

Maynooth University Department of International Development Strategic Plan (2019 – 2024)



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Introduction

This strategic plan is designed to guide the Maynooth University Department of International Development for the coming years (2019 – 2024) through its consolidation as a department within Maynooth University. It builds on the Maynooth University Strategic Plan (2018 - 22) and is based on a response to our analysis of the changes in international development and in the education, policy and activism landscapes which influence our work.

Highlights include the Department's plans to:

Develop the Department's Identity and Recognition through a new communication strategy.

Enhance the Research Culture within the Department through the establishment of a Research, Engagement and Capacity Hub (REACH) at the Department.

Ensure the Relevance, Quality and Range of Academic and Professional Programmes in International Development through the review of existing programmes and the establishment of new joint Masters' programmes in International Development on themes such as Climate Action, Development Education, Accountability and Governance and Ethical Participatory Practice.



What we Do

At the Maynooth University Department of International Development, we specialise in facilitating critical learning for global change, in order to realise a just transformation in our world.

Our research and academic programmes integrate a focus on local and global development issues, linking the theoretical and the practical, and building skills and critical engagement with development at personal, local, national and international levels.

Adopting a learner-centred approach, our work emphasises people at the heart of development theory, policy and practice. Building a community of learning, our programmes are inclusive, interactive and reflective. We apply critical pedagogy, adult learning and development education approaches in facilitating learners to critically reflect on experience, policy and practice in the light of relevant theories and analyses.

We offer programmes through classroom delivery and online learning, emphasising flexibility and meeting the needs of learners.

Academic programmes on offer through the Department are:

MH101 – Bachelor of Arts

MH50N – MA International Development (1 year full-time)

MH51N – MA International Development (2 – 5 years part-time/flexible and distance learning)

MH54M – MA International Peacebuilding, Security and Development Practice (14 months full-time, run with the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for Conflict Intervention)

MH55M – MA International Peacebuilding, Security and Development Practice (modular approach up to 4 years, run with the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for Conflict Intervention)

MH52N – Postgraduate Diploma in International Development (1 year full-time)

MH53N – Postgraduate Diploma in International Development (2 – 4 years part-time/flexible and distance learning)

We also offer a range of continuous professional development programmes for development practitioners in organisational governance, development, planning and management.

Our approach to research is inclusive, engaged and critical and we emphasise the importance of the relationship between research and learning.

The Values, Vision and Mission of the Department



Building on over 40 years of experience, through our work at the Kimmage Development Studies Centre, our work at the Department is underpinned by a commitment to the values of inclusivity and diversity, equality and justice. We emphasise the importance of creating and supporting respectful relationships in all our interactions. We value a democratic approach to the construction of knowledge, and knowledge based on connectedness to the world and those around us. We value inclusive approaches to learning which support diversity, respect for all those involved, participatory processes, and critical reflexivity. At the same time, we put

quality, excellence and good practice at the heart of all of our work.

The vision of the Department of International Development is of a world of equality, sustainability, diversity, respect and justice for all. We support the realisation of this vision through teaching and research and through facilitating learning that links local and global issues and challenges.

Our mission is to facilitate people at the heart of critical engagement on development theory, policy and practice.

The Context Shaping the Work of the Maynooth University Department of International Development

This Strategic Plan has been developed in light of the context shaping the work of the Department. This includes: the Maynooth University Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022; Changes, Challenges and Complexity in International Development; The Role of Higher Education; and Building on Experience – From Kimmage Development Studies Centre to a new Maynooth University Department of International Development.



The Maynooth University Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022

At the heart of the Maynooth University Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022 are the values of scholarly rigour and academic freedom; integrity and ethical behaviour; collegiality, transparency and trust; equality, inclusiveness and social justice; operational excellence, organisational flexibility and responsiveness; dignity, respect and care for the individual.

The Maynooth University Strategic Plan has identified 13 key goals, among which the following are of particular relevance to the Department of International Development:

Investment in research capacity

Enhancing the portfolio of postgraduate programmes and realising the potential of the undergraduate curriculum

An ethical approach to internationalisation and being a truly international university

Becoming a “model university for equality, diversity, inclusion and interculturalism, where social justice, addressing inequality and empowering people are central to our mission” (p.18)

Support staff in the continued development of their teaching and learning practice

Being an excellent place of work

Developing operational excellence, the development of quality, planning and financial management along with good governance
Providing “a vibrant sustainable campus environment, rich in learning, culture, heritage and nature” (p.18)

This strategic plan builds on the Maynooth University Strategic Plan in identifying its strategic priorities in relation to key themes and areas of focus (elaborated upon below).



Changes, Challenges and Complexity in International Development

Contemporary analysis of international development challenges cover an increasing range of diverse issues from climate change to inequality, conflict to food security, governance to globalisation. Underpinning these ‘issues’ are growing questions about the sustainability of current dominant development models - environmentally, politically and socially.

The existence of gross inequalities and injustices across the planet attest to the fact that economic, social, political and cultural development is neither equally available to all nor separate from international Human Rights, equality, sustainability and justice concerns.

A recent feature of the international development sector, has been a professionalisation of development organisations and practice, and with it a greater emphasis on business and management models of development. At the same time, the space for civil society activism

to hold governments accountable for their development progress, and to offer alternative development visions has been reduced.





That said, one of the opportunities offered by the current globalisation process and ICT developments, is the fostering of ‘cosmopolitan’ globally responsibly citizens, who can now participate through global civic activist platforms, calling governments to account across the world. In this increasingly interconnected world, a complex understanding of development issues and realities requires an integrated analysis of development realities in Ireland with those in other countries. It requires a move away from ‘crisis-thinking’ to ‘causal-thinking’, from thinking in terms of the now to a critical reading of history for understanding the present, and from thinking in terms of improving development practices to critical questioning of them. In short, it requires more critical engagement with international development theory, policy and practice.

In Ireland, the new Irish Aid report, ‘A Better World’ (2019) with its renewed financial commitment to development assistance, the recent Development Education Strategy (2017) and the proposed expansion of the Irish Aid fellowship scheme, signal additional opportunities for those interested in working in the area of international development. Alongside these developments is the growing recognition among key stakeholders that the promotion of international development is much more than aid or development co-operation but includes our commercial engagements with the Global South, as well as the need to address larger systemic issues.

Critical engagement with international development involves understanding current development co-operation policies and the larger contemporary international development context and from this department’s perspective, a myriad of opportunities for research and teaching on various theoretical and practical aspects of international development processes.



The Role of Higher Education

Higher education has an important role to play in responding to international development challenges, through supporting critical engagement with understandings of these challenges as well as responses to them. Despite growing fears of the emphasis on management models, league tables and individualism in many formal education contexts, there is also a growing emphasis on internationalisation in Higher Education. Development studies can play an important role in ensuring that this internationalisation is based on the values of inclusion, equality and social justice, as outlined in the MU Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022. In that context, there is increasing acknowledgement that sustainability is relevant in all contexts

and at all levels; that the global and the local are interconnected and that international development is as much about the personal and the community as it is about structures and relationships at national and international level. Through research, academic and professional learning programmes, the establishment of a Maynooth University Department of International Development opens up the space for wider debate and complex critical reflection on international development. Engaging practitioners, policy makers, educators and activists, on the one hand, it can balance the need to be responsive to the needs of the sector and critical engagement with it.

Building on Experience – From Kimmage Development Studies Centre to a New Department of International Development at Maynooth University

Identity, Recognition and Reputation for Excellence:

An important aspect of the Department's experience is our history of work, over 40 years, through the Kimmage Development Studies Centre (DSC). Kimmage DSC, which was run under the Spiritan congregation had a clearly articulated, well-established and well-known identity as a learning institution. This was manifested in name-recognition and a strong reputation for its work, especially among those involved in development policy, education and practice in Ireland and in countries in East and Southern Africa. Associated with linking the theoretical and the practical, with participatory and experiential learning approaches as well as with online programme delivery in recent years, this identity served to encourage a wide and consistently high number of participants on its programmes.

With the establishment of a new Maynooth University Department of International Development, there is a need to build a clear identity, recognition and reputation for excellence for the Department. Building on the work, approach and values at Kimmage DSC, and in light of Maynooth University's Strategic Plan 2019-2022, this can be established through strengthening staff capacity, through enhancing our engagement in university-wide forums and in strategic communications and marketing of

who we are and what we do. It will also be built through implementing the various strands of this strategic plan.

Research:

Staff at the Department of International Development have a long history of emphasis on teaching, professional development and participant engagement through our work at Kimmage DSC. We have also encouraged and supported significant research among postgraduate participants, and worked over the last 10 years to develop the publication of our 'Research and Perspectives on Development Practice' series of papers, now housed at the Maynooth University Research Archive Library (MURAL). In recent years, staff have been building their research capacity through Doctoral study and through partnership research projects, e.g., the UNIDEV (Development Education in Theory and Practice) project (2013 – 2017) between partners in Ireland, Cyprus and Slovakia. Engaged research, which critically explores development practice, is a strength of the Department and essential for engaging learners in enhanced learning for change.



Our Programmes:

We have a long history of programme provision at undergraduate and postgraduate level. In both cases, we have emphasised general ‘international development’ programmes which include a range of dimensions of international development along with a variety of different approaches, i.e., programmes focus on the theoretical, the practical and the applied along with the critical and the technical; they are based around core modules and electives; and they offer modules on structural dimensions of development as well as the personal and inter-personal dimensions. In recent years, we have developed the flexibility of our postgraduate programmes through online provision. This has significantly expanded the learning options for participants, e.g., through part-time, online or blended learning, as well as the Department’s expertise and experience in online programme delivery. While programmes have been very well-established and evaluated consistently positively by participants and external reviewers and examiners, they are in need of review and up-dating.

In addition to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, we have built up considerable experience and reputation for high quality short-term professional development courses (classroom based and online through Kimmage Outreach in Development Education (KODE). This work helped us to develop our links with the development sector and our services to that sector over many years, while facilitating our critical engagement with them on development practice. In the context of our transition to Maynooth University and the strategic direction of the Department, it is important to consider the role for these kinds of professional-development programmes as a complement to our engagement with the international development sector and our increased emphasis on research.

Working in Partnership:

Historically, we have emphasised work in partnership with other actors in Higher Education, in civil society and in state institutions in the promotion of critical learning opportunities on international development. These have ranged from joint academic Level 9 programme provision to short-term training opportunities, from long-term partnerships to short-term, ad hoc working groups, and from multi-national consortiums to bilateral global North-South partnerships. Throughout, we have emphasised the importance of partnership for meaningful learning, critical reflection and for developing understanding, skills and professional capacity among change agents.



Such partnerships and associations allow us to ensure that our work remains critically connected and relevant while facilitating our learning and contribution to the latest thinking and alternative models of practice. Through engaging with networks and organisations such as Dóchas, the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA), Irish Aid and Comhlámh, we can enhance the relevance of our programmes. Through membership of associations like the Development Studies Association of Ireland (DSAI) or the European Association of Development Institutes (EADI), we can situate the Department at the forefront of the latest thinking and research on international development. Working with other Departments at Maynooth University can also open up new avenues for programme development and research.

Strategic Research Themes, Areas of Focus and Goals 2019 – 2024

The following are the strategic research themes, strategic areas of focus and goals which will guide the work of the Maynooth University Department of International Development over the coming years:

Strategic Research Themes

In light of the discussion of the context shaping the work of the new Department of International Development and the department's current academic/research interests, we have identified strategic research themes. These themes will serve as a basis for research, for enhancing programme offers and for engagement with wider academic and development sectors.

Climate Action – Responses to Climate Change and Development Challenges.

Development Education - Critical Global Activism and Engagement with International Development Policy.

Accountability and Governance – Leadership and Management for Change in International Development Practice.

Ethical Participatory Practice – The Role of Civil Society, the State and Business in International Development.



Strategic Areas of Focus

With the strategic research themes in mind, we have chosen the following areas of focus and strategic goals which will guide our work over the coming 5 years:

Ensuring the Relevance, Quality and Range of Academic and Professional Programmes in International Development.

Facilitating Engagement with others and the development of new partnerships.

Developing the Department's Identity and Recognition .

Building a Research Culture within the Department.

Enhancing Support, Capacity and Operational Excellence within the Department.



Strategic Goals

Ensuring the Relevance, Quality and Range of Academic and Professional Programmes in International Development



We will undertake a review of all academic programmes for relevance of content and the appropriateness of structure and learning processes in light of a changing global development context and in the light of the changing professional and educational needs of development practitioners.

We will update and improve the content of all online MA module materials and processes in light of the above review, and bearing in mind our chosen themes.

We will continue to update classroom-based MA and BA modules as required.

We will explore new flexible postgraduate programme opportunities with other MU departments.

We will review the Department's provision of professional development training for the international development sector, developing new and up-dated programmes, as appropriate.

Facilitating Engagement with Others and the Development of New Partnerships

We will liaise with other Maynooth University departments and bodies with the aim of integrating international development more deeply and supporting a social justice perspective across the University.

We will engage with the Development Sector including like-minded organisations and networks involved in development co-operation, education or activism in Ireland as well as through international forums, associations and groups.

We will support the Comhlámh First Wednesdays active citizenship engagement events in 2019.

We will support staff involvement in international development and development studies networks such as the DSAI, IDEA and other professional bodies.



Developing the Department's Identity and Recognition

We will consolidate and develop our work as the new Department of International Development in line with Maynooth University's policies, procedures and Strategic Plan 2019 – 2022.

We will support quality and excellence in all our work and relations, strengthening our emphasis on critical, experiential learning and building an inclusive, respectful and supportive culture within the Department.

We will establish a research, engagement and capacity development hub (REACH) within the Department as a means of coordinating work in these areas with our academic programmes.

We will promote our work through the development and implementation of a new Department communications and marketing strategy.



Building a Research Culture within the Department



We will develop and implement a research and publications strategy which focuses on critically engaged research in development practice, and which is guided by our key themes.

We will support postgraduate and undergraduate research in line with our review of our academic programmes.

We will further develop staff involvement in research through PhDs, at conferences and through commissioned research.

We will continue the development of our publications through our Research and Perspectives on Development Practice series of papers, as well as through staff contributions to peer-reviewed journals or books.

We will investigate the potential for research consultancy work as part of our new REACH provision.

Enhancing Support, Capacity and Operational Excellence within the Department

We will undertake our work in line with all necessary staff policies and practices of the University, ensuring the protection and well being of staff and students.

We will ensure the necessary staff resources for realising our goals and ensure that all staffing policies and protections are implemented appropriately.

We will implement appropriate organisational structures including clarification of staff responsibilities, regular staff meetings and supporting and participating in necessary training.

We will establish an advisory committee to guide the work of the Department over the coming years.



Conclusion

This Strategic sets out the strategic priorities and goals for the Maynooth University Department of International Development up to 2024. It does so in light of the Maynooth University Strategic Plan and the context shaping international development and higher education today. We will review the plan annually based on our operational priorities, and we look forward to working in partnership with others in Maynooth University and beyond to realise our values, vision and goals in the coming years.



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