

Institutional Review Report 2019

NUI Galway



QOI REVIEW

CINNTE 

Foreword

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is responsible for the external quality assurance (QA) of further and higher education and training in Ireland. One of QQI's most important functions is to ensure that the QA procedures that institutions have in place are effective. To this end, QQI carries out external reviews of higher education institutions on a cyclical basis. This current QQI cycle of reviews is called the CINNTE cycle. CINNTE reviews are an element of the broader quality framework for institutions composed of Quality Assurance Guidelines; each institution's Quality Assurance Procedures; Annual Institutional Quality Reports (AIQR); and Dialogue Meetings. The CINNTE review cycle runs from 2017-2023. During this period, QQI will organise and oversee independent reviews of each of the Universities, the Institutes of Technology and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI).

Each CINNTE review evaluates the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of each institution. Review measures each institution's compliance with European standards for quality assurance, regard to the expectations set out in QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines or their equivalent and adherence to other relevant QQI policies and procedures. CINNTE reviews also explore how

institutions have enhanced their teaching, learning and research and their quality assurance systems and how well institutions have aligned their approach to their own mission, quality indicators and benchmarks.

The CINNTE review process is in keeping with Parts 2 and 3 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG 2015) and based on the internationally accepted and recognised approach to reviews, including:

- the publication of Terms of Reference
- a process of self-evaluation and Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)
- an external assessment and site visit by a team of reviewers
- the publication of a Review Report including findings and recommendations
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken

This QQI CINNTE institutional review of National University of Ireland Galway was conducted by an independent review team in line with the Terms of Reference in Appendix A. This is the report of the findings of the Review Team.

The Review Team

Each CINNTE review is carried out by an international team of independent experts and peers. The 2019 institutional review of National University of Ireland Galway (NUI Galway) was conducted by a team of six reviewers selected by QQI. The Review Team was trained by QQI on 7 February 2019. The Chair and Coordinating Reviewer undertook a planning visit to NUI Galway on 8 February 2019. The Main Review Visit (MRV) was conducted by the full team between 25 March and 29 March 2019.

CHAIR

Professor Sibrandes Poppema was born in the Netherlands and studied Medicine at the University of Groningen. He specialized in Pathology and defended his PhD thesis on the Immunopathology of Hodgkin's disease in 1979. He obtained postdoc positions at the University of Kiel (Germany) and Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School. In 1985 he was appointed to the J.K. de Cock chair in Immunopathology at the University of Groningen. From 1987 till 1995 he was Professor of Pathology at the University of Alberta and Director of Laboratory Medicine at the Cross Cancer Institute in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

In 1995 he returned to Groningen to become chairman of the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine. In 1999 he was appointed dean of the Faculty of Medical Sciences at the University of Groningen. He introduced the problem-based, competency-oriented curriculum G2010 in 2003, forged the merger of Faculty and Academic Hospital into the University Medical Center Groningen in 2005 and became vice-president of the UMCG. In 2006 he started the Healthy Ageing focus with the flagship projects LifeLines and ERIBA. In 2008 he was appointed president of the University of Groningen

and in 2014 re-appointed until 2018. Under his guidance the university introduced the three focus areas Healthy Ageing, Energy & Sustainability, and Sustainable Society; improved the study success rate of the students by more than 20 percent; and progressed into the top 100 in the three major university rankings.

Professor Poppema is an expert on Hodgkin's disease and has published around 250 articles.

He was awarded a Knighthood of the Order of the Netherlands Lion for his scientific achievements in 2007. Professor Poppema is a member of the Netherlands Academy of Technology and Innovation. In 2011 he received an appointment as Honorary Consul General for the Republic of Korea in the Northern Netherlands.

Professor Poppema serves on a wide range of committees and boards, such as the advisory board of the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy in Berlin, the international scientific advisory board of the Berlin Institute of Health, the executive board of the European Medical School Oldenburg/Groningen, the supervisory board of the healthcare group TREANT and the Council of Confucius Institute Headquarters.

COORDINATING REVIEWER

Dr Claire Carney is Associate Vice-Principal (Education) for the University of the West of Scotland. As a member of the University leadership Team, she contributes to the strategic leadership of the University and supports the overall achievement of the Corporate Strategy with specific responsibility for the Student Success Education Enabling Plan, UWS Academy, Education Futures and Quality Enhancement. Prior to this, Dr Carney was Head of Quality Enhancement and, laterally, Interim Director at the Quality Assurance Agency Scotland where she was responsible for leading the design, development and quality of the provision of the Quality Enhancement programme of activities across the Scottish Higher Education sector.

LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE

Dr Morgan Cawley Buckley is an MA student in Higher Education at the Technological University of Dublin. He holds a PhD from Magdalene College, Cambridge, a Master's degree from the Royal College of Music, a Fellowship of Trinity College London and a Bachelor's degree from Dublin Institute of Technology. Dr Cawley Buckley currently lectures on Social, Political and Community Studies (SPCS) and Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care) programmes at Carlow College, having had previous posts at Newcastle University, the Royal College of Music, London, and the Mater Dei Institute of Education (now part of the Dublin City University (DCU) Institute of Education). He played a small part in programme revalidation in his current post at Carlow College, and is a member of the SPCS Programme Board.

QUALITY ASSURANCE REPRESENTATIVE

Professor Linda Hogan is an ethicist with extensive experience in research and teaching in pluralist and multi-religious contexts. Her primary research interests lie in the fields of inter-cultural and inter-religious ethics, human rights and gender. In 2015 she established the Trinity Ethics Initiative and is founder of Trinity EthicsLab. From 2011-15 she was Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer of Trinity College Dublin and as such had overall responsibility for education and research at the university, where she coordinated strategic planning, research, undergraduate and postgraduate education, quality and the student experience.

Professor Hogan has lectured on a range of topics in ethics and religion, including Ethics in International Affairs; Ethics of Globalisation; Biomedical Ethics; and Comparative Social Ethics. She has held posts at Trinity College Dublin and at the University of Leeds, where she was a member of the Centre for Business Ethics. She has been a member of the Irish Council for Bioethics and a board member of the Coombe Hospital, Science Gallery Dublin and the Marino Institute of Education. She is currently Chair of the Governing Body of Marino Institute of Education. She has also been appointed to the editorial boards of international journals including *Feminist Theory*; the *Journal of Religious Ethics*; and the *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics and Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. She has worked on a consultancy basis for a number of national and international organisations, focusing on developing ethical infrastructures. Her most recent monograph is *Keeping Faith With Human Rights*, Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2016.

EXTERNAL REPRESENTATIVE

Ken Finnegan has been CEO of Tangent, the innovation centre at Trinity College Dublin, since February 2019. Prior to this Mr Finnegan was the Chief Technology Advisor to IDA Ireland, where he provided insight and advice in relation to research, development and innovation. He was the single point of contact for research centres, third-level institutions and academia for the technology multinational community in Ireland.

Mr Finnegan was responsible for cluster development and developed national value propositions for Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things, Data Analytics, and Cyber-Security among others. He regularly contributes to a variety of business and industry journals, including Silicon Republic, Irish Tech News, and Dublin Globe and has chaired the Smart City IoT World conference in Singapore. He has also presented on technology innovation around the world. He holds a degree in Information Technology and Telecommunication from UL and a Master of Science from The Smurfit Business School, UCD.

INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Appointed director of AEQES in 2008, Caty Duykaerts is responsible for designing and implementing external evaluation procedures in Belgian French-speaking higher education (universities, university colleges, art schools and conservatories, and adult education centres). AEQES underwent external reviews in 2011 and 2016. Both reviews contributed to the further development of the agency and granted it ENQA membership. Committed to the field of quality assurance (ENQA Board member and Vice-President, member of EURASHE Working Group on Quality, member of the Steering Committee of the European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF), co-founder of the French-speaking network of QA agencies), she was previously a language teacher in adult education and ran a large adult education centre in Brussels. Since 2016, she is the ENQA representative in the Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) Initiative, where she has been drafting the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA) and a review methodology for agency reviews.

Section A

Introduction and Context



Introduction and Context

NUI Galway was founded by royal charter in 1845 and was originally named Queen’s College Galway. The University is a constituent university of the National University of Ireland (NUI) and is a member of the Irish Universities Association (IUA), the European University Association (EUA) and the Coimbra Group of Universities¹. NUI Galway is one of seven universities, one technological university and 11 institutes of technology that make up the Irish higher education system. NUI Galway is the only university provider in the higher education West/North-West Cluster, in which it clusters with three institutes of technology that are currently working to attain technological university designation (Galway-Mayo IT, Sligo IT, and Letterkenny IT). At the time of writing in 2019, NUI Galway is ranked 260th in the world, according to the QS World University Rankings, and is in the top 350 in the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, which represents the top 1% of universities worldwide. NUI Galway was named University of the Year in the 2018 Sunday Times’ Irish Good University Guide.

The work of NUI Galway is governed by the Universities Act 1997. The University is guided by its Strategic Plan 2015-2020 Vision 2020², which outlines its strategic objectives. The strategic plan is divided into four main themes: ‘Teaching & Learning’, ‘Research & Innovation’, ‘Internationalisation’, and ‘Our Communities’. NUI Galway’s stated mission is to foster a vibrant community of students and staff, where distinguished learning, impactful research, and creative thinking are shared with the world. In delivering this mission, the University’s activities are underpinned by five core values: Ambition; Creativity; Impact; Collaboration; and Integrity. Its stated vision is that it ‘will be a leading global university, renowned for [its] distinctive areas of research, recognised as an institution of choice for [its] teaching and scholarship,

celebrated for [its] outstanding engagement with wider society, and enriched by a dynamic network of partnerships’.

There has been a relatively stable student profile over the last five years (2012/2013-2016/2017), with a steady increase in enrolments, particularly of postgraduate students, and a growth in non-EU students (see *Institutional Profile*³). Table 1 below illustrates the number of students attending the University over the past five academic years and the number of graduates each year (see *Institutional Profile*). Other key data from NUI Galway’s ISER (ISER, p. 9) include:

- 24% of students are from non-traditional⁴ backgrounds;
- the quality of undergraduate admissions has improved significantly, as measured by an average CAO points increase from 390 in 2010/2011 to 455 in 2017/2018;
- the retention rate of students sits at 80%;
- employment rates for graduates remain high at 97% (this includes graduates who continue to further education).

The student experience score from the national *Irish Survey of Student Engagement* (ISSE) remains above/ in line with the national average for the university sector. 85% of students indicate satisfaction with their experience and 89% indicate that they would make the same decision to take their course at NUI Galway if they had to start university again. NUI Galway has a particular focus and emphasis on the promotion of the Irish language and Irish studies. It is estimated that 10% of the student body are undertaking courses either about Irish language or culture, or through the medium of Irish.

1 <https://www.coimbra-group.eu/>.

2 <http://www.nuigalway.ie/vision2020>

3 <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/NUI%20Galway%20-%20Institutional%20Profile.pdf>

4 <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/NUIG%20ISER%202018.pdf>

Non-traditional students are defined in the ISER (p. 22) as “those students from under-represented socio-economic backgrounds, who may also be mature students or students with a disability”.

According to data provided to the Review Team by the Higher Education Authority (HEA), 50% of the students attending higher education in the region are

enrolled at NUI Galway. The university also accounts for 90% of full-time enrolments of postgraduate students in the region.

Table 1: Student Profile

STUDENTS	2012/2013	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Undergraduate	13,935	13,713	13,905	14,379	14,070
Postgraduate	3,548	3,569	3,637	3,833	3,995
Total	17,483	17,282	17,542	18,212	18,065
Part-time	2,784	2,610	2,815	2,898	2,827
International	2,749	2,994	3,233	3,685	3,116
Graduates	5,656	5,798	5,248	5,693	5,706

The University is Galway's second largest employer, with over 2,600 staff in total (*Institutional Profile*). The number of academic employees has remained relatively static, primarily due to staffing restrictions following the 2010 economic downturn and the

restriction imposed by the Employment Control Framework (ECF 2012)⁵. Table 2 illustrates staff numbers at the University over the past five academic years.

Table 2: Staff Profile

STAFF	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017
Academic Staff	1,076	1,051	1,041	1,068	1,067
Research Staff	490	489	539	601	650
Support Staff	995	918	926	948	949
Total	2,561	2,458	2,506	2,617	2,666

5 <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/05/Appendix-4-Employment-Control-Framework.pdf>

NUI Galway is funded through the Higher Education Authority (HEA)⁶, the Irish funding and strategy body for higher education. A funding breakdown for 2018 published by the HEA indicates that the University's overall funding for 2017 was €230 million, 41% of which consisted of core funding from the HEA and a further 40.8% of which came from undergraduate fees. The remainder is derived from nursing and medical fees, skills and pensions, and other State funding received to support the successful participation in higher education of students from widening participation areas and those with disabilities.

The ISER and the *Institutional Profile* highlight the economic downturn that occurred in Ireland following the 2008 financial crisis – and, specifically, the collapse in Government finances – which led to major cutbacks in the funding of higher education in Ireland. As a result of this, according to the *Institutional*

Profile, between 2008 and 2017 the direct State grant to NUI Galway was more than halved, falling from €70.3m to €31.5m. This reduction in funding and associated staff employment restrictions are noted in the ISER to have resulted in a high student staff ratio across all colleges; however, efforts have been made to address this through diversification of non-exchequer income (ISER, p. 24)

The University offers over 60 undergraduate taught programmes at level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), and over 100 postgraduate taught programmes at levels 9 and 10 (see *Institutional Profile*). In addition, there is a range of part-time programmes at certificate and diploma levels, as well as a comprehensive suite of research master's and PhD programmes available in each of the University's four colleges and 17 schools (see Table 3)

Table 3: Structure of NUI Galway Colleges and Schools

<p>College of Arts, Social Sciences and Celtic Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » School of Education » School of Geography and Archaeology » School of Humanities » School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures » School of Political Science and Sociology » School of Psychology 	<p>College of Science and Engineering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » School of Chemistry » School of Computer Science » School of Engineering » School of Mathematics, Statistics and Applied Mathematics » School of Natural Sciences » School of Physics
<p>College of Business, Public Policy and Law</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics » School of Law » Shannon College of Hotel Management 	<p>College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » School of Medicine » School of Nursing and Midwifery » School of Health Sciences

⁶ <http://hea.ie/higher-education-institutions/national-university-of-ireland-galway/funding/>

At the time of the CINNTE review NUI Galway had a number of key strategic projects and activities in place, set in a broadly challenging financial environment for all higher education institutions (HEIs) in Ireland. The term of the University's Corporate Strategy (*Vision 2020*) ends and the University is going through an active period of consultation to develop its new strategy. This was apparent during the MRV, during which 'Imagine NUI Galway'⁷ took place. This online discussion forum was live from 11am-midnight on Thursday, 28 March. The forum was open to students, staff, alumni and any member of the public who takes an interest in how the University will develop over the coming years.

An academic restructuring is also currently in progress, with the planned merger of the Colleges of Science and Engineering & Informatics. At the time of review, a new (external) dean had been appointed and was about to take up office. There is also an associated project to facilitate budget devolution through a new 'RIGRAM' resource allocation model (this was recommended as part of the last institutional review in 2010/2011, see below). Staff were optimistic that it would lead to more transparency but, as the system is still in its very early stages, it is too early to comment on its success or otherwise. In addition, a review of the functioning of NUI Galway's Governing Authority, *Údarás na hOllscoile*, including the efficacy of its committee structure, is taking place, with a review being conducted by the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) in 2019 (meeting 2, *Údarás*; see Objective 1 – *Governance and Management*).

The most recent institutional review of NUI Galway was carried out as part of the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) Institutional Review of Irish Universities (IRIU) in 2010/2011. The subsequent review report included a number of recommendations to NUI Galway. The ISER provides evidence of each of the actions taken by the University in respect of each recommendation and the Review Team is content that all had been addressed, particularly the recommendation in respect of including Executive Deans of Colleges in the University Management Team (UMT).

NUI Galway has made a comprehensive effort to ensure that there is wide-ranging guidance (major policies, procedures, regulations and guidelines) on quality assurance (QA) available from one central location through the development by the Quality Office of a Policy and Procedures (P&P) Repository. The P&P Repository adopts a holistic and distributed approach, with all P&Ps across the University available from a central location, but ownership of groups of P&Ps distributed across key units, e.g. the Registrar's Office, Human Resources (HR), the Examinations Office, etc. The P&P Repository is available through the NUI Galway staff homepage and through the Quality Office website. The Review Team noted this as a welcome outcome of the 2010/11 review and staff whom the Review Team met over the period of the MRV were very aware of the Repository and assured the Review Team that, when necessary, they made use of the guidance available. Staff were also complimentary about the work of the Quality Office in supporting and guiding activity.

7 <https://www.nuigalway.ie/imagine/>



Section B

Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)

Methodology Used to Prepare the ISER

Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)

Methodology used to prepare the ISER

The ISER was developed by a Self-Evaluation Team (SET). Its membership was drawn from across schools, professional services and the Students' Union, and the group was chaired by the Dean of Graduate Studies (a member of the UMT). The ISER indicates that the SET was originally formed in May 2016 (some 30 months prior to submission of the ISER) which appeared to the Review Team to be a very long lead-in time, but it is understood that NUI Galway believed that, prior to finalisation of the CINNTE schedule, NUI Galway had expected that its review would occur at an earlier stage of the cycle. During this time, the original Chair (Vice-President: Innovation and Performance) left NUI Galway and, subsequently, the Dean of Graduate Studies assumed the role of Chair. Additionally, it was noted that the Dean of Students was not on the SET, due to having been appointed only a short time before the MRV took place. However, it is understood that the previous Vice-President for Student Experience (retired September 2018) was very involved in the ISER process and that the newly appointed Dean of Students (appointed March 2019) was invited to meet the Review Team (meeting 10, Student Services Staff).

There was little description of the methods employed by the University to secure widespread ownership of the ISER by staff and students, nor was this mentioned in any of the meetings held with staff, students or external stakeholders, including *Údarás* members. The ISER referred to 'collaborative development' of the ISER but did not contain any description or details of consultation with staff, students or external stakeholders. The Review Team considered this a 'missed-opportunity' given that NUI Galway was in the process of developing a new corporate strategy, elements of which could have

been 'intertwined' with the ISER to maximise the development of both. It is hoped that during the next iteration of CINNTE reviews, there will be evidence of broader engagement in the preparation of the ISER.

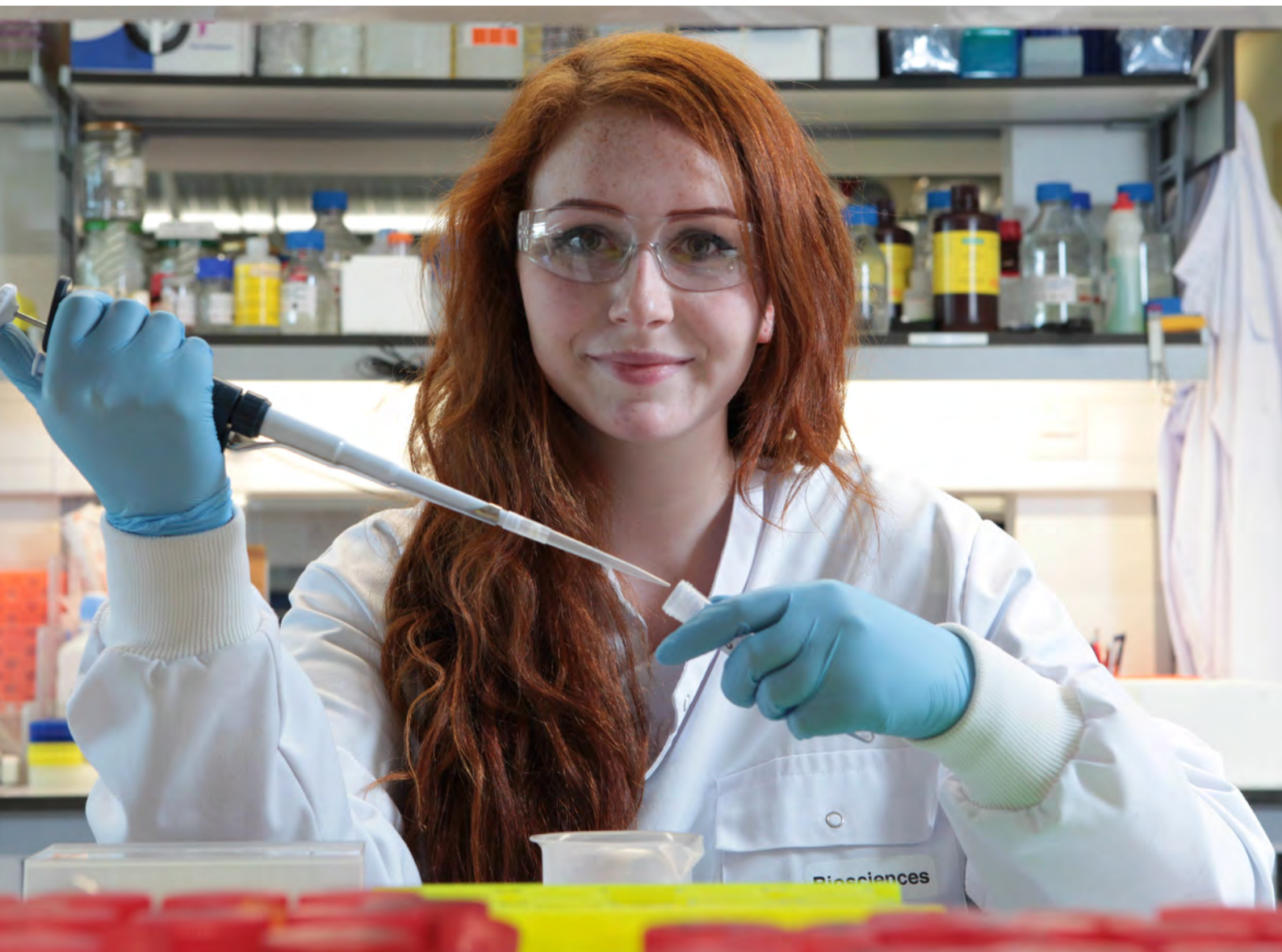
During the Review Team's meeting with the SET, SET members spoke of the challenges they encountered in constructing and presenting the document in the absence of guidance or publication of earlier reports to guide and direct. Members also stressed that their aim was to provide a 'picture' of the University that did not focus solely on financial resources, which are always a challenge. Instead, they aimed to identify key enhancement projects (meeting 6, Self-Evaluation Team).

In the absence of a prescribed template, the ISER was structured around the twelve headings of QQI's *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*⁸. The ISER also referenced these guidelines, as well as other related key documents, including QQI's *Sector-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies*⁹, the *European Standards and Guidelines* (ESG) and the Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR). Each sub-section was then divided into three subsections: Introduction, Recent Major Enhancements and Future Enhancements and related case studies were included. The Review Team considered the provision of case studies a welcome and commendable addition, which provided useful insight and depth into various activities. The Review Team noted that the ISER has been published on the external website.

The approach taken by the SET was to begin with an evaluation of the key recommendations and actions arising from the 2010 IRIU report. The SET

8 <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf>

9 <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Sector-Specific%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%20for%20Designated%20Awarding%20Bodies.pdf>



was satisfied that all recommendations had been addressed and that actions arising have been implemented. The Review Team was also satisfied that all recommendations had been addressed, although members agreed that this could have been done more expediently. NUI Galway responded to the IRIU recommendation to consider the working relationship and communications between the UMT and the Deans to create a stronger leadership culture (ISER, p. 6) in 2012/13 by creating an Academic Management Team, chaired by the Registrar, which created a clear leadership role for Deans, and a clear line of communication to the UMT. However, the Deans were not included in the UMT until 2018. The Chair

expressed an expectation that key recommendations from the CINNTE Review 2019 would not take as long to implement as those set out in the 2010/2011 IRIU report.

The ISER provided some evidence that the development process itself highlighted areas where action or further action was required. An example was the Student Feedback Policy and Procedure, where outcomes of the Quality Survey (2017) highlighted generally good compliance and external oversight by heads of school of the process within schools. The SET endorsed the current initiative to centralise the student feedback process to ensure transparency and oversight and streamlining of processes (ISER, p. 14).

A commendable element of the work by the SET was to conduct a follow-up quality culture survey to the original 2010 survey. The aim was to assess how QA culture had evolved over that time in response to emerging external standards and guidelines, as well as to various leadership initiatives including the Strategic Plan. Summary findings from the survey indicated that the quality culture in NUI Galway is shifting to being 'responsive' rather than 'reactive' (as had been indicated by findings from the survey in 2010), and staff regard it as an opportunity for change and continuous enhancement by schools. It was evident from review meetings that staff believed they had 'ownership' of quality and could demonstrate the need for continuous improvement. Staff also had high praise for the Quality Office. Qualitative comments from the survey suggested a need for more work to be done on the University's system of policies and procedures (which was subsequently completed through the development of a P&P Repository) and the need for UMT to support quality through stronger participation and a greater allocation of resources. Comments also suggest that the emerging culture needs to be supported by a strong centralised performance data management system. (Quality Culture Survey 2017, p. 7). Both of these latter comments were repeated throughout subsequent staff meetings.

On the whole the ISER provided a broad picture of NUI Galway and, whilst the Review Team is of the view that it could have been more reflective (and less descriptive), it recognises that it is a new exercise and that there were no published documents to guide development. The SET acknowledged that there was general and genuine apprehension about the 'public' nature of the document and, as such, the document was perhaps not as reflective as it might otherwise have been (Planning Visit, meeting 1, February 8).

The Review Team acknowledged that each section features 'areas for future enhancement', which arose as a result of the ISER process (e.g. the *Feedback Policy* outlined above) and it is highlighted throughout the document that some of these initiatives have already begun.

Some of the sections were quite short – for example, section 11 – and the Review Team had a large number of questions regarding quality processes. In order to find answers to these questions, the Review Team requested a considerable amount of supplementary material from NUI Galway to aid the Team in carrying out its review. It was time-consuming for all and NUI Galway was exemplary in providing all material. This gave the Review Team a sense of security that 'everything was there', even though it may not have been described in the ISER. The Review Team wishes to positively note the high level of engagement and evaluation demonstrated in its formal meetings with NUI Galway staff and students. Due to the openness and capacity of the delegates with whom the Review Team engaged and the comprehensive nature of the supplementary information provided by NUI Galway, the Review Team was confident of its ability to triangulate views on certain areas of strategic importance, and to make recommendations that it believes will be constructive and useful to NUI Galway in the key period of development which lies ahead.

COMMENDATION 1

The Review Team commends the University for the development and format of the ISER and for the provision of helpful case-studies. While the Team is of the view that the document could possibly have been more reflective, it acknowledges that this is a new exercise and that there were no published documents to guide development. It further acknowledges that the ISER has now been published on the external website, which highlights the level of transparency and openness.

COMMENDATION 2

The Review Team commends the University for conducting a follow-up quality culture survey (original survey conducted in 2010), the aim of which was to assess how the QA culture has evolved over that time in response to emerging external standards and guidelines, as well as for various leadership initiatives.

Section C

Quality Assurance/Accountability

- Objective 1 – Current Quality Assurance Procedures
- Objective 2 – Quality Enhancement
- Objective 3 – Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression
- Objective 4 – Provision of Programmes to International Learners

Quality Assurance/ Accountability

Objective 1 – Current Quality Assurance Procedures

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

NUI Galway’s quality system is built on a comprehensive and supportive quality approach that aims to ensure that “continuous improvement to the quality of all activities across NUI Galway is the responsibility of every member of staff through their own individual efforts and through various organisational committees and units” (AIQR 2018). During the MRV, the Review Team observed that students play a key role in QA, mainly through various mechanisms for feedback (with high rates of participation) but also by being members of its numerous committees. In this way, students are present as active participants in governance and quality review.

Three key external standards guide the institution in the development of its internal QA processes, namely the QQI *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*, the *Sector-specific Statutory QA Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies* and the ESG. Both the AIQR and the 2018 ISER make clear and appropriate reference to these external standards. In its review of the AIQRs (2017 and 2018) submitted by NUI Galway to QQI, the Review Team could see clear overlap and correlation between the AIQRs and the ISER, which provided assurance to the team that NUI Galway is in a continual cycle of evaluation and development.

The quality approach of NUI Galway is well aligned with the University’s overall strategy. “Continuous commitment by all staff to improving quality is also guided by the University’s *Vision 2020* Strategic Plan that outlines specific goals for quality and performance enhancement [...]” (AIQR 2018). The Strategic Plan is reviewed annually by means of

a report from the President to the *Údarás*. At the time of the visit, the Review Team heard that the process of developing the new strategic plan had started, with staff (academic and administrative) and students at all levels encouraged to take part, and several participants expressing their commitment to the process. However, from meeting with external stakeholders (meeting 12, External Stakeholders), it also appeared that they, as yet, were not very engaged in this process. This was perhaps because the new strategic plan is at an early stage of its development. The Review Team hopes that external stakeholder involvement will be a strong feature of the new strategic plan, as development proceeds.

The University’s Strategic Plan is implemented through operational planning at different levels. *Ad hoc* structures and communications processes are in place to manage implementation, and discussions between the Review Team and various stakeholders suggested a high degree of awareness and ownership of the Strategic Plan.

The scope of NUI Galway QA and quality enhancement (QE) processes includes *inter alia* learning and teaching, but also research; staff recruitment; training and development; equality, diversity and inclusion strategies; and collaborative partnerships. To evidence that broad scope, as mentioned previously, the Quality Office has developed and maintains a comprehensive repository of policies and procedures – the P&P Repository – that are in use across the University. Over 280 individual P&Ps are codified and are accessible on the University’s website¹⁰. All P&Ps and the Repository itself are subject to periodic review on a seven-year cycle and are updated where necessary. They guide the actions and behaviour of staff and

¹⁰ <http://www.nuigalway.ie/human-resources/formanagers/policies-procedures/>

students. The Review Team noted this as a welcome development from the last review (in 2010/11) and staff and students were universal in their praise of the P&P Repository's provision of uniformity, transparency and consistency with regard to governance. It is worth noting that the AIQR 2018 states that "the University adopts a holistic and distributed approach where all P&Ps across the University are available through a central repository but where ownership of relevant groups of P&Ps is distributed across key units [...] which can manage and develop them". This explains how the responsibility for quality and QA is allocated.

The team was impressed by the Quality Office's diligence in creating the repository; a further step and area for consideration might be to rationalise the number of policies and develop a Quality Handbook, which would be available to all staff. The team also recommends that, with the Director of Quality due to leave his post and return to his substantive role, the future role and development of the quality office be considered, as well as the potential to link it with related support services – for example, with the Centre of Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), where the sharing of good practice from reviews and direct developmental activities could be supported. This would allow for increased integration of activities – for example, positive practices identified from reviews, which could be shared across NUI Galway via CELT with direct intervention from CELT to support areas for development.

There is a clear determination evident in the senior management team (the President and Deputy President) to have a more devolved approach; as the Review Team heard during interviews, this approach gives college deans and heads of school new responsibilities in respect of QA and QE, and this is regarded as being a constructive approach. The objective of embedding a QA and review culture across the university has been central to NUI Galway's strategy for a number of years. In particular, as outlined above, since 2010 the focus has been on moving from a reactive culture to a more responsive one. In a recent paper entitled *Internal QA Policies across the Full Spectrum of Institutional Activities* (EQAF, November 2018), NUI Galway's Director of

Quality claimed that early findings from the Quality Culture Survey (2017) suggest that this broadening of the scope of QA is valued by staff and students, and that a significant cultural shift is discernible.

Definitions of 'quality' and 'quality culture' are matters of debate. However, through a comprehensive analysis of different approaches, Bollaert *et al* conclude that some indicative features have emerged. These include academic ownership and behaviour of stakeholders; partnership and co-operation; a recognised need for a system of quality monitoring to ensure accountability and to facilitate improvement in a non-'bureaucratic' but transparent way, involving students and inspirational leadership in a symbiotic relationship between individual and community and welcoming external critical evaluation, including peers acting as critical friends to stimulate (self-) reflection and improvement praxis.¹¹ At NUI Galway, the Review Team observed these features throughout the MRV. This is laudable. As noted in the University documentation (including NUIG's Strategic Plan, ISER, website, and P&Ps), and as demonstrated in the multiple interviews conducted during the MRV, ownership of quality and a commitment to its enhancement are realities at all levels for staff and students.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Review Team recommends that the University consider the future role and development of the Quality Office on the departure of the Director of Quality. It further recommends that the University consider linking the Quality Office with related support services – for example, the Centre of Excellence in Learning and Teaching – where sharing of good practice from reviews and direct developmental activities would be supported.

COMMENDATION 3

The Review Team commends the work of the Quality Office in driving the quality culture, which ensures that all staff have ownership of QA and quality enhancement, and in developing and coordinating the policy and procedures.

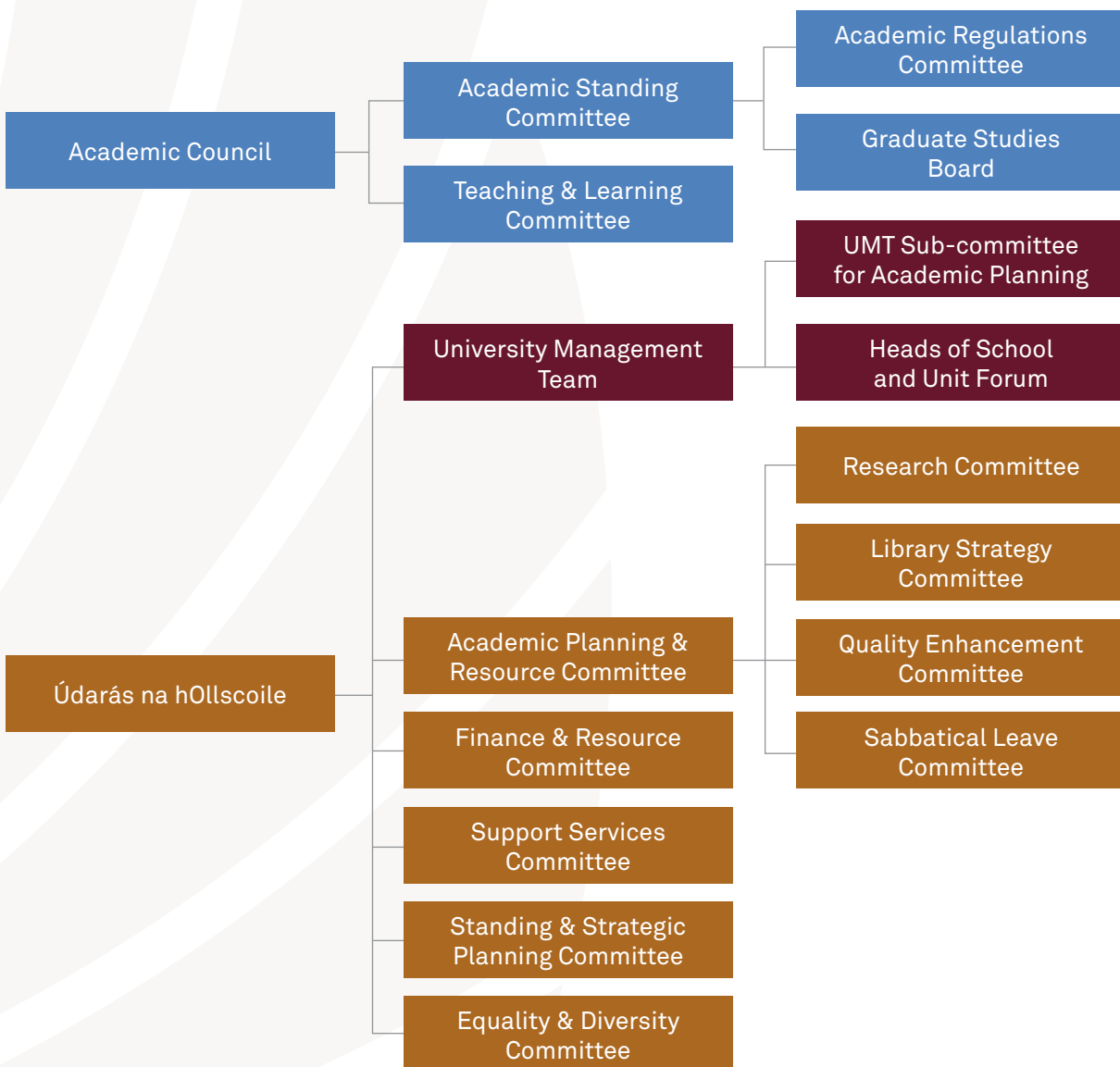
11 EQAF1 Bollaert, L., Brus, S., Curvale, B., Harvey, L., Helle, E., Jensen, H.T., Komljenovic, J., Orphanides, A. & Sursock, A. (2007), *Embedding Quality Culture in Higher Education – a Selection of Papers from the 1st European Forum for Quality Assurance (23-25 November 2006, Technische Universität München)*, Brussels: EUA Case Studies

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Under the Irish Universities Act 1997, governance arrangements for NUI Galway follow a bicameral model, with *Údarás* exercising overall governance responsibility and Academic Council (AC) having a particular responsibility for the governance of academic affairs. Consequently, AC plays a critical role in setting the academic direction of the University, and its remit includes the development and approval of academic programmes and academic policy.

The University Management Team (UMT) is responsible for executing the decisions of *Údarás* through all academic colleges, schools and centres, and major support services. *Údarás* comprises elected representatives of academic staff, students, alumni, local organisations (public and industrial), and ministerial nominees, and has full responsibility for the oversight of quality and QA. It receives quality reports through its sub-committees, which include the Academic Priorities and Resources Committee (APRC), Support Services Committee (SSC) and the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC). QA is a standing item on the meetings of AC and students are represented at all levels on NUI Galway committees.

Figure 1: NUI Galway committees 2018



NUI Galway commissioned a review of the functioning of *Údarás na hOllscoile*, including the efficacy of its committee structure (meeting 2, *Údarás*). The Review Team was shown an early draft of the review and concurred with one of the recommendations, which sought that consideration be given to the strategic overview of quality at committee level (QEC) and queried whether all such quality-related information could be directed through the Academic Standing Committee (ASC) and onwards to AC, which would ensure that all academic-related material would be collated, reviewed and monitored.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Review Team recommends that the University consider requiring the Quality Enhancement Committee to report to the Academic Standing Committee and onwards to Academic Council.

PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

NUI Galway's programme development and approval processes, which are described in the ISER, align with ESG 1.2¹². Schools and colleges in NUI Galway prepare programme and module templates that include programme objectives, learning outcomes, progression rules, and student workloads (measured in ECTS). This is in line with requirements for associating programmes of education and training with a level on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Academic staff can also use CELT to assist in designing their programmes. In addition, the Quality Office also supports schools in order to guarantee compliance with ESG and with QQI's *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*.

All programmes have associated programme boards and the Review Team heard from external stakeholders, particularly from the nursing (and the HSE) and business communities about their involvement in revising or evaluating programmes as part of the programme development process (meeting 12, External Stakeholder). Programme approval begins with individual schools before proceeding to approval by college boards. Final approval is then required from AC following evaluation by its Standing Committee. This process separates the responsibilities of

'proposers' and 'approvers' and provides oversight of the programme design and approval process by senior officers (AIQR 2018).

In terms of processes, several policies are in operation to support the maintenance of the quality of these programmes. These include *External Examiners (Taught)* (QA005), *Review of Taught Programmes* (QA006), *Review of Linked Providers* (QA009), and *Review of Schools* (QA003). The fourth of these policies focusses on learning, teaching and student engagement and enhancements aimed at achieving *Vision 2020* (QA Annual Report, 27 September 2018). Student feedback processes are also considered through the ISSE and the International Student Barometer. The Quality Office intranet shows data related to reviewers and external examiners as well as reports related to the University's external examination process (AIQR 2018). The documentation made available before and during the MRV, together with the testimonies from the University representatives, provided the Review Team with evidence that these processes work well and support enhancement. One way in which the Review Team thought NUI Galway could enhance practice was to share common themes that emerge from the discrete school or programme reviews, which could be shared across the whole NUI Galway community. The Review Team therefore recommends that the University conduct a thematic review on a cyclical basis to consider the main themes arising from school and programme reviews as well as from the reports from external examiners.

The total number of programmes in NUI Galway's portfolio (undergraduate and postgraduate) runs close to 400 and, over the course of the week, the Review Team met (master's) students on programmes where only a handful of students were enrolled (including one master's programme with two students enrolled). In light of the challenging financial climate, and associated cap on recruitment imposed by the ECF in 2012, it is recommended that NUI Galway conduct a portfolio review (particularly at master's level) to provide a comprehensive understanding of NUI Galway's programme provision. The portfolio is extensive, with some programmes having very few participants and, in the current financial climate, this represents a significant staffing cost; it may

12 ESG 1.2 Design and approval of programmes

also pose a challenge to maintaining comprehensive oversight of quality. It would be beneficial to create a more streamlined set of programmes to avoid a proliferation of QA reviews, action plans etc., and the risks associated with such a structure. The Review Team notes that a reduction in programmes does not necessarily require a reduction in the breadth of subjects offered to students, but rather recommends a different way of structuring those offerings.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Review Team recommends that the University conduct a thematic review on a cyclical basis to consider the main themes arising from school and programme reviews as well as from the reports from external examiners.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Review Team recommends that the University conduct a portfolio review (particularly at master’s level) to provide a comprehensive understanding of NUI Galway’s programme provision. In addition, the Review Team recommends that the University develop comprehensive guidance and application processes for new programme proposals that will drive a change in culture and recognition of programme delivery costs and requirements.

STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT

NUI Galway has a robust set of processes, focussed on recruitment, management and development, to assure itself of the competence and professionalism of its staff. The chronic underfunding of the university sector, coupled with additional sector-wide restrictions on hiring, promotions, redundancy, and other employment practices has impacted the work environment of NUI Galway staff and has also shaped the University’s HR strategy. However, the University is actively managing these challenges – for example, by deploying non-exchequer funds to address the high student-staff ratios (ISER, p. 24); by providing structured pathways for research and other staff; and by instituting a process aimed at managing more effectively the profile of its contract and casual staff. Acknowledged past deficits in relation to gender equality and inclusion are actively addressed,

and gender and inclusion are a central feature of current and future enhancements in this domain (see *paragraph below*).

Key processes and procedures to ensure fair, transparent and appropriate recruitment and selection of staff are in place. There have also been significant enhancements to these processes – for example, the creation of competency profiles, benchmarking of staff profiles, and the creation of new induction and probation processes. Effective two-way internal communication is recognised as an important element in maintaining a supportive environment for staff. Significant work is underway to improve processes in this regard. New staff development initiatives, including mentoring and coaching, are currently being rolled out. The CELT, which has a long-standing reputation for providing high-quality professional development for educators, offers a range of credit-bearing activities, including a Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching & Learning in Higher Education, Postgraduate Diploma in Academic Practice and the Master of Arts in Academic Practice. However, these programmes are oversubscribed and, due to staff vacancies, the centre is unable to run its full range of programmes. It is anticipated however, that the vacancies will be filled shortly. The newly established Research Career Development Centre has an ambitious strategy to provide complementary professional and career development for researchers. Performance management is devolved to units, as is the allocation of workloads and the management of these through workload models. The Review Team’s meeting with representatives of HR confirmed that, while the formal PMDS system has been suspended, informal local arrangements are in place and linked to achieving operational goals of the Strategic Plan (meeting 18, HR and Staff Development).

It was also noted in the ISER (ISER, p. 26) and during meetings with the President, Senior Management Team and HR that, since 2008, there has been an unfortunate absence of promotional opportunities for support service staff within existing roles as a result of the ECF. Since then, the only route open to these staff for promotion has been via open competition for advertised posts and temporary appointments. The HR Office has reviewed sectoral best practice to identify a model for promotion for NUI Galway and is aiming to hold competitive promotional rounds on an

annual basis. It is acknowledged that this may still not be satisfactory for all staff, but it is viewed as progress by the Review Team.

A new *Career Pathway to Development* programme has been launched to address (perceived) limited opportunities for progression in administrative, technical and other professional grades. NUI Galway is also investing in new academic, administrative and leadership positions, and these, coupled with its commitment to professional development across the institution, will likely enhance the University's capacity to create and maintain a work environment that is beneficial and supportive for all its staff. The creation of new categories of awards that recognise excellence are further evidence of this commitment.

NUI Galway has also created a new role of vice-dean for equality and diversity (E&D) demonstrating that the principle of equality of opportunity is enshrined in the core values of NUI Galway, as articulated in *Vision 2020*. From interviews with staff and students, there is clear evidence that commitment to E&D is engendering a cultural change throughout the organisation. Since 2016, for example, the Office of the Vice-President for Equality and Diversity has overseen the appointment of vice-deans for equality and diversity in all of the colleges, as well as the development of new policies on flexible working and participation in the *Aurora Leadership Programme*. Each college now has a local E&D operational plan, which was considered by staff that the Review Team met to be a hugely positive step, as E&D is now ingrained in, and appears on all, committee agendas. The achievement of an Athena SWAN Bronze Award in 2018 provides evidence of the progress that NUI Galway has made within a relatively short timeframe. Further plans to embrace equality and diversity across the university are well advanced. These include a new policy on gender identity and gender expression, developed in partnership with NUI Galway's Students' Union, as well as new procedures for promotion and progression (which will include a restructuring of the NUI Galway academic track to bring it into line with other Irish universities).

A further example, described as one of the University's greatest achievements (meeting 21, Equality & Diversity) was the revision of AC membership to meet the University's requirement for 40% gender balance on all committees in accordance with HEA's Gender Equality Action Plan¹³) The revised composition of AC provides for membership on a college basis, with representatives across all academic grades, including postdoctoral, lecturer, senior lecturer and professorial grades, as well as heads of school and students, totalling 100 members, together with an ex officio membership, which includes vice-presidents, directors of academic support units and deans. The revised composition has been effective from October 2018. These and other policy changes are designed to address acknowledged gaps in the organisation's culture and signal a determination on the part of the University's leadership to 'embrace diversity as a hallmark of [NUI Galway's] university community' (ISER, p. 27).

COMMENDATION 4

The Review Team commends the University for the significant work undertaken by NUI Galway to promote and progress equality and diversity including Vice-President Equality & Diversity, vice-deans Equality & Diversity (with associated college action plans), Students' Union work on gender recognition, and institutional achievement of Bronze Athena SWAN.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Responsibility for QA of the delivery of programmes in colleges rests with the college deans. Supported by CELT, NUI Galway's University-level Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee has developed an LTA Strategy. The LTA Committee meets twice per semester and reports on the LTA Strategy's progress. The LTA Strategy and associated P&Ps describe how staff engage with the Bologna Process; learning outcomes; academic integrity; accessibility; attendance requirements; student feedback and

13 Higher Education Authority, *Accelerating Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions – Gender Action Plan 2018-2020*, p. 34 - "The Gender Equality Taskforce recommends that each institution, by the end of 2019, will have reviewed the structure of its academic council so that academic councils will comprise a minimum of 30% of the under-represented gender by 2020 and a minimum of 40% women and 40% men by 2024, at the very latest. Sub-committees of academic council should be restructured in the course of 2018 to ensure they consist of at least 40% women and 40% men."

teaching evaluation. The LTA Strategy provides the overarching framework for the design and operation of courses and modules (augmented by University regulations on degree structures, examinations, etc). Some additional documentation and supports are also available, which provide more detailed information and guidance.

Recent activities of the LTA Committee include: development of LTA Strategy 2016–2020; input to University Strategic Plan 2015–2020; discussion and development of position papers on attendance, first-Year experience, aspects of academic simplification, graduate attributes; development of policies including: student feedback; student recording of lectures; assessment. College-level LTA committees are also in place, and these are chaired by the relevant vice-dean. Recently, as part of the review of academic committees, the strategic role of the LTA Committee has been developed to ensure it has a more cross-cutting role in directing teaching and learning strategy. It is now chaired by the Registrar and Deputy President and will be joined by the new Dean of Students. It will report directly to AC. This is a welcome development from the previous *ad hoc* nature of the Committee (chaired by the Director of CELT) and ensures that learning and teaching are strategically addressed across the institution.

The University has engaged well with the LibQual¹⁴ survey, recognising the need to improve the library as a physical learning environment. The Review Team noted a lack of study space on a tour of the library and welcomes plans to invest in the development and expansion of innovative teaching and learning spaces. The Review Team recognises the One Button Studio—a user-friendly video recording space in the library for students and staff—as an excellent and relatively cheap digital support that has a high impact on the student learning experience (ISER, p. 32).

Overall, the Review Team notes the positive feedback of students in respect of the learning and teaching environment (the students whom the Review Team met unanimously praised the academic support they can receive) as well as staff members' commitment to learning and teaching. As a recent review report of CELT shows (CELT Review Report and Action Plan – March and May 2018), the Centre's expertise is highly

valued : “[...]The result of the on-going proactive support provided by CELT is that the centre [is] very highly regarded by staff at all levels across the entire University as key to setting and achieving University teaching and learning targets ...[its] knowledge and experience is not only an important institutional resource but is central to the development of an innovative teaching and learning culture.” In the subsequent action plan, the University committed itself to working with the Director of CELT in clarifying and clearly defining CELT's role and remit to allow CELT to fully contribute at a strategic level and ensure that the necessary resources are provided to achieve this. This is related to the recommendation for potential linkage of the Quality Office and CELT.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

NUI Galway has a comprehensive set of policies and procedures to address the assessment of learners. These policies and procedures, together with relevant strategies, including but not limited to *Vision 2020* and the *LTA Strategy 2017-2020* and the *Assessment Policy (QA277)*, establish and communicate NUI Galway's philosophy and approach to the assessment of learners. The *NUI Galway Graduate Attributes* promote a student-centred approach to learning, teaching and assessment, consistent with ESG 1.3, and section 1.6 of QQI's *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*, and the commitment to innovation in the assessment of learners is supported by CELT.

This *LTA Strategy* maps out how the teaching, learning and assessment priorities of *Vision 2020* are embedded, operationalised, managed and governed in the context of the new structures and processes within the University. The *Assessment Policy (QA277)* maps how all eight principles of assessment developed by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning are to be embedded throughout the programmes in the University.

The Academic Simplification Project and other comparable initiatives have addressed many of the challenges associated with consistency across the University in the assessment of learners. In interviews with representatives from programmes

14 <https://www.libqual.org/home>

that incorporate blended learning, the representatives of NUI Galway demonstrated that they were addressing the unique challenges associated with the assessment of such programmes in a dynamic and engaged manner, consistent with QQI's *Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Research Degree Programmes*¹⁵ (meeting 19, Distance Learning).

Feedback provided by the community of teachers and learners provided the Review Team with confidence that these policies and procedures are available, understood, applied and monitored in NUI Galway. At each stage in the lifecycle of a programme – from the development of new programmes, to the annual oversight of assessment via the external examiner process and student feedback, to the cyclical programme and school reviews – the QA procedures of NUI Galway attend to all seven requirements of section 1.6 of the *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* regarding the assessment of learners. There was some anecdotal evidence of inconsistent implementation of some of the guidelines – for example, regarding feedback to students on written assessment and some concerns about uneven distribution of assessments at programme level. However even in these rare circumstances the inconsistencies in question were identified through the QA processes. NUI Galway is nevertheless asked to remain vigilant in its oversight of consistency of assessment and feedback.

SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS

Student resources and support are provided through a number of P&Ps delivered primarily through the offices of Student Services, the library and the Student Information Desk (SID). The Student Services Office is supported by P&Ps in respect of student access, accommodation, careers development, counselling, disability services, health promotion, sports and societies. The team is confident that NUI Galway incorporates the student voice in its approach to the ongoing development and implementation of supports for learners. Engagement with the student body is evident – from enhancements that emanate from modular feedback to student meetings with the University's President in the Students' Union. The ISSE (ISER, p. 7) is used effectively used to gather student

feedback. As outlined above, the students present NUI Galway favourably in the survey, with 85% indicating satisfaction and 89% indicating that they would make the same decision to take their course at NUI Galway if they had to start university again (ISER, p. 8). The Review Team noted examples, provided by members of the Students' Union, of the flexible and meaningful system of response to feedback that is carried out in a transparent and dialogic manner (meeting 4, Students' Union Officers). The Review Team also anticipates that, with the appointment of the new Dean of Students (who will work in partnership with Student Services and the Students' Union), the work on drafting a student charter and student engagement policy (ISER, p. 42) will be expedited.

Learner representation is a central tenet of governance structures at the University through which student supports can be designed to respond to any concerns raised. **The Review Team commends the full membership of learners on major committees in the University.** This is complemented by a well-functioning class representative system and staff-student liaison committees.

An extensive range of learner supports was evident from the ISER and the MRV. Interviews with students and staff particularly highlighted the academic peer support group CÉIM and the Careers Development Centre (See Objective 2). Other academic supports, chaplaincy and interreligious supports, and sports and societies were found to be popular. Student interviews also revealed disability support and physical infrastructures to be satisfactory. Distinct support services seek out opportunities to collaborate with each other and with schools on initiatives, such as the integration of the 'Smart Study, Smart Life' programme into the School of Business and Economics (ISER, p. 39). Some of the Student Services staff expressed concern about ongoing financial sustainability, funding applications and the resulting impact on annual planning (see Objective 2). The Review Team endorses the Head of Student Services' proposal for a 'one-stop' student centre that would centralise student support services in one hub, reducing 'run around' for students.

Key results from the NUI Galway *Health and Wellbeing Survey* (part of the NUI Galway Student Information Project) reported that that 23% of the student body

15 <https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Research%20Degree%20Programmes%20QA%20Guidelines.pdf>



report severe/very severe anxiety levels. When asked about experiences of engaging with the Counselling Service undergraduate students and Students' Union representatives recalled both positive and negative experiences. Some were seen quickly, while many others reported extensive waiting lists. From interviews with the Student Services staff, the Review Team understands that, at first point of contact, a system of prioritisation of needs regarding waiting times has been put in place. **The Review Team suggests that the resourcing of the Counselling Service be monitored on an ongoing basis (see Recommendation 8).**

Securing accommodation remains a significant issue for students at NUI Galway, particularly for those without existing personal connections on campus or in the city, such as international students. NUI Galway's commitment to rectifying this situation was clear in meetings with the Senior Management Team. Significant building projects are underway to mitigate this issue, including repurposing existing buildings (ISER, p. 29). **The review commends the University's capital investment in student accommodation and its continued commitment to solving the accommodation shortfall.**

Student Services staff identified non-traditional students as requiring more support in terms of orientation, integration and academic support. ICT skills were identified in particular by vice deans with responsibility for E&D. The Review Team discussed E NUI Galway's campaign to secure University of Sanctuary status with E&D staff; this an international movement in higher education to provide safety and sanctuary to those fleeing conflict and persecution. NUI Galway's commitment to gaining University of Sanctuary status will feed into ongoing strategies to support non-traditional students.

COMMENDATION 5

The Review Team commends the University on having students represented on all of the University's committees and the 'signal' presented by the President in meeting with the Students' Union on his first day and alternating location of monthly meetings between the President's Office and the Students' Union.

COMMENDATION 6

The Review Team commends the University's capital investment in student accommodation and its continued commitment to solving the accommodation shortfall.

INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

NUI Galway has undertaken many large projects over the past year to effectively manage the data and information generated and contained in the University. The P&P Repository is an example of how the University has consolidated the governance and management of information, providing a single source of truth for students and staff and providing for the quality and consistency of decision making and benchmarking.

The student records system, Quercus, is the central source of data on students, which links in with a variety of other academic planning/student-centric information systems. Quercus provides a comprehensive suite of reports to the appropriate personnel in colleges and, centrally, at a programme/module level, for self-monitoring and planning purposes, including reports on student numbers, module completions, exam results and grade analysis. However, it has been recognised that, while the current system meets requirements, it has aged significantly and is widely regarded as requiring replacement. Therefore, a project has been initiated to prepare for the procurement of a new student records system. It is recognised that this is a major undertaking and could entail significant risk for NUI Galway; **it is therefore recommended that NUI Galway undertake a comprehensive risk assessment associated with transfer of student data** and that this register be updated on a regular basis.

Project DANte (data warehouse project) aims to provide real-time data on progression and retention, which is aligned with a range of data sources to measure student academic, social and digital (e.g. library usage) engagement and academic performance. In addition to providing consistent and real-time data, one aim of Project DANte's objectives is to decrease the percentage of non-progressing students from 11% to 9% by 2020. It also aims to provide trend analysis on student progression at college, school and programme levels, as well as by

cohort, gender etc. This will allow the University to identify areas in need of improvement and to tailor early interventions. This element is referred to as the ‘Student Success’ element and is aimed at improving overall completion rates. The Review Team welcomes the project and notes the benefits this will likely bring, but also notes that there may be ethical and privacy dimensions to be considered and expects that the project team will actively address these on an ongoing basis. Phase 1 of the DANte project has been completed and this second phase will involve a deep analysis of current data is assessed in order to provide a single source for student data with a level of granularity of information not currently achievable. The Review Team was impressed with the level of detail and thought in the development of project DANte.

As mentioned above in Section A, in addition to the data Warehouse Project, the university has embarked on a new resource allocation model, which is also dependent on the provision of accurate, real-time and consistent data. Following a review in 2018 this new resource allocation model (RIGRAM) is currently being rolled-out and is based on transparent resource allocation as a function of income to the Colleges. It aims to support the achievement of the strategic objectives of the university in order to enable the resourcing of Schools and Colleges to reflect directly the activities they undertake, in both teaching and research. It is intended that the new model be transparent and logical, but not burdensome in terms of administrative costs. It also aims to ensure that central university charges are reasonable and recognised. The RIGRAM was presented to the Review Team as a system that will provide effective resource allocation tool for the various Colleges and, whilst Staff were optimistic that it would lead to more transparency, the system is still in its very early stages, so it is too early to comment on its success or otherwise. The Review Team noted the progress that NUI Galway is making in its approach to the provision of a streamlined, transparent and effective use of data and information.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Review Team recommends that the University undertake a comprehensive risk assessment in respect of the transfer of student data in the development of the new student records system.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

As an active and nationally important academic institution, NUI Galway’s communication channels and its provision of public information are critical for the University as it seeks to demonstrate the significance and impact of its education and research activity, as well as its public and civic engagement. Effective communication of its system of governance oversight is also important for a body in receipt of public funds. The University effectively uses multiple channels, both traditional and digital, to communicate and target internal and external audiences and stakeholders.

NUI Galway demonstrated to the Review Team an effective and considered communication programme. For staff in the institution the recent addition of the online P&P Repository (see Section 1: Introduction and Context) has been effective as a single source for information and transparency. During interviews with staff from all areas in NUI Galway, the P&P Repository was cited as a valuable tool for accessing internal information.

Communication between the student body and the institution is also an area in which NUI Galway has demonstrated its effectiveness. All students interviewed were very positive with regard to NUI Galway’s communication channels. Students felt very satisfied that there were multiple ways they could engage with NUI Galway and that the University acted on their concerns and feedback.

The University’s website is the primary channel for providing information about the institution. The website contains a robust body of information that is accessible to potential students, potential stakeholders from enterprise, and members of the public can access. Information regarding, for example, course prospectuses, brochures, university life and culture, and the structure of the University is easily accessible, coherently presented and up to date.

In addition to its website, NUI Galway makes effective use of social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter, with more than 200k followers across all of these platforms. The content on the platforms demonstrates an active and committed community of contributors with information posted

on a regular basis. Traditional media is also used to disseminate information on and off campus.

During the MRV, multiple interviewees highlighted NUI Galway's outreach programmes and engagement with primary and secondary schools across the region. The University is very active in engaging with potential students, especially with minority communities in the region.

With regard to external stakeholders, the Review Team noted that there was full attendance at meetings by all external stakeholders and that their overall engagement was very positive. Organisations and enterprises who take placement students were complimentary about the quality of the students they receive for placement, as well as about those students' preparedness for the work environment. The external stakeholders also noted that there is very proactive engagement from NUI Galway when it comes to understanding their needs and requirements with respect to current and future skills (meeting 12, External Stakeholders).

Although interviewees presented an overall positive experience of NUI Galway's communication channels, one challenge noted by representatives of industry and enterprise was acquiring access to information about the research undertaken by NUI Galway. In particular, it was noted that industry would welcome a more explicit information and communications strategy specifically from the perspective of potential commercialisation. Therefore, **it is recommended that NUI Galway develop a Research Communication Strategy and incorporate an intellectual property register.**

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Review Team recommends that the University develop a Research Communication Strategy and incorporate an intellectual property register to ensure that industry is aware of activities and potential areas of collaboration.

OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

NUI Galway has 19 collaborative partners; 18 of these relationships involve collaborative provision (e.g. joint, multiple, double degrees and articulation arrangements). The Review Team had the opportunity to meet several Irish-based partners of NUI Galway who are engaged in the collaborative provision of educational programmes, primarily at postgraduate level (meeting 20, Linked & Collaborative Providers). One of these partners, St Angela's College, is defined as a linked provider. St Angela's College's QA policies and procedures are approved and periodically reviewed by NUI Galway. There are plans to incorporate St Angela's into NUI Galway, but the Review Team heard that there is a delay in the process while legal and financial issues are resolved. It is, however, hoped that all will be complete by December 2019.

The Review Team met with a number of representatives from collaborative providers. In that context, a variety of master's programmes were presented *vis* Master in Paediatric Complex and Palliative Care (DCU), Master of Fine Arts and Archaeology (Burren College of Art), Master of Science in Sustainable Resource Management (University of Limerick), Diploma in Hospitality Management, Master of Science in Technology Management. Across the various programmes there is a range of partnership models and modes of delivery. For example, in one programme just one module is delivered by the partner (DCU) with all other modules being provided by NUI Galway, while in another the partners have an equal share in the programme design, delivery and management. *Vision 2020* notes that "External engagement, an openness to partnership and a spirit of collaboration define the NUI Galway approach" and stresses NUI Galway's will to expand its "dynamic network of partners to develop strong, mutually beneficial relationships".

The nature of the arrangements and the QA procedures that govern them are set out in a Collaborative Provider Register¹⁶. Details provided include the partner's name, the type of provider, the arrangement between the institutions (e.g. collaborative programme or joint degrees), type of

16 https://www.nuigalway.ie/quality/collaborative_providers/



programme, the approval date and review dates, the collaborating school, and contact person in that school.

Linked and collaborative partners interviewed by the Review Team articulated and demonstrated an alignment to the P&P Repository, ensuring a consistent approach for NUI Galway and their partners.

The discussions about the arrangements that NUI Galway makes to ensure quality of provision suggest to the Review Team that these programmes are dynamic initiatives where the students benefit from the complementarity of expertise and, with parties fully engaged in individual and regular QA procedures (programme and/or institutional reviews, external examiners, benchmarking, student feedback, professional accreditation, and such like), with a satisfactory feedback loop. The partners also expressed satisfaction about the attributes of NUI Galway graduates. Evidence was provided to the Review Team that linked providers review their policies and procedures periodically by means of an independent group of reviewers retained by NUI Galway. St. Angela's, which has been the subject of three reviews since 2006, was given as an example.

External entities were very positive with regard to the engagement and overall support that they receive from the University. The Health Service Executive (HSE) and representatives/members of local industry stated that "there is consistent interaction with organisations, school leaders and with students", adding that NUI Galway listens to and acts upon suggestions and recommendations in relation to the placement of students, course content and student learnings, which add to an overall positive image of the University (meeting 12, External Stakeholders).

From a QA perspective, it was evident to the Review Team during the entire review that NUI Galway works and collaborates with multiple stakeholders to ensure quality. As outlined in the ISER, 'NUI Galway's policy is to engage widely with all of its stakeholders. Stakeholders include learners, schools, other colleges and universities, research funding agencies, general public, industry, national and local government and many more. Key stakeholders in the context of QA include Irish Universities Association (IUA); Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI); Higher Education

Authority (HEA); Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN); European Universities Association; North-West Cluster (GMIT, LYIT, IT Sligo); Research Funding Bodies (SFI, HRB, etc.) and NUI Galway-University of Limerick Alliance'.

SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING, AND REVIEW

All academic and professional units at NUI Galway have been the subject of cyclical quality reviews (QR) since the last institutional review (IRIU 2010/11). These are organised by the Quality Office and the structural elements involve the development of a self-assessment report, followed by a peer review visit and report, resulting in recommendations for quality enhancement and action planning. There is an average of seven 'centrally' managed QRs of schools and support services each year. Programme monitoring, review and enhancement are achieved through periodic quality reviews and through continuous development and implementation of P&Ps, which includes annual review by external examiners and annual student feedback at modular level. Several groups that the Review Team met cited the benefit that formal reviews afforded for analysis and reflection outside daily work operations.

Evidence was provided with regard to engagements and services rendered by external examiners (155 in total) and the feedback loops with these entities. External examiners make recommendations for improvements and reports are provided in respect of each examination process with the aim of ensuring the maintenance of academic standards of modules, programmes and awards.

Policies related to a system of internal QR and continuous improvement include: QA003 *Review of Schools*; QA004 *Review of Research Performance*; QA005 *External Examiners*; QA006 *Review of Taught Programmes*; QA009 *Review of Linked Providers*; QA012 *Review of Research Institutes*; QA013 *Review of Services*; QA244 *Accredited Programmes* and QA246 *Collaborative Partnerships*.

RESEARCH

Research and innovation are an integral pillar of NUI Galway's strategy and it was clear from the ISER, supporting documents and interviews with the Review Team that the University places a strong emphasis on supporting both the development of high-quality research and the quality of training provided to researchers.

The offices of the Vice-President for Research and the Dean of Graduate Studies support research activities. The Research Committee includes all vice-deans of research and directors of research institutes and is chaired by the Vice-President of Research. The Dean of Graduate Studies chairs the Graduate Studies Board (GSB), which includes the vice-deans of graduate studies from each college and research student representatives. The GSB considers all academic regulations and policy regarding postgraduate research degrees (including any new programmes) and the associated policy *University Guidelines for Research Degree Programmes* (QA245) provides all relevant guidance.

NUI Galway has prioritised five cross-disciplinary research themes: Applied Social Sciences and Public Policy; Biomedical Science and Engineering; Environment, Marine and Energy; Humanities in Context; and Informatics, Physical and Computational Sciences. The University also has a number of prominent research institutes that perform excellent research in some of the cross-disciplinary research themes. These include the CÚRAM Centre for Medical Devices, the Insight Centre for Data Analytics, the Ryan Institute for Marine, Energy and Environmental Research, NCBES National Centre for Biomedical Engineering Science, Whitaker Institute for Innovation and Social Change, Institute for Lifecourse and Society, and the Moore Institute for Research in the Humanities and Social Studies. The Research Office provides support to the various research efforts and assessments.

The Review Team is satisfied that NUI Galway has organised its research activities in a structured way along the lines of its themes and institutes and has set realistic goals in terms of funding and output. NUI Galway has largely compensated for cuts to its funding by means of competitive performance nationally and in Europe. The Director of Research stated that, under the current strategy, the aim

was to increase direct research funding from €52m annually to €60m and that a figure of €61m had already been achieved last year. In addition, the ISER indicates that, by September 2018, the total value of European research contracts secured by NUI Galway researchers under the current funding cycle (2014-2020) was €67.6M, of which over €61M is from Horizon 2020 (compared with €46.5M under the previous seven-year Framework Programme (FP7)). The most recent Enterprise Ireland report on national performance (March 2018), ranks NUI Galway second in terms of success rate (15.1%) after University College Cork (15.5%). (ISER, p. 66).

However, following steady growth in earlier years, research output and impact have stagnated in recent years, resulting in a decline for NUI Galway in international rankings. This is the case for all Irish institutions, and it is suggested that it is a direct consequence of the funding cuts mentioned above. The University has worked very hard to increase its societal impact and commercialisation output. Mid-term strategic reviews have shown impressive targets on outputs, licences and patents, with future enhancements planned on spinouts. It is important to recognise that continuation of its success is dependent on filling the pipeline with new fundamental research.

The Review Team **commends NUI Galway for performing a REF-like analysis** which included all staff and entailed no funding consequences, followed by an international peer review and rating, as part of the Institutional Review of Research Performance (IRRP). Ratings were based on the quality of research of each school for its research environment, research outputs and research impact. The IRRP exercise allowed for a full understanding of research activity and performance across the whole University and the team was impressed with the level of engagement from staff with the process.

Other initiatives of note include the workshops for supervisor training (held four times each year) and the thesis boot camp sessions. These are intensive three-day structured writing programmes for doctoral candidates. The sessions were very much appreciated by the students who participated, and by the supervisors involved, as a structured way to help with the writing process. College deans also reported effective mentoring schemes for early career



researchers and the Review Team notes the Research Development Centre is an excellent strategic innovation still in the early stages of implementation (ISER, p. 67). NUI Galway has made significant strides to monitor its research quality through the *Research Integrity Policy*, enhancements to the terms of reference for the Research Ethics Committee, and participation in national training for the same. Meetings with external stakeholders highlighted NUI Galway’s commitment to community-based research; examples in the languages and health sciences were discussed.

The Review Team is satisfied that the P&Ps at NUI Galway are in line with QQI’s *Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Research Degree Programmes*. The P&Ps are clearly described, publicly accessible and assessed by objective, competent external examiners. The research students are reviewed annually and well supported with additional legal and commercial advice as necessary. Structured research programmes have enabled NUI Galway to provide opportunities to develop transferable skills and career preparation for work-ready graduates through a network of support centres detailed in the ISER.

At a time of gradual increase in PhDs and in research and specialist staff, a wide range of recent enhancements was evident to the team from HEA data. **The Team wishes to commend the initiation of a clearly defined three-member Graduate Research Committee** for each research student. Interviews with the students clarified that the committees work effectively to support both the student and the supervisor towards a timely completion of the degree.

COMMENDATION 7

The Review Team commends the University for the instigation of the Institutional Review of Research Performance (IRRP) exercise which has allowed for a full understanding of research activity and performance.

COMMENDATION 8

The Review Team commends the University for the initiation of a clearly defined three-member Graduate Research Committee for each research student.

Objective 2 – Quality Enhancement

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

The Review Team is satisfied that NUI Galway has a well-functioning QA and QE system in place. QE takes place through continuous quality improvement involving individual staff members and various structured committees, guided by a set of external national and European standards and QQI guidelines. As set out under Objective 1, specific goals for quality and performance are specified in *Vision 2020*, the *HEA Compact 2014-2017* and the *HEA Dialogue 18-21 Agreements*. Implementation takes place through a comprehensive QA system, encompassing more than 250 P&Ps in the P&P Repository, internal monitoring, and quality reviews. As per section 2 of this report, the University has conducted a quality culture survey that provides evidence that a change in culture from reactive to more responsive quality insurance has taken place.

The Review Team is satisfied that a comprehensive set of P&Ps can be found in the P&P Repository, and that relevant staff and students are aware of and use the Repository. Recommendations resulting from

school and programme reviews are followed up with action plans and reviewed after one year. An annual operational planning process links to the strategic planning process. The Review Team saw evidence of **school reviews** taking place on a seven-year cyclical basis (which includes reviews of programmes) with one-year follow-up plans and action plans; however, there was little evidence of follow-up after that 12-month period. Therefore, **it is recommended that the action plans are included in the cycle of annual monitoring to continuously assess progress.** This *could* be achieved through an annual operational planning cycle. In terms of examples of enhancements that have been advanced in the period since the last institutional review, the ISER highlights no fewer than 39 case studies that present concrete actions directed at improving the system of QA and QE.

The Review Team recognised the impactful and notable efforts of CÉIM, the academic peer support scheme for first-year students at NUI Galway. CÉIM was initiated by NUI Galway Students' Union in 2013 and is offered to a cross-section of first-year



students, who meet weekly throughout the academic year with trained second/third-year student leaders from the same discipline. CÉIM sessions are student led and, during the sessions, students work in small groups to develop independent learning skills, gain a greater understanding of coursework, develop new skills, and meet people enrolled on the same programme. Sessions focus on collaborative learning, and the format is generally quite different to lectures and tutorials. Students often comment on how CÉIM sessions are informal and friendly, yet focused. The Review Team was impressed with the activities and impact CÉIM has in preventing student isolation, developing leadership skills, and reducing the potential of students abandoning their studies at NUI Galway. It was also noted that, due to limited funding, Counselling Services are understaffed, and that CÉIM provides a proactive peer support net for students who may be finding university life challenging in their first year. The Review Team recognises the commendable efforts and impact of CÉIM in terms of quality of the student experience and the support provided to 1500 first-year students. **It is also recommended that, given the increasing numbers of students and complexity of issues (International, widening access, disabilities, mental health), that NUI Galway develop a system to mainstream projects that are successful and demonstrate impact (for example CÉIM and the Academic Writing Centre).**

NUI Galway has developed a considered, innovative and holistic approach to enterprise and external engagement. Evidence of innovative approaches to engagement were presented and praised by many of the external stakeholders (meeting 12, External Stakeholders). Such approaches to engagement included:

- ‘Speed dating’ interviews for students with organisations for placements and graduate recruitment;
- Empowerment of minority groups through education supported by NUI Galway;
- Access programme providing wider and more equitable access to higher education to under-represented, disadvantaged and minority groups, mature students and students with disabilities;
- Invitations to campus to primary and secondary students to showcase NUI Galway.

As with many academic institutions and universities, NUI Galway has embraced technology and developed programmes of education and materials for online education, which it delivers both fully online and in a blended format. The associated Teaching and Learning Strategy outlines NUI Galway’s commitment to a range of initiatives aimed at deploying digital technologies to support the enhancement of student learning in all academic programmes and increasing opportunities for flexible delivery of educational programmes. Both the ISER and discussions during the MRV provided ample evidence of developmental work, particularly the exemplary Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development. There are currently 12 fully online courses and 80 blended courses across all disciplines for postgraduate and undergraduate students, as well as three professional development courses. 1200 students undertook online and blended courses in the academic year 2018/19. The courses have been developed in response to skills needs identified at a national level, where NUI Galway collaborates with key external stakeholders including the HEA and the Department of Education and Skills (Springboard+, Skillnet Ireland) and other public bodies such as *An Garda Síochána*, the Prison Service and SOLAS (the national body for further education and training). The Review Team was provided with evidence, through interviews and documentation, of the range of courses provided by NUI Galway and the enhancement practices that are used to ensure quality of course content is integrated into college structures for programme development and review. These feature external references and feedback from students. The systems and processes employed (such as DANte – see above section 3.1.8 Information and Data Management) to monitor progress of students and mitigate the risk of non-completion were noteworthy.

COMMENDATION 9

The Review Team commends the University for the positive contribution of professional support services including (and especially) the work conducted by CÉIM, the Academic Writing Centre, the Career Development Centre, Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, and the Researcher Development Centre.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Review Team recommends that the University establish ongoing annual monitoring (beyond the 12-month period) of school review outcomes to continually assess progress of areas identified for development.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Review Team recommends that the University develop a system to mainstream projects that are successful and demonstrate impact (for example CÉIM and the Academic Writing Centre) to manage the increasing numbers of students and complexity of issues (International, widening access, disabilities, mental health) and that the University continues ongoing monitoring of the resourcing of the Counselling Service.

ALIGNMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND TARGETS FOR QUALITY.

NUI Galway is guided by its strategy, *Vision 2020*, which outlines the University's strategic objectives. The Review Team praises the University for setting and achieving ambitious targets for quality and QE in education and research in a global and regional setting. Clear evidence of the success of that approach was presented to the Review Team during the review process and is set out in this report.

The Review Team also noted with approval that NUI Galway has performed a review of *Vision 2020*; in spring 2018, a small group, led by the Registrar and comprising academics and support staff from across the University, conducted a mid-term review of the University's progress against the targets contained in the current strategic plan. The Review Team viewed documentation in which the group reported that many of the targets across the University have been achieved, some are in progress, and a number may not be met. A key recommendation from the task group, which is contained within the ISER (ISER, p. 14), is the development of an explicit implementation plan to accompany the next strategic plan, one in which each target is assigned a clear owner. The Review Team would urge NUI Galway to ensure this is captured from the outset of that plan.

The Review Team found that the Strategic Plan and its aspirations for improvements to quality and the student experience were in close alignment with each other.

RECOMMENDATION 9

The Review Team recommends that the University develop an explicit implementation plan to accompany the next strategic plan, one in which each target is assigned a clear owner, and each plan is given the resources to deliver.

Objective 3 – Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION

NUI Galway's procedures for access, transfer and progression are in keeping with QQI's *Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression*¹⁷.

Vision 2020 targets the widening of access and participation of under-represented, socially disadvantaged groups at undergraduate level from '19% to 24%' by 2020. It is noted in the mid-term review report that the rate of access and participation of these groups was at 22% in 2017/18. The Review Team recognises the amount of work that is being done in this area and the range of activities outlined in the ISER (see below).

P&Ps for access transfer and progression are established and implemented in a transparent manner that is in line with QQI's *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*. These have been made publicly available in the NUI Galway P&P Repository and are written in appropriately accessible language. The Review Team welcomes NUI Galway's objective, outlined in the *HEA Compact 2018-2020*, to develop a student success strategy by 2020-2021 'to support and enhance student transition, progression and achievement of non-traditional students. It is also noted that, with the appointment of the new Dean of Students (who will work in partnership with Student Services and the Students' Union), alongside the drafting of a student charter and student engagement policy (ISER, p. 42), this will be expedited.

ACCESS

NUI Galway's ISER outlines its impressive portfolio of access activities and projects (ISER, p. 21), which target learners at primary- and secondary-school level, as well as potential young (under 23) adult learners who might not ordinarily progress to higher education.

The access programmes, such as the Diploma in Foundation Studies, which guarantees entry to undergraduate programmes, are particularly laudable. NUI Galway has made 170 places on

undergraduate programmes available to graduates of the diploma (ISER, p. 22) but, according to the course key facts outlined on the University website, there is an average of only 20 learners per intake. NUI Galway is asked to consider developing a strategy to increase that number and to ensure that more of the 170 undergraduate places available through the scheme are filled.

Meetings with staff from the Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development elucidated the effective strategies in respect of distance and blended learning programmes offered by the University. EDI staff (meeting 21, Equality & Diversity) described the excellent practice of inviting potential non-traditional students from primary or secondary level to the campus to break barriers and encourage a higher rate of applications from this cohort. In turn, Student Services staff highlighted the regional importance of providing access to higher education to those in direct provision and to the travelling community, and to raise awareness of global refugee crises. **The Review Team commends NUI Galway's campaign to secure University of Sanctuary status** (see Objective 1 – *Supports for Learners*).

TRANSFER

The P&P Repository holds a comprehensive set of application forms and guidelines for the transfer of students, both internally and externally, alongside prospectus links. First-year student internal transfers appear to be prioritised in this facilitation, which the Review Team sees as beneficial for retention purposes, ensuring that students can be retained with the university. The ISER references a number of external policies that are drawn on by management with regard to transfer policy, including QQI's *Sector-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies* (ISER, p. 13) and QQI's *Policy on Access, Transfer and Progression* (ISER, p. 21). The ISER stipulates that all University colleges allow transfers from other Universities and colleges for suitably qualified applicants to complete primary degrees (ISER, p. 21). This process is overseen by senior academic staff through school and programme

17 <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/ATP%20Policy%20Restatement%20FINAL%202018.pdf>

committees and approved by AC. The National Academic Recognition Information Centre¹⁸ (NARIC) is used to assess the qualifications of applicants coming from outside the Irish Education system (ISER, p. 20).

PROGRESSION

As identified in the ISER, there has not been collective oversight of all retention-related data to date (ISER, p. 50). A Retention and Progression Working Group was formed in 2017 to develop strategies to reduce non-progress from 11% to 9% by 2020. The *Vision 2020* mid-term review states that KPIs show a 5% shortfall from the retention target rate. In response, as mentioned above, NUI Galway's data warehouse

project, DANte, will be used to identify those at risk of withdrawal, and interventions will be put in place to reduce the number of students at risk of dropping out. Staff were clear about potential targeted retention strategies emanating from the flexibility of the DANte interface. The team is optimistic that NUI Galway will reach its target but urges NUI Galway to remain vigilant in supporting students to ensure positive graduate outcomes. The team acknowledges excellent rates of graduate employment (ISER, p. 44) and the work of the Careers Development Service in monitoring it.

COMMENDATION 10

The Review Team commends the University's campaign to secure University of Sanctuary status.

18 All EU and EEA states and all the associated countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus have a designated National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC), which provides a way to compare academic qualifications as part of the Bologna Process. Together they form the NARIC network.



Objective 4 – Provision of Programmes to International Learners

The team considers the University's approach to the provision of education to international learners to be consistent with the QQI's *Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners*¹⁹. However, NUI Galway's aspirations are to further increase the number of international numbers so that greater attention is given to the specific international student experience and well-being.

NUI Galway has ambitions to become a more globally oriented university. It currently has a substantial number of international learners on its Galway campus and *Vision 2020* includes an ambitious strategy both to change the profile of the international cohort, and to increase the number of international learners. In 2015/16 international students comprised 23% of the student body and, within the timeframe of *Vision 2020*, it is planned that international learners will make up 25% of the student body. The Strategy's ambition lies primarily in the plan to re-profile the international student body by intentionally increasing the numbers of international four-year undergraduate, and taught postgraduate students, as a counterweight to the current profile of international learners, who, on the whole, are visiting semester-long or are junior year abroad students. This re-profiling of the international student body will have significant implications for the QE processes that ensure international student experience is a central tenet.

NUI Galway also has a small number of articulated and joint programmes with international providers, where a substantial portion of the teaching and learning occurs in partner institutions around the world (specifically China and Dijon, France). These programmes provide a small pipeline of international learners who join the NUI Galway-based part of the programme in later years, thus adding to the diversity of international learners in NUI Galway. The University also has plans to increase this cohort through the development of new partnerships and programmes.

NUI Galway's programmes for international learners are also provided to EU learners and are therefore included in all aspects of the QA policies and procedures considered in Objectives 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 above. As stated above, NUI Galway also complies with the *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners* (where applicable). The Review Team had the opportunity to meet international learners both in their own right and as part of the broader undergraduate and postgraduate cohort. In those meetings, the academic aspects of the programmes were uniformly praised, with positive feedback given on the teaching and learning environment and on the commitment of staff. There was also consistent evidence of international learners' engagement in student feedback and other QA processes. International learners reported some challenges in relation to pastoral services available, particularly in respect of access to the medical centre (and awareness of how to access it), although not in relation to the commitment of administrative and other professional staff, whose work was strongly commended. The team heard about the absence of weekend activities for international students as the majority of domestic students travel home at weekends. This is a challenge for NUI Galway's support of international students, but one that needs to be addressed to ensure that student experience is exemplary for an increased and increasing international student body. The results from the biennial *International Student Barometer* complement ISSE and other forms of student feedback, (including module, programme and school reviews) and inform the monitoring of QA and QE processes.

International partnerships to deliver articulated, joint and dual degrees, particularly to international learners, are still at an early stage of development. *QA Policy 246 on Collaborative Partnerships*, adopted in June 2018, details the processes to ensure that all dimensions of articulated, joint and dual programmes are subject to review. *QA Policy 246* has thus adopted detailed guidelines from the QQI's *Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes*

19 <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Code%20of%20Practice.pdf>

and Joint Awards²⁰, the Irish Higher Education Quality Network's *Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision*, with guidelines on developing memoranda of understanding, and the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012*. Because many of these international arrangements are relatively new (established within the last seven years) they have not yet been through cyclical review but will form part of the cycle of internal reviews.

Major recent enhancements to support internationalisation, including academic, administrative and pastoral supports, will improve the experiences of international learners in key areas including academic writing, accommodation, admissions, pastoral support and integration. The appointment of a Vice-President: International, the expansion of the International Office, the creation of a hub-and-spoke model to embed supports for international learners across the University, and the creation of the Global Lounge are highlights of current activities focused on systems and cultural change to support the internationalisation strategy. **The Review Team notes these enhancements, recognising, however, that new demand may continue to outstrip capacity, at least in the near-term.**

The *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners* highlights the importance of developing the international orientation of programmes and learning environments when an educational institution is undergoing a process of internationalisation. NUI Galway already reflects much of this international outlook, and the planned enhancements, led by the Vice-President: International and the Vice-President for Equality and Diversity, and supported by the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Campus Committee, when implemented, will amplify the global orientation and impact of the university.

RECOMMENDATION 10

The Review Team recommends that the University develop a comprehensive and sustainable transition and support arrangements for international students that will have capacity to meet the projected increased demand.

20 <https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Policy%20for%20Collaborative%20Programmes%20Transnational%20Programmes%20and%20Joint%20Awards.pdf>

Section D

Conclusions

Overall Findings and Conclusions

Top 5 Commendations and Recommendations

Overarching Statements about QA

Overall Findings and Conclusions

The Review Team was impressed with the level of engagement and openness from the 170 staff, students and stakeholders whom it met in 22 meetings during the MRV. There was an overall sense that NUI Galway is on a 'journey' with changes being made across the University, the merger of two colleges and recruitment to significant posts, including the new VP: International and new Dean of the College of Science and Engineering. Many staff members the Review Team spoke to also commented (in a positive way) on the 'changing culture' and, with increased devolution across the University, this was evident across most of the Review Team's meetings. The collective development of the new values-based strategy, *Vision 2020*, was welcomed and there was a clear sense from most meetings that staff and students were actively involved in setting the direction of NUI Galway for the next five years. There is a commendable strategic intent to look beyond the region, to have an increased international outlook in order to grow, maximise strengths and compete on a global scale. The Review Team was impressed by the commitment, ownership and pride in QA & QE and by the fact that NUI Galway has maintained and enhanced quality in an era of financial constraints. The recommendations are intended to support and sustain NUI Galway's growth and ambitions.

COMMENDATIONS

1. The Review Team commends the University for the development and format of the ISER and for the provision of helpful case-studies. While the Team is of the view that the document could possibly have been more reflective, it is acknowledged that this is a new exercise and that there were no published documents to guide development. It further acknowledges that the ISER has now been published on the external website, which highlights the level of transparency and openness.
2. The Review Team commends the University for conducting a follow-up quality culture survey (original survey conducted in 2010), the aim of which was to assess how the QA culture has evolved over that time in response to the emerging external standards and guidelines, as well as for various leadership initiatives.
3. The Review Team commends the work of the Quality Office in driving the quality culture, which ensures that all staff have ownership of QA and quality enhancement, and in developing and coordinating the University's policies and procedures.
4. The Review Team commends the University for the significant work undertaken by NUI Galway to promote and progress equality and diversity including Vice-President Equality & Diversity, vice deans Equality & Diversity (with associated college action plans), Students' Union work on gender recognition, and institutional achievement of Bronze Athena SWAN.
5. The Review Team commends the University on having students represented on all of the University's committees and the 'signal' presented by the President in meeting with the Students' Union on his first day and alternating location of monthly meetings between President's Office and the Students' Union.
6. The Review Team commends the University's capital investment in student accommodation and its continued commitment to solving the accommodation shortfall.
7. The Review Team commends the University for the instigation of the Institutional Review of Research Performance (IRRP) exercise which has allowed for a full understanding of research activity and performance.

8. The Review Team commends the University for the initiation of a clearly defined three-member Graduate Research Committee for each research student.
9. The Review Team commends the University for the positive contribution of professional support services including (and especially) the work conducted by CÉIM, the Academic Writing Centre, the Career Development Centre, Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, and the Researcher Development Centre.
10. The Review Team commends the University's campaign to secure University of Sanctuary status.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Review Team recommends that the University consider the future role and development of the Quality Office on the departure of the Director of Quality. It further recommends that the University consider linking the Quality Office with related support services - for example, the Centre of Excellence in Learning and Teaching - where sharing of good practice from reviews and direct developmental activities would be supported.
2. The Review Team recommends that the University consider requiring the Quality Enhancement Committee to report to the Academic Standing Committee and onwards to Academic Council.
3. The Review Team recommends that the University conduct a thematic review on a cyclical basis to consider the main themes arising from school and programme Reviews as well as from the reports from external examiners.
4. The Review Team recommends that the University conduct a portfolio review (particularly at master's level) to provide a comprehensive understanding of NUI Galway's programme provision. In addition, the Review Team recommends that the University develop comprehensive guidance and application processes for new programme proposals that will drive a change in culture and recognition of programme delivery costs and requirements.
5. The Review Team recommends that the University undertake a comprehensive risk assessment in respect of the risk associated with transfer of student data in the development of the new student records system.
6. The Review Team recommends that the University develop a Research Communication Strategy and incorporate an intellectual property register to ensure that industry is aware of activities and potential areas of collaboration.
7. The Review Team recommends that the University establish ongoing annual monitoring (beyond the 12-month period) of school review outcomes to assess progress of areas identified for development.
8. The Review Team recommends that the University develop a system to mainstream projects that are successful and demonstrate impact (for example, CÉIM and the Academic Writing Centre) to manage the increasing numbers of students and complexity of issues (International, widening access, disabilities, mental health) and that the University continues ongoing monitoring of the resourcing of the Counselling Service.
9. The Review Team recommends that the University develops an explicit implementation plan to accompany the next strategic plan, one in which each target is assigned a clear owner, and each plan is given the resources to deliver.
10. The Review Team recommends that the University develop a comprehensive and sustainable transition and support arrangements for international students that will have capacity to meet the projected increased demand.

Top 5 Commendations and Recommendations

COMMENDATIONS

1. The Review Team commends the University for the development and format of the ISER and for the provision of helpful case-studies. While the Team is of the view that the document could possibly have been more reflective, it acknowledges that this a new exercise and that there were no published documents to guide development. It further acknowledges that the ISER has now been published on the external website, which highlights the level of transparency and openness.
2. The Review Team commends that the University the work of the Quality Office in driving the quality culture which ensures that all staff have ownership of QA and QE, and in developing and coordinating the University's policies and procedures.
3. The Review Team commends the University for the significant work undertaken by NUI Galway to promote and progress equality and diversity including VP E&D, vice deans E&D (with associated college action plans), Students' Union work on gender recognition, and institutional achievement of Bronze Athena SWAN.
4. The Review Team commends the University for the instigation of the Institutional Review of Research Performance (IRRP) exercise which has allowed for a full understanding of research activity and performance.
5. The Review Team commends the University for the positive contribution of professional support services including (and especially) the work conducted by CÉIM, the Academic Writing Centre, the Career Development Centre, Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, and the Researcher Development Centre.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Review Team recommends that the University consider the future role and development of the Quality Office on the departure of the Director of Quality. It further recommends that the University consider linking the Quality Office with related support services - for example, the Centre of Excellence in Learning and Teaching - where sharing of good practice from reviews and direct developmental activities would be supported.
2. The Review Team recommends that the University consider requiring the QEC to report to the ASC and onwards to AC.
3. The Review Team recommends that the University conduct a portfolio review (particularly at master's level) to provide a comprehensive understanding of NUI Galway's programme provision. In addition, the Review Team recommends that the University develop comprehensive guidance and application processes for new programme proposals that will drive a change in culture and recognition of programme delivery costs and requirements.
4. The Review Team recommends that the University establish ongoing annual monitoring (beyond the 12-month period) of school review outcomes to assess progress of areas identified for development.
5. The Review Team recommends that the University develop a system to mainstream projects that are successful and demonstrate impact (for example, CÉIM and the Academic Writing Centre) to manage the increasing numbers of students and complexity of issues (International, widening access, disabilities, mental health) and that the University continues ongoing monitoring of the resourcing of the Counselling Service.

Overarching statements about QA

The Review Team restates the following overarching statements regarding the QA arrangements at NUI Galway:

1. The effectiveness of the QA procedures of the Institution, the extent of their implementation, and the extent to which the QA procedures can be considered compliant with the ESG and having regard to QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines.

The Review Team concluded that there was sufficient evidence to confirm that institutional QA procedures are effective and appropriate and cover teaching, learning and assessment in a comprehensive manner. The Review Team found that, overall, the QA mechanisms adopted by NUI Galway were compliant with the requirements of the ESG and had regard to QQI's *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*.

Both the AIQR and the ISER make clear and appropriate reference to these external standards. In its review of the AIQRs (2017 and 2018) submitted by NUI Galway to QQI the Review Team could see clear overlap and correlation between the AIQR and the ISER, which provided assurance to the Review Team that comprehensive procedures were in place for the approval, monitoring and review of academic programmes in NUI Galway and that these were effectively implemented and are in a continual cycle of evaluation and development. During its visit the Review Team observed that students play a key role in QA, mainly through various mechanisms for feedback (with high rates of participation) but also by being members of its numerous committees. In this way students are present as active participants in governance and quality review.

There is a clear determination from the Senior Team (the President and Deputy President) to have a more devolved approach and, as the Review Team heard from the interviews, this approach gives college deans and heads of school new responsibilities in respect of QA and QE. This is much appreciated as being a constructive approach to QA. The objective of embedding a culture of QA and review across the University has been central to NUI Galway's strategy for a number of years. In particular, a commendable element of the SET work was to conduct a follow-up quality culture survey to the original survey

conducted in 2010. It was evident in review meetings that staff really did have an 'ownership' of quality, could demonstrate an understanding of the need for continuous improvement and had high praise for the Quality Office.

The UMT is responsible for executing the decisions of *Údarás* through all academic colleges, schools and centres, and major support services. *Údarás* comprises elected representatives of academic staff, students, alumni, local organisations (public and industry) and ministerial nominees and has full responsibility for the oversight of quality and QA. It receives quality reports through its sub-committees, which include the APRC, SSC and the QEC. QA is a standing item on the meetings of AC and students are represented at all levels on NUI Galway committees. The Review Team was of the view that consideration should be given to the strategic overview of quality at committee (QEC) level and queried whether all such quality-related information could be directed through ASC (and onwards to AC). This would ensure that all academic-related material would be collated, reviewed and monitored. Recently, as part of the review of academic committees, the strategic role of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee has been developed to ensure it has a more cross-cutting role in directing teaching and learning strategy. It is now chaired by the Registrar and Deputy President and will be joined by the new Dean of Students. It will report directly to AC. This is a welcome development from the previous *ad hoc* nature of the committee (chaired by the Director of CELT) and ensures that learning and teaching are strategically addressed across the institution.

In terms of processes, several policies are in operation to support the maintenance of the quality of these programmes. Student feedback processes are also considered through ISSE and the International Student Barometer. The Quality Office intranet shows data related to reviewers and external examiners and reports related to the University's external examination process. The documentation available before and during the site visit, together with the testimonies from University representatives, provided the Review Team with confidence that these processes work well and support enhancement. One

way in which the Review Team thought NUI Galway could enhance practice was to share common themes that emerge from the discrete school or programme reviews across the whole NUI Galway community.

NUI Galway's programme portfolio is extensive, with programmes running with very low numbers and, in the ongoing financial climate, this has significant costs in terms of staffing; it may also pose a challenge to maintaining comprehensive oversight of quality. The Review Team was of the view that it would be beneficial to create a more streamlined set of programmes to avoid the proliferation of QA reviews, action plans etc. and the risks associated with such a structure.

On the whole, the Review Team notes the positive feedback of students in respect of the T&L environment (the students whom the Review Team met unanimously praised the academic support they can benefit from) as well as staff members' commitment to T&L.

2. The enhancement of quality by the Institution through governance, policy, and procedures.

NUI Galway has effective policies and procedures designed to identify improvements required to, and potential enhancements resulting from, its QA processes. To evidence NUI Galway's QA and QE processes, the Quality Office has developed and maintains a comprehensive P&P Repository, which is in use across the university. The Review Team noted this as a welcome development from the last review (in 2010/11) and staff and students were universal in their praise of the P&P Repository's provision of uniformity, transparency and consistency with regards to governance. Recommendations resulting from school and programme reviews are followed up with action plans and reviewed after one year. There is an annual operational planning process that links to the strategic planning. The Review Team was provided with evidence of school reviews taking place on a seven-year cyclical basis (which includes review of programmes), as well as one-year follow-up plans and action plans, but little evidence of follow-up after that 12-month period. NUI Galway is encouraged to implement a cycle of annual monitoring to assess progress. This *could* be achieved through an annual operational planning cycle.

In terms of examples of enhancements that have been advanced in the period since the last institutional review, the ISER highlights no fewer than 39 case studies that present concrete actions directed at improving the system of QA and QE. The Review Team recognised the impactful and notable efforts of CÉIM, the academic peer support scheme for first-year students at NUI Galway. CÉIM was initiated by NUI Galway Students' Union in 2013 and is offered to a cross-section of first-year students, who meet weekly throughout the academic year with trained second-/third-year student leaders from the same discipline. The Review Team recognise the commendable efforts and impact of CÉIM in terms of quality of the student experience and the support provided to 1500 first-year students, but NUI Galway is encouraged, given the increasing numbers of students and complexity of issues (International, widening access, disabilities, mental health), to develop a system to mainstream projects that are successful and demonstrate impact (for example CÉIM, the Academic Writing Centre and the Counselling Service).

Objective 3 – Overall Assessment of Access, Transfer and Progression

NUI Galway procedures for access, transfer and progression are in keeping with the QQI *Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression*.

Objective 4 – Provision of Programmes to International Learners

The team considers the University's approach to the provision of education to international learners to be consistent with the QQI's *Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners*. However, given NUI Galway's aspirations to further increase international numbers (from 23% to 25% within the timeframe of *Vision 2020*) it is important that greater attention is given to the specific international student experience and well-being.

Section

E

Institutional Response



Institutional Response



NUI Galway welcomes the work that the CINNTE Review Team undertook at NUI Galway earlier this year. We welcome the commendations and recommendations in the report and the wholehearted and professional engagement that the Team displayed during its visit and the clear recognition of the professionalism here in NUI Galway. We are particularly pleased that the Team recognised, for example,

- our collective, institutional commitment to quality and the enhancement of quality,
- the level of engagement and openness from all those involved in the CINNTE Review process,
- the publication of the ISER on the University’s website, and
- the use of case-studies to highlight the work being undertaken at NUI Galway.

NUI Galway is very much committed to a culture of quality and quality enhancement. The Review Team’s recognition of the positive outcomes associated with the University’s follow-up Quality Culture survey will help to enhance this culture. The survey proved an extremely effective tool in assessing the University’s response to a changing quality landscape. Through the work of the Quality Office we are determined to strengthen and further enhance our quality culture by continuing to develop and refine relevant policies and procedures.

NUI Galway is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity and to creating and sustaining an environment that values and celebrates the diversity of our staff and student body. We welcome the Review Team’s endorsement of the work we have undertaken to promote and progress equality and diversity. We will continue to enhance the cohesive governance structure put in place to guarantee clear and consistent leadership, responsibility, accountability, and oversight of equality, diversity, and inclusion.

NUI Galway is a research university, research-led in our teaching and civic engagement. As noted by the Review Team, the Institutional Review of Research Performance (IRRP) has allowed for a full understanding of research activity and performance. The Review Team’s recommendation to develop a research communication strategy will position us to communicate to industry partners, all aspects of our research activity and performance and potential areas of collaboration.

NUI Galway aims to provide students with the support and resources it needs through the offices of Student Services, the Library and the Student Information Desk. We welcome the Review Team’s acknowledgement of the excellent support offered to our students through the work conducted by CÉIM, the Academic Writing Centre, the Career Development Centre, Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, and Researcher Development Centre.

The CINNTE Review has been timely as we engage in the process of developing a new strategic plan for 2020 and beyond which will have a commitment to respect and to excellence as core values. These are manifest in the quality of our work together as a university community. The process of compiling the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report will prove a useful tool for self-reflection in this regard as we plan for the years ahead.

There is a noticeable culture of change across NUI Galway with the merger of two colleges, the appointment of new deans and vice-presidents, expanded devolution of responsibilities and resources, a review of governance structures carried out by the Institute of Public Administration and continuing consultation in relation to the University’s new strategy.



We will use the recommendations outlined by the Review Team to enhance and inform this journey of change and to ensure timely implementation of all recommendations.

NUI Galway would like to sincerely thank the Review Team for its incisive and in-depth review and for its commitment to compiling a report that will help to inform NUI Galway's new strategy and guide the University on its path to change in the coming years.

NUI Galway would also like to thank Quality and Qualifications Ireland for its support throughout this process.

Professor Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh
President

July 2019



APPENDICES



Appendices

A: Terms of Reference

B: Main Review Visit Schedule

Appendix A

Terms of Reference (Terms of Reference for the Review of Universities and other Designated Awarding Bodies)

SECTION 1 Background and Context for the Review

1.1 Context and Legislative Underpinning

These are the Terms of Reference for the Review of a Designated Awarding Body (DAB). The concept of a Designated Awarding Body is derived from the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012 (The 2012 Act) and is defined as '*a previously established university, the National University of Ireland, an educational institution established as a university under Section 9 of the Act of 1997, the Dublin Institute of Technology and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland*'. The following institutions are Designated Awarding Bodies:

- Dublin City University
- Dublin Institute of Technology
- University College Cork
- University College Dublin
- University of Limerick
- National University of Ireland, Galway
- Maynooth University
- The National University of Ireland
- The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
- Trinity College Dublin

In 2016, QQI adopted a policy on cyclical review in higher education which sets out in greater detail the scope, purposes, criteria, model and procedures for review. These are represented in the Terms of Reference and the Handbook for the Review of Designated Awarding Bodies. QQI has introduced an annual reporting process for institutions whereby institutions are required to submit an Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR). The aim of the AIQR is to provide a contemporary account of quality assurance (QA) within an institution. Information is provided through an online template and it is published. Collated annual reports are provided to periodical

Review Teams. Annual reporting allows institutions and QQI to engage on a regular basis. Published annual reports assist with documentation management for institutions in reviews and lessen the burden on institutions in the lead-up to a review.

This review cycle is being conducted in a very changed context for higher education. The landscape for higher education has been significantly reshaped since the last cycle of reviews commenced. Smaller colleges have been merged with universities and many institutes of technology are reorganising and preparing mergers as part of the Technological University process. New alliances and clusters, envisaged by [Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape](#) have commenced. A new approach to public funding has been introduced and operated by the Higher Education Authority (HEA). Initiatives for enhancement such as the *Irish Survey of Student Engagement* (ISSE) and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (NFETL) have been formalised at a national level. These developments mean that there are new sources of information and external benchmarks available to institutions that can be used to inform self-evaluation in this review cycle. Key measurements such as entry profiles, student retention, graduate profiles and staff and student satisfaction rates can provide some quantitative evidence of the quality of an institution's offer.

The 2012 Act states that QQI shall consult with the HEA in carrying out the review. QQI has agreed with HEA that this will take the form of engagement with QQI on the Terms of Reference and confirmation of the status of the institution within the higher education system, sharing individual institutional profiles and data with the Team. Further details of the agreement can be accessed [here](#).

This is the third review round of Designated Awarding Bodies. Previous rounds took place in 2004-2005 and 2009-2012.

The 2018-2023 Review Cycle Schedule is:

INSTITUTION	COMPLETION DATES			
	ISER	Planning Visit	Main Review Visit	Report
Dublin City University	Q2 2018	Q3 2018	Q4 2018	Q1 2019
Maynooth University	Q2 2018	Q3 2018	Q4 2018	Q1 2019
National University of Ireland, Galway	Q4 2018	Q1 2019	Q2 2019	Q3 2019
University College Dublin	Q2 2019	Q3 2019	Q4 2019	Q1 2020
University of Limerick	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020
Dublin Institute of Technology	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020	Q1 2021
Trinity College Dublin	Q4 2020	Q1 2021	Q2 2021	Q3 2021
University College Cork	Q2 2021	Q3 2021	Q4 2021	Q1 2022
National University of Ireland	Q4 2021	Q1 2022	Q2 2022	Q3 2022
Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland	Q2 2022	Q3 2022	Q4 2022	Q1 2023

1.2 Purposes

The Policy for the Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions highlights 4 purposes for individual institutional reviews. These are set out in the table below.

PURPOSE	ACHIEVED AND MEASURED THROUGH:
<p>1. To encourage a QA culture and the enhancement of the student learning environment and experience within institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - emphasising the student and the student learning experience in reviews - providing a source of evidence of areas for improvement and areas for revision of policy and change and basing follow-up upon them - exploring innovative and effective practices and procedures - exploring quality as well as quality assurance within the institution
<p>2. To provide feedback to institutions about institution-wide quality and the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality and the overall effectiveness of their quality assurance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - emphasising the ownership of quality and quality assurance at the level of the institution - pitching the review at a comprehensive institution-wide level - evaluating compliance with legislation, policy and standards - evaluating how the institution has identified and measured itself against its own benchmarks and metrics to support quality assurance governance and procedures - emphasising the improvement of quality assurance procedures
<p>3. To contribute to public confidence in the quality of institutions by promoting transparency and public awareness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adhering to purposes, criteria and outcomes that are clear and transparent - publishing the reports and outcomes of reviews in accessible locations and formats for different audiences - evaluating, as part of the review, institutional reporting on quality and quality assurance, to ensure that it is transparent and accessible
<p>4. To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - using the expertise of international, national and student peer reviewers who are independent of the institution - ensuring that findings are based on stated evidence - facilitating institutions to identify measurement, comparison and analytic techniques, based on quantitative data relevant to their own mission and context, to support quality assurance - promoting the identification and dissemination of examples of good practice and innovation

SECTION 2

Objectives and Criteria

2.1 Review Objectives

OBJECTIVE 1

To review the effectiveness and implementation of the QA procedures of the institution through consideration of the procedures set out, primarily, in the AIQR. Where necessary, the information provided by the AIQR is supplemented by additional information provided through documentation requests and interviews. The scope of this includes the procedures for reporting, governance and publication. This also incorporates an analysis of the ways in which the institution applies evidence-based approaches to support QA processes, including quantitative analysis, evidence gathering and comparison. Progress on the development of QA since the previous review of the institution will be evaluated. Consideration will also be given to the effectiveness of the AIQR and ISER procedures within the institution.

The scope of this objective also extends to the overarching procedures of the institution for assuring itself of the quality of its research degree programmes and research activities.

This objective also encompasses the effectiveness of the procedures established by the institution for the assurance of the quality of collaborations, partnerships and overseas provision, including the procedures for the approval and review of linked providers, joint awarding arrangements, joint provision and other collaborative arrangements such as clusters and mergers.

OBJECTIVE 2

To review the enhancement of quality by the institution through governance, policy, and procedures.

To review the congruency of QA procedures and enhancements with the institution's own mission and goals or targets for quality.

To identify innovative and effective practices for quality enhancement.

OBJECTIVE 3

To review the effectiveness and implementation of procedures for access, transfer and progression.

OBJECTIVE 4

Following the introduction of a statutory international education QA scheme, to determine compliance with the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners.

2.2 Review Criteria

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 1

The Review Report will include a specific qualitative statement on the effectiveness of the QA procedures of the institution and the extent of their implementation. The report will also include a specific statement about the extent to which the QA procedures can be considered compliant with the ESG and as having regard to QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (QAG). These statements will be highlighted in the report of the review.

The statements may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements, recommendations and possibly recommendations for directions in reference to this objective.

The criteria to be used by the Team in reaching conclusions for this objective are:

- ESG
- QQI *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (Core)*
- QQI *Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Universities and Other Designated Awarding Bodies*
- QQI *Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Research Degree Programmes*
- Section 28 of the 2012 Act
- The institution's own objectives and goals for quality assurance

Where appropriate and actioned by the institution, additional QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines will be incorporated.

The QQI *Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Independent/Private Providers* may be an appropriate reference document if they have been adopted as their linked provider(s).

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 2

The Review Report will include a specific qualitative statement on the enhancement of quality by the institution through governance, policy, and procedures.

The statements may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations in reference to this objective. If identified, innovative and effective practices for quality enhancement will be highlighted in the report.

The criteria to be used by the Team in reaching conclusions for this objective are:

- The institution's own mission and vision
- The goals or targets for quality identified by the institution
- Additional sources of reference identified by the institution

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 3

The report will include a qualitative statement on the extent to which the procedures are in keeping with QQI policy for Access, Transfer and Progression.

This statement may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations and possibly recommendations for conditions in reference to this objective.

The criterion to be used by the Team in reaching conclusions for this objective are:

QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 4

When the statutory international education quality assurance scheme is in place, the report will include a qualitative statement on the extent to which the procedures are compliant with the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners.

This statement may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations and possibly recommendations for conditions in reference to this objective.

The criterion to be used by the Team in reaching conclusions for this objective is the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners

Key questions to be addressed by the review for each objective

- How have QA procedures and reviews been implemented within the institution?
- How effective are the internal QA procedures and reviews of the institution?
- Are the QA procedures in keeping with European Standards and Guidelines?
- Are the QA procedures in keeping with QQI policy and guidelines, or their equivalent?
- Who takes responsibility for quality and QA across the institution?
- How transparent, accessible and comprehensive is reporting on quality and QA?
- How is quality promoted and enhanced?
- Are there effective innovations in QA and quality enhancement?
- Is the student experience in keeping with the institution's own stated mission and strategy?
- Are achievements in QA and quality in keeping with the institution's own stated mission and strategy?
- How do achievements in QA and quality measure up against the institution's own goals or targets for quality?

SECTION 3 The Review Process

3.1 Process

The primary basis for the review process is this handbook.

3.2 Review Team Profile

QQI will appoint the Review Team to conduct the institutional review. Review Teams are composed of peer reviewers who are students and senior institutional leaders and staff from comparable institutions as well as external representatives. The size of the Team and the duration of their visit will depend on the size and complexity of the institution but in general the Review Team for a Designated Awarding Body will consist of 6 persons. Each Review Team includes a Chairperson and Coordinating Reviewer, and may be supported by a rapporteur, who is not a member of the Team, to take and collate notes of meetings. A single Team may undertake the review of two different institutions.

Reviewers are not QQI employees, but rather peers of the institution. The institution will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed composition of their Review Team to ensure there are no conflicts of interest, and QQI will ensure an appropriate and entirely independent Team of reviewers is selected for the institution. QQI has final approval over the composition of each Review Team.

There will be appropriate gender representation on the Review Team. The Team will consist of carefully selected and trained and briefed reviewers who have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their tasks. The Team will operate under the leadership of the Review Chairperson.

The Review Team will be appointed in keeping with the following profile:

1. A Review Chairperson

The role of the Chairperson is to act as leader of the Review Team. This is an international reviewer who is a (serving or recently former) senior third-level institution leader – usually a head of institution or deputy head of institution or a senior policy advisor who:

- » possesses a wide range of higher education experience;
- » demonstrates a deep understanding of the complexities of the higher education system;
- » understands often unique QA governance arrangements;
- » has proven experience in the management of innovation and change.

2. A Coordinating Reviewer

The role of the Coordinating Reviewer is to act as secretary to the Team as well as to be a full Review Team member. This is usually a person with expertise in the higher education system and prior experience in participating in external reviews. As the coordinating reviewer is responsible for drafting the report, he or she will possess proven excellent writing abilities.

3. A Student Reviewer

The role of the student reviewer is to represent the student voice in the Review Team. The student reviewer will be typically a PhD student with significant experience of higher education or an undergraduate student who has completed a specific programme preparing them for the role or who has previously had a key role in other institutional reviews.

4. An External Representative

The role of the external representative is to bring a ‘third mission’ perspective to the Review Team. In addition to the specific roles above, the full Team complement will include a range of experts with the following knowledge and experience:

- » International reviewer experience
- » EQF and Bologna expertise
- » Experience of higher education QA processes
- » Experience of managing research within or across institutions
- » Experience in governance
- » Experience and proven ability in the advancement of teaching and learning

Details of Review Team roles and responsibilities can be found in Appendix B.

3.3 Procedure and timelines

The outline set out in the policy (below) will be elaborated further and timelines will be set out to accompany it, through discussion and consultation.

STEP	ACTION	DATES	OUTCOME
Terms of Reference (ToR)	Completion of an institutional information profile by QQI Confirmation of ToR with institution and HEA	9 months before the Main Review Visit (MRV)	Published Terms of Reference
Preparation	Appointment of an expert Review Team Consultation with the institution on any possible conflicts of interest	6-9 months before the MRV	Review Team appointed
Self-evaluation	Forwarding to QQI of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)	12 weeks before the MRV	Published ISER (optional)
Desk Review	Desk review of the ISER by the Team	Before the initial meeting	ISER initial response provided
Initial Meeting	An initial meeting of the Review Team, including reviewer training and briefing	5 weeks after the ISER, 7 weeks before the MRV	Team training and briefing is complete. Team identify key themes and additional documents required
Planning Visit	A visit to the institution by the Chair and Coordinating Reviewer to receive information about the ISER process, discuss the schedule for the Main Review Visit and discuss additional documentation requests	5 weeks after the ISER, 7 weeks before the MRV	An agreed note of the Planning Visit
Main Review Visit	To receive and consider evidence on the ways in which the institution has performed in respect of the objectives and criteria set out in the Terms of Reference	12 weeks after the receipt of ISER	A short preliminary oral report to the institution

STEP	ACTION	DATES	OUTCOME	
Report	Preparation of a draft report by the Team	6-8 weeks after the MRV		
	Draft report sent to the institution for a check of factual accuracy	12 weeks after the MRV		
	Institution responds with any factual accuracy corrections	2 weeks after receipt of draft report		
	Preparation of a final report	2 weeks after factual accuracy response		QQI Review Report
	Preparation of an institutional response	2 weeks after final report		Institutional response
Outcomes	Consideration of the Review Report and findings by QQI together with the institutional response and the plan for implementation	Next available meeting of QQI committee	Formal decision about the effectiveness of QA procedures <i>In some cases, directions to the institution and a schedule for their implementation</i>	
	Preparation of QQI quality profile	2 weeks after decision	Quality profile published	
Follow-up	The form of follow-up will be determined by whether 'directions' are issued to the institution. In general, where directions are issued the follow-up period will be sooner and more specific actions may be required as part of the direction			
	Preparation of an institutional implementation plan	1 month after decision	Publication of the implementation plan by the institution	
	One-year follow-up report to QQI for noting. This and subsequent follow-up may be integrated into annual reports to QQI	1 year after the MRV	Publication of the follow-up report by QQI and the institution	
	Continuous reporting and dialogue on follow-up through the annual institutional reporting and dialogue process	Continuous	Annual Institutional Quality Report Dialogue Meeting notes	
Note: The total period from start to finish is approximately 15 months but will depend on QQI committee meeting dates.				

Appendix B

Main Review Visit Schedule

Day 1: Monday, 25 March 2019.

TIME	MEETING WITH	PURPOSE
09.00-09.30	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator
09.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
10.00-10.30	President	Private Meeting with President
10.30-11.00	1. Senior Management Team	To discuss institutional mission, strategic plan. Roles and responsibilities for quality assurance and enhancement
11.00-11.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
11.45-12.30	2. Údarás (Governing Body) Representatives	To discuss the mechanisms employed by the governing body for monitoring quality assurance and enhancement and how it ensures effectiveness
12.30-1.30	Private Review Team Meeting and Lunch	
1.30-2.15	3. College Deans	Discussions on strategic management and quality assurance structures, including the roles and responsibilities for quality assurance and management between the centre, faculties and schools/departments
2.15-2.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
2.45-3.30	4. Students Union Officers	To discuss student engagement and student role in the institute in quality assurance, Strategic Planning and decision-making processes.
3.30-4.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
4.00-4.45	5. Student Representatives (UG & PGT)	Discussions with students from all schools, to include representation from different years, disciplines and service users. (UG and PG)
4.45-5.30	Private Review Team Meeting	

Day 2: Tuesday, 26 March 2019.

TIME	MEETING WITH	PURPOSE
09.00-9.30	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator to clarify issues from previous day and review today.
9.30-10.15	6. Self-Evaluation Team	Discussion on management of quality assurance structures, including the experience of implementing quality assurance throughout the institution
10.15-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting	
11.15-12.00	7. Representatives from Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) & Academic Council (AC)	To discuss how the institution monitors the effectiveness of its quality management processes and structures and it ensures the outcomes of quality assurance processes are enacted in an appropriate, consistent and timely manner.
12.00-12.30	Private Review Team Meeting	
12.30-1.15	8. Heads of Schools	To discuss Quality Management Processes at the Academic Department Level, implementation and how their effectiveness is ensured.
1.15-2.15	9. Review Team Meeting with UG/PGT students and Lunch	
2.15-3.00	10. Student Services staff	To discuss involvement in quality assurance and enhancement
3.00-3.30	Private Review Team Meeting	
3.30-4.15	11. Meeting with Academic Staff representatives from all schools	To discuss involvement in quality assurance and enhancement
4.15-5.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
5.00-5.45	12. External Stakeholders	Meeting employers, local industry/sector representatives, community groups, including for example: stakeholders identified and/or consulted during self-evaluation; stakeholders that are an integral element of higher education provision

Day 3: Wednesday, 27 March 2019.

TIME	MEETING WITH	PURPOSE
09.00-9.30	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator to clarify issues from previous day and review today
9.30-10.15	13. Research Directors	To discuss the development of Research and Innovation in the Institute.
10.15-11.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
10.45-11.30	14. Academic Staff – Research	Staff experience of research management and supervision, the relationship between teaching, research and innovation, quality assurance and enhancements and the impacts on the research student experience.
11.30-12.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
12.00-12.45	15. Management and Staff involved in Internationalisation	To discuss involvement in quality assurance and enhancement in International Education.
12.45-1.30	16. Review Team Meeting with PGR students and Lunch	
1.30-2.00	17. International Students – Incoming and Outgoing	Session on international student engagement in the institution, particularly the student learning experience
2.00-2.30	Private Review Team Meeting	
2.30-3.00	18. Management and Staff involved in HR and Staff Development	To discuss staffing issues and constraints; and policies and procedures for staff promotion, diversity, recruitment and appraisal
3.00-3.30	Private Review Team Meeting	
3.30-4.15	19. Distance learning	To discuss arrangements for ensuring the quality of provision for staff and students for distance learning
4.15-4.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
4.45-5.30	20. Staff from Linked & Recognised Colleges (DABs)	Quality of provision for staff and students at linked and recognised colleges <i>(Session could be used to discuss quality assurance of the distance-learning staff/student experience)</i>

Day 4: Thursday, 28 March 2019.

TIME	MEETING WITH	PURPOSE
8.30-9.00	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator to clarify issues from previous day and review today.
9.00-9.30	Private Review Team Meeting	
9.30-10.15	21. Equality and Diversity	Meeting with VP for Equality & Diversity, Vice Deans, Chair of Support Services Equality and Diversity Group, and staff from the Office of VP for Equality and Diversity.
10.15-11.00	22. Temporary contracts	Meeting with senior management to discuss staff employed on the basis of temporary contracts
11.00-12.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
12.00-12.30	23. OPEN slot	
12.30-17.00	Private Team Meeting & lunch	

Day 5: Friday, 29 March 2019.

TIME	MEETING WITH	PURPOSE
9.00-9.30	Private Review Team Meeting	
9.30-10.00	Meeting with President	
9.30-10.00	<i>Parallel meeting of QQI and Institutional Coordinator</i>	<i>To gather feedback on the review process</i>
10.00-11.00	Review Team and QQI	To discuss the review team's main findings and alignment with the terms of reference
11.00-11.30	Private Review Team Meeting	
11.30-12.00	24. Oral Report	

Glossary

Glossary of terms, acronyms and abbreviations from this report

Term	Definition
2012 Act	Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
AC	Academic Council
AIQR	Annual Institutional Quality Reports
APRC	Academic Priorities and Resources Committee
CAO	Central Applications Office
CÉIM	An Academic Peer Support Scheme for 1st Year Students
CELT	Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching
CINNTE	The name given to QQI's first cyclical review period
DABs	Designated Awarding Bodies
DARE	Disability Access Route to Education
DCU	Dublin City University
E&D	Equality and Diversity
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
EQAF	European Quality Assurance Forum
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
EUA	European University Association
EURASHE	European Association of Institutes in Higher Education
GMIT	Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology
GSB	Graduate Studies Board
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HR	Human Resources
HRB	Health Research Board (research funding body)
HSE	Health Service Executive (Ireland's Health Services agency)
ISER	Institutional Self-Evaluation Report

ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDA	Industrial Development Authority, Ireland
IHEQN	Irish Higher Education Quality Network
IPA	Institute of Public Administration
IRIU	Institutional Review of Irish Universities
IRRP	Institutional Review of Research Performance
ISSE	Irish Survey of Student Engagement
ISER	Institutional Self-Evaluation Report
IT	Institute of Technology / Information Technology
IT Sligo	Institute of Technology Sligo
IUA	Irish Universities Association
IUQB	Irish Universities Quality Board (one of four national agencies that were amalgamated in 2012 to form QQI)
LibQual	Survey on Library Services
LTA	Learning, Teaching & Assessment
LYIT	Letterkenny Institute of Technology
MRV	Main Review Visit
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centre
NFETL	National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NUI	National University of Ireland
NUIG	National University of Ireland, Galway
P&P	(QA) Policies and Procedures
PG	Postgraduate
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PMDS	Performance Management Development System
Project DANte / Data Warehouse Project	An NUI Galway Business Intelligence/Data Analytics solution
QA	Quality Assurance
QE	Quality Enhancement
QAG	(QQI's Statutory) Quality Assurance Guidelines (Core)
QEC	Quality Enhancement Committee
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
QR	(Cyclical) Quality Reviews

RIGRAM	Review of Income Generation and the Resource Allocation Model
RCSI	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
SET	Self-Evaluation Team
SFI	Science Foundation Ireland (research funding)
SID	Student Information Desk
SOLAS	Ireland's national body with responsibility for Funding, Planning and Co-ordinating Further Education and Training (FET)
Springboard+	An upskilling initiative in higher education offering free courses in areas where there are employment opportunities
SSC	Support Services Committee
St. Angela's	St. Angela's College, Sligo
SU	NUI Galway's Students' Union
T&L	Teaching and Learning
THE	Times Higher Education
ToR	Terms of Reference
Údarás (na hOllscoile)	NUI Galway's Governing Authority
UMCG	University Medical Centre Groningen
UMT	University Management Team
Vision 2020	NUI Galway's Strategic Plan for the period 2015-2020
VP	Vice President

Notes

