



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Institutional Self-Evaluation Report 2018

WHY IS QUALITY MATTERS



2017/18 in numbers:



18,381

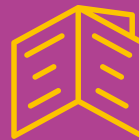
total number
of students



Our students
come from

170

different
countries



21.7%

new students from
non-traditional
backgrounds



4 staff

listed in the **Top 1%** of
**World's Most Highly
Cited Researchers**
according to Clarivate
Analytics



429

new beds available for
students in **campus
accommodation**

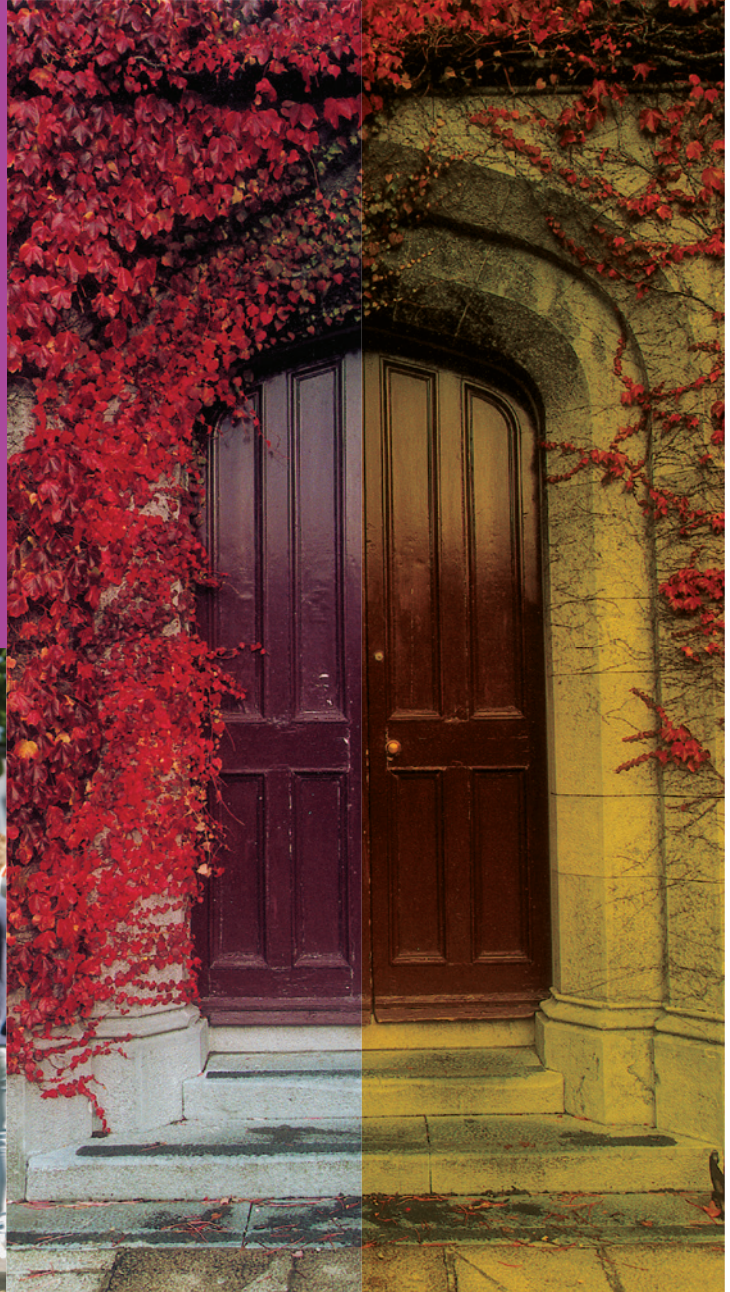


Top 1%

of universities
worldwide according
to data from QS
World University
Rankings



We hope you will find an honest and reflective appraisal of the enhancements that we believe have gone well over the last number of years and also what needs to be improved or enhanced in the future.



Institutional Self-Evaluation Report

Thursday, 29 November 2018

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This report has been prepared by NUI Galway
for the forthcoming Institutional Review by QQI



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cálíochtaí Éireann

Preface



NUI Galway has undergone significant change since the last Institutional Review of Quality in 2010/2011. Major effort and resources have been invested in new and refurbished teaching and research buildings and facilities, new and revised programmes of learning and an increase in our research and impact on society. The positive aspects of many of these changes are evidenced in our rise in University rankings, increases in student preferences for our programmes, the attraction of new research funding and the increased breadth of our activities in our service to society.

These developments have taken place in an atmosphere of profound change in areas such as diminished funding from central Government and changes around how we manage our organisation, in particular, how we develop and implement our policies, engage our students and support our staff and researchers. While many changes have enhanced quality there have also been many lessons arising from feedback from our students and from our national funding authority. These lessons will inform our plans for future change and strengthen our resolve to raise our quality standards ever higher.

This institutional review, the third over the last twenty years, is very much welcomed and valued by the University as one of the principal ways for us to reflect on what has gone well and where we need to improve in the future. Culturally, we believe we are very much in transition towards being a responsive community where staff feel responsible for quality and quality assurance and where we all welcome this institutional quality review as an opportunity to identify and respond to change in the future.

Within this institutional self-evaluation report, prepared by an independent team of staff and students, we hope you will find an honest and reflective appraisal of the enhancements that we believe have gone well over the last number of years and also what needs to be improved or enhanced in the future. We very much look forward to the review visit in March when we anticipate receiving a very thorough independent appraisal of our efforts and firm advice about where our priorities for quality enhancement need to concentrate in the future.

I thank members of the self-evaluation team for their efforts in creating this report and I look forward to welcoming you, our reviewers, to NUI Galway in March 2019.

Professor Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh

President

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ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Academic Council
AIQR	Annual Institutional Quality Report
AMT	Academic Management Team
APRC	Academic Priorities and Resources Committee
CAO	Central Admissions Office for all undergraduates at Irish HEIs
CELT	Centre for Excellence in Learning & Teaching
DAB	Designated Awarding Bodies
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEIs	Higher Education Institutes in Ireland
IP	Institutional Profile for NUI Galway
IRIU	Institutional Review of Irish Universities (2010)
ISER	Institutional Self-Evaluation Report
ISSE	Irish Survey of Student Engagement
IUAQC	Irish Universities Association Quality Committee
P&P	Internal Policies and Procedures at NUI Galway
QA	Quality Assurance
QAG1	Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies
QAG2	Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Universities
QEC	Quality Enhancement Committee at NUI Galway
QIS	Quality Information System
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
QR	Quality Review
SET	Self-Evaluation Team
SSC	Support Services Committee
Údarás	Governing Authority of NUI Galway
UMT	University Management Team

0.

INTRODUCTION

0.1 Overview

This Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) was developed by a representative cross-section of staff and students at NUI Galway and presents an independent evaluation of the enhancement of quality and quality assurance over the last number of years. This report should be read together with the following related documents:

- *NUI Galway's Institutional Profile (IP)*
- *NUI Galway's Annual Institutional Quality Report 2017/2018 (AIQR)*
- *NUI Galway Strategic Plan – Vision 2020 (V2020)*
- *QQI's Core Statutory QA Guidelines (QAG1)*
- *QQI's Statutory QA Guidelines for Universities and DAB's (QAG2)*
- *European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)*

The three external standards and guidelines above (QAG1, QAG2 and ESG), together with the V2020 strategic plan informed by feedback from various stakeholders including students, define the quality standards to be achieved at NUI Galway.

0.2 Self-Evaluation Process

The self-evaluation team (SET), with membership listed on the front of this report, was formed in May 2016. The SET met periodically, and the main activities included:

- *Evaluating the outcomes of the previous **institutional review in 2010/2011***
- *Evaluation and dissemination of **external standards and guidelines** (e.g. QAG1, QAG2 and ESG)*
- *Evaluating **internal policies and procedures** used across the University*
- *Conducting a **quality culture survey** and to identify potential enhancements to QA in the future*
- *Review of overall changes to **key performance indicators** at the University since 2010*
- *Executing **key actions** with respect to QA in preparation for the review*
- *Collaborative development of this **institutional self-evaluation report (ISER)***

The goal of the SET was to conduct an independent and unbiased evaluation of quality and quality assurance (QA) at NUI Galway and highlight both the strengths of current compliance against external standards and also endorse potential opportunities to continuously improve quality standards into the future.

0.3 Institutional Review 2010/2011

The SET began with an evaluation of the key *recommendations* and *actions* arising from the Institutional Review of Irish Universities (IRIU) in 2010/2011 and requested an updated progress report from the University Management Team (UMT). The details of the recommendations and progress by the University are presented in Table 1. The SET were satisfied that all *recommendations* have been addressed and that actions arising have been implemented.

Table 1: IRIU 2010/2011 Progress Report

Recommendation	Progress
<p>(p11 and p14)</p> <p>NUI Galway take steps to ensure that the governance structure of the decision-making and deliberative bodies adopts a more strategic focus and includes a wider spectrum of external stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>University Strategic Planning process well developed</i> • <i>Údarás committees refer to strategic objectives regularly</i> • <i>Strategy is fixed agenda item on all major committees incl. AC</i> • <i>Údarás membership determined by statute</i> • <i>Newly constituted AC in 2018, with broadened membership effective from Oct 2018 and it is proposed to have a revised refocused agenda with annual monitoring and reporting of attendance by members</i> • <i>External Údarás members are on major committees</i> • <i>External stakeholders consulted regularly through the Rúnaí, Adult Learning, Programme Boards, Risk Management</i> • <i>Vision 2020 has a target of at least 75% of Programme/Advisory Boards to have employers, professional bodies or community partners on them</i>
<p>(p12 and p14)</p> <p>NUI Galway consider carefully the working relationship and communication arrangements between the academic Deans and the University Management Team to ensure effective connectivity between academic management and institutional management and the embodiment of a strong leadership culture across the institution which will reinforce the crucial leadership role that Deans must play in the reorganised academic structure of the University.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Deans are now members of UMT</i> • <i>Role and Reporting Relationships of and Appointment Procedures for Executive Deans document approved by APRC</i> • <i>Deans members of all major planning committees</i>

Table 1: IRIU 2010/2011 Progress Report (cont.)

<p>(p21 and p24)</p> <p>The current policy on student feedback be reviewed to ensure that all modules are regularly evaluated, using tools that collect comparable data, for independent analysis and the transmission of summaries to programme, School and College leadership, as well as to students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) delivers independent results for University, Colleges and specific programmes, since 2014, which is analysed and disseminated at UMT and to each College. • Annual NUI Galway Library student survey • Annual survey of NUI Galway postgraduate research students • Student Feedback policy (QA221) for modules and programmes is overseen by Heads and Deans • Voluntary independent evaluation by students carried out by individual academic staff • Some schools have centralised student feedback, analysis and reporting for undergraduate students • University is currently considering 'central' data collection and analysis software
<p>(p22 and p24)</p> <p>The development of an integrated institutional information system that will allow more shared information and transparency of key University policies and processes and strive to ensure that University policies are implemented and monitored fully and consistently, thereby ensuring greater accountability across units of the organisation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Policies and Procedures (P&P) repository established • P&P Repository linked to Staff Intranet • New IT systems deployed e.g. Akari (module records) • IT Strategy for continuous integration of IT systems • New Data Warehouse being piloted
<p>(p23 and p24)</p> <p>The University strives to close the gap between policy requirements and their implementation and monitoring, thereby ensuring greater accountability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines for writing effective P&Ps • P&P Training • Periodic updating of P&P (e.g. External Examinations, Student Feedback, etc.) • Over 200 individual P&Ps are subject to evaluation at least once every seven years
<p>Section 4</p>	<p>Quality Enhancement</p>
<p>(p28)</p> <p>NUI Galway pursues an assertive internationalisation agenda to achieve a more open, outward-looking approach by the University.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dean of Internationalisation appointed in 2012 • Vice-President for Internationalisation currently advertised externally • International Office given significant additional resources • In 2015/2016 NUI Galway ranked in top 200 "Most International Universities" (Times Higher Education) • NUI Galway received "Excellent International Student Satisfaction Award 2015"
<p>(p28)</p> <p>The University reconsiders its resource allocation arrangements to ensure that they are more transparent and, to the extent possible, incentivise academic and administrative innovation and development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New RIGRAM resource allocation model now being implemented, following review in 2018. Model is based on transparent resource allocation as a function of income to the Colleges. • RIGRAM will support achievement of strategic objectives of the University • RIGRAM enables resourcing of Schools and Colleges to reflect directly the activities they undertake, in both teaching and research • RIGRAM maintains and evolves core operations in support of the University's strategic objectives, and ensures central University charges are reasonable and recognised • RIGRAM operates in a transparent and logical manner but without overly burdensome administrative costs

0.4 Quality Culture Survey

The second major activity initiated by the SET was a survey of how QA culture has evolved at the University over the past number of years in response to the emerging external standards and guidelines, various leadership initiatives including the Strategic Plan and the more recently introduced HEA compact agreements. In 1995, the draft Government Act required the University to “establish procedures for quality assurance aimed at improving the quality of education and related services”. This Act heralded an increase in the intensity of rules and regulations, both external and internal within the University through a newly established Quality Office. The quality culture survey indicated that between 1995 and 2010 the culture shifted towards a more *reactive culture* characterised by resistance with external oversight and reluctant compliance with externally imposed standards and guidelines. Since 2010, the survey provides evidence that quality culture is now shifting towards a more *responsive culture* characterised by a significantly increasing number of external standards and guidelines and internal policies and procedures resulting in QA being regarded as an opportunity for change and continuous improvement by Schools, complementing the strategic and operational planning processes. The culture survey also highlighted a number of proposed changes to QA at the University - some of which are now currently being implemented.

0.5 Key Performance Indicators

The SET reviewed overall changes to key performance indicators over the last number of years. Table 2 presents a list of the key performance indicators studied and for which comparative data are available.

- Total student enrolments have risen by 6%
- PhD enrolments have remained steady over the period, having increased from 950 in 2010/11
- Mature enrolments have remained steady and enrolment of international students is rising steadily
- The quality of undergraduate admissions has improved significantly as measured by an average CAO points increase from 390 in 2010/2011 to 455. CAO is a recognised national indicator of student performance in state run examinations.
- The number of academic employees has remained relatively static primarily due to staffing restrictions following the 2010 economic downturn
- Employment rates for graduates remains high at 97%. This figure includes graduates who go on to further education
- The student retention rate remains high at 80%
- The University ranking rose steadily in various world rankings until 2017/18
- Research quality in general has improved as measured by research income and PhD enrolments
- Research quality related to published papers has improved. However, a change from the use of Incites to Scopus in 2017 make comparisons difficult over the period.
- The number of peer reviewed publications has risen year on year as measured by SciVal, in parallel with success in attracting research funding
- The student experience score from the national Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) remains above/in line with the National Average for the University sector. 85% of students indicate satisfaction with their experience and 89% indicate that they would make the same decision to take their course at NUI Galway if they had to start University again.

Table 2: Changes to Key Performance Indicators since 2014/15

Description	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Undergraduate Full-Time Enrolments (HEA)	11,705	12,098	11,945	12,156
Undergraduate Part-Time Enrolments (HEA)	1,872	1,947	1,787	1,920
Postgraduate Full-Time Enrolments (HEA)	2,696	2,882	2,955	3,124
Postgraduate Part-Time Enrolments (HEA)	943	951	1,040	1,181
Total Enrolments (HEA)	17,216	17,878	17,727	18,381
Total Full-Time Enrolments (HEA)	14,401	14,980	14,900	15,280
Total Student FTE	15,258	15,901	15,773	16,601
Academic Staff (HEA Returns)	1,041	1,068	1,067	1,073
Academic Staff FTE (HEA Returns)	712	732	733	736
All Staff (HEA Returns)	2,506	2,617	2,666	2,681
PhD Enrolments	1,140	1,129	1,144	1,119
PhD Graduands	203	174	200	194
New Entrants UG FT (HEA)	2,991	3,079	3,310	3,318
Mature UG FT Enrolments (>23 yrs of age) (HEA)	881	830	788	745
Mature New Entrants UG FT (>23 yrs of age) (HEA)	214	197	217	196
Non Irish FT Enrolments (excl N.I.) (HEA)	2,890	3,487	2,964	3,419
CAO Leaving Cert Median Points (ST)	422	425	429	455

Table 2: Changes to Key Performance Indicators since 2014/15(cont.)

Graduands UG FT (HEA) (Degree only)	2,314	2,374	2,438	N/A
High Hons Awarded UG FT (H1 and H2.1) (HEA)	1,211	1,277	1,336	N/A
Retention/Completion ¹ (FT/UG Degree)	80%	80%	79%	N/A
Employment (UG and PG)	96.40%	96.95%	97.20%	N/A
Student Survey ² : Experience	80%	86%	84%	84%
Student Survey: Start Again	85%	87%	88%	88%
QS World Ranking	271	248	243	260
THE World Ranking	250-300	201-250	201-250	301-350
Total Recurrent Income (€m) (FS)	217	221	225	N/A
Research Income (€m)	51.69	51.98	53.8	60.68
Number of Peer Reviewed Publications (SciVal) ³	1,517	1,447	1,499	1,680
Field Weighted Citation Impact (SciVal) ⁴	1.73	1.93	1.71	1.59
Ratios				
Non Traditional Enrolments/Total Enrolments	26%	23%	23%	24%
Non Irish FT Enrolments/Total FT Enrolments	20.1%	23.3%	19.9%	22.4%
Mature UG FT Entrants/Total UG FT Entrants	7.5%	6.9%	6.6%	6.1%
Total Student FTE/Academic Staff FTE	21.44	21.73	21.51	22.57
High Hons Awarded UG FT (H1 &H2)/Graduands UG FT	52.3%	53.8%	54.8%	N/A
Registered PhD/Academic Staff FTE	1.60	1.54	1.56	1.52

Note: N/A reflects where the data is not yet available due to Repeats / Accounts sign off.

0.6 Key SET Actions

The SET agreed a number of key actions in preparation for the main review visit in March 2019. These key actions included the following:

- Continuously broadcast the impending Institutional Review at key forums
- Improve and enhance current P&Ps and their implementation
- Encourage continuous improvement to key processes by Schools and units
- Enhance the P&P repository
- Conduct a compliance audit of Student Feedback policy
- Conduct a mid-term review of the University's strategic plan

All University units were notified periodically about the Institutional Self-assessment exercise and impending March 2019 Review Visit at regular meetings of Academic Council and the Support Services Director Forum. Agenda items focussed around the need

to enhance internal policies and procedures, more effective policy implementation and to continue to enhance teaching, research and services within Colleges, Schools and Service units. The development of the P&P Repository was a major undertaking that involved all major University units reviewing and updating internal policies and procedures and ensuring compliance with a policy of policies: QA002 Policies and Procedures. The P&P Repository was completed in 2018. There was also a compliance survey on the implementation of QA221 Student Feedback policy and procedure. The survey reviewed compliance among all modules taught at the University. The survey found good compliance and external oversight by Heads of School of the process within their School. However, it was felt we could do better, and to that end the University is currently considering a central system for Student Evaluation of Feedback. A midterm review of all of the key objectives of the University's Vision 2020 strategic plan was also initiated and found good progress on the majority of quality and performance goals.

¹ This is based on a starting cohort of all FT UG Degree NE students (no repeats are in this cohort). It measures the cohort six years previous and then measures how many of these students graduated with a degree in a six-year period. This implies repeat years are included i.e. 3 years repeat years for a 3-year degree, 2-year repeat years for a 4 year degree and no repeat year for a 6 year degree i.e. Medicine.

² The Student Survey metrics are in relation to the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) carried out annually across all Irish institutions. The responses shown to the two questions above relate to the top two of the five answer options i.e. a combined score of the two most positive responses.

³ All research Metrics are based on the calendar year, e.g. 2017/18 refers to all metrics starting in Jan 2017 to December 2017.

⁴ The Field Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI) is the total number of citations/the total number of citations expected based on the global average for the field of science. A FWCI of 1 indicates that the entity's publications have been cited in line with the global average for that field, where as a FWCI of 1.73 indicates that NUI Galway yielded 71% more than the expected number of citations.

0.7 Report Layout

During the self-evaluation process the SET found major challenges mapping the headings used in the Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR), the national Core Statutory QA Guidelines (QAG1, QAG2) and the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). When selecting a structure and layout for this report the SET decided on using the headings of the QAG1. In this regard, Section 1.1 of this ISER deals with *Governance* which is the same section number and heading title as the QAG1 and so on. Section 12 deals with the QA of Research, which is the topic covered in the sector specific Core Statutory QA Guidelines for DABs (QAG2). Each section from 1 to 12 is also divided into three subsections: *Introduction*, *Recent Major Enhancements* and *Future Enhancements* (if any). The *Introduction*

provides a summary of compliance information from the AIQR and also cross references relevant sections within the AIQR, QAG1, QAG2 and ESG documents. *Recent Major Enhancements* illustrates sample enhancements implemented over the last number of years. *Future Enhancements* gives an indication of potential enhancements (if any), arising from the self-evaluation and endorsing enhancements already identified by various academic and service units. *Case Studies* are added throughout to give a brief illustration of recent major enhancements or the impact of enhancements. The impact of major enhancements to various academic programmes as well as new marketing and information initiatives is illustrated in the first case study presented below that provides some evidence of growing demand for NUI Galway's academic programmes.



CASE STUDY

STUDENT CHOICE OF NUI GALWAY PROGRAMMES

In the 2018 undergraduate recruitment cycle, the pool of CAO Level 8 applicants decreased by 3.9% nationally. Despite this decrease in market size, NUI Galway was the only university in Ireland to increase, year-on-year, the number of 1st preference applications received by the end of the recruitment cycle. The popularity of NUI Galway was further reflected in the points increases on most courses in August 2018 over levels in 2017. Since 2014, the number of courses offered by the University cutting off at or above 400 CAO points has increased by 23% and the number of courses cutting off at or above 450 CAO points has increased by 10%, demonstrating increased demand for places at NUI Galway from high quality students. The attractiveness of NUI Galway outside the University's traditional catchment area has also increased in recent years, with undergraduate enrolments from counties outside the traditional catchment area growing by 11.2% between 2014 and 2017.

In relation to demand in subject areas, Science and Engineering programmes grew again in 2018, with points increases in all programmes. Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences remain popular choices with CAO applicants, while Business and Law programmes saw significant increases in demand and CAO entry points. International Business programmes continue to be a popular choice for students with a global outlook, and the strong

performance of the Commerce (Global Experience) programme at 509 points confirms this. Programmes in Law are also in demand this year, with Civil Law increasing by more than 20 CAO points. Interest in seven new Arts programmes in areas like Film and Digital Media and Media Studies, are a clear recognition of Galway's reputation as Ireland's Cultural Capital. The addition of Music to the curriculum this year has been a particular highlight, with the new Music degree proving very popular, entering the market at 462 CAO points. The impact of Brexit and the growing employment opportunities for graduates with European foreign languages is evident in the demand for two new programmes in Global Languages and an International Arts degree. NUI Galway's strength and reputation in Biosciences is also reflected with soaring demand for both Biomedical Science (531 points) and Biomedical Engineering (487 points).

NUI Galway offers a comprehensive portfolio of over 160 postgraduate taught programmes. NUI Galway has the second highest number of enrolments in full-time taught Masters programmes of any institution in the country having grown enrolments by 52% between 2012/13 and 2016/17. The attractiveness of NUI Galway as a postgraduate study destination continues to grow with both applications for and acceptances on full-time taught PG programmes in 2018 increasing on 2017 levels.

1.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY

1.1 Governance

1.1.1 Introduction

Under the Irish Universities Act 1997, governance arrangements for NUI Galway follows a bicameral model, with Governing Authority (Údarás) exercising overall governance responsibility and Academic Council (AC) having a particular responsibility for the governance of academic affairs. Consequently, AC plays a critical role in setting the academic direction of the University, and its remit includes the development and approval of academic programmes and academic policy. The University Management Team (UMT) is responsible for executing the decisions of Údarás through all academic Colleges, Schools and Centres, and major Support Services. Údarás is comprised of elected representatives of academic staff, students, alumni, local organisations (public and industrial) and ministerial nominees and has full responsibility for the oversight of quality and quality assurance (QA). It regularly receives quality reports through its sub-committees that include the Academic Priorities and Resources Committee (APRC), Support Services Committee (SSC) and the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) (*formerly known as the Quality and Innovation Committee*). Údarás meets five times annually. Its sub-committees (e.g. SSC, APRC) meet more frequently. AC meets five times annually and the QEC meets three or four times annually. QA is a standing item on the meetings of AC.

Related Documents: QAG1 1.1; ESG 1.1, AIQR Part 1.

1.1.2 Recent Major Enhancements

Governance of NUI Galway continues to meet statutory and corporate compliance benchmarks set by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI). It also achieves an exemplary record in relation to internal audit, risk management and financial compliance. Recent major enhancements have included a reconstituted University Management Team that

now includes College Deans and up to four Vice-Presidents. An academic restructuring is currently in progress, with the planned merger of the Colleges of Science and Engineering & Informatics, thereby creating a smaller number of larger Colleges.

There has also been a strategic focus on greater equality, diversity and inclusion. Following the adoption of the recommendations of a Gender Equality Task Force, the University is now committed to a restructuring of all committees and working groups within the University in order that they comprise a minimum of 40% women and 40% men. In this regard the membership of Academic Council has been significantly restructured in 2018/2019 for better gender balance and greater representation across all the academic grades. Membership of AC now includes staff holding research contracts, Lecturers (including teaching only contracts) and Professorial grades together with an ex officio membership which includes College Deans, the Director of Quality and student representatives. Membership now totals 117 members – a significant reduction of the previous constituency that included all professorial grades. Since June of 2018, the new members of AC now include 43.5% female, 54% male and 2.5% not specified gender.

In September 2018, in the context of academic restructuring, a review of academic committees led to rationalisation of the number and functions of central committees, with more autonomy and responsibility delegated to the Colleges.

1.1.3 Future Enhancements

Linked to academic restructuring, a project to facilitate budget devolution and decentralisation of power and activity to a smaller number of larger, autonomous Colleges, began in 2018 and will roll out over the next three years. In addition, a review of the functioning of NUI Galway's Governing Authority, Údarás na hOllscoile, including the efficacy of its Committee structure, will take place over the course of academic year 2018/19.



CASE STUDY

QUALITY IN AN ERA OF DIMINISHING RESOURCES

In April 2016, the Údarás requested the Director of Quality to deliver a presentation on the published report 'Quality in an Era of Diminishing Resources – Irish Higher Education 2008-2015'⁵. During the presentation, Údarás heard details about a study into the quality review process led by Dr Claire Carney of the Quality Assurance Agency (UK). The purpose of the study was to review the outcomes of quality reviews led by external review panels against the impact of a significant reduction in resources provided to the sector in the immediate aftermath of the Irish financial crisis. The study cited "reduced funding over prolonged period leading to lower staff numbers", "increased teaching burdens and casualization of staffing" and "promotion limitations". It cited a 38% fall in state grants with overall funding including student

fees falling 13.5% combined with an increase of student intake of 25%. The report cited "... limited funding available to maintain, enhance and develop ... facilities and equipment" that "may have serious and irretrievable implications for sustainability (of some Schools) and that "some Schools will be challenged to meet (European standards and guidelines)." It said that "some third level programmes are at a crisis level due to diminished staffing and resources" and that additional burdens are also affecting research capacity. The report also found that Irish HETs were "plugging funding gaps ... by ... generating income through research and ... international students" and that "emphasis on the student learning experience and the commitment of staff has continued".

⁵Quality in an Era of Diminishing Resources – Irish Higher Education 2008-2015, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Dublin, March, 2016, Pages: 38.

1.2 Management of Quality Assurance

1.2.1 Introduction

Quality and QA permeates the agenda of all major committees at NUI Galway and is the responsibility of every member of University staff. The University's management structures enforce separation of responsibilities between the provision of quality services and their approval. Decision around the development and improvement to all learning programmes is the responsibility of Schools with approval required by Colleges and the Academic Council (AC). Decision around the development and improvement of internal Policies and Procedures (P&Ps) is the responsibility of various units with approval provided by a major committee including Academic Council and the Support Services Committee (SSC). Decisions around P&Ps related to internal monitoring and Quality Review (QR) are taken by the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) with approval by Údarás through the SSC, APRC, and AC committees. The Quality Office is responsible for management of P&Ps related to QR and for supporting all units in the development of their own internal P&Ps.

KEY COMMITTEES THAT DEVELOP AND APPROVE INTERNAL P&PS INCLUDE:

- University Management Team
- College and School Boards
- Graduate Studies Board
- Research Committee
- Standing and Strategic Planning Committee
- Academic Council - Standing Committee
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee
- Finance and Resources Committee
- Risk Management Committee
- Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee
- Library Strategy Committee

Learners/Students are represented on all major committees. College and School Boards are supported in QA by Programme Boards that are responsible for both providing programmes and also monitoring quality through student feedback and stakeholder engagement. Management of QA is also supported by the External Examiner policy and student feedback policy including the national student survey. The Quality Office was staffed in 2017/2018 by Prof David O'Sullivan, Director of Quality, Quality Office (half-time); Ms Maureen Linnane, Quality Office; Ms Geraldine Lyons, Quality Office (half-time).

Related documents: QAG1 1.2; ESG 1.1, AIQR Part 1

1.2.2 Recent Major Enhancements

A key mechanism used in the management of quality is the University's strategic plan, Vision 2020 that sets out strategic objectives and key performance targets for all units across the University. The Vision 2020 strategic plan is also embedded through the operational planning process where every major unit in the University – Schools, Colleges and Support Services – annually provide details of completed and planned enhancements to oversight groups led by relevant members of the UMT.

The Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) regularly approve enhancements to the quality review (QR) processes and various internal policies and procedures (P&Ps). In 2018, the Registrar and Deputy President (Registrar) replaced the Vice-President for Innovation and Performance as chair of the QEC. The Registrar is also a long-term permanent member of the Irish Universities Association Quality Committee (IUAQC) - a University representative body that meets four or five times a year to discuss QA policy and emerging external standards and guidelines in the sector. The QEC adopts a tripartite approach to quality that links quality assurance, strategy and performance measurement.

A large number of external policies have been socialised into the management activities at NUI Galway within the last seven years and not least the *Core Statutory QA Guidelines (QAG1)* and *Core Statutory QA Guidelines for DABs (QAG2)*. These are in addition to a number of other specialist guidelines (e.g. *International Learners, Access Transfer and Progression* and many others). These external guidelines led for example to an enhancement of internal quality review policies. The scope of management has also extended into monitoring and review of collaborative and linked providers and professional accreditation. These and other major enhancements overseen by the management of QA are described in *Section 11 Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review*.

1.2.3 Future Enhancements

In September 2018, the University initiated a mid-term review of performance against the objectives set out in the Vision 2020 strategic plan with a view to making recommendations for enhancements in the development of the next Strategic Plan. One key learning from this process is the need for an Implementation Plan to operationalise the Strategic Plan. Planning for the next Strategic Plan is set to begin in academic year 2018-19. The report indicated that improvement had been achieved in all key areas and that the plan was progressing well towards achieving the 2020 targets.



CASE STUDY

STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL PLANNING

The University is required under statute to develop “a plan which shall set out the aims of the Údarás for the operation and development of the university and its strategy for achieving those aims, and for carrying out the functions”. Strategic planning is viewed by senior management as a way to transform quality and performance through the engagement of staff in idea generation and change management. University management interprets strategic planning as three hierarchically linked planning processes: Strategic planning; Operational planning; and Personal planning. Colleges set out 5-year strategic plans, linked to 5-year budget and student

number planning, and aligned to the University’s macro Strategic Plan, while individual Schools set out annual Operational Plans including projected performance against a range of institutional Key Performance Indicators and initiatives stemming from both the Strategic Plan, recommendations from Quality Reviews, such as the School Research Review reports, and feedback from stakeholders including students. Personal plans require every academic to develop personal goals for his or her research, teaching, societal impact and contribution.

1.3 Embedding a Quality Culture

1.3.1 Introduction

In 2010, the University embarked on developing a more *responsive* quality culture in the face of further increases in the intensity of external rules and regulations that led to the establishment of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The University wanted Schools to positively comply with external and internal policies and procedures while also using them to transform the School in line with University goals. In this regard, the University recognised that it was necessary to engage as many staff as possible in the transformation process and to redefine QA. A staff engagement survey in 2010 identified a number of major enhancements that could improve quality culture:

- *Make the Quality Review (QR) process leaner*
- *Make Quality Review process more evidence-based*
- *Quality Review process should encourage reviewers to explore new ideas with units*
- *Use Facilitators acting as repeat Reviewers to improve Quality Review teams*
- *Establish new types of QR (e.g. research)*
- *Implement Operational Planning to improve quality and link with strategic planning*
- *Enhance internal policies and procedures (P&Ps) to improve quality assurance*
- *Implement benchmarking to improve quality and performance improvement*
- *Enhance performance measurement*

These enhancements were implemented between 2010 and 2017 and their efficacy was tested in a so-called Quality Culture survey in 2017 by the self-evaluation team (SET). This survey asked senior staff members to indicate how effective the above changes were for improving quality and also to consider two widely accepted dimensions of quality culture⁶: (i) changes in rules and regulations and (ii) the ability for teams or units to manage and assure their own quality. They were also asked for their views on how QA could be enhanced in future years.

There was overwhelming agreement among respondents that most of the QA enhancement initiatives arising from a previous staff survey in 2010 and listed above, had improved QA at the University. The least convincing was improvements to the way performance is measured and communicated. Comments on further enhancements suggested a need for more work to be done on the University’s system of policies and procedures and the need for UMT to support quality through increased resource allocation.

Related documents: QAG1 1.3; ESG 1.1, AIQR Part 1

⁶ O’Sullivan, D., (2015), *Evolution of the QA Culture at One University, Proceedings of 10th European Quality Assurance Forum (EQUAF), University College London, United Kingdom, November, 2015.*

1.3.2 Recent Major Enhancements

The 'culture survey' in 2017 demonstrated that QR is now leaner, more evidence based and focussed around creativity and enhancement. In addition to QR, additional QA processes now incorporate: benchmarking; structured P&Ps; and research assessment. The survey gives strong indication that the University's QA has migrated towards a more *responsive* culture that uses QA as a process of transformation and continuous improvement. The Quality Culture survey also identified a number of current and potential enhancements that are summarised as follows:

1. More effective system of Policies and Procedures (P&P) in particular within academic areas.
2. Focussed quality reviews on topics such as workloads and teaching & learning.
3. More appreciation of the role of impacts (societal) in quality assurance.
4. Greater student engagement and involvement in quality enhancement.
5. Greater engagement by UMT in quality assurance processes and follow-up.
6. Centralised performance management system that helps units manage quality.
7. Training and support for units to help them manage their own quality

and performance.

8. Central fund or budget for assisting units implement key actions arising from reviews.
9. Streamline and rationalise the amount of reporting and reviews e.g. operational planning, quality reviews, research reviews, health and safety, risk management, etc.

Items 1 to 4 underpin efforts already underway at the University. The P&P Repository is currently in place and continuously evolving. A current P&P around the QR of Teaching within Schools already goes some way towards focussing QR around workloads and teaching. Societal impacts were a key theme in the QR of Research and now also the topic of a new Presidential Award for Societal Impact started in 2017 and chaired by the Director of Quality. There is also a Student Engagement initiative (NSTEP) currently underway (see Section 7.3.2 for further details).

1.3.3 Future Enhancements

The SET endorses further exploration and implementation of items 5 to 9 above as potentially enhancing a stronger quality culture at the University.



CASE STUDY

QUALITY CULTURE SURVEY

Quality and Quality Assurance (QA) culture has evolved significantly at the University over the past number of years in response to emerging QQI guidelines, various leadership initiatives including more recently the HEA's compact agreements, and through the engagement of staff in co-designing and implementing internal QA processes. Prior to the introduction of QA in 1995, the University exhibited traits of what's called a **reproductive culture** (Harvey and Stensaker, 2008)⁷ where individual, rather than group expertise, defined quality and where transparency of the QA process was poor. QA was an internal process within departments supported annually by the External Examiner process. There was a strong resistance by Schools to external oversight and a focus on maintaining the status quo. In 1995, the draft Government Act required the University to "establish procedures for quality assurance aimed at improving the quality of education and related services" (Universities Act, 1997). This Act heralded an increase in the intensity of rules and regulations, both external and increasingly internal within the University through the newly established Quality Office.

Between 1995 and 2010 the University established its own internal rules for quality assurance focused on a procedure for the internal quality review (QR). According to Harvey and Stensaker, the dominant culture shifted from weak to medium intensity of external rules and towards a more **reactive culture** characterised by reluctant compliance, the perceived threat of potential sanction, high resistance and serious doubts about the potential for

improvement. This reactive culture, although accepting of the need for external rules, perceived quality as externally imposed.

In 2010, NUI Galway decided to embark on developing a more responsive culture in the face of further increases in the intensity of external rules and regulations and its strategy to increase staff engagement. The University wanted Schools to positively comply with regulations while also using them to transform the School in line with their own goals. In this regard, the University recognised that it was necessary to engage as many staff as possible in the transformation process and to redefine QA. A survey identified a number of key enhancements to the quality review (QR) and QA processes that were implemented between 2011 and 2017.

The recent culture survey among University managers shows that QR is now leaner, more evidence-based and focused around creativity and enhancement. In addition to QR, additional QA processes now incorporate benchmarking, structured policies and procedures and research assessment. QA is also now part of a tripartite approach that links quality, strategy and performance together, with quality focusing on assuring an appropriate standard of excellence; strategy and operational planning guiding faculty towards a vision of the future; and performance providing evidence of quality enhancement and strategy execution. The survey gives strong indications that the University's QA has migrated towards a more **responsive culture** that uses QA as a process of transformation and continuous improvement.

⁷ Harvey, L., & Stensaker, B. (2008). Quality culture: understandings, boundaries and linkages. *European Journal of Education*, 43(4), 427-442.

2.

**DOCUMENTED
APPROACH TO
QUALITY
ASSURANCE**

2.1.1 Introduction

The Quality Office has created a *Quality Information Systems (QIS)* accessible publicly through the Quality Office website and that includes the following databases: (i) P&P Repository, (ii) Quality Reviews Schedule and Documentation, (iii) Collaborative Providers Repository and (iv) Accredited Programmes Repository. There is also a database of local Enhancements annually reported by Schools and support units.

Related documents: QAG1 2; ESG 1.1, AIQR Part 1.

2.1.2 Recent Major Enhancements

The University recently adopted a policy for documenting all policies and procedures and making them accessible in a central location. All major policies, procedures, regulations and guidelines (hereinafter termed 'P&Ps') are made available by various units across the University and guide the behaviour of University staff and students when implementing key University processes. The policy for writing P&Ps requires that they reflect best practice in the higher education sector and are written using simple and accessible language for end users. All University P&Ps are also coded and indexed in the University's *P&P Repository* and made available on the Quality Office website (<https://www.nuigalway.ie/quality/>). P&Ps enhance quality by providing guidelines for the behaviours and practices of staff and students.

The P&P Repository adopts a holistic and distributed approach where all P&Ps across the University are available from a central location but where ownership of groups of P&Ps is distributed across key units e.g. Registrar's Office, Human Resources, Examinations Office, etc. The P&P Repository is available through the Staff Homepage and through the Quality Office website.

THE P&PS BELOW ARE A SAMPLE OF POLICIES THAT WERE EITHER INITIATED OR REVISED DURING 2017/2018:

- QA244 Accredited Programmes
- QA246 Collaborative Partnerships
- QA181 Gender Identity and Gender Expression
- QA412 Student Data Usage
- QA202 Recording of Lectures and other Formal Teaching Sessions by Students
- QA221 Feedback on Modules & Programmes
- QA819 Archives Acquisition and Evaluation
- QA161 Parking Management
- QA162 Space Management
- QA163 Protective Services Maintenance
- QA164 Legionella Prevention to L8 ACOP
- QA165 Protocol Response Procedures
- QA166 Safety Management System
- QA167 Radon and Asbestos

2.1.3 Future Enhancements

The P&P Repository as a whole requires continuous updating and enhancement to individual P&Ps. All individual P&Ps need to be reviewed every seven years. A thematic review of all P&Ps may be considered in the future to review this process. A subgroup of the Academic Management Team chaired by the Academic Secretary is currently reviewing all academic P&Ps to identify any that may need to be updated.



CASE STUDY

P&P REPOSITORY

NUI Galway's P&P Repository is one database of information contained within the University's Quality Information System (QIS) and contains all policies and procedures in use across the University⁸. Over 250 individual P&Ps are now codified and controlled and are subject to review and updating at least once every seven years. Policies assure effective implementation and guide the actions and behaviour of staff and students. P&Ps are quasi-legal documents that guard against suboptimal behaviour and enhance risk management. Some P&Ps are guidelines that promote best practice. P&Ps can be documented as formal documents but may also be simple forms or website pages. All P&Ps are codified using a unique QA Code (e.g. QA001).

A capstone P&P reflects overall quality assurance policy is entitled 'QA001 Quality Assurance'. This is followed by a policy

on P&Ps entitled 'QA001 Policies and Procedures'. All of the remaining P&Ps deal with various aspects of the University's systems and processes. P&Ps are created and owned by a number of key stakeholders and independently approved by appropriate committees. The P&P repository is designed to allow each unit to locally manage their own groups of policies. Each unit stores their own P&Ps on a local webpage entitled 'Policies and Procedures' or 'Regulations'. These are aggregated into the P&P Repository. Units that 'own' their own groups of P&Ps include Examinations, Admissions, Student Records, Quality Office, Human Resources, Information Solutions and Services and so on. The P&P Repository is located on the Quality Office website to allow all staff and students one location to find specific P&Ps.

⁸O'Sullivan, D., Lynch, O., (2018), *Internal QA Policies across the Full Spectrum of Institutional Activities, Proceedings of 12th European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF)*, Vienna University of Economics and Business, Vienna, November, 2018.

3.

**PROGRAMMES
OF EDUCATION
AND TRAINING**

3.1 Programme Development and Approval

3.1.1 Introduction

All programmes undergo a comprehensive and rigorous design process and independent approval process. Schools prepare programme and module templates that include programme objectives, learning outcomes, progression rules, and student workloads (ECTS) and that are compliant with the National Framework for Qualifications. All programmes must also have Programme Boards who consult various stakeholders including employers and students when designing, revising or evaluating programmes. Programme approval begins within individual Schools before proceeding to approval by College Boards. Research degree programmes are also considered at Graduate Studies Board. They then need final approval by the Academic Council (AC) following evaluation by its Standing Committee.

Related documents: QAG1 3.1; ESG 1.2, AIQR Part 1

3.1.2 Recent Major Enhancements

New programmes represent enhancements to the extensive portfolio of taught Bachelor and Master's programmes available at NUI Galway. A comprehensive list of approved new programmes by year is available within the Quality Information System (QIS) on the Quality Office website (<https://www.nuigalway.ie/quality/>). For example, in the year 2017/18, 28 new programmes were approved, and 19 programmes had major changes approved by the Academic Council. Major enhancements to programme development in recent years include a strategic focus on the career-readiness and employability aspects of programmes with targets for work-based learning opportunities set out in *Vision 2020*. Major initiatives include the introduction of 12 new 4-year degrees in the areas of Arts, Business and Law, incorporating a period of work-based learning experience.

NUI Galway's Vision 2020 Strategic Plan requires that 80% of UG programmes contain placement opportunities for students by 2020, (we are currently at 45%) and that these opportunities be provided to appropriate existing programmes by 2020. A uniform system of Undergraduate and Postgraduate programme weightings has to be applied since 2012/2013. The policy document was agreed by Academic Council Standing Committee (June 2012) and outlines the award, duration, ECTS, NQAI and level (Major or Minor). Internal policies and procedures (P&Ps) in this area are implemented through committee work as well as a number of online systems (e.g. AKARI) and other forms available from NUI Galway's Syllabus Team. Detailed programme outlines are available to the public through the main University website.

84 programmes are currently accredited by professional and regulatory bodies. For example, the College of Business and Law is in the final stages of achieving an AAMBA accreditation in addition to a number of other accreditations to its existing programmes. The College of Science⁹ achieved accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Medical Physics Education Programmes (CAMPEP) of MSc in Medical Physics. The College of Engineering and Informatics⁹ delivers a range of high quality professionally accredited BE and BSc programmes. The accreditation is awarded nationally by Engineers Ireland, and consequently internationally through the Washington Accord. The College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Science has successfully maintained professional accreditation, and CORU accreditation was successfully attained by the Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy programmes. The College of Arts, Social Sciences and Celtic Studies had its MA in Health Promotion accredited by the International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE).

⁹ The College of Science and the College of Engineering and Informatics are soon to merge into one College of Science and Engineering. This report will refer to each college separately where appropriate.

3.1.3 Future Enhancements

Curriculum innovation is an ongoing process of continuous improvement at NUI Galway and every year new programmes or major changes to existing programmes are approved by Academic Council.



CASE STUDY

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME REFORM AT CASSCS

Three key areas of enhancement were recently completed by the College of Arts, Social Science and Celtic Studies (CASSCS) led by the newly appointed executive Dean and Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies. Key areas of reform and enhancement included: (i) Reform of existing programmes and introduction of new programmes; (ii) Implementing a Skills Agenda and (iii) improving Retention by focusing specifically on First Year experience. Since 2016 the CASSCS has introduced new programme structures to support the development and delivery of new 4-year programmes within the College. This culminates in 7 new 4-year programmes with first entry in September 2018, with further new programmes planned for September 2019 and 2020. As part of this series of enhancements a Portfolio of Minors has also been developed; this incorporates subject based and interdisciplinary minors developed to reflect the expertise of colleagues in the CASSCS and will be used as the 'building blocks' for new programmes in the future.

In line with HEA recommendations (coupled with the Arts Review Strategy and feedback from undergraduates through ISSE), the CASSCS has implemented a Skills Agenda that sees each undergraduate student in the College engage in dedicated and tailored skills modules. These skills modules operate across multiple foci including: supporting student learning, career readiness and employability, life skills. A central focus of these classes (operational across all programmes) prompts students to think through the transferability of the skills learned as part of their CASSCS experience. Further to this, to enhance the career readiness of BA (Joint-Honours) students (866 students), from 2018, each student has the opportunity to develop a College Skills Passport, based on the subject specific skills developed as part of their overall degree. This is a significant piece of work and reflects real change and enhancement to overall student experience.

3.2 Learner Admission, Progression and Recognition

3.2.1 Introduction

Students can access NUI Galway programmes of learning through a variety of means including: Leaving Certificate (CAO), A Levels, EU & EFTA, Non-EU, International and Medicine. Access is also provided to Irish, UK and EU/EEA Transfers, Advanced Entry, FETAC, International/Non-EU and Mature Students. All admissions are overseen and approved by senior academic staff through School and Programme committees and later approved by Academic Council. Extensive use is made of the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) for assessing applicants coming from outside the Irish education system.

NUI Galway recognises that for non-traditional students, access to education can be impeded by a wide variety of barriers including entrance procedures, as well as academic, financial, geographical and cultural barriers. For this reason, the approach to achieving real access and participation for people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds goes significantly farther than targeted recruitment and admission policies. The University has made a strategic decision

to widen access and participation and encourage and support admissions from schools and areas with a poor record of sending children into higher education. NUI Galway's strategic plan details specific actions associated with this goal, i.e. 24% of students from traditionally under-represented groups entering full-time undergraduate study, increased from 19%.

Related documents: QAG1 3.2; ESG 1.3; AIQR Part 1; QQI Policy on Access Transfer and Progression

3.2.2 Recent Major Enhancements

NUI Galway has developed and implemented an intensive programme of developmental initiatives and supports which target those at primary and secondary schools and potential young (under 23) adult students who might not ordinarily progress to higher education.

THE PROGRAM INCLUDES:

- **Access programmes** designed to equip and build the personal capacity of disadvantaged students for University-level studies.
- **University Trail programme** for targeted secondary students in partnership with selected second-level schools.
- Awareness-building programme with targeted **DEIS primary schools, UNI4U**, involving parents, children and teachers in homework, educational support and sport. **22 schools and 3,666 students** participated.
- Participation of senior cycle history students in **3 DEIS Schools on the award-winning NUI Galway Breaking the S.E.A.L. programme.**
- **Foundation courses and pre-entry programmes** for young adult students/school-leavers, including educational guidance and other developmental supports for these students.
- **Outreach of Access across the region** – delivery of Foundation Courses targeting young adults/ school leavers in Ballinasloe, Connemara (through Irish) and Sligo.
- **HEAR - Higher Education Access Route for school-leavers** who have the ability to benefit from and succeed in higher education and who come from socio-economic groups that are under-represented in third level education.
- **Community Education programmes** which target and support capacity-building, in particular, among socially disadvantaged groups and minority and rural communities.
- **Youth Academy, founded in 2012**, has made special efforts to work with young people from DEIS schools and those who may not have a history of third-level education in their family. Over 400 high-ability 4th and 5th class primary school students have engaged with ten subject offerings.
- NUI Galway's major research units, including ILAS, Insight, CÚRAM and Ryan Institute for Marine, Environment and Energy Research, all operate active and comprehensive **Outreach Programmes**
- **Community Education Capacity Building programme:** through on-going collaboration between Life Long Learning and the Local Integrated Development Partnerships where a number of specialised targeted initiatives have been created to enhance capacity building with the most disadvantaged and marginalised.
- All University Colleges allow transfers from other Universities and Colleges for suitably qualified students to complete primary degrees.
- Progress is monitored and assessed through marks and standards, the independent external examination process and examination boards at College level.

Currently, 21.7% of the NUI Galway new entrants are non-traditional students, including full-time mature students, socio-economically disadvantaged students, and students with a disability, members of the traveller community and ethnic minorities and those with QQI/FE qualifications. In the 2017/2018 academic year 220 students participated on Access and Foundation courses; over 150 students will receive offers for entry to NUI Galway. Over 1,200 undergraduate students across all colleges and courses and years are registered with the Access Programmes Office having entered NUI Galway through Access Courses and the HEAR scheme and the QQI route.

Other recent major enhancements to learner admission have included the following changes to organisational structures and IT systems:

- **Integration of non-EU Admissions function into the core Admissions Team**
As set out in Vision 2020, NUI Galway has a strategic objective to advance an ambitious internationalisation agenda, including a focus on recruiting international students, with a target to ensure 25% of the student body is comprised of international students by 2020 (currently at 22.4%). The admission of non-EU applicants through responsive, efficient and timely admissions processes is critical to delivering this objective. In 2017/18, following an extensive process-mapping exercise, the non-EU Admissions function was moved from the International Office and integrated into the core Admissions function, to ensure a standard, consistent approach to both EU and non-EU Admissions.
- **Implementation of a new IT Application System for Postgraduate Admissions**
As set out in Vision 2020, NUI Galway has a strategic imperative to grow the proportion of its student body studying at postgraduate level by 2020. In 2018, NUI Galway invested in a new IT system for Postgraduate applications in order to provide a more customer-focused service to applicants, and to facilitate more efficient and timely decision-making on postgraduate applications.

3.2.3 Future Enhancements

In the area of Learner Progression, NUI Galway has set a strategic objective in the HEA Compact 2018-2021 to make the following enhancements: “*Development of a Student Success Strategy by AY 2020/21 to support and enhance student transition, progression and achievement of non-traditional students.*” NUI Galway will also develop a data warehouse facility to support student success, harnessing the potential of data to drive effective and sustainable success strategies that underpin improvements in learning, retention and progression rates for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (see Section 8.5.3 for more details).



CASE STUDY

ACCESS PROGRAMME

The Access Programme is aimed at non-traditional students from under-represented socio-economic backgrounds, who may also be mature students or students with a disability. During the Access Programme, these students' study for a Diploma in Foundation Studies (Level 6, 30 ECTS), which then guarantees them direct entry to general degree programmes in the University. In January 2018, the Access Centre launched a number of new places in the University that will be made available to students on QQI, FET and FETAC courses. In total, 170 full-time undergraduate places will be available to these students, thereby greatly increasing opportunities for disadvantaged and under-represented groups to access education. This alternative pathway to university and the courses available to applicants are outlined in a new QQI/FET/FETAC prospectus produced by the Access Centre team.

3.3 Programme Monitoring and Review

3.3.1 Introduction

All programmes undergo annual monitoring through Programme Boards and the External Examination process and also periodic review through the Quality Review (QR) process of Schools. All programmes have undergone periodical QR in the last seven years as part of the Quality Review of Schools. Student feedback is provided at module and programme level including feedback through the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE). External Examiners visit programme boards once every year to assess admissions, teaching, learning, staffing and assessment practices.

Related documents: QAG1 3.3; ESG 1.9, AIQR Part 1

3.3.2 Recent Major Enhancements

A new policy for the periodic review of taught programmes was introduced in 2015 - *QA006 Review of Taught Programmes*. This is designed to allow programme boards conduct an independent review of programme content and delivery. These reviews must take place every seven years and are done locally through the programme boards. This policy includes provisions for committees (e.g. Student Complaints Board) to request that the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) conduct a special QR for a particular programme

'centrally'. One such 'central' review of a programme was conducted in recent years. The policy on School reviews (*QA003 Review of Schools*) was also updated to require reviewers to review and assess all taught programmes within the School. Related policies were also created for the review of Collaborative Providers, Linked Providers and Accredited Programmes.

3.3.3 Future Enhancements

The QEC recently reviewed how Schools and Programme Boards utilise the information generated by the Irish Survey of Student Engagement. The committee agreed that ISSE results provide a rich and scientifically grounded dataset for monitoring student feedback. The committee agreed that (a) it is the responsibility of Programme Directors to ensure that survey participation rates are as high as possible and that (b) Programme Directors and Schools need to act on ISSE results and then inform new students of the enhancements that arose. The committee agreed on a need for new policy and procedure (P&P) for how Heads of Schools or their nominees (e.g. Programme Directors) must manage and act on the results of ISSE. This policy should include what intervention actions may be required from senior management (e.g. Deans, Registrar, Quality & Innovation Committee, etc.) for programmes that repeatedly receive poor feedback.



CASE STUDY

PROGRAMME REVIEW

The quality review policy 'QA006 Review of Taught Programmes' stipulates the procedures for the review of all taught programmes at least once every seven years by Programme Boards. QA006 also allows the Quality Enhancement Committee to conduct programme reviews independently under special circumstances. Such circumstances include the outcomes of the Student Complaints Procedure (QA611).

Between 2012-2015 the Student Complaints Board upheld a number of student complaints related to a particular Masters degree programme. Students complained about poor management, equipment and communication. The Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) implemented a special programme review in 2016. The outcome of the review resulted in the University allocating additional staff and capital funding that resulted in the recruitment of a new senior lecturer, curriculum redesign and new laboratory equipment.

4.

STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Staff Recruitment

4.1.1 Introduction

NUI Galway provides an extensive set of policies and procedures for staff recruitment and selection. These policies cover areas such as: Establishing a Post, Advertising a Position, Interview and Selection, Research Recruitment and Employment Permits. Specific P&P's for recruitment address:

- Roles, responsibilities and codes of conduct
- Academic/professional/technical standards for all staff
- Pedagogical standards for teaching staff
- Benchmarking staff profiles (at programme level) with those of similar providers
- Recruitment, selection, probation and tenure
- Collection and use of regular and timely learner and other relevant feedback
- Pedagogical training and certification of teaching staff
- Performance management
- Induction and Probation for new staff

Related documents: QAG1 4.1; ESG 1.5; AIQR Part 1 5.

4.1.3 Future Enhancements

The Foundation Research Lectureship Scheme was launched in 2016 with the aim of creating 15 research lectureship posts supported by philanthropy over a 3-year period. In 2018 and following the filling of the first five of these posts, a review of the scheme was undertaken to assess its effectiveness in enabling the recruitment of and development of future research leaders.

The review determined that the Scheme has created much-needed capacity, accelerated the University's recruitment of high performing early-career researchers, and provided a route to channel philanthropic support for academic posts. The review led also to a number of recommendations. The most notable of these relate to an expansion of the Scheme to all academic levels, including recruitment at Professorial level, an introduction of an application process that is based on strategic priority research themes, and an increased emphasis on the recruitment of ERC awardees through the Scheme. These recommendations have been adopted by the UMT and phase 2 of the Foundation Research Leadership Scheme is now open.

Due to the recruitment embargo and staff number cuts imposed by Employment Control Framework in 2012, coupled with the increase in student numbers that occurred in parallel, all Colleges currently have high Student Staff Ratios (SSR). Efforts have been made to address this through the use of Non-Exchequer income and this is showing initial signs of bearing fruit in the creation of permanent academic positions. However, there is a long way to go to achieve the OECD SSR norm of 14:1.

4.1.2 Recent Major Enhancements

The probationary supervisory group established for newly recruited Lecturer staff includes a clear expectation of engagement with training on Teaching & Learning offered by CELT as part of probation.

The College of Business, Public Policy and Law has recently completed a large competition for a suite of new professors in the School of Business & Economics, supported by innovative new talent recruitment strategies managed in cooperation with Human Resources.

The College of Science and the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Science have made a significant number of key strategic senior appointments that enhance the research portfolio of the University. A number of these appointments arose from competitive awards such as the Wellcome Trust's Clinical Research Career Development Award, European Research Council Award and SFI's Targeted Research Professorship Programme.



CASE STUDY

COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

To underpin a systematic and objective method of assessing and selecting suitable employees, the University has developed a 'Competency Framework for Academic Roles'. It is the duty of those involved in the recruitment and selection of candidates to ensure that the appropriate competencies are applied and that the University's commitment to selection on merit is seen to be clear and unambiguous. Defined competencies support the University and staff to perform better in the following areas: Recruitment

& Selection, PMDS, Learning & Development and Career Development (Progression). Following on from the implementation of a competency framework for academic staff, the University is now in the process of finalising a framework for each grade of support staff. The primary objective of the framework is to describe the particular qualities, attributes and behaviours necessary for effective performance in support service and professional roles.

4.2 Staff Communication

4.2.1 Introduction

Effective two-way internal communications are vital to the promotion of a culture of quality throughout any organisation, particularly one as large and diverse as NUI Galway. The University is committed to ensuring that staff are kept informed of issues, changes and enhancements to work practices. The University's Internal Communications Officer works with colleagues across campus to provide a cycle of internal communications aimed at staff. These channels are used to raise awareness of changing work practices and policies, and to celebrate success and achievement across the wide range of University activities. Key communication mechanisms include: An Dialann - a weekly staff news and events ezine; Ollscéala - a quarterly staff magazine; Campus screen network; Presidential All-Staff Addresses and New Staff Calendar system.

Related documents: CSG1 4.2; ESG 1.5; AIQR Part 1 5.

4.2.2 Recent Major Enhancements

Recent major enhancements include:

- *Upgraded staff recruitment and induction materials to include 'NUI Galway at a Glance' brochure and 'Welcome to NUI Galway' video*
- *Expanded campus screen network, to include screens on shuttle buses on campus*
- *New online staff and student calendar systems to capture and promote upcoming events*

Social media engagement with the University's successes has grown significantly in recent years, as evidenced in a marked increase in followers on Facebook (63k: 50% increase since 2016), Twitter (40k: 31% increase since 2016) and LinkedIn (64k: 45% increase since 2018).

4.2.3 Future Enhancements

Proposed future enhancement to staff communications include:

- *New staff and student portals, with greater opportunities for building awareness and engagement*
- *Increased use of video content in communications*
- *Renewed focus on promoting enhancements to University support services among staff*



CASE STUDY

PRESIDENT'S AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE

*One important aspect of encouraging a culture of quality in the University is the public recognition of staff that go the extra mile in achieving excellence in their work. In recent years we have expanded a suite of President's Awards for Excellence to celebrate the achievements of staff across the University's mission. Building on the success of the President's Awards for **Teaching Excellence**, which have been awarded every year since 2007, the University has introduced annual awards for **Research Excellence** in 2014, awards for **Support Service Excellence** in 2015, and for **Societal***

***Impact** in 2016. The nomination process is widely publicised among staff, who are invited to nominate colleagues and give examples of their exceptional contribution to innovation and excellence in the University. The successful candidates are awarded at public events in the University's calendar, including conferring ceremonies and the annual Research and Innovation Symposium. They are also featured in our internal communications channels to further raise awareness of excellence across the University.*

4.3 Staff Development

4.3.1 Introduction

Staff Training and Development offers a comprehensive suite of training and development opportunities open to all staff. In addition, the *Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching* provides comprehensive training in teaching, learning and assessment and the use of blended learning technologies and approaches to support the professional development of academic staff, with a focus on teaching and learning. All categories of staff are encouraged to pursue further education/training via the *Further Education Policy (FEP) Scheme* to enhance their personal and professional development. Expenditure over the period 2012 to 2018 on staff development was €644k for training and €1.6m towards 'further education' (e.g. Masters, PhD, etc.). Currently 104 staff members are undertaking supported study, including 44 at doctorate and 16 at Masters. In 2017, 87 staff were supported to undertake higher qualifications and 813 attended in house training.

Related documents: QAG1 4.3; ESG 1.5; AIQR Part 1 5.

4.3.2 Recent Major Enhancements

There have been a number of notable major enhancements in the area of staff development including;

- *The establishment of the Career Pathways to Development Programme for Support Services Staff*
- *Coaching and Mentoring focused on career development is available for staff. NUI Galway is committed through implementation of a specific action in the GEAP to extending and promoting the existing mentoring scheme to all staff including professional staff, and provides mentor and mentee training. HR Business Partners actively work with Deans to support mentoring and develop individualised development plans. NUI Galway joined the inter-institutional mentoring scheme run by the 30% Club and the Irish Management Institute (IMI) in 2017 and participates in the Aurora Women only Leadership Development programme*
- *A Working Group has been established to develop a Coaching framework in NUI Galway with the aim of establishing an internal Coaching panel to support the Career Pathways to Development Programme for Support Services staff*
- *Revision of the procedures for progression from below to above the bar based on School norms*
- *Amendments to the Senior Lecturer Promotion Scheme*
- *A more transparent workload allocation model has been implemented*
- *Appointment to the new post of Head of the Research Career Development Centre*

4.3.3 Future Enhancements

The self-evaluation team (SET) noted the current suspension of the University's P&P around the *Performance Management and Development System (PMDS)*. PMDS in an annual appraisal and workload planning process between individual staff and their line manager. The SET also noted the absence of promotional opportunities for support service staff within their existing role since 2008 owing to the public sector moratorium on recruitment. The only route open to these staff for promotion since then has been via open competition for advertised posts and temporary appointments. The HR Office has reviewed sectoral best practice to identify a model for promotion for NUI Galway and discussions with Trade Unions have commenced to agree a suitable scheme.



CASE STUDY

CAREER PATHWAYS TO DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

A new Career Pathways to Development Programme was launched in 2017 with the specific purpose to provide support services staff including technical and library with development options including coaching, mentoring, job rotation, management and personal development training. Through active participation on the programme, staff will be positioned to demonstrate an increased level of performance in their current role and be prepared should a promotional opportunity arise. The focus and goal of the programme is to assist staff in expanding their current skill sets and developing their experiences to open up new career possibilities and

offer greater job satisfaction. To date 17 staff have signed up to the programme. The Career Pathways to Development programme fulfils the University's vision and mission in that it supports the internal mobility of skilled staff across diverse functions within the University. It provides a mechanism for developing a workforce with diverse competencies and experiences capable of migrating into new roles. The programme will run over a 2-year period with participants selecting from a number of developmental options over that time including Coaching, Job Rotation, Mentoring and Personal Development.

4.4 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

4.4.1 Introduction

The Office of Vice-President for Equality & Diversity (OVPE) was established in 2016, with a remit to lead out on equality and diversity initiatives in NUI Galway commencing with developing and implementing a Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP). This first GEAP incorporates all of the recommendations from the NUI Galway Gender Equality Task Force and the recommendations of the HEA National Review on Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions. Since 2016, a suite of new policies and initiatives has been implemented to advance the equality and diversity agenda in the University including new policies around meetings during core hours, flexible working, support for staff returning from leave connected with caring, and equal opportunities.

Related documents: QAG1 4.3; ESG 1.5; AIQR Part 1 5.

4.4.2 Recent Major Enhancements

- *Gender balance on committees: the majority of the University's major committees and working groups (111) now have a minimum of 40% both female and male gender (Údarás and 5 sub-committees, 7 central committees and 98 College/School level committees) with 44% of all committees being chaired by women. Since Sept 2015, all interview panel members, all members of the University Management Team, and all Deans and Heads of School received unconscious bias (UCB) training. UCB training is provided each semester with the uptake routinely monitored by HR and the OVPED.*
- *Equality & Diversity Committees: The Equality, Diversity & Inclusion structures continue to evolve with the establishment of Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Teams/EDI committees at College/ School level. The Support Services Directors Forum has also established an Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Subgroup.*
- *Vice-Deans for Equality & Diversity have been appointed to newly established posts in the Colleges of Business, Public Policy & Law; Arts Social Sciences and Celtic Studies; and Science.*
- *NUI Galway actively supports women to develop their leadership skills through increased participation in the Aurora Women only Leadership Development programme. Since 2015, the University has funded and supported 58 women from all staff categories to attend the programme. As part of the programme, all participants are matched with a mentor. Feedback from participants and mentors has been unanimously positive. A further 15 women will be selected (via a direct application and selection process) to participate on the 2018/19 programme.*
- *A new Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy developed by the OVPED following wide consultation comes into effect on 1st October 2018. The roll out of the new policy is supported by the establishment of an Ally programme, training and campaign to raise awareness of the new policy.*

- *Two new grants were introduced to support research-active academic staff returning after extended periods of leave connected with caring, to re-engage with independent research. The Research Grant for Returning Academic Carers, which provides up to €10,000 to staff members returning from extended leave connected with caring, was introduced in AY 2016/17. To date 13 colleagues have availed of this grant upon their return. The Athena SWAN Mid-Career Lecturer Research Capacity Building Grant provides up to €5,000 to staff members who have availed of leave connected with caring in the past 10 years to focus on their independent research.*

4.4.3 Future Enhancements

THE SET NOTED THE FOLLOWING PLANNED CHANGES AND ENHANCEMENTS:

- *Workload Allocation: A set of core principles have been developed, with input from the Deans the Academic Management Team (Strategic) and consultation across our 5 Colleges and with staff representatives to underpin workload allocation activities at School level. A cross-university working group has developed institutional guidance on workload allocation. Both the set of core principles and guidance documentation was finalised at the first Academic Council meeting of AY 2018/19.*
- *Work has commenced on an NUI Galway Promotions Project which will enhance both the information and supports available for colleagues, particularly female academic colleagues, when preparing to apply for promotion to professorial posts.*
- *The Athena SWAN Action Plan includes the development of a Recruitment Tool Kit to provide guidance and assistance to hiring managers (e.g. Deans, Heads of School/Disciplines) to increase application rates from women at all grades and conduct unbiased assessments of qualified candidates. This will be developed throughout AY 2018/19.*



CASE STUDY

ATHENA SWAN AWARD

In May 2018, the University was awarded an Athena SWAN Bronze Award which recognises that NUI Galway has demonstrated a solid foundation for eliminating gender bias and a commitment to developing an inclusive culture. In addition, the School of Medicine has also been successful in their Bronze application – the first School of Medicine to achieve this status across the seven Irish universities. In accepting the award, the University recognised that it was still at an early stage. Work on implementing the Athena SWAN three-year action plan is already underway and will continue to be fully supported by the President

and UMT as part of the determination to embrace diversity as a hallmark of our university community. In recent years, NUI Galway has introduced gender quotas for promotion schemes, along with inclusivity and unconscious bias training programmes for managers and staff. It has also introduced specific leadership development programmes for female university staff and targeted supports for parents returning from leave. The Athena SWAN action plan sets out a schedule for all STEM schools to apply for accreditation over the next 3 years.

5.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

5.1 Teaching and Learning

5.1.1 Introduction

Students are engaged in programmes using a variety of Policies and Procedures (P&Ps) captured in the *University's Learning, Teaching & Assessment (LTA) Strategy* developed by the *LTA Committee* and supported by the *Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT)*. This strategy and associated P&Ps describe how staff engage with the Bologna Process; Learning Outcomes; Academic Integrity; Accessibility; Attendance Requirements; Student Feedback and Teaching Evaluation.

Related documents: QAG1 5.1; ESG 1.4, 1.5, 1.6; AIQR Part 1 6.

5.1.2 Recent Major Enhancements

The University LTA committee was formed in late 2010 as a sub-committee of the Academic Management Team (AMT). Originally an ad-hoc meeting convened by the Director of CELT of the Vice-Deans for Teaching and Learning, the membership has extended to include the University Librarian, the Director of ISS, the VP for Student Experience¹⁰, and the SU Education Officer. The committee meets twice per semester and reports on the progress of the LTA strategy. Recent activities of the LTA committee include: *Development of LTA Strategy 2016–2020; Input to University Strategic Plan 2015-2020; Discussion and development of position papers on Attendance, First Year Experience, aspects of Academic Simplification, Graduate Attributes; Development of policies including: Student Feedback; Student Recording of Lectures; Assessment.* College level LTA committees are also used, chaired by the relevant Vice-Dean. Some Schools also have an LTA committee.

Specific enhancements within Colleges were also noted by the self-evaluation team (SET). In the *College of Science*, the Arts/Science Biochemistry and Orbsen space were repurposed to accommodate expanded undergraduate (UG) numbers in microbiology and post-graduate taught (PGT) Biomedical Science programmes and implement group-based practical skills in genetics training for UG students. There was replacement of physical in-class responsive 'clickers' with web-based app for all 1st Science UG students. Chaired by the new Vice-Dean for LTA, a *College of Business, Public Policy and Law* level LTA committee has been introduced and 100% student feedback has been implemented across the College. University-wide Operational Provisions for the lifting of borderline students have been defined and rolled out at College level. Capping at repeat sittings has also been successfully introduced across all programmes.

5.1.3 Future Enhancements

Most recently, as part of the review of academic committees, the strategic role of the LTA Committee has been developed to ensure it has a more cross-cutting role in directing teaching and learning strategy. It will be chaired by the *Registrar and Deputy President* and will be joined by the new *Dean of Students*. It will report directly to *Academic Council*.



CASE STUDY

DESIGN AND BUILD TEACHING AT THE COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING & INFORMATICS

The College of Engineering & Informatics has introduced novel and progressive features in teaching activities, that leverage the new facilities in its new award winning 14,250 m² Alice Perry Engineering Building opened in 2012. They include common First Year design and build projects where all First Year Engineering students form teams that compete to design and build the best performing (i) Pasta Bridge, (ii) Electric Car and (iii) Robot, based on the analytical skills they are acquiring in their 1st year modules. A 2018 incarnation of the Electric Car, better known

as the GEEC was crowned the most efficient vehicle possible at the Shell Eco-marathon Europe and is capable of travelling more than 350km on a single charge or 16,000km per gallon. The Shell Eco-marathon Europe is a 16km street-circuit race with the goal of using the least amount of fuel or energy in the most efficient manner. This year, 149 engineering schools and universities in Europe developed and built cars for the Shell competition, with more than 2,000 students taking part.

¹⁰ The VP for Student Experience was replaced by a Dean of Students end of 2018.

5.2 A Provider Ethos that Promotes Learning

5.2.1 Introduction

The LTA Strategy provides the overarching framework for the design and operation of courses and modules (augmented by University regulations on degree structures, examinations, etc). Some additional documentation and supports are also available here that provide more detailed information and guidance including: The Bologna Process; Learning Outcomes; Assessment; Academic Integrity; Accessibility/Inclusivity; Teaching Practices; Attendance Requirements and; Student Feedback Policy.

Many existing academic staff have completed accredited programmes in academic practice (approx. 146 since 2013/14), provided by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT). All new staff are encouraged to register for the Post Graduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. CELT provides a comprehensive suite of policies, guidelines and technologies with the aim of fostering a culture of excellence in teaching and learning; promoting methods that encourage active learner engagement and critical thinking. There is a robust suite of policies for learner feedback, engagement, complaints and examination appeals.

The *Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development* (CALPD) offers an extensive range of Professional, Part-time and Evening courses, with 1,781 students enrolled on these courses in 2017/2018. These flexible courses are offered at undergraduate and postgraduate level and allow learners to study at their own pace in a wide range of subject areas including Science and Technology, Business and Management, Languages, Education and Training, Early Childhood Studies, Arts and Social Science, Information Technology, Community Development and many others. These programmes are offered either via classroom-based learning, blended learning or in fully online mode. Programmes are also offered in a number of outreach Centres at a regional level ensuring equality of access for all learners. A series of short, non-accredited courses are also available for learners who have an interest in a particular subject area and want to find out more about it while experiencing the world of lifelong learning for personal development reasons.

Related documents: QAG1 5.2; ESG 1.3; AIQR Part 1 6.



CASE STUDY

PRESIDENT'S AWARDS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

NUI Galway prides itself on being a student-centred and research-intensive University and seeks to be recognised nationally and internationally for our excellence and leadership in selected and distinctive programmes of teaching and research. Teaching and research are both central to the role of staff, and excellence in teaching and in creative and scholarly work go hand in hand. Inspirational teaching has always been a key feature of the learning experience at NUI Galway. The President's Awards for

5.2.2 Recent Major Enhancements

Teaching and the support of learning is now formally recognised in the academic promotions process, with formal approval of a route to Personal Professorship on such a basis. In August 2016, the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education published a *National Professional Development Framework (PDF) for All Staff Who Teach in Higher Education*. The next phase was to pilot it with a number of groups over the first half of 2017. Three such pilot groups, involving 20 academics, library staff, education developers and learning technologists, were supported at NUI Galway to explore the PDF and support their own individual development. Since September 2017 one approach to mainstreaming the PDF has been by providing a time and space for staff to come together to discuss teaching and their own development as teachers. CALPD has created an open, online CPD training course for adult learning tutors in areas relating to teaching online. A digital badge is available for tutors who successfully complete the training programme.

5.2.3 Future Enhancements

To ensure a high level of consistency with national developments, the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education will be mapped to the National Professional Development Framework (PDF), and further opportunities for staff to engage with the PDF will be supported.

Teaching Excellence recognise the outstanding efforts of teaching staff to ensure NUI Galway students receive the highest quality learning experience. These awards represent an ideal opportunity to demonstrate our appreciation of the efforts and commitment of our colleagues. Up to 2017, there have been 57 recipients of teaching excellence awards across the University. 51 nominations/ applications were reviewed for the 2018 award.

5.3 National and International Effective Practice

5.3.1 Introduction

The University is actively engaged with the *National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. The Director of CELT sits on the board of the National Forum as a representative of the Irish Universities' Association. There are two Associates of the Forum from NUI Galway, who represent the University and also report directly back to the LTA committee on Forum activities. NUI Galway has been successful in a number of funding bids as part of collaborative projects, enhancement themes and the national seminar series.

NUI Galway is a member of the *Coimbra Group of Universities* and plays an active role in the *Education Innovation Working Group*. The working group develops its actions around exchanges of experiences, best practices and also organises seminars (active workshops) on different issues pertaining to enhanced teaching and learning activities. Recent workshop themes include *Assessment of and for learning* (Aarhus University, 2017) and *Internationalisation of the Curriculum* (Pavia University, 2016). Academic and other teaching staff are encouraged to engage in and contribute to the scholarship of teaching and learning within their own discipline at a national and international level.

The University's policy for the QR of Taught Programmes (QA006) requires Schools and Programme Boards to include making comparisons (or benchmarking) against similar programmes as Universities abroad. This applies to all taught undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

Related documents: QAG1 5.3; ESG 1.3, 1.4; AIQR Part 1 6.

5.3.2 Recent Enhancements

Funded by the National Forum, the Collaborative Knowledge Exchange for Learning Impact – or, simply, Crannóg, for short, is a partnership between NUI Galway, UL, MIC, and DCU, which aims to support the professional development of those colleagues in roles such as Head of School, Vice-Dean, Dean in the area of leadership of teaching and learning, recognising that such colleagues can play a pivotal role in implementing curricular change. Specifically, the project focuses on aspects of leadership of teaching and learning, and the building of digital capacity/capability. It builds on the work of Ireland's National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning, and seeks to encourage the sharing of ideas, the dissemination of research and scholarship, and the development of a professional network.



CASE STUDY

GALWAY SYMPOSIUM ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Held each June, this event focuses on a different key theme each year. The theme for 2018 was 'Design for Learning' exploring the design and use of Teaching and Learning Spaces in Higher Education, particularly those that facilitate active learning, collaboration, and student engagement. The event explored everything from state-of-the-art learning spaces to inspiring examples of 'hacking' the spaces we have, from libraries to 'learning commons', and from physical to online, hybrid, and open environments. The event attracts more than 200 participants from NUI Galway and beyond.

5.4 Learning Environments

5.4.1 Introduction

Over the past five years the University has made significant developments through new, redeveloped and refurbished infrastructure and buildings across the areas of Teaching, Learning & Research. Through capital projects, over 30,000 m² of new or refurbished floor space has been delivered to support the University's education and research programmes. NUI Galway's virtual learning environment (or 'learning management system') is *Blackboard Learn*. This provides a wide range of tools to support communication, the sharing of teaching and learning materials and to manage assessment and feedback. The Blackboard system is augmented with a number of plug-ins, such as Turnitin for checking the originality of written assignments and, most recently, the *Quickly Attendance* tool has been added to support the monitoring of student attendance. In addition, many other technologies are used, including peer and group assessment, discussions boards and group projects. Other tools include clickers, classroom response systems and video conferencing.

Related documents: QAG1 5.4; ESG 1.3; AIQR Part 1 6.

5.4.2 Recent Developments

Recent new and refurbished buildings for teaching, laboratory and research space include: *Human Biology Building* (incorporating Anatomy, Pharmacology and Physiology), *the O'Donoghue Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance* and *the Lambe Institute, the Biomedical Sciences Building and the Hardiman Research Building*. In addition, Buildings & Estates have worked closely with academic Colleges and have provided new lecture theatres, tiered seminar rooms, performance theatres, specialist laboratories, classrooms, rehearsal rooms, study zones, meeting spaces and seminar suites. Further investment and development work in the creation of collaborative teaching facilities in Education & Cairnes Business Schools support the evolving changes to teaching practices. The significant upgrade works across the *Arts/Science Building* has ensured the continuation of teaching and research in this area. The creation of *Innovation Hubs*, e.g. Blackstone LaunchPad supports student innovation on campus. The provision of *Language Interpretation Laboratories* supports teaching and research with enhanced facilities. Redevelopment of support facilities have brought important student facing services into one location such as Disability, Access and Mature Student Offices. The amalgamation of Careers & Student Placement into one location and upgrade works to Academic Administration & Examinations Offices also enhance the student experience.

The College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Science has rolled out a significant capital infrastructure programme that has expanded the footprint of the College across the region. They now have academies located at hospital sites in Letterkenny, Sligo, Castlebar and Ballinasloe. Overall, students now have better access to modern and enhanced teaching and research facilities, and also have greater exposure to diverse clinical facilities through the regional hospital network and related academies. In 2012, the College of Engineering and Informatics moved into the state of the art, award-winning, Alice Perry Engineering Building (named in 2017) that houses all four Engineering Disciplines (Civil, Mechanical, Electrical and Electronic,

Biomedical). The Alice Perry Engineering Building is the largest engineering educational building in Ireland. The building affords a seamless integration of teaching and research spaces, allowing for research-led teaching. The building also has ample high-quality laboratory space that has allowed for a step change in the hands-on, practical and design-and-build components in our programmes that are of critical importance in engineering education.

In the area of Research, The Lambe Institute for Translational Research & the Health Research Board Clinical Research Facility, enable integration with researchers and clinicians to address health challenges and pioneer medical interventions. This development represents an innovative partnership between NUI Galway, Health Research Board, Saolta University Health Care Group and the Health Services Executive. Selected staff from each of the Colleges of Science, Engineering & Informatics and Medicine, Nursing & Health Science occupying the new Biomedical Science Building that offers extensive research and teaching spaces for students, including housing the CÚRAM research centre. The Hardiman Research Building hosts two research centres in the Humanities and Social Sciences as well as an impressive collection of archives.

5.4.3 Future Enhancements

Most of the teaching spaces in NUI Galway are traditional in layout and there are not enough examples of learning spaces open for students to use to work on projects, private study, or deal with the requirements of 'flipped learning'. More engaged forms of learning, more participatory classroom activities, can be facilitated or constrained by the space in which the learning is taking place. A review of teaching and learning spaces, led by the LTA committee, is currently underway and will be used to inform future buildings and refurbishment projects. A feasibility study into the transformation of the Library building was published in 2014 and a proposal for a Learning Commons facility was presented to Galway University Foundation in 2017. In addition, a feasibility study for re-configuration of the Arts/Science building is nearing completion.



CASE STUDY

ONE BUTTON STUDIO

A One Button Studio is a collaboration between CELT and the Library and has recently been installed and opened in the James Hardiman Library Building. The Studio is a video recording space where an individual (staff or student) can reserve time and create high-quality video recordings by simply bringing a USB flash drive and pressing a button to start/stop recording. The lights and camera are activated as soon as anyone enters the room. The studio does not require users to have prior video, audio, or lighting knowledge as all of those components have been automated and pre-set for ease-of-use. It is intended to support staff who want to make a high-quality video for teaching, research or marketing purposes and students who are making videos as part of their studies.

5.5 Learning Environments – Library

5.5.1 Introduction

The Library prioritises the following to enable teaching, learning and research:

- A compelling place for academic engagement
- Access to excellent and relevant collections
- Connectivity through partnership, communication and community
- Graduates who think critically and have lifelong academic skills
- High-impact publication of research, data and digital content
- Expert staff, skilled to help in person or online

The Library provides collections, training in information use and a range of spaces in its building to enable different modes of learning and research. An annual budget for information resources is allocated to provide access to books, journals, archives and other collections across all disciplines.

Staff are organised in five teams:

- Operations: aligning Library space and staffing with changing needs
- Collections: integrating management and development of, and access to, information resources
- Marketing and Engagement: promoting the Library and understanding user needs

- Research and Learning: enabling research and developing academic skills
- Digital Publishing and Innovation: creating digital collections for innovative research

The Library uses the international and independent LibQual survey methodology, measuring Library users' minimum, perceived, and desired levels of service quality across three dimensions: Effect of Service, Information Control, and Library as Place. These dimensions translate to user perceptions of staff mediation of service, access to required information resources and the quality of the Library's building(s). Overall satisfaction ratings out of 10 have remained consistent over three recent years as follows: 2015 (6.8), 2016 (6.88), 2017 (6.9). The LibQual survey is conducted at many institutions worldwide and facilitates benchmarking. The average overall ratings in the UK and USA in 2016 were (7.0) and (7.05) respectively.

Annual participation in LibQual has been vital to quality improvement at NUI Galway in recent years. Survey data are reported to the Library Strategy Committee, compared with previous years and the UK/Ireland standard and analysed in detail by Library staff to inform priorities and metrics for the coming year's operational plan.



CASE STUDY

ACADEMIC WRITING CENTRE (AWC)

The AWC is located in the Library and offers free one-on-one tutorials on essay writing for NUI Galway students. In 2016/2017, AWC tutors helped over 500 students to overcome recurrent problems with grammar, punctuation, spelling, and essay structure. All students are welcome, regardless of level of experience or grade average. Students can also visit the AWC if they are having trouble starting a writing project. The AWC also offers group workshops and an online course. The services provided by the Centre are much valued. Student feedback for 2015/16 indicates that the expectations of 91% respondents were met, while the sessions exceeded the expectations of 41% surveyed students. The Centre website includes a book of the month, faculty recommendations, video tutorials, and other resources.

5.5.2 Recent Major Enhancements

RECENT MAJOR INITIATIVES AIMED AT IMPROVING QUALITY OF SERVICES TO STAFF AND STUDENTS INCLUDE:

- Restructuring of staff into new teams to deliver University strategy to 2020 ¹¹
- Combined Library and IT Help Desk to maximise support and user convenience
- Extended weekend opening hours before examinations
- Cross-campus partnership to develop an academic skills programme for student success
- Implementation of reading list management system for better access to learning resources
- Structured use of social media and other channels to communicate developments
- Restructuring of Library Strategy Committee to maximise student and other representation
- Strategic dialogue with each School to exchange information
- Digitisation of Abbey and Gate Theatre archives, generating €750K in research funding
- Development of an internationally recognised Library Makerspace for digital creativity
- Creation of a new space to host exhibitions to stimulate students and showcase scholarship

¹¹ Cox, J. "New directions for libraries in research staffing: a case study at NUI Galway". *New Review of Academic Librarianship*. 23:2-3, 2017, pp. 110-124. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13614533.2017.1316748>

5.5.3 Future Enhancements

The top priority is to improve the quality of learning space in the Library building and proposals are currently under discussion. Students have voiced strong demand for improved facilities, raising concerns about lack of recent investment relative to other universities, including uncomfortable study conditions and a lack of diverse spaces. While Library staff and collections rated well in the latest annual LibQual survey, 85 per cent of the comments about the library's physical environment were negative. SET envisages the Library as an inspirational place for discovery and knowledge creation. It is supportive of current discussions underway for enabling interactive, creative, interdisciplinary and technology-enabled approaches to learning. Other future enhancements may include:

- Reinforce customer service training and develop or acquire skills to meet changing user needs
- Review engagement with international students and the University internationalisation strategy
- Organise a more extensive programme of events and exhibitions to engage communities
- Review workflows to maximise efficiencies enabled by the new Library Services Platform, Alma.



CASE STUDY

MAKERSPACE FOR DIGITAL CREATIVITY

The Library established a makerspace in 2016 to make available to the whole campus community high-specification equipment, software and interactive space for digital creativity. This is a novel space where students can be creative, collaborate, share, develop ideas, innovate, and generally just “make things”. The most used equipment is 3D printing and users have created a variety of objects, displayed in an online gallery at <http://library.nuigalway.ie/digitalscholarship/makerspace/>.

The space has attracted an increasing number of users and has supported experimental learning in a number of disciplines as well as supporting entrepreneurship initiatives generated by students

using the adjacent Blackstone Launchpad. The Library Makerspace has achieved international recognition in the NMC Horizon Report 2017 Library Edition: “The most important practical implication of this trend in libraries is an increase in patron creation and innovation. Students at NUI Galway used the 3D design software and printers in the library makerspace to generate a variety of sculptures and to design and print models of molecules.” In addition to its immediate term impact, this innovative space prototypes the interactive, engaging, high-tech learning spaces envisaged in the proposals around developing the Library building.

6.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

6.1.1 Introduction

Programme assessment is dealt with through a variety of P&Ps and in particular NUI Galway's *Marks and Standards and the Learning, Teaching & Assessment (LTA) Strategy* supported by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT). The Examinations Office provides a number of P&Ps related to examinations, re-checks and special circumstances. Local policies and procedures for assessment exist at the College, School or Programme level. The LTA strategy and associated P&Ps describe how staff engage with the Bologna process, assessment and attendance requirements.

Lecturers are made aware of a variety of assessment methods and receive support from CELT through a range of professional development courses and personal advice. This guidance includes marking criteria, formative assessment and assessment rubrics. NUI Galway offers all students the possibility to inform examiners of mitigating circumstances during the assessment process and to appeal results of the assessment process. All programmes have standard marks and standards set up against them. These marks and standards ensure the same process and rules apply to all students within their programme. Quality assurance and enhancement of academic standards is provided through annual internal peer review of the External Examination process.

External examiners play a vital role in assuring and enhancing academic standards of modules, programmes and awards. While primarily involved in the review of assessment grades and standards, they also provide an important consultative and advisory function in the development of modules and programmes and the enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment practices. External Examiners review samples of Exam scripts to ensure marking is in line with best practice. External Examiners attend Schools prior to the Examination Boards. All programmes go before Examination Boards, chaired by the Dean of College with representatives from the Colleges also in attendance. The Examination board determines the progression of students. Students who have a concern about their results can apply to recheck or appeal their Examination results.

Related documents: QAG1 6; ESG 1.3; AIQR Part 1 2.

6.1.2 Recent Major Enhancements

A comprehensive 'Academic Simplification Project' was initiated in 2012 and ran to 2016/17 to review and simplify cumbersome and bureaucratic academic administrative processes related to learner assessment. Key outcomes of this comprehensive project included:

- A reduction in the number of Marks and Standards from 264 to a standard 8

- Specification that all modules would have a minimum weighting of 5 ECTS and only multiples of 5 ECTS were permitted
- Set out standard examination periods for the University - the standard module exam duration is now 2 hours
- Capping of modules for repeat sittings and the awarding of Honours
- Development of IT software systems including an Exam Modelling Tool (EMT), a tool which has been developed for Colleges to enhance the Exam Board process, by automating aspects of exam marks entry
- Standardised approach to 'mercy marks' at the College level led to a streamlining of Examination Boards

Additional enhancements include:

- Following recommendations by External Examiners, capping of marks (at 40% or 50% for the Medicine programme) at the second sitting was introduced in 2016/17
- A Policy on Continuous Assessment of Late Submissions and Extensions was implemented
- The Annual student survey and review of UG programmes was also implemented. An external review of UG programmes was implemented

All Colleges have also been active in the exploration and implementation of new LTA methods, including: e-learning and assessment; MCQ development and utilisation; online modules for students out on the Professional Engineering Placement (PEP); and blended learning.

6.1.3 Future Enhancements

A Policy on Assessment, derived from the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (QA271), is under development. It builds on the existing strategy, augmented by the eight key principles of assessment arising from the work of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, which recognises that assessment can be of learning, for learning and act as a form of learning.

NUI Galway is committed to the provision of an equitable learning environment that supports all students, including students with disabilities, to fulfil their academic potential. The University recognises the rights of students with disabilities to avail of reasonable accommodations to enable them to participate on equitable terms. Guidelines, legal requirements, recommended practice, and other aspects pertaining to 'alternative forms' of assessment for such cases will be detailed in a separate Alternative Assessment Policy. A process mapping exercise to map the assessment processes used for non-EU Occasional students (e.g. JYA students) will be completed in 2018/19 with a view to standardising assessment processes for these students.



CASE STUDY PEER ASSESSMENT

The Blackboard Collaborate suite of online learning technologies includes a Peer and Self-Assessment module. **Peer assessment** is a process whereby students or their **peers** grade assignments or tests based on a teacher's benchmarks. The practice is employed primarily in large classes to improve students' understanding of course materials and also actively reflect on course materials presented by others and to exchange help and respect with other students. The Peer and Self-Assessment module allows student peer groups to be created for collaborative projects and also anonymous assessment of the work of others. Peer and self-assessment are not normally used in the formal assessment of students, rather as an independent process where students can engage more with learning materials.

7.

SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS

7.1 Supports for Learners

7.1.1 Introduction

Student resources and support are provided through a number of P&Ps delivered primarily through the offices of Student Services, the Library and the Student Information Desk (SID). Student Services is supported by P&Ps around student access, accommodation, careers development, counselling, disability services, health promotion, sports and societies. Students are made aware of the resources available to support their learning through an online hub which also signposts specific training sessions throughout the academic year. These are in addition to programme specific supports. The adequacy of the resources is determined annually by analysing the response of students to questions related to the Supportive Environment in ISSE. First Year students are informed at Orientation, through general and College-specific talks, of the learner supports available to them. They are provided with a Student Guide which outlines these supports and each First Year student is enrolled in The Learning Centre on Blackboard. The development of the Academic Skills Hub brings all the resources together in one place and ensures that different learner support/resource units benefit from networking. The range of supports include the following: IT and Digital skills available online; Academic Skills Team in the Library; the Academic Writing Centre which offers one-to-one tutorials on writing skills to over 500 students annually; Support for Undergraduate Maths and Statistics (SUMS) which is a free drop-in centre for undergraduate students where tutors provide support for any area of Mathematics and Statistics; and CÉIM, an academic peer support scheme for First Year Students.

Related documents: QAG1 7.1; ESG 1.5; AIQR Part 1 7.

7.1.2 Recent Enhancements

Student Services staff were involved in establishing and participating in a cross-campus *Academic Skills Working Group*. The Working Group led by the James Hardiman Library aims to ensure that the range of learning resources and supports are available to students at NUI Galway are as coherent and integrated as possible. The online *Academic Skills Hub* was developed and launched in 2017. It aims to bring together all of the supports for learners (outside the scope of the Colleges, Schools and Disciplines) in a single, easily accessible, online location. It provides substantive content on key academic skills, replacing content previously on offer via an externally hosted online offering (*skills4study*). Content is aimed at all NUI Galway students, especially First Years. As well as providing tips and information, short guides, and downloadable worksheets, the online hub links to other supports as listed above and to upcoming skills training events, and additional supports for students, such as Student Counselling or the Students' Union. The Academic Skills Hub is actively sought by students and using Google Analytics in the period October 2017 to April 2018, there were 19,042 page views. There were clear spikes in October and November 2017, around the time of the launch. These figures will form the baseline for future analysis, particularly on the link between promotion and uptake. *Smart Study Smart Life*, which is an academic and wellness supports programme, was reviewed to ensure that skills workshops were targeted at those students most in need of support or at risk of withdrawal.

The *Disability Support Service* continues to engage with academic and administrative staff to promote inclusive teaching, learning, and assessment practices, with an emphasis on *Universal Design for Learning* to support the learning needs and preference of all learners. The *Disability Support Service* responds to requests for training on inclusive practice across campus. Data gathered for the 2017/18 academic year suggest that, to date, we have worked with just over 100 academic and administrative staff, along with tutors. Again, the figure for 2017/18 will serve as a baseline for future analysis of impact. The *Access Programmes Office* continues to deliver modules that support pre-undergraduate-level students who have experienced socioeconomic and/or educational disadvantage to develop key academic skills, including study skills, IT skills, and academic writing skills. Without such supports, it is likely that most such students would be unable to access or meet the demands of higher education programmes.

7.1.3 Future Enhancements

The College of Arts, Social Sciences and Celtic Studies is building a 'skills pillar' into its new degree offerings for 2018/19. A Student Success Strategy will be piloted in the School of Business and Economics in 2018/19. Student Services, with Library staff, have embarked on discussions with the School of Business & Economics regarding their skills modules offered in First, Second and Final Year of the Commerce programmes with a view to the possible integration of some Student Services offerings, particularly the Smart Study, Smart Life programme into these modules. Possible future activities of the Academic Skills Working Group may include an audit of skills support; evaluation of skills supports; networking; analysis of the interplay between generic and 'embedded' supports; promotion of skills resources; and targeted student mentor support for non-traditional students.



CASE STUDY

LEARNER SUPPORTS AND MENTORING

SUMS is a service for students providing informal mathematics support to First and Second Year students across all Colleges and courses, as well as to students engaged in Access/Foundation courses. Students can receive extra mathematics or statistics tuition during our drop-in service hours. Students also have access to study space – where they can work at your own pace with a tutor available for any questions. Outside of these hours, the SUMS study space is available for students to study on their own or with classmates. Friday afternoons are specially dedicated to students taking Access/Foundation courses and Mature Students.

DISC is a Computer Programming Drop-In Support Centre for students who are taking any programming/software development courses. The DISC is a free service that supports all students with their self-directed learning in computing topics at all years and levels in NUI Galway. DISC is an additional service to lectures and tutorials; and we do not attempt to use it as a substitute to these. DISC offers the following:

One-to-one advice; focused small group tutorials; books, courseware, web links, and other learning resources; advice for students and; assistance with new technologies.

CÉIM is an academic peer support scheme in conjunction with NUI Galway Students' Union, for First Year students at NUI Galway, established in 2013. The aim of the programme is to support First Year students to transition successfully to university, to succeed academically and to develop networks and complete their studies. The programme was first piloted in the College of Engineering & informatics in 2013. The impact of CÉIM to date is very encouraging, with 80% of first-time users surveyed in 2014/15 saying it helped them settle into university. Importantly progression rates of First Year students in Engineering & Informatics improved significantly, which supported the roll out of the scheme to other Schools in CASSCS in 2015. CÉIM also secured the Student Engagement Activity of the Year award from the HEA in 2016.

College of Engineering & Informatics					
Year	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Pass	268	274	261	283	288
Fail	41	34	33	19	22
Total	309	308	294	302	310
% Fail	13%	11%	11%	6%	7%

7.2 Pastoral Care

7.2.1 Introduction

Counselling services provide support for dealing with all the challenges students encounter. The *Student Health Service* provides on-campus medical and psychiatric care to registered students of the University. The *Student Connect Mentoring Programme* provides an introduction to NUI Galway for First Year students. Existing volunteer students are tasked with ensuring the smooth integration of incoming First Years into university life. The *Chaplaincy* service offers pastoral care and spiritual guidance to the students and staff of NUI Galway. The *Safe Campus* initiative is designed to raise awareness about maintaining a safe campus and raising awareness of personal safety wherever we are. NUI Galway is leading a national conversation on sexual consent training. Students are welcome to participate in research workshops and engage with *Smart Consent* that is helping to transform relationships.

Related documents: QAG1 7.1, ESG 1.5; AIQR Part 1 7.

7.2.2 Recent Major Enhancements

Counselling provides support when students need personal help and support. They provided over 5,000 individual appointments in 2018 as well as a comprehensive wellbeing programme for groups of students. The *Student Health Unit* (Medical) provides a medical service (GP, Physiotherapy, Psychiatry) and mental health support, with over 22,000 appointments in 2018. Recent new initiatives included supports in the areas of sexual and mental health. The *Chaplaincy* offers a range of liturgical, pastoral, advisory, social, and recreational activities and services to all students and staff of NUI Galway. Over 14,000 students attend events organised by the Chaplaincy annually. A bystander programme, *Seas Suas*, trained 250 students in 2018 to build shared individual and community responsibility on issues related safety, health and wellbeing. Over 960 students were registered with the service in 2018. The *Sports Unit* enables students to balance academic study with a wide range of sport activities through sports clubs, gym, other indoor facilities and field sports. There are over 46 active clubs with over 3,600 club members in the last year. 90 sports scholars were supported. These clubs enjoyed national and intervarsity success in a range of areas including Basketball, Men's and Women's Soccer, Men's and Women's Rowing, Archery, Athletics, Cricket, Judo and Women's Rugby. The *Societies Office* is the most active in Ireland – 120 societies, with 15,000 members, held nearly 3,000 events last year. NUI Galway won 3 of 12 national awards at the Board of Irish College Societies in 2018, including the 'Best Society' for the third year in a row.

Substantial building work was completed in *Áras na Mac Léinn* (Student Centre) including a new kitchen where students can cook and heat food, a band recording studio, two piano rooms, two new acoustic rooms, a baby feeding room and a relaxation room.

A survey of student counselling services in 2016/17 found that 80% of students said that counselling had helped them stay on at university, a 2% increase on last year. 91% of students said that counselling helped them do better at their academic work while 95%

said counselling had improved their overall experience of university. 93% said counselling helped them develop personal skills that might be useful in future employment. (For 71.8% counselling was an important or the most significant factor in developing personal skills that might benefit future employment). 95% said counselling had improved their self-esteem. (For 68% counselling was an important or the most significant factor in improved self-esteem). 97% said that counselling helped them feel more positive about the future. (For 77% counselling was an important or the most significant factor in feeling more positive about the future).

The College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Celtic Studies piloted a Retention Strategy for First Years in 2015/16, which focused on engagement of students with their course (using attendance as an indicator). They identified students with low engagement and used targeted personal interventions to provide support to students where necessary. Following this, First Year retention rates in CASSCS progression increased from 72.9% in 2015/16 to 79.7% for 2017/18.

7.2.3 Future Enhancements

Following from the success of the above initiative by CASSCS, the School of Business & Economics launched a Student Success Strategy pilot in 2018/19.

The learnings from both of these initiatives will inform the Student Success module of Project DANte (Data Warehouse Project – see Section 8.1.3 for more details) which aims to provide real-time data on progression and retention, aligned with a range of data sources to measure student academic, social and digital (e.g. Library usage) engagement and academic performance. This system will build on the student and staff outputs, and support key university units to replace the current manual, time-consuming and lengthy reporting process with on-demand, accurate, new and attractive reporting, with a view to implementing early intervention supports for at risk students – see section 8.5.3 for more details.



CASE STUDY

HEALTH AND WELLBEING SURVEY

Since 2016 the University has surveyed over 3,000 students on their mental health, wellbeing and academic engagement as part of the NUI Galway Student Information Project. Findings include: 23% of undergraduate students report severe/very severe anxiety; the prevalence of regular binge drinking is going down, but cannabis use is going up; less than half of our students are physically active for 30 minutes a day 4 or more times a week; less than half feel well rested on 4 or more days each week; depending on the College, up to 29% of students report not attending class regularly – the biggest predictors are both academic (e.g. academic

self-confidence, perceptions of academic environment) and personal (e.g. depression levels, cannabis use). This baseline data is reported, disseminated and actioned through staff and student meetings on student wellbeing. Findings from the data have informed: the implementation of the NUI Galway Sustainability Strategy; the work of Advisory Group on Student Health and Wellbeing; and the Smart Study, Smart Life programme. It also contributed data to the Responding to Excessive Alcohol Consumption in Third-Level (REACT) initiative and the Student Success Quiz.

7.3 Learner Representation

7.3.1 Introduction

Learners are represented on all major committees in the University. There are multiple opportunities for students' views to influence decision making, ranging from membership of Údarás of the University to class representatives on staff-student liaison committees. Students engage with NUI Galway in a number of ways illustrated below:

Individual	Student employed as tutor, disability support, library assistant, etc.
	Developing research or teaching projects with staff
	Vote in student elections
	Sports Clubs and Societies committee membership
	Student journalist in Students' Union media
	Engagement with teaching evaluations and national surveys
Course/Programme	Representation on course-development and quality review committees
	Act as elected class/programme representative
	Community-based assignments and projects
	Provide programme feedback
	Peer assessment
	Project-based learning and capstone projects
Department/School	Internships and Placements
	Representation on School-level committees and quality-reviews
	Representation on student council
	Representation on staff-student liaison committee
	Train other student representatives
	Organise events within the School
	Gender and equality training and culture
Interdisciplinary teaching and research opportunities	
College/Faculty	Student employed as tutor, disability support, library assistant, etc.
	Design training for students, peer-support tutors etc.
	Sports Clubs and Societies committee membership
	Student journalist in Students' Union media
	Student volunteering
	Recognition and rewards for student engagement
Institution	Representation on Údarás and Academic Council
	Design training for students, peer-support tutors, etc.
	Work with relevant committees
	Develop policy and procedures with staff, e.g. Student Engagement
	Student leadership training and development
	Visible social responsibility and recognition

National	Representation on national student bodies
	Design training for students, peer-support tutors, etc. (NStep)
	Participation in/design national student surveys
	Representation on national education bodies
	Participation in peer review of other HEIs
	Participation in policy development teams
International	Representation on European student bodies
	Representation on EU education bodies
	Participation in peer review of international HEIs
	Participation in EU policy development teams

Related documents: QAG1 7.1, ESG 1.5; AIQR Part 1 7.

7.3.2 Recent Major Enhancements

Arising from the report of the *Working Group on Student Engagement in Irish Higher Education*, NUI Galway was involved in the pilot programmes for the National Student Engagement Project (NStep). The University endorsed and supported Class Representative training and held an institutional valuation of our formal and informal engagement practices and opportunities at each level within the institution facilitated by Sparqs. This was attended by about 40 staff and students, including several Deans, who reviewed 90 statements on student engagement in the following domains: Teaching &

Learning; Quality Assurance; and Governance. This identified areas for improvement which are currently being implemented. NUI Galway is currently leading an NStep project on ‘The Design, Review and Delivery of Programmes’ with the aim of developing national guidelines.

7.3.3 Future Enhancements

A new policy on student engagement is currently being jointly developed between UMT and the Students’ Union.



CASE STUDY

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE¹²

In 2014, the University’s Director of Quality participated in a working group to establish principles and practices for student engagement for the Irish Higher Education sector funded by the Irish Higher Education Authority (HEA). The working groups established principles such as viewing students as partners rather than ‘detached consumers’. Overall, the working group favoured the ‘developmental model’ for Irish higher education institutions, over the ‘market model’ common in the US and, increasingly, the UK. The market model is based on a view of the student as a consumer. In contrast, the developmental model sees students as partners in a learning community, with both the rights and responsibilities of citizens. It says students who are active members of an institution

have a strong sense of allegiance and commitment and that “student engagement essentially means student involvement in governance and management, quality assurance, and teaching and learning.” The report recommends that all higher education institutions complete a staff evaluation and students work together to evaluate formal and informal student engagement practices and opportunities at every level. Once these self-evaluations are complete, institutions and students should co-author a student engagement policy that places the principles included in the working group’s report at the heart of each institution.

¹²O’Riordan, M., O’Sullivan, D., Collins, T., and McGuire, K., *Embedding Improvement through Student Engagement, Proceedings of 11th European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF), University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, November, 2016*

7.4 Guidance

7.4.1 Introduction

The Career Development Centre helps students to manage student career plans by providing a wide range of support services in areas such as career management and guidance, work-based learning, placements/internships and job applications. They maintain over 2,000 active employer relationships and advertised over 1,300 jobs in the last year. In addition, many Schools and Colleges who have active placement programmes provide academic guidance and supervision to students.

Related documents: QAG1 7.1; ESG 1.5; AIQR Part 1 7.

7.4.2 Recent Major Enhancements

NUI Galway Employability Award – pilot was completed in 2018 to increase students' employability skills, empower them to make successful transitions towards fulfilling careers and equip them with a framework for lifelong career management. The Employability Award was developed primarily for students who do not have a work-based learning experience in their programme. The award which is included in the Diploma Supplement, leverages existing supports with new initiatives and provides a framework to help students develop and articulate their employability. Collaborating with academic and administrative staff across the campus, the award brings together for the first time, the provision of skills development opportunities offered across the University. 56 Students have completed all elements of the award. The primary KPI was students' self-perception of their employability. Using the Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007 statement, "I have the right skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that will help me secure a graduate job in which I will be satisfied and successful" - 53% Agreed/Strongly Agreed with

the statement at the beginning of the programme, compared to 100% at the end. This award will be launched in September 2018 and we aim to have 200 students complete the programme in year 1.

Increase Work-Based Learning Opportunities. The University placed over 1,200 students on work placements in 2017/18, with the Career Development Centre placing over 500 UG students, an increase of 54% since 2013/14. They will continue to increase these numbers in support of the Vision 2020 goal that 80% of all undergraduate programmes will have a WBL experience. Management of placements will expand to include the Colleges of Science; and Arts, Social Sciences, and Celtic Studies. In line with the Centre's increased role in placement, the Centre has also developed a set of placement policies to guide best practice in placement across the institution.

7.4.3 Future Enhancements

FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS WILL INCLUDE:

- Full launch of the Employability Award in September 2018
- International Student numbers increasing to 24% of student body – specific career management programmes planned for this cohort
- Develop provision of service to Postgraduate Research students
- Continue to expand WBL opportunities and support workshops to deliver Vision 2020 WBL targets



CASE STUDY

TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT

Transition to Employment is a new programme to support students with disabilities and/or mental health challenges. This programme was a distinctive collaboration with the Disability Support Service, Student Counselling and the Career Development Centre (CDC) and was promoted through the CDC and the Smart Study/Smart Life academic and wellness support programme in NUI Galway. The programme connected individuals with employers who support inclusion and disability awareness and with AHEAD who provided guidance on disclosure, legislation and internships. Representatives from Google and ESB participated in the employer panel and highlighted how hiring graduates with a disability contributes to the overall inclusion and diversity in their organisations and how they are supported to maximise their

potential. KPIs relate to participant evaluations of the programme – with 12 participants completing all aspects of the programme while over 25 completed a mix of elements. The evaluations indicated high levels of satisfaction with each workshop with 96% of participants recommending the workshops to a friend and 92% indicating that they were satisfied/highly satisfied with the event and 92% agreeing that it increased their understanding. This programme won the AHECS (Association for Higher Education Career Services) Employability Award in 2017. The programme will be expanded in 2017/18 to include a work-based learning experience for participants.



CASE STUDY

TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT

In 2017, the Career Development Centre surveyed the class of 2016 graduates from full-time undergraduate and postgraduate courses; 2,489 graduates responded. **Where are they now?**

- Undergraduates in Employment: 56.51%; postgraduates 81.82%
- Undergraduates in Further Study or Training: 36.55%; post graduates 9.76%
- Undergraduates Seeking Employment: 2.07%; postgraduates: 4.83%
- Undergraduates Not Available or on Year Out: 4.82%; postgraduates: 3.48%
- Undergraduates in Unpaid Internship: 0.06%; postgraduates: 0.11%

7.5 International Learners

7.5.1 Introduction

NUI Galway has a strong international orientation, with a wide range of overseas partners and a well-established community of globally connected faculty, collaborating with over 2,769 institutions across the globe. We have students from over 170 countries including Erasmus and US Student exchange students who studied at NUI Galway in 2017/18. NUI Galway students also undertook exchanges abroad, and as part of our new B Comm. International, where students will spend a year abroad, we see this figure increasing further. NUI Galway is committed to maintaining or improving our International orientation, with targets in Vision 2020 aiming for at least 25% of the student body being international and evidence of this commitment is outlined in the recent major enhancements mentioned below.

Related documents: QAG1 7.1; ESG 1.5; AIQR Part 1 7; QQI Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners.

7.5.2 Recent Major Enhancements

Relevant major enhancements include:

- approval by University Management Team of a significant expansion of International Office staff, to augment each of its service subsections;
- complementary appointments of staff at College level across the university, covering services relating to international learners, with a hub-and-spoke relationship to the International Office to ensure co-ordination and responsiveness
- a significant migration of functions from the International Office to the Admissions Office to achieve integration and modernization of the two units' application procedures, aimed at ensuring international learners are provided with smooth-running access to NUI Galway programmes
- launch by International Office of online application systems to facilitate registration of inbound and outbound visiting students (Erasmus, JYA and non-EU exchanges), replacing previous hardcopy forms
- institution of a 'Global Lounge' for international (and non-international) learners located on-campus at the student centre, as part of a university-wide 'Community Connector' programme

- formal identification of domestically resident non-citizen/non-ethnically Irish students as a priority target group within our student body, and the establishment of a Cultural Diversity Sub-Group of the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Campus Committee
- formal allocation of a segment of the newly built on-campus housing development, dedicated for international learners

International learner experiences are surveyed biennially by the International Student Barometer, which surveys over 3 million international students enrolled at universities worldwide. According to the most recent IRB (2016), international learners at NUI Galway reported an overall 'Learning Experience Satisfaction' rating of 88.7%, which is higher than the average ratings recorded across all Irish (87.6%) and global (86.5%) universities.

The provision of support for international learners produces many impacts, most of which relate to qualitative aspects of student welfare and experience. However, one way to quantify this impact is to consider the attractiveness of NUI Galway as a destination for international learners across time. Statistically, NUI Galway has shown significant annual growth in international student numbers over the past six years. To contextualise:

- In 2011/12, international students comprised 14.85% ($n = 2,060$) of the full-time student body. For 2015/16 (the most recent complete audit), international students comprised 23.1% ($n = 3,487$) of the full-time student body, viz., a growth of 70% in five years.
- In 2011/12, NUI Galway recruited just 85 students from outside the European Union onto its postgraduate taught programmes. In 2017/18, NUI Galway recruited 416 such students.

While fluctuations in international student numbers are affected by many factors (including economic and political events), international student mobility is also highly fluid: there is no intrinsically compelling need for students to choose NUI Galway over alternatives in nearby countries. Therefore, we submit that NUI Galway's growth in international student numbers constitutes firm evidence that it enjoys a strong and continually reinforced reputation for providing international learners with supportive and worthwhile experiences.

7.5.3 Future Enhancements

The University is currently in the process of appointing a new Vice-President for Internationalisation. Among the other significant initiatives for future enhancements are:

- a major initiative by the Chief Operating Officer to pursue lean management approaches to student services, fees office, etc., to achieve 'mainstreaming' of international students as service-recipients of the University
- enhancement to governance systems for university internationalisation activities, and continued augmentation of staffing resource to support international learners both centrally and campus-wide
- restructuring of senior University Management Team to incorporate leadership in the domain of internationalisation
- continued exploration of options to re-house International Office activities within a centrally located and appropriately auspicious university building, properly equipped with student-facing services



CASE STUDY

GLOBAL LOUNGE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

In an effort to assist in integrating international students and provide a focal point at weekends, the International Office collaborated with the Societies Office to introduce 'TGI Friday' and Global Lounge events held on-campus at weekends. Both activities are held at The Hub, Áras na Mac Léinn, with TGI Friday taking place each Friday from 5 to 8 pm and the Global Lounge being held every Saturday from 12 to 3 pm.

Both Global Lounge and TGI Friday are organised with the help of NUI Galway's Community Connector, whose role is to work collaboratively with students to support them to become more socially involved during their time in university. The events aim to facilitate students in creating new social connections and to pursue the diverse social interests they have at a pace that is comfortable for them.

Students are provided with an alcohol-free environment and cooking facilities in The Hub which allows them to socialise with Irish and International students. These events are relaxed, welcoming and most importantly, student-led. Typical activities include watching a film, playing board games, cooking a meal in the new kitchen and listening to music. The International Affairs Office provides money towards the food and refreshments. Both TGI Friday and Global Lounge have been hugely successful, with very high participation rates and positive feedback.

8.

**INFORMATION
AND DATA
MANAGEMENT**

8.1 Information Systems

8.1.1 Introduction

At NUI Galway, an extensive variety of data and management information is recorded across a number of systems and databases which are made available and reported to all key stakeholders to ensure reliable data is available for informed decision making, planning and monitoring across the University. The University has a number of P&P's in place for collecting, storing and reviewing data and information and for identifying appropriate benchmarking and performance assessment measures.

EXAMPLES OF THE INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND AVAILABILITY OF THE RELEVANT REPORTS INCLUDE:

- *The central Student Records System Quercus, is the central source of data on students, which links in with a variety of other academic planning/student-centric information systems as detailed below in section 8.2. A comprehensive suite of reports is available from this to the appropriate personnel in Colleges and centrally, at a programme/module level to aid self-monitoring and planning purposes, including reports on student numbers, module completions, exam results and grade analysis.*
- *A variety of other Information systems capture data on Finance (Agresso), Staff (Core), Grants (GMS - Grant Management System), Academic activity (IRIS - Institutional Research Information System) and Research output (Scopus and SciVal).*

There are sufficient controls and structures in place, managed centrally by Information Solutions and Services (ISS), to ensure all relevant personnel have access to these systems and can generate a suite of reports for self-monitoring and planning (see further details on ISS governance under 8.2 below)

Related documents: QAG1 8.1, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5; ESG 1.7; AIQR Part 1 8.

8.1.2 Recent Major Enhancements

In 2017 the University introduced a new research analytics tool SciVal for measuring research metrics, which produced quick, easy access to the research performance of over 8,500 research institutions and 220 nations worldwide. This tool provides us metrics from a top-level country level, Institutional level, College and School level down to an individual researcher level spreading across all subject areas or at a more granular subject area/to sub-category subject area. The data now available to us is far richer and enables benchmarking and more informed research planning. There have been a number of workshops and training provided to all staff on its use.

8.1.3 Future Enhancements

At present the University has no central data warehouse for accessing data and reports. Each of the different systems above operate independently of each other, and store different data, which requires downloading and editing, depending on the requirements, to get a more holistic overview of performance for planning purposes. This is a manual, time-consuming and lengthy process, often giving

inconsistent results across the University because modifications are made locally to reports.

In 2017/18 the University initiated and completed a pilot phase of a data warehouse which combines data from various sources into a single database and reporting system. Reporting provided by the warehouse will allow time currently spent on report creation to be freed up and redirected to more effective activities, including new programme development, inputs to better systems, planning, staff and financial matters, research outcomes and retention. This project is now in Phase 2 and being trialled by many departments within the University, with a focus on Student Progression and Student Success, providing each College, School and Programme with a detailed analysis of their students progression from year to year and identifying those cohorts that may be at risk and require intervention or additional supports. If successful, the University intends to roll out a complete data warehouse within the next 12 months.

8.2 Learner Information Systems

8.2.1 Introduction

The learner information systems architecture is a bespoke integrated system - Quercus. Quercus is the provider and consumer of data to/ from a number of other current University information systems, including Blackboard, Campus Account Self Service (CASS), Akari (Curriculum Management), OAS, Email (Microsoft Active Directory), Discoverer and Microsoft Dynamics CRM. Quercus can generate a comprehensive suite of reports, drawing from all the above systems to aid internal quality management and improvement including for example exam results, grade analysis, student progression or withdrawal and module completions. However, while the current system meets requirements it has aged significantly and is widely regarded as requiring replacement.

All relevant programme and award information is made available to prospective students and current students via the NUI Galway website. The Curriculum Management (CM) system, enables module and programme owners to publish all relevant details about a module to the web – including assessment details, whether a module is optional or compulsory, number of credits per module, learning outcomes, reading lists for each module, etc.

The Information Solutions and Services (ISS) department provides IT services to the entire University. ISS has established a governance process based around the University IT Strategy and its programmes. High level governance is provided by the Information Technology Planning and Priorities Committee (chaired by the Chief Operating Officer). This is underpinned by a series of programme boards and associated project boards. Alongside this group ISS services, the IT Security Committee chaired by Rúnaí na hOllscoile. Public facing services have a customer facing service definition published on the ISS website. For each service a Service Delivery Plan has been developed. Incidents and service requests are tracked against the individual services. All logged tickets are assigned to technicians for resolution. Service targets have been established for fulfilment of Service Requests against a number of services. Escalation procedures are defined. Security incidents are notified to the IT Security Committee and all critical incidents are managed through the Critical Incident process. The ISS Service Group meets monthly chaired by the Assistant Director for Operations to review service targets and review major incidents.

Related documents: QAG1 8.2; ESG 1.7; AIQR Part 1 8.

8.2.2 Recent Major Enhancements

Under the umbrella of the Academic Simplification Project, the last six years has seen a period of continuous investment in various systems solutions to enhance the learner experience. Significant developments include:

- *AKARI: a Curriculum Management system which enables module owners/Programme Leaders to manage all information relating to each module online and publish that information to the web, for the benefit of prospective students and current students*
- *Blackboard Grade Centre: provides for the online management and publication of exam results via Blackboard, NUI Galway's virtual learning environment*
- *Exam Modelling Tool: an online tool used by academic staff to implement adjustments to initial exam marks at the Exam Board, following feedback from External Examiners*
- *Capping the second sitting: investment in a series of calculators within the student record system to give effect to important changes to assessment practice, such as the implementation of capping of marks at the second sitting*
- *Integrated Curriculum published to the website*
- *Online Results processing using Virtual Learning Environment*
- *Online processing of Invoices*

Details of curriculum are entered online in Colleges/Schools. Phase 1 of this project provided a direct link from the curriculum system to the main Student Records system, thereby reducing the need to enter data twice and improving the accuracy of data used to register/examine students. Phase 2 of the project focused on linking the same data to the University's public website thereby giving prospective students a rich resource in terms of course/module structures, learning outcomes and links to lecturers' research profiles. KPIs:

- *Elimination of duplicate data entry*
- *Integrated curriculum publishing*
- *Academic staff can now manage assessment on the VLE throughout the semester. Results collected on the VLE are automatically loaded to the Student Records system and used to manage exam boards*
- *Reduced transcription of marks*
- *Continuous assessment marks and provisional marks available to students through the VLE*



CASE STUDY

INTEGRATION OF PUBLIC WEBSITE WITH CURRICULUM MANAGER

This implementation of the Curriculum Management system required collaboration between Academic Administration, CELT, ISS and the Marketing and Communication Office to ensure that accurate curriculum data in an accessible format was made available on the web. This project built on the initial move to curriculum management software whereby Disciplines, Schools and Colleges have direct access and control over their curriculum electronically.

The published web-based curriculum data is extracted from the Curriculum Management software system (Akari Document). The curriculum is collated from over 6 million elements of data,

8.2.3 Future Enhancements

A project has been initiated to prepare for the procurement of a new Student Record System to replace the Quercus system, the rigidity of which is proving to be a significant restraint. A Project Steering Group is in place and following initial and wide spread consultation with stakeholders, the project has moved to a phase of scoping out detailed requirements for a new system.

Acquiring and implementing a new Student Records system will be one of the most significant, large scale IT projects undertaken at NUI Galway. In planning for this, we have begun with a pilot of part of the project by moving in 2018 to procure a new online Postgraduate Application system which will feed into the new Student Records system in the future.

This represents a significant development as it means that NUI Galway is moving from an outsourced externally provided postgraduate application service to taking the postgraduate application system back into the University. In 2018, NUI Galway terminated its contract with the external Postgraduate Application Centre (PAC), which runs a postgraduate application system for a range of Irish HEIs, and procured a bespoke new system from Ellucian which it is rolling out to students in the current academic year, 2018/19.

The drive for this systems development was the need to provide a fit-for-purpose, efficient and responsive postgraduate application system to support the University's ambition, as set out in *Vision 2020*, to significantly grow its cohort of taught postgraduate students by 2020.

The roll out of Curriculum Management system, with the provision of comprehensive programme and module information online to prospective and current students, represented a significant cultural change for module owners at NUI Galway. The speed of roll out and quality of information published for each module varies from College to College. Future Enhancements will focus on achieving a consistent and complete suite of module information across all modules for all programmes and integrating the Curriculum Management system into a new proposed Student Records system.

and processed to automatically generate webpage snippets, visible within course pages through a web-enabled browser.

The course and module information is extracted for web publishing after the Curriculum Manager (CM) is re-opened following the annual integration work with the Student Records system (Quercus) and the Learning Management system (Blackboard). This ensures that the curriculum on the web is the most current version of the approved module and course. The module instructor details link directly to the public profile of the academic involved in the course delivery to highlight individual research and publication along with the associated curriculum.

8.3 Management Information System

8.3.1 Introduction

NUI Galway operates a number of learner information systems supported by comprehensive information systems services and supports. The Quercus student record system is the provider and consumer of data to and from a number of other University information systems, including Blackboard, Campus Account Self Service (CASS), Akari, OAS, Email (Microsoft Active Directory), Discoverer and Microsoft Dynamics CRM. Quercus provides integrated data and data archives for: Student Records; Registration Records; Exam Records; and Graduation Records.

Related documents: QAG1 8.3; ESG 1.7; AIQR Part 1 8.

8.3.2 Recent Major Enhancements

There has been significant growth in data requests for Student, Graduate and Applicant data and contained within Student Record System – Quercus. The data available can be grouped into: Student Record; Registration Records; Exam Records; and Graduation Records. The Student Record system reporting tool is an application known as Discoverer. Generating reports from this application is a challenge since the system is inflexible and not user friendly. There are multiple parameters in the application structure that require selection in order to generate the desired report. It is a labour-intensive exercise especially when there are time constraints on Staff who require these reports.

8.3.3 Future Enhancements

Record maintenance is manual. However, the records maintenance process is systemised where possible but not necessarily within the system where records are housed. One unit reported that manual data is required to register students which they recruit directly. Manual data input is also required to deregister students on receipt of Student Withdrawal Form. The International Office uses Quercus for checking fees, status of students and whether the student is registered or not. The reliance on ‘clean’ data input into the system by the service owner to ensure quality data can result in the data not being completely correct. This is a manual intervention as opposed to an automated solution. Specifically, when reports are generated from the system they often contain data errors. Based on the above case scenarios we have facts to support these data issues. Recent major enhancements primarily involve bespoke changes to the Quercus systems and integration with related processes (see 8.2.2).

The SET endorses an approach that will lead to the replacement of the Quercus system but acknowledges that such a replacement will be extremely costly and disruptive and must be proceeded with caution. Recent recommendations from a Quality Review of the unit responsible for Quercus highlighted a number of considerations and potential roadmap for developing a new management information system. Overall the University recognises that evidence-based decision making is a necessity for effective management and leadership, and the University could do better in this area. To this end the University is piloting a new Data Warehouse system, which will aim to pull together the data from all the various systems into a user-friendly information dashboard, where data analysis and interrogation can be performed in a more efficient and timely manner, providing proper standardised management information to inform leadership and management decisions, both centrally and at College/School levels.

8.4 Information for Further Planning

8.4.1 Introduction

The Planning & Institutional Research Office (PIRO) is responsible for providing Institutional data to support NUI Galway's planning and management activities directed toward fulfilling the goals and objectives of the University. Institutional research aims to inform decision making and planning at senior management level. The office aims to lead in the development of a culture which embeds business intelligence throughout the organisation, enabling the University to measure and monitor activities, outputs and performance on many levels, using metrics aligned with University strategy.

The PIRO prepares a number of management information reports to senior management, Colleges and Schools to fulfil the principles relating to data to inform self-monitoring, planning and help feed into the internal quality assurance system. It also supports and advises on the development and maintenance of performance indicators, operational plans and internal and external teaching, research and social impact and benchmarking analysis to support and inform the University's strategic objectives.

IT COORDINATES, ANALYSES AND REPORTS DIVERSE AND COMPLEX INFORMATION TO INFORM DECISION MAKING ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY AND ITS VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS, INCLUDING:

- Annual Key Performance Indicator (KPI) reports, including research and teaching metrics like retention rates, composition of the student body and student satisfaction by College and Schools. These KPIs are compiled by the PIRO and are used extensively throughout NUI Galway and during quality reviews. These indicators are defined by NUI Galway's Vision 2020 Strategy and the HEA's Mission Based Performance Compact and include data on student population profiles, student progression, student completion rates, international and non-traditional student participation, career paths as well as a wide range of research performance data
- Annual international ranking analysis including a detailed Subject Ranking analysis for the Schools, with international and national benchmarks
- Provision of bibliometric research data from a variety of sources with benchmarking to support College, School and individual level Strategic discussions, Research Committees, Promotion processes, Individual Researchers and the Institutional Review of Research Performance
- Annual analysis of PhD cohort, completion rates and times for Graduate Studies
- Supports the compilation, analysis and timely submission of data for external bodies such as University Rankings, HEA and the IUA
- Researches and reports annually on market, demographic and student application trends at an Institutional, College and School level, with benchmarking
- Analyses and reports on surveys such as students surveys like the Irish Survey of Student Engagement, staff culture survey and disseminates reports across the Institution

Related documents: QAG1 8.4; ESG 1.7; AIQR Part 1.

8.4.2 Recent Major Enhancements

A new Market Analyst was employed in 2017 to support more regular and detailed assessment of student body, student surveys and market and demographic data to better inform planning and decisions.

The KPIs provided are high level overall metrics, and in some case lack sufficient detail for bottom-up operational planning at local department level. This means some units prepare their own data which results in inconsistencies across the University. Therefore in 2018, the PIRO in conjunction with the Office of the Academic Secretary has commenced preparing a more detailed information pack for Schools, giving a breakdown of the data behind the KPIs in addition to other salient data across the entire Teaching, Research & Contribution spectrum. This additional data details a wider variety of metrics with more granular detail to support heads of Units in their planning and pinpointing specific areas for focus.

Overall there has been an embedding of evidence-based data driven decisions across the University, utilising the KPIs, ISSE results, Market Analysis reports and Research metrics to inform decisions across the University, which has helped to drive performance across a variety of indicators. Please refer to Table 1 at the beginning of this report for a sample of some indicators used for informing decision making at the University.

8.4.3 Future Enhancements

To roll out a bi-annual detailed Information pack dashboard, to support Units in their operational and ongoing planning.

8.5 Completion Rates

8.5.1 Introduction

Student progression and completion data is collected and reported on in a number of fora, including at College and University Examination boards and in the KPIs as part of the operational planning process.

University Policy dictates that each school perform a self-assessment report for external reviewers, with reference to the KPIs.

THE KEY COMPLETION RATE METRICS REPORTED AND ANALYSED ANNUALLY INCLUDE:

- Overall completion rates per College and School which is discussed annually as part of the Operational Planning Process
- Progression Rates from First to Second Year for the overall university, across each field of study
- Completion rates and average completion time for PhD students across each College and School, which the Office for Graduate Studies presents to Colleges annually to help inform their planning

Related documents: QAG1 8.5; ESG 1.7; AIQR Part 1

8.5.2 Recent Major Enhancements

In 2017, a Retention and Progression Working Group was established, led by the Director for Student Services, to review the issue of student retention, including benchmarking with our peers and reviewing international best practice. The recommendations of this working group were presented to UMT, and many of the recommendations of the group will be adapted, as outlined in Section 8.5.3 below.

The PIRO commenced preparing an annual report for Graduate Studies detailing the completion rates and times of the PhD cohort, which the Graduate Studies office presents to each unit to help them better support their PhD students towards a timelier completion rate.

8.5.3 Future Enhancements

To date we have not been systematic in our analysis of progression rates of Undergraduate students, and of monitoring and analysing student withdrawals so as to improve overall completion rates by identifying and intervening with those students at risk of withdrawal. As a result of the recommendations of the Retention and Progression Working Group this is being addressed centrally and locally with a view to developing a cohesive and sustainable institutional strategy to decrease the percentage of non-progressing students from 11% currently to 9% by 2020. This will be supported by the Project DANte, the data warehouse project, which will use predictive learning analytics to indicate and identify students at risk of disengagement, as well as preparing detailed reports that will inform:

- Trend analysis on student progression from year to year - by College, School, Programme, cohort and gender to identify those areas where we can target improvements
- Tailor early Interventions to support students at risk of non-progression
- Reduction of our institutional non-progression from 11% to 9% by 2020 (focusing particularly new entrants at UG level)
- Generation of profile information what will enable us to better understand factors influencing retention, and also roll out the Student Success element of Project DANte (aimed at improving overall completion rates)

8.6 Records Maintenance and Retention

8.6.1 Introduction

There are implicit policies for the establishment and maintenance of quality-related records as defined in QAG1. Records such as performance indicators; self-monitoring reports; evaluation reports; minutes of QA meetings; actions taken; and follow-up reports are retained by the Institutional Research Office and Quality Office respectively since 2001/02. Key records related to the Quality Review process are made publicly available through the Quality Office's Quality Information System (QIS) (see Section 2 and 11). Minutes of the QA meetings are retained by the University Records office. Records available to the public through the QIS include policies and procedures, review schedules, review reports and action plans, reviewers' names and affiliations, and quality enhancements. There are no plans for further enhancements to Records Maintenance and Retention.

Related documents: QAG1 8.6; ESG 1.7; AIQR Part 1 8.6.

8.7 Data Protection and Freedom of Information

8.7.1 Introduction

The University is acutely aware of its duties in relation to Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation. The Office of the Secretary oversees compliance in these areas. Freedom of Information and Data Protection requirements are overseen by the University Secretary, the University Solicitor, and an Administrative Assistant. In NUI Galway, responsibility to comply with FOI requests is delegated to the Head of School or Head of Unit (or their nominee) to act as local decision makers. They have overall responsibility for the initial decision on FOI requests from their School or Unit, i.e. to decide whether to release all the records, partially release the records or deny access. Advice is provided by the University Freedom of Information team. The timelines involved in processing an FOI request are reflective of the time obligations imposed by the FOI Act which provides that requests, save for limited circumstances, must be responded to within four weeks.

Related documents: QAG1 8.7; ESG 1.7; AIQR Part 1 8.7.

8.7.2 Recent Major Enhancements

The University launched a FOI Publication Scheme. The University has hired a specific full-time Data Protection Officer at a high level to lead the University approach in implementing the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). GDPR Training has been provided to key units and to Senior staff, Unit/Department Heads and Administrative Officers. An all-staff email was issued with data protection tips. The terms and conditions for all new tender competitions have been updated to ensure that all new suppliers are compliant with GDPR. The number of FOI requests received and processed has risen from 23 in 2010 to 111 in 2017. Most of these requests have been non-personal (74) and in total 91 requests were granted or part-granted. Data Protection requests are fewer in number and are processed in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1988-2003.

8.7.3 Future Enhancements

A GDPR officer is being appointed to oversee the implementation of GDPR. Data Protection and Data Handling Policy is in the process of review and will be ready in time for the GDPR deadline. A system for monitoring compliance by each unit for both FOI and Data Protection is being designed and implemented.



CASE STUDY

GDPR TRAINING INITIATIVE

The University is currently running a GDPR training initiative for staff. It is intended that all staff will have received training by the end of 2018. Mandatory GDPR Training was held for the most senior staff on 17 January and 8 March 2018, with 145 recorded attendees of senior staff. Training has also been provided to the Research Office, the TTO, HR, the Exams Office, Support Services Directors Forum, the Risk Advisory Group, the Standing and Strategic Committee, Research Data Working Group, the ICT Committee and Student Services. At the training sessions provided, each Unit Head and AO attending were requested to hold a meeting within a month specific to GDPR. The units were requested to compile a list of personal data processed, held, retained, list third-party processors, list security procedures, and list consent procedures from data subjects. The Data Protection Officer is working with the units to formally record, audit and process the data.

9.

**PUBLIC
INFORMATION
AND
COMMUNICATION**

9.1 Public Information

9.1.1 Introduction

Public information is available through a range of sources, including annual reports, University prospectuses, brochures and engagement through traditional and social media channels. The University has an extensive communications programme in place to keep its internal and external audiences up to date on news and developments, with a particular focus on the educational value of research developments. As audiences now access information through a range of channels, the University's communications activities focus on a multi-platform approach, with information dissemination coordinated to deliver news and information through traditional media channels and digital platforms. The University's communities on social media channels are substantial, standing at over 68,000 on Facebook, 66,000 on LinkedIn, 41,000 on Twitter and 10,000 on Instagram. Its reach through traditional media is also extensive, with media relations activities focusing on a mix of international, national and local coverage. Independent analysis by Rue Point Media has found that NUI Galway received coverage in 1,580 print media articles in the first half of 2018 alone. The University's website is its primary communications source, providing an extensive source of up to date and 'active' information on all of the services available. Recent enhancements include integration with the curriculum management system (AKARI) that means the public can view the live information on programmes and modules as they are being actively approved. The University's policies and procedures are now available in a structured format within special 'Policies and Procedures' web pages on the public web site. Policies around, for example, access, transfer and progression are now more easily accessible from the host unit e.g. Admissions but also from within the P&P Repository available on the public Quality Office website.

Related documents: QAG1 9.1; ESG 1.8; AIQR Part 1 8.

9.1.2 Recent Major Enhancements

The Web Development Programme (WDP) was designed to ensure the University's web presence meets user expectations and requirements. This involved a complete redesign of the University website, ensuring that the new design is responsive across all platforms including Desktop, Tablet and Mobile devices in order to ensure an excellent user experience. The WDP also established a Content Programme to develop new content, edit and update existing content, and to migrate from the old CMS to new CMS for all 'in scope' elements of the site. The WDP was also designed to ensure that the new website and content is sustainable in the long term, and to ensure that any future redesign will apply to all sections of the site thereby negating the requirement for another major review of the entire website.

The WDP has delivered a total of 66 individual components that can be combined to develop a page suitable for any purpose within NUI Galway. Major Deliverables include revised content for all 5 Colleges, the University Home Page, four Gateway Pages, Top Level Navigation and eight Top Level Landing Pages, College Home Page, School Home Page, Disciplines Home Page, News and Events Page, and a new Header and Footer that remain consistent across the entire website. A new OÉ Gaillimh site, encompassing rolled-up content as Gaeilge, will replace the previous inconsistent 'Leagan Gaeilge' function.

9.1.3 Future Enhancements

The Web Development Programme brings a new level of consistency to all the main public facing elements of the University website. However, there are many areas of the website that have not been touched by the Programme. With some 150,000 web pages in the University's primary site, and a community of over 280 content editors across the campus, it will take time to migrate all pages to the new design and to the new Content Management System. Much of NUI Galway's site therefore remains in the existing design, with content requiring migration in stages throughout the last few years subject to appropriate project planning, resources and budgetary approval.



CASE STUDY

PUBLIC WEBSITE UPGRADE

A team of three student employees worked in close conjunction with ISS for a number of weeks in order to migrate hundreds of pages of content from the old web CMS into the new T4 CMS. This migration was carried out even before the final redesign templates were signed off and functional in order to expedite completion of the project. A representative from each College collated content, refining and rewriting it for the web and ensuring the information architecture of the new site was clear, concise and logical. The new design for the site is in keeping with web design best practice and considers changing trends in website use, especially increased use of mobile devices in web browsing.

Transfer of old pages to T4 and creation of new official NUI

Galway pages is managed through NUI Galway's Marketing & Communications Office. Before an old page is transferred, the content is assessed and reviewed for accuracy. Documentation on writing for the web is available from Marketing & Communications. 'Card Sorting Exercises' and focus groups are especially useful when it comes to transferring large sections to the new templates. (For example, the entirety of Student Services, which contained Admissions, Registration, Conferring, Student Information Desk, and more underwent an in-depth focus group review prior to transfer.) These exercises ensure that the transfer exercise is not simply a matter of 'copy and paste' but is a complete redesign and refresh of all online content.

9.2 Learner Information

All relevant programme and award information is made available to students via the NUI Galway website and various other publications. The public website is linked to the live curriculum management system, enabling module and programme owners to publish all relevant details about a module to the web. For further information please see Section 8.1, 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4 above that also address learner information.

9.3 Publication of QA Evaluation Reports

Quality Review (QR) reports have been published publicly since the beginning of the University's QA activities. The public can view reviewers' recommendations and also action plans on the Quality Office website. For further information please see Section 8.6 above that also addresses publication of QA reports.

10.

**OTHER PARTIES
INVOLVED IN
EDUCATION AND
TRAINING**

10.1 Peer Relationships

10.1.1 Introduction

NUI Galway's policy is to engage widely with all of its stakeholders. Stakeholders include learners, schools, other colleges and universities, research funding agencies, general public, industry, national and local government and many more. Key stakeholders in the context of quality assurance include: Irish Universities Association; Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI); Higher Education Authority (HEA); Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN); European Universities Association; North-West Cluster (GMIT, LYIT, ITSligo); Research Funding Bodies (SFI, HRB, etc.) and NUI Galway-University of Limerick Alliance.

Students are a primary stakeholder and regarded by NUI Galway as active and engaged partners as opposed to consumers. Students are regularly invited to engage in various student engagement activities as outlined in 7.3 above.

The University also has relationships with Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PRSBs). The Quality Office provides links on its public website to details of all accredited programmes.

Related documents: QAG1 10.1; ESG 1.1; AIQR Part 1 10.

10.1.2 Recent Major Enhancements

The Registrar and Director of Quality regularly meet with counterparts from the other six universities as members of the **Irish Universities Association Quality Board (IUAQB)** to discuss emerging policies and best practices within the sector. The Director of Quality also attends meetings at other Irish universities as part of the activities of the **IUA Quality Officers Group**.

Recent enhancements include a policy for accreditations (*QA244 Accredited Programmes*). The Quality Office also now maintains lists for each type of relationship and a record of MOA/MOUs in the case of collaborative partnerships. Details of the relationships are also now available on the Quality Office's public website. MOA/MOUs are managed by the legal office at NUI Galway.



CASE STUDY

SURVEY OF PROFESSIONAL BODY ACCREDITATIONS

The University recently participated in a national survey organised by QQI to identify how and if professional body activity impacts upon the higher education institution quality assurance context with the aim of discovering opportunities and benefits and alleviating challenges. The accreditation landscape was mapped through a definitive listing of types of accrediting bodies and reviewing whether their activity is increasing or is in decline. Five further key issues were explored: Institutional policies; Nature of the relationship; Benefits of accreditation and; Challenges of accreditation.

NUI Galway conducted its own internal survey in preparation for the national survey that culminated in the development of a public repository of accredited programmes and the development of a new policy: QA244 Accredited Programmes. This new policy lays out procedures for Colleges and Schools when considering such arrangements and the relationship with other Quality Assurance activities.

10.2 External Partnerships and Second Providers

10.2.1 Introduction

NUI Galway has collaborative relationships with 19 external partners for the provision of joint and articulated degrees. One of these partners, St Angela's College, is currently a *Linked Provider* and negotiations are underway to formally incorporate this college into NUI Galway.

Related documents: QAG1 10.1; ESG 1.1; AIQR Part 1 13.

10.2.2 Recent Major Enhancements

The Quality Office developed an online repository of all collaborative partnerships. The issue of what constituted a Linked Provider versus a routine Collaborative Provider was discussed at length both within the University and with other universities through the Irish Universities Quality Committee. The policy *QA009 Linked Providers* was created and tested at one independent college. This provider agreed to have their own internal P&Ps approved by NUI Galway and later underwent the first of their periodic reviews by an independent group of reviewers retained by the University. A Dean of the University College with closest collaboration with the college in question was the main stakeholder from the University on the Review Team and chaired the panel. No major issues arose with either the approval of the college's P&Ps or during the periodic review other than recommendations for enhancement that were actioned and are currently being implemented by the college.

10.3 Expert Panellists, Examiners and Authenticators

10.3.1 Introduction

There are explicit criteria laid down in a number of P&Ps for the recruitment and engagement of external reviewers and examiners. Key policies include *QA005 External Examiners (Taught)*, *QA003 Review of Schools* and *QA004 Review of Research Performance*. Related documents: QAG 10.3; ESG 1.1; AIQR Part 1 Confirmation of QA Policy and Procedures, Section 10.

10.3.2 Recent Major Enhancements

The University has recently updated a number of policies that stipulate and guide the retention of expert panellists, examiners and authenticators. *QA003 Review of Schools* for example requires that reviewers are recognised experts within their field and have had no working relationships with the School. The policy *QA005 External Examiners (Taught)* has similar conditions and also requires that examiners come from outside the Republic of Ireland.

A total of 155 External Examiners (EE) visited all of the University's taught programmes in 2017/18 as part of the policy *QA005 External Examiners (Taught)*. The number of EE Reports received by each College were (number of reports in brackets): Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge (4); Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies (38); Business, Public Policy & Law (37); Engineering & Informatics (9); Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences (27); Science (20); St. Angela's College, Sligo (20).

BELOW IS AN EDITED SUMMARY OF MOST COMMON RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Support students with their writing skills
- Short exam marking turn-around time puts considerable pressure on staff
- Annotate exam scripts when marking
- Standardise student feedback (in electronic form)
- Ensure project supervision and marking is conducted only by academic staff members
- Review exam scheduling to avoid 'bunching' of exams at the beginning of the exam period
- Provide examiners with details of students with disabilities, ensuring compensation
- Moderate student assessment for each grade boundary and including fails
- Induction programme for new external examiners highlighting QA policies

A total of 127 quality reviewers (46% female) from leading research-intensive universities were involved in quality reviews of research over the last three years. These are in addition to 25 reviewers of support services over the same three-year period.

11.

SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

11.1 Provider-owned Internal Review

11.1.1 Introduction

NUI Galway has a number of key policies related to internal quality review (QR). The QR process involves key steps around self-assessment, benchmarking, independent peer review, stakeholder interviews and surveys, recommendations for quality enhancement and action planning. There is an average of seven 'centrally' managed QRs of Schools and support services each year. Programme monitoring, review and enhancement is achieved through periodic quality reviews and through continuous development and implementation of Policies and Procedures (P&Ps) that include annual review by External Examiners and annual Student Feedback at modular level. Policies related to a system of internal QR and continuous improvement include: QA003 Review of Schools; QA004 Review of Research Performance; QA005 External Examiners; QA006 Review of Taught Programmes; QA009 Review of Linked Providers; QA012 Review of Research Institutes; QA013 Review of Services; QA244 Accredited Programmes and QA246 Collaborative Partnerships.

Related documents: QAG1 11.1; ESG 1.9; AIQR Part 1 9.

11.1.2 Recent Major Enhancements

There have been a range of enhancements over the last number of years to provider-owned internal QR. Chief among these are new policies for the review of research quality, specialised reviews of teaching, support services and linked providers, and new policies for the local review of taught programmes and research institutes. All Schools and major Services have been reviewed at least once in the last seven years. All Schools have undergone two QRs – one focussed on teaching and the other focussed on research.

Research has been a key theme for quality review in recent years with Schools being assessed for the quality of their research. This

review assessed the quality of research outputs, research environment and research impact in each of the Schools and actively engaged 595 academic staff who provided 1,573 research outputs for assessment. School management teams also submitted Research Environment Reports that included elements of research strategy and performance metrics that included PhD researchers, research funding and staff development. The review also required societal impact case studies. 60 Impact Case Studies were developed in total. The assessment was conducted by a total of 127 reviewers (46% female) from leading research-intensive universities. See Case Study below for further information.

Another major enhancement has been the way the University manages its system of policies and procedures and that was highlighted in Section 2 earlier. A policy for annual Operational Planning aligned with the Strategic Plan was implemented through policy QA007 *Operational Plans*. All Schools and all major support services now annually report enhancements achieved during the year that improve quality and performance.

New policies were developed recently around Accredited Programmes and Collaborative Provision that require Colleges and Schools to follow nationally approved guidelines and report key details of their activities to the Quality Office. These details are made publicly available through the office's online Quality Information System (QIS). The QIS has undergone continuing enhancement in recent years and now also includes areas for Benchmarking, External Examiners and School Enhancements.

11.1.3 Future Enhancements

Quality review is now leaving a three-year cycle that focussed on research and entering a four-year cycle that will focus on the review of learning, teaching and assessment within Schools.



CASE STUDY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW OF RESEARCH PERFORMANCE (IRRP)

With an underpinning objective to enhance research performance, NUI Galway initiated a three-year independent review of the quality of research across all of its Schools. IRRP engaged all academic staff in a self-assessment exercise which included a full research profile and samples of high quality research outputs published in the five-year period of assessment. The self-assessment was followed by an independent international peer review and the allocation of ratings of research quality by independent reviewers across (1) the research environment, to include staff, PhD supervision data and research funding, (2) research outputs and publications, and (3) societal impact, as evidenced through Impact Case Studies.

The IRRP process highlighted the need for School-level research strategies, as well as a stronger focus on the development and delivery of Impact Case Studies and Publication/Dissemination Strategies and a greater integration between Schools and Research Institutes. As a result of the IRRP process, each School has developed an IRRP Action Plan aimed at enhancing the overall quality of its research activity, and progress against the implementation of the actions is being overseen by the UMT. In parallel, in September 2018 the UMT approved a Research Action Plan aimed at supporting research performance which complements and supports initiatives aligned to the School IRRP Action Plans

11.2 Internal Self-monitoring

Establishing causality between quality assurance related enhancements and impact is important not only for enhancing responsible behaviour but also for demonstrating that QA has value¹³. Impact can be both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative impact includes evidence of changes to policies, processes and systems. Many of these enhancements are referenced in the earlier sections. Quantitative impact is evidenced through changes to key performance indicators (KPIs) and the results of key surveys. KPIs have been presented earlier and in particular in Section 0.5 and also in Sections 8.1, 8.2, 8.3 and 8.5.

EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT ARE EVIDENCED THROUGH A NUMBER OF KEY SURVEYS, AWARDS AND OTHER DATA BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL TO THE UNIVERSITY THAT INCLUDE:

- ISSE UG and PG
- CÉIM Survey
- Student Preferences (CAO)
- First Destination Survey
- University Rankings
- HEA Progression Statistics
- Student Completion Rates
- Student Feedback Compliance Survey
- Library Survey
- International Students Satisfaction Survey
- Research Funding/Grants/Horizon Performance
- Promotions/Progressions/Gender Balance
- President's Awards for (i) Teaching, (ii) Research, (iii) Support Services and (iv) Societal Impact
- Staff who qualified with teaching qualifications
- New Programmes and Major Changes to Programmes
- Student Health Statistics
- Technology Transfer Statistics
- Access Statistics
- Quality Culture Survey
- Review Reports
- External Examiner Reports

Related documents: QAG1 11.2; ESG 1.9; AIQR Part 1 9.

¹³O'Sullivan, D., et al, *Managing the Impact of Internal Quality Review in Irish Universities*, Proceedings of 12th European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF), University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia, November, 2017.

11.2.1 Recent Major Enhancements

The University undertakes the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) annually and consistently performs well against other Irish universities in both our participation rates and student satisfaction rates as evidenced by the results of two key satisfaction questions below:



“How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?”
(Percentage of students who responded positively)

Description	2015	2016	2017	2018
NUI Galway (%)	80.2	86.3	84.7	84.7
other Irish Universities (%)	79.8	85.1	84.9	83.8



“If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?”
(Percentage of students who responded positively)

Description	2015	2016	2017	2018
NUI Galway (%)	85.1	87.3	88.6	88.6
other Irish Universities (%)	85.5	87.9	88.4	87.9

The University produces reports on the ISSE indices at a College and programme level, which are presented to Academic Council and filtered down to staff through their College. ISSE has been a key enhancement mechanism in recent years with detailed survey data being provided on student experiences with the University’s taught programme – undergraduate and postgraduate. These data are now being communicated and used by Schools and programme boards to identify quality enhancements. ISSE complements the University’s own student feedback policy *QA221 Student Feedback on Modules and*

Programmes. In 2017/18 a compliance survey was conducted on the implementation of this internal policy that gave evidence of very high compliance within Schools. In addition, a working group is currently undertaking a project to support this policy with a centralised student feedback system that will remove the burden of gathering compliance data from School management and further improve the overall monitoring of the student voice for module and programme development and enhancement.

11.2.2 Future Enhancements

The SET endorses the current initiative for centralising the student feedback process that will streamline the gathering of compliance data. SET regards ISSE as important for programme enhancement and encourages the development of policy around how Schools and Programme Boards act on the information and feedback generated from the national survey. Such a policy should include statements on the responsibility of programme boards for assuring maximum student participation in the survey and then for generating action plans based on the feedback. NUI Galway is aiming for a 40% participation rate in ISSE. Participation rates have increased year-on-year as follows: 2014 – 16.2%; 2015 – 25.3%; 2016 – 27.9%; 2017 – 30.9%; 2018 – 34.0%.



CASE STUDY

IRISH SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT (ISSE)

From its inception in 2013, NUI Galway has been a champion of ISSE and its potential to drive positive change in Irish higher education. The University's Vice-President for the Student Experience sits on the ISSE Plenary Group and our Internal Communications Officer is a member of the ISSE Communications Group. Both play an important role in driving the success of the survey nationally and locally.

In recent years, three important developments have seen ISSE make a direct impact on the quality of the student experience in

Galway. The survey results prompted the University to develop a new Academic Skills Hub for students online and on campus and invest further in the Orientation programme to help First Year students adjust to University life. Both of these investments were as a direct result of student feedback through ISSE. For the past two years, the University has invested in data analysis to produce reports of the survey data for all of our programmes. This data is shared with staff through their Colleges to inform positive impacts at a programme level.

12.

RESEARCH
QUALITY

12.1 Research Support & Graduate Studies

12.1.1 Introduction

Research and innovation is an integral pillar of NUI Galway's Strategy and the University places a strong emphasis on supporting the development of high quality impactful research and the quality of training provided to researchers. The University provides support for research and innovation through the Offices of the Vice-President for Research and the Dean of Graduate Studies, both of whom are members of the UMT.

The Terms of Reference for the University's Research Committee were updated in October 2016 to clarify the Committee's role with respect to the delivery of NUI Galway's Research and Innovation Strategy, as well as its advisory role to the Academic Planning and Resource Committee on the implementation of the University's Research Strategy. The membership of the Committee was expanded to include all of the Vice-Deans for Research and all of the Directors of Research Institutes, rather than representatives of, and with effect from October 2018 the Research Committee will be chaired by the Vice-President for Research.

The Graduate Studies Board (GSB) comprises the Vice-Deans of Graduate Studies from each College, research student representatives and key personnel involved in developing and delivering research degree programmes, and is chaired by the Dean of Graduate Studies. It is tasked with considering all academic regulations and policy regarding postgraduate research degrees, including any new programmes. The 'University Guidelines for Research Degree Programmes' (QA245) describes regulations, policies and procedures relevant to these programmes. Standing committee of Academic Council considers recommendations from the GSB and all PhD and MD examiners' reports. External examiners are appointed normally from outside the Republic of Ireland and are approved by the Head of School and College Dean.

Related documents: QAG2 4; ESG 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 and 1.9; AIQR Part 1 3; QQI Statutory QA Guidelines for providers of Research Degree Programmes; National Framework for Doctoral Education; National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland; Inspiring Partnerships – the National IP (Intellectual Property) Protocol.



CASE STUDY

THESIS BOOT CAMP

The Thesis Boot Camp (TBC) is an intensive structured writing programme that supports doctoral students in the production of new written material for their thesis. Over three days we provide a quiet writing space, instruction on effective writing strategies, a supportive group environment and one-to-one help. All meals and facilitated active breaks are provided. The TBC is delivered three times a year, led by an academic member of staff and funded by Graduate Studies. Since its introduction in 2015, over 200 students have had the opportunity to attend. The outcomes are (i) production of significant new material over the course of the weekend. All students produce a minimum of 5,000 words and

the average is 10,000 per student. (ii) Increased confidence in their ability to write and to complete their thesis. Of the students surveyed in 2018, 97% agreed that TBC 'made me feel supported to complete my thesis' and 'helped me make significant progress towards completing.' (iii) Supervisors report significant impact also: 'I believe these writing camps are crucial for PhD students, their supervisors and NUI Galway! ... It improves scientific writing, critical thinking and cultural integration.' 'I found that the students are excited and focused on writing and have gotten a new confidence in approaching the final write-up stages.'

12.1.2 Recent Major Enhancements

- Information for prospective research students is provided online and a link to search for potential supervisors (*findasupervisor*) has been developed also. The **admission process** is supported by the Postgraduate Admissions Centre (PAC, soon to be replaced). Applications for admission, supported by the Head of School, are considered by the relevant College
- On admission, a **Graduate Research Committee (GRC)** is appointed for every research student. The role of the GRC is to support the student and the supervisor in a timely completion of the research degree and each GRC comprises three academic members of staff [excluding the supervisor(s)]
- The **progress of every research student is reviewed annually**. Both the student and supervisor(s) report on progress to the GRC, which meets with the student and recommends to College whether or not the student should progress into the next year of the programme
- Each structured PhD student (over 90% of full-time PhD students are on structured programmes) selects a combination of advanced discipline-specific and professional skills modules to support their development as a researcher and must complete 30 ECTS of such **training**
- The **Graduate Studies Office** provides support to research students and staff on postgraduate research matters. Examples of activities include:
 - Orientation for postgraduate research students in partnership with Colleges. On average, over 80% of research students attend.
 - A bespoke online system for the administration of the PhD (and MD) thesis examination
 - Publication of 'Writing a scientific-style thesis' and 'PhD Viva' Guides, and online Guides for new students
 - All students have access to a set of online training resources (provided by Epigeum) on research methodology and transferrable skills
 - Ad-hoc workshops and seminars for research students and supervisors
 - PhD Write-Up Bursary scheme
 - The Hardiman PhD Scholarship scheme
- The Planning & Institutional Research Office systematically produces average **PhD Completion time and PhD Completion rate** data for every School on an annual basis and benchmarks this data with other Irish and international universities
- **Research Degree Programmes are reviewed annually by each College**. Each College prepares a report detailing the outcome of the research students' annual progress reviews, PhD completion times and rates and feedback from students and supervisors, which is presented by the College Dean and Vice-Dean for Graduate Studies to the Dean of Graduate Studies and is considered by the Standing Committee of Academic Council
- **Supervisor Training, Development and Support**: Graduate Studies provides a set of four workshops every year for supervisors aligned to the framework¹⁴. So far, there have been over 250 attendances at these workshops and as many supervisors attended more than one workshop, over 150 supervisors have attended some training
- **Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student Feedback**: An important Vision 2020 KPI target is to increase overall student satisfaction. Postgraduate Research students are now surveyed regularly – an in-house University-wide survey in 2015, followed by the University participating in the UK PRES survey in 2017 and for the first time in the pilot National Student Survey for research students in 2018¹⁵. Response rates have consistently been above 40% with overall satisfaction scores of approx. 80%. Survey responses are communicated to Colleges/Schools and relevant support units and Action plans developed.
- In 2014, an **Institutional Review of Research Performance (IRRP)**, a three-year independent review focused on the quality of NUI Galway research and modelled to an extent on the UK Research Excellence Framework was initiated. The review involved a self-assessment of all Schools and was followed by an international peer review and rating of the quality of research of each School for its research environment, research outputs and research impact.
- **Research Ethics**: The Research Office commissioned a review of Research Ethics Governance Structures in 2016. Based on the findings of this report, the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee Policy was updated in 2017 to reflect best practice. In addition, a revised Policy on University Research Ethics Policy and Governance Committee was approved. The revised Policy addresses the remit, responsibilities and composition of the Research Ethics Policy Governance Committee and the associated appointment process. It incorporates a new role of Vice-Chair to enhance leadership capacity on ethics.
- **SciVal**: Historically, the Research Office focused on reporting on research inputs, as opposed to research outputs. With an increased focus on impactful research and the quality of research, NUI Galway now subscribes to SciVal: an international database which allows us to capture and report on the quality of our research output, e.g., number of citations, field-weighted citation impact, etc.
- **Post-award support**: Considering recommendations from internal audits, in 2016 the Research Office appointed a **Head of Research Contracts and a Research Support Services Coordinator** on a permanent basis to support the contract review, acceptance and account setup function.
- **Research Institutes: The Policy on the Governance and Management of Research Institutes** was formally approved in June 2016, on the back of a framework recommended by APRC in 2014, and a follow-up review of this Policy including consideration of procedures for the establishment, governance and management of Research Institutes, reporting relationships, membership, operational aspects and branding is planned for 2018/19.
- **Intellectual Property Policy**: In 2017, NUI Galway approved a revised Intellectual Property Policy which aligns with the revised National IP Protocol.
- **Data Management Policy**: NUI Galway's Research Data Working Group developed a new Research Data Management Policy which was approved by Údarás na hOllscoille in June 2018. The Policy advises staff engaged in research of their responsibilities with respect to research project-related data collection/storage, the supports that are available for same, and how to ensure that research data is managed in compliance with Data Protection regulations.

¹⁴ Kelly, A., Byrnes, L., et al 'Developing an institutional framework for supporting supervisors of research students. A Practical Guide.' (2012) ISBN:978-1-906642-50-1

¹⁵ O'Reilly, S., Brennan, J., Byrnes, L., at al 'Implementation of the first national survey to measure the experiences of postgraduate research students', 13th European Quality Assurance Forum, Vienna, Nov 2018

Overall, these enhancements have led to a greater emphasis on quality research outputs and impact, as well as a higher quality research experience for our PhD students. These enhancements are evidenced by NUI Galway's strong performance in Horizon 2020 and other funding programmes. By September 2018, the total value of European research contracts secured by NUI Galway researchers under the current funding cycle (2014-2020) was €67.6M, of which over €61M is from Horizon 2020, compared with €46.5M under the previous seven-year Framework Programme (FP7). The most recent

Enterprise Ireland report on national performance (March 2018), ranks NUI Galway second in terms of success rate (15.1%) after UCC (15.5%). At a national level and in the recent Irish Research Council Laureate Award Programme, six NUI Galway Researchers were successful (total value of just under €3M) from a total of 36 awardees. NUI Galway submitted 36 applications to the Laureate call; 11 of these were 'A' rated at stage 1 review and were shortlisted by the IRC from a national total of 71 shortlisted applications.



CASE STUDY

INCREASING THE QUALITY OF RESEARCH OUTPUTS

NUI Galway's research output has grown over the past 10 years from 594 publications in peer-reviewed journals in 2005 to 1,466 publications in peer-reviewed journals in 2016. However, a comparison of the research impact data of these publications shows that the international reputation of our research activity, did not, at first, develop in tandem with the increase in numbers of publications. To address this problem, NUI Galway adopted a multi-faceted approach to raise awareness of our academic reputation and to better disseminate our research achievements to the wider international research community.

The approach included the appointment of a Director for Planning and Institutional Research and Director for Marketing

and Communications in 2016; the establishment of an Academic Reputation Group in 2016; the roll-out of an awareness campaign to researchers aimed at outlining the importance of raising awareness of their research outputs and managing their academic profiles; training in the use of SciVal; and the provision of Nature Masterclass Workshops focused on writing for high impact factor publications.

There has been an increase in number of subjects with international rankings from QS from 9 in 2015 to 20 in 2018 and improvement in QS University Ranking from 293 in 2011 to 243 in 2017. Research output metrics continues to improve as below:

NUI Galway 10 Year Research Output	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
N° of Peer Reviewed articles	600	679	867	1,003	1,193	1,287	1,411
Publications in top 10% Journals percentile	41.1%	46.1%	43.9%	45.6%	50.4%	54.9%	54.5%
Field Weighted Citation Impact	1.4	1.43	1.31	1.39	1.31	1.58	1.49
International collaboration (%)	45.3%	47.1%	46.5%	48.1%	48.9%	46.6%	49.3%

NUI Galway 10 Year Research Output	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
N° of Peer Reviewed articles	1,402	1,482	1,522	1,443	1,496	1,662
Publications in top 10% Journals percentile	56.0%	57.0%	54.4%	54.9%	57.4%	56.6%
Field Weighted Citation Impact	2.45	1.44	1.73	1.87	1.68	1.59
International collaboration (%)	50.9%	54.5%	54.7%	54.7%	58.4%	54.3%

Source: SciVal May 2018

12.1.3 Future Enhancements

The SET endorses the following enhancements that can improve the quality of research management at the University. Many of these are taken directly from the operational plans of the units responsible.

- **Grants Management System:** An internal audit report (Q4 2015) indicated that limited assurance could be placed on the efficiency and operation of internal controls surrounding account setup and research contracts in NUI Galway. Arising from the recommendations of the internal audit and a subsequent review of the process, the Research Office has initiated an upgrade of a pilot Grant Management System (GMS) for tracking grant applications and setting up research contracts. The upgrade will intricately link the GMS with IRIS and with Agresso; this is notable, as the internal audit findings reinforce the need for this link. The upgrade of the GMS is essential also to establish a tracking system aligned to the process flow in respect of individual research projects as identified on the University's strategic risk register. The implementation of the GMS will alleviate many of the risks identified by internal audit in terms of applying an integrated checklist/approval framework to the pre- and post-award processes and will promote greater participation and success rates by providing the Research Office with accurate data on application numbers and success rates, to enhance academic profiling at group or individual level. The GMS will be rolled out in Q1 2019.
- **Policy on Management of the Research Funding Lifecycle:** The current NUI Galway Financial Policy & Procedures Manual for Contract Research was approved in 2003. The Policy is no longer fit-for-purpose as procedures and responsibilities for the management of the project life cycle have changed in the intervening years. Moreover, this Policy referred only to 'contract research' and the related financial aspects. The findings of two internal audits have highlighted the need for a review of the Policy; specifically, to ensure that responsibility for the review of contracts and the set-up of research accounts is appropriately established and consistently applied. The Research Office has prepared a broader policy on the Management of the Research Funding Lifecycle. It seeks to define the principles and associated responsibilities pertaining to the application for, acceptance of and management of research funding at NUI Galway. The Policy applies to all types of research funding, including, but not limited to, competitive funding awarded by national and international funding organisations, Government departments, private industry, philanthropy and other non-commercial sources including the community sector. The Policy has been approved by the Research Committee and APRC, and approval by the relevant financial channels is anticipated in Q4 2018.
- **Research Committee membership:** Three of the five Colleges have in place their own research committee and the other two colleges are in the

process of convening a College-level committee. The Research Office will be represented on all five committees.

- **Researcher Development Centre (RDC):** A new RDC has been established under the direction of the Vice-President for Research and the Dean of Graduate Studies. The RDC is in start-up phase with the recruitment of the two approved staff members in process and it will support the professional development of researchers and the integration of all members of the University's research community, including postgraduate research students and contract researchers, as well as academic staff, by providing guidance on career management, and planning and training in transferrable skills. The RDC will operate in partnership with Human Resources, the Careers Development Centre, the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), Schools and Research Institutes/Centres.
- **Research Integrity:** The current NUI Galway Code of Good Practice in Research was approved in 2012 and is based on a 1998 Statement on Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice issued by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council. Since then, the National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland was published (2014), heavily influenced by the 2012 UK Concordat on Research Integrity and the 2011 European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (revised in April 2017). In light of these developments, we are developing a policy for Research Integrity which will update NUI Galway's Code of Policy and Procedures for Investigating and Resolving Allegations of Misconduct in Research to reflect best practice as set out in the National Research Integrity Forum's Guidelines for Investigation of Research Misconduct and to include this as part of the Research Integrity Policy under the section on Dealing with Violations and Allegations of Research Misconduct. The policy will define also the role of the Research Integrity Officer in dealing with violations and allegations of research misconduct, particularly with respect to the preliminary review of allegations. The Policy is due to be finalised in Q4 2018.
- **Research Integrity training:** Research Integrity training is being offered to researchers (P.I.s, post-docs and research students) as part of a national initiative which commenced in 2018 and which is funded by the IUA and the funding agencies. NUI Galway has 477 training 'tokens' per year over the three year period to access online Epigeum training modules on Research Integrity. A blended approach is being provided by NUI Galway involving short and long online courses, workshops and preparation of reflective portfolios. Training provisions are tailored to different researcher career stages and with PhD students gaining credits for their training. Six Research Integrity training workshops have been planned for September and October 2018; registration for each is at full capacity (30 places per workshop).



CASE STUDY

HEA PERFORMANCE COMPACT FOR RESEARCH DEGREES

The HEA Performance Compact 2014-2017 specifically set out to achieve the following enhancements:

*Increase number of doctoral graduates to a sustainable level: Vision 2020 target is 200 doctorates conferred p.a. This target has been achieved in three of the last five years.

*Improve quality of research degree programmes: A detailed analysis of current PhD Completion times and rates was undertaken with performance benchmarked nationally and internationally.

*Increase proportion of PhD students on structured programmes: Structured PhD programmes have been introduced in all five Colleges and 94% of all full-time PhD students are now enrolled on Structured PhD Programmes.