



## **University of Limerick CINNTE review Implementation plan**

## **Introduction**

The University of Limerick has welcomed the commendations and recommendations of the CINNTE review which took place virtually in August 2020. In making its recommendations, the review group has confirmed findings of the University's self-evaluation process and findings and has also provided advice on how the University can move to its next phase of development.

In devising this implementation plan, the recommendations of the CINNTE review have been categorised into 6 areas.

- Strategic Planning
- Staff Engagement
- Data and Digital Infrastructure Capability
- Access, Transfer and Progression
- Student Engagement
- Quality Assurance & Enhancement System

Recommendations that were considered by the review group as being in the 'Top 5' are highlighted with an \*. A narrative is provided for each action outlining actions already taken arising from internal review processes and plans prior to the publication of the CINNTE report and those planned over the next academic year and beyond.

## **Implementation**

The actions identified to address the recommendations of the review group, have been aligned to and integrated with the strategic and operational plans of the University, in order to optimise their implementation. Where recommendations are interlinked and have an impact on more than one identified area they are cross referenced accordingly. This is also reflected where actions in one area are interdependent on the outcomes of another.

Each of the areas has been designated an owner at the executive level of the University.

Progress on implementation of the plan will be monitored by the Quality Committee through a report from each owner. A progress report on implementation will be submitted to QQI in May 2022.

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## Strategic Planning

Owner: President

Rec No	Recommendation	Commentary & Actions	Timeline
4	<p>The review team concludes that, in spite of the many good elements of this Strategic Plan, it is too high-level and possibly too ambitious, certainly given the impact of the Covid-19 crisis. The review team therefore <b>recommends that the University reconsider the Strategic Plan and adapt it in the light of the present circumstances before the faculties start to develop their own plans in earnest.</b> The University needs to develop processes for strategic planning that are clear enough and flexible enough to set a high-level course, while facilitating faculties, schools and departments to build their own aligned plans.</p>	<p>Institution wide consultation has commenced on re-calibration of UL@50 . See the commentary on Staff Engagement below for greater detail.</p> <p>This consultation will incorporate the findings of the institutional review report in its discussions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Consultative Forum constituted</li> <li>2 Phase 1 Consultations commenced</li> <li>3 Phase 2 Consultations to commence</li> </ol> <p>A suite of KPIs were developed to monitor the UL@50 Strategic Plan – these were agreed with EC and GA. This listing was prepared through extensive consultation with senior management, reviewing the new strategy, consideration of the KPIs used in previous strategies, data requested and reported on by the Higher Education Authority, and discussions with Governing Authority. As the strategy is now being recalibrated in response to institutional review recommendations, these KPIs and other measures of success will be considered and articulated.</p>	<p>Overall Completion Due June 2021</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. November 2020</li> <li>2. February 2021</li> <li>3. April 2021</li> </ol>
5*	<p>The review team recommends that the University, in adapting its adapt Strategic Plan, ensure that it is considerably less high level and more detailed than the present one, and that it identify a clear time line with well-defined goals. It is important that measures of success are well articulated and that the goals are clearly prioritised, while maintaining a high level of flexibility and agility in the planning process, as the pandemic continues to disrupt ‘business as usual’.</p>	<p>A suite of KPIs were developed to monitor the UL@50 Strategic Plan – these were agreed with EC and GA. This listing was prepared through extensive consultation with senior management, reviewing the new strategy, consideration of the KPIs used in previous strategies, data requested and reported on by the Higher Education Authority, and discussions with Governing Authority. As the strategy is now being recalibrated in response to institutional review recommendations, these KPIs and other measures of success will be considered and articulated.</p>	

Rec No	Recommendation	Commentary & Actions	Timeline
12*	<p>The review team acknowledges the recent developments towards building management and quality dashboards, yet recommends that the University make an <b>even stronger effort to identify key performance indicators/key information for decision makers and actors on different levels</b>, and <b>further recommends that the University create the necessary database (potentially also through revised methodologies of obtaining and analysing data</b> generated throughout the student life cycle or related to the University's different core processes) and IT (infra)structures and processes.</p>		

## Staff Engagement

Owner : President

Rec No.	Recommendation	Commentary and Action	Planned Timeline
3	<p>The review team recommends that special efforts be undertaken to improve communication where needed as soon as possible, and that the lines of transparent and timely internal communication be strengthened. Identifying the less effective elements of UL's communication architecture might be a productive first step. This will help the University to make progress and implement the Strategic Plan under the difficult times ahead.</p>	<p>The University had appointed a Director of Internal Communications in May 2020 as it had identified a requirement to enhance communications. . In direct response to this recommendation, the President has created a Consultation Review Group to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop a process by which all UL staff are given the opportunity to feedback and contribute to looking at the emphasis and detail of what we do well, what we could do better and how this can be achieved in relation to the UL@50 Strategic Plan goals.</li> <li>• To recommend and oversee a series of consultative methods to engage with colleagues on a longer term basis and</li> <li>• To facilitate the feedback of information from consultations both to the Executive Committee and to the campus community.</li> </ul> <p>The following actions have taken place or are planned:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expressions of Interest Sought</li> <li>2. CRG established</li> <li>3. Terms of Reference Agreed</li> <li>4. Meetings with: Head of Department Forum, Management Committee, UG Course Director Forum</li> <li>5. Creation of open-ended consultative process focused on bottom-up information gathering concerning UL Strategic Priorities</li> <li>6. 1<sup>st</sup> phase consultations to take place</li> <li>7. 2<sup>nd</sup> phase consultations to take place</li> <li>8. Staff survey on impact of remote working scheduled</li> </ol> <p>Since September 2020 a range of initiatives in addition to the consultative process have been put in place</p>	<p>1-3 :Sept-October 2020</p> <p>4-5 :Oct-Dec 2020</p> <p>6. February – March 2021 7. April – June 2021 8. April 2021</p>

Rec No.	Recommendation	Commentary and Action	Planned Timeline
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly updates to staff via HR Notices</li> <li>• Targeted communications to various areas e.g. Management Council / HoDs</li> <li>• More regular communications to all staff from Office of President/Regular Town Hall meetings</li> <li>• Regular Town Halls to all staff with Q&amp;A to enable genuine feedback and two-way communication</li> <li>• Project to enable better 2 way communication via a UL Intranet is at its very early stages</li> </ul>	
7	<p>The review team recommends that the university put in place a regular staff survey in order to improve on the performance of staff and thus quality. Such a survey would give timely signals of dissatisfaction to senior management, pointing to the issues on which policy and strategy should be focused</p>	<p>Arising from the consultation process described above, a staff survey or other consultative method will be aligned with existing staff feedback mechanisms including Athena SWAN activities. This mechanism will be used to evaluate improvement in communications</p>	
14	<p>The review team recommends that the University <b>strengthen the role of bottom-up feedback</b> by using <b>staff</b> and student feedback, <b>and</b> that the University give this feedback a more prominent position in the quality architecture.</p>		

## Data and Digital Infrastructure & Capability

Owner: Chief Operating Officer

Rec No	Recommendation	Commentary and Actions	Timeline
8	<p>A significant proportion of staff have little experience in online learning and have negative feelings about the move. It is therefore urgent that UL staff receive training in this and are provided with access to modules to support them in adapting easily to these new ways of teaching, without compromising quality. Clearly, the newly established Learning Technologists Forum (LTF) plays a crucial role here, but, at present, the unit functions primarily as a best-practice forum to connect interested staff. In view of the disruptive speed with which international higher education is forced to adopt blended and online teaching, also in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, the review team <b>recommends that UL rapidly build further on the promising first steps taken in 2019 with the establishment of the Centre for Transformative Learning, both by making the necessary investments and stimulating these new technologies.</b></p>	<p>It should be noted that this finding was in the context of the results of a survey on the movement to emergency remote teaching taken in June 2020. This survey represented the views of teaching staff who had experienced an unplanned for event due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Significant resources have been put in place to support teaching and assessment in an online environment since this survey took place. Throughout the University there has been a strong level of engagement with the support, training and resources provided to staff in the move to blended and online learning provided by members of the Centre for Transformative Learning (CTL) through the collaborative efforts of the LTF. CTL has been a critical driver of this community of practice (delivering much of its CPD, the curation development and curation of resources, social media).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Guidelines for online teaching and assessment have been developed</li> <li>2. A repository of resource materials is available to teaching staff as well as live delivery of CPD activities</li> <li>3. The University implemented the roll out of Panopto and designated MS Teams as its preferred platform to support online teaching.</li> <li>4. The capacity of the Virtual Learning Environment has been enhanced to support time bound assessment where required by professional and regulatory bodies</li> </ol> <p>Notwithstanding this ongoing activity, the University is developing a Digital Strategy to support teaching and learning.</p>	<p>March 2020-June 2020</p> <p>August 2020</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>September 2020</p>

Rec No	Recommendation	Commentary and Actions	Timeline
		It is planned to adapt programmes within CTL to reflect the aspirations of the recalibrated strategy. The Graduate Diploma in Teaching, Learning and Scholarship includes three scholarship modules with a strong emphasis on SoTL. Scholarly teaching and research-led teaching is critical in the preparation of faculty in ensuring teaching is informed by research within their discipline and in informed pedagogy focused on active and engaged learning approaches.	
12b*	...further recommends that the university create the necessary database (potentially also through revised methodologies of obtaining and analysing data generated throughout the student life cycle or related to the university's different core processes) and IT (infra)structures and processes	In order to fulfil recommendations 12 and 13, the University will continue to implement its programme of enhancements as outlined in the IT strategy 'UL Enable'. Phase 2 of the strategy is being re-examined to maintain consistency with the University strategy. Key actions to support that are	
13	In order to obtain really meaningful and systematic enhancements, the review team recommends that the university put in place a much more complete and online data management system that provides data to central administration, as well as faculties and schools.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approve &amp; Fund Stage 2 IT strategy business case</li> <li>2. Expand Business Intelligence team</li> <li>3. Define business requirements and priorities</li> <li>4. Improve underlying data quality, management &amp; governance required across all systems through systems and process improvement e.g. SI tactical stabilisation, selection of new VLE</li> <li>5. Continue with SI Tactical stabilisation (student record system) project</li> <li>6. Development of institutional Digital Strategy</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. December 2021</li> <li>2. December 2021</li> <li>3. Arising from strategic consultation</li> <li>4. Ongoing</li> <li>5. Current to Sept 2022</li> </ol>



## Access, Transfer & Progression

Owner: Provost and Deputy President

Rec No	Recommendation	Commentary & Action	Timeline
15	The review team recommends that the University <b>clarify its objectives in relation to access and diversity</b> , to which the policies already in place are related. In order to satisfy itself of the success of these policies and the achievement of its objectives in this regard, the review team further recommends that the University consider <b>developing an appropriate data set that will allow it to monitor trends</b> in student entry, progression and achievement.	<p>University of Limerick has strong track record within the Irish University sector of attracting and supporting under-represented groups at undergraduate level. <u>Recent data</u> published by the HEA shows that UL has the joint lowest score (with NUIG) of the Irish Universities on the Mean deprivation index; indicating that a far greater number of UL students come from disadvantaged backgrounds and our score still remains below the National Mean for Universities and IoTs combined</p> <p>UL has the highest number of students (42%) from the lowest 2 of the 4 socio-economic bands ('Disadvantaged' and 'below average' bands) as well as the lowest rate of 12% from the highest band ('Affluent') when compared with the other universities.</p> <p>Notwithstanding this, the University recognises that further work is required to ensure that admissions pathways for students in the further education sector can be streamlined and more analysis of its data on the success of students from underrepresented groups would add value to its equality and diversity objectives. The following actions will support that endeavour</p>	
16	The review team recommends that the University clarify its objectives in relation to access and diversity and, as part of this planned review of recognition of prior learning, it <b>should consider what monitoring data would enable it to determine the effectiveness of its access policies in meeting the objectives</b> identified with particular emphasis on social deprivation and diversity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. UL@50 consultation will inform these objectives and the information required to implement and evaluate their effectiveness</li> <li>2. In order to support its Access Transfer and Progression mission and obligations, the University has recently appointed a Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</li> </ol>	<p>June 2021</p> <p>March 2021</p>

Rec No	Recommendation	Commentary & Action	Timeline
		<p>3. The University has created a post to support UL's role in the IUA/Human Capital Initiative for the development of a sectoral RPL /RPE approach to support mobility in the HE system and life long learning.</p> <p>4. As part of the implementation of periodic programme review the streamlining of advanced entry and RPL pathways to UL programmes from alternative routes will be investigated. (See Quality Assurance &amp; Enhancement Actions)</p>	April 2021

## Student Engagement

Owner: Provost & Deputy President

Rec No	Recommendation	Commentary Action	Planned Timeline
14	The review team recommends that the University <b>strengthen the role of bottom-up feedback</b> by using staff and <b>student feedback, and</b> that the University give this feedback a more prominent position in the quality architecture.	The University had identified the need to strengthen its use of student feedback and data in general in order to enhance teaching and learning and service delivery. The <a href="#">StELA</a> project was funded under the SATLE fund in 2019. The project was paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic and it recommenced in September 2020. and is currently in progress	
10*	Given the central position that student surveys have in the total QA system, the review team recommends that UL continue work with students to close the loop by improving student response rates, using all means possible, including new channels of communication to renew enthusiasm for the process. In particular, the review team recommends that UL pilot, identify and follow up best practices in improving student feedback together with students, and, at the same time, work with students on how to address the feedback, including consistently reporting back to students how their feedback is used and in which changes it resulted.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Student focus groups complete</li> <li>2. Staff focus groups complete</li> <li>3. Interim reports and recommendations</li> <li>4. Consultation with stakeholders</li> <li>5. revised policies on student evaluation and use of data for enhancement of teaching and learning to be presented to AC.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. November 2020</li> <li>2. December 2020</li> <li>3. March 2021</li> <li>4. Mar-May 2021</li> <li>5. June 2021</li> </ol>
11	The review team recommends that the University ensure its appeal procedures are accessible, timely and fair to all students.	The University commits to the review of the appeals procedure will be reviewed in conjunction with UL Student Life and ULPSU	To complete academic Year 2021-22

## Quality Assurance & Enhancement System

Owner : Provost & Deputy President

Rec No	Recommendation	Commentary	Timeline
1	<p>There is no overall chart of the University's QA system that shows how the different components are interlinked and who holds responsibility for each component. On a related note, UL's Quality Policy declares that each employee bears responsibility for quality and lists a number of bodies and individuals that share responsibility for QA and QE at the institutional level, although not beyond. A document outlining the day-to-day responsibilities for QA offers only marginally more information, in particular with regard to actual operational responsibilities. It is unclear if the information in this document derives from any official documents. A quality team leaders' forum seems to foster good practice exchange, but it is unclear how the forum supports the overall QA system or what status it has in terms of the overall QA governance. Accordingly, <b>the review team recommends that there be a clear line of accountability for QA, including the ultimately accountable person, who should be the VPAASE.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A graphical description of the QA/E architecture has been developed.</li> <li>2. Clarification on roles and links to formal documents such as the               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) descriptors of academic roles and other roles and</li> <li>(ii) terms of reference of key committees with respect to quality assurance and enhancement will be made and included in the descriptor of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement system.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. June 2021</li> </ol>
2*	<p>The review team found that, overall, the QA and QE system functions in a top down manner. The review team also noted with admiration that, at the level of faculty and school, there is a great willingness and capability to assume greater responsibilities for QA. <b>The review team recommends re-analysing the QA and QE system to obtain a more balanced top down/bottom up attribution of responsibilities, which, in the view of the review team,</b></p>	<p>Recommendations 2,9 and 6 relate to the revision of procedures relating to the programme lifecycle and devolution of responsibility to Faculties.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work had commenced in this regard in March-May 2020. This was suspended due to COVID-19. The Working Group is to be re-instated.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Academic year 2021/22</li> </ol>

Rec No	Recommendation	Commentary	Timeline
	<b>will lead to greater engagement and ownership from all involved.</b>	2. Planning for implementation of the programme Review Process has begun. The initial phase is a scoping process to detail the process and resources required to support it.	2. February – June 2021
9*	Both programme design and annual review form the backbone of what one could describe as the 'top-down loop of quality assurance'. The review team considers this is well established through the clear rules laid down by the GA and associated procedures. However, the review team concurs with the view expressed in the ISER that procedures are top-heavy. <b>The review team recommends that UL revise the processes involved in programme design and annual review in order to identify the critical steps and remove the less important ones.</b>	3. The Curriculum Framework Working Group which has representation from a range of stakeholders has been created with a remit to develop of recommendations for the development of an institutional Curriculum Development Framework for UL	3. Commenced March 21 to report during AY 2021/22
6	The review team recommends modifying the programme approval and revisions processes with the goal of inspiring more enthusiasm among staff, although it is acknowledged that designing a lighter and more inspiring process should not be at the expense of its thoroughness. <b>Moreover, the review team recommends devolving minor revisions to faculty boards, thus making the process more lean and delegating responsibility to the work floor.</b>	4. The review group report implies that the 'complexity of the QA/E system' goes beyond the programme lifecycle so other aspects of the system will be examined through a longer engagement with the university community on the effectiveness of the QA/E system	4. During AY 2021/22