

[Maynooth University]

2023

Annual Quality Report (Maynooth University)
Reporting Period 2021-2022

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PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM
Reporting Period 2021-2022

PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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Guidelines on Completing the Report

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

Submission Process and Timeline

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

Completing the AQR

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

Report Structure

Part A: Internal QA System

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

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

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

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

Case Studies

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

Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template¹

Legislation

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

QQI Documents

Statutory QA Guidelines (QAG)

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

Other QQI Policy Documents

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

Other National/International References

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

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

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Table 1

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

Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for Maynooth University for the reporting period **1 September 2021 - 31 August 2022**.

It is to be submitted by **Friday, 24 February 2023**.

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

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

The University is a modern institution - dynamic, research-led, engaged, and grounded in the traditions of liberal education. In 2021/2022, approximately 15,200 students from over 95 countries are enrolled in a range of programmes at undergraduate, masters and PhD level. Maynooth is Ireland's fastest-growing university, yet it retains a collegial campus culture that is central to its ability to bring significant interdisciplinary expertise to bear in tackling some of the most fundamental challenges facing society today. MU has a distinctive disciplinary profile with research and teaching strengths in humanities and social sciences, science, electronic engineering, business, law and education. The University has major research institutes and centres in the areas of humanities; social sciences; mathematics, computation and communication; human health; business and service innovation; climate change; and Geocomputation.

The [University Strategic Plan 2018-22](#) builds on the institution's strengths and accomplishments, concentrating energy and resources on further development in research and postgraduate education. The strategy focuses on:

- targeted investment in research capacity in a number of priority areas;
- extending the postgraduate portfolio and growing the postgraduate community;
- realising the full benefits of our innovative undergraduate curriculum;
- enhancing the student experience;
- comprehensive and ethical internationalisation;
- equality diversity inclusion and interculturalism as enablers of academic excellence.

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

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

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

DECISION MAKING FORA

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

The decision-making body in the University is Governing Authority. It has responsibility for the appointment of the President, the strategic direction of the University, the management and administration of its revenue and property and the general conduct of University affairs. Members of the Governing Authority are drawn from the staff, students, graduates and external organisations. The Governing Authority is chaired by an external chairperson or in his/her absence, the deputy chairperson. It receives reports from a range of Standing Committees as follows:

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

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

- Quality Committee;
- Equality , Diversity, Inclusion and Interculturalism Committee; and
- Coiste Gaeilge na hOllscoile.

Governing Authority adheres to the Code of Governance for Irish Universities 2019 as its primary code of practice. A Code of Conduct for members of Governing Authority applies to all members and to members of the Committees and sub- Committees established by the Governing Authority.

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

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

- Academic Discipline Board;
- Academic Programmes Committee;

Campus Life Committee;
Examination Appeals Board;
Graduate Education Committee;
Honorary Degrees Committee;
International Education Committee;
Research Committee;
Teaching & Learning Committee.

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

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

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

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

The various fora involved in providing for the Governance and oversight, strategic planning and development, ongoing management, and the quality assurance and enhancement of the University's activities are outlined below in figure 1.

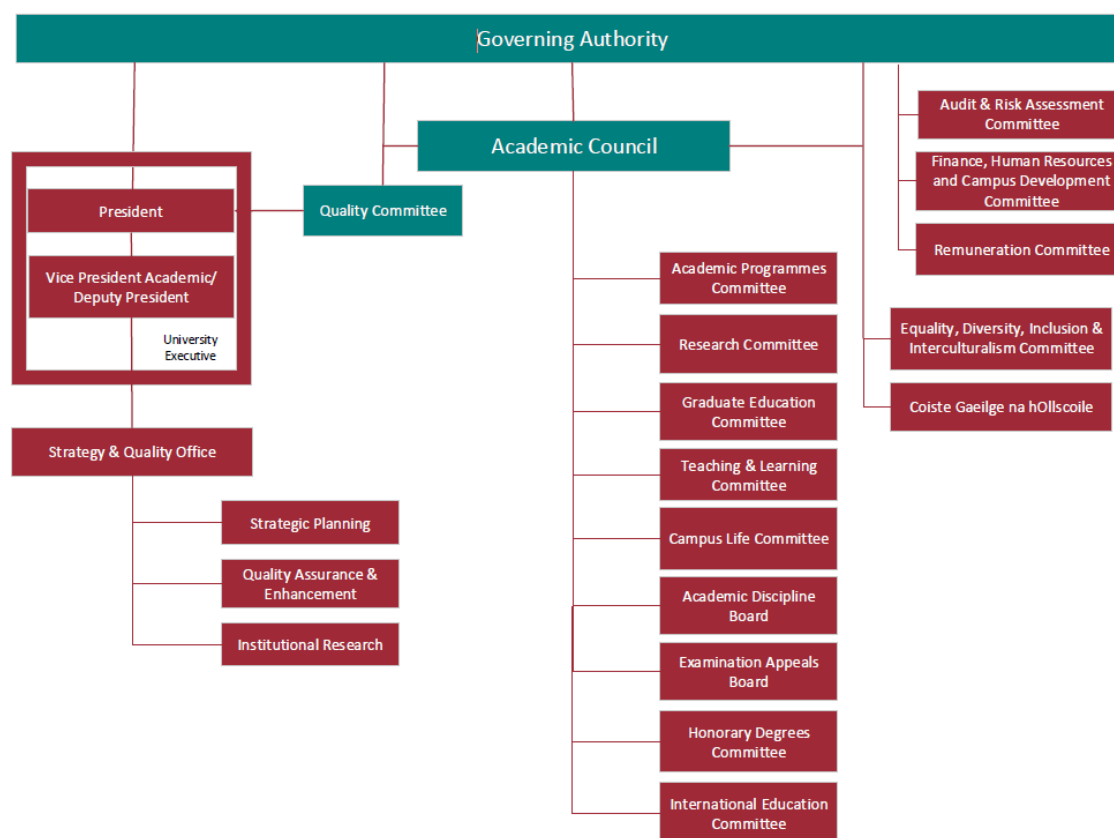


Figure 1: MU's Governance structure and Committees. The Strategy & Quality Office's reporting relationship to the Vice President Academic is also depicted.

GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT.

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

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

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

The functions of the Quality Committee are, using best governance practice, to:

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

MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY FRAMEWORK FOR QUALITY

The Maynooth University Framework for Quality Assurance and Enhancement, adopted in 2016, updated in 2018 and 2022, reflects the reporting and governance arrangements for quality. Consultation on Maynooth University's QA procedures, as set out in the Framework, took place with QQI through the 2016 Annual Dialogue Meeting. In accordance with Section 29 of the QQI Act 2012, following the establishment of our QA procedures, the University published the Framework.

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

Introduction

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

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

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

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

the mission and strategic objectives of the University and which also enable the university to demonstrate compliance with both statutory based national objectives and European standards. Building on experience to date the emphasis in the next phase will be increasingly on quality enhancement.

Assurance mechanisms in relation to quality are required at two levels: for the community within the university and separately for external interest groups. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 states that *“it is essential (for Ireland’s higher education) that its quality assurance structures and processes are trusted both nationally and internationally, and that confidence of students and prospective employers in the higher education system is maintained”* (p.93). The internal university community needs evidence to assure itself that quality procedures are applied systematically by all academic departments and other units and that the procedures are effective in enabling the university to achieve its objectives. Likewise, the university also needs to be able to engender and sustain public confidence in its quality procedures, and in its capacity to provide programmes that achieve national and international standards appropriate to the relevant level in the National Framework of Qualifications.

Maynooth University is a research-intensive university with scholarly strengths in humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, information and communications technology, teacher education, business and law. The University has approximately 15,200 (2021/2022) students enrolled in programmes in the arts, humanities, social sciences including business and law and in science and engineering.

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

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

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

Purpose

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

Principles

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

OVER-ARCHING PRINCIPLES

Purpose: the primary purpose of quality assurance and enhancement is to support the achievement of the strategic objectives of the University and to ensure the highest standards and continuous improvement in all of the activities of the University;

Culture: a quality culture is achieved through the commitment of staff, students, the university leadership and management, and the governance bodies to continuous improvement;

Design and implementation: the University quality assurance framework is designed and implemented having regard to international norms and standards and national statutory requirements and guidelines;

Scope: the scope of the quality framework includes both periodic reviews of units and programmes, and also monitoring and review of policies and procedures that sustain and enhance quality on an on-going basis;

Inclusive and transparent: quality evaluation procedures are inclusive of all stakeholders (students, staff, representatives of external interest groups), are transparent and consistent in application, support in-depth assessment, reflection and change and are performance-focused in relation to the mission and objectives of the University;

External Validation: all quality reviews involve peer review groups that include peers from outside the university to provide objectivity and opportunities for assessing performance against international standards;

Students and stakeholders: all quality reviews involve engagement with students and other stakeholders;

Public confidence: public confidence in the effectiveness of the University quality procedures is achieved by the publication of quality review reports and the related quality implementation plan.

OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES

- The effectiveness of quality procedures applied across the university is evaluated on a periodic basis through the cyclical independent external review of our own internal quality assurance procedures conducted by QQI;
- The effectiveness of quality assurance procedures and the extent of quality enhancement initiatives in different units of the university are evaluated through reviews conducted by the University Quality Office on a cyclical basis;
- The unit under review can be an academic department/school, research institute, administrative unit, support unit or an amalgamation of units such as a Faculty. It may also be a programme (e.g., an omnibus degree programmes), a set of programmes (e.g., taught postgraduate programmes in a Faculty), a specific initiative (e.g., reform of the first year curriculum) or a theme (e.g., quality and impact of Maynooth University research). The University quality framework is not intended as a procedure for reviewing the performance of individuals;
- The scope of reviews of academic departments / schools is holistic in that they comprehend research and scholarship, education, public engagement, and interactions with internal support units. Particular emphasis is placed on the quality of the entire student educational experience with due regard to the diversity of the student population; the quality and impact of research and scholarship; and the work environment and developmental opportunities for staff;
- The focus of quality reviews of administrative and support services is on the quality and effectiveness of the services provided, the processes and systems that support those services, the overall contribution to the strategic development and effective operation of the University, and the work environment and developmental opportunities for staff;
- All quality reviews are supported by key metrics aligned with the University Performance Framework and are appropriately benchmarked against comparable units in other universities;
- The main findings and recommendations from reviews are reviewed by the President, the University Executive, and any other relevant management and governance structures within the University;
- The university officer responsible for quality prepares an annual report for the Quality Committee that includes a report on the Quality Committee activities, and following this, the report is presented to the Governing Authority and the Academic Council as the Annual Quality Report of the Quality Committee.

Objectives

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

- To demonstrate to the University staff, students and governance bodies and external stakeholders that quality procedures are in place for the purpose of establishing, ascertaining, maintaining and improving the quality of education, training and research and related services

that it provides, and which have been established following consultation with Quality and Qualifications Ireland²;

- To maintain public confidence, especially that of external stakeholders, in the quality and standards achieved by the staff and students of the University;
- To confirm that the quality procedures are effective in enabling units of the University to achieve the level of quality and the objectives which the University aspires to under its vision and strategic plan;
- To foster and sustain a quality culture supported by on-going learning and innovation in all units of the University, and by providing feedback to all staff and students on ways and opportunities for continuous improvement;
- To facilitate quality enhancement based on recommendations arising from reviews and other initiatives, and by highlighting effective practices to be shared among internal audiences;
- To demonstrate alignment with the legislative provisions and compliance with relevant European Standards and Guidelines, and other applicable national and international guidelines;
- To publish reports on quality reviews in order to provide to external stakeholders and interests (including the QQI and the HEA, and to the wider public on the quality of the education, training, research and related services that it provides;
- To be prepared for periodic external institutional review of the University quality assurance procedures.

Implementation

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

Quality Reviews of Departments / other Units

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

1. **Self-Assessment:** The department / unit under review prepares a Self-Assessment Report (SAR). Guidelines approved by the Quality Committee guide the process and assistance is provided by the Strategy & Quality Office-
2. **Peer Review Report:** A peer review group (PRG) is established which normally comprises two external members and two members from within the university – the size of the group may vary according to the scale and scope of the unit under review. The SAR is sent to the PRG. The group visits the university, typically for two days, to meet with staff and students of the unit under review, staff from other relevant units of the university, relevant members of the University leadership and management, and external stakeholders. Following the visit, the group submits a PRG report to the Strategy & Quality Office. The Head of Unit is provided with the opportunity to

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

propose corrections to any factual inaccuracies in the report and the report is then finalised and signed off by all members of the PRG.

3. **Quality Improvement Plan:** The unit considers the recommendations contained in the PRG report and prepares a draft Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for discussion with the President (or nominee), Vice-President Academic, the Dean of Faculty or the Head of Administrative Area, other University Executive member(s) as required, and the Director of Quality, from which an agreed set of actions ensues. The University Executive is notified of receipt of the final Peer Review Group report, and of the final Quality Improvement Plan.
4. **Publication of outcomes:** The review process is completed by publication on the Quality Office website of the Peer Review Group Report and the agreed Quality Improvement Plan. The Quality Committee, the Academic Council and Governing Authority are also informed of the outcomes from the review.
5. **Follow-up and On-Going Monitoring:** Following a set of reviews in a Faculty, the Director of Quality will prepare a synthesis report for the Dean to enable the identification of common themes, emerging issues and good practices. Twelve months following completion of a unit's Quality Improvement Plan, the Unit submits a follow-up report to the Director of Quality outlining progress made against the Plan. The Quality Committee, the Academic Council, and the Governing Authority are notified. The annual progress against unit-level Quality Improvement Plans is included in the annual report of the Director of Quality.

LINKED PROVIDERS

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

PROFESSIONAL, REGULATORY AND STATUTORY BODIES (PRSB) ACCREDITATION

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

REPRESENTATION OF LEARNERS AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Maynooth University's strategic goal is to strengthen its engagement with all stakeholders through sustained partnerships with enterprises, communities, civil society and public bodies, to build

support for the mission of the university, to serve the needs of society, and to open new opportunities for research and learning.

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

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

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

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

External stakeholder input into University matters takes place in many guises outside of such structures as Governing Authority or Academic Council and their sub-committees. The University engages with an extensive range of stakeholders and interest groups through formal structures which meet regularly, for example, the Regional Skills Forum, the North Kildare Chamber of Commerce. A number of other external bodies are engaged with regularly also such as the HEA, QQI and Kildare and Meath County Councils. A number of university offices lead systematic engagement with specific groups of external stakeholders: these include the Access Office, the Placement Office, Maynooth Works and the Office of External Relations, which includes the Development and Alumni Relations Office and the Communications and Marketing Office. The University consults widely with external stakeholders on the envisioning and implementation of major strategic projects; examples include the Maynooth Curriculum when the new curriculum was being developed and input is sought into and for activities related to the Campus Master Plan.

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

Note that the composition of the Governing Authority is under review and will be modified by October 2023, in line with the provisions of the Higher Education Authority Act 2022.

Committee	Subcommittee title	Learner Representation	External stakeholder representation
Governing Authority (GA)		4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 elected officers of Maynooth SU. 1 Postgraduate student. 	17 (Including Chair).
GA subcommittee	Audit & Risk Assessment Committee	Not applicable.	3 minimum. (Number of externals should form majority of committee).
GA subcommittee	Finance, Human Resources and Campus Development Committee	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> President Maynooth SU. 	2 upwards. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum 2 (of 6 members drawn from GA). Plus, up to 3 external persons can be co-opted as members.
GA subcommittee	Remuneration Committee	Not applicable.	Not applicable.
Joint sub-committee of GA and AC	Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Interculturalism Committee	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representatives of Maynooth SU. 	1 upwards. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum 1 (of 4 members drawn from GA). Plus, up to 3 external persons can be co-opted as members.

Joint sub-committee of GA and AC	Coiste Gaeilge na hOllscoile	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President Maynooth SU (or their nominee). • Student nominated by President Maynooth SU. • Student nominated by President Maynooth University. 	<p>No minimum number specified. Maximum possible is 4.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 of GA nominees can be external. • Plus, up to 3 external persons could be co-opted as members.
Joint sub-committee of GA and AC	Quality Committee	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President Maynooth SU (or their nominee). • Postgraduate Student representative of GA. 	<p>2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External members of GA.
Academic Council (AC)		4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Undergraduate students (MSU Officers). • 1 postgraduate (taught) student. • 1 doctoral student. 	Not applicable.
AC Standing Committee	Academic Discipline Board	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President Maynooth SU. 	<p>1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lay member.
AC Standing Committee	Academic Programmes Committee	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice President Education Maynooth SU. 	Not applicable.
AC Standing Committee	Campus Life Committee	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representatives of Maynooth SU. 	Not applicable.

AC Standing Committee	Examination Appeals Board	Not applicable	1 • External member
AC Standing Committee	Graduate Education Committee	1 • Representative of Maynooth SU.	1 • Member from the Postgraduate Employer Advisory Network.
AC Standing Committee	Honorary Degrees Committee	Not applicable.	1 • Chair of GA – that is external to MU.
AC Standing Committee	International Education Committee	1 • Representative of Maynooth SU.	Not applicable.
AC Standing Committee	Research Committee	Not applicable.	Not applicable.
AC Standing Committee	Teaching & Learning Committee	2 • Representatives of Maynooth SU.	Not applicable.

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

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

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

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

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

2.1 Programme Development and Approval

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

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

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

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

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

Programme design and approval and modifications to existing programmes.

Maynooth University has a clearly defined process for approving new programmes, making modifications to existing programmes, the approval of microcredential programmes, and of new elective streams. All proposals are submitted in accordance with standard templates to the Academic Council Office for consideration by the Academic Programmes Committee, and where applicable by the Graduate Education Committee. A guide for the development of programmes and

modules ensures programmes are designed in line with University standards in relation to such matters as ECTS credits; qualifications and programmes, and the alignment of awards to the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

Programme design and approval.

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

- a) A review of the initial proposal (if available, including module descriptors with details of assessment and learning outcomes) by the Faculty Dean, Faculty Executive, Faculty Teaching & Learning Committee, Finance Office, Registry, Curriculum Office, (if applicable, Graduate Studies Office) and the Academic Programmes Committee; and
- b) A review of the full proposal (including full module descriptors with details of assessment and learning outcomes), by external reviewers and Faculty.

Stage I of the process involves:

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

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

c) ***Academic Programmes Committee.*** The Committee considers comments received from the Dean of Faculty, the Faculty Executive, the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee, the Head of Financial Planning; Assistant Registrar-Academic Administration; Curriculum Officer; and where applicable, the Dean of Graduate Studies

The Committee discusses the proposal in light of responses received. It may (i) decline the proposed course, (ii) refer it for revision or clarification, or (iii) recommend that it proceed to the next stage. If recommended to the next stage, the Committee selects external reviewers considering gender balance and international/national expertise. If applicable, the Committee seeks written comments from the Vice-President International, the Placement Officer, the Director of Quality and other applicable disciplines/units.

Stage II of the process involves:

a) ***Full proposal prepared and submitted to the Academic Programmes Committee.*** The full proposal is the proposal form used in step 1 (modified if requested), plus the full module

descriptions with details of assessment and learning outcomes. It is submitted to the Academic Programmes Committee.

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

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

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

Modifications to existing programmes

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

Microcredentials and elective streams

The [Maynooth University Framework for Micro-credentials](#) outlines the academic structures and qualifications underpinning the development of micro-credential courses at Maynooth. This framework is in line with the characteristics of micro-credentials as agreed by the seven (as was at the time) Irish IUA Universities. Proposals for micro-credential courses use a standard template for submission to the Academic Programmes Committee. The Committee has the authority to approve micro-credentials that are module sized, credit bearing and assessed and also has the authority to approve elective streams.

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

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

External Examiners

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

Unit level Quality Reviews

The MU Framework for Quality Assurance and Enhancement (2022) sets out the University's overall policy on internal quality assurance and enhancement. Within its scope is provision for the periodic reviews of units--in the case of academic units this includes a focus on research and scholarship, education, public engagement, and interactions with internal support units. In this context, an evaluation of programme offerings within an academic unit are considered as part of the broader activities of the unit. Specific consideration is given to the quality assurance and enhancement processes, procedures and policies that underpin all activities.

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

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

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

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

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

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

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

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

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

[Leaving Certificate Student Applicants](#)

[Mature student applicants](#)

[DARE \(Disability Access Route to Education\) Applicants](#)

[Deferral Applicants](#)

[EU, EFTA & UK Applicants](#)

[QQI Applicants](#)

[BTEC Applicants](#)

[HEAR \(Higher Education Access Route\) Applicants](#)

[International Applicants](#)

[EU Occasional Student Applicants](#)

[Transfer Applicants](#)

[Restricted Courses](#)

There are documented procedures for deciding on applications from students who may have commenced in another university and later wish to [transfer to Maynooth](#). There are also

documented procedures for deciding on exemptions that may be applicable to undergraduate or postgraduate students with relevant [prior learning](#). The university welcomes recognition of prior learning applications from individuals who have sufficient and relevant prior learning to allow them either a) enter a programme of study for which they would ordinarily not meet the entry criteria and/or b) gain exemptions from certain modules. Such prior learning can be evidence through past certified learning and/or experiential learning. Whilst admission by RPL is mostly utilised at a postgraduate level, it is welcomed at undergraduate level for applicants who do not meet the normal mature entry criteria. Students, already registered in the University and depending on their initial programme of study, are provided a [range of options](#) to transfer internally from their first year programme. This provides students with greater choice in determining the final pathway of their studies. The University continuously adapts its admissions procedures to cater for the expanding range of programmes on offer, as well as ensuring that there is a breadth of opportunities for diverse learners to access those programmes e.g., QQI and mature entry pathways.

The [Maynooth University Access Programme \(MAP\)](#) encourages under-represented groups to enter third level and provides these groups with support through their time at Maynooth. These groups include [under-represented school leavers](#), [mature students](#), [students with disabilities](#) and members of the Travelling community. The University is a national leader in attracting and retaining school leavers with diverse backgrounds and profiles. From an institutional perspective, MAP has developed a number of models of academic support that support transition to higher education of underrepresented groups and are acknowledged as innovative models of outstanding good practice. From a national perspective, MAP has taken a leadership role in developing national policy in the area of widening participation. The National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2022-2028 was launched in August 2022. This National Access Plan contains a number of recommendations and practices derived from MAP's work and from direct input to the plan. The plan names 3 priority groups: students who are socio-economically disadvantaged, students who are members of Irish Traveller and Roma communities and students with disabilities including intellectual disabilities. Within students who are socio-economically disadvantaged, an additional focus will be on those who have experienced homelessness, are survivors of domestic violence, have experience of the care system, are carers or who have experience of the criminal justice system. This new plan will inform MAP's new and changing policies, procedures and practices for the next 5 years and beyond.

Specific assistance is provided by MAP to assess and support students entering via the [Higher Education Access Route \(HEAR\)](#) and [Disability Access to Education Route \(DARE\)](#). In addition, all new entrants are provided with an extended induction programme- [Launchpad](#). All new entrants who wish to apply for MAP supports complete a survey which provides information on students' levels of preparedness for various aspects of third level education.

MU is actively engaged and is a national leader in addressing the higher education needs of the most marginalised communities. The Review Team in the University's 2018/2019 CINNTE Institutional Review highlighted MU's work in this area with one of five of the key commendations made by the Team referring specifically to MU's approach commending the University on '*its national leadership*

and strategic approach to Access, Transfer and Progression at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, with recruitment, transition and post-entry strategies established to ensure the success of its diverse student cohort’ (key commendation 5 and commendation 22).

Some examples of MAP projects that have been delivered during this reporting period include:

- Maynooth University’s PATH 1 funded Turn to Teaching programme aims to diversify the teaching profession in Ireland. The project has been collaboratively developed by MAP, the Department of Adult and Community Education, the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, Department of Education, Lárionad na Gaeilge, Department of Applied Social Studies, and the Admissions Office. Turn to Teaching adopts a lifelong, continuum approach, supporting students from diverse and under-represented groups into, through, and beyond initial teacher education (ITE) in a range of educational sectors (Early Childhood, Primary, Post-Primary and Further Education).
- The objective of the PATH 2 funded 1916 Bursary Fund is to encourage participation and success in higher education by students who are the most socio-economically disadvantaged and who are from communities significantly under-represented in the student body. The 1916 Bursaries are managed by the HEA on behalf of DFHERIS via regional clusters. Maynooth University is part of the MEND (Midlands East North Dublin) cluster, with DCU as the lead institution. With effect from 2021/22, a three-tiered system of bursary provision was introduced. Tier 1 worth €5,000 per annum, Tier 2 worth €2,000 per annum and Tier 3 once-off bursaries worth €1,500. At Maynooth University in 2021-22, following the assessment process, 10 entrants were awarded a Tier 1 bursary, 5 entrants were awarded a Tier 2 bursary and 74 entrants were awarded a Tier 3 bursary.
- MU holds the lead partner role in the HEA PATH 3 funded *College Connect* programme across four HEI’s in the MEND cluster region. College Connect analyses the community needs and designs creative interventions with target groups and stakeholders including community organisations, local authorities and industry to increase participation in HE from people experiencing multiple marginalisation. In November 2021, Maynooth University launched the second Community Needs Analysis completed by College Connect. The Community Needs Analysis with Refugees & People in the Asylum Process – Exploring Access & Barriers to Higher Education in Ireland explored the educational barriers to higher education in Ireland experienced by refugees and people seeking asylum in Ireland. The research was conducted with 104 refugees and was completed in collaboration with multiple community organisations including the Irish Refugee Council, Spirasi, MASI, Dún Laoghaire Refugee Project, University of Sanctuary, and the Crosscare Migrant Project. The research findings led to the development of the We are Here, HEAR project, a highly visible series of outdoor installations, as well as a virtual exhibition and website, to provoke public attention and challenge stigma and stereotyping of refugees and people seeking asylum. The touring nature of the We are here HEAR exhibition, enabled the project to tour in all four MEND HEIs as well as Dublin Castle, enabling the MEND HEIs to communicate the experiences of a ‘hidden’ community to a wide audience.

- In 2021-2022, MAP delivered the Inclusive Learning Project (ILP), a strategic initiative announced by DFHERIS relating to disability support services in HEIs. Strand 1 introduced a new Continuum of Support framework to respond to students' learning support needs, with a tiered model of supports that enhance how MAP staff identify and respond to student needs. The key development was the self-directed Maynooth Inclusive Learning Online (MILO) platform that supports the development of student skills and wellbeing. Strand 2 enhanced the accessibility of the online learning environment including the virtual learning environment and library online search interface via a Moodle accessibility audit and embedded toolkit, a LibrarySearch audit and the rollout of training and resources.
- MAP and the MU Centre for Teaching and Learning will submit a proposal to the call for PATH 4 funding in October 2022. This funding is intended to embed Universal Design in Education approaches across the HEI's.

A number of MAP case studies on some additional key projects have also been included with this report to demonstrate quality in action and to highlight areas of practice for dissemination.

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

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

The initial Orientation programme focuses on a number of areas:

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

- Preparing Students in advance of arriving to college, e.g. Registration, Accommodation, Commuting and Finances as well as locating to the town of Maynooth.
- Subject Choices – many of our students are required to make subject choices as part of their degree programme. In order to aid the decision-making process, a schedule of subject talks is organised in advance of the registration process.

- **Parents, Guardians & Family Information Sessions:** These sessions were established in order to give family members an insight into the challenges facing students as well highlighting the various supports available to students.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

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

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

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

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

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

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

- Innovative teaching and assessment that challenges students to analyse, reflect, think critically, communicate clearly and work in teams
- A unique first year subject, Critical Skills, that combines lectures with small group learning to support students' transition to university
- Fewer and simpler entry CAO entry routes, making choices easier and allowing students to specialise either immediately or over time
- Greater flexibility and choice, with the ability to take major and minor options within most degrees
- New and interesting subject combinations, including more opportunities to combine subjects across the arts and sciences
- Ability to pursue a modern language alongside any degree
- Elective options outside a student's core discipline
- Extensive opportunities to learn outside the classroom through accredited co-curricular activities such as work placement, volunteering, or study abroad.

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

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

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

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

[Marks and Standards](#)

[University Assessment: An Introduction to Marks and Standards, a guide for students](#)

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

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

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

[Examination Regulations and Procedures and Breaches](#)

[Plagiarism and Academic Integrity](#)

[Procedures for Discussion Checking and Appeal of Exam Results](#)

[Reasonable Accommodations](#)

[Procedure on examination arrangements for visiting international students](#)

[Policy on use of dictionary in examination hall](#)

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

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

Feedback from students is collated at the academic unit level by a variety of means such as surveys at module and programme level or staff:student committees. StudentSurvey.ie provides useful information on the overall student experience across a range of indicator areas.

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

3.0 Learner Resources and Support

Teaching and Learning

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

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

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

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

The [Dean of Teaching and Learning](#) provides leadership for the University in the key areas of the development of teaching and learning, student success including the supports for all students in learning. This involves overseeing the development of a coordinated suite of critical skills subjects for first year students, a range of elective courses for undergraduate students and the formation of a new Student Success and Skills unit which coordinates orientation, advisory and guidance supports for students, and experiential learning and employability activities including careers advisory services, work related and community engaged learning experiences in addition to work placements.

Supports and services are available to all students, including international students. The Office of the Dean of Teaching and Learning (ODTL) supports teaching and learning across the university, assuming direct responsibility for certain interdisciplinary courses and coordinating the work of the new Student Skills and Success unit established in June 2022. Links providing details of these functions and additional detail are provided below:

[Centre for Teaching and Learning](#)

[Careers Service](#)

[Work Placement](#)

[Experiential Learning](#)

[Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies \(see section 2.4\)](#)

[Academic Advisory Office](#)

[Programme Advisory Office](#)

[Student Engagement Office](#)

Student Skills and Success has a central role to play in enabling MU students to fulfil their potential as we partner with students to understand their experiences and opinions and enable them to discover how to navigate the complexities of university life, develop their sense of belonging as they embrace all the opportunities MU has to offer and thrive as they make the most of their time here and imagine and create a better future. This unit comprises personal (student engagement, orientation and volunteering), academic (academic and programme advisory) and professional (careers and employability, experiential learning including placement) student supports.

The ***Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)*** aims to enhance teaching and learning in the University through the support and development of good practice and innovation in this regard, through a range of services and initiatives for staff and students. Amongst its activities, it provides accredited programmes in teaching and learning to staff (outlined in more detail in section 5.0). These were comprehensively reviewed and redesigned to fully align them with the [National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education's Professional Development Framework](#) for all Staff who Teach in Higher Education (PD Framework); and to incorporate stakeholder feedback. The CTL also offers Evaluation of Teaching processes, through peer review or student group evaluations, supports scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) opportunities through teaching fellowships and Spark awards.

The CTL manages the virtual learning environment, Moodle, and the associated Moodle Support Service for staff and students. It provides a range of supports to teaching and support staff for the design and development of blended learning and online modules and programmes and in the use and integration of learning technologies in teaching, learning and assessment. Technology enhanced learning (TEL) is a critical component of teaching and learning in the University and a range of continuous professional development (CPD) workshops and online supports are available to support staff in integrating use of technological tools. Educational technologies in use include: Turnitin, a tool integrated with Moodle, that helps with managing online submission of assignments and coursework, and provides similarity checking reports to promote academic integrity and deter

plagiarism; Panopto, also Moodle integrated, that facilitates the capturing and recording of lectures electronically for sharing with students; Screencast-O-Matic, that enables users to capture screen activity to aid in online provision of lectures; and online engagement and feedback tools such as Vevox that enables live polling of students whether in a face-to-face or in a blended learning situation; and Padlet, which supports collaborative learning and student feedback approaches.

Student Services

Student services in Maynooth University articulates its provision of services in its mission statement which outlines that “Student Services is an integral part of the University community enabling the promotion and development of its educational mission. Using a holistic approach, we offer a range of clearly defined services to support and empower students to achieve their personal and academic potential and so enhance their life’s journey. We strive to create a community which is open and caring and where diversity is expected and respected”. The range of services available to students through Student Services includes

[Counselling](#)

[Health Centre](#)

[Chaplaincy](#)

[Student Support Officer](#)

[Student Support Hub](#) including details of the [Homefinder](#) service in place.

[Budgeting](#)

[Creche](#)

[Student Helpdesk](#)

Counselling: The Counselling Service is a confidential and professional service offering support to students on a wide range of psychological, academic, family, social and mental health issues. The service offers support on a one-to-one basis, along with a comprehensive range of targeted [workshops](#) to support students during their studies. Counselling also provides an excellent range of [self-help resources](#), including a recently launched iCBT resource called [Silvercloud](#) and an anonymous reporting tool called [Speak Out](#). Our Counselling Service increased their resources in January 2021, to include an additional 1.2FTE staff providing student with 1:1 counselling services and targeted workshops. In January 2022 the Counselling service further increased it’ resources with an additional 1 FTE Counsellor, currently in place until July 2023.

Health Centre: The Student Health Centre offers confidential, and approachable GP and nursing consultations to all registered students. This service is offered in conjunction with a student’s own GP and will support students on matters such as sexual health, mental health, physical and emotional well-being, alcohol awareness and management of day-to-day illnesses. The team work closely with Departments and central units to support students achieve their potential during their time at university. A Mental Health Nurse post was introduced in February 2021, offering clinical support to students experiencing mental ill-health. In January 2022 a Clinical Director/ GP role was introduced to lead the Student Health team.

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

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

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

Budgeting: The Student Budgeting Advice Service offers support and advice to students on managing their money for university. There are FAQ's available for students who have routine queries and the service can refer students experiencing financial difficulties for targeted funding supports.

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

Student Helpdesk: The Student Helpdesk was established as a virtual operation in 2020 in response to the Covid 19 pandemic. With a goal to provide an end-to-end resolution to student queries the team collaborated with services and departments to ensure student queries were resolved while they were learning remotely. This service has now been introduced on a permanent basis, with the addition of an in-person desk. offering support with general queries, as well as targeted supports such as a Laptop Loans Scheme. We introduced a long-term Laptop Loan scheme for students in Semester 1, 2020/2021. With the support of HEA funding this initiative has supported students who were without an ICT device, from Access target groups, to stay engaged in their studies.

International Office

The Maynooth University International Office (IO) supports incoming and outgoing international students throughout the international-student lifecycle. Specifically, the IO is responsible for international marketing and promotion, full-degree international student recruitment, the incoming and outgoing Erasmus and non-EU exchange programmes, the incoming Study Abroad programme, and a suite of Summer & Short-Term programmes. The IO has a commitment to high-quality service to applicants and students on campus, and provides information, guidance and support pre- and

post-entry to the University. It collaborates with a range of external stakeholders across the globe, including partner universities, research institutes and industrial partners, as part of its work supporting the internationalisation of teaching, research and the student experience.

The 'flipped year' arrangement, which was facilitated by the IO and Registry, was successfully completed during the reporting period. As it was a pandemic-related measure, it is not being offered as an option to future outgoing students. To further enhance some of the supports for outgoing students which were initiated at the height of the pandemic, the IO increased the number of virtual information and Q&A sessions to facilitate preparation for outbound mobility. The sessions continued to be very well attended and resulted in a further decrease in errors/delays for students' mobility paperwork and related administrative follow-up.

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

Maynooth University Library

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

With an extension of 6,200 sqm completed in 2013, the Library saw an increase in its space to 10,000 sqm with an increase of over 200% in its seating capacity, a 130% increase in its book capacity and more than 280% increase in computer availability. The development saw the inclusion of a range of study spaces, a special collections facility and a dedicated postgraduate and researcher's room together with a purpose-built exhibitions area. The Library provides students and staff access to over 1,000,000 books/ebooks and more than 42,000 electronic journals. Some of the library's special collections include the papers of significant authors (e.g. Deevy, Hutchinson etc) and historic items e.g. an original 1916 proclamation. It also provides a range of information and training courses to enable users to access information quickly and efficiently. The Library hosts the Maths Support Centre which provides essential support to students studying maths or related disciplines and is regularly the venue for a raft of campus engagement activity ranging from Africa Day to Green Week. Finally, the Library has a range of innovative spaces, services and supports including a makerspace (3D printing, laser cutting, virtual reality and more) and energy (sleep) pods to help students to realise their potential.

Other resources

The University's facilities and buildings for teaching and learning has seen significant investments; including the major extension to the University library referenced above, with the addition of 21,700 m² to the building stock of the University at a cost of €62.4m, this including the EOLAS building and the School of Education. Construction of the new 10,500m² TSI academic building was completed in the Summer of 2022. A campus master plan guides the capital development of the University over the coming decade.

Moodle is the VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) in use at the University providing an online environment where students and staff interact and in which learning resources for programmes and modules are delivered. Students and staff are all provided access to Office 365, including email, calendar and OneDrive for personal storage. Microsoft Teams is available to both students and staff for group work and collaboration exercises. A Microsoft Teams class site is available for each course/module in Moodle which facilitates the seamless integration of the two resources and enables the use of Teams as a teaching and learning tool for classes.

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

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

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

The quality of research outputs at the level of the University is monitored via citation analyses, especially the field weighted citation indices. The University performance framework includes a time series of such metrics, which are benchmarked on an annual basis against other universities in Ireland. Additional proxy measures of the quality of Maynooth research are successes in competitive bidding for national and international research funds, and especially successes for highly prestigious international awards such as European Research Council grants.

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

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

The Research Development Office has implemented a Research Information System (RIS) which hosts academic profile, proposal tracking, ethics and reporting modules. The system has been further updated to add postgraduate students, currently via a bi-annual input. With this update supervisors may ensure their postgraduates are linked to their RIS profiles. The update also enables postgraduate students to submit their protocols directly for ethical approval. A further upgrade of the RIS platform to from V3.6 to V4.0 was implemented and the databased was moved to cloud storage for increased security. The new platform is more user friendly with additional functionality for example; ability to add 'Co-Pi's' to awards and report on it and streamlined ORCHID integration. The implementation is due to be completed by end of Feb 2023. The ability to pull postgraduate students from ITS (the student administrative system) into RIS should be finalized before the end of the academic year 2022-23.

The Office underwent a major restructure in 2015-16 to incorporate research finance so that oversight of research grants from preparation through to close out all fall within the one team. A further re-structure in October 2021 saw research funding for postgraduate students transferred to the Research Development Office. This change ensures a single point of entry approach for postgraduate students for all research funding across the full research proposal life-cycle and includes internal and external scholarships.

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

The University's Commercialisation Office and the Business Incubation Center are now closely aligned appearing under the brand of [MaynoothWorks](#). Together, they deliver an integral approach to knowledge transfer, enterprise partnership and entrepreneurship innovation.

Funding is provided by the University to facilitate staff in attending international conferences, and to avail of sabbatical periods of either six months or twelve months to progress their research. The Research Development Office runs a series of internal funding schemes aiming to increase the University's research profile and assist staff in securing European funding. The Research Development Office revised their internal funding schemes in 2021 to further enhance their effectiveness in the development of networking and dissemination activities for research. Original schemes included a publication fund, conference and travel fund and H2020 support fund. Following consultation two of the schemes were replaced by a network and collaboration support fund and an

impact through dissemination support fund. These new schemes specifically aim to address activities related to the outward profile of research at Maynooth.

In order to increase the external profile of research at MU, the RDO now publishes annually a University research and innovation report which highlights significant research outputs across the institution. This is in addition to the annual Research Week event which, over a period of 5 days each year, runs over 40 events from undergraduate, postgraduate and research and academic staff.

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

[Roles and Responsibilities of Students and Supervisors](#);

[Route of Progression](#) for research masters students;

Code of practice for the [Viva Voce](#).

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

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

[Research Integrity Policy](#)

[Research Ethics Policy](#)

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

[Policy on Open Access to Research](#)

Researcher Career Framework

[Conflict of Interest Policy](#)

[Intellectual Property Management & Exploitation Policy](#)

[Research Incentivisation Policy](#)

[External Activities Policy](#)

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

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

[Child Protection Policy](#)

[Child Safeguarding statement](#)

[Child Protection Procedures](#)

The [Research Skills Development Programme](#) was launched in 2017 and offers an extensive range of training and development programmes to researchers in the University. The programme is now run by the RDO (since a re-structure of postgraduate funding to the RDO) with inputs from faculties, departments and professional units within the University. It is offered to all postgraduate, postdoctoral and other early-stage researchers and combines on-line, blending learning and credited modules.

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

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

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

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

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

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

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

This framework consists of a wide range of e-learning and facilitated professional skills courses, workshops and information sessions focusing on the development of key competencies. Mentoring has also been introduced, on a phased basis, for different categories of staff.

A new leadership programme entitled *Leadership for Excellence and Achievement through Development (LEAD)*, designed to support senior leaders in their role, was rolled out for the first cohort of leaders. This programme is to be provided to all Heads and Deputy Heads of academic and administrative departments. The focus is on providing an opportunity to grow and develop personally and professionally while drawing on the knowledge and experience of participating colleagues. LEAD integrates inclusive leadership principles and working effectively with deep-level diversity which includes differences that include psychological characteristics, personality, attitudes, and values (Harrison et al., 2002).

LEAD is a multi-element, multi-layered development programme, focused on individual, group and university wide learning. The programme commences with an induction workshop designed to provide participants with an introduction to the overall programme philosophy, delivery methods and approaches to learning. This is followed by three interlinked two-day modules, designed with a common structure, a clear narrative and learning outcomes, developed in collaboration with the

University. The programme is delivered over a period of 6 months. LEAD workshops are designed to be interactive and dynamic, allowing for individual and collective discussion and engagement with concepts, models and frameworks. The programme includes coaching, psychometric assessment, peer mentoring, and peer to peer collaboration. Before each module there is preparatory work consisting of pre-reading or listening/watching (audio/videocast) with structured guidance and self-assessments. There is also post module activities to consolidate learning, consisting of reflective practice activities, listening/watching (audio/videocast) with structured guidance.

The data from post-module questionnaires completed by participants will be used as part of the ongoing review of the LEAD programme and will also feed into the final programme evaluation.

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

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

Maynooth University's Recruitment & Selection Guidelines, interpreted and applied in conjunction with the [University Statutes](#), are designed to support objective, transparent and merit-based recruitment and selection processes. The emphasis is on implementing good practice to ensure that suitable staff are recruited and selected on the basis of their demonstrable competencies, and, that selection decisions are made following a fair, consistent and equitable process which reflects the University's values and satisfies all applicable legislative requirements. General principles of good practice in recruitment and appointment of staff apply including a commitment to equality diversity and inclusion (EDI) with all job advertisements containing a statement underlining the University's commitment in this area.

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

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

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

Maynooth University Recruitment and Selection Process

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

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

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

MU Teaching Evaluation process, Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

- CTL offers a process for staff to undertake their own peer to peer evaluations of teaching or to have an independent observation from a member of the Centre.
- The independent observation includes a pre consultation and post consultation meeting with the staff member as well as their observation. This consultation offers observation as well as guidance on classroom (face to face or online) teaching and approaches to student engagement.
- The process was reviewed for the online teaching space and was able to continue during the move to online. An additional option is to have a review of recorded online teaching where the staff member can also review and observe their own teaching.
- Staff members have continued to request observations despite the move to online for a variety of reasons including promotion, inclusion in teaching portfolios, to enhance their online teaching, to gain confidence and awareness.
- A staff resource hub on Student Feedback and Teaching Evaluation has been developed to support staff in these processes, including a guide on evaluating student feedback. It was designed as part of the SATLE 2020 funded initiative, Student Feedback and Teaching Evaluation.

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

- This five-credit professional certificate is offered as an elective module as part of the MU structured PhD programme across all departments and faculty.
- During 2021/2022 this module was delivered as a flipped classroom approach and students learned through recorded screencasts and peer activities with a critical friend they paired up with between online classes. Online classes were used to reinforce and apply learning and to make connections with students.
- The certificate is a popular module and always oversubscribed and as such is run in each semester. 38 students successfully completed in 2021/2022.
- Department feedback indicates the programme has an impact on student engagement and tutors and demonstrators indicate through their feedback they are more confident and prepared for teaching and supporting students and particularly in engaging students. They also indicate they found the critical friend interactions helpful for both learning of the module and making cross disciplinary connections with other researchers in the university.

Following widespread consultation, the **Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education Teaching, Learning & Assessment** was redesigned and launched in 2019.

- MU introduced a new, flexible, programme for MU teaching staff in place of a diploma that ran some years previously, with the aim to enhance quality of teaching and learning in the University and create opportunity for staff to obtain a higher education teaching qualification.
- The new design was aligned to the work of the *National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* and in particular, *The National Professional Development Framework for All Staff Who Teach in Higher Education*.
- This flexible programme is offered to MU teaching staff as a blended, programme with a 30 ECTS certificate option. Staff can complete the 60 ECTS across four years.
- A 10 ECTS digital module is also currently offered as a standalone CPD module, and is open to all teaching staff in the University. It was initially designed as part of the *Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning (EDTL)* Irish Universities Association project, funded through the HEA's Innovation and Transformation Programme.

Evidence of Impact

- Seven staff members graduated with the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education In Teaching and Learning in 2021/2022.
- Five staff members were awarded the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Assessment in 2021/2022.
- Impact from the programme is already evident through feedback from participants, participant engagement with National Forum funded PD projects in Teaching and Learning, participants receiving Teaching and Learning Fellowships, Spark Awards, and University Teaching and Learning award nominations. Further evidence of impact of participant

learning on students has emerged through the reflections and assessment submission of the programme.

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

Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Staff CPD Workshops/Webinars are offered to all staff across a range of TEL topics. Staff are further supported by TEL CPD just-in-time help resources available through staff accessible Moodle pages.

The CTL awards University Teaching Fellowships on a competitive basis, and fellowship projects are showcased annually. CTL also awards Spark awards on a competitive basis since 2020. The Spark initiative aims to support individual staff in implementing small-scale teaching and learning projects aligned to a specific theme. The University also recognises excellence in teaching and doctoral supervision via the Maynooth University Teaching and Supervision Awards.

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

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

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

Maynooth University is committed to being a University community that promotes and advances equality, respects and values diversity, and develops a collegiate environment of excellence with equality, in which the human rights, the responsibilities and diversity of all students and staff are recognised and respected. The University values the enrichment that comes from a diverse community of students and staff and seeks to promote equality and prevent discrimination in the access, experience, progression and achievement of all students and staff through developing and implementing clear policies, processes, practices providing effective support to help realise equality in student experience and in employment.

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

Other policies have been developed to address the needs of particular groups e.g. the Gender Identity and Expression Policy, the Policy for the Employment of People with Disabilities and their associated guidelines. Gender neutral bathrooms were designated throughout the campus and all new buildings will include them as standard – Maynooth met its target of 50 gender neutral bathrooms by the end of 2020. The Policy for the Employment of People with Disabilities was launched in December 2022 and gives a framework for staff who require adjustments due to a disability

6.0 Information and Data Management

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

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

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

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

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

The Institutional Research Office undertakes an annual survey of first year undergraduate students registering in the University for the first time. The survey is conducted in the first or second week of term each year. It provides invaluable information to internal stakeholders on incoming students including why they choose to study in Maynooth University, how prepared they are for third level education, what their expectations are, information about their general living and working arrangements, and feedback on concerns or issues that they have.

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

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

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

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

[Freedom of Information](#)

[Data Protection Office](#)

[Routine Access to Personal Information](#)

[Contact with Third Parties](#)

[Data Protection Policy](#)

[Staff Data Privacy Notice](#)

[Student Data Privacy Notice](#)

[Personal data security incident management procedure](#)

[HEA Student Data Collection Notice](#)

[Records Management Policy](#)

[Information & Data Security Policy](#)

[Code of Conduct for users of Computing Facilities](#)

[Responsible Computing Policy](#)

[CCTV Policy](#)

7.0 Public Information and Communication

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

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

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

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

The University has undergone a seismic shift in its approach to providing public information and to its overall communications agenda in recent years, following an external organizational design assessment in 2019 and subsequent investment in the staff capacity needed to deliver upon University objectives. The Office of External Relations manages and advances the reputation of Maynooth University nationally and internationally by engaging with the public, its graduates, and its colleagues to support the objectives of the *University Strategic Plan 2018-22*. The Office strives to use new and creative ways to tell the stories of Maynooth University—our academic excellence and world-class research to meet societal challenges, our diversity and inclusivity, and our inspiring students and alumni. The Office oversees the University's external and internal communications activities, as presented below. In June 2022, the University created and filled a new senior-level post, Vice-President External Affairs, to lead the development and implementation of the relevant components of the University's next strategic plan; to continue to build capacity in the function; and to provide a

voice at University Executive on matters related to stakeholder engagement and communications. Subsequently, the University Executive approved the creation of an expanded Office of External Relations directorate consisting of four teams, with a head to be appointed for each: Director of Strategic Communications and Marketing, Director of Development and Alumni Relations – and two new functions for the University: a new centralised events function led by a University Events Manager and a new Office of Partnership/Engagement, to be led by a Director of Partnerships and Engagement.

Media and Public Relations. The Communications Team within the Office of External Relations manages and drives the University’s communications strategy and activities, working closely with the media and with internal and external stakeholders to promote MU’s news, research strengths and educational innovations, as well as overseeing internal communications. The Office works actively to pitch and place stories on the University’s research, educational innovations, widening participation agenda and more in various broadcast and print media outlets. It also fields an array of media requests and advises on matters that rise to the public fore in regard to the community, public affairs and the University’s reputation writ large. The Office offers media training and communications guidance to academics, assists with communications around various university events, and leads a series of staff-wide town halls throughout the year.

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

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

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

The Team, in conjunction with IT Services and led by the Project Lego Steering Committee, completed the scoping exercise of Project Lego, a sizable project to re-platform the MU website, and is proceeding with the creation of a project specification document to go to tender for an agency partner. This project is a necessary endeavour to avoid the end-of-life of its current platform and better enable all MU stakeholders to access information in line with modern needs and technologies, and pursue compliance with new accessibility standards. The Project will kick off in Q2 2023.

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

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

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

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

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

next phase of growth will be critical to delivering an ambitious set of activities in support of the University's Strategic Plan 2023-28.

A new Office of External Relations website that reflects the new structure and provides a plethora of new resources and signposting to both internal staff and external audiences launched in 2022.

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

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

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

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

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

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

The selection and engagement of external, independent, national and international experts as quality reviewers on peer review groups consists of nominations, from the unit under review, of an extended list of reviewers who are senior level experts/specialists in the area or the subject under review. This listing is evaluated by a member of the University Executive and the reviewers are

ranked. Reviewers are then invited, in rank order, to serve on review panels with usually two, but in cases, three external reviewers appointed.

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

9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	19
Awarding bodies	0
QA bodies	0

1. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Chartered Accountants (ACA)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA Accounting and Finance; BA Finance; BBS Business and Accounting; BCL Law and Accounting; HDip; Higher Diploma in Professional Accounting; MA in Accounting (1 year); MA in Accounting (2 years).
Date of accreditation or last review	31/08/2021
Date of next review	

2. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA Accounting and Finance; BA Finance; BBS Business and Accounting; BCL Law and Accounting; HDip; Higher Diploma in Professional Accounting; MA in Accounting (1 year); MA in Accounting (2 years).
Date of accreditation or last review	31/08/2021
Date of next review	

3. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Chartered Financial Analyst University Affiliation Programme (CFA)
Programme titles and links to publications	MSc Finance
Date of accreditation or last review	31/08/2021
Date of next review	

4. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	The Teaching Council
Programme titles and links to publications	Postgraduate Master of Education; BScEd/Professional Master of Education; Bachelor of Education-Primary Teaching; Professional Master of Education (primary).
Date of accreditation or last review	01/01/2022
Date of next review	

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	1
Joint/double/multiple awards	7
Collaborative programmes	3
Franchise programmes	0
Linked providers (DABs only)	0

1. Collaborative provision	Collaborative programme
Name of body (/bodies):	Military College
Programme titles and links to publications	Diploma in Leadership, Management and Defense Studies; Higher Diploma in Leadership, Defense and Contemporary Security; MA in Leadership, Management and Defense Studies.
Date of last review	01/10/2021
Date of next review	

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	1
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[Maynooth University]

2023

Annual Quality Report (Maynooth University)
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2021-2022

PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Guidelines on Completing Part B

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Case Studies

QQI recommends that written case studies should:

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

³ The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education have considered impact and measures leading to development and improvement specifically in terms of teaching and learning. See: <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/wp-content/uploads/NF-2020-Insights-from-Practice-About-Impact-in-Teaching-and-Learning-web-ready.pdf>. This is a very useful reference, though impact in the context of this report should be considered

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

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1 Strategic QA Updates

The University commenced work on developing its Strategic Plan for 2023- 2028 during the course of the academic year 2021/2022. Work continues into 2022/2023. The process involves wide consultation and exploration of a range of topics and areas of interest. In anticipation of changes in the University's strategic objectives no major new strategic initiatives were commenced in the reporting period.

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR) Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Update on Status Provide brief update on status, whether completed or in progress. If an action was planned in the previous AQR, but not completed, provide reasons/short reflections for the delay/non-completion.
1	Enhanced reporting of student feedback	Work is still ongoing in this area. Information on practice and on actions arising from student feedback is being collected from academic units with reports being prepared for consideration at Faculty and University level.
2	Clarify the structures and standards for non- major awards	The university has updated its guidance on non-major awards, but will keep this under review if there are sectoral developments.
3	Refine and highlight the Recognition of Prior Learning process.	<p>The University is involved in a sectoral wide initiative that is focusing on recognition of prior learning (RPL). This collaborative piece of work is being undertaken between the seven IUA universities, the Institutes of Technology and the Technological Universities and is funded under the Irish Government's Human Capital Initiative, Pillar 3 (Innovation and Agility). The project aims to develop a sectoral wide, consistent and coherent approach to recognition of prior learning within and across the HE sector. A key objective of the project will be to engage with enterprise partners to understand the needs of employees and to promote the process of RPL as a means of reskilling and upskilling.</p> <p>A dedicated project officer at the University has been engaged for the project duration until April 2025 and is based in the Graduate Studies Office. In the last calendar year, the University has collaborated with project leads across other HEI's in the development of a <u>National Pilot Framework for RPL</u> and a <u>Technical Definition of RPL</u>. The national <u>RPL website</u>, which the University project</p>

		<p>lead was a working group member of, will also be launched on the 2nd March 2023. Such RPL developments at a national level have been instrumental in the redevelopment of Maynooth University's RPL policy, process and further supporting documentation. University RPL policy and supporting documents are currently in the final stages of development after which they will be submitted for formal approval at Academic Council. A suite of promotional RPL videos has also been developed and these will be used to promote the process of RPL to both internal and external stakeholders. These videos will feature on enhanced University RPL webpages due to be published in line with the national website in March 2023.</p>
4	<p>Review the self-evaluation report format for quality reviews with the purpose of enhancing the evaluation of quality processes.</p>	<p>The new University Strategic Plan will impact on the approach used for work in this area. As this Plan is still under development, work in this area is exploratory for the moment.</p>

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Governing Authority	23 rd September 2021 11 th November 2021 15 th December 2021 10 th February 2022 24 th March 2022 2 nd June 2022
Academic Council	13 th September 2021 1 st November 2021 6 th December 2021 31 st January 2022 14 th March 2022 23 rd May 2022
Quality Committee	27 th September 2021 29 th November 2021 14 th February 2022 25 th April 2022 30 th May 2022

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

The new President of the University commenced in post in October 2021.

The following senior level positions were put in place during the academic year 2021/2022:

- Vice-President External Affairs
- Vice-President for Research (interim)
- Director of HR (Interim)
- Director of Governance

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
Music Department	June 2021	https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/strategy-quality/quality-review-process
History Department	October 2021	https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/strategy-quality/quality-review-process
School of Celtic Studies	December 2021	https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/strategy-quality/quality-review-process
English Department	December 2021	https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/strategy-quality/quality-review-process
Philosophy Department	December 2021	https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/strategy-quality/quality-review-process
School of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures	January 2022	https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/strategy-quality/quality-review-process
Ancient Classics Department	January 2022	https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/strategy-quality/quality-review-process
Media Studies Department	February 2022	https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/strategy-quality/quality-review-process

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels⁴ involved in IQA

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

	Total	Academic Schools/ Department	Professional Services/Support Unit	Approval/Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review	Other
Number of review/ evaluation processes	8	8			16		
<i>of those:</i>							
On-site processes							
Desk reviews							
Virtual processes	8	8					
Average panel size for each process type*		4.5			2**		

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

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

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

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

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	8	4	4			5	2	1		8	
Secretary											
Academic/Discipline Specific	48	28	20		16	10	18	4		48	
Student Representative											
QA											
Teaching & Learning											
External Industry /Third Mission											

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

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

Supports and resources for learners

A Student Engagement reach out was delivered by the Student Helpdesk in Semester 2, 2021-2022. This reach out offered a proactive approach to supporting students who were experiencing difficulties engaging with their studies, or with their general student experience. Completed in conjunction with Academic Departments approximately 425 students were telephoned to discuss support options available to them. Academic Departments had the option of referring students for a phone call, using some agreed engagement indicators as a guiding tool.

Arising issues identified by students included feeling isolated, finding it hard to meet peers, difficulties engaging with their studies, ICT deficits, financial concerns, and personal health problems. Students successfully contacted by telephone were signposted to appropriate support services on a need's basis, with details sent by email also. Some students opted to be linked in with support staff by members of the Student Helpdesk team.

Any student who we could not reach by telephone was sent an email detailing the support services available on campus.

Quality Assurance of Research Activities and Programmes

A project to upgrade the current Research Information System (RIS) was approved in early 2022. The upgrade was two-fold- 1. Migration to the cloud and 2. Upgrade to V4.0 of the RIS suite. The cloud migration of the current platform involved the move from MU's virtual infrastructure storage to Oracle's Cloud Infrastructure (OCI). This transferred the responsibility of the maintenance, support and upkeep of the system to the vendor who have the experience to do this. It also will allow to support the growth in the hosting as required. The more important benefit however is the certified security of OCI (ISO27001) which includes:

- Customer Isolation: Full isolation from other tenants.
- Data Encryption at rest and in transport
- Identity and Access Management at the PaaS level (in addition to Application Security)
- Web Firewall / Monitoring/ Penetration Testing

The second element of the project was to upgrade from RIS 3.6 to RIS Version 4.0. This was a significant upgrade delivering not only functional changes but also fundamental changes to the underlying software architecture and database structure. This upgrade involved the entire system being redeveloped using new technology with an overhaul of the structure of the database offering a more user-friendly interface with increased flexibility and functionality. The reporting module also now host a business summary dashboard from the various reports. Co-PIs will also be pulled into the overall life-cycle and be represented into the Proposal Tracking Module and reporting module (Q3 2023). Other improvements include better integration of publications from external databases, and increased security due to improved software elements.

Employee Learning and Development

In line with the approach in use over the last number of years, tailored programmes and development initiatives have been put in place to support colleagues in their role, whilst reflecting the values of the institution. The strategy for 2021/2022 was to focus on developing relevant courses on key competencies and themes, widening the offering of mentoring programmes, developing additional leadership supports, continuing to expand wellbeing initiatives, developing programmes to support working remotely and academic career development supports. A list of programmes available to staff are detailed on a dedicated Learning & Development Directory within the HR website. During the academic year 2021/2022 there was a collective attendance of 1,121 participants across all courses/seminars organised by Learning & Development.

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

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

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

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

Employee Wellbeing and Organisational Culture

The University is committed to providing a healthy working environment and improving the quality of working lives for all employees. There has been a renewed emphasis on employee wellbeing over the 2021/2022 period.

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

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

- High level feedback from the Employee Assistance Programme on topics people attend counselling for, which can inform the types of initiatives and activities that are planned.
- Feedback from employee groups and networks across the University for example, the Parent and Carers and Enable networks.
- Regular consultation with Heads of Department, line managers, employees, and occasional staff across the University.

- Reviewing the supports other Higher Education Institutions provide in this area that may be suitable for Maynooth University.

A Workplace Wellbeing Statement was drafted to support the University's goal to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of our employees and to prevent work associated ill health. This goal encompasses the physical, mental, and social health of our employees and recognises an employees' personal development and work within the University contribute to their overall wellbeing. To deliver on this goal, the University commits to establishing an action plan which consolidates our existing commitments and identifies additional initiatives that may be considered. This statement aims to bring together the initiatives already in place within the University that support and maximise the health and wellbeing of our employees and document how we will improve the wellbeing of our workplace.

The Employee Wellbeing section on the HR Website outlines a number of supports available to employees including:

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

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

- Employee Recognition Awards
- Networking events for New Employees

Mentoring in Maynooth University

A formal mentoring scheme was introduced on a phased basis since 2020. The rationale for the introduction of mentoring is to support the professional growth of the individual and to promote excellence in academia, support, research, administration, technical development, people management and leadership within the University. The University-wide roll-out of mentoring aligned with other available learning initiatives from HR, aims to create a culture of growth and career development among our new entrants and our longer employed colleagues. Mentoring will support the mentees and mentors social learning.

To date mentoring has been offered as a stand alone support to all categories of staff and jointly with a number of development programmes rolled out by MU and on a sectoral basis. These included EDI leadership programmes, which had a mentoring included.

The feedback from the mentoring has been positive with mentees reporting a clearer understanding of their role, the university and the steps they need to take to achieve career goals. Mentors have reported satisfaction

in passing on their experiences to other colleagues, helping colleagues work through challenges and understanding what impacts different departments in the university.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Teaching and Learning Initiatives

The **Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)** have developed and introduced a five ECTS module in '**Equality Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education**' for staff as part of the Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Higher Education (PDHETLA) programme. The aim of this module is to facilitate participants in reflecting on their own teaching and learning contexts and to identify their strengths and areas for development in creating inclusive learning environments for their students. It provides staff with the opportunity to redesign a chosen course element through the lens of inclusion redesign to proof it for diversity and inclusion. Topics explored in this module include: concepts of diversity, inclusion, equality and interculturalism; current policy and good practice in creating inclusive learning environments, and considering the 'self' and values in the context of teaching and facilitating learning in an inclusive way.

The **Centre for Teaching and Learning** in collaboration with the **Access Office**, have developed a range of accessibility-focused supports for staff and students including;

- A MU Accessible Learning Guide,
- A MU Moodle Accessibility Baseline, which outlines to staff how to set up an accessible Moodle page;
- Accessibility guides for students to enable inclusive peerwork;
- Template pages to demonstrate good practice; and
- A series of UDL-focused webinars and consultations.

In addition, the CTL have increased the formats in which Moodle supports are available to staff and students. Over 80 Moodle guides have been reformatted to be more accessible and 24 interactive user tour guides developed.

Office of the Vice-President for Equality and Diversity initiatives

Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

The Office of the Vice-President for Equality and Diversity ran a series of events over the month of June 2022 to mark LGBTQ+ Pride. On the 1st of June, the Progress Pride Flag was raised on the campus. A Pride Picnic for staff was held, and the Pride at Maynooth University lanyards were launched. These lanyards ask staff to commit to learning more about LGBTQ+ issues and supporting the LGBTQ+ community. Staff development supports were also offered on LGBTQ+ issues during the month, one on Gender Identity and Expression and the other on LGBTQ+ Safer Spaces.

The Preparing for Academic Advancement initiative was run from the 23rd June – 28th September 2021. The aim of this sectoral modular programme funded by the HEA Gender Equality Enhancement Fund is to support Associate Professor level academic women to submit a successful application to Professor B level and, in so

doing, support institutions in achieving the very ambitious HEA target of 40% representation of men and women at Professor A level by 2024.

In March 2022, “Engaging Men and Women Equally – A Masterclass” was held to mark International Women’s Day. The event was designed to be of particular value to male leaders, given their strong representation at the most senior levels of organisations and their role in advocating for real change. However, this masterclass was open to all men and women at all grades interested in creating greater diversity and inclusion of talent in their organisation.

The Office of the Vice-President for Equality and Diversity organised two full-day sessions of Anti-Racism Training for Security Staff in recognition of their role as a frontline service for students and staff. These sessions aimed to increase the awareness of security staff on issues surrounding racism and to support them to be better equipped to work in a diverse workplace.

Integration of UN sustainable development goals (SDG)

Maynooth University Social Justice Week was held between the 21st and 25th of March, 2022. The week’s theme was the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Events covered a wide range of global issues and inequalities, including poverty, education, health, climate action and strong institutions. Maynooth University was featured in the Times Higher Education Impact Ranking 2022. This ranking assesses the performance of universities against the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Information and Data Management

Data collection from staff and students is critical to informing the work of the University in the areas of Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Interculturalism (EDI). Maynooth University values the enrichment that comes from a diverse community of staff and students and seeks to have a better picture of that diversity so that we can identify areas where further focus or work is needed. The Maynooth University Equality & Diversity Staff Census 2022 was circulated to staff in March 2022. Maynooth University was ranked in the top 7% of universities globally (at number 69 out of 938 institutions) for its research on the study of gender equality, policies on gender equality and commitment to recruiting and promoting women (SDG5 Gender Equality).

Gender Equality

Minister Simon Harris launched the National Gender Equality Dashboard for Higher Education Institutions on International Women’s Day 2021. The dashboard, developed by Maynooth University, provides an invaluable resource on gender equality in Higher Education Institutions. The dashboard visualises the HEA’s Higher Education Institutional Staff Profiles by Gender data.

The MU Faculty of Arts, Celtic Studies and Philosophy achieved their Swan Bronze award in March 2022. Maynooth sponsored the participation of seven female employees in the Aurora leadership development programme 2021/22.

The MU Sanctuary Lecture 2022, which addressed the theme of ‘Forced Displacement and Afghanistan’, was held in January 2022. The lecture was delivered by Gulwali Passarlay, author of *The Lightless Sky: My Journey to*

Safety as a Child Refugee (Atlantic Books, 2019) and a prominent advocate for refugee rights. A panel discussion followed the Lecture.

The second annual Intersectionality Lecture was held in April 2022. Dr Abayomi Ogunsanya (Researcher, NASC) delivered the lecture titled 'At Risk at Home and Abroad: Intersectional Experience of Race, Disability and Social Isolation in Ireland's Direct Provision System'.

Third-mission activities, societal and community engagement

Excellence in Exile (Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees)

Scholars at Risk (SAR)

In 2020, a Maynooth University SAR Fellowship was established based on international good practice. This has since been shared by SAR Ireland as a model for other HEIs to use. In addition to an Academic Mentor, it includes an Admin Mentor which is best practice internationally but novel in Ireland.

MU partnered with TCD to bring a Fellow to Ireland from Afghanistan in December 2021, along with his family.

University of Sanctuary

Maynooth University is officially designated as a University of Sanctuary in recognition of its initiatives to promote a culture of welcome for refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants into the community. In 2021/22, three students were awarded University of Sanctuary Scholarships. The number of scholarships increased to six scholarships for 2022/23.

Response to the War in Ukraine

Maynooth University's response to support refugees arriving from Ukraine is detailed in a separate case study.

Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment

Maynooth University and other HEIs have been progressing with an Action Plan to implement the Framework for Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Higher Education Institutions. Maynooth University has made progress on all Framework Outcomes, including designating leadership, developing policies and carrying out targeted initiatives, including training for staff and students. Notably, in 2021/22, the Office of the Vice-President for Equality and Diversity carried out a successful information campaign across several social media platforms. Content interaction with the MU EDI profile on Instagram increased by 1,123% during the campaign.

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

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

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

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

- Introduction of a verification Assessment via Marks and Standards.
- Update of the University Plagiarism Policy to encompass other breaches of Academic Integrity.
- Ongoing collaboration with other institutions through the National Academic Integrity Network to share experiences and practices in addressing academic integrity issues.
- Development of new '[Academic Integrity and Artificial Intelligence](#)' resource space as part of the Assessment & Feedback Hub, which includes staff and student facing resources on academic integrity and a range of resources on artificial intelligence, particularly around ChatGPT and similar technologies.
- Facilitation of a Staff Forum on '**Exploring ChatGPT – challenges and opportunities**' to provide staff with the opportunity to learn more about ChatGPT and similar technologies, discuss ChatGPT with reference to current teaching, learning and assessment practice, contribute to the articulation of practical steps we can take as a university community to address the challenges and embrace the opportunities around this technology, suggest 'where to next' on this important topic.

- The University already has academic integrity software (Turnitin) that is designed to promote academic integrity and support detection of plagiarism. This software is currently being enhanced to support detection of AI-assisted writing, with the updated software due for release in April 2023.

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

In anticipation of the completion of the new University Strategic Plan 2023-2028, no new major activities are planned for the upcoming reporting period.

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
Research Development & Support Office	June 2023	2015/2016

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

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

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

CASE STUDY 1

Title: MU Ask-A-Student as a tool for peer-to-peer communication between prospective applicants and current Maynooth University students.

Theme: Innovation in assisting applicants to make informed decisions on course choice.

Keywords (2-3 words): Peer, communication, applicant.

Short Abstract: Use of Unibuddy platform (hereinafter referred to as MU Ask-A-Student) to assist potential applicants with their research and informed decision making on course choice at Maynooth University by facilitating communication with current students via online messaging.

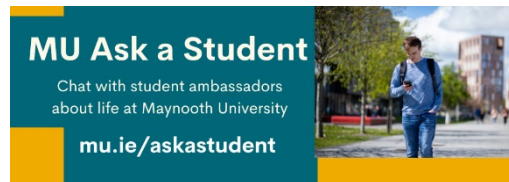
Case Study

During the Covid-19 pandemic, a gap was identified in communication between prospective applicants and current Maynooth University students caused by the lack of on-campus interaction (e.g. Open Days, campus tours). Unibuddy is a digital messaging service which is designed to link current students with applicants and “Empower students to choose their future with confidence” ([link: www.unibuddy.com/the-unibuddy-platform](http://www.unibuddy.com/the-unibuddy-platform)).

Renamed “MU Ask-A-Student”, the platform was adopted by the Maynooth University Admissions Office as a method of filling the gap and assisting applicants to make informed decisions about course choice. In particular, applicants have asked about “area of study” (covering 40% of conversation data since launch). This covers topics such as structure (46%), teaching (32%) and assessment (22%). Careers (15%) and Admissions (11%) are the two other highest ranking topics of conversation. Repeated interaction between student and prospective applicants is common, with an average of 4 unique questions per conversation and feedback from students and applicants is very positive, examples follow; *“Okay this sounds really great, I have already put it on my CAO and will be looking forward to it. Thank you for your time”* – Applicant & *“just letting you know how great it has been to work as part of the student ambassadors and I would love to still be a part of the MU Ask A Student Team next year!”* – Student.

Since October 2020, over 8,000 questions have been answered by our students on the platform. The initiative has continued post-pandemic with continuous growth in site visitors (10,889 in 2021/2022 vs 12,241 in 2022/2023 – sample figures covering October to February). At launch, Maynooth University had 19 Undergraduate students active on the platform from across the varied degree programme offerings. The platform has been since expanded to other Departments, namely for International and Postgraduate student recruitment and now has over

30 Undergraduate and Postgraduate students active on the platform providing a range of experienced knowledge and expertise in their own areas of study and on their Maynooth University experience in general.



CASE STUDY 2

Title: Response to the war in Ukraine and the provision of support to those who arrived in Ireland

Theme: Ensuring IQA can effectively facilitate and support access, mobility and progression of refugees and asylum seekers.

Keywords (2-3 words): Partnership, Crisis

Short Abstract (optional):

Case Study

Maynooth University is proud to have played our part in the Irish Higher Education response to the situation in Ukraine. From March 2020, Ireland became the home of many people from Ukraine, HEIs across Ireland responded by offering accommodation, basic supports and facilitating access to education for those arriving.



During the summer of 2022, MU hosted 1,200 people displaced from Ukraine in our student accommodation. This involved the setting up of a *Maynooth Ukrainian Action Group*⁵ with weekly strategic coordination meetings of c.20 support agencies/organisations where each pledged support and offered to lead on particular areas where they had expertise. This was in

⁵ <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/edi/news/mu-hosts-thank-you-event-mark-maynooth-ukraine-response>

place from June – September 2022 and was chaired by the Maynooth University Vice-President for Equality and Diversity. The Maynooth Ukrainian Action Group was unique in Ireland as the only place that organisations like the Health Service Executive and Department of Social Protection regularly met with host organisations and local support agencies to ensure a holistic joined-up response to supporting the complex needs of guests. In particular, learnings from this included the need to have a ‘poverty gap fund’ to cover the costs of essential items/medical needs for refugees who had just arrived in Ireland and who had no money until their state benefits started several days later. Also, the need to have established links with all the necessary providers of services and contact details of relevant organisations and community groups/volunteers to reach out to for supports. The MU Scholars at Risk Admin Mentor acted at the central contact point in this regard and provided admin support for the Maynooth Ukrainian Action Group and the *Maynooth Ukrainian Information Centre* which employed four Ukrainian speakers and was hosted on campus until September.

Additionally, as part of the national response, a need was identified for a single point for contact for students and researchers wishing to access third level in Ireland. The National Student and Researcher (NSR) Helpdesk was established by DFHERIS in March 2022, as an emergency response, to guide and support Ukrainian students and researchers displaced by the invasion of Ukraine who were covered by the EU’s Temporary Protection Directive to explore suitable study options in the Irish education and training system. Maynooth University was asked by DFHERIS and the Irish Universities Association (IUA) to host the *National Student and Researcher (NSR) Helpdesk*⁶ on behalf of the higher education sector. This was announced by Minister Simon Harris on 3rd May 2022 to assist Ukrainian students and researchers seeking to continue their higher education studies and work in Ireland. It was supported by a National Steering Group chaired by DFHERIS and staffed by six Admissions and Researchers Advisors seconded from HEIs around Ireland, and two Ukrainian speakers. The Helpdesk was developed as a single holistic and student focused national point of contact and information for potential students seeking to access higher education in Ireland. The Helpdesk partnered with Irish Translation Services (based in DCU) to provide translation services for documentation, partnered with Duolingo to provide a central resource for the assessment of English Language for academic purposes free of charge to students, and partnered with PAC who developed a national application system to consistently process applications on behalf of the sector. It was in place until December 2022. MU was asked to provide this service on the basis our expertise in Excellence in Exile, including the SAR MU Fellowship and the *MU College Connect* work on refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers (*Community Needs Analysis with Refugees*⁷).

⁶ <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/3bc36-central-helpdesk-for-ukrainian-people-seeking-access-to-third-level-education-announced-by-minister-harris/>

⁷ <https://collegeconnect.ie/community-needs-analysis-with-refugees/>

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris, meeting with staff of the National Helpdesk for displaced Ukrainian people seeking access to third level education in Ireland on 20th June 2022.



The key strength of our response in supporting Ukrainians was the importance put on partnerships. Whether that was other universities and private companies as part of *the National Student and Researcher Helpdesk* or community and voluntary organisations through the *Maynooth Ukrainian Action Group*. Recognising the value of the *Maynooth Ukrainian Action Group* and the ongoing need for coordination of supports, County Kildare Leader Partnership (CKLP) appointed a Ukrainian Emergency Response Coordinator, Helen Mulhall, whose role is to coordinate and communicate between agency and voluntary responses, to address gaps in the response and to advocate for Ukrainian voices and needs in emergency response.

CASE STUDY 3

Title: Whidden Workshops, Traveller and Roma Outreach Officer

Theme: Widening participation for students from the Traveller and Roma communities

Keywords (2-3 words): Traveller, Roma, Widening Participation

Short Abstract: MAP ran a Social Justice Week 2022 event entitled “Whidden with the Country Needjas: Our Method-Dolly” to share thoughts and experiences around the Whidden Workshop; It’s Kushti to Rokker project and the emergence of the Method-Dolly.

Case Study

MAP ran the Whidden Workshops; It’s Kushti to Rokker to bring together Country Needjas (settled people) and Minéir Needjas to tackle and examine issues around access to education for Traveller and Roma students. The Whidden Workshops are supported by the dedicated Traveller Outreach Officer who supports outreach and inclusion initiatives, by enhancing relationships with key stakeholders to promote educational opportunities for Travellers. The MAP approach to collaboration ensures that the values of meaningful participation, inclusion and equality are at the core of the workshops.

In April 2022, as part of Maynooth University Social Justice Week, a live webinar was delivered to explain:

- (1) The context behind the Whidden Workshops, how and why they were established and the values and principles that underpin the implementation and delivery of the workshops;
- (2) The impacts of the Whidden Workshops on the country neejas – what settled people have learned and taken away from the workshops;
- (3) The impact of the Whidden Workshops on the Minceir & Roma neejas- what Travellers and Roma have gained and taken away from the workshops; and
- (4) Next level of learning going forward.

A Whidden Workshop evaluation & celebration event was held in May 2022.

CASE STUDY 4

Title: Unlocking Potential

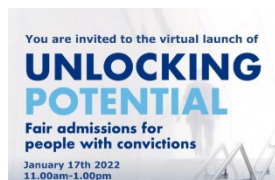
Theme: Widening participation for students with a criminal justice history

Keywords (2-3 words): Prisoners, Ex-Offenders, Widening Participation

Short Abstract: On 17 January 2022, the Unlocking Potential toolkit, podcast, website, documentary & the KickStart scholarship were launched online attended by Maynooth University President Eeva Leinonen and Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris.

Case Study

The Mountjoy Prison Maynooth University Partnership, now in its third year, accelerated its work to support people with criminal justice histories to access third level.



It is well evidenced that people with criminal convictions are disproportionately drawn from groups which are under-represented in higher education. Unlocking Potential is a research policy project led by Maynooth University Access Programme and the MU School of Law and Criminology in collaboration with Mi:Lab – the MU Innovation Lab, the Irish Prison Service, the Irish Probation Service, the Pathways Centre for Prisoners and Former Prisoners (City of Dublin Education and Training Board) and the Irish Penal Reform Trust.

The objective of the Unlocking Potential project is to increase access to higher education for people with convictions. Harnessing the transformative power of education, the goal of Unlocking Potential is to build the diversity of the third level student population whilst supporting the reintegration of people with convictions, prisoners and former prisoners in our society. The project has created a 'Fair Admissions Toolkit' to help universities and colleges to develop their approach to applicants with convictions.

This is the 15 minute [Unlocking Potential documentary video](#) that outlines the project.

CASE STUDY 5

Title: We are Here, HEAR Community Needs Analysis with Refugees

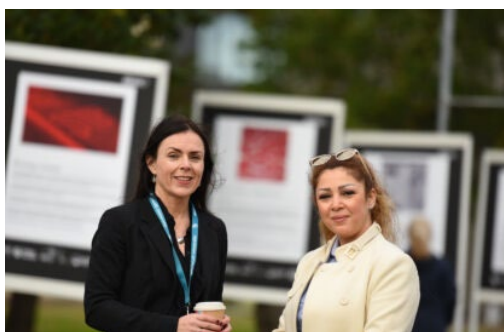
Theme: Ensuring IQA can effectively facilitate and support access, mobility and progression of refugees and asylum seekers.

Keywords (2-3 words): Asylum, Refugees, Widening Participation

Short Abstract: On 17 November 2021, as part of the College Connect project, Maynooth University launched the [Community Needs Analysis for Refugees](#) which set out the findings from 40 in-depth interviews and 104 survey responses collected between October 2020 and March 2021 with refugees and people in the protection process in Ireland focusing on their experience of accessing or trying to access higher education.

Case Study

Maynooth University launched the [We are Here, HEAR](#) Photovoice touring exhibition from Autumn 2021 to Summer 2022 to highlight the College Connect Refugee Community Needs Analysis.



This short video outlines the challenge for refugees to access third level in Ireland.

[Deconstructed](#) is a 3.5-minute artistic and research video about refugees' experience in the protection process and in particular in the Direct Provision system. Featuring spoken word artist Felispeaks, and dancer Mufutau Yusuf, this video gives an insight of how in the 'protection system' in Ireland, one's skillset, self-worth, and sense of identity are deconstructed.