Ollscoil Mhá Nuad
Maynooth University

Teaching and Learning Guidelines 2018

28 August 2018

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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 Maynooth education 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.

This document sets out the principles and policy which guide teaching and learning in the University. The general principles in this document apply to all teaching in the University. However, university teaching and learning involves very different disciplines, contexts and students, and therefore the application of a rigid standardised approach would be restrictive. This document therefore provides guidelines which may apply in many situations, but is not intended to prevent alternative practices where there are good pedagogical reasons to do so.

Maynooth University Graduate Attributes

Maynooth University offers a curriculum and an intellectual, cultural and social environment that provides students with opportunities to reach their full potential. On completion of their degree, graduates will have had a thorough education in the important knowledge, qualities, skills and insights of their disciplines, and will have developed fundamental intellectual skills of analysis, synthesis, critique and communication. Additionally, Maynooth University graduates will be empowered to develop qualities beyond disciplinary or technical expertise to make meaningful and positive contributions to the development of the community and society in which they live, with an awareness of the local and global contexts of that contribution.

Maynooth University students are encouraged to strive for academic excellence within a community of scholars, to take responsibility for their own learning and to develop a capacity for lifelong learning. Through their programme of study, students are expected to acquire:

- A deep understanding of the fundamental concepts, practical skills, and an appreciation of the richness and diversity of current research in the disciplines they have chosen to study.
- The fundamental intellectual skills of analysis and reflection, verbal and written communication, numeracy and digital literacy, and conceptual and critical thinking applicable to a range of work and life situations.

Maynooth University students are encouraged to utilise opportunities for self-development within a challenging programme of study, and graduates are expected to:

- Be empowered to recognise and embrace learning as an enjoyable and valuable experience.
- Be self-motivated, able to work independently and contribute effectively to team projects.
- Be capable of gathering and critiquing information from a variety of sources.
- Be intellectually responsible, self-reflective, open-minded, adaptable, curious and creative.
- Uphold high ethical and professional standards.

Maynooth University students are encouraged to be socially, culturally and environmentally aware and to:

- Recognise their social, environmental and civic responsibilities.
- Have integrity, honesty, a sense of justice, and respect for human rights.
- Appreciate cultural diversity.

The successful development of these attributes will empower graduates to contribute to knowledge, learning, to their communities and societies, locally and globally. The development of these attributes enhances employability and creates a capacity for purposeful innovation and creativity by educated, ethical and civically engaged graduates.

Principles for teaching and learning

The Maynooth University approach to teaching and learning is underpinned by five general principles.[1]

1. **The university learning experience nurtures and enables the development of students as critical thinkers and problem solvers, equipped for life-long learning.** The development of analytical and thinking skills is integral to all aspects of teaching and learning, with the aim of enabling students to develop the skills to face new and unfamiliar challenges, acquire new knowledge and insights, and to manage their own learning.

2. **Teaching is core to academic practice and is respected as scholarly and professional.** Commitment to teaching and learning is integral to the purpose, mission, and strategy of the university. The University actively encourages and enables the advancement of teaching and learning, providing opportunities of student feedback, opportunities for external review of programmes, and opportunities for staff development in teaching and learning.

3. **Teaching and learning are student-centred,** and focused on the development of the student's knowledge and skills. The university community actively explores and values a variety of approaches to teaching and learning that respect a diversity of students and disciplines.

4. **Teaching and learning are collegial processes,** involving collaboration between staff in the planning, development and review of programmes, and often involve collaboration between disciplines and with organisations external to the University.

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[1] Adapted from the European Principles for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.

5. **Learning, teaching, and research are interconnected and mutually enriching.** Teaching is informed by research, and encourages students to engage in research and the creation of new knowledge.

Students come to the University from diverse educational backgrounds. Teaching should, as far as is practicable, take an inclusive approach that anticipates the needs of students from different backgrounds.

Academic structures

Maynooth University uses a credit system aligned to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). In this system, the credit weight of a module is an indication of the amount of student effort required by a typical student to complete the module. The student effort encompasses all student effort related to the work, including taught classes, study time, and time spent on assignments. While students may vary in pace of work, the general calculation is that one credit represents 25 hours of student work. A normal academic year of full time study over two semesters is 60 credits. Programmes which involve full time study for the full year (12 months) are normally 90 credits.

A student's course of study is organised by programme, by subject and by modules. A student must be properly registered for the programme of study and the associated modules, and pay the appropriate fees.

Programme: A programme is a course of study leading to an award of the University. Each programme has a minimum credit value that must be earned in order to complete the programme. For example, an undergraduate in a three year full time BA degree must earn 180 credits to complete the programme. The programme will also specify the modules which can be included in the programme, and may specify additional parameters, such as specific modules that must be taken. When a programme is multi-annual, the programme normally includes specified requirements for progression from one year (period of study) to the next.

Subject: A subject is a subset of a programme of study, normally focussed on a specific discipline. Some programmes are single subject programmes. A subject may have specified conditions, including a minimum credit value, which must be met in order to progress in that subject, or graduate with an award in that subject.

Module: A module is a unit of study. The typical workload required to complete a module is indicated by the credit value of the module. Each module is self-contained in that it has an assessment, and a separate result is recorded for each module. All Maynooth University modules are in credit sizes that are multiples of 2.5 credits. The smallest allowed modules are 2.5 credit. In undergraduate degrees, first year modules are normally 7.5 credits, and modules in subsequent years are normally 5 credits or multiples of 5 credits.

The amount of lecture time associated with a module varies by discipline, topic and level. For undergraduate modules, a 5 credit module is typically associated with 24 hours of lectures.

Marks and Standards: The University regulations for earning credit, passing a programme, making awards, and progression in a programme, and the regulations for repeating assessments are defined in the University Marks and Standards (available on the University Policies website). All programmes are expected to align with these standards, unless a specific exception is approved. Exceptions approved by Academic Council are noted in the Marks and Standards document.

Examinations: Some modules are assessed in whole or in part through written examinations. The University Examinations Office schedules and manages examinations at specific periods each year (normally in January and May, with supplemental resits in August). Departments may arrange and manage additional examinations or assessments outside of these times, but these are not considered 'University Scheduled Examinations'.

University scheduled examinations are of standard durations of 60, 90, 120 or 180 minutes. In general, 90 and 120 minutes are the preferred durations.

External examiners: Each programme leading to an award has an external examiner, who is expected to provide an independent view of the programme and the standards in assessment. This is done before results are sent to the relevant University examination board.

National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ): Maynooth University awards are aligned with the NFQ which is developed and managed by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

Maynooth University Awards are classified as follows:

Qualification title	Level	Credits	
PhD	10	270–360	Typically 4 years of full time study at 90 credits per year.
Doctorate	10	270–360	Practitioner-Led Professional Doctorate, typically 3-4 years of study.
Master's Degree, research	9	90–180	
Master's Degree, taught	9	60–120	Most Maynooth Master's degrees are 90 credits, and many have an associated Postgraduate Diploma which allows a student to exit without completing a thesis.
Postgraduate Diploma	9	At least 60	Assumes graduate entry.
Honours Degree (4 year)	8	240	
Honours Degree (3 year)	8	180	
Higher Diploma	8	At least 60	Often used for conversion courses, where graduates take up a new discipline.

| Diploma | 6–7 | At least 60 | |
| Certificate | Any level | Normally less than 60 | |

The system of record for the Maynooth University curriculum is the Academic Database, which stores descriptions of the content and learning outcomes for each module, along with information on assessment, repeat and resit options, and information on programme structures. The Academic Database is revised annually and information in it is available to current and prospective students through the University website.

Expectations of students

Students are expected to take responsibility for their learning, be self-motivated and engage fully with their programme of study. More specifically, students are expected to:

1. Attend induction, lectures, tutorials and other timetabled classes, and meetings with tutors or supervisors, and participate actively in such meetings.
2. Participate fully in group learning activities and projects and provide collegial support for the contributions of group members.
3. Commit sufficient time to personal study and appropriately prioritise and balance study time with other commitments.
4. Devote sufficient time to independent reading as recommended. In particular, where reading is assigned in advance of a class, students are expected to have read the material thoroughly.
5. Complete and submit assessed work by stated deadlines and consider and act on feedback.
6. Notify departments of any factors that may affect engagement with their programme of study, including, for example, significant absences.

It is important that students check the relevant communications including email, Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle), websites and notice boards, and seek clarification of anything that is not understood.

Students are encouraged to engage with the various academic and advisory supports provided. A list of some of the current supports is provided as Annex A. Where students are experiencing difficulties, they are encouraged to take the initiative in contacting these support services, or the relevant Departments to seek assistance.

Students are expected to develop notetaking skills. Good note taking reduces the risk of plagiarism and assists students to engage with the course content effectively.

Student behaviour

Students are also expected to exercise academic integrity, to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with good practice and academic norms, and to avoid disruption to the learning of others. Students should familiarise themselves with the rules and regulations of the University in respect of acceptable use of systems, intellectual property, plagiarism and the use of copyright materials. Specifically, students are expected to:

1. Treat staff and fellow students with respect and dignity.
2. Avoid any behaviour which is disruptive to teaching and learning, including unnecessary noise or conversation.
3. Help to create and maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning and an environment which encourages equality of treatment and opportunity.
4. Give their full attention during lectures and classes, and to avoid parallel activities including conversation, and social media, which may be distracting to themselves or others.

5. Ensure that examinations, assignments and other assessed materials submitted are their own work, except in the case of group assignments which are clearly marked as such. Submission of assignments written by others is a form of cheating and academic malpractice, as is collusion to supply material to others.
6. Take specific care to avoid plagiarism and to reference their work properly as advised by the relevant department. The University Plagiarism Policy is available on the University Policies page. The Library has prepared a useful guide to help students avoid plagiarism, see http://nuim.libguides.com/list-online/avoiding-plagiarism.

Students studying abroad as part of their programme, or taking part in placements outside of the University but that are part of their programme will be required to comply with additional University requirements as described in the relevant policies.

For further information please see the Maynooth University Student Charter:
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/study-maynooth/maynooth-education/student-charter

Criminal convictions: Students, or applicants for programmes, who have criminal convictions are required to disclose them in accordance with the University Criminal Convictions Policy.

The criminal convictions policy is available on the University Policies page, under Academic Policies/Admissions:
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/Convictions%20Policy.pdf

Garda vetting: Students on certain programmes may be required to undergo vetting in accordance with the provisions of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012. In cases where a student is revealed to have a criminal record that the University considers incompatible with the proposed programme of study, the student may be required to leave the programme.

Risk to self or others: Where the University considers that a student poses a significant risk to themselves, to other students, or to staff, the University may decide to deny admission or to ask the student to leave the University temporarily or permanently.

Teaching

Maynooth University is committed to providing a learning environment for our students, with excellent teaching, research and scholarship, and student supports. Staff are expected to:

1. Provide teaching, assessment, feedback and academic guidance, of a high standard, informed by current research in their field, and consistent with a research-led university of high international standing, so as to support students in their development as independent students or researchers.
2. Provide access to learning activities that will support fundamental intellectual skills such as analysis, synthesis, reflection, numeracy and digital literacy, and conceptual and critical thinking.
3. Provide fair and challenging assessment, both formative and summative, in support of high academic standards and reward creativity and intellectual skill.
4. Provide clear, constructive and timely feedback on submitted work.
5. Provide opportunities to develop critical skills including written and oral communication and presentation.
6. Provide clear and timely communication of information relating to timetables, examination schedules, module and programme content.
7. Consider student workload when planning continuous assessment schedules, and provide clear, timely and unambiguous communication about assessment requirements;
8. Encourage student participation in quality enhancement activities and in programme review.

It is inherent in many academic disciplines that there may be content which some students may find troubling or distressing. If students find themselves in this situation they are encouraged to avail of our on-campus supports (see list of student supports at the end of these guidelines).

Treating students with respect and dignity

Staff are expected to treat students with respect and dignity in all interactions. While it is appropriate at times to provide robust critical feedback on work produced by students, this should be done in a professional manner.

Staff are expected to treat all students with equal respect, regardless of age, social background, religion, ethnicity, nationality, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation.

The Equality and Diversity Policy is available on the Human Resources Policies page at
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/human-resources/policies/statement-policy-equality

The Policy for Staff Student Relationships is available on the Human Resources Policy Page under Staff – Student Relationships at https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/human-resources/policies/staff-student-relationships

Information

Each module should have a clearly identified module coordinator. Normally this person is the main lecturer teaching the module. Where a module is teamtaught, it remains important to identify a coordinator who will take responsibility for the overall coherence of the module, and

who will ensure results are provided on schedule. Where possible, the module coordinator should be identified in the Academic Database.

Students should be provided with accurate information about the content of each module, the expected learning outcomes, and the assessment methods. This should be provided through the Academic Database, and made available to students through the University website. Additional information may be provided through course handbooks or through the VLE (Moodle) as appropriate. Where there is a discrepancy between sources of information, the Academic Database is used as the system of record.

It is important that academic staff are available to students who wish to ask questions. Academic staff are normally expected to have designated office hours, during which students can call in without an appointment. Staff are also expected to respond to student questions through the VLE (Moodle) and email within a reasonable timeframe (normally within three working days).

Reading and support materials

Where reading is expected as part of a module, the recommended reading list should normally be provided in advance. When compiling reading lists, staff should liaise with the Library in advance of the start of the module, allowing a reasonable timeframe to ensure that the relevant materials are available and if possible, readily available in accessible formats.

When distributing reading material in class, staff should ensure they are doing so within current Irish copyright law.

The University provides a Virtual Learning Environment (currently Moodle) to support student learning. This is intended as the primary mechanism for sharing lecture notes and supporting material with students. Staff should ensure that any links to library resources such as online journals and eBooks are created using a stable URL and do not breach current university licence agreements. PDF documents should not be downloaded from online journals and eBooks and then shared with students via Moodle. Students have access to all online library resources .

Further support and information can be provided by the Library.
See https://youtu.be/EwMA3xy7PtE

Inclusive approach to teaching

The University has a range of students with different needs and backgrounds. In line with our principle of inclusive education, staff are expected to make reasonable efforts to support all students to maximise their opportunities.

Teaching should be designed to be as inclusive as possible. This may include:

- Clear design of visual materials.
- Provision of clear supporting materials in advance where possible and appropriate.
- Presenting complex concepts in a variety of ways.
- Providing clear explanations of specialist terminology.
- Avoiding stereotypes (such as gender, racial, cultural, sexual, ethnic, etc.) in visual and teaching materials, unless the context requires it (for example, during a critical analysis).

- Creating opportunities for cooperative interactions amongst members of different ethno-cultural groups.
- Creating opportunities for students to contribute to diverse knowledge creation by sharing their experiences and perspectives.
- Ensuring materials draw from images and examples that reflect diverse ethnicity, diverse learning needs, diverse physicality, and diverse age ranges as the norm.

Course materials, such as reading lists, lecture notes and any handouts that are made available in class should be provided in an accessible electronic format in advance of lectures, where possible and appropriate. Students with particular needs can reformat these materials into the format appropriate for their needs, for example, by enlarging font size or converting to audio versions.

Students with specific additional needs should be made aware of the additional supports available supports through the Access Office. These supports include assistive technology and additional academic supports. Students may also, through the Access Office, be allowed examination accommodations, which may include additional time in examinations, or a smaller examination venue.

Recording of lectures

Teaching and course materials are considered intellectual property and are covered by copyright. It is not permitted for students to distribute, sell or re-use materials provided as part of a programme of study.

Students may wish to record (by photograph, or audio or video recording) a lecture or other teaching activity to assist in their studies. This may be allowed when:
a) The student has the specific permission of the lecturer, and
b) There is a clear understanding that the material recorded is for personal use only, and may not be distributed, published, uploaded to websites, or otherwise circulated, and
c) The recording is done in a manner that does not disturb or distract other students.

There may be some circumstances where it is not appropriate for recording to be permitted. For example, where the content of the class is of a sensitive or personal nature, or where recording would impede the participation of others.

Deadlines

Providing assignment topics early and with clear guidance on what is expected helps students when prioritising their workload and preparing for assignments. Lecturers, where practical, should consult each other on deadlines and endeavour to ensure a manageable workload for students. This may not be possible if students come from diverse programmes with many modules and some flexibility may be required.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to apply penalties for late submissions. Where these apply they should be clearly documented. This fosters discipline in relation to reaching deadlines, which is often essential in cases where feedback is returned in a short timeframe.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes (lectures, tutorials etc.) in their programme of study. Attendance is primarily the responsibility of the students, who are expected to manage their own learning. However courses may include controls on attendance, and these are particularly important in professional programmes, work placements, laboratory practicals, and other learning environments where participation or group work is considered fundamental to the learning outcomes.

Attendance may be managed by:
a) Imposing a cap on the mark where a student's attendance falls below an acceptable threshold.
b) Use of assessed in-class activity which contributes to the module mark.
c) Assigning some marks for attendance. Where this is done, care must be taken to ensure that a student cannot pass the module merely by passive attendance without evidence of achieving the required standard.

Assessment and feedback

Assessment and examinations should be appropriate, transparent, and fair. The assessment methodologies should match the stated learning outcomes. Assessments should be structured to allow students demonstrate associated learning outcomes. In designing assessments, due consideration should be given to different needs and abilities. Where practical, a range of assessment methods should be used across programmes, avoiding dependence on any one particular type, considering a balance between continuous assessment and written examinations, thereby ensuring that a sufficient diversity of assessment methods is employed for each cohort of students. Students may be assessed not merely on writing skills, but also on oral advocacy, teamwork, and negotiation skills.

Lecturers should endeavour to provide timely and meaningful feedback and incorporate formative feedback where possible.

Examination scripts and other written assessments are normally retained for review by external examiners, and for a period afterwards. Examination scripts and written assessment material should normally be held for a period of 13 months after the exam board date, as currently specified in the Records Retention Schedule (see Maynooth University Freedom of Information Office website). Where assessments rely on verbal presentation or performance, it is good practice to record these, where it is practical to do so, for use in cross moderation and external examination.

Where a student does not pass a module there may be resit or repeat options. Resit means an additional opportunity in the same academic year. Repeat means re-registering for the module and repeating it in a subsequent academic year.

Where there is a university scheduled examination, there is normally an opportunity for a supplemental resit in the same academic year. These are usually scheduled in August. For any other major assessment which occurs on a single fixed date (examination, interview or similar), a resit opportunity should normally be provided. A department may also provide resit

opportunities for continuous assessment tasks at its discretion. There is normally no supplemental resit opportunity for placements or laboratory practical tasks.

Where a department decides to allow a supplemental resit of continuous assessment, it may decide to cap the mark that can be achieved. This is normally done where a student could gain a significant advantage by taking the resit. For example, if extensive feedback is provided on an assignment, a student who waits for a supplemental resit opportunity may have the benefit of access to the work of others and the feedback on that work.

Student feedback

It is good practice to provide students with opportunities to give feedback (in anonymised form if they wish) on each module. The staff teaching the module should consider this feedback, in conjunction with any comments from the external examiners, when revising the module.

The University uses a standard instrument to allow students to provide feedback on individual modules. This survey (SELE), is administered twice each year at the end of each semester. Academic staff are encouraged to seek feedback through a variety of means, and may use additional surveys, in-class discussions, and focus groups, to gain a greater range of feedback from students. Where possible, it may be useful to have some feedback from students at an early stage in a module. It is good practice to let students know if changes are being made in response to their feedback.

Difficulties and appeals

Academic Issues: Where students have a difficulty with some academic aspect of a module, this should normally be brought to the attention of the module lecturer or coordinator. Class representatives or tutors can also raise an issue on behalf of a student. If the issue cannot be resolved at this level, it may be escalated to the course leader or year head (depending on the departmental structures in place). If the issue cannot be resolved at that level, it can be escalated to the Head of Department, and ultimately, more formally (in writing), to the Faculty Dean, or Dean of Teaching and Learning.

Behaviour issues: Issues of behaviour or harassment are dealt with through the procedures in the Code of Conduct for Students, (see the University Policies website)

Exam issues: The University provides a consultation day after the release of results in June each year. This allows a student to view the examination paper, and to discuss the result with academic staff. A student may request a recheck of results within two weeks of release of the results. This recheck is not a re-assessment of the work, but is a check to ensure that all components of the assessment have been properly included in the overall mark.

A student may also appeal a result. An appeal does not result in a re-assessment of the work, but is considered on one of two grounds:

(a)   If there is evidence of substantive irregularity in the conduct of the examination.

(b) If there are circumstances which the Programme Examination Board was not aware of when its decision was taken.

Where a department becomes aware of an error in a result, the result may be amended in consultation with the Examinations Office, without the need to appeal a result.

Further information

The University Policies are available on the Maynooth University Policies page, https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/university-policies

Academic policies, including examination policies and Marks and Standards, are available under the heading Academic Policies, at https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/university-policies/academic-policies-procedures

Records retention schedules are available on the University Policies page under Freedom of Information: https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/freedom-information/records-management/records-management-records-retention-schedule

The criminal convictions policy is available on the University Policies page, under Academic Policies/Admissions: https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/Convictions%20Policy.pdf

The Equality and Diversity Policy is available on the Human Resources Policies page at https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/human-resources/policies/statement-policy-equality

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2 April 2018	Second draft for review at Academic Council 9 April 2018
12 April 2018	Third draft following review at Academic Council 9 April 2018
24 April 2018	Fourth draft from second review at Teaching and Learning Committee (including feedback from faculty T&L committees)
15 May 2018	Approved by Academic Council 28 May 2018

Annex A: Student Supports

The University Library
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/library

The Writing Centre
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/centre-teaching-and-learning/student-learning-and-advice/writing-centre

The Mathematics Support Centre
http://supportcentre.maths.nuim.ie

The Programme Advisory Office
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/programme-advisory-office

The Academic Advisory office
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/centre-teaching-and-learning/student-learning-and-advice/academic-advisory-office

The Access Office
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/access-office

Student Services
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/student-services

The Maynooth Students' Union
https://www.msu.ie