

National University of Ireland

2024

Annual Quality Report

National University of Ireland

Reporting Period 2022-2023

National University of Ireland
2024

Annual Quality Report (NUI)
PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM
Reporting Period 2022-2023

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

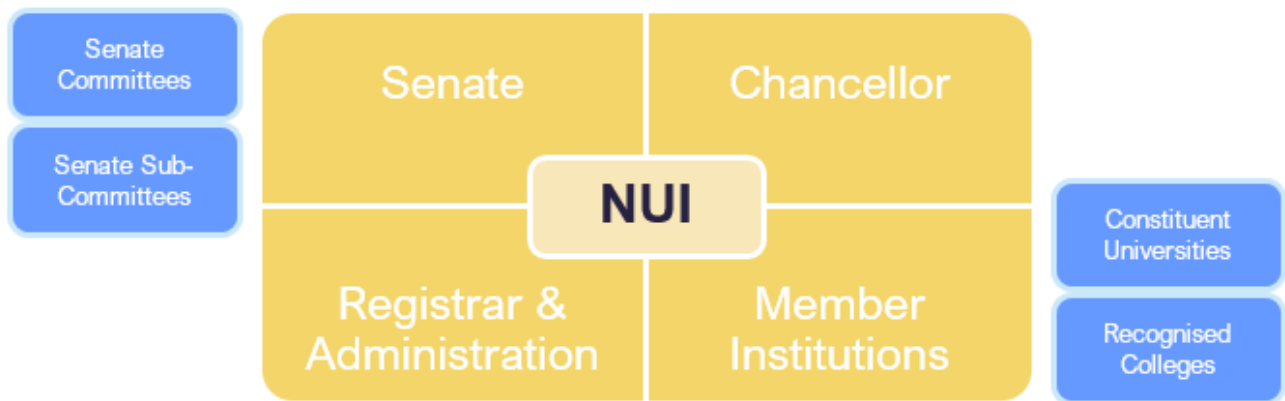
Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)				
AQR Part A Section	QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.	QAG Core Sub-section Title	ESG Standard No.	ESG Standard Title
1.0 - Internal QA Framework	2.1	Governance and Management of Quality	1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
	2.2	Documented Approach to 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 2022 - 31 August 2023**.

It is to be submitted by **Friday, 23 February 2024**.

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 comprising the largest element in the Irish higher education system with four constituent universities (CUs), two recognised colleges (RCs) and 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. 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 20 people. The Quality Team consists of the Registrar, the Head of Academic Services and Registry and the Manager of Academic Affairs. 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 NUI Quality Team. The Registrar gives final approval before the report is submitted.

A note on the Reporting Period

In 2022-23, NUI underwent its first CINNTE review and the Quality Team was largely focused on this and related activities during the reporting period.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The terms below are used in the report:

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

This reporting period straddles to strategic planning cycles. NUI's role and activities relating to quality assurance and enhancement align with NUI's [Strategic Plan for 2018-22](#), specifically referencing Strategic Goal 3, which has, as a major objective, to 'ensure recognition of the NUI brand in Ireland and internationally as a mark of the highest quality academic standards'. As the strategy notes, 'academic quality underpins the NUI brand, which is shared by the constituent universities and the recognised colleges'. NUI's new [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 (2017) [Policy for Quality Assurance and Enhancement](#) states that the University will safeguard the standards of its awards in the recognised colleges (that are linked providers), while stating that the institutions themselves have the primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance on a day-to-day basis.² NUI has developed guidelines, policies and procedures, and provides ongoing guidance and support to its recognised colleges, with due regard to national guidelines,³ 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.

² This policy was replaced by NUI's [Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework](#) in 2023, with the aim of providing a more user-friendly approach to quality assurance.

³ 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.

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.⁴ 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 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.

⁴ 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*](#).

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.⁵ 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.

⁵ QQI will be aware that the IPA institutional review does fall within the NUI's remit; this took place in 2020-21 and follow-up activities (submission of the quality improvement plan and progress reporting via the NUI-IPA Steering Committee) took place during the reporting period. See Part B, Section 2 (pp.33-34) of this report.



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. The student council will have representatives from all member institutions. (The details of this are to be determined in collaboration with student representatives in 2024 and will be reported in the next AQR.)

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

Linked Providers

At present there are two types of provider institutions with the status of a recognised college of NUI:⁶

- A provider institution that is deemed a ‘linked provider’ under the Act 2012;⁷ 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).

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

NUI revised the core quality assurance document pertaining to the recognised colleges in 2022-23 and it was approved by NUI Senate in January 2023:

- NUI (2023) [*Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework*](#)

This document replaces NUI’s (2017) *Policy for Quality Assurance and Enhancement*. The revised document aims to be more user-friendly and directs colleagues in the recognised colleges to the different quality assurance documents that constitute the NUI suite of quality assurance documents depending on their needs and objectives. It outlines NUI’s responsibilities and those of the recognised colleges in maintaining the high standards of quality established by the federal university.

⁶ 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).

⁷ 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’.

In addition, NUI revised and published (following approval by NUI Senate) the document relating to institutional review of linked providers:

- NUI (2023) *[Guidelines for the Institutional Review of Quality Assurance Effectiveness at Recognised Colleges that are Linked Providers.](#)*

This document was revised based on internal experience of the process and consultation with colleagues in the IPA, which underwent institutional review in 2021-22.

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.⁸

In addition to the broader NUI *Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework* document, NUI revised and published the following QA policy document, which was approved by NUI Senate during the reporting period:

- NUI (2023) *[Policy, Regulations and Procedures for the Approval of Research Degrees in the Recognised Colleges.](#)*

ii. Monitoring and Periodic Review

Monitoring of quality in academic programmes via the external examination process is guided by NUI Senate's (2019) *[NUI Extern Examiners: Primary degree and taught postgraduate courses in recognised colleges.](#)* This policy is due to be reviewed in the 2023-24 academic year.

In May 2019, NUI formalised its long-standing requirement for programme review in the recognised colleges by publishing a new [policy](#) and set of procedures governing external, periodic reviews of academic programmes. These guidelines were first used by IPA in the (COVID-delayed) external, periodic review of its suite of BA (Hons) programmes and the

⁸ NUI (2021) *[Policy, Regulations and Procedures for the Approval of Research Degrees in the Recognised Colleges.](#)*

findings and recommendations were reported to Senate in Autumn 2020. During the COVID-19 pandemic, programme reviews were suspended in IPA. They have since been resumed. During the review period the internal stage of a review of the MEconSc programme has progressed significantly.

RCSI suspended scheduled overseas programme reviews during the COVID-19 outbreak. In April 2021, the Education and Training Quality Authority in Bahrain (BQA) carried out a programme review of the BSc in Nursing. After an equivalency review, the report of the BQA review was accepted in place of a separate RCSI programme review, and this was noted by NUI Senate.⁹ Subsequently, standard programme reviews resumed at RCSI, though none progressed to the stage of noting by Senate during the AQR reporting period.

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 [project](#) led by the IUA and THEA); NUI is monitoring and engaging with processes where appropriate.

Certification: The NUI Registrar co-chairs examination boards in the recognised colleges and

⁹ As required by the agreed process, see Section 6.3 of NUI (2020) [*The Quality Assurance Relationship between the National University of Ireland and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, University of Medicine and Health Sciences.*](#)

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 overseas agencies involved in the process of certifying academic credentials supplied by graduates seeking employment and/or professional training opportunities abroad. A project to bring this process online was significantly progressed during the reporting period and will be reported as live in the next reporting period.

iv. Collaborative and Transnational Provision

NUI has not materially updated its specific policy and guidelines for collaborative and transnational provision during the reporting period. The recently updated and republished (May 2020) core regulatory and procedures document for new or significantly changed academic programmes applies to all taught provision in the recognised colleges, including collaborative or transnational programmes leading to NUI qualifications.

NUI's 2013 [Guidelines for Collaborative and Transnational Provision](#) remain in effect. These were re-scheduled for review in the academic year 2021-2022 but due to the impact of COVID-19 and staff departures, and in light of NUI's imminent CINNTE review, work will begin on this in 2023 with publication likely in 2023-24. NUI's (2013) *Human Rights Principles and Code of Conduct* is currently under review and will influence the revision of the guidelines for collaborative and transnational provision. Significant progress has been made with the revised human rights document and related changes to the Guidelines are planned for 2024.

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. However, recent sectoral developments regarding non-major awards and the use of ‘professional’ in qualification titles has prompted a further revision of this policy. This matter was discussed by Senate and planned changes may need further consultation with the member institutions during 2024.

NUI also provides guidance with regard to marks bands and generic grade descriptors for NUI degrees. This was planned for review in 2023 but NUI Senate decision to expand the process of review and the revised NUI Grade Descriptors are now likely to be published in 2024-25.

vi. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

NUI has not materially updated specific policies or guidelines in this area during the reporting period.¹⁰ 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 and Quality Committees, NUI continues to monitor developments in this area and update the recognised colleges accordingly.

¹⁰ The relevant documents in this regard are NUI (2020) *Regulations, Procedures and Guidelines for the Approval of New Programmes and Changes to Existing Programmes in the Recognised Colleges* and NUI (2019) *Guidelines for the Periodic External Review of Programmes Leading to NUI Degrees and Other Qualifications in Recognised Colleges that are also Linked Providers of NUI*. Both are available at <http://www.nui.ie/about/gvrnce.asp>.

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;¹¹ 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 extern 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. A benchmarking exercise for higher doctorate degrees and a review of the NUI regulations is planned for 2024.

ix. Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

¹¹ See n.10.

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

There have not been any material updates or changes to policy, procedures or guidelines in this area during the reporting period.

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 September 2021.

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.¹²

¹¹ NUI's [Web Privacy Policy](#), [Data Protection Policy](#) and guidance on [Freedom of Information](#) requests are available on the website.

2.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

2.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	0 (Please note RCSI has a number of arrangements with PRSBs and submits a separate AQR)
Awarding bodies	0
QA bodies	0

3.0 Collaborative Provision

Type of arrangement	Total number
Collaborative programmes	RCSI has a number of collaborative partnerships and provides information on these in their AQR.
Linked providers (DABs only)	1 (IPA)

1. Collaborative provision (Type of 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.
Date of last review	2021-22 (Full institutional review of QA effectiveness)
Date of next review	By 2028

NUI has in its awards portfolio a range of approved RCSI collaborative and transnational programmes that have evolved from a number of collaborative partnerships. **As a DAB in its own right, further information on these programmes can be obtained directly from RCSI.** Examples include the collaborative PhD programme in Ireland (with DCU and Trinity College Dublin) in Structured Population and Health Services Research Education (SPHeRE).

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	

National University of Ireland (NUI)
2024

Annual Quality Report (NUI)

PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT

Reporting Period 2022-2023

PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1 Strategic QA Updates

Strategic Context

During the review period (2022-23), NUI was in the concluding period of [NUI Strategic Plan 2018-2022](#) while also undergoing a CINNTE review. ISER development coincided with work on the new strategic plan, and NUI's [Strategic Plan 2023-2027](#) was launched in May 2023. Both strategic plans were relevant to the reporting period, which was largely transitional from a strategic point of view. Below are the main goals of the 2018-22 plan:

1. To add demonstrable value to NUI's constituent universities, recognised colleges and associated institutions;
2. To support Irish higher education and advocate for its advancement at home and abroad;
3. To develop and capitalise on the NUI brand nationally and internationally, for the benefit of members and the wider sector;
4. To make a meaningful contribution to Irish civic society;
5. To enhance NUI's staff skills-base and its enabling support structures.

Goal 3, Objective 1 is to 'ensure recognition of the NUI brand in Ireland and internationally as a mark of the highest academic quality standards'. The strategy highlights that 'academic quality underpins the NUI brand, which is shared by the constituent universities and the recognised colleges'. Quality assurance is the focus of the relationship between NUI and its recognised colleges, particularly IPA (NUI's sole linked provider).

The new strategic plan marked a more ambitious positioning for the University in a number of areas, however, the key role of quality assurance remains deliberately consistent with past strategic plans. Under Strategic Pillar 1, Education and Research, Objective 4 states that NUI will 'ensure that quality assurance policies are appropriate and quality enhancement continues to be a priority'. The new strategy explicitly articulates excellence as a value and commits NUI to continuous improvement in all its activities, including quality processes.

QA Developments for Recognised Colleges

The previous AQR committed NUI to a holistic review of NUI's suite of regulations, policies and procedures starting with the overarching quality assurance framework - the approval and publication of NUI's (2023) *Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework* was the first step in this process. NUI's *Policy, Regulations and Procedures for the approval of NUI Research Degrees in the Recognised Colleges* was also revised and republished during the reporting period. Work in the area NUI's grade descriptors, recognition of prior learning (RPL), the titling of NUI degrees, collaborative and transnational provision is progressing, though some require consultation with member institutions (e.g. review of NUI grade descriptors) and therefore will take a little longer than others. The previous AQR also committed NUI to revising guidelines and policies relating to institutional review and QA revalidation, following NUI's experience of IPA's institutional review in 2020-21. This was done; *Guidelines for the Institutional Review of Quality Assurance Effectiveness at Recognised Colleges that are Linked Providers* were revised and republished during the reporting period. The policy relating to the approval of QA procedures in the recognised colleges followed (but was approved and published outside the reporting period).

Internal QA Planning, Monitoring and Improvement

The review and reflection prompted by the CINNTE review of NUI brought focused attention to the system of QA policy development and review. NUI, with new personnel, established a formal cycle of policy review, and completed a review of the overarching framework of quality assurance and enhancement. The core principle of maintaining the standard of quality set by constituent universities across the federation remains central to NUI.

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No	Planned objectives (Previous AQR) See S.3.1 of NUI's 2021-22 AQR	Update on Status
1	New, restructured NUI Quality Assurance Framework - MAA (Quality Team)	Completed: Quality Assurance & Enhancement Framework
2	<p>The MAA (with input from Quality Team) will be responsible for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Obtaining Senate approval of QA policy review log ii. Carrying out QA policy/procedure reviews, aligned with core quality principles and commitments to ease-of-use (plain language, concise documents), sustainability and EDI (where relevant) and in consultation with stakeholders iii. Obtain Senate approval of revised QA policy documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Senate considered and noted the QA policy log in January 2023. ii. Policies reviewed and revised during the reporting period aligned with core quality principles and commitments to ease of use. iii. Senate approved two revised quality assurance documents (in addition to the QAE framework) during the reporting period as noted elsewhere: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Policy, regulations and procedures for the approval of research degrees o Guidelines for the institutional review of linked providers iv. Senate also approved one new policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Policy on extern examiners for research degrees
3	<p>The Quality Team (including NUI Registrar) will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Develop suitable action plan upon receipt of CINNTE Review Report ii. Gain approval of Review Team Chair and NUI Senate for action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The Quality Team developed an action plan (the Institutional Implementation Plan, or IIP) in response to the CINNTE Review Report in consultation with all staff. ii. The IIP has (beyond the reporting period) been approved by Senate and the QQI board (this is the process, rather than approval by the Review Team chair).
4	The MAA will support IPA's activity of programmatic review.	The MAA has continued to support IPA's activity of programmatic review (During the review period the internal stage of a review of the MEconSc programme has progressed significantly, and a second programme review is underway.)

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
NUI Senate	<u>Extra Meeting</u> 15 September 2022 (to discuss draft NUI ISER and draft Strategic Plan 2023-27) <u>Ordinary Meetings</u> 10 November 2022 19 January 2023 4 May 2023
NUI-IPA Steering Committee	26 October 2022 10 January 2023 19 April 2023
NUI-RCSI Working Group Executive	26 October 2022 10 January 2023 17 April 2023

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

NUI Senate has significant responsibility for the governance of NUI's quality assurance system. Extern examiners, quality-related policies (and changes to them) must be approved by Senate. In November 2022, a new **Senate** was [constituted](#). While a number of *ex officio* members remain from the previous Senate and some previous members were re-elected, a significant number of members are new:

Chancellor: Dr Maurice Manning MA, DLitt

Registrar: Dr Patrick O'Leary BSc, PhD

Chief Officers of the Constituent Universities

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

Professor Mark Rogers (till April 2023) / Professor Orla Feely, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, President, University College Dublin (from May 2023)

Professor Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, President University of Galway

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

Nominated by the Government

Professor Pat Clancy

Dr Barbara Doyle Prestwich

Mr John Hurley

Professor Aoife Ahern [new]

Elected by the Governing Authority, University College Dublin:

Ms Cliona de Bhaldrath Marsh [previously elected by Convocation]

Professor John Dunnion [new]

Dr Kelly Fitzgerald [new]

Professor Patrick Guiry [re-elected]

Elected by the Governing Authority, University College Cork:

Dr Valerie Mannix-Boyle [re-elected]

Professor David Kerins [new]

Mr John Fitzgibbons [new]

Professor Maeve Conrick [new]

Elected by the Governing Authority, University of Galway:

Prof Michal Molcho

Dr Rachel Hilliard

Professor Tom Acton [new]

Ms Edel Browne [new]

Elected by the Governing Authority, Maynooth University:

Professor Thomas O'Connor [previous member, newly elected]

Professor Christine Griffin [new]

Dr Niamh O'Reilly [new]

Dr Tony Gaynor [new]

Elected by Convocation, 05 October 2022:

Dr Ruth Casey [new]

Ms Linda O'Shea Farren [re-elected]

Ms Mary Anne Carlin [new]

Dr Marian McCarthy [previous member via UCC GA]

Mr Michael Smyth [new]

Mr Paul O'Donovan [re-elected]

Mr James Doorley [re-elected]

Dr John Crowley [new]

Co-Opted:

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

Professor Aidan Mulkeen, Vice-President Academic, Registrar & Deputy President, Maynooth University

Professor Barbara Dooley, Registrar and Deputy President, University College Dublin [new]

Professor Pól Ó Dochartaigh, Deputy President and Registrar, University of Galway

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
N/a		

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels¹³ involved in IQA

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

Programme approval for new programmes in IPA and RCSI are provided below because NUI is involved in the process for both (most quality assurance activities in RCSI will be reported by RCSI directly).

	Total	Approval/Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review	Other
Number of review/ evaluation processes	3		Prof Cert in Climate Action & Sustainability Reporting; MSc Nursing (Medical) and PCCC; Prof Dip in Global Health Systems		
<i>of those:</i>					
On-site processes	0				
Desk reviews	3		x		
Virtual processes	0				
Average panel size for each process type*	1				

* Excluding secretary if not a full panel member

¹³ QQI acknowledges that the terminology used to describe the groups of individuals that conduct peer review/evaluation varies from institution to institution.

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

Extern Examining Processes

During the reporting period, relatively small changes in the administration of extern examiners (approvals, report sharing etc) were made to facilitate greater efficiency and clearer communication around the relationship between NUI and the recognised colleges (RCs). Certain formal elements of the process can be complicated by the governance structures and annual calendar of meetings, but alternative solutions were identified to work with the structures while maintaining communication (between NUI and the nominated externs, between NUI and the recognised colleges and between externs and programme teams in the RCs). There has been an improvement in the return rate of extern examiner reports and the timing of submission of these reports, which have both been beneficial to programme teams in the recognised colleges.

NUI is a partner (with all IUA institutions) in a QQI-funded project on external examining, which will report findings during the next reporting period.

Institutional QA Effectiveness Review of IPA

Under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, NUI is required to establish quality assurance arrangements in respect of ‘linked providers’ that deliver educational programmes leading to NUI awards including institutional review on a seven-year cycle. The Institutional QA Effectiveness Review (hereafter institutional review) of IPA was governed by NUI’s *Guidelines for the Institutional Review of Quality Assurance Effectiveness at Recognised Colleges which are Linked Providers of NUI*, which were developed in accordance with QQI’s (2019) *Statutory Guidelines for the Review of Linked Providers by the National University of Ireland*.

The institutional review concluded in January 2022 when the Review Report and IPA’s response were presented to NUI Senate as the basis for Senate revalidation of IPA QA processes and procedures for seven years. Subsequently, the Review Report and the IPA response were published on the NUI and IPA websites. The IPA’s quality improvement plan (QIP) was developed to address the Review Panel’s recommendations and was approved by the NUI Registrar and the Chair of the Review Panel in July 2022 and noted by Senate in September 2022. The IPA regularly updates NUI on progress against the agreed actions in the QIP at meetings of the NUI-IPA Steering Committee. A number of actions were planned for completion outside the one-year progress report timeframe and NUI continues to discuss progress with colleagues in IPA.

The IPA provided very helpful quantitative and qualitative feedback on the process of institutional review. It was clear that the guidance on the QIP stage of the process and how approval was managed required greater detail for all parties. The institutional review [guidelines](#) were updated in

consultation with colleagues in IPA, approved by Senate and published during the reporting period (as noted in Section 1.1 above).

CINNTE Review of NUI

The CINNTE review of NUI was the first external institutional review of NUI and constituted an unprecedented opportunity for NUI to critically reflect on its strategy, operations and quality assurance processes. As a loose federation comprised largely of autonomous DABs who undergo their own external institutional review and not providing programmes of education and training directly, NUI's main QA role is in respect of its linked provider, the IPA. The generally successful conclusion of the IPA's institutional review in 2022 was an important demonstration of the effectiveness of NUI's own QA policies and procedures, which largely focus on QA in linked provider institutions.

The main review visit was in March 2023 and the review report was finalised in July 2023. The outcome was generally positive; the independent review team found that NUI met the key objectives of the review. The review report noted the following Top 5 commendations:

1. The panel commends NUI for the quality of the ISER and for adding concluding paragraphs with self-critical evaluations and follow-up activities. This is consistent with the overall self-critical approach NUI applied not only in the ISER but also during the main review visit.
2. It is worth noting that representatives from all members of the federation emphasised the importance of the effective, collegiate and informal day-to-day working approaches of NUI staff. The panel commends the fact that, for an institution with relatively few staff, NUI has achieved a very effective impact through informal collaborations with other key institutions.
3. The review panel commends NUI leadership team for supporting staff development and training and for its programme to improve internal administrative practices.
4. The panel commends the NUI's matriculation team on their responsiveness to the needs of large numbers of university applicants who are attempting to navigate the often-complex NUI matriculation regulations at a particularly stressful time in their educational journey. They note the quality of the help and support that they consistently provide to students, their families and the broader school system.
5. The panel commends NUI's initiative in beginning to extract valuable additional information from External Examiner reports in the form of synthesis and thematic reports, uncovering trends which might not be available to constituent universities or recognised colleges.

A key quality practice that was commended in the report was NUI's thematic reports synthesising the recommendations from extern examiner reports across the federation. This practice is unique to NUI which has sight of extern examiner reports for the entire federation.

The review report also identified 13 recommendations for NUI, including the following Top 5 recommendations:

1. The panel recommends that NUI put in place the appropriate means to ensure that it meets its responsibilities as an awarding body by assuring its oversight of those awards for which it is jointly responsible.
2. 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.
3. The panel recommends that NUI strongly considers the appointment of a student council, using the established pool of student leader resources, i.e., SU sabbatical officers and part time officers from RCSI. The panel also suggests that NUI uses its association with NStEP which already has established partnerships with UCC, University of Galway and MU.
4. The panel recommends the establishment by NUI of an official forum for the discussion of standards and quality assurance and enhancement in the federation accompanied by appropriate documentation and monitoring.
5. Given the NUI's unique oversight of the NUI matriculation process over their CUs and RCs, the panel recommends that the NUI consider collecting longitudinal data on the impact of NUI matriculation exemptions on the longer-term progression and academic success of students. This would contribute new evidence to inform national best practice regarding the impact of pre-requisite subjects on access and progression.

NUI developed an institutional implementation plan, approved by NUI Senate and submitted to QQI in December 2023, just beyond the reporting period. Much of the quality enhancement activity relating to the CINNTE process were in planning stages during the reporting period and some actions have been initiated; further progress will be reported in future AQRs.

NUI and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs)

As noted in the previous AQR, NUI Senate approved a new [*Code of Conduct for the Members of the Senate of the National University of Ireland*](#) and a new [*Code of Conduct for Employees of the National University of Ireland*](#) in May 2022, both of which reference NUI's commitment to the UNSDGs in its services, activities and operations. The new [*Strategic Plan 2023-2027*](#) devotes one of the four strategic pillars to sustainability.

NUI has continued to make progress on eliminating paper from its day-to-day activities. During the reporting period, a project to move the matriculation exemption application process online was advanced to final testing. There is a similar, but more complex project in the area of graduate services (verification, duplicate parchments etc), which is in development.

Third-mission activities, societal and community engagement

Third-mission Activities

The development of the next strategic plan alongside ISER development and reflection on NUI's activities, brought a renewed and more explicit commitment to EDI, sustainability and social justice, broadly construed.

In May 2023, NUI launched a new inclusion-focused award, the NUI Denis Donoghue award to foster success and facilitate excellence, by providing monetary support to undergraduate students from under-represented groups in higher education in Ireland.

It was decided in 2021 to review and revise NUI's (2013) *Human Rights Principles and Code of Conduct* document but this was postponed due to COVID delays. A working group was identified in late 2022 and presented a draft document for consultation to Senate just after the reporting period.

Societal and Community Engagement

NUI, while different from provider institutions, has a long history of promoting academic scholarship and research with public audiences. NUI regularly collaborates with the Dublin City Council Archaeological Conservation and Heritage Unit and co-organised and hosted the annual Viking lecture as part of the Dublin Festival of History in October 2022.

Following the publication of the new Strategic Plan, NUI's Education and Society Committee rebranded the education and society seminar series, 'Higher Education Today and Tomorrow'. The first seminar takes place outside the reporting period; three events are planned for 2024.

NUI regularly opens the door of 49 Merrion Square to the public during heritage and culture events.

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

As highlighted in the previous AQR, initiatives related to academic integrity are the responsibility of the recognised colleges. However, NUI continues to provide guidance in this area drawn from the practices of the constituent universities and wider sectoral policy developments. Through its membership of the IUA Committee of Registrars and the IUA Quality Committee, NUI is fully aware of the new legislative provisions on academic cheating in the updated Quality and Qualifications Act (2019) and we have discussed the implications of this legislation, as well as providing information on QQI's activities in this regard, to the IPA.

NUI monitors and, where possible, attends NAIN activities. NUI will continue to update its QA policies and procedures with reference to arrangements to ensure academic integrity in the recognised colleges. Regular steering committee meetings provide a forum to discuss quality enhancement and share experiences and information in the recognised colleges.

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No.	Relevant objectives Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Planned actions and indicators <i>Note: Include details of unit responsible, and how planned action will address the relevant strategic priority and/or reengagement advice/CINNTE recommendation. If the institution is preparing for cyclical review, include how the planned actions will address the relevant review objective(s).</i>
1	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.]	The MAA (with input from Quality Team) will continue to review and revise quality policies on the approved schedule. NUI's new strategic plan commits to reviewing policies on a three-year cycle, but there will be a short transition period to catch up to this timescale.
2	CINNTE Review Report / Institutional Implementation Plan (IIP) Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Establish an NUI federation-wide quality mechanism (policy, forum etc, tbd) for the discussion of standards and quality assurance and enhancement in the federation accompanied by appropriate documentation and monitoring. ii. Progress other actions (from the IIP)
3	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

The Institutional Implementation Plan following the CINNTE review of NUI will be actioned and reported in the next AQR.

IPA's programmatic review of their Master of Economic Science in Policy Analysis was slightly delayed and will now be reported in the next AQR.

3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
IPA Programme Review: Bachelor of Business Studies (Accounting, HRM, Marketing)	2023-24	2019-20 (This has begun but outside the reporting period.)
Internal QA review of Extern Examiner Process to prepare for 2024 internal audit	2024	Previously informal and ongoing (Note this was originally planned for 2023 but moved to 2024 following advice of auditor.)
Internal audit of Extern Examiner Process in NUI	2024	2012 (see note above)

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
IPA Programme Review: Master of Arts (Criminal Justice, Healthcare Management, HRM, Leadership & Strategy, Local Government, Public Management)	2024	(Due 2020/21 but postponed due to COVID-19)

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

NUI participates, in a support/facilitation role, in a number of initiatives that are more properly the domain of the relevant provider institutions. In particular, NUI has been working to support the following objective of effectively facilitating access to higher education through projects relating to matriculation (minimum entry requirements).

Rationalisation of Matriculation Regulations for IUA Institutions

Context

During the reporting period, NUI led an informal group to evaluate, compare and consider opportunities for streamlining/unifying basic entry requirements for the IUA institutions. While NUI, sets matriculation and manages exemptions for all member institutions (UCD, UCC, MU, University of Galway, RCSI and the IPA), which have common basic entry requirements, there are a number of other institutions in the IUA with slightly different entry requirements.

The Objective: rationalise matriculation requirements to achieve as much uniformity as possible and limit the complexities for CAO applicants/prospective learners.

The Challenge(s):

There are some limitations to any exercise involving a group on autonomous institutions. In this case, some institutions currently require more within the realm of 'basic entry' than others. While there is significant motivation to make the process straightforward for applicants, admissions matters are individually determined by each institution, and some maintain a slightly higher bar of entry. As a result, uniformity continues to be a challenge. There is a clear consensus on the minimum number of subjects. Most institutions require a minimum of two at higher level, but one institution requires three. Other historical commitments and higher education policy also has an influence on matriculation matters. For example, NUI institutions have traditionally demonstrated their commitment to languages (and to Irish in particular) by requiring not only English for entry but also Irish and a third language. Others require English and Irish while a few only require English. The benefit of uniformity is insufficient incentive for removing the Irish language requirement from NUI's perspective; the cultural value and significance of the Irish language and NUI's role in protecting and championing the language remains central to the identity of the National University.

Conclusion

A common set of entry requirements for all IUA institutions seems unfeasible at this point. However, the objective of making matriculation and matriculation exemptions more straightforward for prospective students continues to motivate NUI (and other institutions in the IUA). Focusing on the latter provides some opportunities for improvement. Some improvements to the matriculation regulations can be made through clearer terminology and moving the exemptions process online can provide more structured guidance and reduce the impact of common human error in the process. NUI has been focusing on these opportunities more recently, and significantly advanced a project to move exemption applications online during the reporting period.