

National University of Ireland (NUI)  
**2021**

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**Annual Quality Report (Institution)**  
**Reporting Period 2019-2020**

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**Annual Quality Report (Institution)  
PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM  
Reporting Period 2019-2020**

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## Guidelines on Completing the Report

The AQR is aligned with QQI's Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and with the ESG (2015). A mapping of the ESG to QQI Core QA Guidelines is included in Table 1 below; the structure of Part A of this report template aligns with the first column of the table. Additional guidance on completing this template and reference material is included in each section. Institutions should adhere to this guidance and have regard to QQI Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. **The guide text within each section should be deleted before submission of the report.**

### Submission Process and Timeline

The deadline for submission of the AQR each year is in February of the relevant year, with the call for submission sent to institutions in November of the preceding year. Once the call for submission has been made, QQI will provide access to QQI's provider portal, QHub, to the designated institution contact(s) to facilitate submission of the report. Through QHub, each institution will have access to an editable version of its AQR for the previous reporting period. This document can then be amended/updated to reflect any changes or developments that occurred during the current reporting period before submitting the final report to QQI.

### Completing the AQR

- When completing the AQR template, all relevant colleagues in the institution should be consulted.
- Consider whether external audiences will be able to understand the terminology used (particularly local abbreviations and acronyms); it may be helpful to include a glossary.
- Aim to avoid duplication in the report – where information is relevant to more than one section, the first mention may be referenced in subsequent sections.
- Provide reflections on what worked well, but also what may have been tried but did not work.

## Report Structure

### Part A: Internal QA System

Part A of the AQR comprises a record of each institution's current QA policies and procedures and should provide links to those policies and procedures. Private HEIs may provide links to the policies and procedures approved by QQI during initial access to validation (IAV) or reengagement. It is the responsibility of each HEI to ensure before submission of the AQR that all links are correct and functional, and that the policies and procedures referred to are the most up-to-date versions available. Given that the AQR is submitted in respect of a discrete reporting period, it may be helpful for institutions to establish a SharePoint/OneDrive folder (or similar) for each reporting period that contains the current versions of their policies and procedures, and that hyperlinks to these versions of the documents be provided in the AQR

Part A is to be completed only if there have been **material** changes to QA policies and procedures during the reporting period. Such changes may include the approval and implementation of new policies or procedures, or significant amendments to existing ones.

### Part B: Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE)

Part B of the AQR documents and captures QA activities, developments and enhancements undertaken by institutions **during the reporting period** and their **impact**. Insofar as is possible, institutions should demonstrate in Part B how plans set out in the previous AQR were progressed during the reporting period – these may be plans linked to strategic objectives, to reengagement advices, or to institutional review recommendations.

### Case Studies

In each reporting period, QQI may request updates on specific thematic areas or may invite the institution to submit case studies in response to specific topics. Further, institutions may include case studies to share good practice on topics of their choosing, demonstrating QA and QE in action. In formulating case studies, institutions are encouraged to reflect on and highlight areas that may be of interest to other institutions and would benefit from wider dissemination. Further guidance is provided in Part B.

## Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template<sup>1</sup>

### 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](#)

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<sup>1</sup> 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 QCI QA Guidelines (QAG)				
AQR Part A Section	QCI 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

The National University of Ireland (NUI) is a federal university comprising four constituent universities and currently, two recognised colleges. There are also, at present, five colleges linked with the constituent universities. Graduates from all of these institutions form part of a steadily growing worldwide community of more than 400,000 NUI graduates. NUI students currently account for just over one-third of enrolments to public Higher Education Institutions in Ireland.

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 2018-22 period sets 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 brand is associated 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 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 NUI Recognised Colleges - that meet the quality standards of the University in the academic programmes and student experience that they offer. Through QA policies, procedures and guidelines, NUI seeks to assure that these standards 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 in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012<sup>2</sup> has further strengthened NUI’s statutory role in this regard.

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<sup>2</sup> [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act, 2012](#). See also [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) \(Amendment\) Act 2019](#)



## 1.0 Internal QA Framework

### 1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

#### 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". 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 Policy for Quality Assurance and Enhancement (2017) states that clear 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. NUI provides policies and supporting procedures, as well as ongoing guidance and support to its Recognised Colleges, in line with national policy<sup>3</sup>, 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 Quality Assurance 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.

#### Quality assurance decision-making fora

NUI's Governing Body, the Senate, governs the NUI's role as a Designated Awarding Body 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 for 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.

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 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.

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<sup>3</sup> NUI is also guided in this task by the [Statutory Guidelines for the Review of Linked Providers by the National University of Ireland](#), issued by QQI in March 2019.

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.

It may be noted that all of 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, QQI is responsible for the institutional effectiveness review of the RCSI (QQI's CINNTE review cycle) and this does not fall within NUI's QA responsibility. Notwithstanding, 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 review.



Figure 1: NUI QA oversight and monitoring cycle for Recognised Colleges

## 1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

### Important note:

With permission from 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: sub-sections i) - xi).

Section 2: Details of arrangements with Third Parties

Section 3: Collaborative Provision.

### Linked Providers

At present there are two types of provider institutions with the status of a Recognised College of NUI<sup>4</sup>:

- A provider institution that is deemed a “linked provider” under the Act 2012<sup>5</sup>. 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.

**QA developments relating to the Recognised Colleges (including but not limited to Linked Providers) during the 2019-20 reporting period.**

**i) Institutional Review of Quality Assurance Effectiveness in the Recognised Colleges that are also Linked Providers of the University:**

During the reporting period, NUI produced and published guidelines to support Recognised Colleges that are Linked Providers of the University.

- NUI (2020), *[Guidelines for the Institutional Review of Quality Assurance Effectiveness at Recognised Colleges that are Linked Providers of the NUI](#)*<sup>6</sup>

These guidelines are currently being followed by the Institute of Public Administration as it prepares for external institutional review in Autumn 2021 (the main site visit is confirmed for early September 2021).

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<sup>4</sup> 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 at [registrar@nui.ie](mailto:registrar@nui.ie)

<sup>5</sup> 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”.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce\\_docs/Guidelines\\_QA\\_Institutional\\_Review.pdf](http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/Guidelines_QA_Institutional_Review.pdf)

## ii) Programme Design and Approval

All new programmes proposed by NUI Recognised Colleges (Linked Providers and non-Linked Providers) 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 which outlines the approval process and provides guidelines for the submission and review of programmes. The review of all programmes includes independent academic peer review in line with best practice nationally and internationally.

During the reporting period, NUI updated this core regulatory and procedural document (Spring 2020) and this document is published on the NUI website.

- NUI (2020), *[Regulations, Procedures and Guidelines for the Approval of New Programmes and Changes to Existing Programmes in the Recognised Colleges](#)*<sup>7</sup>

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, particularly where the programme leads to a major award on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ. See section iii) below.

## iii) Monitoring and Periodic Review

Just prior to the reporting period, 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:

- 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](#)*<sup>8</sup>

During the reporting period, these guidelines were then used by IPA in 2020 as it undertook an external, periodic review of its suite of BA (Hons) programmes. The review was delayed from Spring to Summer 2020 due to the Covid-19 outbreak, however the findings and recommendations were reported to Senate in Autumn 2020 (falling into the next reporting period 2020-21).

The RCSI, University of Medicine and Health Sciences suspended its scheduled overseas programme reviews during the reporting period 2019-2020 due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

## iv) Progression, recognition & certification policies and procedures

NUI has not materially updated its policies or guidelines in this area during the reporting period. NUI's 2013 Policy on the Recognition of Prior Learning for the Degrees and Qualifications of the National University applies and is also due for renewal in line with sectoral developments being led by QQI and implemented by NUI's constituent universities and the RCSI, University of Medicine and Health Sciences.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce\\_docs/Programme\\_Approval\\_Regs.pdf](http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/Programme_Approval_Regs.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce\\_docs/NUI\\_Guidelines\\_External\\_Review.pdf](http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/NUI_Guidelines_External_Review.pdf)

During the normal process whereby Recognised Colleges seek NUI approval to offer new academic programmes, 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 (referenced in section ii above), NUI will require re-assurance from an external, independent academic peer assessor of senior rank within a reputable HEI that these provisions are in line with international good practice.

As part of the certification process for the award of all NUI qualifications in the Recognised Colleges, 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. Through the Chancellor, NUI 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.

#### v) Collaborative and Transnational Provision.

NUI has not materially updated its specific policy and guidelines for collaborative and transnational provision during the reporting period. It should be noted however that the 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 place and re-scheduled for review in the academic year 2021-2022.

- NUI (2013), [\*Quality Assurance for Collaborative and Transnational Provision of Academic Programmes Leading to NUI Qualifications\*](#)<sup>9</sup>

#### vi) 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, which was reviewed, re-approved and re-published during the reporting period (January 2020).

- NUI (2020) [\*Policy in relation to the usage of Titles of Degrees and other Qualifications\*](#)

NUI also provides guidance with regard to Marks Bands and Generic Grade Descriptors for NUI Degrees.

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<sup>9</sup> [http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce\\_docs/Collaborative%20&%20Transnational.pdf](http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/Collaborative%20&%20Transnational.pdf)

### vii) Teaching, Learning and Assessment

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

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 Colleges. On a day to day basis, the teaching, learning and assessment strategies adopted for individual programmes are the responsibility of the Recognised College. These form part of programme design, and underpinning assessment strategies and methods. NUI requires submission of these documents, with a report from an independent, external and senior academic peer reviewer in the discipline, for review and recommendation to NUI Senate for approval. This takes place before a Recognised College can offer a new or significantly-changed programme of study leading to a major award on the NFAQ.

Therefore, the previously referenced 2020 update to the core NUI regulatory and procedural document for the approval of academic programmes, apply in this area:

- NUI (2020), [\*Regulations, Procedures and Guidelines for the Approval of New Programmes and Changes to Existing Programmes in the Recognised Colleges\*](#)

The previously referenced guidelines for external periodic review of programmes leading to NUI qualifications also apply (published during the last reporting period, in May 2019):

- 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\*](#)

The new 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.

### viii) 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 Higher Education Institution (HEI) applies to NUI for recognised college status, as set out in the publication below:

- NUI (2018), [\*Guidelines for higher education institutions considering an application for NUI Recognised College status\*](#)<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce\\_docs/NUI\\_RC\\_ProspectiveApplicants.pdf](http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/NUI_RC_ProspectiveApplicants.pdf)

- ⇒ Academic programmes leading to NUI qualifications are submitted for approval or re-validation by Senate and monitored by extern examiners:
  - NUI (2020), *[Regulations, Procedures and Guidelines for the Approval of New Programmes and Changes to Existing Programmes in the Recognised Colleges](#)*<sup>11</sup>
  - NUI (2019), *[NUI Extern Examiners: Primary Degree and Taught Postgraduate Courses in NUI Recognised College](#)*

- ⇒ A periodic, external programme review is undertaken of a programme (or a cognate group of programmes) of study leading to an NUI qualification.

As previously referenced, NUI published a new policy and set of procedures governing external, periodic reviews of academic programmes just prior to the current reporting period, in May 2019:

- 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](#)*<sup>12</sup>
- ⇒ An institutional review is undertaken by NUI to review the effectiveness of quality assurance processes in place.

In line with QQI Guidelines for Institutional QA effectiveness review, NUI places emphasis on the review of resources and arrangements that underpin the “learner experience” in its own guidelines for Linked Providers. These NUI guidelines were published during the current reporting period:

- NUI (2020), *[Guidelines for the Institutional Review of Quality Assurance Effectiveness at Recognised Colleges that are Linked Providers of the NUI](#)*<sup>13</sup>

#### ix) QA of Research Activities and Programmes

As stated, NUI is not a provider institution and does not offer research programmes directly to students. In circumstances where the University may be required to advise in such matters, we have regard to the policies and procedures for research quality adopted in the NUI constituent universities. The University also has a statutory function to appoint extern examiners for research degrees in the constituent universities and the Recognised Colleges.

There were no material updates during the reporting period however work began in Autumn 2020 on a new NUI policy and procedures document for the approval of research programmes leading to NUI degrees in the Recognised Colleges. NUI will update on this policy in the next reporting period, 2020-21 however it can be stated that NUI will seek to be assured that research programmes offered by the Recognised College are consistent with the standards for research education and student support in the constituent universities. These align with national awards standards at NFQ Levels 9 and 10 and with evolving best practice in the sector, notably QQI’s

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce\\_docs/Programme\\_Approval\\_Regs.pdf](http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/Programme_Approval_Regs.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce\\_docs/NUI\\_Guidelines\\_External\\_Review.pdf](http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/NUI_Guidelines_External_Review.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce\\_docs/Guidelines\\_QA\\_Institutional\\_Review.pdf](http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/Guidelines_QA_Institutional_Review.pdf)

2019 [Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree programmes](#) and the HEA's (2017) [National Framework for Doctoral Education](#).<sup>14</sup>

### ***Higher Doctorate Degrees on Published Works***

NUI also offers Degrees in Published Work (higher doctorates) 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 not updated during the reporting period 2019-20 however it is worth providing a reference to the relevant 2018 document here:

- NUI (2018), [Regulations, Criteria, Guidelines and Application Procedures Degrees on Published Work awarded by the National University of Ireland](#)<sup>15</sup>

### **x) 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 Colleges is important to the University and this has its roots in NUI's statutes. Any College seeking recognised status with the University must - at the time of application - provide information and assurances as to the "competencies of teaching staff."

During the reporting period, NUI published guidelines for Recognised Colleges who are also Linked providers, as they embark on the process of QA institutional effectiveness review. The quality of teaching personnel as well as learner resources and infrastructure will form a key part of NUI's expectations from institutional review of the IPA in 2021.

- NUI (2020), [Guidelines for the Institutional Review of Quality Assurance Effectiveness at Recognised Colleges that are Linked Providers of the NUI](#)<sup>16</sup>

### **xi) Information and Data Management**

There have not been any material updates or changes to policy, procedures or guidelines in this area during the reporting period.

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 extern 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 extern 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.

<sup>14</sup> See: [https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/national\\_framework\\_for\\_doctoral\\_education\\_0.pdf](https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/national_framework_for_doctoral_education_0.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.nui.ie/college/docs/published\\_Work\\_Regs.pdf](http://www.nui.ie/college/docs/published_Work_Regs.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce\\_docs/Guidelines\\_QA\\_Institutional\\_Review.pdf](http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/Guidelines_QA_Institutional_Review.pdf)



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

#### **x) Public Information and Communication**

During the reporting period, NUI and the IPA agreed an addendum to the Institute's Quality Assurance policy and procedures. This addendum sets out the nature and specifics of the QA relationship between both institutions, clarifying the QA governance structure and mechanisms for ongoing oversight and monitoring. This document is published by both IPA and the NUI on their respective websites.

This document forms an addendum to the IPA QA policy and procedures that was originally approved in 2017 by UCD's Academic Council and subsequently approved by the NUI Senate in November 2018.

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 a published [Web privacy policy](#) and a published [Data Protection policy](#) on our website home page.

## 2. Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

### 2.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	2
Awarding bodies	0
QA bodies	0

<b>1. Type of arrangement</b> (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Irish Medical Council  <a href="https://www.medicalcouncil.ie/">https://www.medicalcouncil.ie/</a>
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 or last review	<i>Information available directly from relevant NUI constituent universities and RCSI</i>
Date of next review	-

<b>2. Type of arrangement</b> (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	General Medical Council, UK  <a href="https://www.gmc-uk.org/">https://www.gmc-uk.org/</a>
Programme titles and links to publications	Honours Degrees of Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery and Bachelor of Obstetrics ( <i>MB, BCh, BAO Hons</i> )

Date of accreditation or last review	<i>Information available directly from relevant NUI constituent universities and RCSI</i>
Date of next review	-

<b>3. Type of arrangement</b> (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 or last review	<i>Information available directly from RCSI, University of Medicine and Health Sciences</i>
Date of next review	-

### 3. 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 which have evolved from a number of collaborative partnerships. As a Designated Awarding Body 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.

National University of Ireland (NUI)  
2021

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**Annual Quality Report (Institution)**  
**PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE**  
**ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT**  
**Reporting Period 2019-2020**

## PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

### 1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

#### 1.1 Strategic QA Updates

##### Strategy, self-reflection and action in 2019-20

NUI launched its current Strategic Plan for the 2018 - 22 period, on 8 November 2018. One of the main goals outlined for this 5-year period is to continue to ‘develop and capitalise on the NUI brand nationally and internationally, for the benefit of members and the wider sector’. Focusing on the strength of the NUI brand, a major objective is to “ensure recognition of the NUI brand in Ireland and internationally as a mark of the highest quality academic standards”. As the strategy notes, “*academic quality underpins the NUI brand, which is shared by the constituent universities and the recognised colleges*”.

The continued development of policies, procedures and guidelines in support of NUI’s role as the Designated Awarding Body (DAB) for NUI degrees and other qualifications in the recognised colleges is a key action underpinning this strategic goal.

Against this backdrop, the IPA re-joined NUI as a Recognised College in September 2018, having departed from UCD where it had been a recognised college since 2011.<sup>17</sup> During the current reporting period 2019-20, and with the IPA beginning to settle in, NUI reflected on the range of policies and procedures already in place to support QA, how these could be improved and where enhancements might be necessary.

We concluded that our key objectives for the 2019-20 year would be to continue to support RCSI in terms of its programme portfolio and its conferring and graduate services requirements while significantly increasing our interaction with the IPA as a new Linked Provider. We wished to ensure that the management structure between ourselves and the IPA was fit-for-purpose; to familiarise ourselves better with IPA’s QA processes, meeting with key IPA staff both formally and informally, and to begin to test out our programme approval and (new) programme review policy and procedures with IPA since their academic provision and student community is distinctively different from the RCSI, the latter being focussed on medical and allied health professional education and research.

The activities undertaken during the 2019-20 year greatly helped to embed the Institute as a Linked Provider of the University and create the groundwork needed to progress to NUI’s institutional review of QA effectiveness in the IPA, during 2020-21.

During the reporting period we worked with the IPA to secure Senate approval for a number of new academic programmes and changes to existing programmes, and also provided guidance and support for IPA’s first external, periodic programme review of a major award, under NUI procedures, namely their extensive BA (Hons) programme suite.

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<sup>17</sup> NUI, IPA and UCD made arrangements to ensure that students registered on academic programmes while IPA was a college of UCD would continue on their programme and be conferred by UCD. This would continue until all such students, including doctoral students, had passed through UCD. New students registering with IPA from academic year 2018-19 would go on to be conferred directly by NUI.

## Improvements and Enhancements

A planned update to NUI's core regulations, procedures and guidelines for the approval of new programmes or changes to programmes in the Recognised Colleges was finalised and published in 2020. These were reviewed and benchmarked against relevant academic programme approval policies and procedures in the constituent universities and in universities outside of the NUI federation. Professional administrative personnel in the Academic Secretariat/Registry sections of the constituent universities provided valuable feedback on the revised document, and this enhanced the content to reflect current standards governing programme validation locally in those institutions. Colleagues in UCD, UCC, Maynooth and NUI Galway pointed to an increased emphasis on the important of student involvement in programme design and review and during QA reviews of schools, units and programmes.

It was particularly important to NUI to update this core document from its 2012 version in light of NUI's designated as an awarding body at that time and reflecting the changes that had come about since then, particularly in relation to the definition of, and responsibilities towards "Linked Providers". The updated document can therefore facilitate different types of institution as Recognised Colleges (linked providers and non-linked providers), and varying professional, regulatory or statutory requirements.

- NUI (2020), [\*Regulations, Procedures and Guidelines for the Approval of New Programmes and Changes to Existing Programmes in the Recognised Colleges\*](#)<sup>18</sup>

Given the nature of the relationship between NUI and RCSI - which may appear complex to those outside of both institutions - the opportunity was taken during the reporting period to publish an explanatory document that set out in clear terms the nature of the QA relationship between both institutions.

- NUI (2020), [\*The Quality Assurance Relationship between the National University of Ireland and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland - University of Medicine and Health Sciences\*](#)<sup>19</sup>

## Highlights

Through the NUI-IPA and NUI-RCSI management committee structures, NUI and its Recognised Colleges enjoyed a positive and productive working relationship during the reporting period.

### *RCSI status*

RCSI received University status for the first time in Ireland during the reporting period, in December 2019. NUI strongly supported RCSI's application to government and was therefore delighted when the leadership of the RCSI, University of Medicine and Health Sciences, confirmed its intention to remain as a Recognised College of the National University of Ireland.

### *IPA progress in Quality Assurance and enhancement*

During the reporting period, NUI Senate commended the IPA's extensive QA processes to gather and use student feedback on all accredited module provision, also aggregated at programme level and the extremely high rate of satisfaction recorded by students. Senate also noted the external review of the IPA's BA (Hons) programme suite, which was completed during the reporting period (although the

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce\\_docs/Programme\\_Approval\\_Regs.pdf](http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/Programme_Approval_Regs.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce\\_docs/QA\\_Relationship\\_NUI\\_RCSI.pdf](http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/QA_Relationship_NUI_RCSI.pdf)

final report was not received until the beginning of the next reporting period, in September 2020). This was the first, external periodic review of programmes leading to a major NUI award and was agreed to be a significant achievement for the Institute and the NUI as the designated awarding body.

The IPA team are currently implementing changes to a number of modules and assessment methods in response to the Review Panel's recommendations, which included a suggested expansion of research and analytical skills and competencies within the final stages of the BA (Hons) programmes.

#### *Adaptation to the impacts of Covid-19*

Of particular note during the 2019-20 reporting period were IPA's extensive efforts to meet the challenge of Covid-19 during the second semester and the summer period. NUI provided support as needed during this period, in particular in relation to the adaptation of assessment methodologies to suit the fully online environment. The input of extern examiners was a priority concern for NUI during this work. IPA submitted a report on its experiences to QQI's initiative on the Impact of TLA (Teaching, Learning and Assessment) modifications during Covid-19.

#### *Submission of IPA and RCSI accredited provision to the QQI's Irish Register of Qualifications*

During the reporting period, NUI was pleased to submit final data to QQI on the IPA's accredited provision, for publication on the online Irish Register for Qualifications. RCSI, as a Designated Awarding Body in its own right, submitted its accredited awards data separately with full support from NUI.

## 1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No.	<b>Planned objectives (Previous AQR)</b> Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	<b>Update on Status</b> Provide brief update on status, whether completed or in progress. If an action was planned in the previous AQR, but not completed, provide reasons/short reflections for the delay/non-completion.
1	Assist IPA with the programmatic review of their BA programme and use these outputs to update and enhance NUI policy and procedures in this area <i>(AQR2018/19: Part 5)</i>	The review was initially delayed in Q2 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic but was completed by Q4. The Review Panel was highly complementary of the BA programme suite but made a number of recommendations which were endorsed by NUI through the Senate. The Senate revalidated the BA programme for a further 5-year period subject to the Institute satisfactorily addressing the key recommendations in the Panel report.
2	Await the outcome of RCSI scheduled programmatic reviews and consider the findings and recommendations of the reports submitted. <i>(AQR2018/19: Part 5)</i>	A number of scheduled RCSI programmatic reviews (programmes leading to major NUI awards) were delayed during the 2019-20 reporting period due to the outbreak of Covid-19. Reviews were postponed until 2020-21 academic session and NUI is in close communications with RCSI regarding the review schedule and outcomes.
3	Finalise arrangements, including the terms of reference, for the institutional effectiveness review of IPA in 2020-21. <i>(AQR2018/19: Part 5)</i>	NUI Guidelines for institutional QA effectiveness review of the Linked Provider were developed and published during the 2019-20 reporting period. Discussion with IPA on the terms of reference and the composition of the external Review Panel began in earnest in Qtr2, 2020. All arrangements have now been finalised during 2020-21, and the Panel site visit will take place in September 2021.



## 1.3 Governance and Management

### 1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates, 2019-20
NUI Senate	7 November 2019 23 January 2020 7 May 2020
NUI-IPA Committee Meetings	15 October 2019 10 January 2020 28 April 2020 26 June 2020
NUI-RCSI Committee Meetings	23 September 2019 22 January 2020

### 1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

There were no changes during the period 2019/20 in terms of senior personnel involved with QA activity in NUI, in the IPA or in the RCSI, University of Medicine and Health Sciences.

## 1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

### 1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

In this section, NUI refers to periodic reviews that were underway in the Recognised Colleges during the reporting period 2019-20.

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
<p><b>IPA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- External, periodic review of the BA (Hons) suite of programmes, leading to the degree of BA (Hons) awarded by the National University of Ireland.</li> <li>- All BA (Hons) programme pathways were reviewed, including interim awards leading to the BA (Hons) degree, for example, Level 6 and 7 Certificates and Diplomas.</li> <li>- This programme review took place virtually due to Covid-19 restrictions.</li> </ul>	<p>Completed in August 2020; final report from the Review Panel issued in September 2020.</p>	<p>The report of the Review Panel is not published by IPA or NUI, in line with sectoral norms regarding programme review reports however further information is available from the NUI upon request.</p>
<p><b>RCSI</b></p> <p>In light of Covid-19, a small number of programme reviews were postponed to maximise the possibility of an in-person site visit.</p>	<p>Decision by RCSI to defer these scheduled reviews until 2020-21</p>	

## 1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels<sup>20</sup> involved in IQA

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

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
<b>Number of review/ evaluation processes</b>	2						
<i>of those:</i>							
<b>On-site processes</b>							
<b>Desk reviews</b>							
<b>Virtual processes</b>	3			N/A	IPA Professional Diploma in Public Service Innovation IPA Professional Certificate in Public Expenditure Management.	BA (Hons) programme suite in the IPA (all pathways)	
<b>Average panel size for each process type*</b>					2	5	

\* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

<sup>20</sup> 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 unspecified			UK, incl. NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair	1		1			1	1				1
Secretary	1		1		1						
Academic/Discipline Specific	1	1				1					1
Student Representative	1	1			1						
QA											
Teaching & Learning	1	1			1						
External Industry /Third Mission	1	1				1					1

## 2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

There were no institutional-level reviews of QA effectiveness during the reporting period.

NUI looks forward to providing a full response in this section during the next reporting period, when the enhancements arising from the periodic review of IPA's BA (Hons) programme(s) will have been implemented in the institute and NUI's institutional review of the effectiveness of the IPA's QA policies and procedures will be well underway.

Please note that in view of the impact of remote-teaching, learning and administration on IPA staff workload in 20-21, NUI agreed to postpone the main external review panel site visit from June 2021 to September 2021.

## 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.

IPA reported the introduction of new anti-plagiarism software during the reporting period and feedback from staff and students has been positive to date.

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.

## 3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

### 3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

In 2022/23, NUI will undertake its first external institutional QA effectiveness review under the CINNTE Cycle. While preliminary preparations are underway for an internal review of some key areas, other developmental themes of importance will be determined in conjunction and consultation with other NUI member institutions and with QQI during 2020/21.

Currently, NUI has started consultations internally to determine what themes are relevant for both the ISER and the terms of reference for the CINNTE Review. This ties in with the mid-term review and assessment of NUI's current strategic plan 2018-22. The uniqueness of NUI as a DAB, but not a provider institution, will have some impact on the terms of reference of the review. It is important for NUI that the effectiveness of the QA provision in the University can be appropriately examined and benchmarked. QQI and NUI will work collaboratively in this regard.

NUI will review and refresh its academic policies and guidelines in the areas of Research Degrees; Collaborative and Transnational Provision and Recognition of Prior Learning in the upcoming reporting period (20/21) and the subsequent reporting period (21/22).

No.	<b>Relevant objectives</b> Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	<b>Planned actions and indicators</b> <i>Note: Include details of unit responsible, and how planned action will address the relevant strategic priority and/or reengagement advice/CINNTE recommendation.</i>  <i>If the institution is preparing for cyclical review, include how the planned actions will address the relevant review objective(s).</i>
1	To complete the NUI Institutional QA Effectiveness Review of IPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalise the Terms of Reference for the Review with IPA with approval by Senate</li> <li>• Finalise membership of the Review Panel (in consultation with IPA) and schedule site-visit (September 2021)</li> <li>• Support IPA to complete its ISER by June 2021</li> <li>• Arrange a planning and orientation meeting with Panel to agree the scope and the Review and confirm if the site-visit will be in-person or virtual.</li> </ul>
2	Agree a schedule of further periodic programmatic reviews with IPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This will be confirmed through the steering committee meeting and will be impacted staff workloads relating to the institutional review and the continued impact of Covid-19 on teaching and learning within the institution.</li> </ul>
3	Preparation for QQI's CINNTE Review of NUI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin consultation with QQI in respect of a range of the following:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Terms of Reference for the Review</li> <li>○ Panel membership</li> <li>○ Scope of the Review</li> <li>○ The practical use of the AQR in this process</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene a CINNTE Review Advisory comprising of Senate members with experience in Quality and Quality Directors/Officers (from each the constituent universities)</li> <li>• Consultation with internal units, staff and stakeholders regarding the scope of the ISER</li> </ul>
4	Continue schedule of updating NUI policy and procedures in a range of relevant academic and QA areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure Senate approval in a/y 20-21 for NUI policy and procedures relating to research degrees in the Recognised Colleges (Linked Providers and non-Linked Providers)</li> <li>• Schedule review timeframes for NUI policy, procedures and/or guidelines over the 2021-2023 period, to cover areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programmes leading to the award of professional degrees and other professional qualifications of the NUI</li> <li>- The approval and review of programmes that are designed for fully online delivery modes.</li> <li>- Collaborative and transnational provision in the Recognised Colleges</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>



## 3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

Building on the positive experience of the Review of the BA (Hons) programme suite, NUI is now agreeing a schedule of external, periodic programme reviews with the IPA and outcomes and process learnings will be included in future AQRs.

The IPA external, periodic programme review of its BA (Hons) suite of programmes was to take place in March 2020 with a report detailing the outcomes to be presented to Senate in May 2020. However, due to the impact of Covid-19 restrictions, the review was postponed and subsequently took place virtually during the summer of 2020. A report was made to Senate in November 2020 with a subsequent follow-up scheduled for May 2021.

NUI will therefore be in a position to include information on this periodic review process, possibly including a case-study, as part of the AQR for the 202-21 reporting period.

During upcoming reporting periods, NUI will nominate senior academic peer reviewers to external Review Panels arranged by the RCSI, University of Medicine and Health Sciences, in line with RCSI's programme review schedule.

The NUI will itself undergo CINNTE review in the 2022 calendar year.