



## SUMMARY REPORT JULY 2017

### Background to the Review Process

In 2016, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) undertook an institutional review of Mary Immaculate College (MIC) on behalf of the University of Limerick (UL). MIC is a linked provider of UL. Based upon the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two institutions, UL is the academic accrediting body for all higher education programmes at MIC, save where other arrangements are jointly agreed by UL and MIC. As a linked provider of UL, MIC is subject to review and external quality assurance by UL or, if requested, QQI. MIC is also subject directly to QQI for the review and oversight of Access, Transfer and Progression arrangements. In November 2015, UL requested that QQI conduct an institution-level external quality assurance review of MIC. Review, in this context, refers to the formal review of the effectiveness of the institution-wide quality assurance policies and procedures established and implemented by MIC.

### Background to the Institution

Mary Immaculate College (MIC), founded in 1898, is the oldest third level institution in Limerick City. It is a Catholic College of Education and the Liberal Arts, standing in the Catholic University tradition. MIC was the first College established outside of Dublin for the professional education of national school teachers. The Bachelor of Education programme was introduced in 1974 following the advent nationally of graduate entry status for primary school teaching. At this time, the College attained the status of a university-level institution when it became a recognised college of the National University of Ireland, through its association with University College Cork.

MIC has been a linked provider of the University of Limerick (UL) since 1991 and it aligns with the statutory measures set out in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012. In 1992, MIC became the first College of Education in Ireland to offer a degree in Liberal Arts. MIC was the first College of Education to establish a Bachelor of Arts in early Childhood Care and Education (2003) as well as a Bachelor of Education in Education and Psychology (2004). MIC was also the first College of Education to confer a doctoral award.

### The Review Team

The review was conducted by the following team of six reviewers, trained by QQI on 26 September 2016. The Planning Visit to MIC was undertaken on 27 September 2016. The Main Review Visit was conducted by the full team between 28 November and 1 December 2016.

**Professor Anne Scott**  
Vice President for Equality and Diversity at the National University of Ireland, Galway (Chair)

**Dr Bruce L. Mallory**  
Co-Director, New Hampshire Listens, Professor of Education, Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire

**Áine Lynch**  
CEO of the National Parents Council (Primary)

**Professor David T. Croke**  
Director of Quality Enhancement and Professor of Biochemistry at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI)

**Martin Galevski**  
DPhil student at the Department of Education, University of Oxford

**Dr Claire Carney**  
Associate Vice-Principal (Education) for the University of the West of Scotland (Coordinating Reviewer)

### Review Team Conclusions

Based on the Review Team's evaluation of the Institutional Self Evaluation Report (ISER), supporting documentation and meetings conducted during the Main Review Visit, the Team found sufficient evidence to confirm:

Category:	Key Reviewer Findings
<b>Planning, governance and ownership of quality</b>	The Review Team found that the institutional strategic planning, governance and ownership of quality assurance and enhancement is consistent with the institution's role as a higher education institution in the European Higher Education Area.
<b>ESG and other guidelines</b>	The Review Team found the institution's internal and collaborative quality assurance arrangements to be consistent with Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) [2015] and national, European and international guidelines in accordance with the Bologna process.
<b>Higher Education Institution in the NFQ</b>	The institution's planning, structure and systems support its responsibilities as a linked provider of the University of Limerick with qualifications recognised by the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).



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#### Review Team Commendations\*

The Team found sufficient evidence to commend the following examples of good practice for further promotion internally, nationally and internationally:

1	MIC staff, who were hugely positive, and their commitment evident, in ensuring that the quality of the educational experience has been preserved despite the severe resourcing issues over recent years coupled with an increase in student numbers.
2	The engagement and expertise of members of An tÚdarás Rialaithe (the governing body) and the associated induction, annual orientation and ongoing information sharing for An tÚdarás members.
3	The creation of the Student Parent Support Service and the work done by the Student Parent Support Officer in supporting this important but vulnerable group of students, furthermore, MIC is encouraged to find a way to ensure continuity of funding for the Student Parent Support Service.
4	Departmental mentoring and support for part-time colleagues in the Faculty of Education where they rely heavily on such staff to support delivery of practice supervision and programme delivery.
5	Research support provided to staff by way of seed funding, sabbatical leave and the research centres and institutes as places for staff/student collaboration.

#### Review Team Recommendations\*

The Team found sufficient evidence to recommend the following activities to MIC for attention and development:

1	MIC, as a matter of priority, should move to confirm resourcing plans outlined for the Quality Office and in so doing develop an MIC quality handbook that will be applied consistently across the institution, inclusive of the St. Patrick's Thurles campus.
2	MIC should build upon the collegiality fostered in the ISER process to address and resolve the issue of academic staff representation on the Governing Body, and, as part of due process, consider examples of governance models from other institutions.
3	Given that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between UL and MIC underpins the current designation of MIC as a Linked Provider of UL, it is recommended that the MOU should be reviewed as a matter of urgency and, where necessary, be re-negotiated and revised, to reflect the changes to the Irish HE 'landscape' since 2007, in particular: the provisions of the 2012 Act; the role of QQI; the status of MIC as a Linked Provider of UL (the cognate Designated Awarding Body); and the need for UL to have effective oversight of MIC internal quality assurance processes and overall governance arrangements in place (levels 6-10).
4	MIC should, as a matter of urgency, publish its schedule of internal cyclical reviews (similar to the UL model), on a five-year rolling basis, encompassing the review of programmes, departments, faculties and related services.
5	MIC should ensure that placement risk management and crisis response protocols are developed as a matter of urgency, and that staff and students be oriented to them. In addition, the development of placement protocols is required to assure more consistent practices including contact between advisors/tutors and students. It is then vital that all staff responsible for supporting students on placement familiarise themselves with the placement protocol and that the tutor's role in proactively maintaining contact with students is clarified.

\*The five key commendations and recommendations are presented in the Summary Report. A comprehensive list of all commendations and recommendations made by the review team are presented in the Conclusions Section of the full MIC Review Report.

#### UL Governance

The MIC Review Report was considered by UL Academic Council at its meeting of 17 May 2017; considered by the UL Governing Authority Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance Committee at its meeting of 7 June 2017; and considered and approved for publication by the UL Executive Committee at its meeting of 14 June 2017.

#### Further Information

The full MIC review report, including responses from UL and MIC, is published on the QQI website at:

[www.QQI.ie](http://www.QQI.ie)

Further information on the QQI institutional review process and the range of quality assurance and enhancement activities undertaken by QQI can also be found on the QQI website.