Annual Quality Report
Munster Technological University
Reporting Period 2022-2023

Munster Technological University (MTU)

2024

Annual Quality Report
Munster Technological University (MTU)
PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM
Reporting Period 2022-2023

PREFACE

The **Annual Quality Report** 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

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Case Study: Cyber-Attack, Cork Campuses, February 2023 130

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 take account of 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 Q4 of the preceding year. Once the call for submission has been made, QQI will provide access of 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.
- When providing reflections on quality enhancement it is interesting to share a broad range of examples including what worked or didn't work.

Report Structure

Part A: Internal QA System

Part A of the AQR should provide a succinct outline of the institution's internal quality assurance (IQA) system and include details of the governance and management structures and supports in place, and all policies and procedures underpinning quality across the organisation.

Links to current QA policies and procedures in operation in the institution should be included. Please ensure that all links are correct and functional. As the AQR is submitted in respect of a specific reporting period, it is recommended that the institution establish a unique SharePoint/OneDrive folder (or similar) for that reporting period to archive current versions of the policies and procedures and include relevant hyperlinks that are included in the AQR.

The information contained in Part A is carried from one reporting period to the next and should not require substantial update on an annual basis. However, institutions are asked to update and highlight any significant changes in the structures and published material that support the internal IQA framework as they arise.

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

Part B of the AQR focuses specifically on the effectiveness and impact of the IQA framework on the QA activities and developments across the institution. Here, the institution is invited to document the quality enhancements adopted and implemented during the reporting period and describe concisely the impact of these across a selected range of QA activities. Part B should also be used to demonstrate how plans set out in the previous AQR were progressed during the reporting period. These plans may be linked to strategic objectives, to QQI reengagement recommendations, or to institutional review recommendations.

Case Studies

In each reporting period, QQI may request updates on thematic areas or may invite the institution to submit case studies in response to specific topics. The institution may also include case studies on topics of their choosing,

demonstrating good practice in QA and QE in action. In formulating case studies, the institution is encouraged to reflect on and highlight areas that may be of interest to other HEIs and would benefit from wider dissemination. Further guidance is provided in Part B.

Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template[1]

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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[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*				
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*			1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
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
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*	**2.10**	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
9.0 - *Details of Arrangements with Third Parties*			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
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 Munster Technological University for the reporting period **1 September 2022 – 31 August 2023.**

It has been submitted on **Friday, 23 February 2024.**

The AQR has been approved by Dr Áine Ní Shé and Dr Brendan O'Donnell, Registrars / Vice-Presidents for Academic Affairs of MTU and has been submitted by Ms Eva Juhl on behalf of MTU.

Munster Technological University (MTU) is a multi-campus technological university, contributing to the South-West region through the provision of academic programmes which support student development and opportunities, education and research. MTU has an extensive and impressive regional footprint with six campuses in Cork and Kerry, a student body of 18,000, and over 2,000 staff. MTU supports entrepreneurship, enterprise development and innovation, and serves the community and public interest.

MTU was established on 1 January, 2021, through the merger of Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) and Institute of Technology (IT) Tralee. Fusing the individual strengths, extensive experience and passion for education and entrepreneurship of both institutions, the new university has an ethos of excellence, an ambition to serve the needs of its community and region, and a vision of higher education provision that is innovative, responsive, entrepreneurial and forward-looking. The Mission, Vision and Core Values of MTU are set out in <u>Table 1</u>:

Munster Technological University (MTU)				
Values	Inclusive	Engaging	Dynamic	Bold
Vision	To lead transformation through education			
Mission	To lead change and, through education, empower people for a successful future in a globalised world			

<u>Table 1</u>: MTU Values, Vision and Mission. (From: Munster Technological University, *Our Shared Vision. Strategic Plan 2022 – 2027*, p.7, link <u>here</u>.)

The six MTU campuses are centred in two locations in Munster, Cork and Tralee, and encompass MTU Bishopstown, MTU Crawford College of Art and Design, MTU (Cork) School of Music and the National Maritime College of Ireland as well as MTU (Kerry) North Campus and MTU (Kerry) South Campus.

MTU makes major higher education awards at all levels of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) from Higher Certificate (NFQ Level 6) to PhD (NFQ Level 10), as well as minor and special purpose awards. The University also makes joint awards with University College Cork, as well as offering a number of international cotutelle (double) research awards, most at doctoral level.

Building on the statutory functions and historic strengths of the Institutes of Technology, the Technological Universities (TU) Act of 2018 continues to emphasise career education, technology and provision of regional offerings as distinctive traits of the technological university sector in Ireland, marrying this with a strengthened focus on international research excellence, research-informed teaching and postgraduate provision.

MTU's professional focus is reflected in the broad spectrum of its provision which encompasses both academic programmes and craft and degree apprenticeship programmes leading to both further and higher education awards. This is further reflected in the remarkable extent of professional recognition and accreditation achieved by MTU programmes across all discipline areas and is also obvious in the manifold professional development offerings for mature, work-based learners, be it through bespoke delivery of modules and short courses at company premises or through the broad and varied portfolio of part-time and evening programmes. Continuous industry input was, and continues to be, a feature of programme design and emphasis on work placement in many higher education programmes across all academic fields.

Driving forward internationalisation is central to MTU's ambitions for the future. The University's vision for internationalisation is to develop its graduates as global citizens with the necessary abilities and confidence to live, work, achieve and participate fully in an international environment.

Last but certainly not least, MTU's research has achieved significant national and international impact, as evidenced by a range of recognised key performance indicators including success rates in competitive funding calls, citation rates of scholarly outputs, profile of international collaborators and number of research contracts with industry. The impact profile (see Table 2 below) affirms the excellence of MTU's research activity across the continuum from fundamental to commercialisation. And while MTU focuses on mid-Technological Readiness Level (TLR) activities, MTU research covers the full continuum from fundamental to spin out (commercialisation) (see Graph 1 overleaf).

Impact Parameter (Bold)	MTU Performance	Source / Comment
Scale of Research		
Research Expenditure	Circa €21m	KTI survey 2021
PhD students	Circa 200	PRB annual report 2021 / largest amongst TU's
Knowledge Dissemination		
Field-weighted Citations	1.57	Scopus / Publications cited 57% more frequently than global average in 2021
Knowledge Transfer		
Direct Industry Funding	€3.8m	KTU survey 2021 / largest amongst TU's
International Funding		
H2020	15.2% application success	EU / Third highest in Ireland
H2020	€16m	MTU / More than double predecessor FP7 programme
Supports for Companies		
Use of facilities and equipment	351 contracts signed	KTI / Highest of any university or government agency in Ireland in 2021

Table 2: Research Impact Profile for MTU.   *Legend:* KTI = Knowledge Transfer Ireland
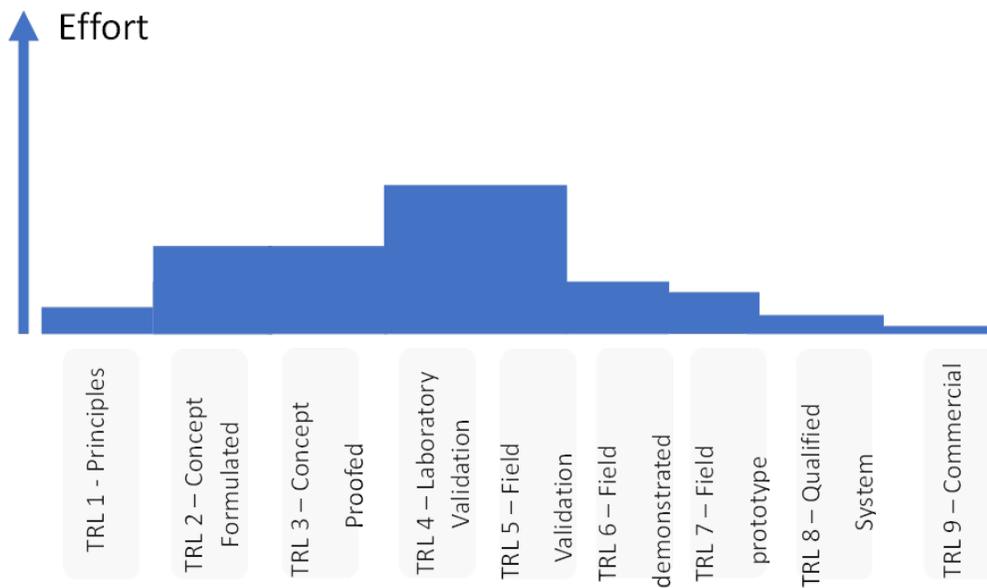
Graph 1: Effort expended across the MTU R&I ecosystem as per relative amount of research expenditure ("effort") across the Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs).

While editorial oversight of the material collated in this report rested with Ms Juhl to maximise overall coherence, focus and flow, this report represents the views of MTU as a whole on its quality systems and activities, as expressed by those of its members responsible for and most familiar with the implementation of the relevant University functions.

As for the two previous AQRs for MTU since its inception, intensive work on the development and implementation of new MTU structures, policies and processes has been ongoing during the drafting of this AQR update. In addition, the reporting period saw the start of preparations for the CINNTE Institutional Review, with the main review visit upcoming in March 2024. AQR 2024 therefore aims to present the most up-to-date and accurate snapshot possible, both of the new governance and executive structures introduced during the reporting period, and any remaining elements of the inherited quality frameworks and procedures of CIT and IT Tralee. With further changes to MTU's quality framework continuing during drafting and following submission of the report, however, certain features described may have been superseded when the report is published.

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

1.1.1 Governance and Quality Management in the Post-Establishment Period

On 1 January 2021, Munster Technological University (MTU) was established under the TU Act 2018 through the merger of Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) and Institute of Technology (IT) Tralee. With establishment of the new technological university, IT Tralee and CIT stood dissolved.

While MTU is a new legal entity with a separate statutory role and a different governance and management structure, the TU Act 2018 provides for an initial transfer of functions (Section 37), programmes of education and training (Section 59), quality assurance procedures and access, transfer & progression procedures (both Section 61) from the dissolved component institutions to the new technological university on designation day.

a. Governing Body

The first meeting of the Governing Body of Munster Technological University took place on 1 January 2021. At that inaugural meeting, MTU was formally established and Prof Maggie Cusack was appointed as President.

Other items addressed at the inaugural Governing Body meeting included staff and student representation on Governing Body; approval of the Governing Body Standing Orders; approval of the MTU Code of Governance; establishment of an Audit and Risk Committee (to independently ensure proper corporate governance of the University and the management of a Risk Register for the University); and approval of the MTU Dignity and Respect Policy and Procedure. The MTU Code of Governance provides the framework for the application of best practice in corporate governance by MTU and is published on the MTU website, as is the MTU Dignity and Respect Policy; both documents may be accessed here.

The MTU Governing Body furthermore ratified the continued application of the legacy regulations, policies and procedures of the dissolved institutions to the respective MTU campuses to which they applied immediately before establishment of the MTU, in accordance with the TU Act (2018). These legacy regulations and policies will remain in place until such time as they are formally amended or replaced by MTU.

Soon after designation, MTU Governing Body, in accordance with the Technological Universities Act 2018, commenced the process of expanding its membership from the inaugural five members to enable the appointment of MTU student and staff members, as well as further external members. The expanded Governing Body first sat on 30 June 2021 and concluded its first two-year term of office at the end of the academic year 2022/23. A newly constituted Governing Body took up office on 6 July 2023.

In the months following designation, two further Committees were also set up by Governing Body, namely a Nominations Committee and an Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Committee. Following its expansion in June 2021, Governing Body set about finalising its Committee structure and approving a Terms of Reference and workplan for each Committee. In total, Governing Body established six Committees as follows:

- Arts, Sport & Culture Committee
- Audit & Risk Committee
- Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Committee
- Finance Committee
- NMCI Committee
- Strategic Development Committee

All Committees of Governing Body have now been populated and have commenced their programme of work.

Documentation on the membership and meetings of the current Governing Body and its Committees and GB Committee terms of reference are made available on the Governing Body page of the MTU website.

b. Transitional and Steady-State Academic Council

At its inaugural meeting, MTU Governing Body ratified the establishment of a small Academic Council to meet the legislative requirements for an Academic Council to be in place from Establishment Day. The membership and responsibilities of this small Academic Council were legislated for under the TU Act (2018) also.

Subsequently, the Governing Body agreed on the establishment of a 'transitional' MTU Academic Council. This transitional Academic Council, which commenced on 7 May 2021 and continued in existence until early 2024, had a larger membership with a majority of elected members. Several Academic Council Committees were also established to support the transitional Academic Council in the discharge of its functions, including the development of new, common academic policies and procedures for MTU.

The committee structure of the transitional Academic Council of MTU comprised an Executive Committee and six 'Integration & Development Committees'. Two Academic Legacy Committees (the former Academic Councils of CIT and ITT) were also in operation up to the end of 2021/22. The Academic Legacy Committees dealt with legacy processes already in train and local operational issues and had significant delegated authority from the MTU Academic Council to manage quality assurance within the pre-existing QA frameworks. Following completion of the legacy processes and adoption of a number of university-wide QA policies and procedures, including for new programme approvals, the two Academic Legacy Committees were stood down.

Following approval of the Membership Regulations for a new, 'steady-state' Academic Council by Governing Body in May 2023 and adoption of thoroughly revised and expanded Standing Orders by Academic Council in June 2023, the initial step in implementation was the appointment of ex-officio members by the President. The new Membership Regulations are based on the new Executive Structure, but as recruitment of the eleven executive posts had not commenced, provisions were invoked whereby the President appointed ex-officio members on an interim basis in November 2023. Elections for the elected constituencies commenced in December 2023 and are almost complete, with the first meeting of the newly constituted Academic Council taking place on 9 February 2024. As with the previous 'transitional' Academic Council, the new Standing Orders provide for an Executive Committee, which is to assist Council in ordering and discharging its business, and six further Committees whose remit is focused on specific areas of academic operations, as follows:

- Academic Planning & Review Committee;
- Admissions & Student Affairs Committee;
- Learning Resources/Infrastructure & Student Supports Committee;
- Regulations, Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee;
- Research & Innovation Committee;
- Standing Orders Committee.

Apart from the Executive Committee (chaired by the President), all Committee Chairs are elected and appointed from and by the membership of Academic Council. Elections for the members and chairs of the six topical Academic Council Committees will take place in March 2024.

The current Academic Council membership is published on the Academic Council page of the MTU website. For details on Governing Body and Academic Council activity in the reporting period, see **PART B Section 1**.

c. Commencement of MTU Regulations, Policies and Procedures

At its inaugural meeting, 4 January 2021, the MTU Academic Council agreed a number of principles in relation to the status and interpretation of the saved quality assurance procedures of the former Institutes of Technology which were subsequently ratified by Governing Body.

The core academic regulations, policies and procedures of MTU which applied at the Institutes immediately before the establishment of the University were to remain in place until they were amended or replaced by MTU. MTU (Cork) or MTU (Kerry) Regulations would continue to apply to the modules and programmes to which they applied immediately before the establishment of MTU. Any students on those modules and programmes were to be subject to the MTU (Kerry) or MTU (Cork) regulations in respect of any matters covered by those regulations.

Oversight of the regulations specific to MTU (Cork) and MTU (Kerry) and their implementation was to lie with the Kerry Academic Legacy Committee and the Cork Academic Legacy Committee respectively. Any uncertainties or apparent conflicts as to the particular regulation, policy or procedure applicable to a given case would be resolved by a consensus decision of the two Vice-Presidents responsible for academic affairs.

Since its establishment, MTU has been working at pace to develop and extend its portfolio of university-wide regulations, policies and procedures for all operational areas, including academic quality assurance, governance and administration. Upon coming into force, new MTU policies and procedures replace saved local policies and procedures in all campus locations, normally with immediate effect.

The academic regulations, policies and procedures approved by Academic Council during the reporting period are listed in **PART B Section 1** of this quality report.

All current MTU regulations, policies, and procedures are published on the MTU website at MTU Policies and Publications. Any local academic regulations and policies which remain in force pending completion and approval of common MTU policy are published at MTU (Cork) Academic Regulations and Policies and MTU (Kerry) Quality Assurance Procedures respectively.

PART A Sections 2 – 8 below provide further details on specific elements of the MTU academic policy framework.

d. MTU Executive

Immediately on establishment of MTU, all members of the former executives of CIT and ITT retained their portfolios. A small Operational Executive and a separate Planning Group were formed to support the President in day-to-day operational and planning activities in the first few months post-designation. At the end of the first semester, the two groups were amalgamated to form the first full MTU Executive.

The MTU Executive is a non-statutory committee of the University, and as such its membership and functions are determined by the President. The overall remit of the MTU Executive, as outlined in its current Terms of Reference below, is to assist the President with operational direction, oversight and decision-making in relation to any MTU activities which come within the scope of the President's statutory functions under the TU Act 2018. Executive matters considered by the MTU Executive thus include, amongst others:

- Academic and Student Activities
- Corporate Systems

- Finance and Resourcing
- Staffing and Industrial Relations
- Strategic Planning and University Performance
- Research
- Engagement with Statutory Bodies and other stakeholders
- Transformation Activities
- Building, Estate and Capital Projects
- Marketing and Media/PR.

The MTU Executive meets on a fortnightly basis, and its terms of reference are to:

- Review and monitor the status and performance of key operational plans and provide information for the President to report on to the Governing Body as necessary and appropriate;
- Ensure that risks are identified, managed and reviewed as relevant and appropriate, and provide information for the President to report on to the Governing Body as necessary and appropriate;
- Ensure delivery of MTU's strategic vision through projects and TUTF-funded initiatives to deliver MTU transformation via the Project Initiation Request process (PIR), and act as champions for the process and the outcomes;
- Communicate the outcomes of University Executive deliberations to all relevant stakeholders, including staff and students;
- Other matters as deemed appropriate by the President.

The design of the new MTU Executive Structure, one of four Technological University Transformation workstreams, was completed in June 2022, at which time it was approved by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS). A business case was submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform (DPENDPDR) in January 2023 and approved in early December 2023. Recruitment for the first tranche of posts, comprising the Vice-President for Academic Affairs & Registrar, Vice-President for Finance & Operations, and Vice-President for Research & Innovation, commenced in January 2024.

As of February 2024, the membership of the MTU Executive is:

Prof. Maggie Cusack	President
Mr Tim Daly	Head of Strategy / MTU Project Director
Mr Paul Gallagher	Vice-President Finance & Administration
Mr Michael Loftus	Vice-President External Affairs
Ms Ciara Looney	Vice-President Corporate Affairs
Prof. Hugh McGlynn	MTU Project Director
Dr Áine Ní Shé	Registrar & Vice-President Academic Affairs
Dr Brendan O'Donnell	Vice-President Academic Affairs & Registrar
Dr Eilish Broderick	Executive Head of School of Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics

Dr Brendan O'Connell	Head of Faculty of Engineering & Science
Mr Gerard O'Donovan	Head of Faculty of Business & Humanities
Dr Séamus O'Shea	Executive Head of School of Health & Social Sciences
Ms Mary Rose Stafford	Executive Head of School of Business, Computing & Humanities

Figure 1 just below presents the new MTU Executive Structure, implementation of which will commence in AY 2023/24:
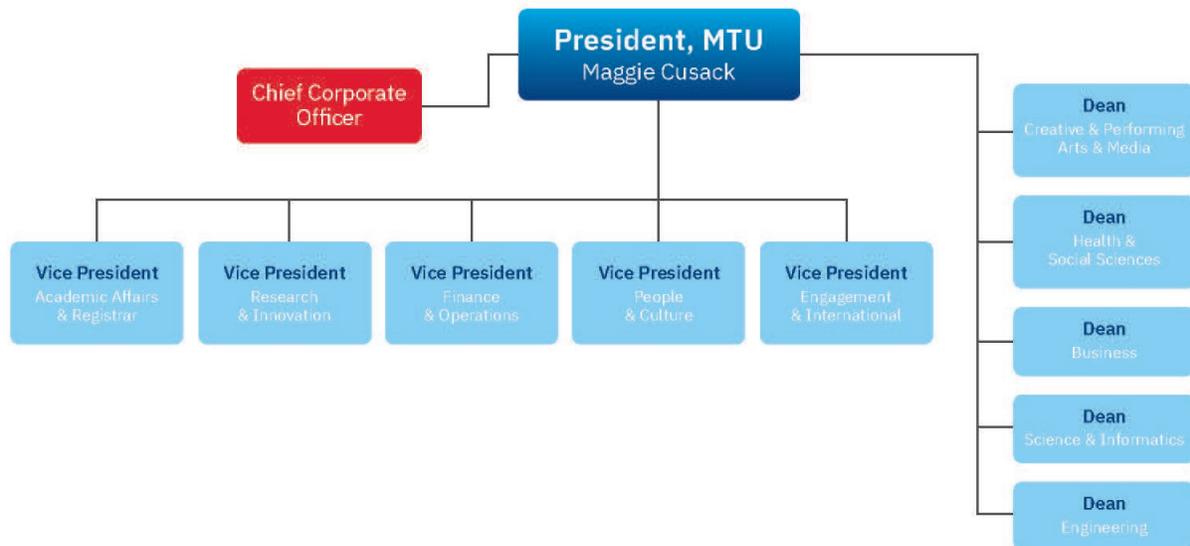
Figure 1: New MTU Executive Structure

e. Academic Operating Model

Constituting the fourth TU Transformation workstream, a high-level design of the Academic Operating Model was completed in June 2023. This followed a highly consultative process facilitated by KPMG and supported by the Academic Operating Model Working Group of diverse cross-institutional membership.

Key to the early deliberations was work previously done by the MTU Academic Domains Working Group, established during the final stages of the TU application process in 2019. Through this, five academic domains were decided upon and the existing academic departments were aligned to these. Subsequently, the elected membership of the 'transitional' Academic Council was organised by these domains, and, following further review, the identified domains were also used to form the basis of the elected academic constituencies of the 'steady state' Academic Council model. The domains were formally agreed by the University Executive as academic faculties in June 2022, and the alignment of the academic departments was validated in early 2023.

The Academic Operating Model that emerged as the preferred option is a two-tier model wherein Heads of Department report directly to the Deans of the five Faculties (Creative, Performing Arts & Media; Health & Social Sciences; Business; Science & Informatics; and Engineering).

The Faculty Deans will sit on the University Executive; other faculty-based senior staff will only join the Executive when deputising for the Dean. Faculties will span multiple campuses and faculty leadership roles will be cross-organisational. New senior leadership roles of Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Associate Dean for

Research & Engagement will be created in each faculty; these will be faculty-based, rather than associated with specific academic departments.

Programmes and academic departments will remain as they are currently set out against the alignment to the academic domains. Detailed design and implementation of the Academic Operating Model will be a multi-year project, completed by the faculties on a phased basis.

A representation of the new Academic Operating Model is presented in Figure 2:
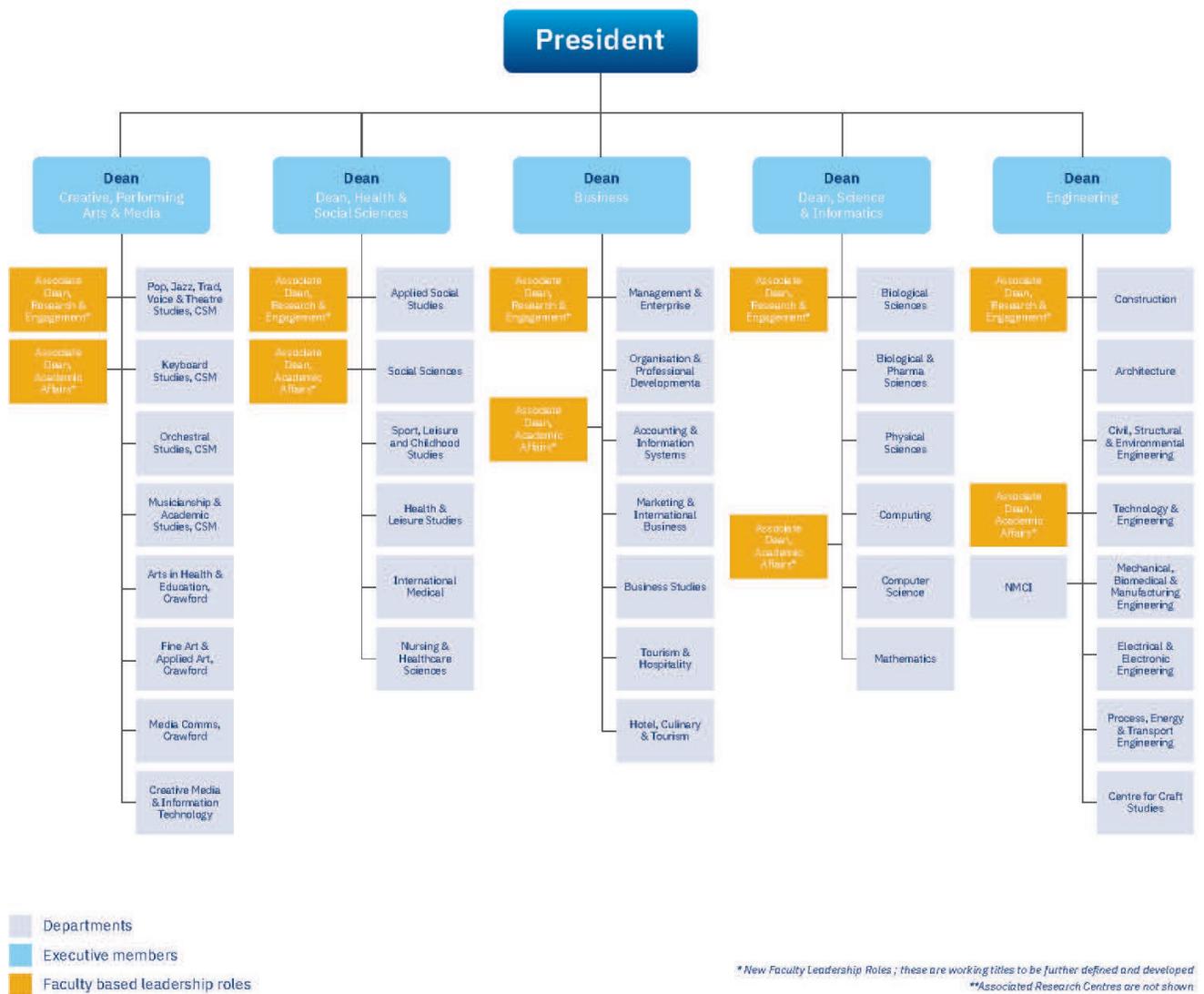
Figure 2: New Academic Operating Model for MTU, approved June 2023 (implementation pending)

Figures 3 and 4 on the following pages visualise the current MTU (Cork) and MTU (Kerry) campus organisational structures, which will remain in place pending implementation of the new academic structures.
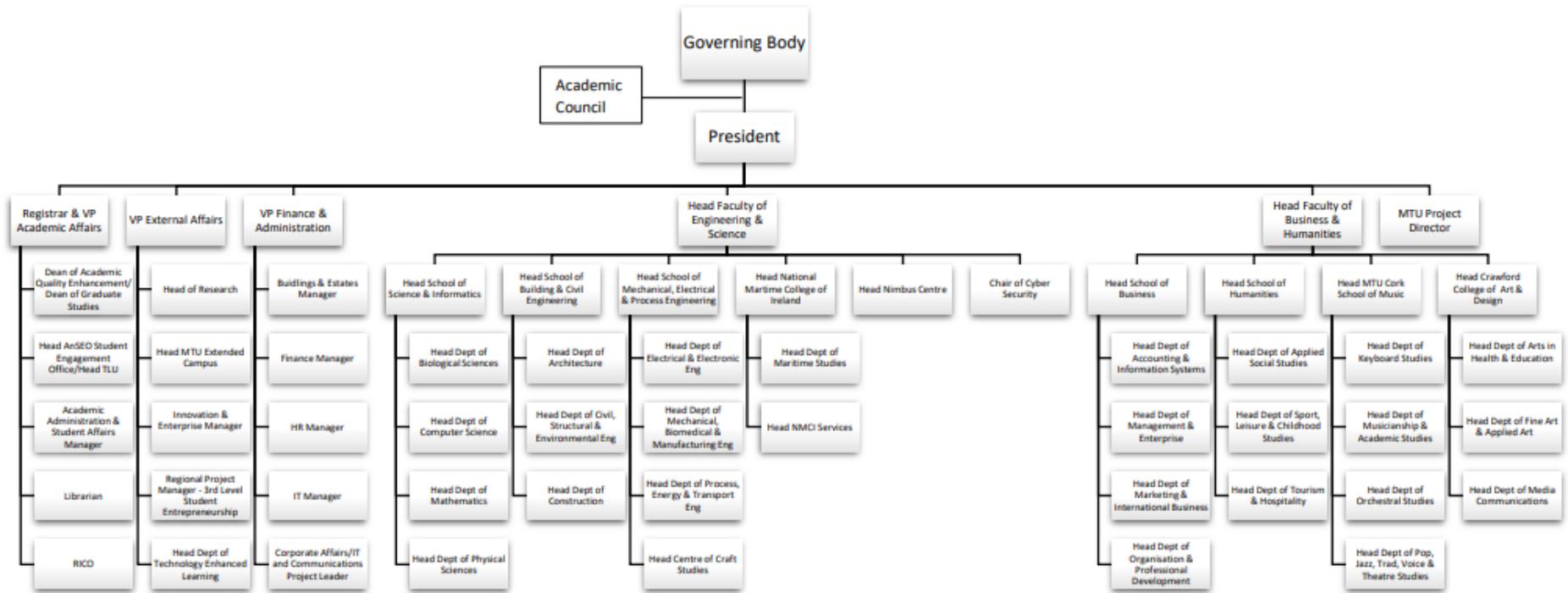
Figure 3: MTU (Cork) organisational structure as of February 2024. Note that the post of Research Integrity & Compliance Officer (RICO) jointly reports to both Registrars.
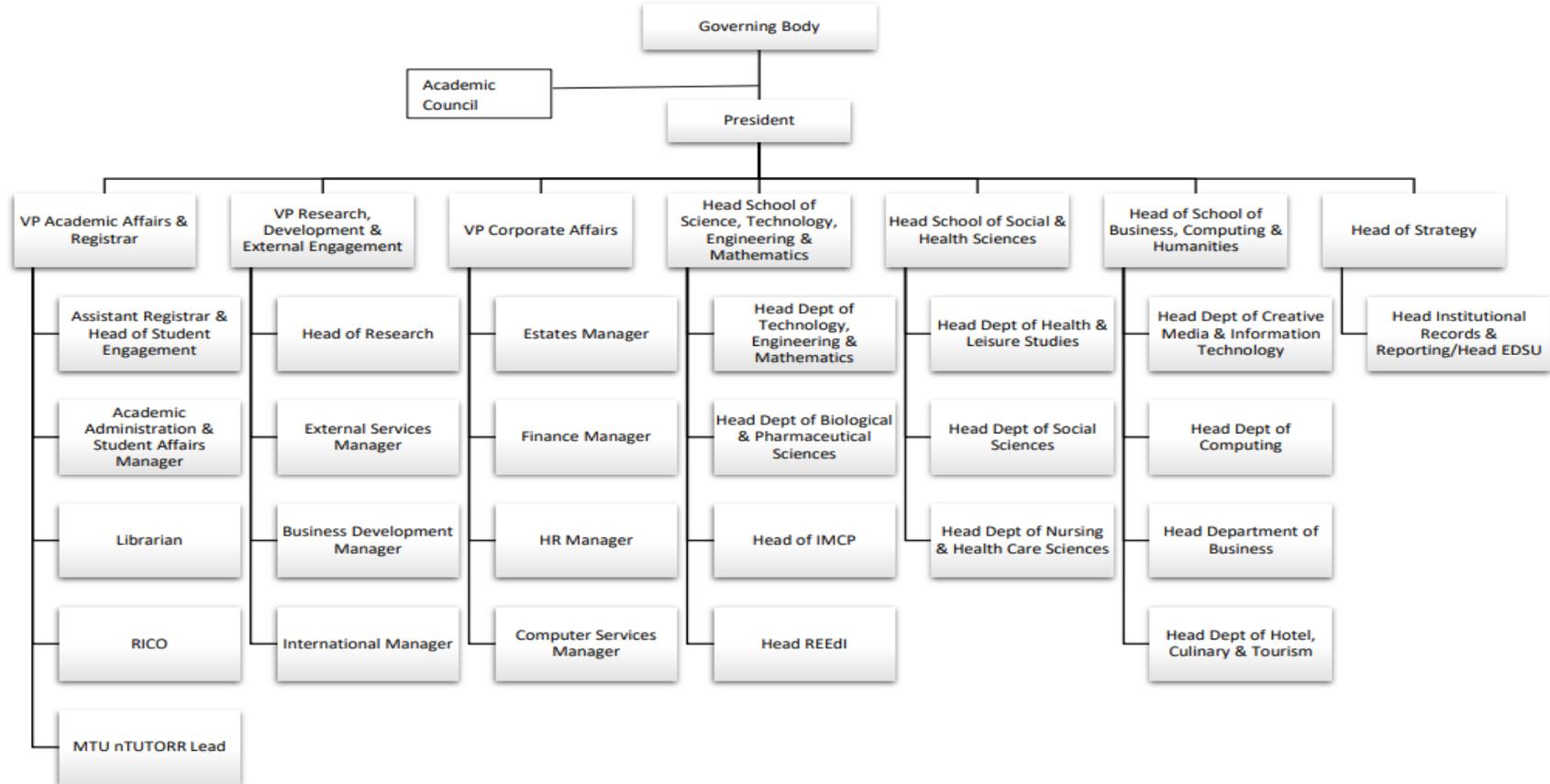
Figure 4: MTU (Kerry) organisational structure as of February 2024. Note that the post of Research Integrity & Compliance Officer (RICO) jointly reports to both Registrars. VP Research, Development & External Engagement retired during the reporting period and the portfolio has been reassigned on an interim basis.

1.1.2 MTU Strategic Plan

Following broad-based stakeholder engagement and a period of intensive development, the first Strategic Plan for MTU was completed in June 2022 and formally launched by Minister for Higher Education Simon Harris in October 2022.

MTU's "Our Shared Vision. Strategic Plan 2022-2027" is published on the MTU website and is available here.

The Strategic Objectives of "Our Shared Vision" flow from five thematic priority areas which were developed through extensive engagement and consultation. The key strategic themes for MTU's first five years will be:

- To deliver outstanding learner education and experience to produce work-ready graduates;
- To increase investment in MTU's staff and the communities within which MTU is embedded;
- To achieve significant growth and impact across MTU's research, innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem;
- To lead regional development; and
- To adopt a global outlook across all of MTU's activities.

To achieve its strategic outcomes, MTU has identified key Strategic Enablers which will ensure the ongoing success of the University. These are

- The proactive pursuit of equality, diversity and inclusion across all of MTU's activities;
- Embracement of the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the creation of a sustainability culture across all campuses;
- Collective commitment to a multi-campus technological university;
- Strategic investment in a high-performing digital infrastructure and capabilities ("Digital-by-default");
- Development of a state-of-the art physical infrastructure and capabilities across MTU's campuses.

For further detail on the commencement of the MTU Strategic Plan implementation process during the reporting period see **PART B, Section 1** of this report.

1.1.3 Academic Governance and Quality Assurance Framework

As set out in the Technological Universities Act (2018), it is the responsibility of MTU Governing Body to regulate the MTU Academic Council. Pursuant to Section 9 (7) of the Act, MTU Governing Body has delegated to the MTU Academic Council the function of approving all regulations, policies and procedures concerning the academic affairs of the technological university. In accordance with the TU Act 2018, Academic Council may delegate the discharge of any of its functions to any of its committees, as it sees fit. Governing Body reserves the right to revoke any delegated authority provided for under these regulations at any time.

MTU is committed to the highest quality standards, to continuous quality improvement and enhancement and to the creation of a quality culture. The development of an integrated Academic Quality Assurance Framework for the University is being progressed as a matter of high priority. In the initial period following TU designation, much of this work was carried out by the transitional Academic Council through its Integration & Development

Committees, in discharge of Academic Council's statutory functions under the TU Act 2018. Responsibility for ensuring implementation and compliance with academic quality assurance policies and procedures rests ultimately with the MTU Executive and particularly within the remit of the respective Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Registrar.

At Faculty, School and Department level, Heads of Faculty, Heads of School, Heads of Department as well as Programme Boards have local responsibilities for implementing and monitoring of quality assurance policies and procedures. The academic management of a department's programmes is the responsibility of Head of Department and the respective Programme Boards. The current academic governance structures of MTU are represented in Figure 5 below.

Information on the evolution of the MTU framework for academic governance and the management of academic quality assurance during the reporting period is provided in **PART B Section 1** of this report.

The academic regulations, policies and procedures of MTU cover all aspects of its academic activities, including the quality assurance of MTU's programme provision and of its research, knowledge transfer and innovation activities; academic and research integrity; access, transfer and progression; and student and staff welfare.

For further information on MTU academic policy development in the post-establishment period, see **PART A Section 1.1.1.c** above. For details on the quality assurance of research activities and postgraduate research degree provision specifically, see **PART A Section 4** below.
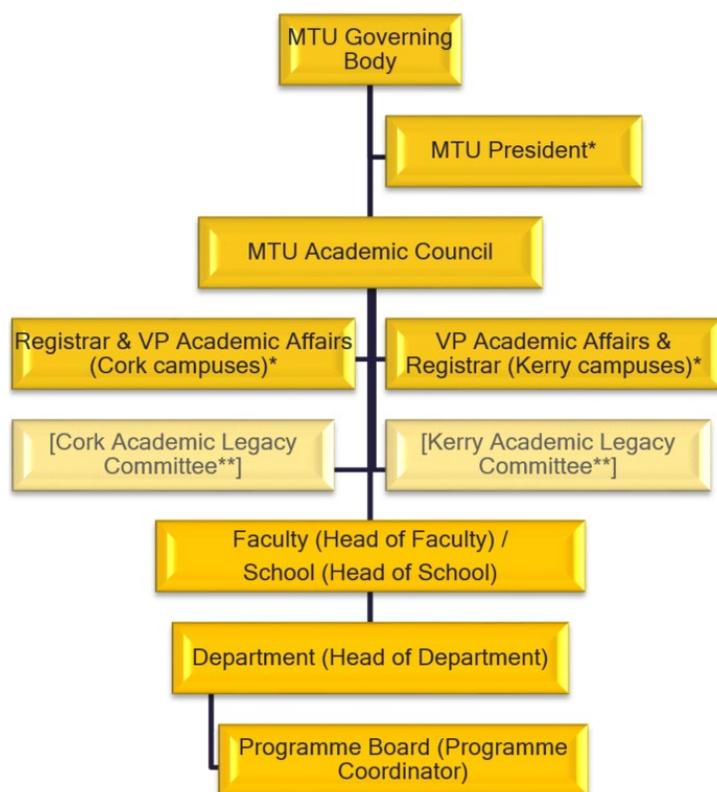
Figure 5: MTU Academic Governance and Management Structure in the Post-Establishment Period
(* with associated Administrative Offices; ** wound down)

1.1.4 Learner Representation in Governance and Quality Assurance

Learner representatives are systematically included in MTU governance and management structures at all levels. MTU's active and engaged Students' Unions on the Cork and Kerry campuses are the main vehicle through which learner representation is organised. While separate Students' Unions are still in place in Kerry and Cork at the time of writing, a single Students' Union structure for the whole of MTU has been agreed and is nearing implementation. In the meantime, the Joint Executive Committee (JEC) of the two Students' Unions has been recognised by the Governing Body for the purposes of representation. The two Students' Unions are also working on the alignment of business processes ahead of the merger.

The membership of the MTU Governing Body, appointed in accordance with the TU Act 2018, includes both Students' Union Presidents and a postgraduate representative. The two Students' Union Presidents were also members of the 'Establishment Day' Academic Council. On the 'transitional' Academic Council, they were joined by the two SU Vice-Presidents for Education and a postgraduate representative. Membership Regulations for the new 'steady state' Academic Council assumed the new Students' Union structure. Governing Body has approved an addendum to the Regulations to enable a full complement of student members to be determined through the JEC. The two Students' Union Presidents also sit on the Executive Committee of Academic Council, and all other Committees of the Academic Council also include student members, as did the Integration & Development Committees over the period 2021 – 2024.

Learner representatives ('Class Reps') act as the main spokespersons for their cohort at Programme and Stage level. Class reps are elected at the beginning of each academic year to act as principal spokespersons for their cohort and liaise with academic and support staff on its behalf. Each class rep is a member of the Students' Union Council and reports back to the SU Executive at Union Council Meetings on issues of concern to the group.

All new programme validation panels at MTU now include external learner representatives. MTU students themselves are systematically enabled to contribute to programme development and monitoring through programme board participation. MTU class reps regularly meet class tutors/programme coordinators and attend academic workshops with programme coordinators or Heads of Department to facilitate continuous monitoring of programmes with regard to issues of concern to learners. During the exploratory phase of new programme development, departments will often consult with existing students and recent graduates on various aspects of the prospective programmes. Student involvement in academic review is being further strengthened in the development of new policy.

In addition to Governing Body, Academic Council and its Committees, and Course Boards, ca. 60 university committees and boards include student representation.

1.1.5 External Stakeholder Representation in Governance and Quality Assurance

Over half the membership of the MTU Governing Body are external stakeholders from a variety of sectors and organisations, including regional education & training boards, the community, industry organisations, enterprise and government.

In relation to programme provision, a key mechanism for ensuring that external peer perspectives feed into academic quality management is the external examiner system. External examiners are approved by MTU Academic Council and provide oversight in relation to learner assessment and monitoring of programmes.

Additionally, all core processes for the approval and review of modules and programmes incorporate external stakeholder representation. A further layer of externality is added by the fact that many MTU programmes are professionally recognised, accredited or regulated.

Lastly, MTU's inaugural Strategic Plan, "Our Shared Vision. Strategic Plan 2022-2027" was developed through a consultative and collaborative approach that sought the views of MTU's external community as well as those of students and staff.

The development of mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders in the Southwest Region is also at the core of the Strategic Priority Area "Leading Regional Development". The Strategic Objectives in this area include, amongst others, that "MTU will encourage, support and initiate collaborations towards mutually beneficial goals". (MTU, "Our Shared Vision. Strategic Plan 2022-2027", p. 19).

For further details on the MTU Strategic Plan, see **PART A Section 1.1.2** above. The MTU Strategic Plan is available here.

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

With regard to collaborative and transnational provision, the saved policies and procedures of CIT and IT Tralee currently remain in force in the respective campus locations until such time as the legacy policies are altered by way of amendment or replacement by MTU.

To date, MTU has not designated any linked providers.

Under Section 9 of the TU Act 2018, the functions of MTU include collaboration with higher education providers within and outside of Ireland, including on joint research projects and the provision of taught programmes, as well as collaboration with business, enterprise, the professions, the community, local interests and related stakeholders in the region. Promotion of stakeholder involvement in programme design and delivery is also a function of the University under the Act. Governing Body has delegated authority to the President (and other members of the MTU Executive authorised by the President) to sign off on collaborations or agreements related to contracts with external parties on behalf of MTU. Governing Body has however reserved approval for any high-profile matters and/or matters associated with a high level of cost or risk.

Formal Joint Awarding Agreements are in place for all joint awards made by MTU. All collaborative programmes, irrespective of whether they lead to an MTU award or a joint award, are subject to detailed consortium agreements governing the arrangements for provision and quality assurance of the programme, including assessment standards, learner protection, and the making of the award.
Under the existing quality processes, each joint awarding and consortium agreement made in relation to a collaborative programme to be offered by MTU (Cork) requires prior approval of Academic Council and Governing Body before the collaborative programme and, where relevant, joint award can be validated. Formal agreements made in relation to MTU (Kerry) programmes require approval from the President and University Executive, alongside validation of the programme specification by Academic Council.

With regard to the long-standing overarching joint awarding agreement between MTU and UCC, the institutions operate well-established joint mechanisms for the validation, operation, ongoing monitoring and periodic review of the relevant programmes. These include a Joint Board which has oversight of academic, management and resource issues for all joint programmes and makes recommendations to the MTU Academic Council and UCC Academic Board. A (Joint) Board of Studies is also in place for each of the joint programmes.

Refer to the following sections for the applicable QA procedures:

- MTU (Cork) Academic Regulations and Procedures, Section Collaborative Provision, "Academic Policy on the Quality Assurance of Collaborative Provision and Joint Awards";

- MTU (Kerry) Quality Assurance Procedures, Section A15: Collaborative Provision.

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

2.1 Programme Development and Approval

2.1.1 Evolution of the MTU Programme Quality Assurance Framework

At the time of writing, the programme quality assurance system of Munster Technological University is undergoing rapid development. Building on the quality assurance procedures of MTU's predecessor institutions, but developing these further to reflect the broader reach, scope and ambitions of a technological university in an evolving higher education environment, the University is engaged in an intensive programme of academic policy review and creation. Driven by Academic Council and its Committees and relevant central academic functions of the University, this programme aims to create and implement a comprehensive framework for academic quality assurance and enhancement for the whole of MTU.

As new, university-wide quality assurance procedures are being approved by Academic Council, they supersede the relevant legacy procedures of MTU (Cork) and MTU (Kerry) across all MTU campuses. In the interim, to accelerate implementation of a common quality framework, a number of saved legacy policies and procedures of one MTU campus location have been adopted by the campuses at the other location also, pending policy redevelopment on a whole-of-MTU basis.

2.1.2 Policies and Procedures for Programme Development and Approval

The core MTU policy documents regulating the design and approval of new programmes are the "Policy for the Design and Approval of Programmes Leading to Major Awards" and associated "Procedure for the Design and Approval of Programmes Leading to Major Awards".

The MTU programme design and approval policy came into effect in September 2022, replacing a number of separate legacy policies which had continued to govern programme approval processes on the MTU (Kerry) and MTU (Cork) campuses respectively up to the end of the 2021/2022 academic year.

The Policy sets out the parameters and guiding principles for curriculum development and programme approval and regulates the credit profiles of degree programmes at different NFQ levels under MTU's framework for modular programme provision. The accompanying Procedure specifies the procedural steps involved in new programme development and validation review at MTU, as well as the required sequence of approvals.

Incorporation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Sustainable Development principles are integral elements of the University's approach to programme design. In line with the MTU mission and profile, the University's programme design process furthermore ensures that programme structure and delivery are informed by engagement and connectedness with industry, business, the professions and the community.

Prior to approval and validation, every new programme and module undergoes a rigorous, thorough, multi-step review process which draws on both internal and external expertise. The selection of independent internal and external experts is subject to the MTU Policy on Conflict of Interest or Commitment and External Work.

The design and approval of programmes leading to non-major awards is guided by the supplementary procedure for the Validation of Special Purpose, Minor and Supplementary Awards. This MTU (Cork) legacy procedure was also adopted by MTU (Kerry) at the end of 2021/2022 pending approval of new common MTU policy.

Amendments to existing programmes and modules are also subject to review and approval. Any major or critical changes to programmes give rise to a differential validation process, which is treated as a new validation of a programme element or elements and – like all new validations – requires Academic Council approval. Module changes are carried out in accordance with the procedures laid down in the new MTU Policy and associated Procedure for the Design, Amendment, Review, and Approval of Modules. Programme changes, for the time being, follow the MTU (Cork) legacy procedure for module and programme changes, which was adopted by the MTU (Kerry) campuses at the end of 2022.

At the time of writing, programme development procedures governed by saved policy continue to be published on the legacy websites under MTU (Cork) Academic Regulations and Procedures and MTU (Kerry) Quality Assurance Procedures, even where relevant processes have been adopted across MTU.

Newly (re)developed and approved common MTU academic policies and procedures are published in the Policies and Publications section of the MTU website and may be accessed here.

2.1.3 Professional Requirements and Programme Quality Assurance

As a public provider of higher education and training, MTU's primary obligation is to achieve excellence in programme provision and research against the academic standards and criteria defined in higher education legislation and academic quality frameworks.

At the same time, the TU Act 2018 lists among the functions of a technological university the provision of programmes that reflect the needs of "business, enterprise [and] the professions" and enable graduates to "excel in their chosen careers" (TU Act 2018, Section (9) (1) (b) and (c) respectively).

MTU delivers on these functions by offering a broad portfolio of degree programmes and CPD courses which aim to anticipate the requirements of business, industry and the professions regionally and nationally, delivered flexibly and with curricula designed to develop work-ready graduates at any NFQ level.

Through its programme approval process, MTU ascertains itself that proposed new programmes indeed address the current and developing professional requirements of their respective field and meet the needs of both graduates and employers. The periodic review of existing programme provision, which involves amongst others a scrutiny of graduate performance and industry/employer feedback, confirms that programme curricula have been updated as necessary to keep step with any significant changes in the professional environment.

2.1.4 Programme Validation and Professional Accreditation

In addition to academic validation, where fields of employment are subject to professional regulation or where successful professional practice is predicated on professional registration, academic programmes generally need to achieve recognition or accreditation from professional bodies or statutory regulators such as CORU, the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI), or the Marine Survey Office (MSO) in the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport.

MTU strives to facilitate and support academic units required or wishing to undergo external professional programme accreditation processes in any way feasible. To support units in minimising unnecessary reduplication of effort, the University may allow for elements or outcomes of a professional review to be recognised against some or all academic (re)validation requirements, provided there is sufficient alignment between the professional and academic review procedures and criteria.

Conversely, the University endeavours to familiarise relevant professional organisations with its academic quality assurance procedures and criteria whenever an opportunity offers. In addition to inviting engagement in the context of various industry liaison fora, MTU may arrange for representatives of regulatory or professional bodies to sit in on academic review panels as observers or, for certain areas, invite them to participate in academic review as panel members. MTU programmes are currently recognised by ca. 30 separate professional organisations.

2.1.5 Apprenticeship Provision and Work-Based Learning

a. Apprenticeship Programmes and Work-Based Learning

In keeping with the long-standing focus on career-oriented education and training of its predecessor institutions, MTU continues to offer both traditional craft and new ('post-2016') apprenticeship programmes.

MTU delivers apprenticeship training for a number of different trades. Apprenticeship programmes for the larger trades, such as plumbing or carpentry & joinery, are delivered by multiple providers, while other apprenticeships are delivered in one location only. MTU continues to be the sole provider for apprenticeship programmes in construction plant fitting, pipe fitting (Phase 6) and plastering.

Degree apprenticeships in the area of hospitality (NFQ L7 Chef de Partie and NFQ L8 Sous Chef) were introduced at IT Tralee and CIT in 2018 and continue to be provided by MTU. MTU is also a provider of consortia-led apprenticeship programmes leading to NFQ L6 Logistics Associate; NFQ L6 Manufacturing Technician and NFQ L7 Manufacturing Engineer; and NFQ L6 Laboratory Technician and NFQ L7 Laboratory Analyst awards.

MTU furthermore offers a novel Bachelor of Engineering in Engineering Services Management. This is a part-apprenticeship programme which affords craftspersons the opportunity to gain an NFQ Level 7 degree. MTU is the coordinating academic provider for this programme which is led by the Confederation of Irish Industry (CIF). MTU actively participated in the 2022 review of consortia-led apprenticeship commissioned by QQI. The review report, "A Review of Consortia-Led Apprenticeships in Ireland", September 2022, is available here.

In addition to apprenticeship provision per se, a broad – and expanding – range of academic degree programmes incorporate significant work placement, ranging from embedded service learning, a standard 5 ECTS-credit modules to full placement semesters worth 30 ECTS credits.

Hybrid models are also on offer at MTU. Through a differential validation process, a novel 2-year part-time 'apprenticeship' pathway was added to the previously existing MSc in Software Architecture & Design which parallels the capstone project with workplace learning. Arising from efforts made in 2018 by a consortium led by LERO (the SFI Research Centre for Software) in conjunction with the University of Limerick, the new pathway gained HEA/SOLAS funding on the grounds that there was a clear and identifiable need for this type of graduate. Coordination of the consortium programme was later transferred to MTU (Cork) as it had an existing matched programme and the expertise and experience to deliver a pathway of this nature.

b. Quality Assurance of Craft Apprenticeships

Traditional craft apprenticeships lead to further (rather than higher) education and training awards. At the point of writing, they are subject to a separate national quality assurance framework maintained by SOLAS, the state agency established in 2013 to oversee and manage further education and training in Ireland. The implementation of the National Plan for Apprenticeship (2021) will lead to far-reaching systemic changes which

will fundamentally alter the role of SOLAS in the process and will align and integrate the overall approach to the quality assurance of craft apprenticeships with the system for quality assuring higher education provision within the providing institutions.

In terms of curricular structure, craft apprenticeships are delivered in a phased manner over four years. Phases 1, 3, 5 and 7 are work-based, while Phases 2, 4 and 6 consist of 'off-the-job training' delivered by regional ETB Training Centres (basic skills training, Phase 2) and associated education providers, predominantly Institutes of Technology respectively Technological Universities. The trades apprentice calendar does not follow the academic year but consists of three terms spread across the calendar year. For that reason, the timetabling of staff lecturing across both further and higher education programmes and managing demand fluctuations for relevant facilities and equipment are some of the endemic challenges of concurrent provision of apprenticeship and academic programmes for the providing institution.

As it stands, the development of, curriculum and assessment design for, and review of apprenticeship programmes lie within the sole responsibility of SOLAS. While individual lecturers are frequently consulted by SOLAS in the context of these QA processes, this is in the capacity of individual subject expert rather than provider representative. The chief vehicle for interaction between SOLAS and the apprenticeship providers on programme quality issues is the – what is still termed – Institutes of Technology Apprenticeship Committee (ITAC), composed of representatives from providing institutions. Normally, SOLAS will first informally advise ITAC members about impending programme changes during tri-annual meetings with ITAC held at the start of each term. These meetings also provide an opportunity for provider representatives to give feedback on and discuss operational or curricular issues arising during the previous term. Subsequently, formal notification about any amendments to apprenticeship programmes is given to the providing institutions by SOLAS. Review of apprenticeship programmes is to take place annually, though for some trades the review intervals – and consequent changes to apprenticeship programmes – can on occasion be longer.

Underneath this top-level structure, cognate trades are organised into Institutes' Fields of Trades Committees, or 'IFOTs'. IFOTs are composed of representatives of all providers which offer apprenticeship programmes in the relevant field, and generally also meet once per term to discuss technical issues. Conclusions or suggestions arising from IFOTs meetings are reported onward to ITAC for further transmission to SOLAS.

All assessments are centrally set by SOLAS. While the timing of practical assessments is up to each provider, all written theory examinations are 'sat' at the same time nationwide. Marks are determined by local apprentice examination boards based on a common marking scheme set by SOLAS. Recent adaptations of the scheme now allow providers to return marks which represent a more detailed and accurate reflection of apprentice performance in the theory exam. Operationally, the existing, somewhat circuitous processes for apprentice assessment and results processing still present some challenges for providers. Apprentice marks are not released by the providing institutions directly, for instance, but are forwarded to the local Education & Training Boards (ETBs) for release to candidates on behalf of SOLAS. However, assessment appeals are to be dealt with under the appeals procedure of the provider. Where this foresees a specific timeframe for lodgement of an appeal tied to the release date, as is the case at MTU, but the provider is not privy to the release date information when the appeal is lodged, this can make it difficult to determine if an appeal is allowable.

c. Quality Assurance of Degree Apprenticeship Programmes

From 2017 onwards, 'new' apprenticeship programmes leading to higher education awards at Higher Certificate (NFQ Level 6) or Ordinary Bachelor (NFQ Level 7) level have also been delivered at both MTU campus locations.

The delivery structure of degree apprenticeships varies; some delivery models combine days of workplace-based learning with days of academic study in one and the same week, while others are phased. However, in the case of phased programmes, certain academic projects may continue during workplace-based phases in order to retain apprentices' connection with academic learning throughout.

Degree apprenticeship programmes fall under the academic quality assurance framework for higher education. By default, delivery and assessment, validation, continuous monitoring and periodic review of the new apprenticeships thus follow the standard MTU QA processes as described in this report. However, in the case of consortium programmes (see next paragraph), it is frequently the regulations and procedures of the lead provider that apply, as governed by the individual consortium agreement. The involvement of SOLAS in the operation and quality assurance of degree apprenticeships is far more limited than in the case of trade apprenticeships, being generally restricted to apprentice registration.

Many new apprenticeships are developed for consortium delivery in the Technological Universities and Institutes of Technologies sectors, with professional organisations also often involved in programme development and delivery of work-based elements in particular. The academic lead institution within a consortium normally takes responsibility for validation of the programme specification and for overseeing programme operation across the consortium partners, for instance by facilitating joint programme board meetings involving all participating providers. The arrangements for quality assurance and delivery are specified in a consortium agreement.

Since degree apprenticeship is a relatively new model of provision, the QA parameters for consortium delivery have not – yet – been standardised in all respects. This means, for instance, that the applicable delivery and assessment regulations and ownership of the award are currently agreed separately for each new degree apprenticeship. The resulting variations, even between apprenticeship programmes offered by one and the same consortium with the same lead institution, are tempered by the fact that the academic quality procedures across the IoT and TU sectors are informed by a historically common sectoral framework.

MTU is a member of the Higher Education Apprenticeship Providers (HEAP) group and participated in the development of the discussion paper "Towards the Implementation of the Action Plan for Apprenticeship", which was published and issued to all relevant stakeholders on 13 March 2023. HEAP plans to hold a series of follow-up meetings to consider and progress the recommendations contained in the discussion paper.

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

2.2.1 Student Lifecycle

a. Admissions Policy and Information for Prospective Entrants

The overarching general principles on admission to MTU programmes are set out in the University's Admissions Policy. The Admissions Policy underpins all other policies and procedures relevant to the admissions process at MTU. It is published in the Policies and Procedures section of the MTU website and may be accessed here.

The MTU Admissions Policy sets out the requirements and procedures for admission to all stages of all taught and research programmes offered by MTU. This includes admission to programmes designed and/or delivered with or on behalf of external partners, whether leading to awards of MTU or not. The Admissions Policy also regulates admission to individual modules leading to single subject certification, as well as admission to any other educational and training offerings of the University. Provision is also made for applicants to appeal admissions decisions within a specific period of time, subject to valid grounds being demonstrated.

MTU is committed to having clear, fair, equitable and consistent admissions procedures. As a rule, programme applicants are required to meet minimum entry requirements and participate in a competitive process. The MTU admissions procedures also give due regard to international, national and regional initiatives which are designed to broaden participation in third-level education.

Prospective entrants may obtain information on admission to MTU programmes from the MTU Admissions Office portal (accessible here). Bespoke access points for undergraduate, postgraduate, international and part-time learners link to sections detailing entry requirements and application procedures and providing contact information for different types of applicants, including entrants with QQI FET awards, entrants with a disability and entrants from disadvantaged communities. Comprehensive information on flexible study modes, including the ACCS route and the procedures for Recognition of Prior Learning, may also be accessed through the Admissions Office portal, as can information on MTU's student supports and services.

Detailed listings for all full- and part-time programmes of MTU are accessible from any part of the MTU website (see Figure 6 just below) and may be found at this link.

Figure 6: MTU main website with 'hamburger' menu, including 'Courses' button

Each programme entry indicates the specific entry requirements and progression opportunities for the programme, provides an online application link where this is possible, and supplies a University contact for further information. The MTU website also offers a Prospectus Builder (link here) which allows prospective applicants to create and save a personalised, shareable digital prospectus with a bespoke selection of programmes chosen by campus location and field of study. In line with MTU's sustainability agenda, from 2022/23 onwards, the University no longer produces full paper prospectuses (or their pdf versions). A Quick Entry Guide with summary programme listings for each department is however available in hard copy and pdf formats; the current version is linked here.

b. Entry and New Student Induction

Standard entry into Years 1 – 4 of full-time undergraduate programmes of MTU is through the Central Applications Office (CAO). CAO entrants apply through the CAO website (www.cao.ie). The CAO Hub on the MTU website (linked here) provides a 'one-stop-shop' of resources where Leaving Certificate undergraduate students and their supporters can access information on CAO programmes, Open Days and application procedures as well as on campus life, library offerings and available student services and supports in all MTU campus locations. Application for entry into all other programmes, including taught and research postgraduate, part-time and Springboard programmes, is made directly to MTU. Mature applicants (23 year and older) and non-EU applicants residing outside of the European Union apply directly to the University for entry to any programme.

Building on a second chance mathematics opportunities for Leaving Certificate students offered on both Kerry and Cork campuses for many years, a single MTU August Mathematics Examination for Leaving Certificate students is now offered across MTU campus locations.

On the MTU (Cork) campuses, new student induction is organised centrally by the AnSEO Student Engagement Office as part of the Good Start programme. Resources for new students starting at the MTU (Kerry) campuses can be accessed via the New Students webpage on MTU (Kerry) website (linked here). This provides campus-specific information on MTU (Kerry) orientation and induction events and registration procedures as well as on campus life and student services.

c. Stage and Programme Progression

From September 2023 onwards, the MTU Policy Regulations for Modules and Programmes (Marks and Standards) regulate progression and award classification in taught programmes across all University campuses.

Prior to this, the legacy regulations of MTU (Cork) and MTU (Kerry) had continued to apply to MTU students enrolled in the respective campus location, albeit with certain local adaptations for the 2022/23 academic year to remove any semblance of differential treatment of students based on campus location. These consisted of adoption of elements of the MTU (Cork) assessment and progression regulations on the MTU (Kerry) campuses, in particular the regulations concerning progression with a credit deficit and pass by compensation.

Some supplementary local policy elements regarding progression still remain in force at the time of writing. In MTU (Kerry), this concerns the Policy for Determining the Order in which Eligible Candidates are made Offers on Add-On Ordinary/Honours Degree Programmes (Section 14.4 of the MTU (Kerry) QA Procedures).

MTU (Cork) currently retains its legacy Academic Policy for Admission to NFQ Level 8 Programmes Post Level 7, available from MTU (Cork)'s Academic Regulations and Policies page (link here), amended by annually updated supplementary policy regulating progression of Level 7 cohorts graduating since the Covid-19 emergency.

Eligible continuing full-time students enrol online and are then automatically progressed by the Banner Student Record System. Full-time students with programme options and graduates progressing to follow-on programmes at the next-higher NFQ level (e.g. to an add-on Level 8 degree) are processed through MTU's proprietary online registration system, OLAPS.

General and programme-specific information on procedures for progression and transfer between undergraduate programmes at different levels may be obtained from the programme listings on the MTU website and through the MTU Admissions Office (accessible here).

MTU's postgraduate transfer procedures are described in **PART A Section 4** of this report.

d. Academic Engagement and Fitness to Study/Practice

Munster Technological University has achieved national and international recognition for its work in the area of student engagement and communication. These successes are testimony to long-established collaborations between academic departments/schools/faculties and the Student Engagement, Access & Disability and Student Services Offices, as well as ongoing effective partnership with the Students' Union.

A focal area of work in MTU is the First Year Experience. Campus initiatives such as the Good Start programme and the FYI programme aim to build engagement and proactively identify and support learners in need of early-stage intervention during their crucial first few weeks in college. New students challenged by the academic environment or the competing demands of study, work and/or their personal life are supported in acquiring tailored personal and academic success strategies through academic success coaching available on both the Cork campuses (ANSEO Academic Success Coaching; further information here) and the Kerry campuses (through the Academic Success Centre; accessible here). Unsure or wavering students are supported to systematically explore all available avenues, including alternative programme choices or viable alternatives to academic study, before they continue on a programme to which they are not well suited, limiting their chances of academic success, or else drop out without knowing what to do next.

In relation to learners experiencing other life issues which may fundamentally impede or negate their ability to continue in study or to safely and effectively practice their intended profession, or creating such issues for others, Policies and Procedures to Support and Regulate a Student's Fitness to Study and a Student's Fitness to Practice have been implemented MTU-wide. Both policies may be accessed from the MTU website (link here). The policy frameworks on fitness to study and fitness to practice are complemented by a wide range of well-established academic and welfare supports offered to learners in addressing academic and life issues before they can cause disengagement and, ultimately, failure or non-completion of the academic programme. Targeted supports are furthermore available to international students. The range of MTU student services and supports across all campuses is outlined below in **PART A Section 3** of this report.

2.2.2 Widening Participation

MTU's commitment to the region and the social and economic welfare of all of its people means that fostering inclusive access to higher and further education has always been and remains one of MTU's key institutional commitments and strategic priorities.

For many decades, MTU and its predecessor institutions have offered a broad and varied spectrum of programmes in a variety of delivery modes attracting an ever more diverse learner intake. A comprehensive set of resources and initiatives is in place to proactively widen participation in higher and further education in the region and beyond, and to enable every learner who enters a programme to successfully complete their studies and reach their full academic potential, irrespective of background or circumstance.

a. Equity of Access and Participation

i.   Access and Participation Policies and Procedures and Universal Design

MTU's Strategic Plan gives expression to the University's deep commitment to social inclusion and equity of access and participation in all interactions throughout the educational lifecycle of the student. MTU welcomes students from all backgrounds, preparing and supporting them to participate in activities related to higher education from pre-entry through to graduation and beyond. Central to this is the cultivation of a sense of belonging among all students and alumni. Promoting access to higher education for under-represented groups is a priority. In these endeavours, MTU is guided by the goals and objectives of the "National Access Plan: A Strategic Action Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education 2022-2028" and its obligations under other relevant national legislation and policy documents.

MTU's many and varied initiatives and activities to foster access and inclusion are underpinned by the University's core Equity of Access and Participation (Student) Policy. This policy commits MTU to providing equitable opportunities for participation in higher education and striving to ensure that the MTU student body reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population. The University will work to achieve these goals by implementing access initiatives and creating alternative pathways to higher education, devised and delivered in partnership with students and stakeholders to incorporate their voices and respond to their needs. MTU further aims to support and enable communities to identify and address issues in relation to access to education in their own areas. The University's commitments to equity of access are reiterated in the principles guiding the MTU Admissions Policy.

The Equity of Access and Participation (Student) Policy further commits MTU to "embedding universal design and inclusive practice in all its functions across the MTU community" (ibid., Section 5.2, p. 5) to enable creation of an inclusive educational environment that can be accessed by, understood and engaged with to the greatest extent possible by all, regardless of age, gender, size, cultural origin, race, family/marital status, religion, sexual orientation, neurotype, or ability profile.

MTU is taking a whole-university strategic approach to the (re-)design of its systems under the Universal Design (UD) framework, built of five pillars: Programme Curriculum Design (Teaching, Learning & Assessment); Student Supports, Services & Social Engagement; Physical Campus and Built Environment; Information Technology Systems & Infrastructure; and Human Resources. To progress implementation of universal design across its systems, the University has established a Universal Design Framework Implementation Steering Committee. This Steering Committee reports directly to the University Executive and is tasked with the oversight, coordination and strategic planning of embedding UD approaches and inclusive practices across MTU, including oversight of all relevant national strategic funding programmes in place to support such activities.

At the operational level, the MTU Reasonable Accommodation (Student) Policy provides a framework for the provision of reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities, learning differences or significant ongoing health conditions studying in MTU. A supplementary Procedure for Conducting an Oral Examination as a Reasonable Accommodation is also in place.

The MTU policies and procedures governing access and participation are published on the University's website and may be accessed here. Further details on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), in particular, in the reporting period can be found in **Part B, Section 2.3 a)** of this report.

ii. Access Resources and Initiatives

Spear-headed by the MTU Access Service and building on the strong tradition of offering accessible education in both of its founding institutions, MTU continues to provide an extensive range of outreach activities and pre-entry, entry and post-entry support initiatives (including personal, academic, and financial supports) for target under-represented groups. The MTU Access Service delivers and aims to continually enhance this programme in collaboration with academic departments and schools and various central units of the University, as well as with regional and national community groups, organisations and initiatives.

The36rocess Service is dedicated to widening participation, increasing access opportunities and supporting positive educational outcomes for under-represented groups while providing a high-quality, professional and student-centred service. This is achieved by a strong commitment to the principles of social inclusion and by working in partnership with key stakeholders locally, regionally and nationally.

Extensive information on MTU access procedures and supports for learners from under-represented groups, including members of ethnic minorities and learners presenting with disabilities or learning differences, can be obtained through the web pages of the MTU Access Service (accessible here).

The Mature Students section on the MTU Access Service web pages (link here) also provides targeted information for prospective mature entrants (i.e. entrants over 23 years of age). While MTU continues to attract a high number of full-time mature entrants, in line with national trends it has been experiencing a year-on year decline in the intake of this cohort (see amongst others the 2021 "Study of Mature Participation in Higher Education" commissioned by the Irish Higher Education Authority). Mature applicants who do not progress to registration are therefore surveyed, and the University has committed to undertaking research in the wider community in collaboration with local partnership companies to inform the development of bespoke access initiatives for this target group.

MTU is a member of a number of national higher education admissions schemes, including HEAR (Higher Education Access Route), which offers places on reduced points and extra college support to school leavers under 23 years, and DARE (the Disability Access Route to Education), which can allocate reduced points places to eligible school leavers under 23 years old with learning differences, health conditions and disabilities. Information on the HEAR and DARE schemes may also be obtained from the Access Service web pages.

The University also leads or participates in a number of regional access initiatives.

The Linked Schools initiative works in partnership with school staff, local communities, MTU staff, and students from 27 designated primary and second level schools in the Cork/Kerry region to support greater participation in higher education by students in those schools. Academic, personal or social supports are provided for eligible candidates transferring into MTU from Access Linked Schools. Information on the Linked Schools scheme is available from the MTU Access Service webpages (link here).

In each campus location, MTU also operates long-standing supported progression schemes for graduates of Further Education Colleges based in the respective region. This links certain MTU programmes to specific FE courses offered in the region, creating supported progression pathways between the linked programmes/courses. MTU reserves a number of places on these linked programmes for applicants who achieve specified levels and other requirements in their QQI FE award. New University-wide progression initiatives between MTU and the FE sector in the Cork/Kerry region are being explored. MTU is partnering with UCC, Cork ETB and Kerry ETB on a collaborative FET-HE Pathways Project which is one of the initiatives under the joint

SOLAS/HEA National Tertiary Office. It aims to strengthen existing and develop new opportunities for learner pathways and transitions between the sectors in order to deliver on the ambition of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Innovation, Research and Science (DFHERIS), as set out in its vision paper for *"Progressing a More Unified Tertiary System for learning, Skills and Knowledge"* (May 2022).

The SOAR (Inter-Institutional Collaboration for Access) Project (PATH 3) brings together the South Cluster (IT Carlow, MTU, UCC, and WIT) with community partners to collaborate on strategies to increase access to higher education for under-represented groups. It has enabled the member institutions to build on existing access practice, consolidate community partnerships and develop new initiatives to further the cluster's collective ambition of widening participation for access target groups. SOAR workstreams are multi-dimensional, including amongst others Enabling Transitions, aimed at easing the transition of students with disabilities to higher education through use of assistive technologies, and Travellers in Education. MTU Traveller Access Programmes delivered under the Travellers in Education umbrella include MTU (Kerry)'s junior- and senior cycle Star Pupil Traveller Access to Education programmes as well as post-entry and early career mentoring for Traveller students and graduates delivered by the Traveller Education Coordinator at MTU (Cork).

MTU also makes available a range of financial supports to enable students from under-represented groups to enter and remain in higher education. These include the MTU (Cork) and MTU (Kerry) Student Assistance Fund – which at the time of writing remains under separate administration at each campus location – as well as scholarships offered under the 1916 Bursary Fund (part of the SOAR initiative) and the MTU Sanctuary Scholarship scheme for asylum seeker and refugee students. Information on these financial supports is also accessible from the web pages of the MTU Access Service (link here).

iii. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Policy and Resources

Cognisant of its diverse student population, MTU is committed to providing an inclusive learning environment for all students. The pursuit of equality, diversity and inclusion forms an integral part of the MTU Strategic Plan and is understood as a key enabler for the successful achievement of the University's strategic objectives (see **PART A Section 1.1.2** for further details on the MTU Strategic Plan). Steered and overseen by the EDI Committee of Governing Body, MTU's activities to foster equality, diversity and inclusion among its students and staff are supported by a number of dedicated University posts, including an EDI Manager and EDI Officer. At the time of writing, an EDI policy for the University is at an advanced stage of development.

Further details on EDI procedures and supports are given in **PART A Section 3.1**, Policies and Procedures Related to Student Welfare and Community Standards, and **PART A Section 5**, Staff Recruitment, Development and Supports, below.

b. Flexible and Lifelong Learning Opportunities

One of the actions under MTU's ongoing commitment to inclusive access to education opportunities and a diverse student body is to increase opportunities for mature, work-based, lifelong, part-time and flexible learners through part-time, blended or online programme delivery. MTU already has a sizeable population of learners who avail of learning opportunities later in life, either as returning or as first-time students, and is committed to further expanding its range of options for lifelong access to higher education to optimise opportunities for life-long learners to achieve a third-level qualification whilst recognising the many work, family and life commitments they invariably have.

One means by which MTU has been delivering on this commitment is the strategic expansion of flexible learning opportunities, in particular the distance learning portfolio. Building on e-learning infrastructure and the dedicated pedagogical and technological supports of the Department of Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) and the E-learning Development and Support Unit (EDSU), MTU offers a significant portfolio of flexible online programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level, both degree programmes (many of which Masters) and shorter courses leading to special purpose or minor awards. The significant expertise built up by TEL and EDSU also served MTU well in its move to predominantly or exclusively online delivery of all its programmes for the duration of the Covid-19 restrictions across higher education institutions.

The online provision complements and extends the reach of MTU's traditionally strong suite of continuing education programmes and lifelong learning programmes with access and delivery mechanisms that are tailored to the needs of learners unable to participate in standard full-time programmes. A range of short courses developed in consultation with employers and delivered both online and in more traditional formats are furthermore offered under Springboard or in conjunction with local development projects.

MTU's Extended Campus, based in Cork's Bishopstown campus, works with numerous regional and national organisations interested in developing their workforce and adding to their employees' skills sets. Extended Campus services include Learning Clinics where Extended Campus staff and industry partners together identify organisational learning needs and the programme offerings and delivery strategies best suited to meeting these. Solutions identified may include existing, 'off-the-shelf' programmes as well as collaborative development of customised learning pathways which utilizing modular 'building blocks'; workplace or e-supported delivery; and the integration of learning gained at the workplace through MTU's well-established RPL and WBL mechanisms.

The Lifelong Learning Office in MTU (Kerry) is committed to providing a high-quality and relevant education service to all part time students. Its course offerings allow learners to enhance existing or gain new qualifications to advance careers. A number of courses also offer the opportunity to progress to full-time programmes at the University in future years, gaining exemptions from the modules successfully completed. To support adult learners, an increasing number of programmes are delivered both on and off campus through a combination of online and distance learning. The Lifelong Learning Office also offers programmes under the Springboard+ initiative, enabling eligible candidates to gain qualifications across a variety of industries and sectors. All programmes selected for funding under Springboard+ are in areas of identified enterprise skills needs.

In areas of high industry demand, Lifelong Learning works with businesses and industry to provide customised company courses and training. Through a process of programme design and development in conjunction with industry partners, these bespoke solutions address challenges and opportunities identified by the employer. Courses are delivered at a time, place and frequency that suits the employer and employee. The Lifelong Learning Office has worked with national and international industry partners based in Kerry to design and delivery custom employee training programmes.

2.2.3 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Candidates wishing to apply for entry, advanced entry, exemptions, module credit or indeed full awards on the basis of prior learning – be that formal or non-formal/informal learning – can do so in accordance with the MTU Recognition of Prior Learning Policy published on the University's website (accessible here).

RPL can be applied for in any valid MTU programme or module. Recognition of prior learning claims are made against complete modules, and applicants must demonstrate that all learning outcomes have been satisfactorily met to gain exemptions (in the case of prior certified learning) or module credit.

A range of well-established RPL supports are available to candidates and academic assessors across the University through the MTU RPL Service based on the MTU (Cork) Bishopstown campus and the MTU (Kerry) Registrar's Office. This positions MTU at the forefront of RPL practice and policy nationally. Potential applicants may access information on RPL processes and supports through the web pages of the MTU Admissions Office.

MTU collaborates in the HCI Pillar 3 RPL in Higher Education and Lifelong Learning project (commenced in April 2021), an innovative and ambitious collaboration of Institutes of Technology, Technological Universities and Universities to build a consistent and coherent approach to recognition of prior learning within and across the entire public higher education sector. The project provides the opportunity to build on the existing extensive expertise of the University in RPL and to identify opportunities for further enhancements, specifically in engagement with enterprise.

MTU has a long-established national and international reputation in RPL policy, process, practice and scholarship. MTU's RPL activities include engagement with industry for the purpose of customised and collaborative course development incorporating the recognition of informal and nonformal learning acquired within the workplace. In keeping with the development of a coherent tertiary education sector, MTU has engaged with the Further Education & Training sector on RPL CPD, policy, process and practice development to develop a consistent approach to prior learning recognition. The University has invested in RPL since 1999 and has continuously striven to embed the culture of RPL within programmes and modules, working with staff across all University areas to achieve this strategic ambition.

Development of MTU policy and procedure in relation to micro-credentials is underway.

2.2.4 Portability of Qualifications and Credit

a. Curricular Features Supporting Credit Transfer

MTU's programmes are designed to ensure maximal portability of credit for their graduates, not just within Ireland, but within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Programme features specifically designed to support transferability include modularised and semesterised delivery and a standard module credit volume of 5 ECTS credits, as set out in the MTU Policy for the Design and Approval of Programmes Leading to Major Awards (available here). Modules attracting multiples of 5 credits are allowable where the optimal learning experience demonstrably involves integrated learning and assessment, meaning that the learner is required to address complex authentic problems, synthesise previously acquired knowledge and skills, and largely self-direct her or his learning. Typical examples of larger modules are performance-based modules and final year theses or 'capstone' projects, which may attract up to 30 ECTS credits.

b. Alignment of Awards with the National Framework of Qualifications

MTU awards align with the National Framework of Qualifications, as confirmed through all standard MTU programme quality assurance processes. This alignment underpins the recognition and thus portability of MTU qualifications within Ireland and – through alignment of the NFQ with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) under the Bologna Agreement – within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

2.2.5. Certification

All student assessment performance and award records of MTU students are securely stored by the Examinations Office in the central student records database, for which strict data access and protection protocols apply.

Achievement of an award of MTU is certified through the issuing of a formal award parchment, bearing the University seal, and of a transcript of award stage results (Diploma Supplement) to the successful graduate by the MTU Examinations Office.

Parchments for major awards record the NFQ level of the award, the named award and detailed programme specialisation, the award classification and the date of the award. Parchments for non-major (special purpose or minor) awards present the same information, together with the credit value of the award and the title of the linked major programme in the case of minor awards.

Parchments for joint awards require the agreement of bespoke parchments formats between the providers respectively awarding bodies, as well as relevant national authorities in the case of international awards. Succeeding long-standing joint awarding arrangements between Cork Institute of Technology and University College Cork and following consultation between MTU, UCC and the National University of Ireland (NUI), an agreed MTU-UCC joint parchment is in place which is awarded to graduates of a range of collaborative programmes leading to joint awards of the two institutions.

The award Information on the formal parchment is complemented by the detailed transcript of stage results, recording the academic year and examination 'sitting', full award and programme title and programme delivery mode, overall classification of the stage result, and the credit value and percentage grade achieved for each module completed within the stage.

Following the upgrade to Version 9.0 of the Banner student records system, the introduction of the Digitary Secure Online Credentials solution, already in place on the MTU Kerry campuses, is also being progressed for MTU Cork, albeit at a slower pace than originally envisaged due to the additional workload arising from the 2023 cyber-attack, particularly in relation to the rapid pivot to Banner broadsheets in June.

Through Digitary, the learner or graduate can securely receive, download and print digitally certified, official documents online and also share these electronic documents with prospective employers or other higher education institutions in a secure and verified manner. The following record types are available:

- Grademailer – an official report of a learner's grades for a specific term (semester/stage) or examination session;

- Transcript of Results – a detailed statement of the results a learner has achieved during the duration of their studies at MTU, comprising a list of modules completed, the grade awarded for each module, and the student's overall academic standing;

- 'Europass' Diploma Supplement (EDS) – a document available for each graduate, in addition to their parchment and transcript of results, which provides contextual information on the qualification, awarding institution, grading scheme and applicable assessment and award regulations, as well as brief standardised summary of the national higher education and training system.

Together, the award documentation issued facilitates the clear alignment of a graduate's award with the National Framework of Qualifications and indicates its transfer value for academic progression and, where applicable, professional status of the graduate within the European Higher Education Area.

As per national policy as well as custom and practice, successful graduates of Munster Technological University are formally conferred with their award at a public conferring ceremony at which prescribed academic dress is worn. Graduates of the joint UCC-MTU programmes are all conferred at an annual joint conferring ceremony, with the venue alternating between MTU and UCC.

2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

2.3.1. Award Standards

The QQI award standards were adopted by the MTU Establishment Day Academic Council as the interim award standards of Munster Technological University, pending adaptation or further development by MTU.

2.3.2. Development and Review of Module and Programme Learning Outcomes

a. Development of Graduate Profile and Programme Learning Outcomes

The development of a new MTU programme almost always commences with determination of the desired graduate profile and associated programme learning outcomes. The 'Backward Design' process typically employed by the curriculum design team encompasses three major design phases, whereby the team:

1. Researches and describes the desired knowledge, skills and competences to be gained by the learner upon successful completion of the programme or module. These are expressed as intended learning outcomes for the programme or module under development.

2. Develops an assessment strategy to measure achievement of these prescribed learning outcomes. For programmes, a curriculum map is developed which maps intended module learning outcomes (MLOs) to programme outcomes indicating how the achievement of programme learning outcomes is supported. For modules, based on the concept of constructive alignment, module assessment items are mapped to MLOs. Through purposeful design of module assessment strategies, the achievement of MLOs and hence programme learning outcomes is assured.

3. Describes the teaching and learning strategy to be employed in the curriculum unit. For programme design, the strategy will prescribe the approved programme schedule detailing the modules to be undertaken by the learner. For modules, the module descriptor details the balance of directed and independent learning and class contact hours.

When seeking to validate a programme, the proposers are required to undertake consultation with appropriate stakeholders (industry, professional bodies, regulators, alumni, learners) to determine a graduate profile for the programme under development. In revalidation, stakeholder consultation is conducted to ascertain that the graduate profile continues to meet current professional or progression requirements, and furthermore that the level of knowledge and skills shown by graduates in 'real world' contexts reflects the intended graduate profile. Once determined, the intended graduate profile is expressed in terms of intended programme learning outcomes which describe the knowledge, skills, and competences of the graduate of the programme. The intended programme learning outcomes are then mapped to the MTU award standards to ensure alignment

with the target NFQ level and award descriptor for the programme. Programme development teams are supported through this process by the Registrars' Offices.

b. Development of Module Learning Outcomes

The equivalent process at module level sees the module author determine the learning to be achieved by the learner upon successful completion of the module. The learning is described in a set of intended module learning outcomes. Depending on the starting point of module development, the MLOs are then evaluated to either establish the level of the prescribed learning, or to confirm that the volume and complexity of the intended learning as described match the target level of the module. This involves interrogating the learning outcomes to determine the nature of the ability/understanding described and the context in which the learning is to take place. The level of the expected ability/understanding is normally determined from the chosen verbs which are reviewed against appropriate taxonomies. The context is evaluated by considering the inherent complexity of the learning and the degree of autonomy and originality expected of the learner. Module authors are supported through this process by the Registrars Offices.

c. Review of Module and Programme Los and their Alignment with the Award Standards

As part of the overarching quality assurance system, programme and module learning outcomes undergo both an internal and external review process. Particular attention is paid to the alignment of module and programme outcomes with the award standards in programme design and review in the context of collaborations with providers whose education and training provision is not in itself aligned to the National Framework.

2.3.3 Exit and Embedded Awards

In addition to the target award, many degree programmes offer an exit award or awards. Exit awards may be sought by learners who are not in a position to complete their studies towards the target award due to life circumstances. Depending on the target award programme, exit awards may be offered at Higher Certificate, Ordinary Bachelors or Postgraduate Diploma level.

Many Higher Certificates (120 ECTS credits) embedded as exit awards in long-standing Bachelor programmes were created through conversion of the first target award in a 'ladder' suite of programmes, typical of the programme provision in the Institutes of Technology sector in its early years. By contrast, exit awards offered within more recently validated MTU degree programmes are normally created as such and validated together with the target award. Validation of an exit award entails, as a minimum, submission of a set of programme outcomes and a statement of professional value for the exit award as part of the new programme review documentation for the proposed target award programme.

While most exit awards are embedded into the main programme, use of existing cognate lower-level awards as non-embedded exit awards is also possible. This requires a 'differential validation' based on a detailed demonstration of how the minimum intended outcomes of the exit award programme are met through successful completion of the relevant exit stage of the target programme.

Principles governing the provision, validation and making of embedded and exit awards are set out in the MTU Policy for the Design and Approval of Programmes Leading to Major Awards (available here), with supplementary saved Policy and Procedure on the Validation of Exit and Embedded Awards of MTU (Cork) (published here) also remaining in force at the time of writing.

To safeguard the good standing of the University and the excellent reputation of its graduates now and in future, both MTU (Cork) and MTU (Kerry) have in place local legacy policies on the revocation of awards. In MTU (Kerry), this forms part of Section A5.26, Examinations and Assessments Review Committee (EARC) and Examinations and Assessments Appeals Committee (EAAC), of the MTU (Kerry) QA Procedures (accessible here), while a standalone Policy on Revocation of […] Awards remains in force at MTU (Cork) (published here).

2.3.4 Validated Awards Register

A register of all valid taught and research awards made by MTU is maintained by the Registrars' Offices.

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

As new, university-wide quality assurance procedures are being approved by Academic Council, they supersede the saved legacy procedures of MTU (Cork) and MTU (Kerry) across all MTU campuses. For policy areas and procedures where no common MTU policy has yet been approved, the legacy procedures of MTU (Kerry) and MTU (Cork) continue in force at each campus location as relevant.

2.4.1 Teaching and Learning

Core principles governing Teaching, Learning and Assessment are formulated in the MTU Policy for the Design, Amendment, Review, and Approval of Modules, Policy for the Design and Approval of Programmes Leading to Major Awards, and associated Procedures, all published on the MTU website (link here). The application of these principles to module and programme design and development is detailed in the following sections.

a. Pedagogical Principles in Module and Curriculum Design

When a new module is developed, the design of the formal MTU module descriptor enforces the systematic capture and constructive alignment of fundamental elements of the module teaching and learning strategy from the outset. The descriptor thus defines, describes and encourages an interlinkage between the module learning outcomes, indicative content, the assessment and re-assessment formats and weightings, and the delivery formats, including the extent of independent learning expected.

At the curricular level, MTU's principles for modular programme design, set out in the Policy for the Design, Amendment, Review, and Approval of Modules and the Policy for the Design and Approval of Programmes Leading to Major Awards, embed a number of precepts fundamental to the mission and pedagogy of the University. The attendant design features appear most pronouncedly in full-time undergraduate programmes, where they are aimed at supporting learners in transitioning from second level to higher education and in taking responsibility for charting and developing their own learning.

The first year of each ab-initio undergraduate degree programme offered by MTU must include a bespoke, University-wide academic skills module to support learners in their transition to third-level education and equip them with the skills and knowledge for successful engagement with their studies and with subsequent life-long learning opportunities. Delivery of this module is adapted by each department to the particular context of the discipline, so that no two instances will be exactly alike. Common to all deliveries however is the focus on developing independent learning, thinking and reasoning skills, team-working abilities, academic integrity precepts and basic academic writing and referencing skills as appropriate to the field of study. Learners also develop a vision of their ideal career path to start them out on the journey of taking ownership of their learning.

In addition, to develop graduates who have the skills, knowledge, and ways of thinking to address the sustainable development challenges posed by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), each new ab-initio programme is required to conduct a mapping exercise at the programme design stage to ensure that SDGs are addressed throughout the lifespan of the programme. A variety of approaches to integrating the SDGs into the curriculum may be considered by programme teams, including interdisciplinary introductory modules; discipline-specific modules with an SDG focus, including project-based; or co-curricular credit-bearing activities. Departments are also encouraged to review existing curricula and modules with a view to including SDG-related material at the next point of revision.

To encourage learners to take responsibility for their own learning and personal and professional development, ab-initio degree programmes may include 'Free Choice' modules to a maximum of 10 ECTS credits per stage. In many existing programmes of MTU (Cork), where inclusion of Free Choice has been a long-standing curriculum design principle, most advanced programme stages include both a cognate elective or electives and a Free Choice option. While many learners avail of cognate modules related to their own specialism as their Free Choice, others opt to broaden their educational experience by taking modules from outside their own field, be it in the form of language or entrepreneurship modules or in pursuit of unique interests, such as the choice of certain engineering modules on the part of music students. While logistical or resource constraints tend to put practical limits on the accessibility of modules offered by other disciplines, maintaining the principle of choice as an enabler of competence development is an important element of the pedagogy underpinning MTU's modular model.

b. Quality Assurance of Programme Teaching and Learning Strategies

MTU's Procedure for the Design and Approval of Programmes Leading to Major Awards and supplementary procedure for the Validation of Special Purpose, Minor and Supplementary Awards, as well as the University's process for periodic programme review, require academic departments to comment on the teaching and learning strategy and mechanisms for each programme in the programme self-evaluation report submitted to the external expert panel. The self-evaluation report and the qualitative feedback obtained from panel meetings with learners, graduates and lecturing staff are complemented by quantitative student performance data which give an indication of the success of the programme teaching and learning strategy in relation to the achievement of the learning outcomes by the different cohorts of learners.

The overall programme document provides a curriculum map showing where the relevant award standards are met and how the intended programme learning outcomes are achieved. Peer reviewers are asked to ascertain that each programme outcome is supported by a sufficient number of modules to ensure it can be achieved by the average learner, irrespective of elective choice. Furthermore, an assessment matrix for each programme is reviewed to ensure that the time and nature of the assessment tasks is appropriate. Reviewers will frequently address issues such as assessment clustering or over-reliance on a particular assessment methodology.

In addition to external peer review, MTU's QA procedures also require that each MTU programme and module undergoes a detailed internal moderation process carried out by the Registrar's Office, resp. its Academic Quality Enhancement Unit in the case of MTU (Cork) and Assistant Registrar's Office in the case of MTU (Kerry), before it is proposed for (re-)validation. Internal moderation amongst others aims to establish that the teaching, learning and assessment strategies, both within modules and cumulatively at stage and overall programme level, are pedagogically sound, coherent and optimally support achievement of the intended learning outcomes within the given programme delivery mode; that the individual teaching, learning and assessment elements within each module are consistent with each other and reflect the module level and credit weighting; and that learners receive appropriate formative feedback allowing them to improve their academic performance.

c. External Stakeholder Input into Development of Teaching and Learning Strategies

At an earlier stage of programme (re-)development, the appropriateness of the proposed teaching and learning strategies is investigated when academic units seek advice on their programme proposals from employer groups or industry advisory panels.

Teaching, learning and assessment strategies may also be subject to review in professional accreditation or recognition processes. The professional organisation may wish to ascertain if the methodologies employed are

suited to helping learners meet the requirements of the workplace in their chosen field, or it may require use of certain – particularly assessment – methodologies to grant exemptions from or admission to professional examinations. In some cases, professional accreditation processes may reveal a degree of divergence between the overall pedagogical philosophy of MTU and that of a particular professional body. Another reason why the University continues to work closely with its professional partners is therefore to enable the partners to improve their understanding of each other's educational mission and aims, and to advance the development and promulgation of student-centred approaches to teaching, learning and assessment for professionally- oriented higher education, guided by best current pedagogical theory and practice.

d. Learning through Extracurricular Engagement and Participation

Learning opportunities at MTU are not restricted to the – real or virtual – classroom. In keeping with its institutional mission and ethos, MTU offers learners numerous opportunities to broaden their horizons and to develop their personal and leadership skills through participation in activities and initiatives beyond their academic programme, with online information available through the Campus Life at MTU section of the MTU website (accessible here). Both MTU campus locations host many active and popular student societies whose profiles can be accessed through the MTU Societies page on the website. Likewise, MTU boasts a wide range of Sports Clubs with access to excellent Sporting Facilities. Entrepreneurship is a central element of MTU's mission, and the University offers many opportunities to incentivise and support student engagement in entrepreneurial activity outside of the classroom. MTU Student Enterprise initiatives include Student Inc., Ireland's longest-running student accelerator programme, the annual MTU Prize for Innovation and the MTU Innovation Challenge. Community engagement opportunities provided by the MTU Societies Office include its long-standing Volunteer Abroad programme (see the MTU Societies web page). The main conduit for student participation in institutional governance and programme management is the MTU Students' Union.

2.4.2 Assessment and Academic Integrity

Assessment is the means by which learners formally demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes of a module or programme, thereby earning academic credit and, eventually, the right to be conferred with a particular award. The quality assurance of assessment – from its design through delivery and operation to the evaluation of its outcomes – is thus critical to establishing and maintaining confidence in the standards of MTU awards.

Equally as important are measures to foster academic integrity, prevent academic misconduct, and address it where it does occur. While academic misconduct is normally understood as dishonesty in completing assessments, academic integrity is far broader than just 'not cheating'. It refers to a set of positive values which inform daily practice in academic endeavour, be it on the part of learners, lecturers or researchers, and which ideally both feed and are nurtured by an institutional culture of 'doing things right'. Recent technological advances, such as the introduction of ChatGPT and comparable AI capable of generating cohesive and seemingly lucid original text which poses particular challenges for technical 'anti-plagiarism' solutions, only strengthen the argument for an approach which strives to create a whole-University culture of academic integrity and pride in one's own academic accomplishments.

An Academic Integrity Policy for MTU was approved by the Academic Council in May 2023, with publication currently deferred until corresponding implementation procedures have also been finalised and approved.

a. Assessment Standards

MTU's assessment standards and regulations are rooted in the long-standing sectorial framework for determination of assessment grades and of progression and award standards determined in QQI's *Assessment and Standards* (last revised edition published in 2013) and should be understood before that backdrop.

With effect from September 2023, the applicable standards, regulations and procedures for assessment and the making of awards to students enrolled in all University programmes are set out in the MTU Policy Regulations for Modules and Programmes (Marks and Standards). Regulations specific to the assessment of postgraduate research degree programmes at MTU are set out in the MTU Regulations for Postgraduate Research Study. Both documents are published on the MTU website (link here). For further details on MTU's quality framework for postgraduate research degree provision, see **PART A Section 4** below.

b. Assessment Design and Review

The format, general design and weighting of continuous assessment tasks and final examinations undergoes rigorous internal and external quality review when modules and programmes are first developed and during each subsequent programme review. This serves to assure assessment quality and the standard of the MTU awards based on these assessments, but also helps ensure that module and programme assessment strategies are student-centred, pedagogically sound and fair. (See **PART A Section 2.1.2** and **PART A Section 8** below for further details on the quality procedures for new programme approval and programme monitoring and review.) In between cyclical programme reviews, assessment design adaptations are routinely proposed by module lecturers based on the operational experience of delivering and marking assessments or on external examiner feedback. In addition, the review of student progression statistics, which forms an important part of both ongoing programme performance monitoring and programme review, may yield valuable information on the validity and reliability of the assessment instruments as implemented. Assessment design issues identified by the programme boards through programme monitoring activities may thus also lead to assessment design changes between scheduled reviews. (For MTU (Kerry), specifically, see Section A6.2, Course Boards, of the MTU (Kerry) Academic Quality Procedures).

In accordance with its Procedure for the Design, Amendment, Review, and Approval of Modules, MTU requires internal module moderation by a member of the academic quality enhancement staff in the Registrar's Office where the assessment design of an existing module is altered in a significant way between periodic reviews. Major changes to assessment also entail referral of the relevant modules for review by external experts (see also **PART A Section 2.4.1.b** above).

For the duration of Emergency Remote Teaching ('ERT') during the Covid-19 restrictions, MTU academic departments were furthermore required to submit Departmental Assessment Plans indicating the nature and extent of the changes to assessment from the approved module descriptor in the context of ERT online provision for each upcoming semester. Each plan was reviewed in detail by the MTU (Cork) AQE Unit and the MTU (Kerry) Assistant Registrar's Office respectively and approved by the Cork and Kerry Academic Legacy Committees of Academic Council before the revised assessments could be delivered.

c. Assessment and Examination Procedures

The organisation of the assessment and examination process, the conduct of examination candidates, formal inquiry into allegations of assessment misconduct, and the appeal of assessment and examination outcomes by

learners currently still come under the separate legacy policies and procedures of MTU (Kerry) and (MTU) Cork. However, 'headline' standards of good conduct summarising fundamental expectations on learners in relation to academic integrity University-wide are set out in the MTU Code of Conduct (Student) published on the MTU website (accessible here).

Operationally, the organisation of final examinations and the preparation of stage results, records of achievement and award certificates falls under the remit of the Examinations Offices in each campus location. The web pages of the Examinations Offices provide learners in the respective campus location with extensive information and guidance on the assessment and examination process, assessment regulations, and academic honesty and integrity. The web page for the MTU (Kerry) Examinations Office can be accessed here, while the MTU (Cork) Examinations Office web page may be accessed here.

In MTU (Kerry), the preparation and production of examination and assessment material is subject to Section A5.3 of the MTU (Kerry) Quality Assurance Procedures, while Section A5.4a outlines the procedure for setting projects and dissertations specifically. A range of detailed procedures concerning the implementation of different aspects of the assessment and examination process and the handling of alleged assessment infringements aimed at staff and student-facing procedures regarding the extension and late submission of assignments and gaining access to examination materials are made available as further sub-sections of Section A5, Assessment of Learners, of the MTU (Kerry) QA Procedures (linked here).

The published policies, procedures and guidelines of MTU (Cork) campuses on the operation and conduct of examinations and continuous assessment are accessible through the web page of the MTU (Cork) Examinations Office and/or the Academic Regulations and Policies section of the MTU (Cork) website. They include

- Policy on the conduct of candidates during examinations;

- Policy on academic honesty, plagiarism and infringements, with a policy supplement approved in 2020 following the move to emergency remote teaching ('ERT') which focuses on types of academic dishonesty and misconduct specific to the online environment and outlines the follow-up process for potential instances of online misconduct;

- A process for formal inquiry into allegations of misconduct related to examinations and assessment, and a supplemental 'ERT' procedure for online hearings of the Assessment Infringements Board; and

- A process for submission of extenuating circumstances related to non-completion of examinations and assessment tasks.

Candidates are furthermore furnished with a published process for appealing the outcomes of assessment and examinations and notifying correction errors.

d. External Moderation of Assessment in Taught Programmes

A key piece of the quality assurance of assessment is the external examiner system which ensures external moderation of both the design and the outcomes of assessment and examinations.

With effect from September 2023, external moderation of assessment and examinations in taught provision is regulated by the MTU Policy on External Examination of Taught Programmes and its associated Procedures. The Policy specifies the role of module and programme 'externs', the criteria for their appointment, and the general

principles underpinning external examination, while the nomination and appointment processes as well as the specific functions and reporting requirements of external examiners are detailed in the Procedures document.

The procedures for selection and duties of external examiners in research degree programmes are incorporated in the MTU Regulations for Postgraduate Research Study.

Currently, taught MTU programmes whose curriculum is largely anchored in a single discipline or a small number of cognate fields of study are moderated on a per-programme basis, with two 'externs' – one academic and one professional examiner – normally appointed for each programme. Assessment in service-in areas such as mathematics, languages or business skills, by contrast, is moderated by 'subject externs' who review modules in a particular specialism delivered across a variety of programmes. Selection of external examiners for multi-disciplinary programmes looks to ensure reasonable coverage of the main disciplines represented.

Nominations for external examiner are formally approved by the MTU Academic Council for a three-year term, following vetting by the Office of the Registrar / VP for Academic Affairs which considers the proposed extern's experience and expertise as well as any potential conflict of interest issues. Re-nomination is possible where a suitable new extern is not available but is not encouraged.

External examiners are responsible for reviewing all draft examination materials, including marking schemes and model solutions, to determine whether the applied procedures for assessment are valid, reliable, fair and consistent. Programme externs also form a view on the overall appropriateness of the programme assessment strategy and the range and type of assessment procedures.

On completion of the assessment processes, external examiners consider the appropriateness of the internal marking in a representative sample of submitted learner work. In some subjects the latter function may also encompass presence during a percentage of oral or performance examinations. Externs are normally expected to conduct at least one visit to the institution to coincide with the meeting of the Progression & Awards Board (Cork) and the Examination Boards (Kerry) for the respective programme. Each external examiner is also required to provide an annual summary report of observations and recommendations to the Registrar which feeds into ongoing programme monitoring and programmatic review.

On the MTU (Cork) campuses, the bespoke MAX^e digital exam paper management system introduced in 2018/19 has simplified communication and reduced the administrative load for both externs and MTU (Cork) staff in relation to scheduled final exams. Ways of obtaining maximum utility from MAX^e to support the external review of continuous coursework, now the dominant form of assessment in many programmes and with an increased adoption post the onset of the pandemic, are being actively explored. Due to the diversity of disciplines and assessment formats, which amongst others include artefacts and recordings, and the sheer volume of assessment, the external moderation of 'continuous assessment' remains subject to greater local variation than is the case for final examinations.

For an outline of the role of external reviewers in postgraduate research study, see **PART A Section 4**.

e. Academic Integrity

All MTU students are expected to approach their academic work with honesty and integrity. Fostering academic integrity and the prevention of academic misconduct, or its detection and the implementation of appropriate consequences, are the cornerstones of maintaining trust in the assessment system of a higher education institution and the awards that are founded on this.

i. Policy and Public Information

With the new MTU Academic Integrity Policy awaiting finalisation of associated implementation procedures at the time of writing, separate legacy policies regarding academic integrity and the prevention and investigation of academic misconduct remain in force in MTU (Kerry) and MTU (Cork) for the time being.

MTU (Cork)'s core policies and procedures governing academic integrity and the investigation of academic misconduct are published in the Academic Regulations and Policies section of the MTU (Cork) website. For further details, see **PART A Section 2.4.2.c**, Assessment and Examination Procedures, of this report.

The key academic integrity principles and procedures are widely and repeatedly promulgated to learners and staff via emails from the Registrar's Office and academic departments, communications from the MTU Students' Union, and through the MTU (Cork) Academic Honesty and Integrity webpage on the Cork Campuses Student Portal. The portal also has information on different supports available to students in this area.

In MTU (Kerry), the following policies and procedures concerning academic integrity and the avoidance and investigation of academic misconduct are currently in place:

- A5.2: Anti-Plagiarism Policy and Procedures;
- A5.13: Processing of Alleged Infringements related to Examinations organised by the Examinations Office;
- A5.14: Processing of Alleged Infringements of Examination Regulations Relating to Continuous Assessment (CA) and Final Examination Other (FEO);
- A5.25a: Guide to Citations, Referencing and Avoiding Plagiarism;
- A5.25b: Request for Approval to Depart from Institute Referencing System;
- A5.26: Examinations and Assessments Review Committee (EARC) and Examinations and Assessments Appeals Committee (EAAC).

These policy documents are published in Section A.5, Assessment of Learners, of the MTU (Kerry) Quality Assurance Procedures (link here).

In addition, Section B, Student Rights and Responsibilities of the MTU (Kerry) Student Handbook provides learners with comprehensive information on good academic conduct, forms of plagiarism and other academic misconduct, and appropriate referencing (Sub-Section 2.1, Academic Integrity). It also outlines expectations about satisfactory attendance and performance (Sub-Section 2.2, Attendance and Class Participation).

ii. Academic Integrity Training and Prevention of Academic Misconduct

While currently remaining under separate – if comparable – legacy policy, on the operational level, MTU has long taken a multi-faceted, whole-University approach to the creation of an academic integrity culture and the prevention and detection of academic misconduct.

Learners have their attention drawn to the requirement for academic honesty at various points of their academic journey, starting with the common foundational University-wide academic skills module included in standard undergraduate degree programmes. The key academic integrity principles and procedures are furthermore continually and repeatedly promulgated to learners and staff via communications from the Registrar's Office, academic departments and the MTU Students' Union. Students submitting final theses/dissertations or projects, whether at undergraduate or postgraduate level, are required to sign a declaration confirming the originality of their work and the absence of unauthorised collusion, but module lecturers often require similar declarations to

accompany other coursework submissions as well. MTU (Cork) introduced a standard declaration of originality for all written submissions after the move to fully remote online assessment during the Covid-19 emergency.

To raise overall awareness of academic integrity and good academic practice, the University has recently made online training courses on academic integrity available to students and staff across MTU, with the support and advice of the Department of Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) in MTU (Cork), the E-Learning Development and Support Unit (EDSU) in MTU (Kerry), and the MTU Students' Union.

The courses have been developed by HE online learning provider Epigeum, part of Oxford University Press. The student-facing course consists of five units/modules and is available to all undergraduate and postgraduate students via the Canvas Learning Management System. Students who successfully complete this course receive an MTU digital badge for academic integrity. The staff-facing modules, also available via Canvas, address key issues such as contract cheating, dealing with breaches of academic integrity, assessment design, technology, and the promotion of a culture of academic integrity.

The Epigeum staff training complements the assessment design workshops for staff jointly provided by the MTU Teaching & Learning Unit (TLU) and the Department of Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL). These workshops aim to support staff in reducing the incidence of academic misconduct from the first by, amongst others, demonstrating ways in which careful assessment design can minimise opportunities for 'cheating'. The TLU also collaborates with the MTU Library in offering 'disseminator' training for lecturers to help their students avoid plagiarism and access useful online referencing resources.

Developed by MTU, the MTU Library Assignment Toolkit includes a suite of modules that guides undergraduate and postgraduate students through the assignment completion process and provides a grounding in academic integrity by using best practice guidance at every stage. The MTU Library Assignment Toolkit is hosted on Canvas. Click here to access the toolkit directly.

Practical advice and training for students at all levels on assessment literacy, good academic writing and referencing practice and the avoidance of plagiarism is also offered by several other MTU services, such as the Academic Learning Services provided as part of the University's Student Services, the Academic Success Coaching service and the MTU Library. The annual "Just Ask! About Results" campaigns of AnSEO, the Student Engagement Office also aim to raise awareness of poor assessment practices.

MTU has six nominees on QQI's National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN), and one of these chairs one of its Working Groups. NAIN updates, alerts, and related communications are circulated by Registrar's Office via a dedicated email address set up for this purpose. This ensures a consistent and visible approach.

iii. Detection and Investigation of Academic Misconduct

MTU uses plagiarism detection software (currently, 'Ouriginal') which is fully integrated with the Virtual Learning Environment. Not least given the variety of assessment types and purposes, use of plagiarism detection software is not mandatory in MTU, though department-level usage policies are in place in several academic departments. Many academic staff members use plagiarism detection software not just to support the detection and confirmation of plagiarism in submitted work, but also to prevent plagiarism in written coursework by encouraging students to check drafts for similarity matches and/or requiring submission of assignments through the software. In addition to staff training opportunities, the offerings of the MTU TEL Department include the

TEL staff 'knowledge base' (https://telhelp.eu.helpdocs.com/) with help articles which provide essential information on how to set up assignments and interpret originality reports.

Minor instances of academic misconduct are dealt with at the level of the individual academic department respectively Module Examination Board (MEB). Suspected infringements of a serious nature or repeat infringements are referred to the Assessment Infringements Board (AIB) on the MTU (Cork) campuses and the Examinations and Assessments Review Committee (EARC) on the MTU (Kerry) campuses.

Each board reviews the evidence in each case, hears from the students and staff members concerned, and determines an appropriate course of action in line with applicable policy. The AIB reports to Academic Council on its activities and also makes recommendations on the further development of academic integrity and misconduct procedures.

Should credible suspicion of serious academic misconduct on the part of an MTU graduate arise post- graduation, to the extent that this casts doubt on the entitlement of the graduate to their award, the award may be revoked under Section A5.26 of the MTU (Kerry) Regulations, respectively MTU (Cork)'s saved Policy on Revocation of […] Awards. The latter foresees an investigation of the suspected historic misconduct by a high-level institutional committee with the primary aim of determining if, on balance of the evidence, the award conferred upon the graduate was deserved, or was not deserved and should be revoked. The final decision on revocation lies with the Governing Body of MTU.

(With regard to integrity and ethics in postgraduate research education specifically, see also **PART A Section 4** of this report.)

3.0 Learner Resources and Support

MTU is committed to creating and maintaining a safe, welcoming and inspiring academic environment which enables and encourages all learners to reach for and achieve their full academic and personal potential. This section describes the policies, structures and services in place to support both the individual learner and the student community as a whole to thrive and succeed.

3.1 Policies and Procedures Related to Student Welfare and Community Standards

Key policies regarding student welfare and community standards at MTU are published in the Policies and Publications – Academic – Student Policies of the MTU website (link here).

a. Community Standards and Student Discipline

The MTU Student Charter sets out the general principles of the partnership between students and the University to enhance and support the learning and teaching experience for all. These principles are built on the premise that all members of MTU should be able to coexist in an environment which allows for freedom of thought and free expression of opinion within a framework of respect for each other.
The Charter sets out the undertakings made by the University to its students and those expected of the students in relation to the teaching and learning environment, equity of participation, dignity and respect, and wellbeing.

The Code of Conduct (Student), published here, is a companion policy to the MTU Student Charter. It details the obligations of students regarding compliance with MTU policies and regulations and specifies the standards of behaviour expected by the University, contrasting standards of good conduct with examples of behaviour that contravenes these standards.

The rules of good conduct and discipline set out in the Code are intended to apply equally to individual students and student organisations. They apply when students are on campus, off campus representing the University, or engaged in a placement or in study abroad.

In line with the precepts of the MTU Student Charter, the standards of good conduct in the Code of Conduct are built on the principles of respect, responsibility and academic integrity. Reported breaches of the Code of Conduct lead to a disciplinary process overseen by the Student Disciplinary Panel. An illustrative table of possible breaches and penalties is provided in an appendix to the Code.

b. Dignity and Respect, Wellbeing and Mental Health

Based on previous work done by the founding Institutes, the first common policy approved by Munster Technological University following designation was its MTU Dignity and Respect Policy and associated MTU Dignity and Respect Procedure. These documents form part of a linked set of policies and procedures which also include the Student Charter and the Code of Conduct (see **Part A Section 3.1.a** just above).

The MTU Dignity and Respect Policy aims to foster a positive culture which values the contribution of each member of the MTU community, be they staff or student, promotes respectful and professional behaviour, fosters inclusion, and addresses bullying and harassment where it does occur.

The Dignity and Respect Procedure gives members of the University recourse to a sequence of informal and formal steps to resolve complaints in relation to dignity and respect issues. The complaints process in relation to these issues does not distinguish between staff and students.

MTU has furthermore published a Grievance Policy and Procedure (Student). This covers general grievances in relation to module or programme delivery, resources or supports; research degree supervision and monitoring; and general student services and facilities. Not included in the policy are matters related to assessment, appeals or exam board decisions (which are covered under the MTU Assessment Appeals Policy and Procedure as applicable); the policy also does not cover academic difficulties experienced by students on an individual basis in specific modules. Grievances under the policy may be raised by individual students or class representatives.

The Grievance Policy and Procedure (Student) foresees one informal and two formal grievance resolution stages. The informal stage allows for the involvement of the MTU Student Ombudsman, whose terms of reference and powers in the context of the grievance resolution procedure are also set out in the policy.

The appointment of a Student Ombudsman has proven to be a critical element of resolving student grievances particularly at informal stage. The post holder will normally be a retired member of academic staff. The Student Ombudsman now operates on a pan-University basis, having been originally in place in MTU (Cork). The purpose of the post of Student Ombudsman is to advise and assist students with the resolution of difficulties, complaints or grievances involving staff or services of the Institute in an informal manner. The services provided by this post are complementary to a range of existing student services and the Student Ombudsman may refer relevant student issues for resolution by those services as appropriate.

Appeals and grievance procedures for MTU postgraduate students are set out in the MTU Regulations for Postgraduate Research Study. For further details on these, refer to **Part A Section 4** below.

Where a member of the University has a concern over the fitness of a student to safely follow their course of studies, or to practice their chosen profession following graduation, the MTU Fitness to Study Policy and Fitness to Practice Policy may be invoked (see also **PART A Section 2.2.1.d** above).

An MTU-wide Protocol for Dealing with Death of a Student has been adopted and published on the MTU website (link here), with an associated Procedure for Dealing with Death of a Student for internal publication only.

A small number of legacy policies relating to welfare and community standards also still remain in force at the time of writing, to the extent that matters covered therein have not been superseded by common MTU policy. These include the Student Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy of MTU (Cork), which aims to direct and inform learners registered on the MTU (Cork) campuses looking for mental health supports, as well as staff members concerned about learners with acknowledged or suspected mental health issues. This is published in the Academic Policies and Regulations section of the MTU (Cork) website (link here).

MTU (Kerry) still retains its Substance Abuse Policy (Drugs and Alcohol), published as Section A13.2 of the MTU (Kerry) Quality Assurance Procedures (link here).

Section A13.9 of the MTU (Kerry) Quality Assurance Procedures (link here) furthermore sets out the Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy in force on the MTU (Kerry) campuses pending adoption of a common set of cross-campus EDI policies for the University.

3.2 MTU Libraries

a. Library Policy and Infrastructure

MTU Library significantly contributes to the achievements of MTU's education, research and lifelong learning strategies by offering exceptional expertise, scholarly resources, spaces and technologies to all MTU's community, regardless of location or mode of learning. Ensuring equality of access to, and full use of, all library resources and facilities is a critical aspect in the role of library services, and especially in the context of a new Technological University. Standardizing policies, procedures, and practices across MTU Libraries to ensure parity of user experience has been a key priority since University designation. Key MTU policies since approved include the Membership and Lending, Collection Development, Library Usage, and Inter-Library Loan policies. A policy regulating Library Access by Children Under the Age of 16 has also been approved. The MTU library policies are published in the Policies and Publications section of the MTU website (link here).

Physical library facilities are spread across MTU six campuses and are designed to enhance opportunities for study and reflection while efficiently housing over 170,000 print items and several key collections of artefacts held in the Special Collections category. The library materials cover all subject areas represented in MTU and provide access to titles in Science, Engineering, Business, Social Studies Nursing & Health Care and Humanities. All physical library material is publicly searchable from the MTU (Cork) Campuses Library and MTU (Kerry) Library websites by using the Online Public Catalogue module of *Koha*, the Library Management System.

A variety of over 1,300 well-proportioned, abundantly lit study spaces are available across all the MTU libraries, with WIFI access throughout. Libraries offer flexible and inclusive social learning spaces that provide users with comfortable areas for collaborative and group study. In addition to 'hot desk' study spaces for short-term occupancy, PC workstations and a number of height adjustable motorised desks, students can avail of bookable group study hubs, an Audio-Visual Resource room, and an Assistive Technology room with specialized hardware and software. RFID technology has been implemented throughout, enabling all MTU libraries to provide access to their holdings and services through self-service kiosks.

As outlined in the Library's Collection Development Policy, MTU Library seeks to be a hybrid library, i.e. having the optimum combination of varied and in-depth in-house collections while delivering access to premium online resource content to all of the academic community. Both physical and electronic materials are mapped to a sophisticated discovery layer, a mega-aggregate of disparate content. This surfaces results of all of the library's indexable content into a single search box, retrieving a broad scope of material via a faceted and relevancy-ranked search functionality with ability to drill down instantly to any native database.

The physical library holdings are complemented by a range of digital resources, encompassing 200,000+ e-books accessible through Ebook Central and a significant collection of both broad-based and specialist e-journal and standards databases, with identical peer-reviewed teaching and research e-content now available across all campuses. The multi-disciplinary databases provided currently include Science Direct, Emerald-Premier and EBSCOhost (with subsections Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, CINAHL Ultimate, MEDLINE Complete, APA PyscArticles, OmniFileFull-Text Mega, SportDiscus, SOCINDEX, and MathsciNet). Subject-specific databases include ACM, Bloomsbury Applied Visual Arts, I Markit, SAI Global (NSAI, ISO, EN Standards), ARTSTOR, ASABE, Digital Theatre+, Drama Online, IEEE, iSurv, Proquest Health Research Premium Collection, Medici TV, Nexis Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale (RILM), SAGE Business Cases, Sage Research Methods, Scopus, and Westlaw.

MTU's e-resource portfolio has expanded considerably with membership of the Irish Research eLibrary (IreL) from 2023 onwards; further details on this are provided in Part B.

b. Library Services and Supports

As student learning modes expand and diversify, the Library resources continue to adapt and grow in response to developing user expectations. The Library websites, with integrated mobile device compatibility, offer a continually expanding range of video tutorials and online subject guides created by library staff in collaboration with academic staff from relevant departments. Library staff have created their own dedicated YouTube channel which hosts a large selection of instructional videos designed and produced by members of the library team.

The Library also utilises a '24/7' Virtual Assistant Chatbot built on IBM's Watson Assistant platform. Implementation of this AI support tool has allowed the Library to build, train, and deploy conversational interactions with immediate responses to the most frequently asked library queries, regardless of time and user location. Library staff are able to regularly update conversation starter topics, a feature which proved especially useful during the rapidly evolving pandemic crisis as the chatbot can immediately reflect operational changes and new services, such as 'Click & Collect'.

Lib Chat service is also available on the Springshare platform. This allows Library staff to interact online with library users and answer questions in real-time via the Lib Chat interface on the Library website. The service was particularly useful during Covid-19 and is used in conjunction with the regular library support services. A FAQ resource has also been developed.

The highly qualified, experienced and skilled staff of the MTU Libraries – without a doubt the Libraries' greatest resource – continually demonstrate significant capacity to deliver innovative library services combined with a passion for engagement and outreach within MTU and the wider community. There is a clear commitment to enable students to discover and utilise resources for their study and future career, become independent and self-motivated learners and to learn the necessary skills to become independent life-long learners. The MTU Libraries cater for information literacy requirements at all levels, i.e. undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD level, as well as academics and researchers. Presentations and workshops for members of the MTU academic and research community are delivered either face-to-face or online as requested and range from individual support to group and class tutorials. They are complemented by 'outreach' offerings, such as workshops for regional DEIS schools or as part of life-long learning community events in the region.

The MTU Library is committed to promoting and supporting scholarly communications via its Institutional Repository, SWORD (Southwest Online Research Deposit). SWORD records, preserves, and disseminates MTU research outputs and also features publishing capabilities and a conference hosting infrastructure. Between September 2022 and August 2023, 602 MTU-affiliated works were added to SWORD, the majority of which related to the Theses Digitisation Project as detailed in Part B. During the reporting period downloads more than doubled on the previous year (from 17,343 to 38,296), and readership distribution across recognised institutions saw a growth of almost 40% which included a 9% increase on the number of countries accessing MTU research outputs (verified statistics available here). The Library is actively developing Open Science infrastructures that support the data management needs and research integrity agenda of the research community. In addition to managing MTU's membership of the Irish ORCID consortium, the Library provides a DOI minting service via CrossRef and provides access to DMPonline, a toolkit to help researchers create, review and share data management plans.

3.3 Digital Environment

3.3.1 Information Technology Services and Supports

MTU sets out to provide an engaging, high-quality, flexible and inclusive learning experience for all students, built on an excellent, modern educational IT infrastructure and resources across all campuses which are continually enhanced and which have served the University well during the Covid-19 emergency period.
The IT Services Team works to provide high-quality IT services and solutions to students and staff across all campuses, thus enhancing student experience and supporting academic delivery across MTU, in collaboration with relevant technical staff in the academic units. A strong focus is placed on staff development and empowerment through effective IT governance processes and appropriate IT staff training programmes, accompanied by regular awareness-raising campaigns through various media on critical topics such as cybersecurity.

At the time of writing, students are able to access comprehensive information on IT services and supports available to them through the IT Support Tab on the MTU (Cork) Campuses Student Portal and the MTU (Kerry) Campus Computer Facilities web page. Staff queries may also be posted through the MTU IT Services Space on the internal Workvivo staff server, which furthermore provides staff members with updates on new developments in the IT space.
IT Service Desks, both physical and virtual, respond to a wide range of computer-related queries across MTU. Issues can be related in person, by email, online or by phone, with services available to both staff and learners.

All new MTU (Cork) campus students receive their, currently, myCIT.ie and Web4 Student account details on registration, along with their MTU (Cork) campus SmartCard. MyCIT email accounts are based on Gmail, with online tutorials supporting learners in setting up and fully utilising their myCIT email account. Students use Single Sign On (SSO) authentication to log into all relevant IT services, including email, Virtual Learning Environment (Canvas) and WiFi. A Microsoft Office plan is available free to current MTU students which permits learners to install, at no cost, the latest version of the MS Office suite (including MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint apps) on up to five personal devices, use MS Office online on any device and avail of 1TB Cloud storage on OneDrive.
Apart from being the primary form of campus identification, the MTU (Cork) SmartCard provides access to Library facilities and services, restricted-access laboratories and campus car parking facilities. It also acts as a personal electronic 'purse' for use at 'Smart' campus locations including photocopiers, print and reprographic services, food services and campus shops.

All new MTU (Kerry) campus students receive their MTU (Kerry) campus computer network account details and Web4 Student account details on registration, along with their MTU (Kerry) campus T-Card. Online tutorials supporting learners in utilising the campus IT computer facilities are available via the campus Virtual Learning Environment, Blackboard. Students use Single Sign On (SSO) authentication to log into all relevant IT services, including email, the Virtual Learning Environment (now Canvas) and WiFi. While the T-Card acts as the primary form of on-campus identification, it also provides access to various facilities and laboratories, and is used for reprographic services.

The IT Services Department also provides software, networking and hardware support to the MTU (Cork) Department of Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) and MTU (Kerry)'s E-learning Development and Support Unit (EDSU) as well as to academic departments involved in the delivery of online or blended programmes.

On the MTU (Cork) campuses, this ongoing support also informed and accelerated the implementation of the Emergency Remote Teaching ('ERT') Model in response to Covid-19 from March 2020 onwards. Covid-19 presented particular challenges for the attainment and assessment of learning outcomes related to laboratory work, which features prominently in many programmes. Following extensive work by IT Services, the range and functionality of the Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI), which had previously mainly supported programme delivery in Computer Science and Mathematics, was massively extended in time for the 2020/21 academic year. Several additional areas – including Engineering, Life Sciences, Business and Music – are now enabled to avail of virtual desktops for remote delivery purposes. Furthermore, remote 'labs' are integrated with the timetabling system, so that any laboratories scheduled are automatically aligned to the class timetable. The VDI permits lecturers to collaborate with students during remote lab sessions, complementing the use of MS Teams to facilitate screensharing and provision of individual assistance to students during class time.

3.3.2 Digital Learning Ecosystem

MTU has long-established expertise in the use of technology for the enhancement of teaching and learning. Building on its digital learning infrastructure and the dedicated pedagogical and technological supports of the Department of Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) and the E- learning Development and Support Unit (EDSU), MTU has offered a significant suite of flexible online and blended learning programmes for many years now. The expertise built up by TEL and EDSU served MTU well in its move to predominantly or exclusively online programme delivery following the introduction of Covid-19 restrictions across the higher education sector and allowed it to respond quickly and effectively to the demands of emergency remote teaching (ERT) during the pandemic period.

a. Digital Learning Policy

Online and blended delivery at MTU is framed and guided by the new MTU Digital Learning Policy, within the broader policy context of QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes (2018).

The policy outlines that the design, delivery and support of digital learning at MTU must reflect the University's standards of academic quality and excellence; safeguard the fair and equitable treatment of MTU students and staff; promote an inclusive, high-quality student experience; and harmonise with the egalitarian traditions of distance education and the values associated with open source, open access, open educational resources (OER) and open educational practices (OEP).

MTU's commitments, requirements and quality assurance arrangements for digital learning and teaching activities are set out under the headings of digital learning technologies and infrastructure; online and blended programmes and other formal digital learning pathways; access to and dissemination of digital learning materials and activities; data protection, retention and management; and intellectual property and copyright.

In relation to proposals for new programmes or modules or for changes to existing programmes or modules which introduce significant use of digital learning, prior formal engagement with the University's Digital Learning Function is a condition of approval.

b. Digital Learning Resources

At the heart of the rich digital learning infrastructure in place on the MTU (Cork) campuses sits the Canvas Learning Management System (also called a Virtual Learning Environment, or VLE), managed by the Department

of Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL). Canvas is a cloud-based platform with a range of features to support important online teaching and learning functions with respect to assessment, content sharing, communication and collaboration, class management and learning analytics. Canvas is integrated with the Banner student record system, so that staff and students are automatically 'enrolled' on the relevant modules based on the most up-to-date information.

Canvas was originally chosen as MTU (Cork)'s VLE because of the quality of its user experience, mobile support, learning analytics capabilities, ease of use, and ease of integration with other platforms and tools. The latter point has been key to allowing TEL to selectively release new tools and functionality and to mainstream new integrations in a systematic and evidence-based way.

Since its introduction, Canvas has been reframed as the central hub and access point for all online components of MTU (Cork) programmes, whether to complement traditional face-to-face delivery or to support blended or fully online delivery of programmes and modules. In the context of Covid-19, such flexibility together with in-house experience in TEL allowed the institution to respond quickly and effectively to the demands of emergency remote teaching (ERT). The Canvas platform was the primary – and often exclusive – way in which staff engaged with learners throughout this period, and the system supported a number of different ERT approaches, both through its out-of-the-box features and its ability to integrate with other ed-tech components and tools. Such integrations include, at present, the Ouriginal plagiarism detection system, e-learning authoring systems (H5P and Screencastomatic) and a digital badging platform (Badgr).

The key integrated platform is the video conference platform Zoom, which was rolled out across MTU (Cork) in its entirety to support ERT. Canvas and Zoom together have also been a source of powerful learning analytics, giving lecturers and programme co-ordinators valid, reliable and actionable insight into online learner engagement and performance which has been particularly important in the ERT context.

Plans are in train to move Cork and Kerry staff and students to a single instance of the Canvas Learning Management System. Ancillary integrated systems, in particular Zoom and MTU's plagiarism detection system Ouriginal, will also be moved to one single instance as part of this merger project.

3.4 Academic, Career and Welfare Services and Student Life

MTU is a student-centred university, with a strong focus on student support and student engagement. The professionals who provide the University's broad range of student services cater to large and diverse student population and are dedicated to supporting the academic, professional and personal development of all students from pre-entry to graduation and beyond, contributing to the fulfilment of MTU's mission 'to lead change, and through education, empower people for a successful future in a globalised world.'

Information on the range of available learner services and supports and points of contact for each can be obtained from the Student Services page on the MTU website. This provides access points to the web portals or pages of the University's Access & Disability, Careers, Counselling, Health & Medical and Accommodation Services. Information on Fees and Funding sources and the location of the Academic Learning Services is also made available, as are links to the MTU Students' Unions (see **Part A Section 3.4.d** below), the Arts Office and the MTU Libraries (see **Part A Section 3.2** above). Registered students may also access academic supports through the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) (see **Part A Section 3.3.b** above).

Prospective and new students wishing to obtain summary information on student supports and contact details for relevant services may do so through the MTU Quick Entry Guide (available online via the MTU Prospectus Builder page), Open Days and various induction events, both on campus and in outreach format. More detailed information on the range and location of the services available in each campus location is provided on the legacy websites of MTU (Kerry) and MTU (Cork).

a. Academic and Career Support Services

Key services and supports related to aspects of programme access and entry, academic study and graduate career development are provided by MTU's AnSEO, the Student Engagement Office, the Access & Disability Service and the Careers Service, in addition to the core administrative services and supports of the MTU Admissions and Examinations Offices.

In addition to its work around First Year engagement, the Student Engagement Office delivers or coordinates student success initiatives such as the Just Ask! Campaigns or Academic Success Coaching, which offers one-to-one or group coaching sessions intended to improve the ability of learners at all stages to identify academic goals and to develop strategies and skills to meet these. Another core strand of AnSEO's work revolves around building student partnership in quality through different project strands recently brought together under the banner Le Chéile.

AnSEO also incorporates the Academic Learning Centre on the MTU (Cork) campuses, which offers individual or group-based advisory sessions and tutorials support in academic writing as well as a range of STEM areas in which learners traditionally experience a level of difficulty, particularly Mathematics.

On the MTU (Kerry) campuses, academic support is provided through the Academic Success Centre, which offers one-to-one study guidance and academic skills workshops, both on general academic success topics and tailored to the needs of specific groups of students. The web page of the centre also pulls together links to academic resources and skills training opportunities offered by other MTU (Kerry) offices and services.

b. Financial Supports and Funding of Student Services

Information on financial supports available to learners can be obtained via the Grants, Scholarships and Financial Assistance page of the MTU website. Grants are principally available through the Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) scheme; a range of Scholarships is also available to prospective MTU learners.

Learners facing economic hardship may apply for financial support through the Student Assistance Fund. A critical element of this for the duration of the Covid-19-related remote delivery arrangements was the Government Laptop Loan Scheme and the special HEA Covid-19 funding package aimed at enabling equitable access to necessary digital devices for disadvantaged learners.

MTU offers a number of Academic and Sports Scholarships linked to specific academic programmes on offer in one of the two campus locations. Individual application links are provided for each relevant programme. Two further scholarships, the Sanctuary Scholarship and the 1916 Bursary Scholarship, aim to support participation in higher education by asylum seekers and refugees and by resident applicants from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds respectively. These scholarships are offered to eligible applicants across all MTU campuses.

Heretofore, student support services provided on the MTU (Cork) campuses, including the MTU (Cork) Sports and Societies Offices, but also services such as the Medical Centre, Counselling and the Accommodation Office,

have been funded through a devolved budget managed by the Student Finance Committee. Reporting to the Finance Committee of Governing Body, the membership of the Student Finance Committee includes representatives of the University Executive and relevant services as well as four representatives of the Students' Union. Devolution of service funding to this committee thus ensures that learners, through their formal representational structures, are enabled to play a critical part in the governance and management of the services provided to them. Any funds remaining once allocation of funding to the regular student services is complete are invested in the Capital Development Reserve and are also utilised to support various student-focused special projects. Thus, for example, the new MTU Arena on the Bishopstown Campus came to be planned and brought to completion, while special projects of a smaller nature include study hubs in library spaces and enhancements to the Rory Gallagher Theatre. A similar model was agreed for MTU and put in place in late 2022/23. Work is ongoing on the development of a unitary devolved student services funding process involving the MTU Students' Union and a 3- to 5-year budget plan. This is to be rolled out across the University in the near future to ensure a more consistent experience of supports for students across all six campuses.

Responsibility for the management of the two European Social Fund (ESF) funds, the Student Assistance Fund and the Fund for Students with Disabilities, lies with the Access Funding Committee. The Access Funding Committee is tasked with evaluating and revising policies and procedures regarding these funds and preparing for internal and external audit. The Committee includes representatives from the MTU Finance Office and Student Services, relevant MTU senior managers, as well as Students' Union representatives. Following on from the establishment of the MTU Student Finance Committee, it is planned to extend the Access Funding Committee across MTU in the near future.

c. Student Life and Welfare Support Services

MTU's Clubs and Societies play a vital role in helping students build friendships and support networks, open themselves up to new possibilities and perspectives and develop a sense of belonging, engagement and pride. In turn, positive integration into the MTU community contributes to improved engagement and retention in the students' chosen academic programme.

Supports and services related to students' physical and mental health and welfare needs are provided by the relevant Medical/Health Centre, Counselling Service and Accommodation Office, while the Chaplaincies have an open door policy, welcoming learners and staff of all faiths and none.

On MTU (Cork)'s main Bishopstown campus, the principal student services hub is the Nexus Student Centre. This houses most of the services outlined in the sections below, as well as a Student Common Room, meeting rooms and 'high-street' services such as a mini-market, bistro and banking service. The offices of the MTU (Cork) Students' Union are also housed here. A more limited range of comparable services is available in each of MTU (Cork) constituent college campuses. The Nexus also hosts many key events of the MTU (Cork) annual academic calendar, including graduation ceremonies.

In MTU (Kerry), the main Student Services Office is currently located in the Library and Information Centre (U-Block) on the North Campus. Some student services are also available on the MTU (Kerry) South campus. A new dedicated Kerry Campus Learner Centre is currently in planning. The new Learner Centre in the heart of the MTU (Kerry) North Campus, for which a business case was approved in 2023, will provide a central location for learners, allowing consolidation of existing services and the provision of additional facilities, thus supporting MTU's ambition to achieve a unified approach to the delivery of academic and support services across campuses. For further detail on the development of MTU's physical footprint, see **Part B Section 1**.

With four separate MTU campuses located at some geographical distance from each other in Cork, a key role in maintaining ongoing links between these continues to be that of the Campus Liaison Officer, who visits each constituent college on a weekly basis and provides information about supports available to all students.

d. MTU Students' Union

The MTU Students' Unions are the main representative bodies of and for the students of MTU. Currently still operating as separate entities in the two different campus locations, MTU Students' Union (Kerry) and MTU (Cork) Students' Union, a unified structure and funding model for a single Students' Union operating across all six MTU campuses have been agreed with the University. A constitution has been drafted and the Unions are at an advanced stage of alignment of business processes, ahead of the final merger following a referendum on the new constitution, which is expected to go to ballot later in 2024. In the meantime, a Joint Executive Committee (JEC) comprising both Presidents and the four Vice Presidents is in place and is recognised by the Governing Body for the purposes of the TU Act.

In addition to their role in institutional governance (see **Part A Section 1.1.4** above), the Students' Unions also offer students many practical supports and services 'at eye level'. On the main MTU (Cork) Bishopstown campus, students can access the permanently resourced SU Office in the Nexus Student Centre for day-to-day necessities, as well as to arrange meetings with the SU sabbatical officers to discuss issues or concerns. The MTU (Kerry) Students' Union Office is located in the Business and IT Building (R-Block) on the North campus.

A University-wide MTU Students' Union publication is currently under discussion, building on the tradition of the monthly expliCIT Magazine written and produced by MTU (Cork) campus students with student interests and information needs in mind, and available both in print and online format.

e. Services and Supports for International Learners

The International Offices located on the MTU (Cork) and (Kerry) main campuses provide end-to-end support to incoming and outgoing learners embarking on an international experience. In line with the National Strategy for Higher Education, the University recognises that different groups of students need different and uniquely tailored academic, life and cultural supports to enable successful integration and participation in their new living and learning environment. The International Offices aim to support incoming students of different cultural origins to have the best possible life and learning experience at MTU, as well as preparing outgoing students for a successful period of living and studying abroad.

The offerings of the International Offices can be accessed through local MTU (Cork) and MTU (Kerry) International Office websites or the central MTU International Office web page.

The International Office websites provide both incoming ERASMUS and other EU students and prospective non-EU applicants with detailed information on topics such as the application process, programme entry requirements, orientation and registration, fees and scholarships, living in Ireland, visas and health insurance. For students interested in programmes of MTU (Cork), this can be accessed through the Erasmus and Non-EU sections of the International Office website. For prospective entrants at MTU (Kerry) through the ERASMUS and Exchange Students and International Students (Non-EU) applicant portals respectively.

Outgoing students of MTU wishing to study or obtain work placement abroad can gain access to relevant information through the Study and Work Abroad tab on the MTU (Kerry) International Office website and the Study Abroad tab of the MTU (Cork) website. At time of offer, incoming international students are issued with a digital International Student Handbook, which is updated annually. There are two versions of the digital

handbook offering bespoke information for both Cork-bound and Kerry-bound students. Regular information webinars addressing academic and practical information for international students also take place. Post-arrival, the International Offices also work closely with the local Garda Immigration Offices to ensure that incoming students have a seamless and low-stress engagement with the immigration authorities.

To ensure continuity of support during the Covid-19 emergency, the MTU (Cork) International Office launched a Virtual International Office which allowed learners and staff to 'drop in' virtually via a Zoom link with any queries or requests for advice.

An "International Module" is also accessible to all MTU international students on Canvas, MTU's virtual learning environment. This module provides practical information on living in Ireland specific to the needs of current international learners (on topics such as PPS Numbers, bank accounts and the immigration process). It is also used as an additional channel for the University to communicate with and distribute information to international learners specifically, improving the reach of targeted information provision outside of emails.

Registered international learners at MTU have access to the same broad range of student services and supports as local students. International students may also draw on the supports of the MTU Students' Union, of which they are members for the duration of their registration with the University. The MTU (Kerry) campus also runs a comprehensive orientation programme prior to and around arrival for all new incoming international students, including an onsite orientation event to ease the transition into MTU.

In addition to service provision to students, the International Offices are engaged in advocacy for internationalisation within the University, working closely with other student support services and academic departments to ensure that the additional needs of international learners are understood and supported. MTU is a member of ICOS (Irish Council for Overseas Students) and works actively within that forum to advocate with the Irish Government for international students.

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

4.1 Research Environment and Research Degree Provision Framework

Research is a core dimension of activity at MTU, in collaboration with a wide range of organisations, including Higher Education Institutions, industry, state and voluntary bodies. MTU's Research, Innovation & Entrepreneurship constitute one of MTU's five strategic themes, with the Strategic Plan envisioning that excellence in research, innovation, scholarly activity, knowledge transfer and engagement that have measurable impact will be a hallmark of the University.

MTU's research activities are founded on collaboration and expertise across science, engineering, business, social sciences, humanities, the creative and performing arts and media. They are increasingly linked to issues of global relevance which the University addresses through the UN Sustainable Development Goals whilst aligning to, and advancing, national and European research priorities and strategies.

MTU has the joint largest-scale of R&I expenditure (€26.4m) and highest direct-funded research income from industry partnerships (€3.2m) across the entire TU sector (AKTS 2022). The University currently has close on 300 research postgraduates and over 30 postdocs.

Most research income is competitively generated, through funding applications to national and international funding agencies for specific research projects under relevant funding calls. Through the RFAM budget, provided as additional funding via the HEA and based on a transparent rubric which takes account of PG graduations, research income and knowledge transfer metrics, the Research Offices are enabled to support research activities targeted at building sustainable capacity in the MTU research and innovation ecosystem.

The strategic development of the MTU research environment is led by the MTU (Cork) and MTU (Kerry) Heads of Research, with important contributions from the Research & Innovation Committee (previously Research Integration & Development Committee) of Academic Council to policy development. While the development process is in train, knowledge transfer activities arising from the research outputs are coordinated and supported by the Innovation & Enterprise Office in MTU (Cork) and Research Office in MTU (Kerry). Working in tandem with these, the Research Offices focus on innovation activities in each campus location.

In contrast to its predecessor institutions, Munster Technological University is a designated awarding body with the power to make research awards at all levels across all research areas. The creation of an MTU-wide framework for the development and quality assurance of research and postgraduate research provision commensurate with the new University's extended powers and responsibilities to generate new knowledge, achieve impact from this for the benefit of the region and beyond, and provide transformative research education, continues apace.

The MTU Research Integrity & Compliance Officer (RICO) has responsibility for fostering a research environment that promotes the responsible conduct of research which maintains the highest standards of integrity, along with contributing to the development, implementation and review of the University's research related policies and procedures. (See further Part B Section 4.3 below.)

Overall responsibility for the quality assurance of postgraduate research provision in MTU currently remains within the remit of the School of Graduate Studies on the MTU (Cork) campuses and the Research and Registrar's Offices on the MTU (Kerry) campuses. Approval for the MTU Graduate Research School was secured from the University Executive at the end of 2023. The new University-wide School will move underneath the aegis of the Vice-President for Research & Innovation once all requisite structures are in place.

4.2 Postgraduate Research Regulations and Postgraduate Student Lifecycle

Research degree provision at MTU is governed by comprehensive MTU Regulations for Postgraduate Research Study which cover all quality-relevant aspects of postgraduate education. Complementary policy documents covering, inter alia, ethical research practice, IP issues and conflict of interest (see **PART A Section 4.c** below) establish a secure legal and ethical framework within which postgraduate education can take place.

The provisions of the MTU postgraduate regulations largely reflect the regulations that previously applied at MTU (Cork), respectively Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) before it. All postgraduate research students registered on the MTU (Cork) campuses were therefore moved under the new common MTU regulations immediately upon their coming into effect in September 2022.

Preceding this, in February 2021 the MTU Academic Council had already approved the legacy Regulations for Postgraduate Research Study of MTU (Cork) as the interim MTU Regulations for Postgraduate Research Study for the whole of the University (see Section A11.6a of the MTU (Kerry) QA Procedures). The interim regulations were to apply to research students across all MTU campuses registered on new postgraduate programmes from 1 January, 2021 onwards (including students transferring from a Level 9 to a Level 10 programme).

Any students registered on research programmes of MTU (Kerry) prior to 1 January 2021 either continue to be subject to saved MTU (Kerry) regulations or are supported in transitioning to MTU regulations, depending on the stage of their studies. The pertinent MTU (Kerry) regulations remain published in Section A11 of the MTU (Kerry) QA Procedures and encompass the following documents:

- A11.1 Introduction;
- A11.2: Project Proposal Approval and Student Registration;
- A11.3: Research Degree Programme Supervision and Monitoring;
- A11.4: Thesis Submission and Examination.

Applications for registration, progression or transfer between research registers and notices of 'Intention to Submit' a thesis or other examinable work require the approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies in MTU (Cork), respectively Head of Research or Registrar in MTU (Kerry), before proceeding.

Support in reviewing such applications may be provided by the MTU Postgraduate Research Studies Board (PRB) and/or external experts in the field, as relevant.

In addition to providing support on postgraduate research student entry and progression, the Postgraduate Research Studies Board advises the University on matters relating to academic standards in postgraduate academic formation, makes recommendations to the Academic Council on the Postgraduate Research Regulations, and liaises with the Academic Council and its Committees (including the Research & Innovation Committee) on such matters. The functions of the PRB are set out in Appendix C of the Regulations for Postgraduate Research Study.

Information about postgraduate study opportunities at MTU is available via the Postgraduate Research portal on the MTU website. At the time of writing, additional information for prospective postgraduate students, including on the MTU postgraduate environment, entry requirements and application process, structured

elements, available supports, and supporting documentation, may be accessed from the web pages of the [MTU (Cork) Graduate Studies Office](#) and through the [Research Postgraduate Programmes](#) section on the MTU (Kerry) website while information related to postgraduate study is being migrated to the main MTU website.

Applications for funding for research postgraduates, in addition to the general study opportunities as published on the Postgraduate Research portal, are supported by the Research Offices, including for IRC, SFI, DAFM and Horizon Europe funding.

4.3 Research Integrity and Ethics

a. Research and Knowledge Transfer Policies and Procedures

MTU has approved a substantial number of policies, procedures and guidelines regulating the responsible conduct of research and knowledge transfer activity.

MTU's [Research Integrity Policy](#) and the [Code of Good Practice in Research](#) outline the key requirements on all those engaged with research in MTU, including all researchers, students, technical, administrative and research support staff. The Policy and Code summarise the principles and practices under which research in MTU must be carried out and include the associated policies that may be relevant during the course of a research study's lifecycle. These two core documents are complemented by a range of more detailed policies and operational documents regulating specific aspects of ethical research practice, knowledge transfer, IP and the management of research data, as follows:

- [Authorship Policy](#);
- [Human Research Ethics Policy](#), with several supplementary operational documents including
  - [Full Ethical Review Human Research Ethics Application Form](#);
  - [Human Research Ethics Screening Checklist](#);
  - [Minimal Risk Human Research Ethics Application Form](#);
  - [Procedures for Review of Human Research Ethics Application Forms from University Staff and Research Students (Masters and PhD)](#); and
  - [Procedures for External Research Requesting Access to MTU Research Participants](#);
- [Intellectual Property Policy](#);
- [Open Access Policy](#);
- [Research Data Management Policy](#);
- [Signing Authority for MTU IP and Innovation Agreements](#).

In November 2022, the new MTU Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) replaced the two hitherto separate legacy research ethics committees of the antecedent institutions. With a membership drawn from all six MTU campuses, HREC has responsibility for reviewing applications for research study involving human participants on the basis of the [Procedures or Review of Human Research Ethics Application Forms from University Staff and Research Students (Masters and PhD)](#) and the [Procedures for External Research Requesting Access to MTU Research Participants](#).

All research-related policies and procedures are published in the Policies and Publications – Academic section on the MTU website (link [here](#)).

Further guidance and access to a wealth of additional resources is provided to researchers on the dedicated [Research Integrity](#) and [Research Ethics](#) web pages of the University.

b. Strengthening MTU Research Integrity Culture

To strengthen the existing positive research culture and support MTU researchers to continue carrying out research and knowledge transfer activities with integrity against a backdrop of a changing external R&I landscape, MTU's Research Offices advocated and provide budgetary support for the post of designated Research Integrity & Compliance Officer (RICO). The RICO works alongside the Heads of Research and, more generally, the research leadership of MTU to promote the responsible conduct of research, contribute to the development and implementation of MTU's research policies, and collaborate with relevant offices and postholders to ensure MTU's research training includes adequate coverage of research integrity and the ramifications of research misconduct.

All research-active staff and research students in MTU are required to undertake research integrity training. Coordinated by the Research Offices, this training is delivered online via Epigeum and includes a robust certification framework based on the key learner outcomes.

MTU researchers also have the option of registering on a credit-bearing module entitled Fostering Research Integrity (10 ECTS credits, Expert level). This module counts towards the credit requirements of MTU's Structured PhD programme, which is applicable to PhD students across all disciplines.

Postgraduate research students also have access to other research-specific training available within MTU, such as the offerings of the MTU Libraries. A suite of digital badges is on offer for completing training units on topics such as the research ethics application process, research data management, and responsible dissemination.

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

5.1 Recruitment and Professional Development of Staff

a. Policy and Procedures for Staff Recruitment, Induction and Progression

The MTU Human Resources Office has a detailed plan in place for development of aligned processes for the recruitment, induction, progression and professional development of the University's staff. Pending completion and approval of an aligned MTU Recruitment and Selection Policy, which is under development, the existing legacy recruitment and selection policies of MTU (Cork) and MTU (Kerry) continue to apply in respect of MTU staff on the respective campuses.

A change to legacy selection procedures already implemented across all campuses concerns approval levels. In the antecedent institutions, the procedures approved by each of the Governing Bodies required all appointments to be approved by the Governing Body. Since designation, only appointments to posts at grade Senior Lecturer II (SLII) or Assistant Principal Officer (APO) require Governing Body approval.

On the operational level, as an outcome of the CoreHR system merger project, recruitment processes have been aligned between the campus locations, and a unified online employment application process is in place.

Members of internal interview boards are provided with a guidance manual designed to facilitate the interview process, for instance by outlining appropriate interview questions.

In order to 'gender-proof' recruitment, selection and promotion procedures and practices, MTU (Cork) has provided unconscious bias training to all staff who are routinely called upon to sit on interview boards, including Heads of Department and Heads of School. Originally provided by an external organisation, the unconscious bias training programme is now being rolled out by MTU (Cork) staff following upskilling and the plan is to roll this out to MTU (Kerry) under the Train-the-Trainer initiative.

Further procedural changes in relation to recruitment may arise from the review of the recruitment and selection processes in the technological higher education sector, which is currently underway with a view to rendering the process simpler and more efficient.

b. Continuous Professional Development for Academic Staff

MTU makes provision for staff development for all categories of staff, and its staff development programme is addressed at all staff groups. Each academic unit is allocated funding for staff development, which is generally used to fund attendance at conferences and seminars for staff members of that unit.

Staff may apply for funding to pursue further, part-time academic studies in MTU or in other higher education institutions, mainly on Masters or doctoral programmes. All staff development funding applications require the approval of the head of the relevant academic or administrative unit. Academic units and central university functions may also apply for funding for dedicated short courses, workshops and seminars designed to meet specific identified staff development needs. Depending on the nature of the requirements, these may be confined to a particular department or may be interdepartmental.

The MTU Staff Doctorate Scheme is open to staff and staff employed as researchers. Normally, a call is issued once per annum and is subject to an assessment process. The scheme funds tuition fees and a small budget for consumables / conferences.

Finally, the continuous development of the professional and pedagogical competence of academic staff forms an important part of the activities of the Teaching & Learning Unit (TLU) in MTU (Cork) and the Assistant Registrar's Office (Kerry). CPD offerings in this space across the campuses range from full NFQ Level 9 teaching and learning awards, the Certificate in Effective Teaching in Higher Education (SPA, 20 ECTS) and a part-time MA in Teaching & Learning in Higher Education to national digital badges and a wide range of short staff development seminars, workshops and guest speakers. Seed funding for academic department-led teaching & learning initiatives is also available. MTU also facilitates learning communities and networking events, all offered in formats designed to maximise ease of access.

Supported by a number of national funding initiatives, MTU was able to develop and initiate several successful new staff CPD programmes in recent years which have since been mainstreamed. These include:

- 'EAT-PD': Enabling Academic Transitions through Professional Development

   This CPD programme, developed by the Teaching & Learning Unit (TLU), is aimed at new and early career academic staff who have been teaching full-time for three years or less (or equivalent). EAT-PD enables staff relatively new to teaching to develop their competencies in the classroom. The focus of this 15-week experiential programme (1 hour per week) is to expose staff, in a supportive and constructive environment, to a range of research-based teaching strategies that can be used to enhance lectures and support learning.

   Initially funded through the Strategic Alignment of Teaching & Learning Enhancement (SATLE) Fund 2019, such was the success of the initial offering that it received mainstream funding within MTU from Sem. 2, 2021/22 onwards, with planned offerings every semester going forward.

- 'Elevate' Leadership Development Programme

   Elevate is MTU's bespoke leadership development programme, open to all staff members on all campuses.

   Developed by the TLU in conjunction with the HR Managers and the MTU Transformation Office, this programme was delivered by the TLU for the first time in Semester 2 of 2022/23. It is currently funded through HEA Systems Performance Funding and the Technological Universities Transformation Fund (TUTF).

   Elevate is specifically aimed at staff in non-senior management roles and offers leadership skills training on a cohort basis, with particular emphasis on transformation, communication, planning and change in support of Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Student Engagement (TLASE). The project enables distributed leadership and emphasises collaboration, with a view to supporting the implementation of MTU strategy and personal or team professional objectives that align with this. Staff self-select one of three programme strands based on their previous experience of leadership, current and previous roles, and their interest in developing leadership skills: Leadership Fundamentals, Leadership Core, or Experiential Leadership.

   Elevate is delivered on an annual basis, with two deliveries to date. The 2022/23 delivery had 157 participants, 75% of whom were administrative and technical staff. 90 staff members are enrolled in the programme, offered in a somewhat altered format, in the current academic year 2023/24.

c. Recruitment and Development of Researchers

MTU is a two-time holder of the [EURAXESS](#) HR Excellence in Research Award (in 2017 and 2019 respectively), recognising the institutional commitment to the adoption and realisation of the 40 principles of the European Charter for the Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers ('Charter & Code'), and showcasing MTU internationally as a favourable working environment for researchers. The HR Excellence in Research Award will recognise MTU's progress in supporting researchers at all career stages.

In recognition of the merger situation, EURAXESS has agreed to extend the deadline to renew the award to April 2024, which has given MTU time to harmonise its human resources practices and submit the renewal as one University. MTU's renewal application will be assessed based on the updated action plan, where relevant information about how the HRS4R process has been cascaded must be included.

In line with MTU's strategic goals of strengthening and extending research activities and engaging and empowering staff, the University recognises the need for research units to be in a position to recruit talented researchers as expeditiously as possible while adhering to best practice in recruitment, selection and provision of opportunities for professional development.

A significant milestone towards full implementation of the EC 'Charter & Code' was the adoption of an 'OTM-R' (open, transparent and merit-based) Researcher Recruitment Policy for MTU, detailing every step of the recruitment process, from advertising to appointment. Other actions include appointment of a HR staff member dedicated solely to researcher recruitment, provision of MTU graduate internships for research positions, and provision of paid student work placement opportunities in one of the research centres or groups.

5.2 Staff Wellbeing and Support

A number of MTU human resources policies to support staff in different life circumstances who may require leave, as well as an [MTU Annual Leave Policy](#), have been finalised and put in place University-wide at the point of writing. These are available from the Policies and Publications – HR section of the MTU website (link [here](#)).

MTU also has in place a [MTU Dignity and Respect Policy](#) and associated [Dignity and Respect Procedure](#), which have the distinction of being the first common policy documents to be approved upon MTU designation.
The Dignity and Respect Policy establishes the right of staff and students of MTU to be treated with dignity and respect and commits the University to ensuring that staff and students can work and learn in a positive and safe environment free from all forms of bullying, harassment, victimisation and sexual harassment. The linked procedural document sets out the process for making complaints related to issues covered by the policy and the steps towards achieving a resolution.

MTU offers ongoing support for the mental wellbeing of its staff members through its Employee Assistance Service (EAS), now provided by [Spectrum.Life](#). The assistance service is designed to support employees with personal or work-related concerns through telephone support, specialist information and face-to-face counselling. Beyond fully anonymised usage level data, no information on service use is shared with MTU. Information on the service and the associated wellbeing platform/app is available in the MTU Staff Wellbeing space on the internal Workvivo staff portal.

5.3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

a. EDI Policies, Procedures and Awareness-Raising Activities

As an employer and higher education provider, MTU not only has the responsibility of adhering to legislative requirements regarding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, but – as importantly – of doing so in a manner that is visible to all. Relevant pieces of legislation include the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (2005), the Equal Status Acts (2000-2018), the Employment Equality Acts (1998-2015), and the Gender Recognition Act (2015), which inform all aspects of staff recruitment and management.

Increased training, policy development and communications activities and greater student and staff participation in EDI research support MTU in communicating legislative requirements and acceptable behaviours and in fostering active support for 'living' EDI principles among the members of the university. Activities designed to raise awareness for equality, diversity and inclusion issues are organised by a number of MTU services and the MTU Students' Union.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team plays a key role in ensuring the promotion and mainstreaming of equality, diversity, and inclusion throughout MTU. It drives key equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives, projects and events while also working with colleagues within and outside of MTU on the implementation of MTU's strategic goals in relation to EDI. The EDI team collaborates on regular basis with Access Offices, Student Counselling, Teaching & Learning functions, and Students' Union on these areas of work, including training and awareness activities around sexual consent, gender-based violence and sexual assault, and the Code Red Period Dignity Pilot Project.

An interlinked suite of cross-campus EDI policies for MTU is currently in development. (See also **PART A Section 2.2.2**, Widening Participation, above.)

In the meantime, the Student Change of Details Regulations, published in the Policies and Regulations – Academic section of the MTU Website (link here), sets out the processes by which transgender and otherwise gender-transitioning students may request a change of their personal details in the University's records.

Saved Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy continues in force on the MTU (Kerry) campuses; see Section A13.9 of the MTU (Kerry) Quality Assurance Procedures (link here).

b. Gender Equality

i. Athena SWAN

Following successful application, MTU now holds a legacy Athena SWAN Bronze Award. CIT applied successfully for the Institutional Bronze award in 2019, and MTU's successful application for the legacy award recognizes its ongoing commitment to addressing gender barriers and advancing the careers of women and trans people.

The Athena Swan Charter was launched in the United Kingdom in 2005 by AdvanceHE, a sector-owned charity that works with higher education institutions globally to improve higher education for staff, students and society, was extended to Ireland in 2015 with funding from the Higher Education Authority (HEA). Adoption of the Charter commits higher education and research institutions to removing barriers that contribute to gender-based underrepresentation and to taking a targeted approach to address issues of both internal and external origin. Initially focused on female academic staff in STEMM areas (science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine), the Charter was transformed and expanded in 2021 to include all staff and students, with specific

awareness of intersectional inequalities and the experiences of MTU's trans and non-binary community. Achievement of an Athena SWAN Bronze Award requires a thorough analysis of institutional data, policies and procedures, identification of key issues, and the creation and implementation of a three-year action plan to address the issues identified.

The national Gender Equality Taskforce has noted that engagement with the Athena SWAN process has been transformative for Irish HEIs and has encouraged institutions to work towards obtaining a Silver- and, eventually, Gold-level award by demonstrating progressive levels of achievement in relation to the embedding and promotion of gender equality and evidence of impact against challenges from actions implemented. While cognisant of the growing momentum around Athena SWAN certification, the taskforce has also recognised that, owing to revised application requirements which have increased the workload involved, the original timelines may not be achievable for institutions.

Following a programme of work in 2022/23, including a survey of staff, thorough analysis of institutional data, policies and procedures, and identification of key issues, MTU submitted an application for a university-wide institutional Bronze Award to Advance HE in November 2023. The application includes a costed four-year action plan to address the issues identified.

Future work in the area of gender equality will include the progression of the 4-year institutional action plan, with applications for departmental awards to follow thereafter. Application for an Athena SWAN Silver award is intended in the long term.

ii. *Aurora Leadership Initiative*

A number of female staff members are invited annually to avail of the Advance HE Aurora Leadership Development Initiative. Recently, six participants were successfully appointed to partake in the 2022/23 cohort, with this figure rising to ten participants in 2023/24. MTU is committed to continue participation in the Advance HE Aurora programme on an annual basis to support female leadership among its staff going forward.

iii. *Strategic Academic Leadership Initiative (SALI)*

Following a successful application to the first call under the Strategic Academic Leadership Initiative (SALI), MTU has one SALI postholder at Senior Lecturer III, the grade at which SALI posts in the Technological Higher Education (THE) sector were pegged. However, as noted in MTU's Athena Swan submission (November 2023), there is a gender imbalance in the grades of Senior Lecturer I/III and, to a lesser extent, SLII, when compared with the breakdown for Assistant Lecturer/Lecturer grades.

6.0 Information and Data Management

6.1 Staff and Student Record Systems

Core learner, graduate and staff data are collated in MTU's Banner Student and CORE HR Staff Records Systems. Relevant Banner and CORE data are made available to authorised users in the faculties, schools and the central administration for purposes of managing and quality assuring the provision and related supports as necessary.

A single, merged CORE HR system is now in place. In November 2021, the Banner Team completed the roll-out of Version 8.5 on the Cork campuses, and all campuses have now completed the upgrade to Banner Version 9.

Heretofore on the Cork campuses, many critical aspects of the student lifecycle have run in stand-alone systems. An intensive and substantial programme of work is underway to replace these separate systems with an integrated set of processes using the Banner system. The implementation of Banner processes relating to online payments and registration is now complete. 2022/23 saw intensive work towards the implementation of Curriculum Advising and Programme Planning (CAPP) Compliance and Banner processes for examination results processing and graduation. Semester 1 broadsheets were processed through the legacy system, but with parallel runs being undertaken in Banner for validation purposes. Initially, it was planned to continue with this approach for the Summer and Autumn 2023 examination sessions ahead of retiring the legacy system with effect from academic year 2023/24. However, arising from the cyber-attack, an emergency pivot to Banner broadsheets processing was implemented in June 2023 and continued into the Autumn 2023 examination session.

The legacy broadsheets system has now been retired. At the time of writing, all broadsheets are processed via Banner. However, there remain differences between the business processes on the MTU Kerry and MTU Cork systems during what is still a transition phase. For example, the timings of grade roll vary. Also, changes agreed by Progression & Awards Boards are processed 'live' in Kerry, while they are processed post the board meeting in Cork. As a consequence, the timeline for completion of processing, including issue of results, varies. Ultimately, the aim is to move to the 'live changes' across the University, and to achieve a more streamlined, consistent and efficient experience for staff and students.

Alignment of these and other academic business processes related to Banner, including curriculum management, examination timetabling, room timetabling, and examination paper management is essential for progressing the final phase of the Banner Upgrade and Merger Programme, the merger of the pre-existing Banner systems of the Cork and Kerry campuses into one unified student records system for the University.

6.2 Information and Data Management and Freedom of Information

Soon after TU designation, the MTU Governing Body approved a suite of policies in relation to Information and Data Management. All published information and data management policies may be obtained from the Policies and Publications – Data Protection section of the MTU website (link here).

The Information Governance Policy provides direction on the classification, ownership, deletion and retention of data and information for the University as well as clarifying accountability for data and information. Data and information as pertaining to this policy includes electronic and non-electronic data. MTU is reliant upon the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of its data and information to successfully conduct its operations, meet student and staff/faculty expectations, and provide services. All staff, students, and external parties of the University have a responsibility to protect University data and information from unauthorized generation, access, modification, disclosure, transmission, or destruction and are expected to be familiar with and comply

with this policy. University data and information is an important asset and resource. All data and information is categorised according to appropriate needs for protection, handling and compliance with regulatory requirements. The purpose of classification is to ensure that data and information is managed in a manner appropriate to the risks associated with ensuring that it remains reliable, trustworthy and available for appropriate use. It is also provided to make staff aware of their responsibilities for the protection of sensitive/confidential data and information and that access to such data and information should be restricted to appropriate authorised personal that require this access and that personal information is only disclosed to third parties as it applies.

MTU is committed to complying with all applicable data protection, privacy and security laws and regulations (collectively referred to as requirements) in the locations in which it operates. In Europe, the data protection requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into effect on May 25, 2018. MTU's Data Protection Policy creates a common core set of values, principles and procedures intended to achieve a standard set of universal compliance parameters based on GDPR.

The Data Retention Policy ensures that the University applies retention periods appropriately and retains data only for the period for which it is allowed.

The security and protection of MTU assets, facilities and staff are fundamental to the efficient and effective operations of the University. The Data Handling and Clean Desk Policy is to establish the minimum requirements for handling data and maintaining a "Clean desk", i.e. a work space where sensitive/critical information about University employees, students, University intellectual property, and University vendors is handled correctly, is secure in locked areas and out of sight. The Data Protection-Breach Response Policy, approved in May 2021, applies throughout the Organisation in the event of a personal information/data breach.

The Data Access Management and Privileged User Policy was approved in June 2021 to ensure processes and tools are in place to manage secure access to critical information, manage the lifecycle of systems and application accounts, and to manage administrative privileges on computers, networks and applications.

Implementation of GDPR across MTU is overseen by a Data Protection Officer both on the MTU (Cork) and Kerry campuses. In addition to the GDPR-related duties, the Data Protection Officer also processes any freedom of information requests made to MTU (Cork) / CIT.

The FOI section of the MTU website (link here) sets out key public information on the University under the FoI Publication Scheme, including on its public services, decision-making processes and procurement policy. Contact information for making Freedom of Information requests is also provided.

6.3 IT Policy and Systems

A number of policies in relation to the management and protection of the University's IT systems have also been adopted by MTU and are available in the Policies and Publications – IT section of the MTU website (link here).

The MTU Information Security Policy sets out the overall approach to information security. It provides a security model aimed at implementing best practices to protect information assets from unauthorized use and at providing the required controls by protecting data confidentiality, where sensitivity warrants this. In addition, the policy is concerned with the integrity of data, to ensure its completeness and accuracy regardless of confidentiality and criticality; with the availability of data, so that it is accessible as and when required; and with protecting the work and study environment of staff and students and the good name and reputation of MTU.

The **Third Party IT Engagement Policy sets out the conditions that must be met to ensure the security of University data and resources are maintained when a third party is engaged to provide a service while the Staff Machine Replacement Policy ensures that the machines connecting to the University's network are not posing an increased risk to the University's staff and students.**

7.0 Public Information and Communication

The main repository for public information about MTU is MTU website. The website allows prospective students and other stakeholders to obtain comprehensive information about the University and its six campuses, its Strategic Plan, campus life as an MTU student, and the MTU programme portfolio. MTU's programmes can be accessed and searched from anywhere on the MTU website, and all programme listings link through to the full current approved specifications for MTU programmes and modules.

Interested stakeholders may furthermore access information on MTU's Research and Innovation ecosystem and on various opportunities for engaging and partnering with the University. The University's Equality Statement is accessible via the EDI webpage, while student and staff sustainability initiatives are showcased on the MTU Green Campus website.

Policies, reports and public records related to the governance and quality assurance activities of the University are available through the Governance section of the MTU website, which provides access to relevant Governing Body and Academic Council documentation as well as the current Policies and Publications of the University.

Currently, the MTU website still links to the legacy websites of the two predecessor institutions where this remains relevant; thus, the Policies and Publications – Academic section provides links to the remaining Campus Policies of MTU (Cork) and MTU (Kerry). These links are being iteratively phased out as new common content is added to the MTU website itself on a phased basis.

As part of its commitment to reduce its impact on the environment, MTU has been reducing the volume of its printed programme literature. Full printed programme prospectuses were phased out at the end of the 2022/23 academic year and replaced by a digital MTU Prospectus builder. A Quick Entry Guide with summary programme listings is still being distributed in printed and pdf formats. Information on the University and its programmes of study is also disseminated via different social media outlets, including the MTU Facebook, MTU Twitter and MTU Instagram pages and the MTU Youtube channel; MTU also has a presence on LinkedIn.

In addition to MTU's expanded online presence, the University continues to hold regular in-person information events both on its campuses and in an outreach format, such as Open Days, a Postgraduate Fair, Mature Student Evenings or Roadshows, and is also represented at national third-level exhibitions such as Higher Options.

The Marketing Unit, currently in the Office of the Vice-President for External Affairs, works with stakeholders across the University to enhance MTU's image and visibility amongst its external stakeholders. The aim is to ensure that MTU projects a consistent high-quality message to the outside world. It provides services in advertising, branding and marketing; publications, design and print; public relations; student recruitment; and digital services.

The Digital Accessibility Index gives valuable insights into the digital accessibility of key areas in Ireland's public sector, including government parties, education, housing, healthcare, and of Ireland's leading companies. The 2023 audit presented stark findings: only 27% of the websites of Ireland's top 100 companies can be used by people with disabilities, a 1% decrease from the previous year's review. Similarly, 95% of Ireland's top university and secondary school websites were found to be inaccessible. MTU was one out of just four educational institutions which passed.

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

8.1 Internal Governance Audit and Review

Immediately upon University designation, the Governing Body of MTU at its first meeting established an Audit & Risk Committee to assist the Governing Body in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities regarding risk management, internal control and internal audit, as set out in the MTU Code of Governance adopted in January 2021 and the Technological Universities Act 2018.

8.2 External Academic Quality Monitoring and Review Cycles

The internal academic quality assurance system of MTU is systematically linked into external quality assurance cycles at the national level through a number of mechanisms.

Chief amongst these are the annual reports – including the present Annual Quality Report – to the two statutory agencies with legal and regulatory responsibilities for Irish further and higher education, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) (link to QQI's Quality Monitoring web page here) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) (link to the HEA Performance Management web page here). The reports are complemented by cyclical dialogue meetings with each agency and a schedule of external institutional audits (commissioned by the HEA) respectively major cyclical institutional reviews (overseen by QQI; see the Quality Review page on the QQI website). The engagement of MTU with each agency is governed and bounded by the statutes, national strategies and government policies which determine the remit of each authority vis-à-vis the Irish higher education providers.

The ongoing formal and semi-formal engagement of MTU with the HEA, the statutory planning and development body for further and higher education, encompasses an annual programmes & budgets process and strategic dialogue as well as other HEA-sponsored programmes, initiatives and functional audits.

The effectiveness of MTU quality assurance policies and procedures is due for review as part of the cycle of national 'CINNTE' higher education provider reviews organised and overseen by QQI. The first whole-University CINNTE review following designation is upcoming and is scheduled to occur within the 2023/24 academic year.

With regard to the evaluation of the student experience, the key instrument at a national level is the annual 'StudentSurvey.ie' in which all public higher education providers in Ireland have been participating since its inception in 2013. The outcomes of the student survey are analysed by the University and discussed by the Academic Council and other relevant units. Through funding awarded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning, the recently launched SUCCEED – Standardising the Use, Communication and Capability of StudentSurvey.ie Data project aims to make StudentSurvey.ie data more accessible at academic unit and programme level and therefore provide an evidence-based mechanism to close the feedback loop.

The annual HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey is also carried out by the University, and the results are made available to the faculties for analysis.

8.3 Internal Quality Monitoring and Periodic Review

Pending adoption of common MTU policy on monitoring and periodic review, the saved legacy policies and procedures of MTU (Cork) and MTU (Kerry) remain partially in place in the different campus locations, with local

amendment. Current saved policies which remain in force may be accessed from the Quality Assurance Procedures web page of MTU (Kerry) and the Academic Regulations and Policies web page of MTU (Cork) respectively.

a. Ongoing Monitoring of Academic Programmes

Ongoing programme monitoring is a core responsibility of the MTU Programme Boards / Course Boards.

At MTU (Kerry), the primary policies for ongoing monitoring of programmes are published in Section A6, Procedures for Ongoing Monitoring of Programmes, of the MTU (Kerry) Regulations. The procedures for programme monitoring are incorporated into Sub-Section A6.2, Course Boards, which outlines the functions of the Course Boards regarding, inter alia, the academic standards, including the examinations, assessment, delivery, content of the programmes, and the monitoring of learners. Related policies and procedures governing School Boards (A6.1) – to which Course Boards report –, the Course Programme Handbook (A6.4) and the representation and role of students on Course Boards (A6.6) are remain in force.

In MTU (Cork), continuous monitoring of academic programmes is carried out by the individual Programme Boards in accordance with the Annual Programme Status Review process, guided by the MTU (Cork) Policy and Procedure for the Annual Programme Status Review (APSR), published on the Academic Regulations and Policies web page of MTU (Cork) (link here). Programme boards are required to report annually on programme development and enhancement measures. To support and guide the boards, an Enterprise Reporting Portal has been implemented in MTU (Cork) to provide authorised users with a standardised report template for each programme. Each template is pre-populated with key performance data for the relevant programme drawn down automatically from the Banner student record system (see Policy Appendix B: Sample Template for Programme Review Report (CAO)), although the recent stepped transition to Version 9 of Banner has temporarily disrupted data access through the portal. In their analysis of programme performance, the programme boards consider qualitative feedback from different sources – such as external examiner reports – as well as a range of quantitative performance indicators (applications and acceptances, enrolment and retention, student and graduate performance).

b. Periodic Review of Academic Programmes ('Programmatic Review')

At the time of writing, the periodic review of academic programmes at MTU (Cork) remains under the saved MTU (Cork) Academic Policy on Programmatic Review. Programmatic review encompasses, as a minimum, a thorough self-evaluation of the academic unit hosting the complement of programmes under review, followed by a site visit from a panel of independent external experts with representation from the Registrar's Office. Each review stage generates a detailed report. A positive overall recommendation in the report of the peer review panel forms the basis for revalidation of the programmes by Academic Council.

External members of programme validation and review panels are selected for the experience and expertise they bring to a panel, as well as for their ability to effectively participate in or – in the chair's case, lead – a criteria-based academic peer review.

Reports on programmatic review cycles completed by MTU (Cork)'s predecessor institution, Cork Institute of Technology, prior to University designation can currently still be accessed through the Programmatic Reviews webpage of the MTU (Cork) website (using the links to the individual Schools and Colleges in the sidebar).

By contrast, MTU (Kerry), on the establishment of MTU, took a decision to retire its erstwhile Procedures and Guidelines for the Regular Evaluation of Programmes, which outlined the policies and procedures in relation to programmatic review based on QQI core statutory Quality Assurance, were retired as part of the process of interpretation of the status of regulations of the amalgamated institutions.

All three MTU (Kerry) schools (School of Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics; School of Health & Social Sciences; and School of Business, Computing & Humanities) had undergone 'programmatic review' in the academic years 2019/20 and 2016/17 respectively, and all programmes encompassed therein were revalidated for a further five-year period at that point. It is anticipated that equivalent MTU regulations for the periodic review of programmes will be developed in time for the next programmatic review of these schools.

MTU (Kerry) currently makes reports on its quality assurance activities both post-MTU designation and of its predecessor institution, Institute of Technology Tralee, available on its website. These include Programme Validation Reports, Programmatic Review Reports, Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Reports and Institutional Review Reports, and Annual Reports, and are published in the Reports section of the [MTU (Kerry) Procedures, Plans and Reports](#) web page.

With the high-level design of the new academic operating model agreed in June 2023, the first programmatic review of MTU is getting underway. In June 2023, a staffing resource (Change Management Implementation Facilitator (Academic)) was appointed. This postholder has been engaging with Heads of Department/School/Faculty across the University and with Registrar's Office teams. This consultation is informing policy, procedure and guidelines for the forthcoming review. These are currently in development, and it is intended to bring them to Academic Council in the near future.

Academic Council has agreed to continue with the two-phase process for the first programmatic review of MTU, i.e. a strategic Phase 1 organised by faculty plus a detailed programme review at department level in Phase 2.

However, given that this is the first programmatic review of MTU, these two phases will be preceded by a preparatory phase called 'Phase 0' which will afford staff of each of the new faculties the opportunity to engage and reflect, in a multi-campus context, on the current status and envisaged future direction of its programme portfolio in the context of the strategic development of the University and the wider environment. 'Phase 0' will include an analysis of the external environment and will also be informed by a capstone report on the programme portfolio of each domain/faculty, an additional output of the Academic Operating Model Workstream in 2023. A phased approach will allow learnings to feed forward and also afford a phased allocation of staffing resources, both at faculty/department level and centrally, particularly in academic quality and other academic affairs functions. At the recommendation of the University Executive, Academic Council has agreed that the Faculty of Creative & Performing Arts and Media and the Faculty of Business will be the first two faculties to undergo programmatic review. It is envisaged that these two faculties would complete Phase 0 by the end of 2023/24, and Phases 1 and 2 in the academic year 2024/25. Proposed timelines for the Faculties of Health & Social Sciences, Engineering, and Science & Informatics are being worked out at present.

8.4 Engagement with Professional and Other External Quality Frameworks

As described earlier in this report, MTU systematically engages with a number of other external quality frameworks.

Some of these are engagements sought by MTU to streamline and certify particular function- or area-specific management processes. These include certification of MTU's energy management system under ISO 50001 and certification of the management and quality system of NMCI under ISO 9001-2015.

MTU also engages with the discipline-specific external QA frameworks for regulated professions under the remit of CORU (Social Care Work, Biomedical Science, Nursing) or the International Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) overseen by the Marine Survey Office (Nautical Science, Marine Engineering, Marine Electrotechnology). In certain joint postgraduate programmes with University College Cork, the QA procedures of the Teaching Council also apply (Art & Design Education); these procedures are also taken into account in undergraduate programmes leading to single MTU awards which articulate with consecutive teacher training programmes at Masters level, such as the BA (Honours) in Home Economics and Business.

Even where professional registration is not mandatory, the desirability of professional accreditation for graduates in fields such as Engineering, Architecture or Accountancy means that MTU regularly engages with many different professional QA frameworks maintained by representative professional bodies or associations, both national and international. The engagement of the University with these professional quality frameworks may take different forms, but more often than not implies regular external review or audit of curricula, arrangements for programme delivery and the overall academic quality framework of MTU by the regulator or relevant professional body.

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

1. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Engineers Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	MTU Cork programmes - Engineering Technician: Higher Certificate in Engineering in Biomedical Engineering; Higher Certificate in Engineering in Civil Engineering; Higher Certificate in Engineering in Electrical Engineering; Higher Certificate in Engineering in Electronic Engineering; Higher Certificate in Engineering in Mechanical Engineering. Associate Engineer: Bachelor of Engineering in Mechanical Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering in Biomedical Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering in Civil Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering in Environmental Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering in Electrical Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering in Electronic Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Electrical Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Electronic Engineering. Chartered Engineer with Further Learning: Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Mechanical Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Biomedical Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Structural Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Sustainable Energy Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Chemical & Biopharmaceutical Engineering. Chartered Engineer: Master of Engineering in Structural Engineering (integrated 5-year Masters); Master of Engineering in Civil Engineering (Environment and Energy) (integrated 5-year Masters): Master of Engineering in Mechanical Engineering (integrated 5-year Masters); Master of Engineering in Biomedical Engineering (integrated 5-year Masters); MTU Kerry programmes - Associate Engineer: Bachelor of Engineering in Civil Engineering. https://www.engineersireland.ie/Professionals/Membership/Become-a-member/Accredited-third-level-courses; https://www.mtu.ie/courses/.

Date of accreditation or last review	22/03/2023
Date of next review	21/03/2026

2. Type of arrangement	**PRSB**
Name of body:	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Science in Nautical Science; Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nautical Science; Bachelor of Engineering in Marine Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering in Marine Electrotechnology. https://www.gov.ie/pdf/268970/?page=null (Marine Notice No. 59 of 2023 / Schedule of Examinations for Certificate of Competency for Deck Officers, Marine Engineer Officers, Skippers and Second Hands September 2023 – July 2024). NB: "Date of accreditation or last review" entry represents the date of publication of Marine Notice 59 of 2023. https://www.mtu.ie/courses/; https://www.nmci.ie/undergraduatecourses.
Date of accreditation or last review	01/09/2023
Date of next review	

3. Type of arrangement	**PRSB**
Name of body:	Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI)
Programme titles and links to publications	MTU programmes - Bachelor of Science in Architectural Technology; Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Architectural Technology. Programmes of the MTU-UCC Cork Centre for Architectural Education (joint awards of MTU and University College Cork)- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Architecture; Master of Architecture. https://www.riai.ie/careers-in-architecture/how-to-become-an-architectural-technologist; https://www.riai.ie/careers-in-architecture/education/accredited-programmes; https://www.mtu.ie/courses/; https://www.ucc.ie/en/architecture/.
Date of accreditation or last review	21/04/2023

Date of next review	31/12/2025

4. Type of arrangement	**PRSB**
Name of body:	CORU
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Biomedical Science (joint award with University College Cork); Diploma in Clinical Laboratory Practice (MTU single award). https://www.coru.ie/health-and-social-care-professionals/education/approved-qualifications/medical-scientists/; https://www.coru.ie/files-legislation/msrb-bye-laws/si-305-of-2022-msrb-aqbl-2022.pdf; https://www.mtu.ie/courses/mt871/; https://www.ucc.ie/en/mt871/;
Date of accreditation or last review	28/06/2022
Date of next review	28/06/2027

5. Type of arrangement	**PRSB**
Name of body:	Association for Nutrition (UK)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nutrition & Health Science https://www.associationfornutrition.org/degree-accreditation/accredited-programmes https://www.mtu.ie/courses/mt876/
Date of accreditation or last review	01/05/2023
Date of next review	01/05/2028

9.2 Collaborative Provision

Definitions:
QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards, 2012 defines collaborative provision as a process that occurs where two or more providers are involved by formal agreement in the provision of a programme of higher education and training.

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended) defines 'joint award' as a single award made jointly by two or more awarding bodies

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended) defines 'linked provider' as 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.

Type of arrangement	Total Number
Joint research degrees	27
Joint/double/multiple awards	18
Collaborative programmes	16
Franchise programmes	0
Linked providers (DABs only)	0

1. Collaborative provision	Joint/double/multiple award
Name of body (/bodies):	Munster Technological University / University College Cork
Programme titles and links to publications	Postgraduate Certificate in Health and Wellbeing; Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Health and Wellbeing; Master of Science in Health and Wellbeing. https://www.ucc.ie/en/pchw/ https://www.ucc.ie/en/study/mastersthatmatters/health-and-wellbeing/
Date of last review	23/02/2023
Date of next review	23/02/2028

2. Collaborative provision	Joint/double/multiple award
Name of body (/bodies):	Munster Technological University / University College Cork (iEd Hub)

Programme titles and links to publications	Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Medical Device Development; Master in Science in Medical Device Development. https://www.mtu.ie/courses/cremedd9/
Date of last review	02/06/2023
Date of next review	02/06/2029

3. Collaborative provision	Joint/double/multiple award
Name of body (/bodies):	Munster Technological University / University of Limerick / Technological University Dublin (CyberSkills.ie)
Programme titles and links to publications	Professional Diploma in OT Security Operations Specialist, NFQ Level 9 Special Purpose Award, 30 ECTS credits https://www.cyberskills.ie/study/pathways/professional-diploma-in-ot-security-operations/; https://www.ul.ie/gps/courses/ot-security-professional-diploma-ulwork. NB: "Date of last review" entry represents approval date of programme specification by UL. Approved by the MTU Academic Council as a joint award in September 2022.
Date of last review	05/05/2022
Date of next review	05/05/2027

4. Collaborative provision	Joint/double/multiple award
Name of body (/bodies):	Munster Technological University / University of Limerick / Technological University Dublin (CyberSkills.ie)
Programme titles and links to publications	Certificate in Secure Network Operations, NFQ Level 8 Special Purpose Award, 20 ECTS credits (pilot programme, review of specification 18 May 2021, date of next review 18 May 2026); Certificate in Secure Software Development, NFQ Level 9 Special Purpose Award, 20 ECTS credits (pilot programme, review of specification 18 May 2021, date of next review 18 May 2026). Certificate in Cybersecurity for Business, NFQ Level 6 Special Purpose Award, 30 ECTS credits; Certificate in Cyber Defense Forensics, NFQ Level 9 Special Purpose Award, 25 ECTS credits; Certificate in Security Penetration Testing & Analytics, NFQ Level 9 Special Purpose Award, 25 ECTS credits; Certificate in Systems Architecture Security, NFQ Level 9 Special Purpose Award, 20 ECTS credits; Certificate in Web Penetration Testing & Assurance, NFQ Level 9 Special

	Purpose Award, 15 ECTS credits. https://www.cyberskills.ie/explore/events/cybersecurity-for-business-1.html; https://cyberskills.ie/study/pathways/
Date of last review	02/06/2022
Date of next review	02/06/2027

9.3 Articulation Agreements

Definition:

Per the IHEQN Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision, an articulation agreement may be defined as a process whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria on one programme are automatically entitled (on academic grounds) to be admitted with advance standing to a subsequent stage of a programme of a degree awarding body. These arrangements are subject to a formal agreement between the parties.

Articulation agreements - Total number	5

Annual Quality Report (Institution)
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2022-2023

PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1 Strategic QA Updates

a. Governing Body

The majority of provisions of the Higher Education Authority (HEA) Act 2022 commenced with effect from 10 November 2022 on foot of Statutory Instrument No. 554 of 2022. On that basis and the consequent amendments to the TU Act 2018, MTU had 12 months from the 'relevant date', being 10 November 2022, to reduce the number of members of Governing Body to 19 (from the current number of 21). This was achieved by reducing external membership from 13 to 10, including the Chair. The number of internal staff and student members was not changed.

Governing Body established its 12(7) Regulations Implementation Committee to draft and settle the regulations required for the appointments to the reconstituted Governing Body, and to seek Ministerial approval of those regulations, per Section 12 of the TU Act 2018 (as amended by the HEA Act 2022). This Committee consisted of the Chair of Governing Body (also Chair of the Committee), the President, one staff member, one student member, and three further external members.

The current geographical distribution of seats on the academic staff panels – one in Kerry, one in Bishopstown and one for the constituent campuses – was maintained.

There is now a 50% whole time equivalent qualifying threshold for staff eligibility under the election process, similar to that of Academic Council.

Advertisements for external membership (including a candidate brief) were placed in print media and online. The 12(7) Regulations Implementation Committee considered expressions of interest under this process and made recommendations to Governing Body for the appointment of three external members. The Committee considered and assessed expressions of interest having regard to the specifications set out in the candidate brief. The Committee and Governing Body also had regard to the statutory objectives under the TU Act that:

a) not less than 40 per cent of the members of Governing Body shall be women and not less than 40 per cent of them shall be men;

b) the membership of Governing Body shall take account of the different locations of the campuses of MTU; and

c) the membership of Governing Body shall broadly reflect the composition of Irish society, including persons who are competent in the Irish language.

The appointment period of these external positions is two years from 06 July 2023 in the case of new appointments to MTU Governing Body, with the possibility of a further term of four years upon re-appointment. For those successful persons who were already existing members of MTU Governing Body, their appointment is for a period of four years from 6 July 2023.

The end date of the term of all three student members is 1 June 2024.

With effect from 06 July 2023, the total membership of MTU Governing Body is 19 as follows:

a) Chairperson – external member

b) President – internal member

c) Five staff members – internal members

d) Three student members – internal members

e) Three external members nominated by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science

f) Six further external members appointed by MTU

i.   Governing Body Self-Assessment Action Plan

Following a self-assessment process which enabled Governing Body to review its own effectiveness, an action plan was developed on foot of that review for implementation. The action plan, approved by Governing Body, is broken into categories, each of which has a number of items specific to it. Each item is allotted a time frame and a party responsible for delivering on same. The action plan has proved to be a valuable tool in enabling Governing Body to carry out its functions and improve its effectiveness.

ii.   MTU Effectiveness Review

MTU's Code of Governance provides for a periodical external review of Governing Body effectiveness. The Institute of Public Administration undertook the external effectiveness review of MTU Governing Body in 2023. The report was completed in October 2023. A draft implementation plan in relation to the recommendations contained in that report was tabled before Governing Body in November 2023, with the timeline for implementation to commence in early 2024.

b. TU Transformation Programme

In December 2021, following an extensive tender process, MTU appointed KPMG as external advisory support for the Technological University Transformation Programme, across three workstreams: Strategy Development; the Executive Structure and the Professional Services Operating Model. The academic year saw the fourth workstream – the Academic Operating Model – get underway. This was also supported by KPMG, following a separate tender process.

These workstreams have been designed to run in parallel, based on their interdependent nature.

The University's Strategic Plan was approved by Governing Body in October 2022, and an implementation plan subsequently developed. The new MTU Executive Structure, design of which was completed by June 2022, is now being implemented now that government approval has been granted. At the time of writing, the first six posts have been advertised.

A high-level design of the Professional Services Operating Model was completed in November 2022, following which the more detailed implementation work got underway. The design of the high-level Academic Operating Model was completed over the period January to June 2023, and the implementation phase is now progressing.

The work on the PMSS Operating Model and the Academic Operating Model continues to be informed by the design principles which had been developed early in the process for the determination of the new Executive Structure, these being:

1. Be aligned with best practice design from the higher education sector and beyond, which will position MTU to become a global university of the future;

2. Promote cross-organisational roles at the leadership level with general equivalence in breadth/depth of remit;

3. Be easy to navigate from staff, student and stakeholder perspectives; reducing duplication, promoting organisational alignment and enabling decision-making at the optimum level;

4. Promote increased research, development and innovation capability;

5. Retain and build the current focus on excellence in teaching and learning, mindful of the need for balanced, sustainable regional provision and the unique requirements of the constituent colleges;

6. Best support and develop its traditions, people and cultures through strategic capabilities in people development, communications, engagement and EDI;

7. Ensure the strategic alignment and continued development of external engagement and contribution (regionally, nationally and internationally) across all campuses;

8. Adopt a unified view across all professional, management and support (services, systems and infrastructure), where appropriate;

9. Enable the best use of institutional data and institutional research to drive strategic development and inform insight and improvement;

10. Promote a strategic focus on revenue generation and sustainable growth;

11. Best incorporate the constituent colleges, taking appropriate account of their brand, management and leadership requirements.

An internal team is now in place, with two management-level posts of Change Management Integration Facilitators (Academic, Administrative) allocated to the work.

As these two workstreams progress, the degree of 'cross-talking' between them has increased. The intersection of the academic operating model with the design of the Professional, Management Support Services (PMSS) operating model will be key to establishing effective support for the academic structures. Accordingly, in September 2023, a Transformation Implementation Group was established to oversee the PMSS and Academic Change Management Integration Programme. Comprising the four Executive Sponsors, the two Change Management integration Facilitators, the Communications Specialist, and the two Directors of the Transformation Office, its duties are to review progress, discuss issues arising, agree prioritisation and planning, and consider communications.

c. Implementation of MTU's Strategic Plan: Our Shared Vision to 2027

The implementation plan for the MTU Strategic Plan was developed by the University Executive early in AY 2022/23 and approved by Governing Body following review by its Strategic Development Committee. The Strategic Plan and its implementation are standing items on the agenda of the Strategic Development Committee of Governing Body, with quarterly reviews by Governing Body. The executive sponsors for each of the five strategic themes have presented to the Strategic Development Committee. Following a tender process, ViClarity was appointed to provide compliance

software and related support for MTU's reporting and compliance tracking. This includes tracking of the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

d. Academic Council

i. Extension of Academic Council Term

On Establishment Day (1 January 2021), Governing Body decided to establish a small, time-limited, Academic Council Council for MTU with immediate effect in accordance with the Technological Universities Act (2018). This ensured business continuity during the Semester 1 examination results processing period and Semester 2 academic delivery, then impacted by a Covid-19 lockdown.

Drawing on work and consultation carried out prior to designation, the 'Establishment Day' Academic Council progressed the full 'transitional' Academic Council, which first convened on 7 May 2021. By the end of 2021, the six 'Integration & Development' (I&D) Committees and the Executive Committee of the Academic Council were established, fully constituted, and functional.

The two Academic Legacy Committees (legacy Academic Councils of CIT and IT Tralee) had remained in place on the establishment of MTU, but only to deal with legacy and operational issues. Their focus was on contingency Teaching, Learning & Assessment arrangements, in the context of the ongoing and dynamic COVID-19 situation throughout 2021. The business of these committees wound down over 2021/22, whereupon they ceased.

Under its regulations, approved by Governing Body on 12 March 2021, the term of the 'transitional' Academic Council was to be no longer than 18 months from its commencement date, unless or until otherwise determined by Governing Body. Thus, the Standing Orders Integration & Development Committee (SO IDC) of the Academic Council work intensively throughout 2022 on the development of proposals for the formation of the 'steady-state' Academic Council, in accordance with the work plan approved by Academic Council on 4 February 2022.

By September 2022, however, it was clear that while development of the proposals for the 'steady-state' Academic Council was progressing, the work would not be complete in time to have the new Academic Council in place and ready to commence sitting by 7 November 2022.

The matter was brought to the Executive Committee of the Academic Council and from there to the Academic Council in September 2022. In considering the matter, both entities noted that determination of the term of Academic Council is a function of Governing Body under the TU Act (2018) and that final decision on extension would therefore lie with Governing Body.

Two proposals to Governing Body were considered by Council:

1. A request that the Academic Council term should be extended, in the interest of retaining a fully functional Academic Council during the academic year 2022/23 so that the programme of work towards the development of a unified academic quality framework for the University could progress without interruption; or alternatively

2. A request that the 'transitional' Academic Council membership model should be retained, but its elected membership repopulated for a limited term through elections, the procedure for which would be determined by the Academic Council.

The Academic Council favoured the first of these two options. It noted that the second option would entail amendments to the existing membership regulations and would therefore also require Governing Body approval. Furthermore, operational experience indicated that Option 2, if implemented, would lead to a transitional period of at least 2 months' duration to allow for the time to complete elections to Academic Council and subsequently to the I&D Committees, followed by the election of I&D Committee Chairs and the handover to the newly populated committees. All of this would likely slow progress of the I&D Committees' programmes of work towards the development of a unified academic quality framework for the university, including the planning for the 'steady-state' Academic Council.

The request to Governing Body for an extension of term included a timeline to the establishment of the 'steady-state' Academic Council no later than 31 August 2023. Governing Body granted the extension in October 2022.

ii. Towards the 'Steady-state' Academic Council

Whereas it had been envisaged that the new Academic Council would be in place for the start of the academic year 2023/24, there was some slippage on timelines, due initially to the time taken to complete staff consultation on the membership regulations and then to the cyber-attack.

By June 2023, the membership regulations and standing orders for the new 'steady-state' Academic Council were approved by Governing Body and Academic Council respectively. A set of interim regulations for the determination of student members of the Academic Council pending the merger of the two students' unions was presented to and approved by Governing Body in July 2023.

Elections to the new Council took place over the period December 2023 to February 2024 and the new Academic Council first convened on 9 February 2024. Key membership principles of the new model include:

- The continuation of ex-officio and elected seat contingents;
- Representation from a broad range of academic affairs groups and functions;
- An non-management academic staff majority;
- The inclusion of a research constituency;
- The inclusion of a Professional, Management & Support Staff (PMSS) constituency;
- The inclusion of a constituency for academic staff working in central university roles;
- The introduction of a contingent of cross-domain seats.

The term for elected members is 3 years, with elected members serving no more than two terms consecutively (though re-election is possible after a hiatus of at least one term).

In a new development, Observer status will be facilitated at Academic Council meetings.

Following consultation with the members of the I&D Committees during 2022/23, it was decided that the existing Academic Council Committee structure was fit for purpose and should be retained. The

following six Academic Council Committees were thus (re-)established in June 2023, with remits covering the same areas of academic operations as those of the 'Integration & Development' Committees preceding them:

- Academic Planning & Review Committee;
- Admissions & Student Affairs Committee;
- Learning Resources/Infrastructure & Student Supports Committee;
- Regulations, Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee;
- Research & Innovation Committee (renamed from 'Research Council' to more clearly express the Committee's relationship with Academic Council);
- Standing Orders Committee.

At the time of writing, the new Academic Council has approved the regulations for the election of academic staff members to the Committees and for the election of Committee Chairpersons. Elections will take place in Spring 2024.

The Executive Committee also remains as a feature of the new Academic Council. It normally meets once in advance of each meeting of the Academic Council, to order and manage the agenda for each meeting of the MTU Academic Council as set out in its terms of reference. As delegated by Academic Council from time to time, the Committee may deliberate and decide on critical academic issues on behalf of the Academic Council during time periods when a meeting of the full Council is not scheduled or not feasible. Such issues include, but are not limited to ratification of assessment results; approval of external examiners; adoption of programme approval/review panel reports; and approval of policies and procedures. The exercise of any such delegated functions is time-limited, and the Executive Committee reports to the Academic Council on the exercise of such functions and in particular on any decisions taken on Council's behalf.

In addition to the I&D Committees, a number of Working Groups were established by the 'transitional' Academic Council. The Digital Learning and RPL Working Groups have completed their work, while Micro-credentials and Academic Integrity – the latter group established in October 2022 – are being carried over to the steady-state Academic Council, as their work is still in train.

e. Faculty/Academic Domain Boards of Study

During the reporting period, initial discussions took place on a proposal to establish Interim Academic Domain Boards of Studies, one per domain. In time, these will be renamed and reconstituted as Faculty Boards of Study. The purpose of the Faculty/Academic Domain Boards of Studies is to advise on, and support, matters related to the planning, coordination, development and oversight of the educational work of the Faculty/Academic Domain. The Boards feed into the decision-making processes of the Academic Council and thus contribute to the development of academic policies and procedures, and their approval by, the Academic Council. In particular, the Boards will have specified responsibility and authority in relation to the approval, monitoring and review of academic programmes of the relevant academic domain. More generally, the Boards will contribute to the academic affairs of the University through the Academic Council or other I, as appropriate.

f. Cyber Attack on the Cork Campuses, February 2023

Over the Bank Holiday weekend Saturday 4 – Monday 6 February, a significant IT breach was detected on the MTU Cork campuses. Immediate steps were taken to intercept and manage the incident. With the consequent loss of the network, there was also a telephone outage. An emergency plan was activated. Following extensive initial investigations, MTU confirmed, on Wednesday 8th February, that the Cork campuses had been targeted in a cyber-attack.

On Friday 10 February, to mitigate the effects of the breach, MTU secured an injunction from the High Court to help prevent the sale, publication, possession, or other use of any data that may have been illegally taken from its systems in the course of this ransomware incident.

Following careful and ongoing monitoring of the evolving situation, MTU subsequently received confirmation from its technical advisors and members of the National Cyber Security Centre assisting it that certain data had been accessed and copied from MTU systems during the ransomware incident and made available on the 'dark web'. This included personal data of staff, students and third parties. The Data Protection Commission was informed of this development.

Initial assessment indicated that the vast majority of personal data compromised related to staff members, rather than students. Staff were therefore advised to assume that all personal data contained on their personnel file had been compromised and to continue to be extra vigilant in respect of potential attacks by email or SMS or other unsolicited communications. Communications signposted staff to advice from the National Cyber Security Centre. MTU also undertook to directly contact, as soon as practicable, affected individuals as necessary and in line with its data protection obligations.

The95rocesss to review the extent of the data breach and to identify, insofar as is possible, any affected individuals has been a lengthy and arduous one. It is anticipated that MTU will commence issuing notifications and guidance in line with its data protection obligations to affected individuals in Spring 2024, with priority being given to cases that may be considered high risk or vulnerable. Further information and updates are available on the dedicated portal, http://cybercare.mtu.ie.

A case study provided at the end of this report focuses on the impact of the cyber-attack on academic and business operations and on the approach taken to continue teaching, learning and assessment activities and to safely recover systems.

g. Physical Infrastructure

In February 2022, the Minister for Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science issued two calls in relation to HEI Capital Funding. MTU identified three projects from its Masterplan and made the following submissions under the Technological Sector Strategic Projects Fund (TSSPF) funding call:

1. Bishopstown Campus Extension Project (DnA Combined Extension Project);
2. Kerry Campus Learner Centre (Kerry North Campus);

3. ADAM Art, Design, and Media (CCAD, Sharman Crawford Street Campus).

In November 2022, the Minister announced the go-ahead for the next phase of the first two listed projects, i.e., the development of business cases for the Kerry Campus Learner Centre and the Bishopstown Campus Extension Project. Both projects have since been approved to proceed to design stage (December 2023).

The Bishopstown Campus Extension Project includes an upgrading and extension of the '1974 Building' under the project title "DnA Combined Extensions" (DnA). This will address huge weaknesses in MTU building infrastructure which became increasingly evident during the pandemic and also will alleviate the current capacity undersupply.

Construction of the Kerry Learner Centre and the new STEM building on the North Campus in Kerry (currently under construction, and expected to be completed in 2025) will assist MTU to move towards its vision of a single Kerry campus which will reduce operational costs and improve energy targets, as well as providing students with a more consistent student experience.

The new MTU Multi-Purpose Arena on the Bishopstown Campus opened its doors in February 2023 and was formally opened by Minister Simon Harris in November 2023. This is the first phase of a 2-phase programme which will ultimately see in excess of €22M (of which ca. €12m directly from MTU) invested in state-of-the-art sports facilities on the MTU Bishopstown Campus**.** The 3,600 m^2 Arena supports three main strands of activity: Sports/Fitness, Societies/Social and Academic/Educational. It has been designed to achieve a very low energy usage and NZEB (Nearly Zero Energy Building) standards. The MTU funding (€12m) can be tracked back to the Student Finance Committee budgetary process; thus, it can be considered to have been funded directly from the contributions of students over many years.

Phase 2 is a collaboration with Athletics Ireland for which government funding of €9.225 million was awarded following a joint application to the Large-Scale Sports Infrastructural Fund (LSSIF) of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. It has since been confirmed, in November 2023, that full funding is in place for this project, which should commence in 2024.

With the MTU Arena being fully operational, the old sports hall on the Bishopstown campus is now being reconfigured. Work commenced on this in 2023, and is expected to complete in mid-2024, realising new lecture theatres and office space for staff.

Construction of two further new buildings – the aforementioned STEM Building on the Kerry North Campus and the Learning Resource Centre (LRC) Building on the Bishopstown Campus continued during 2022/23. These projects are part of the first bundle of six buildings in the Government's Higher Education PPP programme.

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR) Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Update on Status 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	Submission of Institutional Self-Evaluation Report as part of CINNTE review Cycle *(AQR 2023, Section B.1.2)*	ISER submitted December 2023. Main Review Visit confirmed for 11-15 March 2024.
2	Development of MTU Academic Affairs Policies and Procedures in relation to the following: • Regulations for Modules & Programmes (Marks and Standards); • Duties and Responsibilities of External Examiners (Taught Programmes); • Design, Validation and Modification of Programmes and Modules; • Assessment (Academic Integrity, Individual Extenuating Circumstances, Assessment Appeals and Reviews, Student Feedback, Late Submission Penalties). *(AQR 2023, Section B.1.2)*	• Policy and Procedure on External Examination of Modules and Programmes approved by Academic Council in March 2023 and now in effect. • Regulations for Modules & Programmes (Marks and Standards), approved by Academic Council June 2022 for implementation from 1 September 2023, were revised to include provisions on external examination to align with the new policy and procedure in this area. • Revised Marks and Standards were approved by Academic Council in March 2023 and are now in effect. • Policy and Procedure for the Design, Amendment, Review, and Approval of Modules approved in 2022/23 and now in effect. • Policies related to assessment are in development. • Academic Integrity Policy approved in May 2023 and will be implemented along with procedure which is currently in development. Target date for approval 2023/24 ahead of implementation in 2024/25.
3	Development of MTU Student Affairs Policies and Procedures in relation to the following: • Fitness to Study • Fitness to Practice • Student Discipline • Substance Abuse	• Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, approved by approved by GB in June 2023, following approval of a revised version by Academic Council in May 2023. Now in effect. • Fitness to Study and Fitness to Practice approved in December 2022 and now in effect. • The remaining policies are all in development.

	• Student Wellness & Health • Gender Identity and Gender Expression • Posthumous and Aegrotat Awards *(AQR 2023, Section B.1.2)*	
4	Policies and Procedures in relation to Bereavement *(AQR 2023, Section B.1.2)*	• Protocol and Procedure for Death of Student approved February 2023; • Protocol and Procedure for Death of Staff – in development.
5	MTU Examinations Administration Process *(AQR 2023, Section B.1.2)*	• Alignment ongoing. • All broadsheets now generated via Banner since June 2023. Alignment of processes for roll-over ongoing.
6	Student Affairs: • Alignment of MTU Forms and Fees in relation to application, admissions, international, repeat examinations • Alignment of MTU processes in relation to management ;of Student Assistance Fund; • Alignment of MTU processes in relation to assessment of Mature applicants; • MTU Code of Practice in relation to admissions. *(AQR 2023, Section B.1.2)*	• Alignment of other academic administration/ student affairs processes ongoing. • All Student Assistance Fund payments now made via Banner. (Previously Kerry Campuses used Banner, Cork Campuses used MegaPay).
7	Collaborations: MOU between the MTU and the Cork and Kerry Education and Training Boards *(AQR 2023, Section B.1.2)*	• MOU drafted 2021/22. • MOU for Tertiary Programmes (MTU, Cork ETB, Kerry ETB) approved November 2023.
8	Implementation of MTU Executive Structure *(AQR 2023, Section B.1.2)*	• Eleven executive posts approved by Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform (DPENDPDR). • Recruitment process for Vice Presidents, Faculty Deans and Chief Corporate Officer has commenced. Six posts have been advertised to

		date. It is anticipated that the process will be complete by the end of the calendar year.
9	Professional Services Operating Model *(AQR 2023, Section B.3.1)*	• High-level design completed November 2022. • Prioritization matrix also agreed. • Detailed design of Priority 1 areas (e.g. Finance, IT) well-progressed. • End-to-end design of Research completed.
10	Academic Operating Model *(AQR 2023, Section B.3.1)*	High level design completed and approved June 2023.
11	LEAD@MTU: *TLASE* Enhancement Through Distributed and Transformational Leadership Development* (*Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Student Engagement) *(AQR 2023, Section B.3.1)*	First cohort completed in 2022/23 (one element rolled over to October 2023 due to cyber-attack). Programme has rolled over to 2023/24 and now open to research leads. → *For further information, see Section B.2.2.d) of this report.*
12	Elevate Leadership Development Programme *(AQR 2023, Section B.3.1)*	First cohort completed in 2022/23. Programme has rolled over to 2023/24. → *For further information, see Part A.5.1.b) and Part B.2.2.d) of this report.*

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Governing Body (13 meetings)	6 October 2022; 10 November 2022; 1/19 December 2022; 11 January 2023; 2 February 2023; 2/30 March 2023; 13 April 2023; 4 May 2023; 1/22 June 2023; 6 July 2023.
Academic Council (9 meetings)	30 September 2022; 11 November 2022; 9 December 2022; 17 February 2023; 10 March (*Special Meeting*) / 31 March 2023; 5/31 May 2023; 16 June 2023.
University Executive (25 meetings)	6/20 September 2022; 4/18 October 2022; 1/15/29 November 2022; 13 December 2022; 10/24 January 2023; 7 February 2023; 21 March 2023; 4/18 April 2023; 2/16/30 May 2023; 13/27 June 2023; 11/25 July 2023; 8/22 August 2023.
Academic Council Executive Committee	15 September 2022 *(Ratification of Examination Results)*; 21 September 2022; 26 October 2022; 30 November 2022;

	26 January 2023 (*Ratification of Examination Results*); 8 February 2023; 22 March 2023; 26 April 2023; 22 May 2023; 7/29 June 2023.
Admissions & Student Affairs *Integration & Development Committee of Academic Council*	6 meetings over the period 1 September 2022 to 1 June 2023 inclusive
Academic Planning & Review *Integration & Development Committee of Academic Council*	15 meetings over the period 14 September 2022 to 25 May 2023 inclusive
Learning Resources/Infrastructure & Student Supports *Integration & Development Committee of Academic Council*	3 meetings over the period of 7 December 2022 to 29 March 2023 inclusive.
Regulations & Quality Assurance Enhancement *Integration & Development Committee of Academic Council*	15 meetings over the period of 27 September 2022 to 15 May 2023 inclusive.
Research Council *Integration & Development Committee of Academic Council*	11 meetings over the period of 8 September 2022 to 01 June 2023 inclusive.
Standing Orders *Integration & Development Committee of Academic Council*	37 meetings over the period 13 September 2022 to 06 June 2023 inclusive.
MTU-UCC Joint Board	16 November 2022; 24 February 2023; 15 May 2023.

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

a. Executive Structure

Pending the implementation of the Executive structure design and the development and implementation of the Academic and PMSS Operating Models, the pre-existing management structures largely remained in place during the reporting period, as set out in Part A, Section 1.1.1.e.

In June 2022, the President published the outline of her proposed Executive, approved by the Department of Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science (DFHERIS), to all staff. This consists of five Vice President roles (Academic Affairs & Registrar; Research & Innovation; Finance & Operations; People & Culture; Engagement & Global), five Faculty Deans, and a Chief Corporate Officer. In accordance with the design principles, these executive level roles are cross-organisational, multi-campus roles with general equivalence in breadth and depth.

A business case for the new Executive posts (five VPs, five Deans, and Chief Corporate Officer) was subsequently submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform (DPENDPDR) but the length of the timelines for its approval did delay the appointment of the senior leadership posts and the consequent benefits that have been designed into our structures with the mapping of the leadership posts to the themes and strategic enablers of our strategic plan.

In parallel to the government approval process, the President commenced engagement with the executive search firm Perrett Laver following a competitive tendering process, also in January 2023. Substantial preparatory work, informed by consultation with senior staff, was undertaken to ensure that the recruitment process would be ready to commence on approval by DPENDPDR. Final approval was granted in late 2023 and announced by the President to staff in December 2023. At the time of writing, recruitment is underway, with the first three posts (Vice-President for Academic Affairs & Registrar, Vice-President for Research & Innovation, and Vice-President for Finance & Operations) advertised in January 2024, followed by three more (Chief Corporate Officer, Dean of Faculty of Creative & Performing Arts & Media, and Dean of Engineering) advertised in February 2024. The posts are being advertised in four tranches, and it is envisaged that the recruitment will be completed by end of this calendar year.

b. Professional Services Operating Model

In February 2022, work commenced on the review of MTU's professional and support services operating model. The workstream was split into two phases. Phase 1 – the high-level design of the new Professional, Management & Support Services (PMSS) Operating Model – was completed over the period February 2022 to November 2022.

Subsequently, Phase 2 of the programme got underway. Phase 2 is sponsored by the Vice President for Finance & Administration and the Vice President for Corporate Affairs. It includes the detailed design, development and initial implementation of the PMSS Operating Model. The specific deliverables of Phase 2 are the PMSS Organisational Structures (in alignment with the new executive structure); a defined approach for how PMSS areas will work and interact with each other; and Process Optimisation to enable effective implementation of the model.

The work Is Informed by an Implementation Sequencing Matrix in which functional areas are organised by impact, effort and urgency, to identify which areas to prioritise and how resources can be allocated in the most streamlined manner. During 2023, high-level organisational reviews of External Engagement, Research and Graduate Studies took place. The final proposal document for the establishment of an MTU Graduate School has been adopted by the University Executive in November 2023.

c. Academic Operating Model

The Academic Operating Model Workstream commenced in January 2023 and was led by the two Registrars as Executive sponsors. This is the high-level design that will see MTU's five faculties become established according to the aforementioned design principles with common structures that are easy to navigate and that will facilitate collaboration within and across faculties.

Key to the early deliberations was the outputs of the MTU Academic Domains Working Group during the final stages of the TU application process in 2019. It was at that time that the five academic domains were first identified, following which each of the existing academic departments was aligned to one of the five academic domains. This as well socialised through the nomination and election procedure to the current Academic Council. Through this work, five key academic domains had been identified. Subsequently, the elected membership of the 'transitional' Academic Council was organised by these domains. The domains were agreed as academic faculties in June 2022, and the initial alignment of departments within these domains was validated in early 2023.

This workstream was supported by the Academic Operating Model Working Group, formed following an expression of interest process. The Working Group was diverse in its membership, including academic representation from all five academic domains, campuses and management/non-management levels. A small number of faculty-based PMSS staff – administrative and technical – were also included. Insofar as possible, membership included representation from Cork & Kerry campus locations for each of the five academic domains. Membership also included representation from regulated and/or accredited discipline/academic areas within MTU.

While the Working Group did include a number of current members of the MTU Academic Council within its ranks, it was not a sub-committee of the Academic Council. Engagement with the Academic Council took place via the President and Registrars.

KPMG supported the workstream, including discovery sessions and focus groups with Executive, Heads of School, Heads of Department and staff and students' unions. User groups were convened with key staff and students. Following a current state mapping, high-level strategic review, and comparator analysis, a set of options were developed and evaluated, with an agreed recommendation being sent to the Design Authority (consisting of the President and two external academic experts) for decision.

The Faculty Deans will sit on the Executive Committee; other faculty-based staff will not, unless deputising for the Dean. Faculties will span multiple campuses and faculty leadership roles will be cross-organisational. The leadership roles of Associate Deans are working titles and the details have to be worked through.

Programmes and departments will remain as they are currently set out against the alignment to the academic domains. As Faculties establish, there may be opportunities for further integration and realignment that emerge over time. Some proposed options may necessitate these changes happening sooner rather than later to enable academic coherence; for other options this may be a gradual and multi-year process. Design of the Academic Operating Model was location-agnostic; determination of who will fill leadership roles and where they will be based will be subject to a separate process.

Detailed design and implementation of the Academic Operating Model will be a multi-year project, completed by Faculty and on a phased basis. The detailed design of each faculty will need to be completed in line with design principles and aligned as appropriate through programmatic review. Priorities and timelines for this are currently being finalised. To date, preliminary meetings have been convened with a number of Heads of Department, with others in train, to explore multi-campus alignment and collaboration. Senior staff workshops will be convened in March and May 2024 to further progress this.

d. Senior Staff Appointments

The following senior staff appointments were made on a permanent, acting and/or fixed-term basis in the academic year 2022/23:

- Dr Gerard Corkery, Head of Department of Biological & Pharmaceutical Sciences, MTU (Kerry) campuses (fixed term)
- Mr Don Crowley, Change Management Integration Facilitator (Academic), MTU
- Ms Sarah Flaherty, REEDi Project Manager, MTU
- Dr Mary Galvin, Head of Department of Applied Social Studies, MTU (Cork) campuses
- Dr David Goulding, Head of Department (Acting), Department of Mathematics, MTU (Cork) campuses
- Dr Paul Hegarty, Head, National Maritime College of Ireland, MTU (Cork) campuses
- Dr Seán McSweeney, INGENIUM Coordinator, MTU
- Mr Séamus Murphy, Head of Department of STEM, MTU (Kerry) campuses (fixed term)
- Ms Teresa Murphy, Change Management Integration Facilitator (PMSS), MTU
- Dr Breda O'Dwyer, Head of Department (Acting) of Organisation and Professional Development, MTU (Cork) campuses
- Dr Fiona O'Flynn, Head of Department Internation Medical Commencement Programme (IMCP), MTU (Kerry) campuses (fixed term)
- Dr Brendan O'Connell, Head, Faculty of Engineering & Science, MTU (Cork) campuses
- Ms Anne Looney, External Services Manager, MTU (Kerry) campuses
- Dr Ted Scully, Head of Department (Acting) of Computer Science, MTU Cork (campuses)
- Mr John Walsh, Student Ombudsman, MTU

1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review
1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Programmatic review is a periodic quality process in which peer evaluators analyse the effectiveness of a suite of programmes in a faculty, with an emphasis on quality, standards, and flexibility as well as appropriateness of response to changing needs. Guided by the principles set out in ENQA, *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) 2015 (link here), programmatic review is one of the most significant academic quality instruments of the University.

In January 2023, work commenced on the development of the Academic Operating Model for MTU.

As set out in the previous section, this work is being undertaken over two phases. The main deliverable of Phase 1, completed in June 2023, was the design of the high-level structure within faculties. Through Phase 1, a capstone programme report for each faculty was also produced. Each faculty report provides a listing of current programmes of that faculty, student and staff data for those programmes, and some competitor analysis within the Irish higher education sector. In parallel, key principles for the forthcoming alignment and review of programmes was agreed, including the 'one programme per award' principle.

Towards the end of AY 2022/23, an internal implementation team was put in place. Two change management integration facilitators (one academic, one PMSS), both at management grade, were appointed. The Transformation Programme Implementation Steering Group was established in September 2023 and reports to the University Executive. The group includes the Communications Specialist based in the Office of the President in its membership, and this ensures a focus on regular, effective and consistent communication of the plan for the forthcoming review. This was felt to be essential to encourage the support and engagement of all staff and students in the forthcoming process and thus maximise the opportunity for the first programmatic review of MTU to be much more than a revalidation exercise, supporting the development of a coherent, fit-for-purpose and sustainable academic programme portfolio for MTU, with ensuing benefits for learners, staff, industry, and the region.

Since then, there has been substantial engagement, via the Change Management Integration Facilitator (Academic), with Heads of Department/School/Faculty across the University and with Registrar's Office teams. This consultation is informing policy, procedure and guidelines for the forthcoming Programmatic Review. Drafts have been prepared and consulted upon ahead of consideration by the Academic Council in March 2024.

In the meantime, the Academic Council has agreed that, similar to the previous procedure in our antecedent institutions, the forthcoming programmatic review will include the following phases:

- **Phase 1**, organised by faculty, which will look at strategic and high-level issues;

- **Phase 2**, organised by academic department(s) within the faculty, which will consist of a detailed programme review.

Furthermore, given that this is the first programmatic review of MTU, the above two phases will be preceded by a preparatory phase under the working title of 'Phase Zero' which will afford staff of each of the new faculties the opportunity to engage and reflect, in a multi-campus context, on the current status and

envisaged future direction of its programme portfolio in the context of the strategic development of the University and the wider environment. Phase 0 will include an analysis of the external environment and will also be informed by the aforementioned capstone report on the programme portfolio of each domain/faculty.

A phased approach has been agreed; this will allow learnings to feed forward and also afford a phased allocation of staffing resources, both at faculty/department level and centrally, particularly in academic quality and other academic affairs functions. On the recommendation of the University Executive, the Academic Council has agreed that the **Faculty of Creative and Performing Arts and Media** and the **Faculty of Business** will be the first two faculties to undergo programmatic review. It is envisaged that these two faculties would complete Phase 0 by the end of this academic year, and Phases 1 and 2 in academic year 2024/25.

Proposed timelines for the **Faculty of Health and Social Sciences**, **Faculty of Engineering**, and **Faculty of Science & Informatics** are being worked out at present, and it is envisaged that these will all have completed programmatic review by end AY 2026/27.

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
n/a		

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels[2] involved in IQA

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

	Total	Academic Schools/ Department	Professional Services/Support Unit	Approval/Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review	Other
Number of review/ evaluation processes	16[1]	n/a	n/a	n/a	16	n/a	n/a
of those:							
On-site processes	2				2		
Desk reviews	1[2]				1[2]		
Virtual processes	12				12		
Average panel size for each process type*	4[3]						

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

Annotations: 1. Includes one joint validation review for joint MTU-UCC awards conducted by University College Cork according to UCC QA procedures;

2. Differential validation;

3. MTU programme approval policy specifies different panel sizes for different award types. Furthermore, new MTU-wide policy for the approval of major awards includes a learner representative in addition to the standard panel membership of 4+1 foreseen by the legacy MTU (Cork) policy, which still applied to most review processes for Cork-based programmes included in this table.

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[2] 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	14[1]	9	5	0	4	10	0	0	0	7	3[2]
Secretary	3[3]	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a
Academic/Discipline Specific	21[4]	16	5	0	4	17	0	0	0	12	5
Student Representative	5	3	2	0	1[5]	4	0	0	0	n/a	4
QA	8[3]	5	3	0	8	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a
Teaching & Learning	n/a										
External Industry /Third Mission	14[4]	6	8	0	0	15	0	0	0	0	14

Annotations:
1. Applicable MTU (Cork) legacy policy for validation of non-major award provides for an internal Chair from a different school. 13 Chairs were senior academics, with external Chairs coming from the relevant discipline area; 1 Chair was a senior industry representative.
2. Including 1 industry-based Chair.
3. In each case, constituted by an internal Registrar's Office / Academic QAE representative, as per the applicable policy.
4. Excluding Chairs.
5. Postgraduate student from a different school, as per the applicable policy.

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

2.1 Policy Alignment and Development

a. Marks and Standards (Regulations for Modules and Programmes)

While a new MTU Marks and Standards for taught modules and programmes in its third draft version had received preliminary approval from Academic Council in June 2023, it had been noted then that training and implementation could not fully commence until new, University-wide provisions on external examination had also been developed and agreed.

Thus, the academic year 2022/23 was a preparatory phase, ahead of full implementation of the new Marks and Standards at the start of academic year 2023/24. During that preparation phase, all modules and programmes ran under the pre-existing Marks and Standards of the Cork respectively Kerry campuses for one final year. This allowed time for the coding of the new Marks and Standards on the Banner system. Whereas it was originally envisaged that other policies and procedures related to assessment would be progressed to approval stage in time for 2023/24 implementation, this did not materialise, with the February 2023 cyber-attack impacting on all university functions for most of the second semester.

Development of common MTU Policy and Procedures on External Examination in Taught Programmes was however completed through the Regulations, Quality Assurance & Enhancement Integration & Development Committee during this time; the two documents were approved by Academic Council in March and May 2023 respectively. Under the new policy and procedures, all appointed external examiners perform the role of module external examiner for a defined set of modules, with each module assigned to a specific module external examiner. Two module 'externs' per programme perform the additional role of programme external examiner, one coming from higher education and the other from industry, business or related professions.

Under the new policy, nominations for external examiner are formally approved by the MTU Academic Council for a four-year term and following vetting by the Office of the Vice-President for Academic Affairs / Registrar which considers the proposed extern's experience and expertise as well as any potential conflict of interest issues. Re-nomination is possible where a suitable new extern is not available but is not encouraged.

The new Marks and Standards were updated to fully align with the new external examination procedures and also approved by the Academic Council in March 2023; both came into effect at the start of 2023/24.

b. Portfolio of Academic Policies and Procedures

i. Approval of New MTU Procedures

A substantial number of common MTU policies and procedures were finalised and approved by Academic Council during the reporting period 2022/23 (where a policy required final approval from Governing Body, this is stated specifically):

Office of the President:
- Honorary Awards Policy, November 2022;

Academic (Relating to Taught Provision):
- Digital Learning Policy, September 2022;
- Policy for the Design, Amendment, Review, and Approval of Modules, December 2022;

- Policy on External Examination of Taught Programmes, March 2023;
- Policy Regulations for Modules and Programmes (Marks and Standards), March 2023;
- Procedure for the Design, Amendment, Review, and Approval of Modules, March 2023;
- Academic Integrity Policy, May 2023 (implementation/publication postponed until such a date as Academic Council approves corresponding procedures);
- Procedures on External Examination of Taught Programmes, May 2023;
- RPL Procedures (1. Prior Formal Learning; 2. Prior Informal/Non-Formal Learning), May 2023;
- Title Convention Policy for Non-Major Awards; May 2023.

Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Study:

- Authorship Policy, September 2022;
- Research Integrity Policy, May 2023;
- Procedures for External Research Requesting Access to MTU Research Participants, May 2023;
- Procedures for Review of Human Research Ethics Application Forms from University Staff and Research Students (Masters and PhD), May 2023;
- Minimal Risk Human Research Ethics Application Form, Version 2.0, June 2023 (governed by the MTU Human Research Ethics Policy);
- Full Ethical Review Human Research Ethics Application Form, Version 2.0, June 2023 (governed by the MTU Human Research Ethics Policy).

Student:

- Equity of Access and Participation Policy (Student), December 2022;
- Policy and Procedure to Support and Determine a Student's Fitness to Practise, December 2022;
- Policy and Procedure to Support and Determine a Student's Fitness to Study, December 2022;
- Protocol for Dealing with Death of a Student, February 2023;
- Procedure for Dealing with Death of a Student, February 2023 (for internal publication only);
- Reasonable Accommodation Policy (Student), Version 2.1, May 2023;
- Admissions Policy, Version 3.0, June 2023;
- Student Change of Details Regulations, Version 2.0, June 2023;
- Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, Governing Body June 2023 (following Academic Council approval of a revised draft in May 2023).

As in 2021/22, most approvals during the reporting period arose from the policy work of the Integration & Development Committees of Academic Council or Working Parties thereof.

ii.   *Approval of Legacy Procedures as Interim Procedures of MTU*

Pending finalisation of MTU policy, a number of saved procedures of MTU Cork were approved by Academic Council in November 2022 for adoption as Interim Procedures of MTU across all campuses, as follows:

- CIT Module Approval Process, in: *Handbook for Operation of the CIT Programme Approval Process*, CIT 2008, pp. 10ff and Appendix B;

- CIT Module and Programme Change Process with associated operational documents.

Both interim processes have since been superseded by the MTU Policy / MTU Procedure for the Design, Amendment, Review, and Approval of Modules, approved in December 2022 and March 2023 respectively.

- [Academic Procedure for the Validation of Special Purpose, Minor and Supplemental Awards](#), CIT 2013.

iii. Approval of Revisions to Legacy Procedures (Campus-specific)

Academic Council also approved revisions to a small number of MTU Cork legacy procedures. Where still in force at the time of writing, these are published on the [MTU Cork Academic Regulations and Policies](#) page:

- [Supplement to Guidelines: Admissions to Level 8 Degrees (Post Level 7 Award) for 2019/20 Level 7 graduates, 2020/21 Level 7 graduates, and 2021/22 Level 7 graduates, and 2022/23 graduates applying in 2023 (Cork Campuses)](#), March 2023.

    This policy supplement extends the validity of amended entry regulations for Ordinary Bachelor graduates to the award stage of Honours Bachelors adopted on foot of the Covid-19 emergency;

- [Procedure for Formal Inquiry by Assessment Infringements Board (Cork campuses)](#), Version 2.0, December 2022.

    This revision increased the maximum number of board members and the quorum to ensure availability of a quorate board at times of high demand and to render board decisions less vulnerable to challenge;

- Reinstatement of Version 6.0 of the Regulations for Modules & Programmes (Marks & Standards) for the MTU Cork Campuses, December 2022.

    This reversed a purely technical code change to facilitate broadsheet processing (approved as Version 6.1) in April 2022 which became moot due to changes in the Banner Upgrade Project schedule. Since superseded by the MTU [Policy Regulations for Modules and Programmes (Marks and Standards)](#).

c. Other University Policies and Procedures

- An EDIT Charter developed by four Technological Universities (MTU, SETU, ATU and TUS: Midlands Midwest) in collaboration with [Advance HE](#) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) was brought to Academic Council for noting in March 2023.

2.2 Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

a. MTU Pathway to Fellowship Programme

In late 2021/22, MTU established a Steering Group (with executive membership) to explore the development of a Fellowship Programme for staff at MTU. MTU contracted [Advance HE](#) for this pilot. The [Advance HE Fellowship Scheme](#) is an internationally recognised professional accreditation system that offers [accreditation through distinct categories](#) from Associate Fellow to Principal Fellow. Fellowship provides individual higher education staff with recognition of their practice, impact and leadership in the context of teaching and learning. It reflects a wide range of professional practice, from teaching and/or supporting learning to senior management functions with strategic impact on teaching and learning within or beyond the applicant's organisation. The comprehensive [fellowship application process](#) is based on a self-evaluative and reflective journey for the applicant.

Two staff members were appointed as leads to progress the development of the MTU Advance HE Pilot Fellowship Programme, for launch in AY 2022/23. A call for expressions of interest from staff received a very positive response, with expressions of interest received from across all campuses and discipline areas for all

categories of Fellowship. This resulted in 52 staff enrolling on a support programme to gain their fellowship with a planned completion date of April 2023, with applications distributed across the fellowship types as follows:

Fellowship Type	Number of Staff
Associate Fellowship	4
Fellowship	28
Senior Fellowship	16
Principal Fellowship	4
Total	52

MTU has continued this scheme into AY 2023/24. By December 2023, 41 staff had completed, there were 43 new starters, and 5 were still progressing with their application. MTU Advance HE Fellowship programme participants share their experience of the programme in a video published here on the TLU website.

Going forward, MTU is working to increase the numbers of accredited staff and to build a learning community of Advance HE fellows in the university. In the longer term, we are working towards MTU becoming an accredited institution so that it can award fellowships to our staff internally. There will be linkages between the Advance HE Fellowship and MTU's existing professional development programmes, thus allowing staff several pathways to gain Fellowship.

b. Leadership Development Initiatives

In 2021/22, the HEA, as part of its Strategy and Performance Dialogue review process, awarded MTU €1 million in performance funding based on the MTU Impact Assessment Case Study submitted entitled "MTU TLASE Enhancement through Leadership Development and Partnership Approaches". MTU was then invited by the HEA to submit a programme of work to use these funds, building on the activities outlined in the case study which had won the funding, to be undertaken over the next two academic years, across MTU. The HEA approved a three-strand, whole-of-university programme, as follows:

- *Strand 1*: Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Student Engagement (TLASE) Enhancement Through Distributed and Transformational Leadership Development

- *Strand 2*: Developing a Continuing Professional Development in TLASE Recognition Framework for MTU

- *Strand 3*: Building our Student/Staff Working Together to Enhance TLASE programmes across MT.

Under Strand 1, led out by a seconded member of academic management, there were two significant leadership development initiatives in 2022/23:

i. Elevate Leadership Development Programme

Elevate, MTU's bespoke leadership development programme – open to all staff members (administrative, technical, research and lecturing across all grades and campuses) but aimed specifically at those in non-senior management roles, was first delivered in Semester 2 2022/23. The programme was developed by the TLU in conjunction with the HR Managers and the MTU Transformation Office. It was provided through the TLU and funded through HEA Systems Performance Funding and TUTF.

Elevate offers leadership skills training on a cohort basis, with particular emphasis on transformation, communication, planning and change in support of Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Student Engagement (TLASE). The project enables distributed leadership, emphasising collaboration, with a view to supporting the implementation of MTU Strategy and personal/team professional objectives that align with MTU Strategy. Staff self-select one of three leadership programmes based on their previous experience of leadership, their current and previous roles, and their interest in developing leadership skills.

- *Leadership Fundamentals*, aimed at those with an emerging interest in leadership and whose background and exposure to leadership is at a beginner's level.

- *Leadership Core*, aimed at supporting staff who may have any of the following: Previous leadership experience; informal leadership roles outside MTU; past or current project leadership; some prior training on management or leadership; completion of Elevate (Fundamentals) in the last academic year.

- *Experiential Leadership*, aimed at supporting staff who may have any of the following: A formal or informal leadership role in MTU; involvement in drawing people together to achieve a goal of some sort; ongoing complex collaboration with a group of people; previously completion of Elevate Leadership Core or Experiential Leadership.

157 staff (28 male, 129 female; 39 academic & research, 118 PMSS) participated in 2022/23 with a very positive response received; in 2023/24 the programme is running again in an altered format with 90 people enrolled.

ii. LEAD@MTU

The LEAD@MTU programme, initially geared towards the University's senior management team, has now been opened to managers in all areas across all campuses. Activity includes:

- A masterclass series focused on the development of leadership skills and capability to support existing leaders in their individual and collective pursuit of MTU objectives and more gradual discipline-specific or function-focused activities. Of the ca. 110 senior managers in MTU, 70 have participated in the LEAD@MTU masterclass series fully or substantially.

- Peer Action & Learning Groups (PAL), of which 8 were formed within the senior management team in 2022/23. These groups are multi-disciplinary and multi-campus in nature. The focus of each group is peer-supported leadership development, centred on action sets of mutual interest.

- The Mentoring Programme for Senior Managers, which is the first formal mentoring support for those in management. 18 senior managers have undertaken significant training to support the programme which is available to all newly appointed managers and those that have been appointed to management in the past 3 years. This programme is ongoing and has been identified as being of particular value in navigating the complexity of the roles involved.

- Leadership/managerial personality profiling offered to all senior management, and based on industry-accepted approaches which support teamwork and leadership development. A number of TLU staff have undertaken specific training to support the ongoing implementation of this programme beyond 2022/23. Insights® Discovery is used as a means to develop self and relational awareness amongst staff. This profiling tool has been completed by ca. 100 staff, with a significant uptick planned for 2023/24.

- All senior managers were offered a limited number of one-on-one coaching sessions in 2022/23 and into 2023/24.

LEAD@MTU is aligned with a newly developed MTU Certificate in Higher Education Leadership which is currently being undertaken by 24 senior managers.

A three-day international residential programme in University of Leuven, Belgium was also built into the programme. This did not take place until October 2023, having been postponed from February 2023 following the cyber-attack. 28 staff participated. The design of this event ensured a broad perspective on European Higher Education and on the role of innovation (within and outside the sector) in shaping attitudes to change, advancement and leadership.

Feedback from participants in LEAD shows that the programme has been generally very beneficial and has assisted colleagues in dealing with some of the challenges and opportunities faced in supporting MTU's continued development. Participants also reported finding it helpful in terms of their own leadership, for developing collaborative links within the University, and also for tapping into the substantial levels of peer support and guidance on offer across MTU.

c. Continuous Professional Development

As previously mentioned, Strand 2 of the HEA Performance Funding won in 2021 focused on Developing a Continuing Professional Development in Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Student Engagement (TLASE) Recognition Framework for MTU. Broadly, the CPD@MTU project has 3 main objectives:

1. To gather opinions on current and future CPD practices across the university.
2. To develop a mechanism for staff to be able to plan, collate and showcase future CPD activities using an online 'e-portfolio'.
3. To enable the development and delivery of targeted CPD programmes and resources for staff in strategic areas.

A major aim of this project is to provide support and resources so that staff may more easily plan CPD related activities and gain recognizable credit for them through a standardized university approved framework. Thus those who engage with this project will be able to enhance their Teaching & Learning practices more effectively, share best practice and develop a portfolio of completed CPD which will be recognized by the university. This will in turn support the development of a robust, inclusive and adaptable CPD recognition framework for MTU.

For the purposes of this project, CPD is viewed very broadly. It encompasses any additional undertaking by a staff member related to the improvement of teaching, learning, research and outreach. It includes formal and/or informal practices such as attending seminars, accumulating micro-credentials, undertaking reflective practice, participating in or initiating a learning community, attending or delivering discipline specific conferences, joining a professional body, gaining additional professional qualifications or recognition etc.

Participation in CPD@MTU is entirely voluntary, and individuals can interact with it as often as they wish.

2.3 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

a. Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

MTU's Equity of Access and Participation Policy (Student) includes a commitment to embedding Universal Design (UD) and inclusive practice in all functions across the MTU community. In line with this, per MTU's Policy for the Design and Approval of Taught Programmes Leading to Major Awards, curriculum development and design will

be informed by universal design for learning (UDL) principles to facilitate and enhance the learning experiences of all students.

In Sem. 1 2022/23, MTU, led by facilitators on the Kerry campus, participated in a national roll-out of the Digital Badge for Universal Design for Learning, hosted by AHEAD and UCD Access and Lifelong Learning, on behalf of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning. This 10-week, 25-hour course introduces participants to the UDL Framework and gives them the opportunity to implement UDL approaches within teaching activities. It has also been effective in building a community of UDL practitioners across the country.

A further opportunity for staff to gain a digital badge in UDL was provided in Semester, with an in-house delivery of the digital badge course by the Teaching & Learning Unit (Cork campuses).

MTU was allocated €180,000 funding under PATH 4 Phase 1 in late 2022. As part of the PATH 4 project plan, the President approved the establishment of the MTU Universal Design Framework Implementation Committee in April 2023. This Committee draws its membership from all campuses and areas and includes both staff and students. Its membership and terms of reference are reflective of the five pillars underpinning the Universal Design Framework: Programme Curriculum Design (Teaching, Learning & Assessment); Student Supports & Services; Physical Campus and Built Environment; Information Technology Systems & Infrastructure; and Human Resources. The Committee first convened in June 2023. It meets four times per academic year, rotating its meeting venues across all six campuses, with remote attendance also facilitated.

The University is already progressing activities across all UD pillars. Future plans include an application for the ALTITUDE Charter.

b. N-TUTORR

MTU is a member of N-TUTORR, a partnership of seven technological higher education institutions, funded by NextGenerationEU and co-ordinated by THEA and HEA. Its programme of work is guided by six core themes: Digital Transformation, Universal Design for Learning, Education for Sustainability, Academic Integrity, EDI, and Employability; and organised into three streams: Student Empowerment, Staff Capabilities, and Digital Ecosystems.

In early 2023, the MTU Project Lead for N-TUTORR was appointed. Since then, several internal secondments (both from academic and PMSS staff) have been made to the project. Initial outputs in the reporting period included the development of an Access Special Purpose Award, the commencement of the MTU Libraries' Reading Pen Loan Scheme and a number of seminars, consultations and CPD events on topics such as embedding the Sustainable Development Goals in the curriculum and Academic Integrity.

c. Strategic Alignment of Teaching & Learning Funding 2023 (SATLE 2023)

MTU was allocated €526,000 in the 2022/23 round of Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Funding in Higher Education (SATLE 2022/23), administered by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (NFETLHE) in partnership with the Higher Education Authority (HEA).

The MTU approach for SATLE 2022/23 built on the institution's response to previous SATLE calls, and also took account of the three themes of focus for SATLE 2022/23: Education for Sustainable Development (ESD); Digital

Transformation in the Tertiary Sector; and Best Practice in Upholding and Cultivating Academic Integrity. The following strands were identified:

  i.   Learning Enhancement Projects (LEPs);
  ii.   Open Educational Resources (OERs) project;
  iii. Reimagining Assessment and Feedback Together 2 (RAFT 2);
  iv.   Open Call for National MTU Seminar Series.

i.   Learning Enhancement Projects (LEPs)

Two levels of project funding were made available: €5,000 to €20,000 and €20,001 to €35,000 to support resource development, external expert engagement, staff time buyout and dissemination, etc.

Potential project submission teams were required to consider how proposed activity aligns to MTU's Strategic Objectives as outlined in its Strategic Plan and the aforementioned key areas identified in the SATLE 2023 call.

LEPs were selected by a panel of international reviewers as part of a competitive process. In total, they span the full range of discipline areas in MTU and involve engagement from students, staff and external partners.

ii.   Open Educational Resources (OERs) Project

This project was led by the Department of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL), MTU Cork Campuses and the E-learning Development and Support Unit (EDSU), MTU Kerry Campuses. Cross-campus collaborations were encouraged to build links across the whole of university. The TEL and EDSU departments provided advice and direction where projects involve the introduction of new digital learning apps or technology or the development and rollout of new digital learning content or courses/modules. This project will result in the development of a series of Reusable Learning Resources.

iii. Reimagining Assessment and Feedback Together 2 (RAFT 2)

This was coordinated by the Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU), which invited 23 staff from across 14 MTU departments "to get on the RAFT" and partake in this year-long project to identify, and hopefully solve, an assessment and/or feedback challenge in collaboration with their students. The group took an action research approach to develop, plan, implement and evaluate 16 different assessment and feedback interventions. Activity emerged across some core themes including:

- Peer Assessment and Feedback;
- Standardised Rubrics;
- Co-creating Criteria with Students;
- Feedforward and Exemplars;
- Supporting Large Classes;
- Programme-level Change.

The funding supported this cohort of staff in their assessment practices to proactively cultivate academic integrity through enhanced assessment design and to disseminate emerging good practices for wider application.

There are currently 17 projects ongoing as part of RAFT. These are centred around several thematic areas including rubrics, peer review/feedback, oral assessment, plagiarism, feedback literacy and authentic assessment.

iv. *Open Call for National MTU Seminar Series*

Up to €1000 was made available for each seminar approved for funding. The purpose of these seminars is to provide staff with an opportunity to connect with colleagues internally and externally, from across the higher education sector, to focus on shared interests in both the research and practice of TLASE enhancement and create opportunities to hear from national and international experts in this area.

d. *Navigate* Learning Development

The *Navigate* Learning Development Project partnered with departments and programmes across disciplines to design and deliver 54 bespoke learning and study skills-based workshops for students, addressing areas including academic and technical writing, presentation skills, group work and university readiness. Students also availed of one-to-one study skills coaching.

e. Learning Communities

This initiative has continued to flourish. There are upwards of 36 Learning Communities in total, mostly from schools/faculties, but also a number from Central Services, and an increasing number of interdisciplinary learning communities. In total, over 180 staff members are involved.

2.4 Supports and Resources for Learners

2.4.1 Mental Health Supports

During AY 2022/23, work relating to process alignment continues between the Cork and Kerry campuses. Good progress was made in relation to the mental health budget and it was agreed to appoint a new framework coordinator to work pan-MTU on developing the mental health agenda.

The continued implementation of the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework (HEA, 2020) has seen additional mental health funding allocated to each HEI, MTU included, over the past three years. This has allowed the Student Counselling Services to move towards more adequate staffing to respond to the needs and requests from students. It has also allowed for more whole-campus mental health initiatives and has provided a modern, digitised database for confidential student counselling records. While this funding is welcomed, it is fixed term each year and there is no guarantee of it continuing into the future. Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education Ireland (PCHEI) and their member counselling services are hoping that the HEA will continue this as multi-annual core funding into the future as recommended by the Joint Committee on Education, Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science[3].

During AY 2022/23, 5.86% of full-time students contacted the Student Counselling Service, on par with the figures for the previous year, and slightly higher than the international average of 5% (CCMH, 2023).

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[3] *Report on Mental Health Supports in Schools and Tertiary Education* (January 2023)

2.4.2 Library Enhancements

a. Collection Development

Following provision of initial funding to extend TU access to IReL resources, a subset of eight IReL resources were made available to MTU-affiliated staff and students in March 2023. This resulted in 10,000+ new online journals added to MTU Library's e-collection portfolio, with over half of the publishers offering a variety of Open Access Publishing[4] opportunities for MTU researchers.

Mental health is central to individual well-being, and providing on- and off-campus support is an increasing priority for MTU. The Library, with support from the Academic Administration & Student Affairs Office, established a new e-resource entirely dedicated to mental health and positive well-being. MTU was the first Irish University to roll out the Self-Care Collection; a unique support featuring hundreds of authoritative, comprehensive, and accessible titles in e-format on mental health, well-being, and mindfulness. Content was sourced from University Presses such as Oxford and Cambridge as well as renowned publishers such as Wiley and the American Psychological Association. The collection promotes overall well-being by ensuring all students and staff have free 24/7 access to online self-care resources in an atmosphere of confidentiality.

The Sage Business Cases perpetual access collection was upgraded in 2022, adding 600 new cases with ca. 90% containing teaching notes. The new content includes enhanced video and data files embedded.

As part of National Bike Week (13 – 21 May), MTU Library matched funding from a Cork City Council grant via the National Transport Authority to acquire cycling-related reading material. Library staff also customised The Cork Cycling Map (Metro version) by including images highlighting the MTU Cork campuses along the route. In addition to promoting the health benefits of cycling, the work succeeds as both a practical route finder and a showcase for how embedded MTU colleges are in the society and architecture of their region.

b. Information Literacy Workshops and Outreach Programme

An extensive offering of online, hybrid and face-to-face information sessions ran throughout the 2022/23 academic year, up 27% on the previous reporting period. The workshops covered themes of information and digital literacy, use of library resources for study and research, referencing, misinformation, literature review process, research methods, Open Science practices, effective search techniques, and academic publishing. Online referencing guides were revised and expanded to include information on the free (non-subscribed) versions of the EndNote, Mendeley and Zotero referencing packages. These packages, including tutorials, feature on the library website and YouTube channel.

During February 2023, a team of library staff completed a four-week intensive training programme on providing library support as part of the Systematic Review process. Training was further supplemented by webinars hosted by Evidence Synthesis Ireland. Subsequently, the Library developed a suite of new online supports relating to Systematic Reviews and also published its first Service Level Agreement for Systematic Review Support. Library staff also availed of many other CPD opportunities offered in MTU and attended workshops on topics such as

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[4] Read & Publish deal - i.e. includes Open Access Publishing Agreement for MTU authors. Entry to such deals flips the subscription payment with provision for increased availability of funding of MTU researcher's Article Processing Charges, at no cost to the authors, and is part of a trend in worldwide activism working towards full Open Access for academic outputs, an agenda which MTU fully supports.

Academic Integrity, Artificial Intelligence, Biophilia and Universal Design in Teaching and Learning.

The MTU Cork Libraries sponsored an initiative by Togher Community Garden Outreach Project to teach children how to cook healthy meals using the produce from the community garden. In addition to providing some funding for the printing of the beautifully illustrated cookbook, the library shared its expertise on copyright and was delighted to be able to digitally preserve and share the cookbook entitled *From the Garden: A Fun Cookery Book for Young Chefs* via the institutional repository SWORD.

During Sem. 1, 2022/23, the Library participated in the National Learning Network's Employability Skills programme, hosting a student work placement over 10 weeks (one day per week). The programme – Certification: QQI Level 3 Employability Skills (3M0935), QQI Level 3 General Learning – is designed to enable the students to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to make realistic vocational choices for further education, training or employment, based on their own needs and strengths. The programme aims to provide students with Foundation Level personal, social and work-related skills to progress to greater levels of independence and community integration.

The Library also took part in Cope Foundation's Ability@Work 2023 Job Shadow Initiative whereby job seekers are supported by mentors on a visit to learn about a working day at MTU Library. Ability@Work is a dedicated supported employment service linking employers with disabled job seekers. The initiative allows the job seekers to experience the workplace environment and learn about particular roles and employer expectations. It also offers participating bodies a chance to see the talent represented by people with disabilities.

The Leaving Certificate Access Programme also ran again across Cork and Kerry campus libraries from 22 May to 29 June 2023, and applications more than doubled compared to the previous year.

c. Library User Experience Enhancement

Following the recruitment of four part-time Library Assistants, in April 2023 the MTU Bishopstown library piloted an extension of weekend opening hours, including opening the library on Sundays for the first time, making MTU Bishopstown Library the first library in the TU sector to operate a library service for staff and students on Sundays. From September 2023 onwards, the extended library schedule has been running fully, which will increase opening hours by up to 20% (ca. 190 extra hours)

Also in the MTU Bishopstown library, the second and final phase of the ICT upgrade project started in Summer 2023. This involved complete replacement of the internal lighting system and fire alarms as well as upgrading the external lighting and CCTV facilities and installation of new turnstiles to enhance the visitor experience and effectiveness of the library's access control system. Completion of the works was expected for Sem. 1 2023/24, resulting in a more sophisticated, energy-efficient lighting experience with lighting zones which are easily configurable via an intuitive web application to ensure a comfortable study environment across the building's entire 2,700m2 footprint.

Similarly, following the installation of new access control entry gates in April 2023, the lighting infrastructure of the MTU Kerry North Campus Library was upgraded in August 2023. These upgrades offer increased security, safety and visibility for all library visitors.

The Library Management System Koha was upgraded to Version 22.11 in June 2023. The upgrade included 911 bugfixes, but did not introduce any significant enhancements.

In November 2022, library staff established a Subject Guides Merger Working Group with participation from across all campus libraries. A primary objective of this group is to redevelop library subject guides (see also here)

across all MTU campuses, thereby offering all students a shared user experience. Supported by MTU's Student Engagement Office under the Le Cheile initiative, library staff, academic staff and MTU students work in partnership to revise and standardise library subject guides. It is hoped a redeveloped template will ensure easier navigation, simplify content structure and incorporate accessibility and UDL principles to provide an optimal subject support platform. It is intended that the redeveloped subject guide template for all of MTU will be rolled out across all campuses during 2024.

Further to the development of an MTU Style Guide and standard templates for MTU policies and procedures during 2022 (published on the Workvivo staff server), all library policies were revised accordingly to ensure consistency and published in December 2022. All revisions are recorded in the Document Control section of each policy document. These policies can be accessed from the MTU Policies and Publications webpage or the MTU Library websites (see here and here).

d. Research and Digital Scholarship Supports

MTU continued to build on its commitment to Open Access when it joined as a partner in the Trinity College Dublin- and Royal Irish Academy-led project to secure €220,000 for Action Plan 3 of the NORF Open Research Fund. Part of this project will be a mapping study of academic publishing in Ireland and establishing the feasibility of a national Open Access Platform, which is expected to be delivered in November 2024. The first project output was the [Directory of Open Access Publishers in Ireland](#), published by [PublishOA](#) on Bloomsday (June 16), 2023.

Further collaborations in the Open Science space included provision of training by the Digital Scholarship Services and Metadata & Research Data Management Librarians. The Digital Scholarship Services Librarian partnered with colleagues such as the Research Integrity & Compliance Officer and CIRIT (Cross-Institutional Research Integrity Group) to deliver best practice guidance in [Open Access Publishing](#), [Journal Selection](#), [Authorship and Research Integrity](#). In May 2023, the Digital Scholarship Services Librarian, along with colleagues from across the island of Ireland via OSCAIL (Open Science Committee of All Ireland Libraries), provided a workshop on Lego Serious Play and Open Scholarship at the [2023 Conul Conference](#), held in Cork.

The Thesis Digitisation project began in June 2021 when TUTF Funding was secured to digitise and preserve MTU's entire stock of hardcopy theses. This marked three decades of outputs globally available on MTU's institutional repository, SWORD. Since June 2023, over 1,000 theses from across MTU's Cork and Kerry campuses have been available to be accessed and shared online. To date, the project has already generated over 29,000 downloads of PhDs and Masters (see Figure 7 below).
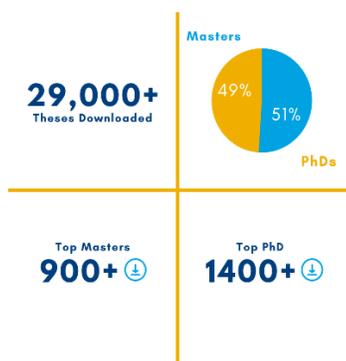
Figure 7: Downloads of MTU online theses (SWORD), June 23 to Feb. 24

Complementing the thesis digitisation project, MTU acquired a subscription to Crossref, a DOI minting service providing foundational digital infrastructure to ensure research objects are easy to find, cite, link, assess, and reuse. This infrastructure will allow the project to progress to Stage Three, application of a DOI to each digitised thesis to ensure its discoverability via a permanent digital identifier.

To coincide with Open Access Week 2022, a hybrid workshop entitled *'Unlocking Open Access – Publish without Paying'* guided researchers through the various steps to better utilise Open Access publishing and identify journals that are suitable for research and budgets. In April 2023, the Metadata & Research Data Management (RDM) Librarian began a series of collaborative webinars with the Research Integrity and Compliance Officer initially on the Intersection between RDM and Research Ethics, with further training to be offered in 2023/24.

Developments in this space, both local and national, were recognised in December 2022, when MTU's Digital Scholarship Librarian was awarded a Research Ally Prize 2022 by the Irish Research Council. The prize is awarded to mentors, supervisors, research officers, and technical support staff in Irish higher education who play vital role in supporting the academic research community across all career levels.

Building on this work, the Digital Scholarship Services Librarian, the Research Integrity and Compliance Officer and the Metadata & Research Data Management Librarian secured funding from MTU's SATLE Reusable Learning Resources (RLR) Funding Initiative to create an Open Science RLR that would offer foundational learning in Open Science. The final resource will include modules on Open Science, Open Licensing, Open Data, and Open Access. Students who complete the course will be awarded a digital badge. The resource is expected to be launched in semester two of the 2023/24 academic year.

2.4.3 Access and Participation

a. Enhancing Access Post-Pandemic

The Access Service was finally able, following the pandemic, to fully re-engage with its many stakeholders and partners in person in AY 2022/23. School visits, Further Education and Training visits, the Access Service Prison Lecture Series, and other internal and external engagements returned.

However, many of the Covid-19-related additional supports and funding ended in 2022/23. Thus, in some cases, alternative funding and resources had to be sourced in order to maintain some of the supports. For example, the Government Laptop Loan Scheme had been extremely beneficial in addressing the digital divide and access to flexible learning, especially so following the recent cyber-attack on the MTU Cork campuses. The Access Team is working with MTU colleagues in the area of fundraising in an effort to maintain this particular scheme.

b. Alignment of Access Service

Prior to the merger of the two former Institutes of Technology, a review of CIT's Access Service had been undertaken in 2020, supported by PWC following a tender process.

In AY 2022/23, TUTF funding was allocated to undertake a review of the Kerry Campus Access Service and to update findings of the 2020 CIT Report. Following a separate tender process, PWC was appointed to undertake the 2022/23 review. This included an *ab initio* review of the Kerry Campus Access function and a review of progress to date on some of the recommendations and targets outlined in the 2020 report, incorporating some of the new challenges (i.e. any shifts post-Covid-19 or since the establishment of MTU). At the time of writing, a

draft is with relevant MTU staff for review. The report will prove beneficial to highlight the engagement, work and challenges within Access, and to inform the alignment and future development of the function.

In the meantime, cross-campus collaboration occurred across several initiatives and funds, including the Student Assistance Fund, Fund for Students with Disabilities, 1916 Bursaries, Sanctuary Scholarships and Tomar Trust etc. There is agreement that this collaborative work is both important and necessary in order to ensure parity of service provision across all campuses, although Access Service staff have noted that it does result in a considerable amount of additional administration short-term.

c. Traveller Education Initiatives

i. *Traveller Graduate Network*

The Traveller Graduate Network is an initiative of the Traveller Education Coordinator (Cork campus). It consists of Traveller graduates working collectively to support each other by using their experiences for the benefit of present and prospective students from within the community. The network provides networking, progression and career advancement opportunities through mentoring sessions and workshops.

The Network continued to meet throughout 2022/23, developing a plan of action for the coming years. However, it was apparent that the network needed a specific person who could dedicate their time wholly to the purpose of the TGN. Hence, working in conjunction with the SOAR Project Coordinator (based in UCC) a successful proposal was made to the HEA for funding to employ an administrator for the TGN.

The Network also began working with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) in 2023 and was invited to contribute to the Worker & Employer Advisory Committee Roundtable – Traveller & Roma Initiative.

ii. *Whidden Workshops*

The Whidden Workshops – "It's Kushti to Rokker" (WWKR) are a joint initiative and exemplary example of cross-institutional collaboration between DCU, DkIT, TUS Midlands (MEND HEI's), MTU and, most recently in 2022, TUS Midwest. WWKR translates as 'The Chatting Workshops – It's Good to Talk' in Cant and Romani languages and is the name given to a series of virtual, peer-led workshops where current Traveller and Roma students come together to inspire, inform and increase Traveller and Roma participation in higher education. The workshops provide prospective Traveller and Roma students with information, guidance and insight into the real experiences of Traveller and Roma students accessing and currently progressing through third level education.

Three virtual workshops were held during AY 2022/23; these covered topics such as access routes, college resources, financial supports, important timelines and course and employment opportunities from a 'lived experience' perspective. There are currently 18 Traveller students and 1 Roma student employed to facilitate the project, and over 50 prospective Traveller and Roma students took part in the workshops this year.

In addition to the workshops an ongoing partnership has been established with The National College of Art and Design (NCAD) Studio+ to produce a short-form documentary video that explores and highlights the experience of Travellers in Higher Education via the WWKR team. The team also applied for, and subsequently won in 2023, the AONTAS STAR Award in the category for Third Level Access and Engagement Initiative.

iii. *Development of Access Special Purpose Award*

Early in Semester 2 2022/23, it was proposed to create and develop an Access Special Purpose Award (SPA) aimed at creating pathways for mature students, lifelong and life wide learners and community stakeholders. This

programme would be targeted very specifically towards the priority cohorts who are currently under-represented in higher education and who are identified in the new National Access Plan 2022 – 2028.

A working group to develop the proposal was established, drawing from the Access Service and the Department of Sport, Leisure and Childhood Studies. The Working Group was granted €5,000 N-TUTTOR funding to assist with the cost of developing and offering of this Special Purpose Award.

The SPA will be piloted in Semester 2 of 2023/24, within a delivery framework which will be cognisant of school holidays and the impact on students with childcare responsibilities. Delivery will also be informed by an inclusive assessment process and principles of Universal Design for Learning.

Should the pilot be successful, the working group intends to develop a second six-week Special Purpose Award and hopes to further develop learning opportunities with the aim of establishing an Access Foundation Programme which will allow students to progress to Stage 1 of a full-time undergraduate programme of study.

2.5   Information and Data Management

Banner Upgrade and Merger Project

As part of Phase 2, the upgrade of Cork Banner to V8.5, Curriculum Planning and Programmes Compliance (CAPP) was implemented, and the data in the sandbox of V 8.5 reviewed and tested. Between January 2022 and June 2023, broadsheets for the MTU Cork Progression and Award Boards (PABs) continued to be generated from the legacy Cork system, with a parallel run in Banner V8.5 for validation purposes. This preparatory work served MTU well in June 2023, when, as a consequence of the IT breach, a decision was taken to pivot to Banner broadsheets processing on the Cork campuses, as it was not possible to recover the legacy broadsheet system.

2.6   Other Parties Involved in Education and Training

a. INGENIUM European University Alliance

The INGENIUM Alliance, comprised of 10 partnering universities including MTU, was successful under the 2022 European Universities call. It launched in January 2023 and the MTU project lead was appointed in June 2023.

INGENIUM is working to develop fully accredited and recognised higher education degrees, applying an integrated QA Policy framework. It plans to expand the scale and range of joint programmes and innovate in its academic offerings, setting up a framework for open degrees for students to customise their study programmes. The Alliance has established an operational structure that includes governance bodies and local bodies, to ensure the correct implementation of the actions of INGENIUM.

INGENIUM is divided into ten inter-related work packages (see Table 3 overleaf), of which MTU is leading the eighth: *Entrepreneurial INGENIUM.*

Entrepreneurial INGENIUM is aimed at enhancing the entrepreneurial character of the INGENIUM Alliance, building on the tradition and experience of some of the partners to develop all aspects of the Entrepreneurial University. These include introducing entrepreneurship in all INGENIUM courses and activities to encourage researchers, academics, and learners to develop entrepreneurial mindsets and skills; increasing the number of entrepreneurs produced across the Alliance; and supporting external stakeholders within INGENIUM to set up new enterprises and benefit from wider geographical expertise and market knowledge.

Work Package	Work Package Label	Lead Institution
001	Management and Coordination	UNIOVI (Spain)
002	Building a cohesive cooperation framework	MUS (Bulgaria)
003	Digital INGENIUM	UOC (Greece)
004	The INGENIUM European Campus	HKA (Germany)
005	INGENIUM for innovative teaching and lifelong learning	XAMK (Finland)
006	INGENIUM for research	UDA (Italy)
007	INGENIUM for Sustainable Development	HS (Sweden)
008	Entrepreneurial INGENIUM	MTU (Ireland)
009	INGENIUM for Non-discriminatory and Socially Engaged Higher Education	URN (France)
010	Impact and Dissemination	TUIASI (Romania)

Table 3: INGENIUM work packages and lead institutions

Work Package 2 aims to prepare the partners for the challenges of enhanced inter-university cooperation and to set up the basic instruments, infrastructures and procedures to facilitate this, beyond the strict management of the project. Specifically, it envisages the development of a joint Quality Assurance (QA) system and the development of a common culture of QA across the Alliance structures and activities.

Work Package 4 aims at creating the relevant framework, structures and procedures to pave the way for seamless academic mobility of students and staff across the member institutions. Supported by measures to promote and support student and staff mobility, the key action will be to create a single inter-university campus – the INGENIUM European Campus (IEC) – as one major hallmark of the Alliance. This is to feature a joint teaching body; an Open Degree structure to allow for the configuration of flexible and multidisciplinary curricula with integrated international physical, virtual, and/or hybrid student mobility; a catalogue of designated INGENIUM programmes; and special courses and activities within the INGENIUM Winter/Summer Schools.

As work has got underway on Work Packages 2 and 4, each sponsored by a Registrar, it has become evident that they are even more connected than was first anticipated. Accordingly, it has been agreed to bundle them as one.

b. FET-HE Pathways and Tertiary Programmes

The creation of a unified tertiary system has been a key priority of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS). A central component of this vision was the establishment of the joint SOLAS/HEA National Tertiary Office (NTO) in 2022. The purpose of the NTO is to support the development of arrangements between FE and HE institutions which will allow learners to progress in a clear, seamless manner between FE and HE pathways. In December 2022, Minister Harris announced a pilot initiative involving several Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and HEIs, working collaboratively in local or regional clusters, to further develop the pathway for learners between Further and Higher Education and to provide more options and opportunities for learners.

The regional collaboration *New Horizons* involves MTU, UCC, Cork ETB, and Kerry ETB. A project Oversight Group comprising the Chief Executives and Presidents of the partner organisations, as well as the Directors of FET and

the Registrars and Vice Presidents first met in January 2023. From the outset, all four organisations were keen to build on the already significant collaborations in place. Four specific areas were identified for initial development. HEA/SOLAS funding was provided for the appointment of two Programme Development Coordinators.

Early discussions f125ocused on making existing arrangements explicit rather than implicit and looking at opportunities to extend them. Having considered time factors, the project partners initially agreed that the project would first focus on the mapping of existing pathways between FET and HE, to identify areas where initial additional pathways could be identified for learners entering FET programmes in AY 2023/24 academic year, thus building on the work done over many years in developing existing effective collaborative arrangements.

At national level, however, the focus of the National Tertiary Office (NTO) was on the development of tertiary programmes to commence in FET and continue and conclude in HE, culminating in the award of a degree. AY 2023/24 was posited as a proof-of-concept phase.

A small number of programmes were included in the first tranche for the 2023/24 pilot, leveraging on the pre-existing positive relationships between MTU and the two ETBs, extending/developing existing progression arrangements, and with a commitment to carry out a detailed gap analysis. The ambitious timeline for and expectations of the pilot were, and have continued to be challenging, particularly in relation to the completion of MTU's academic governance requirements.

Much effort was invested in the preparation for the pilot over the Summer of 2023, including development and completion of assessment and interview procedures, with staff from MTU and Cork/Kerry ETB involved. Ultimately, the number of applicants by interview stage was modest relative to the quantum of work undertaken. Some withdrew following the CAO Round 1 offers, while others who had completed the initial stage of the application process did not complete any further steps and were therefore deemed to have withdrawn. The design of the interview/assessment procedure sought to ensure that applicants had sufficient opportunity to demonstrate their learning, experience, and competence to successfully undertake the programme, while ensuring as much as possible that those accepted onto the programme were likely to succeed. In the end, the number of offers, acceptances and registrations for the pilot has been modest, in line with the national trend. One pathway was stood down in advance of the pilot due to lack of applicants who met the criteria.

As previously mentioned, MTU has long, well-established and effective links with the FET sector. The local progression links with Cork and Kerry ETBs have proven to be particularly effective when there is substantial engagement at programme level. In the late 2010s, for example, work done by the Department of Computer Science and Cork ETB in relation to the curriculum succeeded in smoothening the pathway for FET entrants into Computer Science programmes on the MTU Bishopstown Campus, with positive impacts for MTU, the local colleges of FET, and, most of all, the increased number of FET applicants successfully progressing to and completing MTU programmes.

Thus, while consolidation and further development of FET-HE links supports MTU's strategy, a reflection on the current tertiary initiative has highlighted some issues, in particular:

- Speed of development of the pilot and consequent challenges re. academic governance;
- Public information provided on the pilot offerings; and
- The need to decide on and overarching model and framework initially, in relation to, for example:

- bespoke programmes versus a hybrid approach;
- entry requirements;
- total duration of programme; and
- implications of model for viability and costing of programme

As the initial development phase continues, these items will require careful consideration, at both national level and by the *New Horizons* academic governance structures, including the Oversight Group, Steering Group (modelled on the existing MTU-UCC Joint Board) and local programme boards and working groups. The overall priority will be on ensuring that the student is set up for success.

2.7 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

In October 2022, Academic Council approved the establishment of an Academic Integrity Working Group, sitting under its Regulations, Quality Assurance & Enhancement Integration & Development Committee. The membership of the Working Group draws from a wide range of stakeholders, including Committee members, Heads of Department, lecturers and nominees from several relevant central services units. The Working Group is chaired by a member of the Regulations, Quality Assurance & Enhancement Integration & Development Committee who is also one of MTU's nominees to the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN).

In its first months, the Working Group agreed a set of principles to underpin the first MTU-wide Academic Integrity Policy. This work was very much informed by the outputs of NAIN. The importance of a whole-of-institution approach to safeguarding academic integrity is amplified through these principles. The policy was approved by Academic Council in March 2023, but its implementation is pending the development and approval of the associated detailed procedure.

Whereas academic misconduct boards were centrally located in the antecedent institutions, the policy provides for an academic misconduct board for each MTU faculty, with a central appeal mechanism. It also provides for a central Academic Misconduct Register.

The procedure is currently at draft stage and expected to go out for consultation in March 2024. As with the policy, it is informed by the outputs of NAIN, in particular the recently published *Framework for the Investigation of Allegations of Academic Misconduct* to which MTU had provided input through feedback on an initial draft in Summer 2022. The scoring mechanism provided in the NAIN Framework is being tested against previous cases at present to ensure cross-campus and faculty alignment as well as alignment with the current penalty schemes. Where it is decided to increase a standard sanction for a given instance of academic misconduct, due notice will need to be given to students. The new procedure will also provide more guidance for the informal, department-based stage, and will draw on the experience of 'courageous conversations' in Australia.

As detailed in Part B Section 2.3.c above, Academic Integrity was one of three themes highlighted in the Strategic Alignment of Teaching & Learning call in 2023 (SATLE 2023). MTU responded to this in a number of ways. Funding was allocated to the second phase of the Reimagining Assessment & Feedback (RAFT) Project. Many of the initiatives which commenced under this pillar had a focus on academic integrity, whether on building a culture and/or promoting an understanding of academic integrity, or exploring the theme of assessment literacy. Applicants for Local Educational Projects (LEPs) were also required to give consideration to the three themes highlighted in the SATLE 2023 and one of the projects finally selected to progress is *Redesigning Assessment and Feedback to Uphold Academic Integrity (RAF-AI)*. Similarly, seminars funded as a result of the open call for proposals for the MTU National Seminar Series included the webinar *Academic Integrity – What everyone needs to know, now…* involving speakers from QQI, USI and MTU in September 2022.

The draft MTU Academic Integrity Policy also provides for an Academic Integrity Officer and faculty-based Academic Integrity advisors. The position on dedicated national funding for such resources remains unclear.

Towards the end of the reporting period, staffing resources related to the N-TUTORR project were being put in place. Since January 2024, two dedicated secondments are in place in the area of Academic Integrity. These will further work both on the implementation of the new policy and procedure (consultation on and development of guidelines for students and staff, reporting mechanisms, template forms and templates, for example) and research on the rapidly evolving topic of Open AI.

Last but certainly not least, the MTU Library was delighted to present on its Assignment Toolkit at the showcase of AQR 2023 Case Studies held by QQI in October 2024.

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

3.1.1 Development of Processes for Periodic Review

For developments planned in relation to the processes for programmatic review and periodic review of MTU units, please refer back to Part B, Section 1.4.1, Overview of Periodic Reviews, of this AQR.

No.	Relevant objectives Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Planned actions and indicators Note: Include details of unit responsible, and how planned action will address the relevant strategic priority and/or reengagement advice/CINNTE recommendation. If the institution is preparing for cyclical review, include how the planned actions will address the relevant review objective(s).
		- See above -

3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

For developments planned in relation to planned review of MTU units, please refer back to Part B, Section 1.4.1, Overview of Periodic Reviews, of this AQR.

3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Faculty of Creative and Performing Arts and Media	2024/25	First programmatic review of MTU
Faculty of Business	2024/25	First programmatic review of MTU
Faculty of Engineering	Semester 2, 2024/25 (Phase 1)	First programmatic review of MTU
Faculty of Health and Social Sciences	Semester 2, 2024/25 (Phase 1)	First programmatic review of MTU
Faculty of Science and Informatics	Semester 2, 2024/25 (Phase 1)	First programmatic review of MTU

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Faculty of Engineering	2025/26 (Phase 2)	First programmatic review of MTU
Faculty of Health and Social Sciences	2025/26 (Phase 2)	First programmatic review of MTU
Faculty of Science and Informatics	2025/26 (Phase 2)	First programmatic review of MTU

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

Case Study: Cyber-Attack, Cork Campuses, February 2023

a. Background

Over the Bank Holiday weekend Saturday 4 – Monday 6 February, a significant IT breach was detected on MTU Cork campuses. Immediate steps were taken to intercept and manage the incident. With the consequent loss of the network, there was also a telephone outage. An emergency plan was activated. Following extensive initial investigations, MTU confirmed, on Wednesday 8 February, that the Cork campuses had been targeted in a cyber-attack.

On Friday 10 February, MTU secured an injunction from the High Court to help prevent the sale, publication, possession, or other use of any data that may have been illegally taken from its systems. MTU subsequently confirmed that data was accessed and copied from MTU systems and made available on the 'dark web', including personal data of staff, students and third parties. The process to review which data were taken and to identify, insofar as is possible, any affected individuals has been a lengthy and process one. It is anticipated that MTU will commence issuing notifications and guidance in line with its data protection obligations to affected individuals in Spring 2024, with priority being given to cases that may be considered high risk or vulnerable. Further information and updates are available on the dedicated MTU Cybercare portal accessible.

Meanwhile, however, the focus of this case study is on the immediate impact on academic delivery and the approach taken to a safe recovery of systems while continuing teaching, learning and assessment activities.

b. Immediate Aftermath

Immediately following the breach, all four Cork campuses – Bishopstown, NMCI, Crawford College of Art & Design, and Cork School of Music – closed from Tuesday 7 to Sunday 12 February inclusive to allow time for a full assessment of the situation and to protect the University's systems. Planned contingencies were activated to ensure that key business processes such as payroll, expenses, procurement and payments would continue to operate.

Within days, emergency planning moved to preparing for a phased and managed return to on-campus teaching and learning. MTU's back-up systems had been preserved and this, in combination with further steps taken to protect the integrity of our systems, facilitated a relatively quick return in the circumstances.

Student Leaders played a significant support role in the return of students and staff, on Monday 13 February, to what was a dramatically changed teaching and learning environment. Initially, all staff computers were put through a "Wash" process set up on all campuses before being permitted to connect to University systems. As no network was available, lectures and tutorials were on a 'chalk-and-talk' basis with presentation facilities available via direct connection to a projector.

The Microsoft Office suite remained accessible throughout. The front-end of the Banner Student Record System also remained available. However, access to back-end Banner was via the network and so was not possible for several weeks.

While the Canvas Learning Management System was not itself compromised, it was not available initially as the breach had directly impacted Active Directory and IPD, both used for authentication. Other systems (e.g. the Koha Library Management System) were similarly impacted. Following an intensive programme of work, access to several priority systems including Canvas, student email, Koha and Zoom was restored on Thursday 16 February.

For full-time and part-time taught MTU programmes, the breach had occurred relatively early during the semester, so that the immediate impact on assessment was not generally significant, albeit with challenges concerning assessment of 'short fat' modules taken by student cohorts commencing work placement in mid-March, and of Craft Apprentices who were at the start of Week 6 of their Term 2 block when the Cork campuses closed.

The situation with practical components was more mixed, and there was a particularly marked impact on computer/IT/software laboratory components, including in Engineering, Science, and Creative and Performing Arts. While Wi-Fi was restored at the end of February, many such components depended on the network and so significant challenges remained in this area over the semester.

Academic Council received an update at its meeting on 17 February and agreed that all Summer 2023 and Autumn 2023 Module Examination Boards (MEBs) and Progression & Award Boards (PABs) would consider the impact which the breach may have had on candidate performance over the given period.

c. *Path to Green*

An iterative plan for the recovery of IT and related systems, *Path to Green*, was developed. It entailed a carefully sequenced restoration of the University's systems, with priority being given to core business-critical elements. *Path to Green* facilitated a return to in-person and online teaching and learning, the restoration of Wi-Fi onsite and, in its final stage, the resumption of academic and business processes. By way of example:

- A contingency examination paper management system was built by the IT Services Applications Team in consultation with staff stakeholders. The contingency system was built using features within MS SharePoint and Power apps to mirror, as close as possible, the MAXe system. The prompt delivery of this contingency system was well-received. It has since been rolled over to AY 2023/24 to allow time for further work necessary before the MAXe system can be restored.

- Initially, it was intended to restore the legacy SRS broadsheet system in time for the Summer 2023 Examination Boards, and significant effort was invested in making this happen. By the end of May, however, the decision was taken to bring forward the roll-out of the Banner broadsheet system from January 2024 to June 2023 in the interests of certainty. The timeframe for results processing was extended by one week to allow time for preparatory work, including a pilot. The pilot was undertaken in the Department of Computer Science, selected because of its broad range of programme structures and modes and its previous involvement in testing the new broadsheet system on the Cork Campuses.

In the end, thanks to a huge team effort from all relevant central functions and academic departments, there was a net delay of just 3 working days on the planned timelines for issue of results. It was clear that Semester 1 work in relation to 'parallel runs' of the new system had served MTU very well, albeit coming to fruition sooner than expected, and in an emergency context.

- The unavailability of the Akari Curriculum Management system presented challenges on two fronts. Firstly, the lack of public access to module/programme descriptors on the MTU website was far from ideal in the lead-up to the CAO Change of Mind deadline. Secondly, there was no staff access to draft module/programme descriptors. An interim plan was developed and approved whereby the system was restored but with access limited to relevant Registrar's Office staff and nominated staff leads on high priority programme validation/accreditation processes. As of September 2023, the system is fully restored and upgraded.

d. Communication

Students and staff received regular updates, instructions, and guidance via email, website, and social media platforms. Initially, however, student email was primarily available on mobile phones, and only where the app was already downloaded to the phone prior to the occurrence of the breach.

The new MTU website was invaluable as a secure and reliable communications channel for staff and students during the February 2023 cyber-attack on the Cork campuses. Key design features which had been requested by the Website Project Team in the initial design were utilised, such as emergency notice banners and landing pages with dedicated related news sections for cyber security updates.

e. Impact on Learner Supports

Once the four Cork Campuses were closed, contingency arrangements were put in place to ensure that the Student Counselling Service and the Access Service could continue to operate to offer support to any students in need. All student services remained operational throughout, both on campus and remotely. However, there was a significant and protracted impact on data systems and networks, including the loss of internal shared drives. This impacted on services in various ways.

One example where the need to rapidly identify viable alternatives pending recovery of an existing system ultimately led to service improvement was the move from MegaPay to the Banner Student Record System for payment of student support funding.

The MegaPay payroll system used for Student Assistance Fund (SAF) payments to students on the Cork campuses was among the systems affected by the cyber-breach, causing SAF payments to be delayed. MegaPay was therefore initially included in the top priority grouping of systems for recovery. With the aid of the Finance and HR Offices, the larger of the Semester 2 payments could be paid through the Core Expenses system as an emergency workaround while MegaPay was 'down', but this approach was unsuitable for regular use going forward. Further research into sustainable alternatives proved, however, that not only could the Banner Student Record system be used for SAF payments, but making these payments through Banner resulted in a far more efficient payment process which also brought MTU Cork into closer alignment with MTU Kerry processes. Therefore, it is intended that use of Banner for SAF payments will be mainstreamed on the MTU Cork campuses going forward.

In many instances, workarounds were developed with the cooperation of colleagues on the MTU Kerry Campuses. For example, staff in the Admissions, Fees, Examinations and Registrar's Offices who required access to student records were assisted by Kerry-based colleagues, including members of the Banner Team, in progressing contingency arrangements. The unexpected additional workload for the Banner Team however in turn impacted on timelines for the Banner Upgrade and Merger Project and the roll-out of the Digitary Online Credentials System on the MTU Cork Campuses.

f. Governance

From late February 2023, the organisational structure utilised for coordination of the Cyber Response was reconfigured, and the transition was made from an Emergency Management Team, chaired by the President and including Executives based on the MTU Cork campuses, to an Incident Recovery & Resilience Governance Board (IRR), chaired by the Vice-President for Finance & Administration, with a focus on the 'build back better' principle underpinning *Path to Green*. The IRR reported to the University Executive. Items for decision were progressed to the IRR via one of a number of subgroups that sat underneath it, and penultimately the Architecture & Design Board (ADB). As with the original emergency management framework, the governance structure included subgroups for Communications and for Legal & Data.