Maynooth University Quality Committee
Meeting 20th March 2023 at 12.00 pm

Minutes

Present: Dr Alison FitzGerald (Chair), Dr Teresa Lee (Secretary), Dr Antonio Cascelli, Professor Joseph Coughlan, Mr Niall Daly, Professor Fiona Lyddy, Mr Craig McGabhann, Mr Gerry O'Sullivan.

Apologies: Ms Joan O'Riordan Bruton and Ms Sarah Searson.

Item 6.3 attendee: Professor Alison Hood (Dean Teaching & Learning).

In Attendance: Ms Helen Berry.

Agenda Item	Key Points/Decisions	Actions, if any (Follow-up by)
1. Declaration of Interest.	The Chair asked the Committee members if they had any conflicts of interest.	No conflicts declared.
2. Minutes.	**2.1 Draft minutes of meeting of 7th February 2023.** The draft minutes were accepted as accurate.	Minutes adopted.
3. Membership Update.	The Chair welcomed Mr Craig McGabhann as the new Postgraduate Representative on the Committee. The Chair reported that she had written to the outgoing Postgraduate Representative, Ms Sneha Pala, thanking her for her time on the Committee.	
4. Matters Arising.	**4.1 International Education Mark (IEM).** The Director of Quality stated that it is expected that the QQI process for the submission of institutional applications for the IEM will open in 2023. However, it is likely that it will first apply to the 2024/2025 intake of	The Director of Quality will provide updates as required.

	international students. The Director of Quality will share the pre-final draft with key internal stakeholders (including VP International) for final feedback.	
5. Annual Quality Report to Academic Council and Governing Authority.	**5 Annual Quality Report to Academic Council and Governing Authority.** The Director of Quality stated that a working draft of the report will be distributed to members next week with a deadline for feedback to be set for the 6th April. The draft will be revised based on feedback received and will be distributed for consideration at an online meeting during which final changes will be made. The Committee members were happy to proceed on this basis.	The Director of Quality to circulate the draft report next week. The Quality Office to explore options for an on-line meeting on Friday 21st April.
6. Third Cycle of Quality Reviews.	**6.1 Quality Reviews: Follow up reports.** The Director of Quality confirmed that twenty-five follow-up reports have been received from a total of twenty-seven. The Quality Office is following up on the two outstanding reports. The report will include the profile of recommendations and whether completed, partially completed, not completed/no longer relevant, or no response received. The report will categorise completion status by faculty and by department/ administrative area. Key areas of success and non-success will be identified. The report will be brought to the Quality Committee's (QC) meeting in May. This will provide an opportunity for the Committee to identify issues that need to be brought to the attention of the University Executive (UE). The report, together with any issues identified by the Committee, will be submitted to the Vice-President Academic (VPA) to bring to UE. **6.2 Faculty Analysis reports.** The Director of Quality met with the VPA to discuss a procedural gap, previously identified by the Committee, relating to how themes/issues highlighted in Faculty Analysis Reports are being addressed via follow-up actions at Faculty Executive level and how feedback on such actions taken is being provided to the Quality Committee. The key outcome of the meeting with the VPA was that early identification of issues was deemed preferable with the ideal time being when a unit's Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is in development. The process would see the Dean identifying the recommendations in a Peer Review Group (PRG) report that may need a decision at UE level. UE would then consider these and decide on a way forward, with the decision reflected in the unit's QIP. This approach will bring greater clarity for the unit and empower the Dean and the academic unit to implement recommendations that are supported by UE. Feedback to the Quality Committee would proceed as before through receipt of the finalised QIP reports, and via receipt of the units' follow- up reports. The proposal was welcomed by the Committee. The VPA to be asked to bring this proposal to the Deans, and to UE for a commitment to the process by the end of May 2023.	Draft report to be brought to the QC meeting in May. The report, together with any issues raised by the Committee will be submitted to the VPA to present to UE. The QC would welcome a commitment to this process by the end of May 2023. The Director of Quality to follow up on this with the VPA and report back to the Committee at the QC meeting of the 29th May.

A discussion followed on whether recommendations made in PRG reports should continue to be classified as strategic- or unit-level recommendations. An alternative is that the recommendations are presented without any categorisation, and it is the University that decides whether a recommendation is deemed as being at a strategic level or at a unit level. It was agreed that this needs to be decided before the next set of reviews.

6.2 (i) FACSP thematic analysis report.
The Director of Quality introduced this item. The FACSP thematic analysis report was submitted to the VPA and the Faculty Dean. The report was prepared based on analysis of the recommendations in the PRG reports of the FACSP units. Recommendations are categorised into major themes such as Governance & Management, Teaching & Learning and Research. Recommendations are further categorised into subsidiary themes such as strategy/planning, management, staffing, workload, etc.
The Excel format of the report enables filtering by major theme and/or by sub-theme with access to the associated recommendations providing valuable context. The Dean can identify which themes are most pertinent for addressing at faculty level or for addressing in relation to a number of departments/schools.

It was remarked that certain contemporary national and international initiatives/developments that impact on the operations of Higher Educational Institutes are not appearing within the thematic areas identified. It was acknowledged that the areas that units would be asked to consider as part of their quality reviews in Cycle 4 might include a consideration of certain aspects of such initiatives.

The Chair stated that the report was very welcome and very clear.

6.3 MU Student Feedback Process.
The Chair welcomed Professor Alison Hood to the meeting and congratulated her on her recent appointment as Dean of the FACSP. Professor Hood was invited, in her capacity as Dean of Teaching & Learning, to provide an update to the Committee on the MU Student Feedback process.

Professor Hood outlined how, at the end of 2019, the University made the decision to suspend the existing centralised process known as *Student Evaluation of the Learning Experience (SELE)*. It was decided, on a pilot basis, to give responsibility and ownership for garnering student feedback to individual academic units. This was a move that was welcomed by academic units and is seen to be in line with current practice where universities have moved away from centralized models.

In April 2022, the Teaching & Learning Committee requested all academic unit heads to evaluate the implementation of the new student feedback processes within their unit for the academic year 2021/2022. A

	standard template was provided to units for submitting returns. The template provided was an Excel spreadsheet with all modules per department prepopulated in rows, and a number of fields in columns, including fields for: total number of students; timing; scheduling; evaluation method; response rate (% of students); issues identified; actions taken; and feedback to students. The Associate Deans of the three faculties were each charged with preparing an evaluative report for their Faculty, drawing from evidence presented across the individual reports.	
	The Dean outlined some of the key themes emerging from the faculty-level reports, highlighting that in general student feedback received was positive. It is evident that a range of approaches are in use by academic units, from the use of surveys/focus groups, to seeking feedback through staff-student committees. The Dean indicated that the development of dashboards for reporting on unit-level returns might prove beneficial in facilitating academic units to work more effectively with their data sets.	The faculty-level reports to be made available to Committee members.
	A discussion followed with several queries raised. It was remarked that the number of modules a student is asked to provide feedback on every semester may be contributing to lower response rates. The impact of Covid on response rates must also be considered. Alternative approaches such as seeking feedback at the programme or subject level were proposed and might prove more effective/generate higher response rates. The value of on-the-spot electronic feedback formats such as Padlet was also discussed.	
	It was emphasised that providing feedback to students on actions taken, or highlighting key findings from previous evaluations is essential, both in terms of good practice and to ensure continued engagement with student evaluation processes; indeed most units reported that they did close the loop with their students. It was remarked that it would be useful to include some standard reporting sections within each of the faculty-level reports to enable broader comparative analysis across the University. Likewise, having sections that include quantitative information such as the number of modules evaluated each year, the types and scale of use of different evaluation methods, would be useful and should facilitate an analysis of trends over time.	
	The Dean of Teaching & Learning stated that the Teaching & Learning Committee will write to the heads of academic units in April seeking reports on student evaluations completed in the academic year 2022/2023. A member asked if this could be flagged earlier this year.	
7. Fourth Cycle of Quality Reviews.	**7.1 Schedule of Quality Reviews for Cycle 4.** **7.1 (i) Strategy and Quality Office: Review format.**	

	The Director of Quality met with the VPA and it was agreed that the Strategy & Quality Office should be reviewed as part of Cycle 4. The timing of the review will be scheduled to allow the new quality review processes and procedures to be established, and to take account of changes and developments associated with the MU Strategic Plan 2023-2028.	For note.
	7.1 (ii) Research Development Office: Internal Reviewer list. The Director of Quality informed the Committee that the list of eligible internal reviewers (permanent academic staff, senior lecturer and above) has been received from HR. A discussion followed and there were no objections to continuing with this current process. It was noted that for Cycle 4, discussion needs to take place as to the eligibility criteria in use for selecting panels of internal reviewers.	For note.
	7.2 Student participation in quality review processes. The Director of Quality met with Dr Trevor Vaugh, Director of MiLab who has innovative ideas to increase student engagement. The Director of Quality proposed that it would be useful to ask Dr Vaugh to facilitate a workshop with staff and students (in May or June) with a view to identifying approaches for increasing student engagement with quality reviews. A discussion followed on the timing of the workshop with the fact that students leave in May stressed.	The Director of Quality to follow up with Trevor Vaugh and with MSU in relation to the workshop.
	7.3 Cycle 4 Quality Review Parameters: Benchmarking report. The Director of Quality met with the VPA to discuss the quality review parameters for Cycle 4. All the current parameters are aligned with best practice and the University's legal requirements. It was agreed that the broad parameters used in Cycle 3 will continue to apply for use in Cycle 4. However, it was also agreed that details of what to address under each broad parameter would be needed to take account of Maynooth University's Strategic Plan (2023-2028). Detailed direction will be given to the Departments/Units being reviewed. The Chair acknowledged the excellent benchmarking report.	
8. Annual Quality Report (AQR) to QQI.	**8 Annual Quality Report (AQR) to QQI.** The Director of Quality informed the Committee that the Annual Quality Report (AQR) to QQI has been submitted. A discussion followed regarding bringing this report to the Quality Committee before being submitted. The issue is the short timeframe between the call from QQI and the submission date which does not provide enough time for bringing the report to relevant committees such as the Quality Committee.	The Director of Quality to feedback to QQI the internal issues with the short timeframe allocated.

AOB.	None.	
Date of next meeting.	The next meeting will be an on-line Teams meeting on 21st April, to discuss the draft Annual Quality Report to Academic Council and Governing Authority.	The Quality Office to send out a poll to establish a time for a meeting on April 21st.