

Maynooth University Governing Authority
Údarás Rialaithe Ollscoil Mhá Nuad



CANDIDATE INFORMATION PACK FOR THOSE
INTERESTED IN APPLYING TO BECOME
GOVERNING AUTHORITY MEMBERS

1. MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY

Maynooth University (MU) is an internationally recognised institution and is the nation's fastest growing University. One of four constituent universities of the National University of Ireland, MU is in the top 90 global Times Higher Education Young University Rankings 2024.

MU was formally established as an autonomous university in 1997. Yet, it traces its origins to the foundation of the Royal College of St. Patrick in 1795, drawing inspiration from a heritage that includes over 200 years of education and scholarship. The University has grown from 982 students in 1980 to 16,110 in 2023/24. Maynooth University has over 1,300 staff, of which 560 are academic staff. Today, MU is a place of lively contrasts – a modern institution, dynamic, rapidly-growing, research-intensive and engaged, yet grounded in historic academic strengths and scholarly traditions. With over 16,000 students, including over 1,800 taught postgraduates and 530 research postgraduates from more than 90 countries, Maynooth offers a range of programmes at undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral level in the humanities, science and engineering, and social sciences, including business, law, and education. The University also offers a range of international programmes and partnerships.

Maynooth's unique collegial culture fosters an interdisciplinary approach to research, which its world-class academics bring to bear in tackling some of the most fundamental challenges facing society today. The University's research institutes and centres consolidate and deliver this impact as vibrant communities of learning, discovery and creation. Research at Maynooth is very much central to its teaching and the University prides itself on placing equal value on its research and teaching missions.



2. PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

Maynooth University is committed to the following values:

- **Integrity:** We act with integrity in the best interests of our University.
- **Collegiality:** We are a collegial community with a shared purpose which we pursue with empathy, respect and an ethos of care.
- **Responsibility:** We are a community where we are empowered to take agency and responsibility for our individual and collective actions within an open and transparent environment.
- **Freedom of Expression:** We enquire and express ideas freely, with civility and responsibility.
- **Ambition:** We have an ambitious, flexible and innovative mindset when seeking opportunities and responding to challenges.

3. STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2028

The University Strategic Plan 2023-2028 builds on a rich heritage and long history of academic excellence at Maynooth, moving forward with confidence to embrace the University's future direction with clarity and focus, and a clear vision as a university of excellence, opportunity and impact.

Our strategy focuses on:

- developing research outputs and impacts across the University, supporting researcher career development, and becoming global leaders in our selected beacons of research excellence.
- enhancing the whole student experience, supporting the development of student life and facilities, and ensuring students graduate with future-focused skills.
- delivering flexible and experiential curriculum options within our programme portfolio, and achieving significant and sustainable growth in postgraduate and international students.
- establishing a School of Health and Medicine and a National Centre of Excellence for Inclusive Higher Education.
- working in partnership with staff to support career development with a continued commitment to equality and diversity.
- enabling international engagement and establishing key strategic partnerships.
- supporting strong and mutually-beneficial engagement and partnerships with stakeholders from all sectors.
- embedding sustainability as a guiding principle in the enhancement of the physical and digital infrastructure.
- enhancing the coordination of data reporting and analysis, renewing digital-first operational infrastructures, and the continued embedding of good governance across the University.

- creating financial capacity to invest strategically and empowering effective resource management.

The Strategic Plan comprises four main pillars, each with a separate goal:

- **Research and Impact:** Our goal is to be recognised for the excellence and impact of our research
- **Students and Learning:** Our goal is to create a dynamic, responsive and inclusive learning environment, in partnership with our students, in which we provide an excellent and transformative education that enables our graduates to make impactful contributions to society.
- **Engagements and Partnerships:** Our goal is to grow and leverage mutually-beneficial partnerships in order to support our strategic objectives.
- **Internationalisation:** Our goal is to internationalise our student population and campus, expand and diversify our international strategic partnerships, and facilitate international opportunities for all, in support of the University's objectives.

These pillars are underpinned by five key enablers: (i) People and Culture; (ii) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; (iii) Infrastructure and Sustainability, (iv) Governance, Quality and Operational Excellence, and (v) Financial Strength.



The Strategic Plan can be found here: [Maynooth University Strategic Plan |](#)

4. GOVERNANCE

MU is an Irish public university and an autonomous awarding body recognised under the Universities Act 1997. The University is primarily funded by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and effectively reports to that Authority through the Universities Act 1997 (as amended by the

HEA Act 2022) and the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016. The governance structures of the University are defined in the Universities Act 1997 (as amended), with the President as the Chief Officer of the University.

5. GOVERNING AUTHORITY

The Governing Authority has responsibility for the strategic direction of the University, the management and administration of its revenue and property, and the general conduct of its affairs. The Governing Authority is charged with the responsibility of appointing the President of the University in accordance with the University Statutes. A schedule of matters reserved for decision by the Governing Authority includes approval of capital development projects, approval of schemes for promotion of academic and senior administrative staff, approval of University policies and approval of the Annual Financial Statements and the Annual Governance Statement.

Governing Authority comprises internal members (staff), students, and external members. It normally meets six times a year and receives reports from a range of committees: Audit & Risk Committee, Finance, Human Resources and Capital Development Committee; the Quality Committee and Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Interculturalism Committee. The Governing Authority is chaired by an external chairperson or in his/her absence, the deputy chairperson and adheres to the Code of Governance for State Bodies. Dr Mary Canning was appointed the Chairperson of the Governing Authority in late 2019 and reappointed in November 2023.

The current membership of the Governing Authority is available here: [Membership | Maynooth University](#)

The length of Governing Authority meetings varies depending on the size of the agenda, but some meetings may last for four or five hours. Papers are circulated electronically to members a week in advance of Governing Authority meetings. Members are expected to have read the papers in advance of the meeting.

There is an expectation that members attend all meetings of the Governing Authority. There is a significant time commitment required of members of the Governing Authority and this should be taken into account by anyone interested in becoming a Governing Authority member. Induction training is provided to all new members of Governing Authority.

Each member of Governing Authority is required to sign a Code of Conduct that commits them to acting ethically and responsibly during their membership.

6. STANDING COMMITTEES OF GOVERNING AUTHORITY

There are six Standing Committees of Governing Authority:

- Audit and Risk Committee
- Coiste Gaeilge na hOllscoile
- Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Interculturalism Committee
- Finance, Human Resources and Capital Development Committee

- Quality Committee
- Remuneration Committee.

While not compulsory, members of Governing Authority are encouraged to participate in one of the Standing Committees. The Committees (apart from the Remuneration Committee which only meets infrequently and as required) meet four or five times a year. Further information on each Committee can be found here: [Standing Committees | Maynooth University](#)

7. ACADEMIC COUNCIL

The Academic Council focuses on the academic affairs of the University, namely the curriculum of, and instruction and education provided by, the University. It is chaired by the President, or nominee and includes the Registrar/Vice President Academic, the Vice President Research and Innovation, other Vice-Presidents, Executive Deans, Heads of Schools and Departments, the University Librarian and representatives of all grades of academic staff as well as students.

8. UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE

Chaired by the President, the University Executive is a team of academic and administrative leaders, the purpose of which is to support the President in her role as Chief Officer, by providing collective leadership and management for University Community. The University Executive 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.

9. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Under the Ethics in Public Office Acts, Governing Authority members are required to provide an annual written statement of the following, which could materially influence their performance in carrying out their official functions by reason of the fact that such performance could so affect those interests as to confer on, or withhold from, themselves or their spouse / civil partner / child, a substantial benefit:

- Any interests they may have (including interests in shares);
- Any interests (including interests in shares), of which they have actual knowledge, of their spouse or civil partner, child, or child of their spouse or civil partner.

A register of members' interests is kept as part of the management of potential conflicts of interest.

10. APPLICATION PROCESS FOR NEW GOVERNING AUTHORITY MEMBERS

Expressions of interest are now being sought from interested individuals who wish to be considered to fill a vacancy that exists for an external member on the MU Governing Authority.

A Nominations Committee has been established by the Governing Authority to oversee the process for selecting the new external member of the Governing Authority.

The Nominations Committee will have regard to the legislative requirement that, (a) not less than 40 per cent of the members of Governing Authority shall be women and not less than 40 per cent of them shall be men, and that (b) the membership of the Governing Authority shall broadly reflect the composition of Irish society, including persons who are competent in the Irish language. Proficiency in the Irish language is not a requirement for every member of Governing Authority.

The Nominations Committee has developed a Skills, Experience and Competency Framework which describes the key competencies that are required of the Governing Authority as a whole. The Skills, Experience and Competency Framework is included below as Appendix A. The Governing Authority as a whole will be expected to possess the attributes outlined in the Skills, Experience and Competency Framework. **No one member is expected to possess all of the attributes.**

Some members may have an in-depth proficiency in a small number of areas. Other members may possess several of the attributes in the Framework. What is important is that the Governing Authority as a whole possesses the set of attributes outlined in the Framework. The Framework is divided into attributes that are deemed to be essential for the effective performance of the Governing Authority, and other attributes that are desirable.

Expressions of interest are now being sought from individuals who meet the following requirements:

Essential criteria

- Formal financial accountancy qualification from a professional body and/or senior financial management experience within the last ten years.
- Excellent financial management and budgeting skills, with a deep understanding of financial metrics as they apply to large complex organisations and financial reporting.
- Corporate governance experience at senior management level in a large complex organisation within the last ten years.

Desirable criteria

- Formal board/ board committee experience.
- Public Relations and Communications expertise
- Strategic Management experience
- Risk Management experience.
- Experience / knowledge of the higher education sector.

Candidates who are interested in becoming an external member of Governing Authority must possess the essential attributes above and it would be advantageous (but not essential) if they are able to demonstrate some of the desirable criteria.

Interested individuals should submit an Expression of Interest that encompasses (i) a description of how they meet the specific attributes identified above (maximum of 600 words); (ii) a brief indication of why this specific role in Maynooth University is of interest (maximum of 400 words),

and (iii) a short CV detailing relevant work experience. Those interested in submitting an expression of interest should ensure that they meet the eligibility criteria outlined below.

Applications must be directed to the Secretary to the Governing Authority at governingauthority@mu.ie. **The closing date for the submission of Expressions of Interest is 5pm on Friday 16 May 2025.**

All expressions of interest will be assessed by the Nominations Committee against the specific attributes identified from the Skills, Experience and Competency Framework. The Nominations Committee will identify the most suitable candidate, based on its assessment, and informed by the requirements for diversity among Governing Authority members.

The Nominations Committee may seek to meet with candidates, or consult with referees, as part of the assessment process. The Nominations Committee will recommend the selected candidate for appointment to the Governing Authority.

11. LENGTH OF APPOINTMENT

Members of the new Governing Authority, with the exception of the President and Student Union representatives, may be appointed for a period of up to four years, to allow for a rolling renewal of the Governing Authority. Positions are non-remunerated, with appropriate expenses reimbursed in accordance with University policy.

12. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be considered for appointment as an external member of Governing Authority, a person:

- (a) Must be able to clearly demonstrate in their expression of interest their compatibility with the specific attributes taken from the Skills, Experience and Competency Framework and identified in section 10 above.
- (b) Must not be:
 - i. A student of Maynooth University.
 - ii. An employee (or a retired employee) of Maynooth University.
 - iii. A person who is remunerated under a contract with the University.
 - iv. A member of the Academic Council of Maynooth University.

A person may withdraw their expression of interest at any time prior to the appointment of the external members by notifying governingauthority@mu.ie with written notice of their withdrawal signed by them.

13. HIGHER EDUCATION IN IRELAND

The HEA is the statutory planning and development body for higher education and research in Ireland. The HEA has wide advisory powers across the third-level education sector. In addition, it is the funding authority for the higher education sector. Following the enactment of the Higher

Education Authority (HEA) Act of 2022, the HEA has new regulatory powers in relation to the higher education sector.

The Universities Act, 1997 (as amended) sets out the objects and functions of a university, the structure and role of governing bodies, staffing arrangements, composition and role of academic councils and sections relating to property, finance and reporting. University governing authorities are required to ensure that strategic development plans and procedures for evaluating teaching and research are in place. The HEA has a supervisory role in respect of such plans and procedures. The legislative framework preserves the academic freedom of the universities and respects the diverse traditions and institutional autonomy of each university.

The Irish Universities Association (IUA) is a representative body for the university sector in Ireland. MU is a core member of the IUA.

A key document for the university sector is the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016) which provides the general regulatory framework for MU. It can be accessed here: [gov.ie - Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies](#)

14. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

MU values the enrichment that comes from a diverse community and seeks to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of each individual. In 2018, MU was awarded an Athena SWAN Bronze Institution Award in recognition of our plans to accelerate change towards gender equality. MU was the first Irish institution to incorporate intersectionality as part of its Athena Swan Ireland application, taking into account the intersections between gender, race and ethnicity in inequality. MU was recognised by the European Union (EU) as a [Gender Equality Champion](#) in 2022, and our current [Maynooth University Gender Equality Action Plan 2023-2026](#) was recognised as a case study of best practice by the EU funded project [Inspire - Building Europe's Centre of Excellence on Inclusive Gender Equality in Research & Innovation](#).

15. DATA PROTECTION

MU will process any personal data provided by you in connection with an application for this role in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Acts 2018. MU's privacy notices and data protection policies and processes, can be viewed here [Data Protection | Maynooth University](#).

16. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on the application process to become a member of the Governing Authority of Maynooth University please contact: Dr Tony Gaynor, Director of Governance and Secretary to the Governing Authority. Email: tony.gaynor@mu.ie



APPENDIX A: SKILLS, EXPERIENCE AND COMPETENCIES REQUIRED OF THE GOVERNING AUTHORITY OF MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY

The Governing Authority as a whole is expected to possess the attributes outlined in this Skills, Experience and Competency Framework (“the Framework”). No one member of Governing Authority will be expected to possess all of the attributes. Some members of Governing Authority may have an in-depth proficiency in a small number of areas of the Framework. Other members of Governing Authority may possess several of the attributes in the Framework. What is important is that the Governing Authority as a whole possess the set of attributes outlined in the Framework below.

The Framework is divided into attributes that are deemed to be essential for the effective performance of the Governing Authority, and other attributes that are desirable but not essential.

1. ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES

GOVERNANCE:

- Corporate governance understanding and expertise
- Legal expertise
- Regulation and compliance experience
- Risk management experience
- Evidence of effective engagement in University governance at different levels

STRATEGY:

- Experience of strategic planning and implementation of strategic plans
- Evidence of delivery of University strategic goals
- Experience of stakeholder engagement and management
- Ability to contribute to Maynooth University’s strategic priorities
- Experience of supporting sustainability / ESG goals
- Experience of public affairs/marketing/PR/communications

EXECUTIVE/MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL EXPERIENCE:

- Performance of Board roles (chair, non-executive director, executive director)
- Organisational experience at senior management level at national and international levels

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- Knowledge of the following: IT systems; Cybersecurity; Digital learning; Disaster Recovery; Artificial Intelligence; Disruptive technology

CULTURE:

- Knowledge and empathy with University culture
- Evidence of a commitment to EDI principles
- Evidence of proficiency in the Irish language

FINANCIAL:

- Accountancy or Financial management experience, including budgets and internal controls

- Audit qualification and experience

SECTORAL EXPERIENCE:

- Public sector knowledge and experience
- Knowledge of the Higher Education (HE) Sector, including international HE
- Industry and commercial sector experience
- Cultural and artistic sector experience
- Non-Governmental Organisation / Non-Profit / Voluntary sector experience

STUDENT VOICE:

- Experience of representing the student voice and experience

TEACHING AND LEARNING:

- Teaching and learning leadership experience
- Experience of Quality management in Higher Education
- Experience of innovation and knowledge of future trends in learning and teaching in Higher Education

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION:

- Strong academic and publications track record
- Experience of research leadership
- Knowledge of research funding landscape, national and international

2. DESIRABLE ATTRIBUTES

- Human Resources expertise
- Fundraising experience
- Project management experience
- Experience of leading negotiations
- Experience of Sports sector
- Regional development experience
- Entrepreneurship (commercialisation, IP, spin-outs, spin-ins)
- Change management experience
- Experience of managing capital projects