

Annual Quality Report
National University of Ireland
Reporting Period 2024-2025

National University of Ireland
2026

Annual Quality Report (NUI)

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Reporting Period 2024-2025

Preface

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

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

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

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

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Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template¹

Legislation

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

QQI Documents

Statutory QA Guidelines (QAG)

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

Other QQI Policy Documents

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

Other National/International References

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

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

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

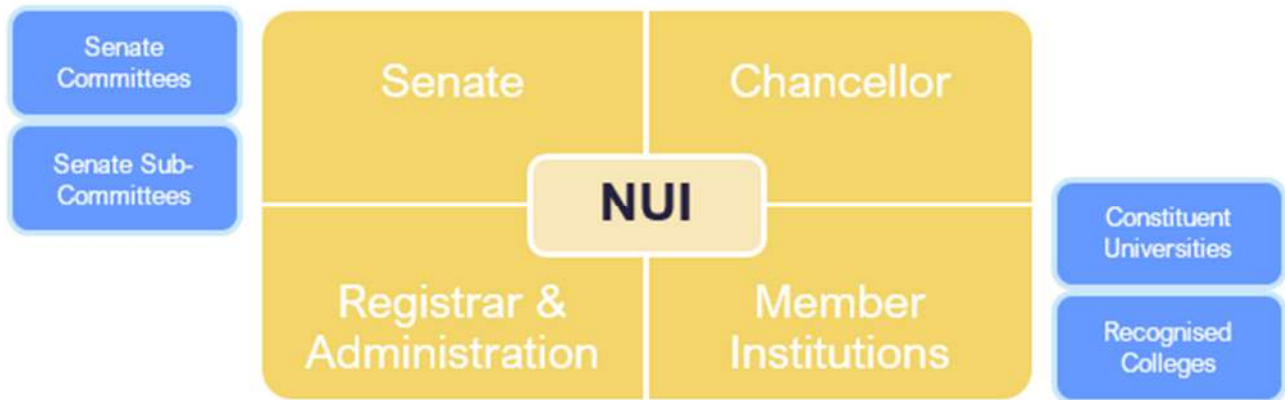
Table 1

Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)				
AQR Part A Section	QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.	QAG Core Sub-section Title	ESG Standard No.	ESG Standard Title
1.0 - Internal QA Framework	2.1	Governance and Management of Quality	1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
	2.2	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance		
2.0 - Programme Development and Delivery	2.3	Programmes of Education and Training	1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
4.0 - QA of Research Activities and Programmes			1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review				
5.0 - Staff Recruitment, Development and Support	2.4	Staff Recruitment, Management and Development	1.5	Teaching Staff
2.3 - Teaching, Learning and Assessment	2.5	Teaching and Learning	1.3	Student-centred Teaching, Learning and Assessment
	2.6	Assessment of Learners		
3.0 - Learner Resources and Supports	2.7	Supports for learners	1.6	Learning Resources and Student Support
6.0 - Information and Data Management	2.8	Information and Data Management	1.7	Information Management
7.0 - Public Information and Communication	2.9	Public Information and Communication	1.8	Public Information
2.0 - Programme Delivery and Development	2.10	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
9.0 - Details of Arrangements with Third Parties				
2.0 - Programme Development and Delivery	2.11	Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review			1.10	Cyclical External Quality Assurance
4.0 - QA of Research Activities and Programmes	QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes			

Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for **National University of Ireland (NUI)** for the reporting period **1 September 2024 - 31 August 2025**. It is to be submitted by **Friday, 27 February 2026**.

The AQR has been approved by Dr Kieran McGovern, Head of Academic Services and Registry, and Dr Patrick O’Leary, NUI Registrar, and is submitted by Dr Sorcha Uí Chonnachtaigh, Manager of Academic Affairs.



The National University of Ireland

The National University of Ireland (NUI) is a federal university with four constituent universities (CUs), two recognised colleges (RCs) and a number of associated institutions. Collectively, these are referred to as member institutions. NUI is a designated awarding body (DAB) but not a provider of education, though it does directly award higher doctorate degrees.

NUI was established by charter in 1908 and is empowered by charter and statute to recognise other institutions of higher education - known as recognised colleges - that meet the quality standards of the University in the academic programmes and student experience that they offer. Through quality assurance (QA) policies, procedures and guidelines, NUI applies standards that are comparable to those in the constituent universities, and on this basis these colleges are permitted to award degrees and other qualifications of the National University of Ireland. NUI’s position as a designated awarding body (DAB) in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 has further strengthened NUI’s statutory role in this regard.

Constituent Universities

Maynooth University / MU

University College Cork / UCC

University College Dublin / UCD

University of Galway (no abbreviations/initialisms permitted)

Recognised Colleges

Royal College of Surgeons - University of Medicine and Health Sciences / RCSI (DAB)

Institute of Public Administration / IPA (Linked Provider)

The AQR Development Process

NUI has a small team of 26 people. The Manager of Academic Affairs has the main responsibility for quality matters in NUI and manages the relationship with the recognised colleges. For this reason, the AQR is written by the Manager of Academic Affairs with input from external stakeholders (in the RCs) and the Head of Academic Services & Registry. The NUI Registrar gives final approval before the report is submitted.

A note on the Reporting Period

In 2024-25, NUI was focused on the election for its Chancellorship, NUI Seanad Éireann Election and the implementation of the new six-seat Higher Education constituency for Seanad Éireann, which extends voting rights to graduates of other designated institutions in addition to NUI and Trinity College Dublin.

Longer-term changes to meet the commitments outlined in the CINNTE Implementation Plan continued to be implemented (sectoral work on matriculation, changes to the administration of external examiner matters).

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CU	Constituent university
DAB	Designated awarding body
ISER	Institutional Self-Evaluation Report
LP	Linked provider
MAA	Manager of Academic Affairs
NUI	National University of Ireland
QA	Quality assurance
QAE	Quality assurance and enhancement
QT	Quality Team
RC	Recognised college

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

This section provides information on the overarching quality policy and the decision-making fora for quality assurance in NUI during the reporting period.

a. Overarching Institutional Quality Policy

NUI's current [strategic plan for 2023-27](#) was launched in May 2023. Under Pillar 1 (Education & Research), Objective 4 outlines NUI's renewed commitment to 'ensure that quality assurance policies are appropriate and quality enhancement continues to be a priority' for the University.

NUI's (2023) [Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework](#) is a flexible and future-proof document, which refers member institutions to relevant statutory, regulatory and policy sources to support their (relevant) quality assurance and enhancement activities. NUI's (2024) federation-wide [quality policy](#) is a relatively straightforward document formally capturing the ongoing responsibilities of all member institutions regarding the quality standards of the University.

In 2024-25, NUI took the opportunity to review the NUI Grade Descriptors. The Grade Descriptors had not been reviewed since their introduction (over 20 years previously), but the document is instrumental in determining a coherent and consistent approach to assessment and academic standards across the federation. Prompted by a QQI initiative around degree classification and feedback from a variety of sectoral bodies (IUA, non-NUI institutions and NUI institutions), we decided to undertake a review of the Descriptors. We were particularly conscious that one of our institutions cited the use of the NUI Grade Descriptors as a determining factor in maintaining steady grade distribution during the pandemic (in the context of 'no detriment' assessment policies). Consultation was ongoing throughout the academic year, with excellent engagement from the federation members.

NUI has developed guidelines, policies and procedures, and provides ongoing guidance and support to its recognised colleges, with due regard to national guidelines,² sectoral practices and European good practice guidelines. NUI benefits from membership of the European Universities Association (EUA) Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF). At a national sectoral level, NUI engages actively as a member of the Irish Universities Association (IUA) Quality Committee and the IUA Quality Officers Group. NUI is also represented at the QQI's Irish Quality and Qualifications Forum for Statutory Awarding Bodies.

This engagement and information-sharing supports NUI's work to review and expand the range of quality assurance policies, procedures and guidelines.

NUI's governing body, the Senate, oversees quality matters - approving new/revised QA policies. The Registrar presents a report on QA matters in the recognised colleges at every meeting of Senate. The Committee of Registrars of the NUI Constituent Universities also provides advice and support on QA matters, as and when required.

b. Quality Assurance Decision-making Fora

NUI Senate governs the NUI's role as a DAB for the recognised colleges that are linked providers.³ The NUI Registrar leads and manages the implementation of this role, supported by designated executive staff in NUI, namely the Head of Academic Services and Registry and the Manager of Academic Affairs. The Registrar reports to Senate at its meetings in January, May and November on QA matters in the recognised colleges, bringing forward items for decision, as and when appropriate. Membership of the NUI Senate includes the NUI Chancellor, the NUI Registrar, chief officers of the constituent universities, four government nominees, four elected members from the governing bodies

² NUI is also guided by the [*Statutory Guidelines for the Review of Linked Providers by the National University of Ireland*](#), issued by QQI in March 2019.

³ At present, there is only one such recognised college, the IPA. RCSI is a DAB in its own right though it remains a recognised college of the University. The unique and long-standing relationship between NUI and RCSI is detailed in NUI's (2020) publication, [*The quality assurance relationship between the National University of Ireland and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-University of Medicine and Health Sciences*](#).

of each constituent university, and eight members elected by convocation (graduates of the NUI). An additional four members may be co-opted by Senate.

Below the level of the Senate, operational business between NUI and its recognised colleges is conducted through separate steering committees for each institution. The steering committees act as the main mechanism for oversight of all strategic, policy and operational issues between NUI and the relevant recognised college. In the case of recognised colleges that are also linked providers, this committee is the key forum for deliberation and decision-making on quality assurance matters, leading to formal decision-making by the Senate where warranted.

Figure 1 below illustrates the oversight and monitoring cycle of QA activity between NUI and its recognised colleges that are linked providers. This is based on an interpretation of quality in its widest sense, inclusive of the approval and re-approval processes for academic programmes leading to NUI qualifications as well as activities more traditionally associated with quality assurance such as external examining and institutional effectiveness reviews.

All these steps - except the periodic institutional review of QA effectiveness - apply to both of NUI's current recognised colleges. As a designated awarding body in its own right, RCSI's institutional effectiveness review is conducted directly by QQI, and this does not fall within NUI's QA responsibility.⁴ The NUI Registrar and staff participate in the reviews of RCSI, attending meetings convened by the external review panels and providing documentation upon request. NUI Senate notes the outcome of the RCSI institutional effectiveness review.

⁴ The most recent institutional review of IPA took place in 2020-21 and follow-up activities took place during the previous reporting period. The IPA's quality assurance policies and procedures were revalidated for a further 7 years by NUI Senate at that time.

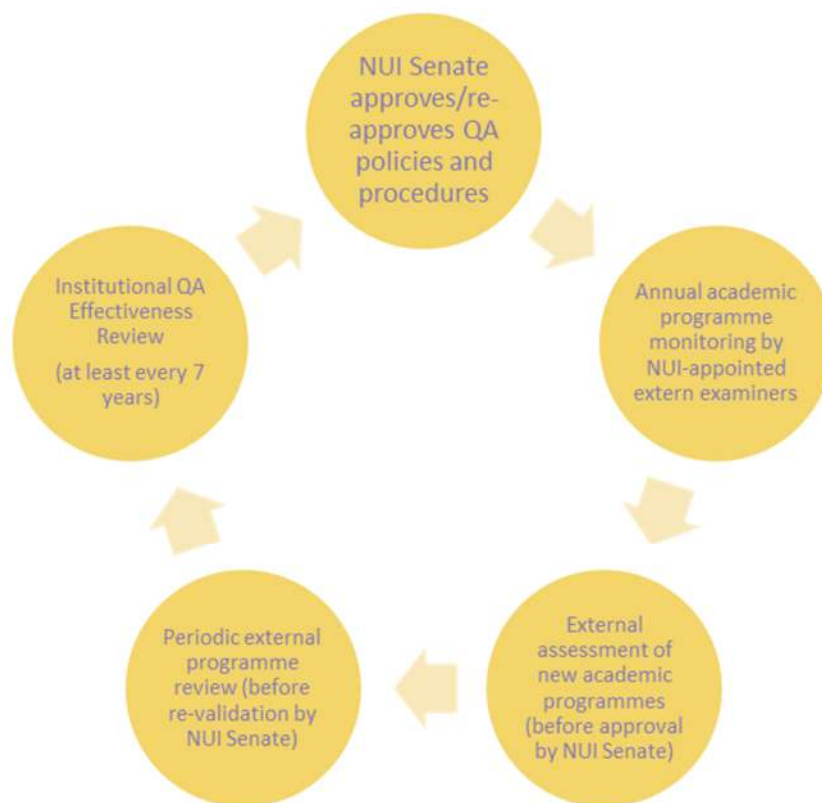


Figure 1: NUI QA oversight and monitoring cycle for recognised colleges that are linked providers

c. Representation of Learners and External Stakeholders

External stakeholders are involved in NUI's governing body, the Senate, and external stakeholders and partners are involved in civic engagement activities and ad hoc projects.

As a non-provider, NUI does not have learners in the same way as its member institutions. Learner experience is a core concern of our quality assurance activity with regard to the recognised colleges, but NUI does not have a direct relationship with learners that is typical in provider institutions. However, in the development of the ISER for the CINNTE review of NUI, the establishment of a student council was identified as an action to address the need for greater student engagement in the federation. This was affirmed and recommended by our review team. The inaugural NUI Student Council convened in November 2024, with Senate receiving reports from the Council regularly and the Chair of the Student Council invited to attend Senate meetings

Important note:

With the prior permission of QQI, NUI has adapted Part A by moving most of the information from further sections of Part A into section 1.2. This change reflects the scope of this Annual Quality Report, which relates only to NUI's quality responsibilities towards its recognised colleges and, in particular, its current linked provider institution, the Institute of Public Administration (IPA). Part A, therefore, has the following sections:

- Section 1.2: QA Developments Relating to Recognised Colleges (sub-sections i-xi)
- Section 2: Details of Arrangements with Third Parties
- Section 3: Collaborative Provision

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

1.2.1 Linked Providers

At present there are two types of provider institutions with the status of a recognised college of NUI:⁵

- A provider institution that is deemed a ‘linked provider’ under the Act 2012;⁶ NUI is the DAB for qualifications of the linked provider. At present this includes the Institute of Public Administration (IPA).
- A provider institution that is also the holder of the status of designated awarding body under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. Here, the responsibility for approval of the quality assurance provision for that institution lies directly with QQI. At present this includes the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland - University of Medicine and Health Sciences (RCSI).

1.2.2 QA Developments Relating to the Recognised Colleges (both DABs and Linked Providers)

NUI’s (2023) *Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework* outlines NUI’s responsibilities and those of the recognised colleges in maintaining the high standards of quality established by the federal university. In the previous AQR, we noted that NUI Senate approved the *National University of Ireland Quality Policy*. This federation-wide policy outlines expectations for maintaining quality standards and indicates the NUI policies that apply to different institution types (constituent universities, recognised colleges; designated awarding bodies and linked providers).

⁵ The conditions for recognised colleges as set out by Senate are governed under NUI Statute LXXXV1: Chapter LIX. This is not published online however details are available upon request from the NUI Registrar (registrar@nui.ie).

⁶ 2012 Act: Section 2(3) states that ‘a linked provider is a provider that is not a designated awarding body but enters into an arrangement with a designated awarding body under which arrangement the provider provides a programme of education and training that satisfies all or part of the prerequisites for an award of the designated awarding body’.

NUI also has a QA document relating to approval of quality procedures in linked providers (following an institutional review):

- NUI (2023) [*Policy and Procedures for the Approval of Quality Assurance Procedures in Recognised Colleges that are Linked Providers of NUI.*](#)

i. Programme Design and Approval

All new programmes proposed by NUI recognised colleges leading to NUI qualifications are subject to approval by the NUI Senate. The design of the programme lies with the institution and follows NUI's core procedural document concerning education provision in recognised colleges.⁷ This core document was reviewed in 2024-25, but the consultation was ongoing at the close of the reporting period.

ii. Monitoring and Periodic Review

In 2024-25, we revised and updated the policy relating to the monitoring of quality in academic programmes via the external examination process:

- [*NUI Policy and Guidelines on External Examiners for Taught Programmes in the Recognised Colleges.*](#)

NUI's QA document relating to programme review in the recognised colleges (that are linked providers)⁸ was reviewed during 2024-25:

- [*Guidelines for the Periodic External Review of Programmes Leading to NUI Qualifications in Linked Providers*](#)

A change in leadership in linked provider resulted in a more holistic review of the programme portfolio and delayed the schedule of programme reviews but review of the Master of Economic Science programme (MEconSc) was close to completion at the close of the reporting period.

⁷ NUI (2021) [*Policy, Regulations and Procedures for the Approval of Research Degrees in the Recognised Colleges.*](#)

⁸ While all recognised colleges must engage in periodic programme review, there are different arrangements for our recognised college that is also a DAB, see: [*The Quality Assurance Relationship between the National University of Ireland and RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences.*](#)

RCSI has undertaken a significant project on its internal quality and programmatic reviews and had suspended reviews until the revised process was approved - significant progress on the implementation of the new system was made during 2024-25. RCSI will report to QQI directly on this.

iii. Progression, Recognition and Certification Policies and Procedures

NUI has not materially updated its policies or guidelines in this area during the reporting period.

Progression: During the normal process of programme approval, or to make major changes to existing academic programmes, documentation submitted to NUI must include details of arrangements for access and transfer into the programmes of study and the progression pathways in place for students. As part of its procedures (see section i above), NUI requires re-assurance from an external, independent academic peer assessor of senior rank that these provisions are in line with international good practice. Access, transfer and progression (ATP) is a standing item on the agenda for steering committee meetings with NUI's linked provider, IPA. All discussions of new programmes involved consideration of ATP matters.

Recognition: NUI's (2013) *Policy on the Recognition of Prior Learning for the Degrees and Qualifications of the National University* applies but is due for review and renewal in line with sectoral developments being led by QQI (and a recently concluded [project](#) led by the IUA and THEA); NUI is monitoring and engaging with processes where appropriate. There have been sectoral delays, so NUI plans to review the current policy in 2025-26.

Certification: The NUI Registrar co-chairs examination boards in the recognised colleges and formally recommends to the Senate the award of degrees and other qualifications to students who have achieved the requisite results, in line with the published marks and standards of the recognised college. The NUI Chancellor then confers all degrees and other qualifications made in the recognised colleges at conferring ceremonies. All degree and certificate parchments bear the university seal as well as the institutional crest of the recognised college where the graduate undertook the course of study.

NUI also provides a [certification service](#) for graduates who have lost their original parchment and seek duplicate documentation as well as a certification service for agencies (largely) involved in the

process of certifying academic credentials supplied by graduates seeking employment and/or professional training opportunities abroad. A project to bring the application process for these services online was on track to be launched just beyond the reporting period (Q3 of 2025).

iv. Collaborative and Transnational Provision

In 2024-25, NUI reviewed and revised the document relating to quality assurance for collaborative and transnational provision in the recognised colleges, in consultation with the relevant institutions. In May 2025, the new version was approved by the NUI Senate and has since been published to our website:

- [*Guidelines on Collaborative and Transnational Provision of Academic Programmes Leading to NUI Qualifications*](#)

v. Procedures for Making Awards

The regulations and procedures for making awards are the responsibility of the recognised college, however NUI has a long-standing [policy](#) on the usage of titles of degrees and other qualifications, which was reviewed and re-published in January 2020. The lack of consistency in the approach to non-major awards across the sector has delayed revision of this document.

NUI also provides guidance with regard to marks bands and generic grade descriptors for NUI degrees. As reported in the previous AQR and in 1.1(a) above, NUI undertook an extensive review of the NUI Grade Descriptors in partnership with the CUs, with the new wording approved by Senate in May 2025.

vi. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

As noted above, the following relevant policies have recently been revised:

- NUI (2025) [Guidelines for the Periodic External Review of Programmes Leading to NUI Qualifications in Linked Providers](#)
- NUI (2025) [Guidelines on Collaborative and Transnational Provision of Academic Programmes Leading to NUI Qualifications](#)

The below policy was under review in late 2025 and was in the stakeholder consultations stage at the close of the reporting period:

- NUI (2020) [Regulations, Procedures and Guidelines for the Approval of New Programmes and Changes to Existing Programmes in the Recognised Colleges](#) - for review in 2025.

While the teaching, learning and assessment strategies adopted for individual programmes are the responsibility of the recognised college, the quality of teaching staff is a core criterion for recognition by the University of any college seeking recognised status and assurance of same will form part of the approved QA system in any recognised college.

The provisions in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 relating to academic integrity and academic misconduct have gained higher prominence in teaching, learning and assessment and student discipline strategies and policies across the university sector. As a member of the IUA Registrars' Committee and the IUA Quality and Qualifications Subgroup, NUI continues to monitor developments in this area and update the recognised colleges accordingly.

vii. Learner Resources and Support

In line with NUI policy on quality assurance in the recognised colleges, learner resources and supports for students are primarily the responsibility of the recognised college itself. However, NUI has oversight of these supports at various stages of its business with the recognised college: when a HEI applies to NUI for [recognised college status](#); when academic programmes leading to NUI qualifications are submitted for approval or re-validation by Senate; when a periodic, external

programme review is undertaken of a programme(s); when NUI conducts an [institutional quality effectiveness review](#).

viii. QA of Research Activities and Programmes

As stated, NUI is not a provider institution and does not offer research programmes directly to students. NUI ensures advice is aligned to the policies and procedures for research quality adopted in the NUI constituent universities. As mentioned in Section i above, *NUI Policy, Regulations and Procedures for the approval of NUI Research Degrees in the Recognised Colleges* was revised and published in May 2023.

The University also has a statutory function to appoint external examiners for research degrees in the constituent universities and the recognised colleges. A [new policy](#) on the appointment of external examiners for research degree programmes in the recognised colleges was published in November 2022.

Higher Doctorate Degrees on Published Works

NUI also offers [higher doctorate degrees](#) on published work, which are awarded directly by the University to scholars who have, over a sustained period, published a substantial body of ground-breaking and influential work in a field of specialisation and who have achieved outstanding distinction internationally in that field. The Higher Doctorate Degrees Committee reviewed stakeholder surveys from the CINNTE review and recommendations from NUI staff following an internal review of the process during the self-assessment stage. From this, a number of procedural improvements were identified. A benchmark was completed during the reporting period and reviewed by the NUI Higher Doctorate Degrees Committee.

ix. Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

NUI does not have a direct role or responsibility in relation to the recruitment, development and support of staff in the recognised colleges, however the quality of teaching staff in the recognised colleges is important to the University and this has its roots in NUI's statutes. Any institution seeking recognised college status with the University must - at the time of application - provide information and assurances as to the 'competencies of teaching staff'.

x. Information and Data Management

During the last reporting period, NUI Senate considered and approved a proposal for the development of a formal policy relating to the notification of new programmes with specific reference to graduate data collection and submission to NUI. The policy itself was finalised approved during this reporting period:

- [*NUI Policy and Procedure: Notification of New Programmes*](#)

The use of information and data for quality assurance and enhancement is a requisite part of NUI's approval of linked provider's approved QA policies and procedures. Annual reports from appointed extern examiners form a core part of this information set for enhancement and NUI provides updates to the Senate from time to time on recurring issues arising from extern reports (across the recognised colleges and the constituent universities).

NUI also requires that recognised colleges (as linked providers) provide updates on the outcomes of information and data-management processes, for example, major curriculum or assessment decisions adopted on foot of student feedback on modules and programmes. Enhancement actions related to information and data-management are further developed during specific programme reviews and formed a significant part of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report from the IPA in preparation for its institutional review in 2021-22.

xi. Public Information and Communication

NUI publishes information on its website in relation to the structure and governance of the University, its strategy and academic and QA policies, regulations and guidelines. NUI's internal culture is to prioritise the accuracy of information that we make accessible to our users, and to the public generally. We have published the NUI web privacy policy, Freedom of Information documentation and the NUI data protection policy on our website.⁹

⁹ NUI's [Web Privacy Policy](#), [Data Protection Policy](#) and guidance on [Freedom of Information](#) requests are available on the website.

9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

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

9.2 Collaborative Provision

Definitions:

QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards, 2012 defines collaborative provision as a process that occurs where two or more providers are involved by formal agreement in the provision of a programme of higher education and training.

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended) defines 'joint award' as a single award made jointly by two or more awarding bodies

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended) defines 'linked provider' as a provider that is not a designated awarding body but enters into an arrangement with a designated awarding body under which arrangement the provider provides a programme of education and training that satisfies all or part of the prerequisites for an award of the designated awarding body.

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

1. Collaborative provision	Linked provider
Name of body (/bodies):	Institute of Public Administration
Programme titles and links to publications	All IPA programmes leading to awards on the NFQ. Details of the programmes (Levels 6-10) can be found on IPA's page of the IRQ website: https://irq.ie/providers/institute-of-public-administration?id=90aca4de-dbf1-4889-b6b9-f9ac06a1deb8&ref=%257B%2522search%2522:%2522institute%2520of%2520public%2520administration%2522%257D The next institutional review of QA effectiveness will take place by September 2029.
Date of last review	08/09/2022

Date of next review	
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9.3 Articulation Agreements

Definition:

Per the IHEQN Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision, an articulation agreement may be defined as a process whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria on one programme are automatically entitled (on academic grounds) to be admitted with advance standing to a subsequent stage of a programme of a degree awarding body. These arrangements are subject to a formal agreement between the parties.

Articulation agreements - Total number	0
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Annual Quality Report (NUI)
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2024-2025

PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1 Strategic QA Updates

A. Policy and Procedures

NUI's current strategic plan for 2023-27 was launched in May 2023. Under Pillar 1 (Education & Research), Objective 4 outlines NUI's renewed commitment to 'ensure that quality assurance policies are appropriate and quality enhancement continues to be a priority' for the University.

Revisions to the following policies and procedures (highlighted in Part A of this report) were approved by Senate during the reporting period:

- [NUI Policy and Guidelines on External Examiners for Taught Programmes in the Recognised Colleges](#)
- [Guidelines for the Periodic External Review of Programmes Leading to NUI Qualifications in Linked Providers](#)
- [Guidelines on Collaborative and Transnational Provision of Academic Programmes Leading to NUI Qualifications](#)

In addition, the following new policy was approved by Senate:

- [NUI Policy and Procedure: Notification of New Programmes](#)

B. CINNTE: Implementation Plan Update

NUI's CINNTE Review Follow-on Report was approved by Senate in November 2024 and submitted to QQI. In the report, a number of actions were outstanding, some updates are provided below:

	Recommendation	Action	NUI Lead	Due	Status in 2024-25
1	The review panel recommends that NUI explores ways in which the permanent participation of the	Registrar will make a proposal to Senate reflecting this recommendation during 2023-24 session.	Registrar & RO	Q1 2024	Exploration with Registrars re inclusion of Registrar nomination among four GA nominated

	CU Registrars in Senate meetings can be assured. (CO1)				members. Initial focus on engagement with University of Galway through Academic Sec as they are next representatives to change
6	The review panel recommends that NUI produces further synthesis reports of external examiner reports including analysis of developments over time of all members of the federation and formally shares these with members. (CO2)	6.1 Add section to thematic analyses of EE reports on previous reports ('Key issues in previous reports' / 'Similarities and Differences')	MAA	Q1 2024	Done and ongoing
		6.2 Send thematic reports to Academic Council (or equivalent) in each member institution.	MAA	Q1 2024	Personnel changes - anticipate completion in Q4 2025/Q1 2026.
10	The review panel recommends that NUI explore whether more consistency in its matriculation regulations can be achieved within the basic cross-institutional matriculation requirements at national level. The panel considers that such a harmonisation will be valuable in simplifying and enhancing access opportunities for students. (CO3)	10.1 Internal review of NUI Matric Regs (in keeping with agreements of sectoral working group), incorporating feedback from user surveys conducted for ISER.	RO	Q3 2023	Postponed due to sectoral process, novel sectoral approach now agreed. As implementation constitutes a significant change and will take some time. A minor review of NUI's current regulations will take place in 2026 as an interim measure.
		10.2 Consult with stakeholders, e.g. Dyslexia Ireland, regarding changes.	RO	Q4 2023	Will follow from above (10.1), but substantial stakeholder consultation done for online form.

		<p>10.3 Develop and launch online exemption application form, which streamlines application and makes it easier to navigate. (This is also a relevant action for Recommendation 12.)</p> <p>Note: these actions have some impact on Recommendation 12 and related actions.</p>	RO	Q4 2023	Done
12	<p>Until more fundamental enhancements can be delivered, the panel recommends, as a matter of priority, that the NUI website should be developed to include the simplest and clearest explanation possible of the NUI matriculation process, with links to relevant individual matriculation pages on the websites of the different constituent universities. (CO3)</p>	<p>12.1 Review and revise the matric pages on www.nui.ie to simplify language (plain English principles), unify terminology in use on homepage and include clear links to admissions pages of all member institutions.</p>	RO and IT	Q4 2023	<p>NUI website section on matriculation exemptions includes a sub-section on Admissions directing learners to the member institutions websites for general and programme-specific admissions information. A plain language audit and review of all public forms and documents is planned for 2026 (see NUI's Public Sector Duty Action Plan).</p>
		<p>12.2 Revise Matriculation Regs (for publication in 2025-26), reflecting stakeholder feedback and CINNTE recommendation.</p> <p>Action 10.3 (online exemption application form) is related to this recommendation.</p>	RO (with input from Publications)	Q4 2023	See commentary for 10.1 above.

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR)	Update on Status
1	<p>Ongoing review and enhancement of QA management and related policy documents</p> <p>[Ref: NUI Strategic Plan 2023-27, Pillar 1, Objective 4, QQI QAG Core 2.1 and 2.2.]</p>	<p>Previously, NUI's QA suite of documents were reviewed/introduced on an as-needed basis. The current MAA placed all documents on a five-year cycle. This was switched to a 3-year cycle in the most recent strategic plan (2023), but we're still in a transition period for the final few documents. In 2024-25 the following documents were due for review, revision and approval:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and guidelines for external examiners (taught programmes) in the CUs - approved May 2025 • Policy and guidelines for external examiners (taught programmes) in the RCs - approved May 2025 • Guidelines for periodic external review of programmes in LPs - approved Feb 2025 • Guidelines on collaborative and transnational provision in RCs - approved May 2025 <p>Additionally, the review of the NUI-RCSI QA relationship document was due to begin and it was progressed (approved just beyond the reporting period - on schedule).</p> <p>A new policy was developed during the previous reporting period and approved in November 2024: NUI Policy and Procedure: Notification of new programmes</p>
2	<p>Related to CINNTE objectives/IIP - complete documentation of external examining processes</p>	<p>All external examiner processes now have SOPs and additional guidance documentation, where appropriate (e.g. process flow diagram). [See s2.0.1 for more detail]</p>
3	<p>Statutory requirements of DABs (QAA Act 2012)</p>	<p>As noted in the previous AQR, IPA was undertaking a portfolio review and planned to re-establish a regular schedule of programme reviews. We now have a full schedule of programme reviews.</p>

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
NUI Senate	7 November 2024 13 February 2025 22 May 2025
NUI-RCSI Working Group Executive	21 October 2024 16 January 2025 30 April 2025
NUI-IPA Steering Committee	21 October 2024 22 January 2025 6 May 2025

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

NUI Senate has significant responsibility for the governance of NUI's quality assurance system. External examiners, quality-related policies (and changes to them) must be approved by Senate. As previously reported, the most recent Senate was constituted in November 2022. During the reporting period, our new Chancellor was elected (October 2024), and a number of government nominees joined the Senate.

Chancellor: Dr Michael B Murphy MB BCh BAO, MD

Registrar: Dr Patrick O'Leary BSc, PhD

Chief Officers of the Constituent Universities

Professor Orla Feely, Vice-Chancellor, President, University College Dublin (until 31/12/25)

Professor Peter McHugh, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Interim President University of Galway

Professor Eeva Leinonen, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, President, Maynooth University

Professor John O'Halloran, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, President, University College Cork

Nominated by the Government

Professor Aoife Ahern

Liam Cosgrove

Jason Sherlock

Dr Barbara Doyle Prestwich

Elected by the Governing Authority, University College Dublin:

Ms Cliona de Bhaldrath

Professor John Dunnion

Dr Kelly Fitzgerald

Professor Patrick Guiry

Elected by the Governing Authority, University College Cork:

Dr Valerie Mannix-Boyle

Professor David Kerins

Mr John Fitzgibbons

Professor Maeve Conrick

Elected by the Governing Authority, University of Galway:

Prof Michal Molcho

Dr Rachel Hilliard

Professor Tom Acton

Ms Edel Browne

Elected by the Governing Authority, Maynooth University:

Professor Thomas O'Connor

Professor Christine Griffin

Dr Niamh O'Reilly

Dr Tony Gaynor

Elected by Convocation, 05 October 2022:

Dr Ruth Casey

Ms Linda O'Shea Farren

Ms Mary Anne Carlin

Dr Marian McCarthy

Mr Michael Smyth

Mr Paul O'Donovan

Mr James Doorley

Dr John Crowley

Co-Opted:

Professor Stephen Byrne, Deputy President and Registrar, University College Cork

Professor Ronan Farrell, Vice-President Academic, Registrar & Deputy President, Maynooth University

Professor Colin Scott, Registrar and Deputy President, University College Dublin

Professor Becky Whay, Interim Deputy President and Registrar, University of Galway

1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Guide:

In this section include the reviews completed or in progress during the reporting period. (QQI acknowledges that the institutional review schedule may not be aligned with the AQR reporting period, and that reviews may be in progress and not completed at the point in time when the report is submitted.)

The unit of review may be a programme [private HEIs], faculty, department/school or service delivery unit.

Please include the schedule for reviews included in the previous AQR - this can be cut and pasted from previous report.

In the table below, indicate the academic and support units for which reviews **concluded** (i.e. the point at which the report associated with the review has been published) during the reporting period; the date of completion of review, the reason for conducting the review (if the review had not been planned) or the reason for non-completion (if the review had been planned for completion but was not conducted or concluded during the reporting period).

A link to the report or other relevant documentation arising out of the review should be provided in the third column.

Please delete guide text before submission.

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
n/a for this reporting period		

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels¹⁰ 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	15				4	1	10
<i>of those:</i>							
On-site processes	1						
Desk reviews	13						
Virtual processes	1						
Average panel size for each process type*							

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

¹⁰ 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

Type of Expert/ Role on Panel	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
		Male	Female	Other, or unspecified			UK, incl. NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair	1	1			1						
Secretary											
Academic/Discipline Specific	22	12	10		4	12	2	4	22		
Student Representative	1	1			1				1		
QA	1		1		1				1		
Teaching & Learning	1		1		1				1		
External Industry /Third Mission	1		1		1					1	

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

2.0.1 Governance & Management of QA: External Examining

Context

NUI was a partner (with all IUA institutions) and co-author on the ExPeRA project report, which was published and launched during the reporting period. The report was shared with NUI Senate in May 2025 and the NUI Education and Society Committee was tasked with reviewing the findings and identifying key actions for NUI institutions - follow-on activities will be reported in the next AQR.

NUI's unique role in external examining across six HEIs in the Irish higher education system was highlighted as a strength during the CINNTE review. Some recommendations were also made to enhance this activity.

During the reporting period, we built on previous enhancements, notably embedding administrative support within the team. In terms of processes and procedures, the following has been completed during the reporting period:

- Standard Operating Procedures and Supporting Documentation for Processes
- Regulations, Guidelines and Guidance
- Communication and engagement with colleagues in the member institution

Standard Operating Procedures

Standard operating procedure documents were developed to support the personnel changes, which has improved the quality of the processes and procedures from an NUI perspective. The personnel changes will have longer term benefits in that all external examiner activity is now within the same broad team rather than split across Academic Services & Registry and the Registrar's Office.

The following documents have been updated or created:

1. Calendar of activity for external examiner matters (new)
2. Appointment Procedure 2024 (Senate requirements and database management) - updated document
3. Overview of External Examiner Reports Process (referred to as 'thematic reports' in CINNTE review report) - new
4. Template emails for external examiners (welcome; appointment confirmation; report request; report reminder) - updated and expanded
5. Report Process - new

Regulations, Guidelines and Guidance

Guidance for External Examiners

A briefing document for new external examiners in RCSI and IPA was developed in consultation with the recognised colleges and published on the NUI external examiners' [webpage](#) during the reporting period.

Updated Policy and Guidelines

The existing QA documents for the CUs and the RCs were reviewed and revised in tandem. The RCs document was developed in consultation with the relevant steering committee/working group executive. The CUs document was shared with directors of quality in the CUs for feedback as well as going through the NUI Registrars' Committee before being presented to Senate in May 2025. Both these documents were approved.

Some processes relating to external examiners in the CUs (particularly relating to nomination of external examiners and submission of examiners' reports to NUI) were handled according to 'custom and practice'. During the revision process, these were formalised. The documents now explicitly identify NUI's responsibilities, more clearly articulate the responsibilities of member institutions (both RCs and CUs) and outline the updated responsibilities for external examiners.

One notable change in **policy** is the addition of a requirement for transparency, i.e. NUI and the other DABs in the federation must publish their external examiner lists. During the reporting period, the implementation of this requirement was being considered in the DABs (CUs and RCSI). It was agreed with IPA that NUI will publish the external examiner list for the linked provider.

Communication & Engagement

The policies were written to flexibly accommodate the different systems in member institutions. NUI aims to meet its statutory responsibilities while minimising the burden on member institutions. We have ongoing communication and direct engagement with relevant colleagues in the RCs.

There is a multitude of offices/units and there has been structural changes and staff turnover in the CUs. With the operational and policy changes, we took the opportunity to engage with colleagues in the CUs so we could all get to know each other a bit better and to understand the system and institutional calendar constraints within which we are all working. We wanted to answer questions and identify how to support the CUs in meeting the Senate-approved requirements in ways that minimised administrative burden and duplication. We successfully engaged with three of the four institutions during this process. (We have engaged differently with the remaining institution, beyond the reporting period.)

Reflection

We are more confident that the processes, systems and professional relationships are in place to achieve the desired outcome of a more consistent quality process around external examining across the federation. Though the real impact (e.g. more consistent data in nomination lists, more usable report formats) have been experienced just beyond the reporting period.

One of the recommendations of the CINNTE review report was that we continue to produce 'thematic reports' (these were never truly thematic reports - we now refer to these as **overview reports**) and that we share them directly with the academic councils in our CUs following presentation to Senate. This was suspended while the new (to the area) administrator was embedded in the team and more familiar with external examiner matters. The frequency of these reports will be increased during the next reporting period to ensure we get caught up to the regular schedule (the retrospective academic year).

We achieved much in laying a strong operational foundation to achieving the enhancements planned during the reporting period and anticipate that we will be able to fully implement the identified actions around overview reports.

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

Not applicable

(As a non-provider DAB, the matter of academic integrity is a quality assurance responsibility of member institutions.)

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>All actions are the responsibility of the MAA and the Quality Team</i>
1	Grade Descriptors Review [Ref: NUI Strategic Plan 2023-27, Pillar 1, Objective 4, QQI QAG Core 2.1 and 2.2.]	NUI Grade Descriptors (established after the 1997 Act as a key mechanism for maintaining consistent standards across the federation) were not on the NUI website and not in the system for the MAA or Academic Services & Registry but were referred to consistently in sectoral discussions of grade distribution changes during in the pandemic. It was agreed that in order to fully meet our strategic commitments (Pillar 1, Objective 4), we need to review and revise the document, which is over 20 years old.
2	Ongoing review and enhancement of QA management and related policy documents [Ref: NUI Strategic Plan 2023-27, Pillar 1, Objective 4, QQI QAG Core 2.1 and 2.2.]	Policies to be reviewed/revised and, ideally, approved in the next reporting period include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Regulations, Procedures and Guidelines for the approval of New Programmes and changes to Existing Programmes in the Recognised Colleges</i> • <i>Policy on extern examiners for research degree programmes in the recognised colleges, including professional doctorates</i> New policy to be developed and, ideally, approved in the next reporting period: <i>NUI Policy on Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards in Linked Providers</i>
3	Completion of CINNTE actions relating to External Examiner matters (IIP)	Production of overview reports for 2021-22 and 2022-23, presentation to Senate and subsequent dissemination to academic secretaries/registrars in the constituent universities.
4	Statutory requirements of DABs (QAA Act 2012)	The MAA will continue to support IPA's activity of programmatic review.

3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Bachelor of Arts in Public Management - Health Management, HRM, Law & Administration of Justice, Local Government, Public Management	2026	(prior to return to NUI as linked provider, schedule delayed due to COVID and IPA Leadership change)

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Master of Arts - Criminal Justice, Healthcare Management, HRM, Leadership & Strategy, Local Government, Public Management	2027	(prior to return to NUI as linked provider, schedule delayed due to COVID and IPA Leadership change)
MSc in Business and Management - Financial Management, HRM	2027	(prior to return to NUI as linked provider, schedule delayed due to COVID and IPA Leadership change)
Doctorate in Governance	2028	(prior to return to NUI as linked provider, schedule delayed due to COVID and IPA Leadership change)

