

National University of Ireland

2022

Annual Quality Report
National University of Ireland
Reporting Period 2020-2021

National University of Ireland

2022

Annual Quality Report (NUI)
PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM
Reporting Period 2020-2021

PREFACE

The **Annual Quality Report (AQR)** (formerly AIQR) forms part of Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) quality assurance (QA) framework of engagement with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The AQR provides documentary evidence of the development and evolution of each institution's internal quality system. It provides QQI with assurance that internal QA procedures have been established and are being implemented consistent with regulatory requirements.

The AQR, particularly part A, should assist with **document management** in the institutional review process and will facilitate institutions in providing review teams with procedural QA documentation in preparation for the external review process. It is an important part of the evidence base considered by external **review teams** as part of QQI's CINNTE cycle of institutional reviews, demonstrating that the institution's internal QA system is aligned with QQI's Core and relevant Sector- and Topic-specific Statutory QA Guidelines, and with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015 (ESG). It enables the review team to satisfy itself of compliance with these requirements for the purpose of the institutional review process.

Each AQR is **published in full on QQI's website**, providing transparency on the HEIs' assurance and enhancement of quality to external stakeholders. (As such, institutions should ensure that their submissions do not contain any data that they consider to be commercially sensitive.) Collectively, the AQRs comprise a single national repository of quality assurance practice in Irish higher education institutions.

Each year, QQI produces a synthesis report of the key themes highlighted across the AQRs, primarily arising from Part B of the reports.

CONTENTS

PREFACE	3
Guidelines on Completing the Report	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template	6
PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM	7
Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)	7
Introduction and Overview of Institution	8
1.0 Internal QA Framework	10
1.1 Governance and Management of Quality	10
1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision	14
2.0 Programme Development and Delivery	20
2.1 Programme Development and Approval	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.3 Procedures for Making Awards	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.0 Learner Resources and Support	21
4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support	Error! Bookmark not defined.
6.0 Information and Data Management	Error! Bookmark not defined.
7.0 Public Information and Communication	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review	Error! Bookmark not defined.
9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties	22
9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	22
9.2 Collaborative Provision	22
9.3 Articulation Agreements	22
PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
Guidelines on Completing Part B	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments	25
1.1 Strategic QA Updates	25
1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR	27
1.3 Governance and Management	29
1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review	30

2.0 IQA System - Enhancement and Impacts	33
2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity	35
3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period	36
3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives	36
3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods	38
3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period	38
3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period	38
4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template¹

Legislation

- [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012 \(as amended\)](#)
- [Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992 \(as amended\)](#)
- [Technological Universities Act 2018](#)
- [Universities Act 1997](#)

QQI Documents

Statutory QA Guidelines (QAG)

- [Core QAG](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Independent/Private Providers](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Designated Awarding Bodies](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Institutes of Technology](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Blended Learning](#)

Other QQI Policy Documents

- [QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards, 2012](#)
- [QQI's Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners, 2015](#)
- [QQI Policy Restatement on Access, Transfer and Progression, 2015](#)

Other National/International References

- [European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(2015\)](#)
- [IHEQN Guidelines on Collaborative Provision](#)
- [National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland](#)
- [Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes, 2019](#)
- [HEA National Framework for Doctoral Education](#)
- [The Salzburg Principles](#)
- [The Salzburg II Recommendations](#)
- [SOLAS Code of Practice for Employers and Apprentices](#)
- [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

¹ These links will be updated as further guidance documents are published.

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Table 1

Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)				
AQR Part A Section	QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.	QAG Core Sub-section Title	ESG Standard No.	ESG Standard Title
1.0 - Internal QA Framework	2.1	Governance and Management of Quality	1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
	2.2	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance		
2.0 - Programme Development and Delivery	2.3	Programmes of Education and Training	1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
4.0 - QA of Research Activities and Programmes			1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review				
5.0 - Staff Recruitment, Development and Support	2.4	Staff Recruitment, Management and Development	1.5	Teaching Staff
2.3 - Teaching, Learning and Assessment	2.5	Teaching and Learning	1.3	Student-centred Teaching, Learning and Assessment
	2.6	Assessment of Learners		
3.0 - Learner Resources and Supports	2.7	Supports for learners	1.6	Learning Resources and Student Support
6.0 - Information and Data Management	2.8	Information and Data Management	1.7	Information Management
7.0 - Public Information and Communication	2.9	Public Information and Communication	1.8	Public Information
2.0 - Programme Delivery and Development	2.10	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
9.0 - Details of Arrangements with Third Parties				
2.0 - Programme Development and Delivery	2.11	Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review			1.10	Cyclical External Quality Assurance
4.0 - QA of Research Activities and Programmes	QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes			

Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for the National University of Ireland for the reporting period **1 September 2020 - 31 August 2021**. The AQR has been approved by Dr Patrick O’Leary, NUI Registrar, and is submitted by Dr Sorcha Uí Chonnachtaigh, Manager of Academic Affairs.

The National University of Ireland (NUI) is a federal university comprising four constituent universities (Maynooth University, NUI Galway, UCC and UCD) and two recognised colleges² (RCSI and IPA). There are also, at present, four colleges linked with the constituent universities (NCAD, Burren College of Art, St. Angela’s College, Sligo and the Institute of Banking). A number of NUI’s institutions have campuses overseas. Graduates from all these institutions form part of a steadily growing worldwide community of over 475,000 NUI graduates. NUI students accounted for over 90,000 enrolments in the academic year 2020-21 and had over 40,000 graduates.³

Established by charter and statute in 1908, NUI occupies a unique position in the Irish university sector as a loose federation of institutions whose students graduate with degrees and other qualifications of the National University of Ireland. NUI is a university, but it is not a provider university and does not directly admit students to academic programmes. NUI provides a range of academic and related services to its member institutions and their students, as well as directly to graduates.

The current strategic plan for the five-year period 2018-22 is approaching conclusion. This plan set out a vision for the National University ‘to continue to be an integral part of part of the Irish higher education system, contributing to its development, being an advocate for its advancement and supporting our members’.

The National University of Ireland is recognised nationally and internationally with high academic standards for degrees and qualifications. In addition, the University has a long and proud heritage of promoting and funding academic scholarship and distinction in Ireland, and of contributing to civic, cultural and intellectual life through many activities and collaborations with national and international partner organisations in education and wider civil society.

NUI is empowered by charter and statute (1908, as amended) to recognise other institutions of higher education - known as ‘recognised colleges’ - that meet the quality standards of the University in the academic programmes and student experience that they offer. Through quality assurance (QA)

² The term ‘recognised college’ is defined later in this section.

³ This figure would generally be higher, but COVID-19 restrictions resulted in a number of postponed conferring ceremonies and a reduction in the number of graduates that would otherwise be ‘counted’ in this reporting period.

policies, procedures and guidelines, NUI applies standards that are comparable to those in the constituent universities, and on this basis these colleges are permitted to award degrees and other qualifications of the National University. NUI's position as a designated awarding body (DAB) in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012⁴ has further strengthened NUI's statutory role in this regard.⁵

Terms and Abbreviations

General

AY	Academic year
DAB	Designated awarding body
ISER	Institutional Self-Evaluation Report
NUI	National University of Ireland
QA	Quality assurance
RC	Recognised college

NUI Institutions

Constituent Universities

MU	Maynooth University
NUIG	National University of Ireland, Galway (aka NUI Galway)
UCC	University College Cork
UCD	University College Dublin

Recognised Colleges

RCSI	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland: University of Medicine and Health Sciences
IPA	Institute of Public Administration

Colleges Linked with Constituent Universities

IoB	Institute of Banking (UCD)
NCAD	National College of Art and Design (UCD)
BCA	Burren College of Art (NUIG)
SACS	St Angela's College, Sligo (NUIG)

⁴ [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012 \(irishstatutebook.ie\)](#). See also [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) \(Amendment\) Act 2019 \(irishstatutebook.ie\)](#).

⁵ At this time, NUI is the DAB for one recognised college only, IPA. RCSI, NUI's other recognised college, is a DAB in its own right. (See Section 1.2 for further detail.)

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

This section provides information on the overarching quality policy and the decision-making fora for quality assurance in NUI.

a. Overarching Institution Quality Policy

NUI's role and activities relating to quality assurance and enhancement align with the current *Strategic Plan for 2018-22*, specifically referencing Strategic Goal 3, which has, as a major objective, to 'ensure recognition of the NUI brand in Ireland and internationally as a mark of the highest quality academic standards'.⁶ As the strategy notes, 'academic quality underpins the NUI brand, which is shared by the constituent universities and the recognised colleges'.

Effective quality assurance is therefore of the highest significance for NUI, since it underpins the University's mission of upholding the value and prestige of NUI qualifications at home and abroad.

NUI's (2017) *Policy for Quality Assurance and Enhancement* states that the University will safeguard the standards of its awards in the recognised colleges, while clarifying that the colleges themselves have the primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance on a day-to-day basis.⁷ NUI provides policies and supporting procedures, as well as ongoing guidance and support to its recognised colleges, in line with national policy,⁸ sectoral practices and European best practice guidelines. We benefit in particular from our membership of the European Universities Association (EUA) Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF) and at sectoral level in Ireland, we fully engage as a member of the Irish Universities Association (IUA) Quality Committee.

This engagement and information-sharing supports us in our work to review and expand our range of quality assurance policies, procedures and guidelines.

NUI's governing body, the Senate, receives regular reports on QA matters across the recognised colleges, while the Committee of Registrars of the NUI Constituent Universities provide advice and support on QA matters as and when required.

b. Quality Assurance Decision-making Fora

⁶ *NUI Strategic Plan 2018-2022*, http://www.nui.ie/publications/docs/2018/NUI_Strategic_Plan_2018_2022.pdf.

⁷ See http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/NUI_Quality_Assurance_Policy_2018.pdf.

⁸ NUI is also guided in this task by the (2019) QQI *Statutory Guidelines for the Review of Linked Providers by the National University of Ireland*. Available at: http://nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/Statutory_Guidelines_for_the_Review_of_Linked_Providers_by_the_NUI.pdf.

NUI's governing body, the Senate, governs the NUI's role as a DAB for the recognised colleges. The Registrar of the NUI leads and manages the implementation of this role, supported by designated executive staff in NUI, namely the Head of Academic Services and Registry and the Manager of Academic Affairs. The Registrar reports to Senate at its meetings in January, April/May and November on QA matters in the recognised colleges, bringing forward items for decision as and when appropriate. Membership of the NUI Senate includes the NUI Chancellor, the NUI Registrar, chief officers of the constituent universities, four government nominees, four elected members from the governing bodies of each constituent university and eight members elected by convocation (graduates of the NUI).

Below the level of the Senate, operational business between NUI and its recognised colleges is conducted through separate committees for each institution. The committees act as the main mechanism for oversight of all strategic, policy and operational issues between NUI and the relevant recognised college. In the case of recognised colleges that are also Linked Providers (at this time this includes IPA only), this committee is the key forum for deliberation and decision-making on quality assurance matters, leading to formal decision-making by the Senate where warranted.

Figure 1 below illustrates the oversight and monitoring cycle of QA activity between NUI and its recognised colleges. This is based on an interpretation of quality in its widest sense, inclusive of the approval and re-approval processes for academic programmes leading to NUI qualifications as well as activities more traditionally associated with quality assurance such as external examining and institutional effectiveness reviews.

All these steps - except the periodic institutional review of QA effectiveness - apply to both of NUI's current recognised colleges. As a designated awarding body in its own right, RCSI's institutional effectiveness review is conducted directly by QQI (CINNTE review) and this does not fall within NUI's QA responsibility.⁹ The NUI Registrar and staff participate in the reviews of RCSI, attending meetings convened by the external review panels and providing documentation upon request. NUI Senate notes the outcome of the RCSI institutional effectiveness review.

⁹ QQI will be aware that the institutional effectiveness review of IPA does fall within the NUI's remit and that the review began during the reporting period (concluding shortly after).



Figure 1: NUI QA oversight and monitoring cycle for recognised colleges

c. Representation of Learners and External Stakeholders

External stakeholders are involved in NUI's governing body, the Senate, and external stakeholders and partners are involved in civic engagement activities and ad hoc projects

As a non-provider, NUI does not have learners in the same way as its member institutions. Learner experience is a core concern of our quality assurance activity with regard to the recognised colleges, but NUI does not have a direct relationship with learners that is typical in provider institutions. NUI interacts with active learners in a limited way, however, through the annual programme of awards, prizes and scholarships. (We provide services to graduates directly, but this is after they have completed their studies.) In civic engagement activities, the University seeks to include student perspectives, but this is also, necessarily, somewhat limited to student representatives (student union movement, students involved in governance). The approach in NUI previously has been to respect the member institutions' primary relationship with learners and interact in the above, specific ways. The development of the next strategic plan is an opportunity to rethink the relationship and input of student perspectives in NUI activities more broadly.

Important note:

With the prior permission of QQI, NUI has adapted Part A by moving most of the information from further sections of Part A into section 1.2. This change reflects the scope of this Annual Quality Report, which relates only to NUI's quality responsibilities towards its recognised colleges and, in particular, its current linked provider institution, the Institute of Public Administration (IPA). Part A, therefore, has the following sections:

- Section 1.2: QA Developments Relating to Recognised Colleges (sub-sections i-xi)
- Section 2: Details of Arrangements with Third Parties
- Section 3: Collaborative Provision

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

Linked Providers

At present there are two types of provider institutions with the status of a recognised college of NUI:¹⁰

- A provider institution that is deemed a 'linked provider' under the Act 2012;¹¹ NUI is the DAB for qualifications of the linked provider. At present this includes the Institute of Public Administration (IPA).
- A provider institution that is also the holder of the status of designated awarding body under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. Here, the responsibility for approval of the quality assurance provision for that institution lies directly with QQI. At present this includes the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland - University of Medicine and Health Sciences (RCSI).

QA Developments Relating to the Recognised Colleges (both DABs and Linked Providers)

i. Programme Design and Approval

All new programmes proposed by NUI recognised colleges leading to NUI qualifications are subject to approval by the NUI Senate. The design of the programme lies with the institution and follows NUI's core procedural document, updated in the previous reporting period.¹²

During this reporting period, NUI formalised and published guidelines on the approval of NUI research degrees:

- NUI (2021) NUI Policy, Regulations and Procedures for the Approval of NUI Research Degrees in the Recognised Colleges¹³

Changes to programme design and approval are often the result of recommendations arising from informal and formal external reviews. NUI has always required that recognised colleges formally review their existing programmes leading to NUI qualifications (see next section).

¹⁰ The conditions for recognised colleges as set out by Senate are governed under NUI Statute LXXXV1: Chapter LIX. This is not published online however details are available upon request from the NUI Registrar (registrar@nui.ie).

¹¹ [1] 2012 Act: Section 2(3) states that 'a linked provider is a provider that is not a designated awarding body but enters into an arrangement with a designated awarding body under which arrangement the provider provides a programme of education and training that satisfies all or part of the prerequisites for an award of the designated awarding body'.

¹² These apply to linked providers *and* recognised colleges that are designated awarding bodies:

http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/Programme_Approval_Regs.pdf

¹³ See: http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/policy/NUI_Research_Degree_Policy.pdf.

ii. Monitoring and Periodic Review

In May 2019, NUI formalised its long-standing requirement for programme review in the recognised colleges by publishing a new policy and set of procedures governing external, periodic reviews of academic programmes.¹⁴ These guidelines were used by IPA in the (COVID-delayed) external, periodic review of its suite of BA (Hons) programmes and the findings and recommendations were reported to Senate in Autumn 2020.

The RCSI suspended its scheduled overseas programme reviews during the COVID-19 outbreak and is now finalising arrangements for this activity (the results of which fall outside the reporting period).

Many programmes received a temporary approval for a change to online (or blended) delivery during the pandemic. Some programmes are now seeking to make this a more permanent change. A protocol on transitioning to permanent online delivery for the 2022-2023 session is currently being finalised (and will be included in the next AQR).

NUI is currently in the final stages of work on *NUI Policy on External Examiners for Research Degree Programmes, including Professional Research Degrees, in the Recognised Colleges*.

iii. Progression, Recognition and Certification Policies and Procedures

NUI has not materially updated its policies or guidelines in this area during the reporting period.

Progression: During the normal process of programme approval, or to make major changes to existing academic programmes, documentation submitted to NUI must include details of arrangements for access and transfer into the programmes of study and the progression pathways in place for students. As part of its procedures (see section i above), NUI requires re-assurance from an external, independent academic peer assessor of senior rank that these provisions are in line with international good practice.

Recognition: NUI's 2013 *Policy on the Recognition of Prior Learning for the Degrees and Qualifications of the National University* applies but is **due for review and renewal** in line with sectoral

¹⁴ See: http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/NUI_Guidelines_External_Review.pdf

developments being led by QQI (and a project led by the IUA and THEA¹⁵); NUI will contribute to the process as appropriate.

Certification: The NUI Registrar co-chairs examination boards in the recognised colleges and formally recommends to the Senate the award of degrees and other qualifications to students who have achieved the requisite results, in line with the published marks and standards of the recognised college. The NUI Chancellor then confers all degrees and other qualifications made in the recognised colleges at conferring ceremonies. All degree and certificate parchments bear the university seal as well as the institutional crest of the recognised college where the graduate undertook the course of study.

NUI also provides a certification service for graduates who have lost their original parchment and seek duplicate documentation as well as a certification service for overseas agencies involved in the process of certifying academic credentials supplied by graduates seeking employment and/or professional training opportunities abroad.¹⁶

iv. Collaborative and Transnational Provision

NUI has not materially updated its specific policy and guidelines for collaborative and transnational provision during the reporting period. The recently updated and republished (May 2020) core regulatory and procedures document for new or significantly changed academic programmes applies to all taught provision in the recognised colleges, including collaborative or transnational programmes leading to NUI qualifications.

NUI's 2013 *Guidelines for Collaborative and Transnational Provision* remain in effect.¹⁷ These were re-scheduled for review in the academic year 2021-2022 but due to the impact of COVID-19 and staff departures, and in light of NUI's imminent CINNTE review, work will begin on this in 2023 with publication likely in 2023-24.

v. Procedures for Making Awards

The regulations and procedures for making awards are the responsibility of the recognised college, however NUI has a long-standing policy on the usage of titles of degrees and other qualifications,

¹⁵ See <http://www.thea.ie/rpl>.

¹⁶ See <http://www.nui.ie/services/document-services.asp>.

¹⁷ See http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/Collaborative%20&%20Transnational.pdf.

which was reviewed, re-approved and re-published during the previous reporting period (January 2020).¹⁸ NUI also provides guidance with regard to marks bands and generic grade descriptors for NUI degrees.

vi. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

NUI has not materially updated specific policies or guidelines in this area during the reporting period.¹⁹ While the teaching, learning and assessment strategies adopted for individual programmes are the responsibility of the recognised college, the quality of teaching staff is a core criterion for recognition by the University of any college seeking recognised status and assurance of same will form part of the approved QA system in any recognised college.

The provisions in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 relating to academic integrity and academic misconduct have gained higher prominence in teaching, learning and assessment and student discipline strategies and policies across the university sector. As a member of the IUA Registrars and Quality Committees, NUI continues to monitor developments in this area and update the recognised colleges accordingly.

vii. Learner Resources and Support

In line with NUI policy on quality assurance in the recognised colleges, learner resources and supports for students are primarily the responsibility of the recognised college itself. However, NUI has oversight of these supports at various stages of its business with the recognised college: when a HEI applies to NUI for recognised college status;²⁰ when academic programmes leading to NUI qualifications are submitted for approval or re-validation by Senate;²¹ when a periodic, external programme review is undertaken of a programme(s);²² when NUI conducts an institutional quality effectiveness review.²³

¹⁸ See http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/Policy_in_relation_to_the_usage_of_titles_of_degrees.pdf.

¹⁹ The relevant documents in this regard are NUI (2020) *Regulations, Procedures and Guidelines for the Approval of New Programmes and Changes to Existing Programmes in the Recognised Colleges* and NUI (2019) *Guidelines for the Periodic External Review of Programmes Leading to NUI Degrees and Other Qualifications in Recognised Colleges that are also Linked Providers of NUI*. Both are available at <http://www.nui.ie/about/gvrnce.asp>.

²⁰ NUI (2018) *Guidelines for higher education institutions considering an application for NUI recognised college status*. Available at: http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/NUI_RC_ProspectiveApplicants.pdf.

²¹ See n.12 above and NUI (2019) *NUI Extern Examiners: Primary Degree and Taught Postgraduate Courses in NUI recognised college*. Available at: http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/policy/NUI_Extern_Examiners_Colleges.pdf.

²² See n.14 above.

²³ NUI (2019) *Guidelines for the Institutional Review of Quality Assurance Effectiveness at Recognised Colleges which are Linked Providers of NUI*. Available at: http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/Guidelines_QA_Institutional_Review.pdf.

viii. QA of Research Activities and Programmes

As stated, NUI is not a provider institution and does not offer research programmes directly to students. NUI ensures advice is aligned to the policies and procedures for research quality adopted in the NUI constituent universities. As mentioned in Section i above, *NUI Policy, Regulations and Procedures for the approval of NUI Research Degrees in the Recognised Colleges* was published in November 2021.²⁴

The University also has a statutory function to appoint external examiners for research degrees in the constituent universities and the recognised colleges. As mentioned in Section ii above, work is almost complete on a new policy on the appointment of external examiners for research degree programmes in the recognised colleges.

Higher Doctorate Degrees on Published Works

NUI also offers higher doctorate degrees on published, which are awarded directly by the University to scholars who have, over a sustained period, published a substantial body of ground-breaking and influential work in a field of specialisation and who have achieved outstanding distinction internationally in that field. The regulations, criteria and guidelines for these degrees were updated during the reporting period:

- NUI (2021) *Higher Doctorate Degrees on Published Work awarded by the National University of Ireland: Criteria, Regulations, Application Procedures and Guidelines*²⁵

ix. Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

NUI does not have a direct role or responsibility in relation to the recruitment, development and support of staff in the recognised colleges, however the quality of teaching staff in the recognised colleges is important to the University and this has its roots in NUI's statutes. Any institution seeking recognised college status with the University must - at the time of application - provide information and assurances as to the 'competencies of teaching staff'.

x. Information and Data Management

²⁴ See n.13 above.

²⁵ See: http://www.nui.ie/college/docs/published_Work_Regs.pdf.

There have not been any material updates or changes to policy, procedures or guidelines in this area during the reporting period. There were changes to ICT systems during the reporting period which had operational implications, but information security and data protection considerations were leading principles for the project.

The use of information and data for quality assurance and enhancement is a requisite part of NUI's approval of linked provider's approved QA policies and procedures. Annual reports from appointed external examiners form a core part of this information set for enhancement and NUI provides updates to the Senate from time to time on recurring issues arising from external reports (across the recognised colleges and the constituent universities).

NUI also requires that recognised colleges (as linked providers) provide updates on the outcomes of information and data-management processes, for example, major curriculum or assessment decisions adopted on foot of student feedback on modules and programmes.

Enhancement actions related to information and data-management are further developed during specific programme reviews and formed a significant part of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report from the IPA in preparation for its institutional review in September 2021.

xi. Public Information and Communication

NUI publishes information on its website in relation to the structure and governance of the University, its strategy and academic and QA policies, regulations and guidelines. NUI's internal culture is to prioritise the accuracy of information that we make accessible to our users, and to the public generally. We have published the NUI web privacy policy, Freedom of Information documentation and the NUI data protection policy on our website.²⁶

²⁶ NUI web privacy policy: <http://www.nui.ie/help/privacy.asp>;
NUI Freedom of Information documentation: <http://www.nui.ie/help/foi.asp>;
NUI data protection policy: http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/data_protection/NUI_Data_Protection_Policy.pdf.

2.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

Note: The QHub portal is designed to input arrangements with third parties data in a different location. Because the information being submitted on arrangements with PRSBs pertains to degrees in RCSI, which reports this information directly as a DAB, an overview is provided here only.

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	3
Awarding bodies	0
QA bodies	0

1. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Irish Medical Council (IMC) - https://www.medicalcouncil.ie/
Programme titles and links to publications	Honours Degrees of Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery and Bachelor of Obstetrics (MB, BCh, BAO Hons)
Date of accreditation and next review	<i>Information available directly from RCSI.</i>

2. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	General Medical Council, UK (GMC) - https://www.gmc-uk.org/
Programme titles and links to publications	Honours Degrees of Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery and Bachelor of Obstetrics (MB, BCh, BAO Hons)
Date of accreditation and next review	<i>Information available directly from RCSI.</i>

3. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	CORU and PSI
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy MPharm (and BSc (Hons) Pharmacy)
Date of accreditation and next review	<i>Information available directly from RCSI.</i>

3.0 Collaborative Provision

For the reporting period, there have been no new collaborative partnerships proposed by either IPA or RCSI.

NUI has in its awards portfolio a range of approved RCSI collaborative and transnational programmes that have evolved from a number of collaborative partnerships. As a DAB in its own right, further information on these programmes can be obtained directly from RCSI. Examples include the collaborative PhD programme in Ireland (with DCU and Trinity College Dublin) in Structured Population and Health Services Research Education (SPHeRE). RCSI's overseas provision continued during this period in Bahrain, Dubai, Perdana and Penang (Malaysia). The latter is a collaboration with UCD: the RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus. The 10-year agreement with Perdana was terminated slightly in advance of the full term due to the COVID-19 pandemic's effect on delivery for the tenth year.

9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	0
Awarding bodies	0
QA bodies	0

9.2 Collaborative Provision

Type of arrangement	Total Number
Joint research degrees	0
Joint/double/multiple awards	0
Collaborative programmes	0
Franchise programmes	0
Linked providers (DABs only)	0

9.3 Articulation Agreements

Articulation agreements - Total number	0
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National University of Ireland (NUI)

2022

Annual Quality Report (NUI)
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2020-2021

PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1 Strategic QA Updates

Ordinarily, this introductory section involves a critical element of the AQR: self-reflection. However, the actions relevant to the reporting period were coordinated by this report's predecessor, Andrea Durnin, and many of the key staff involved in the actions outlined have also recently departed NUI. As such, self-reflection on past action is neither possible nor appropriate; reflections concern new directions only. Self-reflection will be reintroduced in the next AQR. It is worth noting that the significant staffing changes in NUI in 2021 present both challenges and opportunities for the organisation, especially as they coincide with the transition from one strategic plan to the next. At the same time, external sectoral developments have been accelerated and stalled by COVID-19. This liminal period requires both reflection and action - informed, reflexive action. This is something NUI has always been committed to.

Strategy and Action in 2020-21

NUI Strategic Goals

The *NUI Strategic Plan 2018-22* has five strategic goals:²⁷

1. Add demonstrable value to NUI's constituent universities, recognised colleges and associated institutions
2. Support Irish higher education and advocate for its advancement at home and abroad
3. Develop and capitalise on the NUI brand nationally and internationally, for the benefit of members and the wider sector
4. Make a meaningful contribution to Irish civic society
5. Enhance NUI's skills-base and its enabling support structures

QA activities contribute to Strategic Goals (SGs) 1 and 3, but particularly to SG3 in the first main objective 'to ensure recognition of the NUI brand in Ireland and internationally as a mark of the highest academic quality standards'.

Activities for 2020-21

As with all organisations during this period, COVID-19 restrictions slowed processes and any activity involving third parties involved some delays. Nevertheless, two documents were published (as mentioned in Part A, Section 1.2) during the reporting period:

- NUI (2021) *NUI Policy, Regulations and Procedures for the Approval of NUI Research Degrees in the Recognised Colleges* [new]
- NUI (2021) *Higher Doctorate Degrees on Published Work awarded by the National University of Ireland: Criteria, Regulations, Application Procedures and Guidelines* [updated]

²⁷ See http://www.nui.ie/publications/docs/2018/NUI_Strategic_Plan_2018_2022.pdf.

In addition, significant progress was made on the *NUI Policy on Extern Examiners for Research Degree Programmes, including Professional Research Degrees, in the Recognised Colleges*. However, most resources were allocated to supporting IPA in preparing for their institutional quality effectiveness review and coordinating the review itself, which involved virtual meetings and site visits. This large-scale review of a linked provider was the first conducted by NUI under the relevant statutory provisions, and in line with QQI guidance, and was viewed as a significant event in advance of the NUI's own institutional (CINNTE) review.

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR)	Update on Status
1	To complete the NUI Institutional QA Effectiveness Review of IPA	<p>Slightly delayed - the site visit was moved from June 2021 to September 2021 in light of the resources required for ongoing COVID-19-impacted teaching and assessment.</p> <p>This was not quite completed during the reporting period but has since concluded; the final report was presented to NUI Senate in January 2022.</p>
2	Agree a schedule of further periodic programmatic reviews with IPA	<p>In progress.</p> <p>This schedule was suspended due to the institutional QA effectiveness review. (It was reported at the NUI-IPA Steering Committee meeting in Jan 2022 that this schedule is to be presented at the next meeting in April but that the first programme for review has been identified.)</p>
3	Preparation for QQI's CINNTE Review of NUI	<p>In progress.</p> <p>Delays in the IPA's review and significant staffing changes in the Academic Affairs team and leadership in NUI impacted NUI's ability to prepare for the review. A six-month extension of the ISER submission deadline was agreed with QQI. Preparation was started by previous staff members and has since been picked up by new team members.</p> <p>During the reporting period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Terms of Reference, and the scope of the review, were significantly progressed (and agreed after the reporting period) • The NUI Advisory Board was secured and convened • One NUI staff consultation was held <p>The panel membership is yet to be confirmed (QQI) Further consultation is required (internal units, staff and stakeholders).</p>

4	Continue schedule of updating NUI policy and procedures in a range of relevant academic and QA areas.	<p>Slightly delayed and on-going. During the reporting period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Senate approved the NUI policy and procedures relating to research degrees• Progress was made on the extern examiners for research degrees policy• Guidelines/policy for the approval and review of programmes designed for fully online delivery modes has been partially progressed but significant work is still needed• Review of the policy and guidelines on collaborative and transnational provision in the recognised colleges has been further postponed (dependent on yet to be concluded sectoral guidance) <p>The delays in the IPA review had resource implications for NUI. COVID-19 also affected the pace of work.</p>
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1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
NUI Senate	5 November 2020 21 January 2021 7 May 2021
NUI-IPA Steering Committee	19 October 2020 12 January 2021 30 March 2021 29 June 2021
NUI-RCSI Working Group Executive	8 October 2020 14 January 2021 15 April 2021

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

While there were significant leadership changes in NUI and one change in RCSI just after the reporting period, none occurred in NUI, IPA or RCSI during the reporting period.

1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Unit of review for which report has been published during reporting period	Date of completion/reason for conducting review (if not planned) or non-completion (if planned but not conducted)	Links to relevant publications
IPA (institutional QA effectiveness review)	Completion just beyond reporting period: the final report was submitted to IPA in December 2021 and the IPA response and final report submitted to NUI Senate in Jan 2022.	Coordinated joint publication has been delayed due to staff illness in NUI but is scheduled. Copies of both the final report and the IPA short response are available from suichonnachtaigh@nui.ie .
RCSI In light of Covid-19, a small number of programme reviews were further postponed to maximise the possibility of an in-person site visit.	Decision by RCSI to postpone to next reporting period.	

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels²⁸ involved in IQA

(i) Expert Review Team/Panel Size and Related Processes

Please note, the information in the table below refers only to review activity and related processes in the IPA.

	Total	Academic Schools/ Department	Professional Services/ Support Unit	Approval/ Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review	Other
Number of review/ evaluation processes	3						
<i>of those:</i>							
On-site processes							
Desk reviews	2				IPA Professional Certificate in Resourcing and Recruitment	BA Programmes (desktop review supplemented by virtual meeting with IPA staff)	
Virtual processes	1						IPA Institutional QA Effectiveness Review
(Average) panel size for each process type*					1	6	6

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

²⁸ QQI acknowledges that the terminology used to describe the groups of individuals that conduct peer review/evaluation varies from institution to institution.

(ii) Composition of Expert Review Teams/Panels involved in IQA

Type of Expert/ Role on Panel	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
		Male	Female	Other , or unsp ecified			UK, incl . NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair	2	1	1			1			1		X (university)
Secretary											
Academic/Discipline Specific	3	2	1		1	2				(internal x1)	X (university x2)
Student Representative	2	1	1			1					X (local government x1; other unknown)
QA	2		2		1	1				(internal x1)	X (university x1)
Teaching & Learning	1		1			1					X (university)
External Industry /Third Mission	3	3				1			1		X (government dept; local government2 university)

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

Institutional QA Effectiveness Review of IPA

While the institutional review of QA effectiveness in the IPA began during the reporting period, it was not concluded until afterwards. It will be included in the next AQR, but will also feature in detail in the ISER for the upcoming CINNTE review of NUI. Regarding the implementation of the review, it is worth noting that the review was conducted entirely virtually. While this presents additional challenges and an on-site visit allows for a more thorough experience for the review team, NUI recognised the environmental benefits. Given the essential role of international reviewers, some element of virtual engagement on an on-going basis would be welcome.

Programmatic Review of the BA (Hons) Programmes at the IPA

BA Level 8 (Major Award) 240 ECTS

During the reporting period, the programmatic review of IPA's BA (Hons) programmes concluded. This is a long-standing (operating since 1981) and important programme in the IPA's portfolio offered to evening and distance learners. The four-year programme has a common first year for all students who thereafter select one of seven streams: healthcare management, human resource management, information technology management, law and administration of justice, local government, management or public management. Two interim awards are available: Certificate in Public Management and Diploma in Public Management.

The review panel reported that 'notwithstanding the difficulties presented by the COVID-19 lock-down, both the nature and detail of all materials presented was excellent and comprehensive, and allowed for in-depth insight into the arrangements and practices of the programme'. The report was broadly positive; the panel made several commendations, including its flexible delivery, the use of interim awards, the programme's module review procedure, the use of reflective self-assessment, excellent stakeholder involvement, student representation, programmatic management structures, and student support services. The continuous drive to enhance learning and student experience was reflected in annual module reviews, student feedback and expanding QA programme of work schedules.

The panel made a number of recommendations. The IPA engaged in the process in an open and reflective way, taking on board suggestions and taking action to explore possible changes to respond to the recommendations. The IPA noted in their response that a number of recommendations had broader implications for their (then) impending institutional effectiveness review, and indeed some issues arose in both, e.g. enhancing alumni engagement.

The review panel's report and the IPA's response were submitted for consideration at the meeting of NUI Senate in November 2020. On the foot of these documents, the Registrar asked Senate to revalidate the BA (Hons) Programme for a period of five years (subject to implementation of three recommendations made by the panel). Senate adopted this recommendation.

This process was a good preparatory exercise in advance of the IPA's institutional review and NUI recognised the meaningful engagement of programme and administrative staff and IPA leadership in the review process.

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

Initiatives related to academic integrity are, in the main, the responsibility of the recognised colleges. However, NUI continues to provide guidance in this area drawn from the practices of the constituent universities and wider sectoral policy developments. Through its membership of the IUA Committee of Registrars and the IUA Quality Committee, NUI is fully aware of the new legislative provisions on academic cheating in the updated Quality and Qualifications Act (2019) and we have discussed the implications of this legislation, as well as providing information on QQI's activities in this regard, to the IPA.

NUI also monitors and, where possible, attends NAIN activities. NUI will continue to update its QA policies and procedures with reference to arrangements to ensure academic integrity in the recognised colleges. Regular steering committee meetings provide a forum to discuss quality enhancement and share experiences and information in the recognised colleges; for example, the topic of academic integrity in the context of the move to online assessment during COVID-19 was a discussed at steering committee meetings with the IPA.

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No.	Relevant objectives	Planned actions and indicators
1	Agree schedule of programmatic review with the IPA	This will be confirmed through the steering committee meeting and will be impacted staff workloads relating to quality improvement plan (QIP) under development following the recent institutional review.
2	Preparation of QQI's CINNTE review of NUI	<p>Continue consultation with QQI with respect to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review team membership • Practical aspects of the review process <p>In preparing the ISER during the next reporting period, NUI will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin desktop data gathering and analysis • Continue staff consultation • Begin stakeholder consultations • Continue drawing on expertise of NUI Advisory Panel

3	Continue schedule of updating NUI policy and procedures in a range of relevant academic and QA areas.	<p>NUI will secure Senate approval in AY 2022-23 for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy on extern examiners for research degrees• Protocol on permanent change to online delivery <p>NUI will mostly be focusing on CINNTE review preparation but will also be monitoring sectoral developments (and taking appropriate action) with respect to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborative and transnational provision• Recognition of prior learning• Micro-credentials
4	Identify key areas for development of new policy, guidelines and procedures	This will depend on the findings of work for the NUI's ISER for the CINNTE review.

3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

IPA's Professional Diploma in Human Rights was reviewed after the reporting period for this AQR and will be included in the next AQR.

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

IPA's programmatic review schedule is shortly to be agreed but it has been agreed that one major programme review will take place each year. Work on the next programme review will begin in 2022 but likely conclude in 2023.

NUI's own CINNTE review will take place during the AY 2022-23.