# University of Limerick

## Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report 2019

Based on the reporting period 1 September 2017 – 31 August 2018



The Cyclical Review Process

# Part 1

# Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures

## Overarching institution-level approach and policy for QA (ESG 1.1)

**1. Overarching Institution Quality Policy**
A brief synopsis of the overarching institution quality policy which sets out the links between QA policy and procedures and the strategy and strategic management of the institution.

The University of Limerick (UL) strategic plan (*Broadening Horizons*) articulates institutional mission, vision and strategic priorities. The plan is guided by six core values, the first of which is excellence, which explicitly commits the university to a quality improvement ethos. The overall strategic plan is supported by: (a) our teaching, learning and assessment strategy (*Engaged Learning*), which includes a specific commitment to quality in all our activities, and (b) our research and innovation strategy (*Excellence and Impact 2020*), the first objective of which commits us to maximising the quality of research outputs across all disciplines. These strategic documents each have associated implementation plans, which are subject to regular monitoring and review.

UL's overarching institutional quality statement commits the university to enhancing the quality of its academic programmes, teaching, research and service to the community and to complying with statutory and regulatory requirements relating to quality assurance (QA) and quality improvement (QI). UL's risk management policy and associated processes also represent a core university system linking risk, quality and strategy.

UL's institutional arrangements for developing, monitoring, reviewing, enhancing and managing the quality of its activities are multi-layered and multifaceted. They are informed by national acts, statutory quality guidelines and international good practice and are appropriately underpinned by UL policies. The arrangements have evolved and are tailored to institutional organisational structure and mission. They are developed and overseen by relevant institutional and local unit-level governance committees and are reviewed by various means, including internal quality reviews and periodic institutional (external) reviews. Cornerstone institutional-level QA processes are described in our annual institutional profile.

**2. Quality assurance decision-making fora**
A brief description of institution-level quality assurance decision-making fora

UL's administrative and academic organisational structures are available here. Overall authority for the affairs of the university is vested in the Governing Authority, whose functions include approving high-level strategy and policy, statutes and regulations. The Vice President Academic Affairs and Student Engagement (VPAASE) reports directly to the Governing Authority on all quality-related issues. Matters relating to internal audit or risk management are dealt with by the GA Audit and Risk sub-committee.

The Executive Committee, which is accountable to the President, is the senior management committee with responsibility for developing strategic policies and procedures, monitoring corporate performance and ensuring that all aspects of the corporate function operate with optimal efficiency and effectiveness.

Academic Council controls UL's academic affairs. It oversees academic awards, standards and regulations and approves all new programmes and changes to existing programmes. Chaired by the President, Academic Council comprises senior officers, deans of faculty, heads of academic departments, Students' Union officers, assistant deans of academic affairs and elected staff representatives.

As per the academic organisational chart, UL comprises four faculties and 23 academic departments and schools. Overall responsibility for the academic faculties resides with the faculty executive deans, who report to the President. Each dean is supported in his/her role by heads of academic schools/departments, a faculty manager, an Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs, an Assistant Dean of Research and an Assistant Dean of Internationalisation. All academic members of a faculty, together with student representatives, comprise the faculty board, which meets regularly to discuss academic matters, such as proposals for new programmes.

All UL service (support) units report to a senior member of Executive Committee, as per the administrative organisational chart. As with academic units, periodic quality reviews are undertaken for all support units. Academic unit quality review reports and the implementation of the associated quality improvement plans are monitored by the VPAASE while those of support units are monitored by the Chief Operating Officer & Registrar.

## Confirmation of QA Policy and Procedures

**1. Programme Design and Approval (ESG 1.2)**
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance policy and procedures for the design and approval of new programmes.

In accordance with **ESG 1.2 (Design and approval of programmes)**, UL follows a well-established, rigorous, documented procedure for approving new programmes. All new programmes must align with the UL strategic plan, with justification included in approval documentation. New programmes are approved in five stages by these five groups: the host department, host faculty, Executive Committee, Academic Programme Review Committee (APRC) and Academic Council. Academic Council approves new programmes on the advice of its APRC subcommittee, which is chaired by the VPAASE. Terms of reference can be seen on the APRC web page. Joint or dual degrees are subject to the provisions of UL's joint and dual degree awards policy. Documented procedures for institution-wide programme design, approval and modification are published on UL's internal SharePoint portal.

In line with ESG 1.2, all programmes (and modules therein) have associated learning outcomes, and the programme qualification is clearly specified and articulated in the context of the National Qualifications Framework for higher education (and consequently, in the framework for qualifications of the European higher education area).

**2. Programme Delivery and Assessment (ESG 1.3)**
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance policies and procedures for the ongoing delivery and assessment of programmes.

In line with **ESG 1.3 (Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment)**, active and collaborative learning forms a central element of UL's teaching, learning and assessment strategy. Given the diversity of programmes on offer at UL, programmes are delivered in many ways. In accordance with **ESG 1.3**, the mode of delivery is defined for all programme modules in the (new or revised) programme submission documentation approved by APRC/Academic Council (see last section). Academic regulation 1.4.3 (in the Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures) requires the academic staff member(s) to provide details to the students of the learning outcomes of the module, indicative grade descriptors corresponding to each grade, the criteria on which assessment is to be based, the minimum performance standard, the weighting allocated to each assessment instrument associated with the module and repeat assessment instrument(s) associated with the module. Programme assessment policy and procedures are clearly articulated in the Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures (in particular chapter 2, Marks and Standards). Assessment is also externally reviewed through the external examiner system, which is considered to be part of programme reviews.

Working with UL's four faculties, Graduate and Professional Studies (GPS) manages the development and delivery of flexible and relevant professional and personal development programmes. GPS uses a hybrid model: academic schools/departments retain ownership of courses and academic material, and GPS provides the support, procedures and processes that enable the delivery of flexible learning pathways.

Students are systematically involved in programme delivery and assessment-related activity. Programme boards include student representation (with students absenting themselves when exam results are discussed), as do associated QA oversight fora, including Faculty Board, Academic Council and Governing Authority. Institutional-level student feedback is collected systematically through the annual student exit survey and the module satisfaction survey as well as through a range of other survey activities, including, but not limited to, the Irish Survey of Student Engagement, the UL postgraduate research experience survey and surveys of international students. Survey findings are considered, as appropriate, at local level (by individual academic staff, programme boards, heads of department) and at institutional level (by deans, Executive Committee, Academic Council), and summary reports are made publicly available (accessible here and here). In line with formal UL processes, individual programmes are subject to annual monitoring and periodic review activities.

**3. Research Quality (ESG 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.9)**
Links and/or text relating to any specific quality assurance procedures for the design, approval, delivery, assessment and monitoring of research programmes, if they exist.

Overall research strategy and policy is articulated by the university's (a) strategic plan; (b) research strategy, which is informed by the overall strategic plan; and (c) quality statement. Procedures relating to the quality of research are many and varied according to purpose. Regulations pertaining to postgraduate research students are included in the Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures (in particular chapters 2 and 5). Graduate and Professional Studies, which leads on the development of guidelines, procedures and processes pertinent to research and taught postgraduate education, resides in the portfolio of the VPAASE.

The Research Projects section of the Finance Department oversees and reports on financial aspects of research activity. The quality of research is reviewed through the quality review process for academic departments, the quality review process for research institutes and the range of research support services provided by support units, including the Research Office and Graduate and Professional Studies, the Finance Office, HR, the Library and Information Services Division, the Information Technology Division and Buildings and Estates, all of which are reviewed through the quality review process for support units. Several of the above support units regularly develop, deliver or coordinate various research-related professional development courses, which are widely advertised throughout the institution via global email. In addition, the assessment of research quality forms the basis of periodic research quality initiatives undertaken by the Research Office and through the annual UL research report prepared by the Research Office, which is considered by Executive Committee. Research conduct is guided by the university's Research Integrity Policy.

UL operates recruitment policies and procedures for research scholars, research staff and academic staff.

**4. Student Lifecycle (ESG 1.4)**
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures that are encompassed by the student lifecycle.

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Policies and procedures for student enrolment, registration, assessment, grading, performance standards, progression and academic awards are all incorporated into the Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures. In line with **ESG 1.4 (Student admission, progression, recognition and certification)**, UL operates policies and procedures relating to access, recognition of prior learning, admission processes and criteria. Admissions procedures for undergraduate entry is operationalised in the main by the Admissions section of the Academic Registry Division, with the majority of undergraduate students entering through the national Central Applications Office (CAO) system. In support of UL's access policy and through the Access Office, Mature Student Office and Disability Support Services Office, Student Affairs promotes and supports the participation of students from groups that have been under-represented in higher education (see also below). Respect for the diversity of learners is enshrined in UL's Equality and Diversity Policy. UL also has an Access and Widening Participation Policy.

As specified in the university's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy, RPL is used at UL to enable applicants to gain entry to a programme, to award credits for part of a programme and to award exemptions for some programme requirements. Non-EU student applicants apply directly to the International Education Division while postgraduate taught and research applicants apply to Graduate and Professional Studies. Entry requirements for all UL programmes are articulated in published, annually updated course documentation (undergraduate and postgraduate). QA/QE mechanisms employed by these offices in support of their admissions and related processes form part of each unit's quality management system, which is periodically reviewed as part of the quality review process for support units. Students undergoing work placement involving activities relating to children or vulnerable adults are subject to the provisions of the UL student vetting policy.

Also in line with **ESG 1.4**, UL operates student orientation and induction processes through the Academic Registry's Orientation Programme, the Centre for Teaching and Learning's First Seven Weeks programme, the Student Engagement and Success Unit and the International Education Division's 7-day orientation/welcome programme for new international students as well as faculty, department and programme-based inductions.

UL collects, monitors and acts upon information on student progression and maintains graduation and student records in a number of ways. Under governance of the Steering Group, Academic Registry maintains, controls and develops UL's student records, including all personal information, grant records, student registrations, module grade entry, performance reports and student results, the issuing of all graduate parchments and the publication of all class and examination schedules. Student progression information is considered at a number of fora, most notably the faculty exam boards, the Academic Council Grading Committee and the University Exam Board. Student progression is also considered during the annual programmatic review process, at which course boards propose quality enhancements on the basis of (in part) annual programme performance metrics.

Students with additional requirements are supported by the Disability Support Services Office, which provides a range of services to students, including assistive technology. The Disability Support Services handbook provides detailed information for current and prospective students.

UL's Mature Student Office supports mature students who are registered on full-time undergraduate programmes in UL and students who are registered on the Mature Student Access Certificate. The office helps to ease these students' transition into full-time higher education.

Part of the Cooperative Education & Careers Division, the Careers Service offers support to students and recent graduates in developing and implementing successful career plans and facilitates the recruitment process for students and employers.

As part of the restructuring of Governing Authority, an Access, Equality and Student Affairs Committee was reconstituted. Its remit includes ensuring that 'policies prepared are in accordance with good practice, student equality and diversity principles, and student, University and legislative requirements'.

**5. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)**
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring the competence of teaching staff, including staff recruitment and staff development.

In line with **ESG 1.5 (Teaching staff)**, UL:

- ***Pursues clear, transparent and fair processes for staff recruitment:*** Relevant policies and procedures are published on the Human Resources website, including recruitment and appointment procedures and packs for academic (as well as research and support) staff.

- ***Operates conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching:*** Academic role profiles for all academic grades clearly articulate the importance of teaching. Teaching portfolios form a core element of academic staff progression and promotion. Teaching activity forms a prominent element of the academic workload allocation policy and automatically forms a core element of UL's Performance and Development Review System (PDRS) as applied to academic staff. Moreover, the importance of teaching is articulated and emphasised in strategic institutional publications, including the strategic plan (*Broadening Horizons*), the teaching, learning and assessment strategy (*Engaged Learning*) and the research and innovation strategy (*Excellent and Impact 2020*). Teaching-related activities form a core determinant of resource allocation to academic units. UL invests very significant resources in its Centre for Teaching and Learning and runs annual teaching excellence awards.

- ***Offers opportunities for and promotes the professional development of teaching staff:*** The Centre for Teaching and Learning offers and promotes certificate and graduate diploma courses in teaching, learning and scholarship as well as a myriad of additional professional development opportunities for teaching staff. The centre is the driving force in piloting and implementing a professional development framework for all staff teaching in higher education. The PDRS facilities opportunities for teacher professional development. The HR Learning, Development and Equal Opportunities section promotes and coordinates training courses, including teaching-related courses, and a university-wide academic mentoring programme.

- ***Encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research:*** Aim 1.1 of our strategic plan commits us to fostering a research-led educational ethos at all levels of the curriculum, and Activity 1.1.2 of our teaching, learning and assessment strategy commits us aligning teaching with research. Progress in both instances is monitored through implementation and programmatic reviews.

- ***Encourages innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies:*** Aim 1.1.5 of our strategic plan commits us to further embedding technology-enhanced learning across the curricula, while Activity 1.3.1 of our teaching, learning and assessment strategy commits us to further developing a technology-enhanced pedagogy. UL established the Technology Enhanced Learning Unit (TELU) and a learning technologies forum to realise these strategic commitments.

**6. Teaching and Learning (ESG 1.4, 1.5, 1.6)**
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring the quality of teaching and learning.

Teaching and learning activity and direction is informed by UL's strategic plan, teaching, learning and assessment strategy and overarching quality statement. Implementation of the strategic plan is regularly monitored at various institutional fora, most notably Executive Committee and Governing Authority. Implementation of the teaching, learning and assessment strategy is monitored by the VPAASE. As part of the annual programme report, course review boards are requested to outline how the programme complies with UL policy and procedures, including the teaching, learning and assessment strategy.

Teaching and learning-related QA policy and procedures (**ESG 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6**) are described in these sections of this report: (a) Student Lifecycle; (b) Teaching Staff; and (c) Resources and Support. In summary, the Centre for Teaching and Learning takes a primary institutional lead on promoting teaching and learning, and cornerstone institutional QA mechanisms for monitoring teaching-related activity include:

- Ongoing cyclical quality review of all academic units
- The external examiner system
- Programme reviews (annually by the relevant course review board and periodically (usually every five years) by an external panel)
- The Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) process
- The Module Satisfaction Survey (MSS)
- The Student Exit Survey
- The Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE)
- The maintenance and periodic review of a comprehensive framework of academic practices and regulations, as articulated in the Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures

Other relevant policies and procedures include, but are not limited to:
- Equality and Diversity
- HR Mentoring Programme
- Athena SWAN
- Sabbatical Policy
- Family Friendly Policies

> **7. Resources and Support (ESG 1.6)**
> Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring funding and resources for learning, teaching and research. Also, links and or text relating to the quality assurance procedures for learning resources and student support.

In line with **ESG 1.6 (Learning resources and student support)**, UL invests (and regularly reviews) appropriate levels of funding for learning and teaching activities and ensures that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided. UL utilises a specific resource allocation model, which ultimately allocates resources to academic and support units based on available budget, the units' needs and alignment with the strategic plan. This model is regularly reviewed for fitness for purpose by the Finance Department and Executive Committee.

Most student supports are provided by specific support units or offices, including the Centre for Teaching and Learning, Cooperative Education and Careers, Library and Information Services Division, Buildings and Estates, Student Affairs, the Information Technology Division, the International Education Division, Graduate and Professional Studies, the Academic Registry and the cross-divisional Student Engagement and Success Unit. All support (and academic) units are subject to periodic quality reviews, the reports from which are [published](#) on the Quality Support Unit (QSU) website. Support units ensure the effectiveness of their services through their [quality management system](#) (QMS), and an internal auditing process is used to verify the effectiveness of each QMS.

The self-assessment reports produced by academic departments as part of their periodic quality reviews include sections on facilities and learning resources and student guidance and support. The evaluation of these aspects of teaching and learning as they relate to individual departments often raise issues that need to be addressed and improved. Such quality improvement action items invariably form part of the departments' quality improvement plans, either in the context of being able to improve the issue themselves or in liaison with the service provider in question.

Student surveys, most notably the annual [student exit survey](#) and [module satisfaction survey](#), include questions on the effectiveness of the university's learner support services and resources. Survey reports are subsequently distributed for consideration, both locally at unit and programme level and to relevant institutional-level fora (e.g. Executive Committee and Academic Council). Summary reports are [published](#) on the QSU website.

All supports are accessible. Students are informed about the services available to them in a variety of ways, including [orientation week](#) and the [First Seven Weeks programme](#) for first-year students, the Personal Academic Support System ([PASS](#)) and the [student gateway portal](#) on the UL homepage. In addition, individual support (and academic) units provide relevant information on their own web pages. The Student Engagement and Success ([SES](#)) Unit supports first years in their transition. Five learning centres – [Regional Writing Centre](#), [Maths Learning Centre](#), [ICT Learning Centre](#), [Science Learning Centre](#) and [Peer-Supported Learning Centre](#) – offer focused support to students to help them meet the requirements for progression and complete of their programmes of study. In addition, targeted faculty-based support has been developed to help students progress and complete their programmes.

ESG 1.6 recognises that the role of support and administrative staff is crucial in delivering support services and that such staff need to be qualified and given opportunities to develop their competences. In this context, UL implements published procedures for the recruitment and appointment of support staff and a competency framework. Generic induction, training and development opportunities are also provided, most notable by HR's Learning, Development and Equal Opportunities section. Tailored training and development requirements for individual support staff are considered as part of their annual PDRS (Performance and Development Review System) activities.

**8. Information Management (ESG 1.7)**
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for collecting, analysing and using relevant information about programmes and other activities.

Responsibility for policy and procedural development relating to information management is devolved across appropriate individual UL units and offices, including the Office of the President and the Information Technology Division. The effectiveness of such information management policies and procedures is assessed via individual unit quality reviews. In line with **ESG 1.7 (Information management)**, UL collects, analyses and uses relevant information for managing programmes and other activities effectively. Some primary procedures include the following:

- **At a strategic institutional level**, the strategic plan, the teaching, learning and assessment strategy and the research and innovation strategy all articulate specific aims and objectives, each with accompanying outcomes and targets. Internal procedures are in place to routinely monitor, document and report progress to key decision-making individuals or committees, including Executive Committee, Management Council, Academic Council and Governing Authority. For example, the implementation, monitoring and review of the strategic plan is described on page 68 of that document.

- **Profiles of the student population as well as student progression, success and drop-out rates** are gathered, reported and analysed in a number of ways. Under governance of the Steering Group, the Academic Registry Division maintains, controls and develops UL's student records through its student information system, from which various officers and offices can extract and tailor data to generate reports for appropriate internal stakeholders at institutional level (e.g. Academic Council and Executive Committee), at local level (e.g. course review boards) and for external stakeholders (e.g. HEA, DES). Among other responsibilities, UL's Student Engagement & Success Unit (SESU) undertakes research and data-analytics relating to student engagement.

- **The student voice:** Information relating to students' levels of satisfaction with their programmes is gathered in a number of ways. Cornerstone institutional-level student surveys include student evaluation of teaching surveys, module satisfaction surveys and student exit surveys, for which survey reports are delivered to relevant internal stakeholders for consideration and follow up (e.g. Academic Council, Executive Committee, heads of department, course directors, course boards and individual academics). The UL institutional survey register recorded an additional 35 surveys, which, in the main, targeted one or more specific cohorts of students (first-year students, international students, etc.).

- **Institutional processes** provide a framework for individual students or student groups to avail of various local mechanisms to receive immediate feedback on modules and programmes of study during delivery, with a view to local consideration and response. These mechanisms include direct contact with a lecturer, head of department, academic advisor or student representative. Student feedback and dialogue is also facilitated by student representation on various committees and boards, both at institutional level (e.g. Governing Authority, Academic Council and faculty boards) and local level (e.g. course review boards).

- **External examiner reports** are considered by relevant programme review boards, and the outcome of programme reviews are considered at departmental and faculty level and by the Academic Programme Review Committee in accordance with UL procedures.

- The **quality review process** for academic units and support units requires input from students, customers and stakeholders. The quality review reports, which address all aspects of units' operations, are considered by Executive Committee, the relevant dean and the VPAASE.

- A comprehensive range of **learning resources and support services** are provided by UL to facilitate student learning. The programme approval process incorporates a detailed analysis of the resources required by each programme, including student supports. Academic and support department quality reviews include an evaluation of the provision of learner resources and supports by the department under review.

- **Career paths of graduates**: The Cooperative Education and Careers Division provides comprehensive career advice and support to students and organises work placements for students. The division conducts an annual First Destinations Survey of graduates, which helps inform relevant strategic planning activity as well as local and institutional decision making.

- **The Research Office** uses a research information system (ULRIS) for tracking research output and publications and has numerous internal processes for recording, monitoring and reporting upon research activity.

- **The Marketing and Communications Division** is responsible for gathering and disseminating a wide range of information to audiences both internal and external to UL.

**9. Self-evaluation and Monitoring (ESG 1.9)**
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for self-evaluation and internal monitoring.

A diverse range of procedures are enacted at institutional, local and, indeed, personal level with a view to monitoring, self-evaluating and enhancing the quality of our activities. Institutional-level self-evaluation activities incorporate, but are not limited to:

- Self-evaluation activities (and associated authorship of a self-evaluation report) as part of both academic and support unit quality reviews. Review reports are made publicly available, and the review recommendations form the basis of a subsequent quality improvement plan. The implementation of the plan is monitored by the QSU, the VPAASE, the relevant dean and the Governing Authority Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance Committee.

- An external examination process for both taught and research programmes, with feedback of external examiner reports at local unit and individual level. External examiners are requested to contact the Office of the VPAASE directly if they have particular concerns.

- Under the terms of UL's Annual Programme Report and Periodic Review policy, all taught programmes are subject to formal annual monitoring by the relevant course review board and to periodic review (usually every five years) by an external panel. The review outcomes are considered at departmental and faculty level and by Academic Council's Academic Programme Review Committee (APRC).

- Student feedback by means of the module satisfaction survey and student exit survey, with detailed and/or aggregate reports being considered by individual academics, heads of department, course boards, deans, Executive Committee and Academic Council.

- All UL support units are required to implement a QMS. A requirement of the QMS is the inclusion of a 'QMS Audit' process, whereby all processes are audited by trained QMS auditors on an annual basis. An Inter-Department Audit Process is in place to help units prepare for quality reviews. The audits are referred to as 'inter-department' because they are conducted by trained auditors both from within the unit under review and from other UL support units. The purpose of the audit process is to ensure that all components of the unit's QMS are audited for compliance with UL's quality framework. The process allows for a sharing of best practice and a focus on inter-department collaboration. Support units are also required to complete an annual quality report, which provides valuable input for the annual institutional quality report (AIQR).

- Faculties provide an annual quality report, which has now been connected to the annual programme monitoring process and resulting faculty action plan.

Systematic and ongoing risk assessment exercises (feeding into risk registers) are undertaken by academic and support units in line with UL's risk management policy, the implementation and monitoring of which is undertaken by Executive Committee and Governing Authority's Audit and Risk Committee.

**10. Stakeholder Engagement (ESG 1.1)**
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.

A diverse range of procedures and activities are enacted at institutional and local level with a view to ensuring stakeholder engagement. Activities incorporate, but are not limited to:

- UL Engage, which evolved in the context of the IUA Campus Engage Initiative and complies to its charter, fosters engaged learning and research with the communities of Limerick city and the region. UL Engage aims to inculcate civic values and foster access to higher education, learning attainment, research with societal impact and knowledge exchange. Building and strengthening community relations informs the development and delivery of programmes of study and research.

- In line with the 2025 National Skills Strategy, UL is an active member of the Regional Skills Forum and participates in initiatives such as Springboard, Apprenticeships and Skillnets to develop, deliver, accredit and quality-manage flexible, work-based programmes.

- Students are systematically represented in all aspects of UL governance and quality assurance activity (e.g. student representation on Governing Authority, Academic Council, faculty boards, course review boards and review panels of academic units).

- As part of the quality review process for both academic and support units, individual units identify their customers and stakeholders and reflect upon levels of engagement with a view to identifying opportunities for enhancing quality. The quality reviewers meet with key stakeholders as part of review site visits, and key stakeholders (e.g. student and employer representatives) form part of the quality review team.

- As part of their QMS, individual support units identify and seek feedback from their core customers and stakeholders.

- Engagement with employer and related stakeholders is largely facilitated by the Research Office (research, intellectual property and technology transfer), the Cooperative Education and Careers Division (managing a network of over 2,000 employers in the context of student placements) and Graduate and Professional Studies. These networks and linkages are routinely used to identify employer and related stakeholders for participation in QA activities (such as the external examining process, unit quality reviews and periodic programmatic reviews).

- The International Education Division facilitates stakeholder engagement by the faculties with academic institutions and other relevant organisations abroad. These networks and linkages are at the heart of UL's internationalisation and are used to inform institutional quality improvement (learning from best practice).

**11. Engagement with Other Bodies (ESG 1.1)**
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for engagement with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies and other quality assurance and awarding bodies (details of specific engagements should be provided in the online section of the form).

Engagement with professional, statutory and other regulatory bodies is managed directly by the relevant academic or support unit.

Unit-level QA oversight of how these interactions are managed and enhanced falls under the auspices of each (support) unit's QMS activities and quality review processes (academic and support units). For example, the Office of the President's [QMS](#) encompasses a range of documents (quality policy and manual, customer charter and key business processes), which, collectively, record the Office's engagement activities with relevant statutory, regulatory and other bodies. The QMS also incorporates a quality improvement plan to drive continual improvement. The effectiveness of each unit's QMS and operational excellence is assessed by periodic [quality review](#).

UL maintains (and updates annually) a central institutional repository (database) of programmes accredited by external/professional bodies.

In instances where engagement between a professional, regulatory or statutory body and an academic or support unit raises issues outside of the scope of the unit concerned, the unit liaises with the relevant UL committee, unit or management group.

**12. Provision and Use of Public Information (ESG 1.8)**
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for the provision of clear, accurate, up-to date and accessible public information.

In line with **ESG 1.8 (Public information)** and informed by an [institutional marketing and communications strategy](), UL regularly updates its [website]() so that the university's wide range of stakeholders can easily source information of relevance to them. UL adheres to the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2014, which informs institutional practice in this area. Section 8 of the Act requires FOI bodies to prepare and publish as much information as possible in an open and accessible manner on a routine basis, having regard to the principles of openness, transparency and accountability as set out in Sections 8(5) and 11(3) of the Act. Links to each section of UL's FOI publication scheme are maintained by the [FOI section]() of the Corporate Secretary's Office. Links include:

- [General Information about the University of Limerick]()
- [Information on Functions & Services Provided]()
- [Information on Decision-Making Procedures]()
- [Financial Information]()
- [Procurement Information]()
- [Other Routinely Published Information / FOI Disclosure Log]()
- [Data Protection (GDPR)]()
- [Records Management]()
- [Environmental Information]()

The UL [Student and Staff Gateway]() provides information on calendars and timetables; policies, procedures and handbooks; learning resources; support and administration; further study; and details on upcoming events.

The [Marketing and Communications Division]() is responsible for gathering and disseminating a wide range of information to audiences both internal and external to UL. Each academic and support unit maintains, reviews and updates its own website, and all sites are accessible from the UL [homepage](). The UL homepage is undergoing a redesign to ensure easy access to information for different stakeholders.

**13. Linked Providers (for Designated Awarding Bodies) (ESG 1.1)**
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring engagement with linked providers including the procedures for approval, monitoring, review, withdrawal of approval and appeal for linked providers.

From time to time, UL enters into partnership agreements with both public and private bodies to develop and accredit programmes of study that align with the university's aims and goals as described in the strategic plan. UL pursues a defined framework (documented on an internal SharePoint site) to establish, following discussion with the external partner, the terms of reference of any accreditation arrangement. The accreditation process involves a review of the academic programmes of study and the capacity of the external partner to deliver the programmes in a manner consistent with UL's quality assurance processes. The process entails establishing an accreditation committee tasked with reviewing external partner documentation and facilities and reporting recommendations to the relevant institutional committee.

QA procedures for engaging with linked providers are/will be governed by memoranda of understanding (MoUs) between UL and individual linked providers. The MoUs, and hence the exact profile and scope of the resultant QA oversight, are tailored to best suit individual institutional contexts and are approved ultimately by Academic Council and Governing Authority. The QQI sector-specific QA guidelines informs evolving institutional procedures underpinning the approval, monitoring, review and potential for withdrawal of approval and appeal for linked providers.

Ongoing QA monitoring and dialogue is pursued via submission by the linked provider to UL of an AIQR coupled to an annual follow-up annual dialogue meeting. Details of UL's linked providers is available on the QSU website [here](#).

**14. DA Procedures for use of QQI Award Standards (IoTs only)**
Links and/or text relating to the specific procedures for the approval of programmes in keeping with Core Policy and Criteria for the Validation of Education and Training Programmes by QQI, the Sectoral Protocols for the Awarding of Research Master Degrees at NFQ Level 9 under Delegated Authority (DA) from QQI and the Sectoral Protocols for the Delegation of Authority by QQI to the Institutes of Technology to make Joint Awards, May 2014.

N/A

**15. Collaborative Provision (ESG 1.1)**
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for engagement with third parties for the provision of programmes.

The Office of the VPAASE follows internal guidelines when responding to requests for accreditation from external bodies. These guidelines, which are retained on an internal SharePoint site, have been informed by the IHEQN guidelines on collaborative provision.

In July 2015, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the state agency responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of quality assurance in further and higher education providers in Ireland), published a Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners. The Code of Practice (or 'the Code'), which both draws upon and informs international effective practice, can be accessed here or from the QQI website (www.qqi.ie). The Code represents a set of threshold requirements particular to the provision of education and training to international learners. In the introductory text, QQI indicates that compliance with the Code should be integrated into the provider's quality assurance policies and procedures.

An evidence-based overview of: (a) how compliance with the Code is integrated into UL's quality assurance policies and procedures and (b) how UL complies with each of the specific criteria included in the Code is available here.

In May 2018, the QSU undertook a scoping exercise in relation to: (a) exemplar national and international practice as applied to collaborative and transnational provision and (b) current UL practice in this area. This, in turn, facilitated a preliminary gap analysis to be undertaken in relation to our current practice. A discussion document was prepared for the VPAASE for consideration by the International Committee.

UL is developing a partnership tool kit to ensure effective processes and procedures for initiating and implementing linkages and cooperation with international higher education institutions. The work is strategically overseen by the International Committee and its working groups.

**16. Additional Notes**
Any additional notes can be entered here.

Delete this message and insert text here. The box will expand.

> **17. Internal Review Schedule**
> The internal reviews schedule or cycle at the level of unit of review within the institution. The units of review can be: module; programme; department/school; service delivery unit; faculty. The cycle will usually run over a 5-7 year period and all units should be encompassed over the full period of the cycle.

| Year | **2017/18** |
| --- | --- |
| Areas/Units | Centre for Teaching & Learning (Mar '18) |
| Number | 1 |
| Link(s) to Publications | http://www.ul.ie/quality/current-review-cycle |

| Year | **2018/19** |
| --- | --- |
| Areas/Units | Students' Union (Oct '18); Postgraduate Students' Union (Oct '18); UniJobs (Dec '18); Irish World Academy of Music and Dance (Feb '19) |
| Number | 4 |
| Link(s) to Publications | http://www.ul.ie/quality/current-review-cycle |

| Year | **2019/20** |
| --- | --- |
| Areas/Units | Library & Information Services Division (Sept '19); Cooperative Education & Careers Division (Dec '19); Buildings & Estates (Mar '20) |
| Number | 3 |
| Link(s) to Publications | http://www.ul.ie/quality/current-review-cycle |

| Year | **2020/21** |
| --- | --- |
| Areas/Units | Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences (Oct '20); Student Affairs Division (Nov '20), National Council for Exercise & Fitness (Dec '20), Human Resources Division (Jan '21), Kemmy Business School (Feb '21), Lero Research Institute (April '21), Information Technology Division (May '21) |
| Number | 7 |

| Link(s) to Publications | http://www.ul.ie/quality/current-review-cycle |
|---|---|

| Year | **2021/22** |
|---|---|
| Areas/Units | Faculty of Science & Engineering (Sept '21), Bernal Research Institute (Nov '21); Finance (Jan '22); Health Research Institute (Feb '22); Faculty of Education & Health Sciences (Mar '22); International Education Division (May '22) |
| Number | 6 |
| Link(s) to Publications | http://www.ul.ie/quality/current-review-cycle |

| Year | **2022/23** |
|---|---|
| Areas/Units | Research (Oct '22); Academic Registry (Nov '22); UL Sport (Feb '23); Plassey Campus Centre (Apr '23) |
| Number | 4 |
| Link(s) to Publications | http://www.ul.ie/quality/current-review-cycle |

| Year | **2023/24** |
|---|---|
| Areas/Units | Marketing & Communications (Sept '23); Office of the President (Nov '23); Graduate and Professional Studies (Feb '24); UL Alumni (May '24) |
| Number | 4 |
| Link(s) to Publications | http://www.ul.ie/quality/current-review-cycle |

| Year | **2024/25** |
|---|---|
| Areas/Units | Institutional Cornerstone Quality Assurance Processes |
| Number | 1 |
| Link(s) to Publications | http://www.ul.ie/quality/current-review-cycle |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures** | [UL AIQR 2019 Part 1.docx](UL%20AIQR%202019%20Part%201.docx) |
| **PRSBs** | 24 |
| **Awarding Bodies** | 0 |
| **QA Bodies** | 3 |
| **Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies** | First Set of Records |
| **Type of Arrangement** | QA Body |
| **Name of the Body** | European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) |
| **Date of last review or accreditation** | 20-06-2015 |
| **Next review year** | 2020 |
| **Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies** | Second Set of Records |
| **Type of Arrangement** | PRSB |
| **Name of the Body** | Irish Medical Council |
| **Date of last review or accreditation** | 8-2-2011 |
| **Next review year** | 2019 |
| **Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies** | Third Set of Records |
| **Type of Arrangement** | PRSB |
| **Name of the Body** | Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Date of last review or accreditation** | 15-12-2014 |
| **Next review year** | 2019 |
| **Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies** | Fourth Set of Records |
| **Type of Arrangement** | PRSB |
| **Name of the Body** | The Teaching Council |
| **Date of last review or accreditation** | 20-04-2015 |
| **Next review year** | 2020 |
| **Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies** | Fifth Set of Records |
| **Type of Arrangement** | PRSB |
| **Name of the Body** | Teaching Council |
| **Date of last review or accreditation** | 15-12-2014 |
| **Next review year** | 2019 |
| **Joint/double/multiple awards** | 6 |
| **Collaborative programmes** | 5 |
| **Franchise programmes** | 0 |
| **Linked providers (DABs only)** | 3 |
| **Section: Collaborative Provision** | First Set of Records |
| **Type of arrangement:** | Linked providers (DABs only) |
| **Name of the Body (Bodies)** | Mary Immaculate College, Limerick |
| **Date of last review** | 30-11-2016 |
| **Next review year** | 2023 |
| **Section: Collaborative Provision** | Second Set of Records |
| **Type of arrangement:** | Linked providers (DABs only) |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Name of the Body (Bodies)** | Garda College Templemore |
| **Date of last review** | 17-11-2014 |
| **Next review year** | 2021 |
| **Section: Collaborative Provision** | Third Set of Records |
| **Type of arrangement:** | Linked providers (DABs only) |
| **Name of the Body (Bodies)** | Limerick Institute of Technology |
| **Date of last review** | 15-06-2016 |
| **Next review year** | 2021 |
| **Section: Collaborative Provision** | Fourth Set of Records |
| **Type of arrangement:** | Joint/double/multiple awards |
| **Name of the Body (Bodies)** | KEDGE Business School, Marseille, France |
| **Date of last review** | 29-7-2016 |
| **Next review year** | 2021 |
| **Section: Collaborative Provision** | Fifth Set of Records |
| **Type of arrangement:** | Joint/double/multiple awards |
| **Name of the Body (Bodies)** | National University of Ireland, Galway |
| **Date of last review** | 8-2-2013 |
| **Next review year** | 2020 |
| **Section: Collaborative Provision** | Sixth Set of Records |
| **Type of arrangement:** | Joint/double/multiple awards |
| **Name of the Body (Bodies)** | National University of Ireland, Galway |
| **Date of last review** | 2-9-2013 |
| **Next review year** | 2019 |
| **Section: Collaborative Provision** | Seventh Set of Records |
| **Type of arrangement:** | Collaborative programmes |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Name of the Body (Bodies)** | Irish Revenue Commissioners |
| **Date of last review** | 14-02-2014 |
| **Next review year** | 2019 |
| **Section: Collaborative Provision** | Eighth Set of Records |
| **Articulation Agreements** | 33 |
| **Do you wish to make a final submission?** | Yes, this is my final submission |
| **On behalf of the President/Provost/CEO I confirm that the information submitted in this AIQR is accurate and correct.** | Confirmed |
| **Overview of internal governance, policies and procedures (Word Template).** | Confirmed |
| **Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies.** | Confirmed |
| **Collaborative Provision.** | Confirmed |
| **Articulation Agreements.** | Confirmed |
| **Date of Final Submission** | 20-02-2018 |

# Parts 2-6

# Institution-led QA – Annual Information

**Parts 2-6 are completed annually with information pertaining to the reporting period (i.e. the preceding academic year only).**

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# Part 2: Institution-led QA – Annual

**Part 2 provides information relating to institution-led quality assurance for the reporting period.**

## Section 1: Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Developments

> **1.1** The evolution of quality assurance and enhancement systems in support of strategic objectives in the reporting period.

In order to further support the strategic quality objectives of the University of Limerick (UL), the following initiatives were undertaken.

- All support units implement a bespoke quality management system (QMS) based upon the seven quality management principles specified in the [ISO9001:2015](#) quality management standard ([Standard Quality Management System (QMS) Framework](#)). In November 2017, a streamlined version of the standard QMS framework ([QMS-Essential](#)) was published. This tailored QMS framework applies to smaller support units (typically with a staffing level of 10 or fewer), newly established support units and/or units that have not undergone a formal quality review to date.
- To ensure compliance with statutory quality-related requirements, the Quality Support Unit (QSU) undertook a mapping exercise of the requirements outlined in both the European Standards and Guidelines (ESGs) and the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines against the required content for quality review self-assessment reports. All ESGs and core guidelines are adequately covered through the different streams of review (academic unit, faculty, research institute, support unit and subsidiary unit).
- During the reporting period, a process was instigated to facilitate an annual quality reporting mechanism with the Garda College, a linked provider of UL. The process involves the completion of an annual quality report followed by an annual dialogue meeting.
- In order to strengthen institutional strategic equality and diversity objectives, the Department of Physics and the School of Education successfully applied for and received Bronze Athena SWAN accreditation.
- As part of an overall quality-based strategy to position itself amongst the top business schools globally, the Kemmy Business School continued its extensive accreditation programme. In particular, the school secured:

> - o Five-year accreditation from the Project Management Institute (PMI) for its MSc in Project Management and MBA
> - o Five-year accreditation from the Psychological Society (PSI) for its MSc in Work and Organisational Psychology and MSc in Work and Organisational Behaviour programmes
> - o Submission of self-evaluation report to AACSB, the largest global business school accreditation entry, with a view to a panel visit in 2019
> - o Approval of an annual submission for EPAS re-accreditation
> - o Submission of an Eligibility Request for EQUUIS accreditation

**1.2** Significant specific changes (if any) to QA within the institution.

- • **Appointment of new Governing Authority**: A new Governing Authority was appointed in December 2017. The term of office is from 1 December 2017 to 30 November 2022. In accordance with recommendations from previous reviews, the membership was reduced to 29 with a streamlined meeting schedule. There is now greater external representation on UL's GA and a requirement that at least one external member bring senior, high-level leadership experience in academia to the authority. A revised committee structure was put in place taking into account best practice, effectiveness and efficiency. Full details of membership and committee structure is available [here](#).
- • **Changes to the senior management team**: In recognition of the university's rapid growth, a decision was made to expand the senior management team. The new leadership appointments bring with them a wealth of national and international leadership experience, which will play an important role in the strategic development of UL. New appointments include:
  - o A **Chief Operating Officer and Registrar** (COOR) with overall responsibility for ensuring that the university's core work of research, teaching and service to the wider community is enabled and supported as effectively, efficiently and economically as possible. The COOR is a member of the Executive Committee with specific responsibility for a number of key services, including corporate and legal, campus and estates, marketing and communications, public relations, governance and risk, corporate services, finance, information technology, human resources, and registry, including the Admissions Office. The COOR is also responsible for several student services, such as health and safety and sports and recreation.
  - o A **Vice President Academic Affairs and Student Engagement** (VPAASE) with strategic responsibility for all aspects of education, the student experience, internationalisation, community engagement and quality management. The VPAASE is a member of the Executive Committee with specific responsibilities for the Centre for Teaching and Learning, Graduate and Professional Studies, Library, Cooperative Education and Careers Division, Student Affairs, International Education Division, QSU and UL Engage. The VPAASE office comprises a number of components, some of which are currently undergoing a review to ensure they provide effective support.
  - o A **Director of Strategic Projects and Transformation** with responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the strategic transformation programme across the organisation. The

Director of Strategic Projects and Transformation is a member of the Executive Committee. Based in the Office of the President, the post-holder's office plays a key role in developing UL's strategic objectives by supporting ongoing development, innovation and transformation and then aligning the objectives with our funding agency to assist the university to achieve its goals.

- o A **Special Advisor on Equality and Diversity**, who reports directly to the UL President and is a member of the Executive Committee. The appointee presents international and national policies on equality, diversity and inclusion as they impact on the Irish third-level sector in general and the academic mission of UL in particular. The role's current focus includes the HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions, 2016; the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act (IHREC) 2014; and Accelerating Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions – Gender Action Plan 2018-2020. The Special Advisor represents UL on the Irish Universities Association Vice-Presidents' Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group. She chairs the UL Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board and oversees the development of a strategy for equality, diversity and inclusion 2019–2021.
- o **A Director of China Engagement** was appointed to support UL's strategic internationalisation agenda.

- The Executive Committee comprises the President, Deputy President/COOR, VPAASE, Vice President Research and Enterprise, Special Advisor on Equality and Diversity, five executive deans (four faculty deans and Dean of Graduate and Professional Studies), Director of Strategic Projects and Transformation, and Corporate Secretary.

- A review of Academic Registry was completed in summer 2018, which recommended the restructuring of the existing two departments (Admissions and Student Academic Administration) into three new departments. In addition to the three new heads of department, 11 other additional posts were created to support the mission of the division. These positions are currently being recruited.

- 2017 saw an increase in QSU staff numbers with the ratification of a part-time administrator position and the appointment of an Executive Administrator for Compliance. These positions facilitated the development of an ambitious operational plan for the unit for 2018.

- As a further enhancement to UL's internal control environment, the Governing Authority approved a new [Signing Authority policy](#) in November 2017, effective from 1 December 2017. The policy sets out the authorised signatories to contracts that bind/place an obligation on UL and applies to all contractual arrangements to which UL is a party, including, without limitation, contracts involving UL's academic units, research centres, administrative units and any other unincorporated units not contained in the foregoing.

- In November 2017, the Governing Authority approved a new policy for [Official Entertainment](#) effective from 1 December 2017. The Official Entertainment policy gives additional clarity on official entertainment and guidance from the most recent official entertainment circular on entertainment expenditure. The introduction of the new policy necessitated the removal of the section on entertainment and hospitality from the Travel and Subsistence policy. A revised [Travel and Subsistence policy](#) was approved by Governing Authority effective from 1 December 2017.

- In February 2018, the Governing Authority approved amendments to the [Policy and Procedures for Granting Multi-Annual Status to Entry-Level Academic Staff](#) and [Policy and Procedures for Progression Across the Merit Bar](#).

- In May 2018, the Governing Authority approved a [University of Limerick Smoke and Vape Free Campus policy](#).

**1.3** The schedule of QA governance meetings.

**Governing Authority (GA)**
28 September 2017
26 October 2017
30 November 2017
22 and 23 February 2018
29 March 2018
17 May 2018

**Finance Committee (GA sub-committee)**
15 November 2017

**Human Resources Committee (GA sub-committee)**
3 October 2017

**Campus Development Committee(GA sub-committee)**
10 November 2017

**Finance, HR and Asset Management Committee (GA sub-committee)**
4 May 2018

**Access & Student Affairs Committee (GA sub-committee)**
27 September 2017
25 October 2017

**Audit & Risk Committee (GA sub-committee)**
12 Sep 2017
17 Oct 2017
14 Nov 2017
11 Apr 2018
4 May 2018
19 Jun 2018

**Academic Council**
4 October 2017
13 December 2017
7 March 2018
16 May 2018
13 June 2018

**Academic Council Grading Committee**
30 August 2017
25 September 2017
7 December 2017

12 January 2018
8 May 2018
30 May 2018
13 June 2018
29 June 2018

**Academic Programme Review Committee**
8 September 2017
6 October 2017
3 November 2017
1 December 2017
5 January 2018
9 February 2018
9 March 2018
20 April 2018
18 May 2018

**Academic Regulations Committee**
5 September 2017
17 October 2017
28 November 2017
9 January 2018
13 February 2018
27 March 2018
24 April 2018
29 May 2018

**Executive Committee**
20 September 2017
27 September 2017
4 October 2017
11 October 2017
18 October 2017
25 October 2017
1 November 2017
8 November 2017
15 November 2017
22 November 2017
29 November 2017
6 December 2017
13 December 2017
20 December 2017
10 January 2018
17 January 2018
24 January 2018
31 January 2018
7 February 2018
14 February 2018

21 February 2018
28 February 2018
7 March 2018
14 March 2018
21 March 2018
28 March 2018
4 April 2018
11 April 2018
18 April 2018
2 May 2018
16 May 2018
30 May 2018
13 June 2018
27 June 2018
11 July 2018
25 July 2018
8 August 2018

**Faculty Boards** (KBS = Kemmy Business School; EHS = Education and Health Sciences; S&E = Science and Engineering; AHSS = Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences)
20 September 2017     S&E
27 September 2017     EHS and KBS
11 October 2017     AHSS
8 November 2017     KBS
15 November 2017     EHS
29 November 2017     S&E and AHSS
31 January 2018     EHS
7 February 2018     KBS and S&E
14 February 2018     AHSS
28 March 2018     KBS, EHS, S&E and AHSS

**University Teacher Education Board**
19 September 2017
9 November 2017
15 February 2018
26 April 2018

## Section 2: Reviews in the reporting period

**2.1** Internal reviews that were completed in the reporting period.

This academic year saw the completion of Cycle 2 quality reviews and the commencement of Cycle 3. Accordingly, only one site visit was undertaken during the reporting period.

**Unit Reviews**

Centre for Teaching and Learning (March 2018)
Link to published report

**2.2** Profile of internal approval/evaluations and review completed in the reporting period.

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of new **Programme Validations/Programme Approvals** completed in the reporting year <br>    New programmes <br>    Existing programme modifications | <br><br>23 <br>116 |
| Number of **Programme Reviews** completed in the reporting year | 88 |
| Number of **Research Reviews** completed in the reporting year | 0 |
| Number of **School/Department/Faculty Reviews** completed in the reporting year | 1 |
| Number of **Service Unit Reviews** completed in the reporting year | 0 |
| Number of **Reviews of Arrangements with partner organisations** completed in the reporting year | 0 |

**2.3** Profile of reviewers and chairs internal approval/evaluations and review for reviews completed in the reporting period.

| Composition of Panels | % |
|---|---|
| Internal | 16.6 |
| National | |
| UK | 33.3 |
| EU | 16.6 |
| Student | 16.6 |
| Other | 16.6 |

| Chair Profile | % |
|---|---|
| Internal | |
| Similar Institution | |
| Different Institution | |
| International | 100 |

**Section 3: Other Implementation Factors**

> **3.1** A description of how data is used to support quality assurance and the management of the student learning experience.

- **Data Warehouse Project**: A Head of Business Intelligence and Reporting has been appointed in the Information Technology Division (ITD) to lead on UL's data warehouse solutions to underpin data mining, systems development and respective reporting.
- **Module Satisfaction Survey (MSS)**: In February 2018, MSS requests were distributed to those UL students who were undertaking one or more modules that semester. This represented over 55,000 individual requests to over 14,000 students taking one or more of approximately 1,325 current modules on offer. Some 13,267 responses were received, which represents an overall response rate of 24%. The reporting structure is as follows:
  - Individual module reports are available to the lecturer listed as being responsible for the module.
  - Heads of School/Department received a report detailing all departmental modules (copied to the Faculty Executive Dean) within two weeks of survey closure.
  - Executive Committee received a report summarising departmental and faculty-level aggregate data within a month of survey closure.
  - A report that provides a summary of institutional-level survey findings is made publicly available.
- **Student Exit Survey**: The 2018 exit survey was launched online in March 2018 and was available to students until mid-September. A total of 4,840 students were invited to participate; the response rates were 28% for bachelor's programmes and 20% for non-bachelor's programmes. The reporting structure is as follows:
  - Individual programme reports were sent to the lecturer listed as course director.
  - Heads of Departments/Schools received reports on all programmes associated their department/school.
  - Deans received reports on all departments/schools associated with their faculty.
  - Executive Committee and Academic Council received a report on the aggregate data for the university.
  - Heads of Support Departments/Divisions received reports based on comments that respondents make in relation to their services.
- **Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning (SET)**: The SET is used by UL's Centre for Teaching and Learning to gather in a structured manner feedback from students about individual approaches to teaching. The SET process is voluntary and confidential and is designed to provide useful information to individual lecturers on their students' experiences of the modules they teach. In the academic year, 236 lecturers requested a SET, which involved 366 modules and 5,247 student responses.
- **Peer Observation of Teaching**: The Shannon Consortium peer observation network has continued to provide a forum for colleagues to be observed and act as the observer. With 56 peer observations taking place through the establishment of intra and inter-institutional partnerships during the reporting period, this network is providing a valuable platform for dialogue on teaching and learning. In its leadership of this initiative, the Centre for Teaching

and Learning facilitated Shannon Consortium regional peer observation workshops on 4 October 2017 and 6 February 2018.

- **Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE)**: ISSE is a national survey that is distributed annually to first-year, final-year and postgraduate students across the country. The survey covers a range of aspects of student life, and the results can help inform local and national strategies. The ISSE was open to UL students from 5 to 23 March 2018. Several initiatives were undertaken across campus in an effort to increase the response rate this year. The UL ISSE response rate for 2017/18 was 28.4% (up from 14.3% in 2016/17).

- **Postgraduate Research Experience Survey**: This exit survey for research students who have successfully completed their studies is run annually and asks participants about their experiences as a UL postgraduate research student (master's by research and PhD). The responses inform Graduate and Professional Studies and UL as a whole about the experience of postgraduate researchers and help staff to improve future levels of support. The responses are also used to inform policy and improve the postgraduate research experience. The number of respondents over the four-year period 2015 to 2018, inclusive, ranged from 37 to 57, and the response rates varied from 31% to 42% with a mix of gender, award level and mode of attendance.

- **First Destinations Survey**: The Careers Service completes a detailed study that maps the employment and/or study progression outcomes of 3,300+ UL graduates. The findings give interesting insights into employment sectors, geographical location, gender comparatives and earning power of UL graduates. The survey also captures the percentage of UL graduates who opt to continue in further study or training. The survey had a response rate of 78% during the reporting period.

- **Student feedback on the Science Learning Centre** (SLC) was collected extensively during the reporting period. There were 108 surveys collected from students who attended seven different support tutorials for first-year modules. Seventy-nine anonymous feedback forms were collected from students who attended the Drop-in Centre. The survey results indicated that most students found the services to be either very helpful or helpful. The main reasons given were that the pace of the tutorials was slower, difficult concepts were explained in more detail, the example exam questions were helpful, and the students felt more confident about asking questions in a small-group setting. With respect to the Drop-in Centre, the feedback forms showed that students valued having a place to go and ask their questions, felt they could ask questions without fear of becoming embarrassed, appreciated the one-to-one context and found the tutors to be patient and friendly.

- Research conducted by the **Mathematics Learning Centre** (MLC) with first-year engineering students (n=584) suggests that frequent users, regardless of their ability level, will pass their mathematics examinations while non-users might not always do so. Furthermore, survey results suggest that the MLC is highly valued by its student users.

- **External examiner reports** for all taught programmes and degree awards by research are collected and made available to course boards and research supervisors, respectively.

- Institutional-level **progression, retention and completion data** are generated annually. In addition to being presented to the HEA, the data are considered by a number of committees, most notably the Executive Committee, and are used to inform the development of relevant policies and initiatives.

**3.2** Factors that have impacted on quality and quality assurance in the reporting period.

- In November 2017, a 'Two Degree Track' collaboration agreement was signed between EIGSI Engineering School La Rochelle, Casablanca and UL.
- In January 2018, the Bar Council of India, adopting resolution No 222/2017, recognised, under section 24(1)(c)(iv) of the Advocates Act 1961, law degrees awarded by UL's School of Law for the purpose of enrolment as an advocate in India subject to Bar Council of India rules. Internationally, the UL School of Law has secured recognition of UL law programmes (specifically Law Plus and Law and Accounting) by the Bar Council of India, thereby allowing UL law graduates to practise law in India. UL is one of only two law schools in Ireland to offer this recognition. The approval process saw a week-long visit of a high-level delegation of the Bar Council of India to UL in August 2017. During this visit, the delegation met with staff and students of the School of Law as well as with key stakeholders and representatives of the wider university, including the President and senior staff from the Library, Language Centre, International Education Division, Regional Writing Centre, etc. The recognition process was co-ordinated by Dr Kathryn O'Sullivan, School of Law. The accreditation will help significantly to increase the number of international students at UL.
- In March 2018 an MOU was signed between the University of Limerick and New York University, USA in relation to a full degree programme 'BA in Performing Arts'.
- In March 2018, UL launched a **Researcher Development Programme**, the aim of which is to support and attract excellent researchers. Available to all researchers, the programme has been informed by international best practice and is designed to be flexible so that researchers can avail of the training and supports they need to help them succeed in their chosen career. With strong involvement across UL's four faculties, the Researcher Development Programme is a collaborative initiative led by Professor Kevin Ryan.
- The University appointed a Research Integrity Officer in support of the implementation of its Research Integrity Policy.
- Erasmus-Funded Joint Masters Programme (PSYCH): The two-year MSc in Global Minds is a five-university partnership that provides three cohorts of students with full scholarships to undertake the programme at three of the five partner universities (five years' funding in total). The first cohort of students arrived at UL in January 2018.
- The HEA recommended UL for the delivery of rounds 1 and 2 ICM projects. Receiving 86% and 88% for the projects respectively, these will be selected as examples of good practice. This means that all four completed ICM projects, inclusive of the two from 2015, are labelled good practice in the Commission database. Round 1 comprised 16 partner universities across 11 countries (Algeria, Ghana, Georgia, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Lebanon, Israel, Morocco, Bangladesh and Malaysia). The projects were building on previous Tempus, Erasmus Mundus and CBHE projects with Georgia, Bangladesh and Malaysia, previous Erasmus+ ICM activity under the 2015 ICM deadlines with Algeria, South Africa and Lebanon and to formalise and expand collaboration with Israel and Morocco. The introduction of the ACP region allowed for new opportunities to build on collaborative links with Ethiopia, Ghana and Kenya. The project included 59 mobility activities, with 13 incoming staff to UL, 22 outgoing staff across all partner countries and 23 incoming students at all levels (Georgia, South Africa, Lebanon) and one outgoing third-cycle student to Ethiopia. In Round 2, 20 partner university came from across 10 countries (Russian Federation, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Egypt,

Belarus, Lebanon, Israel, Serbia and Tunisia). The projects built on previous Tempus, Erasmus Mundus and CBHE projects with Georgia and Egypt and previous E+ ICM activity under the 2015 ICM deadlines with Algeria, Lebanon, Egypt, Georgia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to formalise and expand collaboration with Israel and Russian Federation and to develop new collaborative activities with Belarus, Tunisia and Serbia. The project included 61 mobility activities, with 29 incoming staff to UL, 22 outgoing staff across all partner countries, nine incoming students at all levels (Georgia, Israel, Belarus, Tunisia) and one outgoing third-cycle student to Israel. This recognised best practice informs the management of other UL exchanges in and beyond Europe.

**3.3** A description of other implementation issues.

- UL concentrates its endeavours on translational research with societal impact. The university has pioneered a range of community-engaged research initiatives in health, the social sciences, education and natural sciences, design and engineering. It was the first Irish university to develop impact case studies of some of its high-quality research projects. UL's Research Impact programme has been singled out by the OECD as '*an excellent example of emerging good practice which could be mainstreamed across the Irish higher education system and abroad*.' OECD (2017) *Supporting Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Higher Education in Ireland. OECD Skills Studies,* Paris: OECD Publishing.
- UL's School of Law, School of Allied Health and Graduate Entry Medical School were recipients of the National DELTA Award in March 2018. The inaugural DELTA Awards are an initiative of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and recognise the value of teaching at a national level. The learning impact awards system highlights the quality of higher education in Ireland and recognises and publicises this good work to a wider audience, thereby increasing innovation, enhancement and collegiality within higher education communities.
- The UL Cooperative Education programme won the Best Business Collaboration award at the 2018 Education Awards in April 2018. The award recognises higher education partnerships with industry, both national and global. UL was also a winner in the Best Erasmus Programme category.
- UL continues to run the largest outward mobility Erasmus programme in Ireland; the programme includes both university and work placements. In April 2018, the programme was awarded the Best Erasmus Programme 2018 by Education Awards.
- The team in the UL Student Residences and Conference & Events Division of Plassey Campus Centre received an accreditation award from Fáilte Ireland for Service Excellence. This is the first university residential and events service in Ireland to receive this accolade from Fáilte Ireland.
- The President's Excellence Awards for Staff were established in 2017/18 to recognise outstanding contributions by staff (academic/research/support) to the overall goals of the university and the campus community. They are awarded in five categories: Innovation; Leadership; Student Experience; Exceptional Team Member; and Business Transformation/ Excellence. Recipients serve as role models, and their best practice is disseminated in the UL community.

# Part 3: Effectiveness and Impact

**Part 3 provides information relating to the effectiveness and impact of quality assurance policy and procedures for the reporting period.**

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**1. Effectiveness**
Evidence of the effectiveness of QA policies and procedures during the reporting period.

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- During the reporting period, three post-review QIP implementation meetings were held, summary details outlined below:
  - Office of the President – 5th October 2017: 14 recommendations were made during the quality review. At the time of the final meeting, four of these remained open as part of a longer-term institutional-level project.
  - Department of Nursing & Midwifery – 19th December 2017: 16 recommendations were made during the quality review, all of which were complete at the final review meeting.
  - Department of Clinical Therapies – 25th January 2018: 21 recommendations were made during the quality review. At the time of the final meeting, six remained open, two of which require institutional-level action.
- During the reporting period, the Student Engagement and Success Unit (SESU) at UL ran a second pilot of their module 'Making the Leap'. This module looks at the differences between second-level and third-level education, expectation-setting, supports and services for new students, time management and approaching the first assessment. The 848 evaluations provided by students in the 2017/18 pilot were used to modify the content further. Plassey Campus Centre also delivered the module to their first-year students. This was the first large-scale collaboration with a focus on student engagement and success between Plassey Campus Centre and SESU. There is commitment from three faculties to continue offering the module in 2018/19. Training for module facilitators is provided by SESU.
- During the reporting period, the QSU undertook a scoping exercise in relation to Collaborative and Transnational Provision (TNE). The exercise involved analysing current practice in Ireland, the UK and internationally. It also included an analysis of national quality-related requirements. A gap analysis was then conducted with current practices in UL, which outlined recommendations for improvements going forward. A resulting 'discussion document' was presented to the Vice President Academic Affairs and Student Engagement in June 2018.

**2. Impact**

Evidence of the impact of QA policies and procedures during the reporting period.

- Following a full audit of UL's student records system by Deloitte in 2015 and a full assessment of the findings of the report and to facilitate the university's strategic plans for continued growth of the institution and increased international collaborations, a major capital investment programme in the student records system commenced in 2017. The investment has been complemented by an increase in staff numbers in key departments to provide the necessary support and expertise to deliver new change governance, business process development, project assessment, delivery and management capabilities. This internal expertise is supported by our strategic partner Clarion Consulting and by TRIBAL, the UL system supplier. This significant investment will ensure that, moving forward, the student records system will rely less on manual intervention and operate with enhanced automated capability and capacity to accommodate the growth in student numbers, the diversification of the student body and learning needs, the development of new academic programmes with inbuilt flexibility, and increased internationalisation. The phased systems development is underpinned by a new governance structure overseen by the SITS Steering Group, which is chaired by the Deputy President Chief Operating Officer and Registrar and reported on to the Governing Authority.
- A Head of Business Intelligence and Reporting has been appointed in ITD to lead on UL's data warehouse solutions to underpin data mining, systems development and respective reporting.
- A review was undertaken by the UL Governing Authority (GA) of how the GA was structured and operated in light of the rapid growth and increased complexity of UL. The GA engaged governance experts Crowe Howarth to conduct the review, the outcomes of which have informed a series of changes. The changes include that there is now greater external representation on the GA and that at least one external member is required to bring senior, high-level leadership experience in academia to the authority, a unique obligation among Irish universities. A further reform has seen the GA streamlined from 35 to 29 members and the introduction of fixed-term limits for members. The new GA started its term of office in December 2017.
- Following feedback from internal quality reviews, the QSU published a guidelines document for completing the post-review quality improvement plan. The purpose of the document is to provide guidelines to heads of unit and quality team leaders on best practice (and hence institutional expectation) for project managing the implementation of review recommendations. This has facilitated units to adopt a more focused approach to post-review implementation.
- A focus group was conducted with a mixed group of first-year undergraduates. The focus group was undertaken at the end of the academic year to inform future planning of the Student Engagement and Success Unit. One of the initiatives being progressed with input from this group is a programmatic approach to student leadership. The initiative will match first-year students with student leaders in a more senior year, and the student leaders will be mentored by academic staff.

- Following a recommendation from a quality review in 2016, Plassey Campus Centre (PCC) established key performance indicators (KPIs) for catering operations on campus. Newly introduced service-level agreements include comprehensive KPIs, which are now being utilised as an important management tool to measure service performance. The set KPIs were informed by a 2017 campus-wide survey, which captured the needs and expectations of the campus community.
- The Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences undertook a major review of the Final Year Project following feedback received from the student exit survey. The Assistant Dean, Academic Affairs carried out a review and drafted a discussion document outlining alternative assessments along the traditional dissertation. This initiative has now been extended to the whole university.

**3. Themes**
Analysis of the key themes arising within the implementation of QA policies and procedures during the reporting period.

- Cycle 2 quality reviews began in November 2009 and ended in April 2017. Review activity focused upon individual internal UL units, both academic and support. A total of 27 academic and 12 support units were reviewed. A thematic analysis was undertaken by the QSU of commendations and recommendations arising from the quality review process. Published reports are available here for academic units and here for support units.

# Part 4: Quality Enhancement

**Part 4 provides information which goes beyond the description of standard quality assurance procedures. Quality enhancement includes the introduction of new procedures but also extends the concept of quality assurance to other initiatives, activities and events aimed at improving quality across the institution.**

**4.1 Improvements and Enhancements for the Reporting Period**
Improvements or enhancements, impacting on quality or quality assurance, that took place in the reporting period.

- Significant development of the QSU's survey and data analytics-related systems and processes included: (1) development and use of Sulis to operationalise the module satisfaction survey (MSS); (2) design and development of MS Access reporting database linked to both Sulis and SI (student records system) to automate MSS reporting and consequently reduce the report-generation phase from over two weeks to two days; (3) identification and evaluation of Qualtrics survey software in respect of operating future student exit surveys, and; (4) significant enhancements to the exit survey operational process, reducing survey report generation time by two to three months. Collectively, these enhancements provide significantly more robust survey management and reporting mechanisms based on core university systems that are supported by ITD at an enterprise level.
- For cycle 3 quality reviews, which commenced in March 2018, cost-saving interventions were introduced by the QSU, particularly in relation to support unit reviews (14 in total). These included:
    1. **Template for self-assessment report (SAR)**: Following post-review feedback from quality team leaders, a template was designed by the QSU for completion of the SAR. The template covers all elements of the SAR requirements and allows the unit under review to provide the information in a concise, evidence-based manner, thus reducing the overall cost incurred in producing the SAR.
    2. **Focus Group Facilitator Training**: Focus group facilitator training was provided to all support unit quality team leaders in June 2018. Following the training, the QSU documented a process (with supporting guidelines and templates) that allows units to conduct their own focus groups using facilitators from other support units.
- During the reporting period, the QSU presented to the VPAASE a number of discussion documents/reports aimed at facilitating further evolution of institutional quality assurance, enhancement and governance. These included: (1) a draft institutional linked provider framework document; (2) Cycle 2 quality reviews: implementation of university-level recommendations discussion document; (3) collaborative and transnational provision: a discussion document; (4) the student voice memo and associated support reports and documents; and (5) establishment of a university quality committee discussion document.
- ITD's strategic plan (UL Enable) was formally approved by the Executive Committee in November 2017. This phased plan maps a path of growth and enhancement for ITD to

become partners in achieving the strategic objectives of the university. The first half of 2018 focused on filling a number of new strategic roles within ITD, which will position the division to improve service delivery in areas of customer engagement, business analysis, vendor management, data governance and business intelligence.

- As part of UL's annual programme monitoring process, faculty and university action plan templates have been developed and implemented to ensure a systematic approach to quality enhancement in learning, teaching and assessment and strengthen the feedback loop to students.

**4.2 Quality Enhancement Highlights**
Analysis of quality enhancement activities that were initiated during the reporting period and which would be of interest to other institutions and would benefit from wider dissemination.

In February 2018, UL launched the **UL Resource Guide for Brexit**. The guide was compiled by the Information Services Department, Glucksman Library with the Special Advisor to the President on European Policy with specific reference to Brexit. An initiative of the UL President, the guide is part of the university's contribution to providing the necessary resources on which to make informed decisions as we, as a nation and a university, chart a course through Brexit. The guide provides a range of resources on which to make informed decisions and covers a vast array of sources representing different viewpoints and analyses. It includes special sections dealing with the impact of Brexit on the university sector in Ireland and provides targeted information for UL alumni. The guide can be accessed from the homepage of the Glucksman Library website.

# Part 5: Objectives for the coming year

**Part 5 provides information about plans for quality assurance in the institution for the academic year following the reporting period (in this instance 1 September 2017 – 31 August 2018).**

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**5.1 Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Plans**
Plans for quality assurance and quality enhancement relating to strategic objectives for the next reporting period.

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- A prototype institutional indicator dashboard with key indicators against performance targets and rankings is under development and will be aligned to the HEA Performance Framework metrics.
- We will review the university's policy and guidelines for annual programme monitoring and periodic programme review.
- We will enhance the Curriculum Development Framework to better support student-centred, active learning and flexible, blended, online and distance learning.
- In close cooperation with project partners Limerick City and County Council and Limerick City Community Development Project, we will establish a virtual and physical hub to integrate community engagement within the university, enhance quality, promote best practice and build a coherent and effective infrastructure.
- We will develop a UL quality policy to supersede the university's current quality statement.
- We will develop and publish an institutional quality manual.
- We will review and revise, as appropriate, the MoUs with our linked providers.
- We will enhance UL processes with a view to systematically evaluating and improving our teaching spaces.
- We will finalise or update a number of assessment of compliance exercises.
- We will conduct an institutional-level self-evaluation of the adequacy and effectiveness of the university's overall institutional QA architecture; this task will be undertaken as part of the preparatory process in respect of the university's 2020 institutional review.
- We will review UL's committee structure; the review will include considerations to cover effective quality management and assurance.

**5.2 Review Plans**

A list of reviews within each category (module, programme, department/school, service delivery unit or faculty), as per the internal review cycle, planned for the next reporting period.

**Unit Reviews**:
- UL Student Life (October 2018)
- Postgraduate Students' Union (October 2018)
- UniJobs (November 2018)
- Irish World Academy of Music and Dance (February 2019)

**5.3 Other Plans**

# Part 6: Periodic Review

**Part 6 provides information that acts as a bridge between the AIQR and periodic external review.**

> **6.1 The Institution and External Review**
> A description of the impacts of institutional review within the institution.

**2012 Institutional Review:**
- The QSU completed a review of the implementation status of recommendations arising from the 2012 institutional quality review. A tabular format was used to report on the status of implementation of each recommendation. A traffic-light system was used to report the level of completion. The report was co-ordinated by the QSU with input from the Corporate Secretary's Office, the Centre for Teaching and Learning, the Associate Registrar, the Director of Strategic Planning and the Students' Union. On the basis of the information presented, it is evident that a significant majority of the recommendations have been implemented in full or in large part, as was evaluated to be appropriate to UL's needs. The final report, which provides an evidence base for the 2020 institutional review, was forwarded to the then VPA&R in December 2017 to assist senior UL management in reflecting upon the extent and adequacy of the institutional response to the recommendations and whether or not any further action was warranted.

**2020 Institutional Review**:
- A number of preliminary actions were initiated in 2018 by the QSU to support preparations for the 2020 institutional review. These actions included:
  - Informing key UL committees of the upcoming review (Executive Committee, Academic Council, Governing Authority's Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance subcommittee)
  - Preliminary planning discussions with the then VPA&R
  - Informing all students and staff of the upcoming quality review (by global email, January 2018)
  - Incorporating compliance exercises in respect of key quality guidelines (ESGs and QQI quality guidelines) into the cycle 3 internal quality review process
  - Incorporating institutional review support activity in the QSU operational plan for the calendar year 2018
- A detailed institutional review **project management plan** was developed in 2018 to:
  - Identify and document arrangements required to support appropriate institutional preparation for the quality review
  - Identify and document institutional activities required to support dissemination and consideration of the institutional review report
  - Identify and document institutional activities required to support the development and implementation of a post-report quality improvement plan

- o Identify the resource base and timeline required to appropriately underpin all of the above activities
- o Identify the specific UL officers, offices and/or committees bearing primary responsibility for (a) operationalising and (b) overseeing the various phases of the quality review process

- An institutional self-evaluation report (ISER) team was appointed by the VPAASE with representation from staff and students. ISER team training was provided in November 2018. A SharePoint (intranet) site was set up as a central repository for information.
- Regular meetings between the ISER team chair and VPAASE were established.

**6.2 Self-Reflection on Quality Assurance**
A short evaluative and reflective summary of the overall impact of quality assurance in the reporting period or, over a more extensive period, in the review.

Since the last institutional review (2012), significant challenges were identified, which resulted in subsequent changes being put in place to meet these challenges. These changes will be considered in more detail in the ISER for the 2020 institutional review. Reflecting on the last number of years, it is evident that many quality assurance systems have been improved. The following examples outline some of the initiatives undertaken by UL:
- The Governing Authority and its sub-committees were restructured and the senior management team was significantly changed in response to evidence-based external reviews.
- Student engagement and feedback mechanisms were enhanced with the appointment of a vice president with specific responsibility for student engagement (the aforementioned VPAASE role).
- A Module Satisfaction Survey (MSS) policy and procedures were initiated as one of the cornerstone quality assurance mechanisms for receiving student feedback.
- Considerable progress was made in relation to the oversight mechanisms in place for assuring the quality assurance procedures of our linked providers.
- Several evidence-based enhancements were made to the quality review process as a result of feedback from internal and external stakeholders.
- An assessment-of-compliance process and procedures were developed within the QSU to assess UL's compliance with statutory quality-related policies and guidelines.
- UL's policy for annual programme monitoring and periodic programme review has been updated.

Quality is a journey with processes, practices and procedures continually evolving with the diverse range of quality assurance requirements and in relationship to the changing external conditions and internal needs. The forthcoming institutional review (March 2020) provides UL with an opportunity for critical self-reflection and evaluation, which will, no doubt, inform quality enhancement actions.

**6.3 Themes**
Developmental themes of importance to the institution which will be relevant to periodic review.

- Development of a postgraduate programme portfolio with work-based and research experience, and design and implementation of flexible, blended, online and distance programmes for work-based learners
- Engagement with a new apprenticeship programme in collaboration with industry networks and related quality assurance and enhancement
- Strategic internationalisation: increasing international student recruitment, development of partnerships and collaborations; growing student and staff international mobility and internationalisation at home, including the curriculum and related quality assurance and enhancement
- Access: continued effort to widen participation and progression in higher education through coordination between all units involved and by enhancing the linkage with engaged learning and research in and with the communities of Limerick city and the region
- Community-engaged teaching, learning and research: Consolidation of the institutional infrastructure, processes and procedures to underpin sustainable, strategically aligned partnerships to support co-creation, knowledge exchange and impact
- Student records system: Continued improvement project of the student records system overseen by an institutional steering group and in collaboration with external consultants Clarion and systems provider Tribal (UK)