University of Limerick

2021

Annual Quality Report
University of Limerick
Reporting Period 2019-2020

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PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM
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PREFACE

The **Annual Quality Report (AQR;** formerly AIQR) forms part of Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) quality assurance (QA) framework of engagement with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The AQR provides documentary evidence of the development and evolution of each institution's internal quality system. It provides QQI with assurance that internal QA procedures have been established and are being implemented consistent with regulatory requirements.

The AQR, particularly part A, should assist with **document management** in the institutional review process and will facilitate institutions in providing review teams with procedural QA documentation in preparation for the external review process. It is an important part of the evidence base considered by external **review teams** as part of QQI's CINNTE cycle of institutional reviews, demonstrating that the institution's internal QA system is aligned with QQI's Core and relevant Sector- and Topic-specific Statutory QA Guidelines, and with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015 (ESG). It enables the review team to satisfy itself of compliance with these requirements for the purpose of the institutional review process.

Each AQR is **published in full on QQI's website**, providing transparency on the HEIs' assurance and enhancement of quality to external stakeholders. (As such, institutions should ensure that their submissions do not contain any data that they consider to be commercially sensitive.) Collectively, the AQRs comprise a single national repository of quality assurance practice in Irish higher education institutions.

Each year, QQI produces a synthesis report of the key themes highlighted across the AQRs, primarily arising from Part B of the reports.

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Legislation

- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended)
- Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992 (as amended)
- Technological Universities Act 2018
- Universities Act 1997

QQI Documents

Statutory QA Guidelines (QAG)

- Core QAG
- Sector-specific QAG for Independent/Private Providers
- Sector-specific QAG for Designated Awarding Bodies
- Sector-specific QAG for Institutes of Technology
- Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes
- Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes
- Topic-specific QAG for Blended Learning

Other QQI Policy Documents

- QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards, 2012
- QQI's Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners, 2015
- QQI Policy Restatement on Access, Transfer and Progression, 2015

Other National/International References

- European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)
- IHEQN Guidelines on Collaborative Provision
- National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland
- Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes, 2019
- HEA National Framework for Doctoral Education
- The Salzburg Principles
- The Salzburg II Recommendations
- SOLAS Code of Practice for Employers and Apprentices
- UN Sustainable Development Goals

A Glossary of terms is included in Appendix 1

[1] These links will be updated as further guidance documents are published.

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Table 1

Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)				
AQR Part A Section	QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.	QAG Core Sub-section Title	ESG Standard No.	ESG Standard Title
1.0 - *Internal QA Framework*	**2.1**	Governance and Management of Quality	1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
	2.2	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance		
2.0 - *Programme Development and Delivery*	**2.3**	Programmes of Education and Training	1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
4.0 - *QA of Research Activities and Programmes*				
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2.3 - *Teaching, Learning and Assessment*	**2.5**	Teaching and Learning	1.3	Student-centred Teaching, Learning and Assessment
	2.6	Assessment of Learners		
3.0 - *Learner Resources and Supports*	**2.7**	Supports for learners	1.6	Learning Resources and Student Support
6.0 - *Information and Data Management*	**2.8**	Information and Data Management	1.7	Information Management
7.0 - *Public Information and Communication*	**2.9**	Public Information and Communication	1.8	Public Information
2.0 - *Programme Delivery and Development*	**2.10**	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*				
9.0 - *Details of Arrangements with Third Parties*			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
2.0 - *Programme Development and Delivery*	**2.11**	Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*			1.10	Cyclical External Quality Assurance
4.0 - *QA of Research Activities and Programmes*	QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes			

Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for the University of Limerick for the reporting period **1 September 2019 – 31 August 2020.**

It is to be submitted by **Friday, 26 March 2021**.

The AQR has been approved by the Quality Committee and Executive Committee and is submitted by **Sinéad O'Sullivan, Director of Quality**

University of Limerick

The University of Limerick (UL) was founded as The National Institute for Higher Education, Limerick in 1972. In 1989, it was classified as the University of Limerick and became the first institution since the establishment of Irish independence to be newly designated a university. The University is one of Ireland's youngest. The University profile is available here.

UL has undergone relatively rapid growth. In 1989, the University had 3,490 students and in 2019, it had 15,269 students. The campus is situated on 366 hectares of land, making it geographically one of the largest universities in Ireland, and it is situated five kilometres from Limerick City. The University's age and location have facilitated the development of a range of modern cultural and sporting facilities. The University has four faculties which have subsidiary academic units, namely (i) Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS); (ii) Business (Kemmy Business School- KBS); (iii) Education and Health Sciences (EHS); and (iv) Science and Engineering (SEN).

The University of Limerick has pioneered several initiatives that are unique in the context of Irish education, including cooperative education. Under this initiative, students undertake a six to eight-month work placement. These placements take place across 30 countries in five continents. This may contribute to a high level of employment amongst UL graduates.

The University's current strategic plan, which is for the period 2019-2024, sets out a mission 'to build on the expertise of our scholars in creating, harnessing and imparting knowledge for the benefit of our students and the enrichment of our community'. The strategy is broken into five goals: i) Transforming Education; ii) Research Excellence; iii) Internationalisation; iv) Engagement with the city and the region; and v) a programme of continual improvement. Central to the University's strategic plan is its quality policy which focuses on fostering a quality culture informed by international best practice.

Development and Approval of AQR

Operational responsibility for completion of the AQR rests with the Quality Support Unit. The Director of Quality is responsible for submission of the AQR to QQI. Upon receipt of the report template, the Director of Quality confers with the Provost and other relevant offices/officers as appropriate. The consultation and development process includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Part one is reviewed by the Quality Support Unit (QSU) to ensure content is relevant and up-to-date and also to include any updates for the reporting period.
- A copy of the report template is circulated to the UL Quality Committee. All members are asked to contribute relevant case studies for inclusion.
- An email is sent to the University Executive and senior officers requesting case studies for inclusion in the AQR.
- Relevant data is extracted from annual support unit quality reports for inclusion in the AQR.
- Relevant data is requested from academic and professional service units for inclusion in the report.
- Weekly progress update meetings are held internally in QSU to monitor progress.

At the end of January, a draft AQR is circulated to the UL Quality Committee for review and feedback. Once final amendments are made, the AQR is circulated to Executive Committee for approval. The finalised report is circulated to Academic Council and Governing Authority for noting.

A documented operational procedure for completion of the AQR is available on the QSU SharePoint site.

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

Overall authority for the affairs of the University is vested in the Governing Authority (GA), 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.

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.

Reporting to the Chief Corporate Officer, the Corporate Secretary has responsibility for a number of areas including: Management of the University governance function including attendance at Governing Authority meetings and management of all Governing Authority Committees; Ensuring Compliance with the Universities Act 1997; Development, revision and distribution of University statutes, regulations, corporate policies and procedures; Legislative Compliance; Management of University corporate legal affairs; Management of the University's Visual Arts Collection; Management of the University's Risk Management Function; Responsibility for the University's Internal Audit Function; Management of Recruitment & Appointment Processes for the President, Academic Vice Presidents and Deans; Management of a range of internal appeals processes; Records Management; Management of the development, progression and completion of various corporate-wide projects.

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 professional service (support) units report to a senior member of Executive Committee. Full details of all support units with links to individual functional areas are available here.

The University of Limerick (UL) strategic plan UL@50 Strategic Plan 2019-2024 articulates institutional mission, vision and strategic priorities. The overall strategic plan is supported by (a) the UL Equality and Human Rights Strategy, which details objectives, actions and expected outcomes for 13 grounds of Equality and Human Rights under 10 themes: Governance; Leadership; Staff Experience; Educational Experience; Research Experience; Campus Development; Events, Clubs and Societies; Public Relations, Marketing and Communications;

Technology; and Procurement and Budgeting; (b) our teaching, learning and assessment strategy (*Engaged Learning*), which includes a specific commitment to quality in all our activities; and (c) 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.

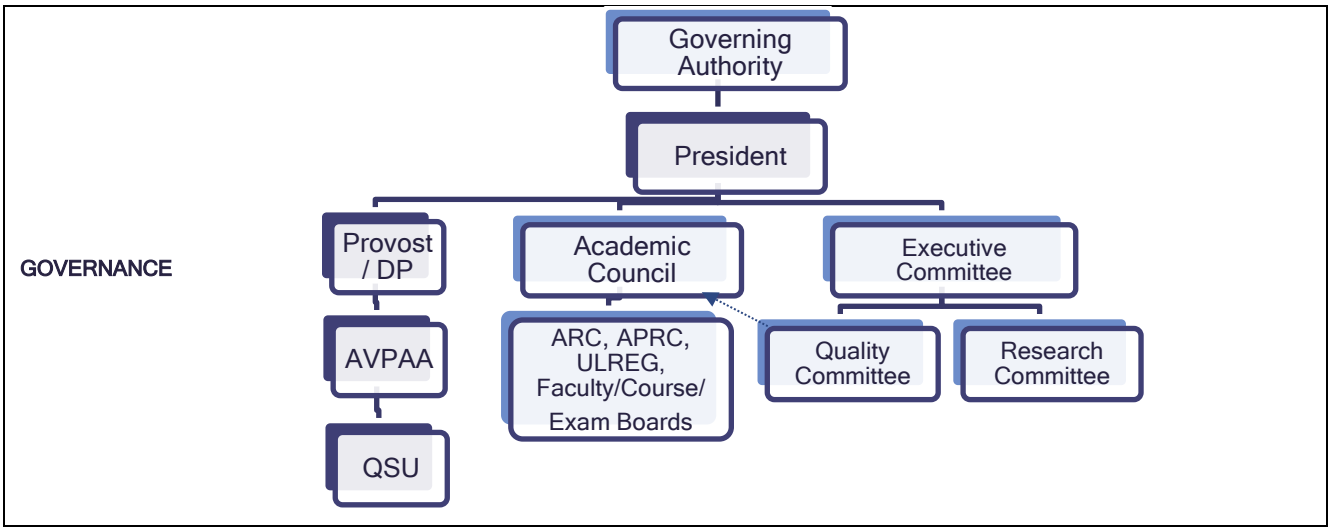
The University's decision-making processes and procedures are outlined on the Corporate Secretary's website here.

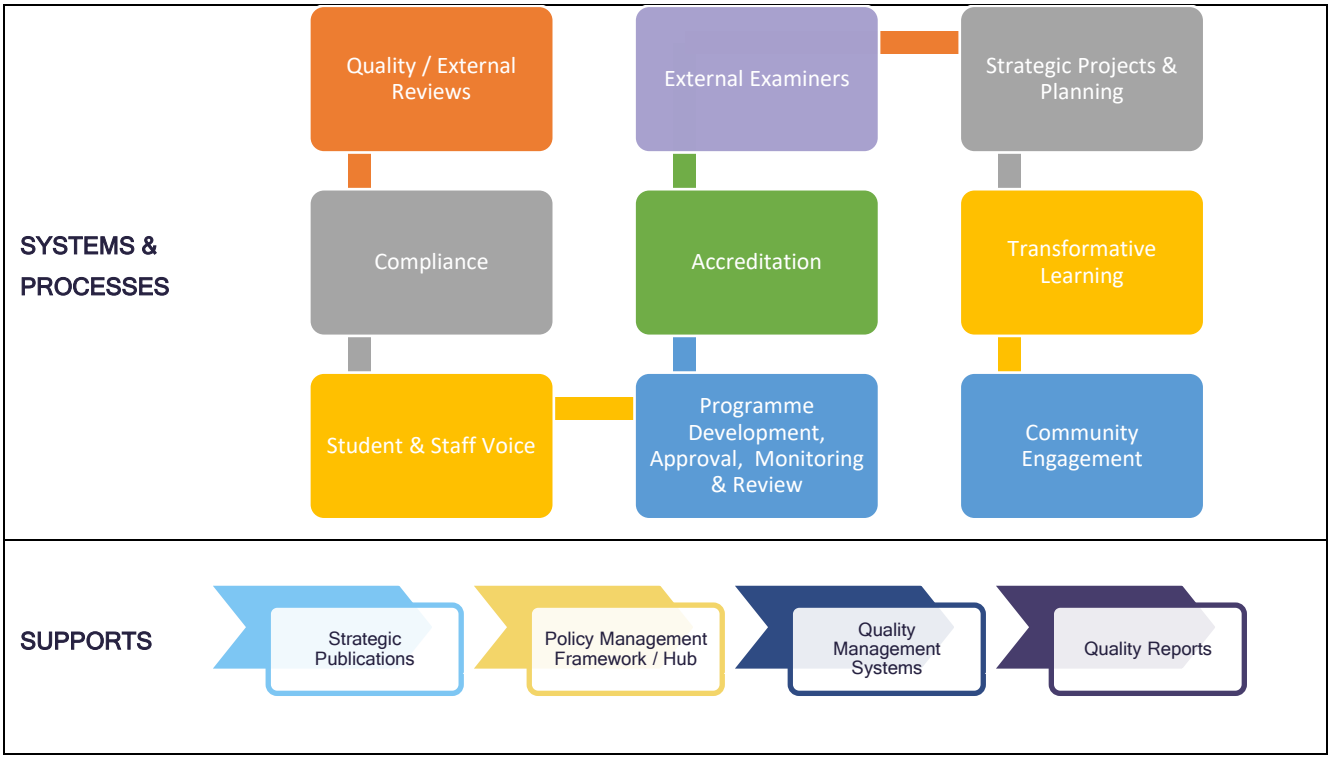
The University is committed to assuring and enhancing the quality of its activities and to fostering a quality culture throughout the institution. The University recognises the pursuit of quality, and hence excellence, as a core value. Responsibility for the quality of our activities rests at institutional, local and individual level. The University Quality Policy is available here. The University's Quality Manual is available here. 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.

The University's Policy Management Framework sets out a standard set of principles to follow when developing, implementing and managing institutional policies with a view to promoting a consistent approach to both the development process and format of policies across the University.

UL Internal Quality Assurance Governance, Systems and Supports





External Quality Assurance

Representation of Learners, Staff and External Stakeholders

The student voice plays a central role in UL's quality assurance framework. Students are represented on all of the key decision-making committees of the University (Governing Authority, Academic Council, Faculty Boards, Course Boards, Course Review Boards).

The Student Representative forum provides an opportunity for dialogue and discussion, addressing issues affecting students and enhances links between students and the University. Student Representatives influence change across the campus, from access, facilities, academic delivery, supports and services. They work with the University and become part of the decision-making forum. Elections are held annually for student representatives by UL Student Life, the representative body for UL's undergraduate student population.

Students also participate in the University's quality review process. All review panels comprise a student representative.

The Academic Council of the University of Limerick is charged under the University of Limerick Act with ensuring academic standards and the quality of all awards made by the University. In accordance with the University's quality assurance procedures, Academic Council appoints external examiners to all taught programmes to provide an independent view and report on student performance, programme outcomes and proposed awards. Academic Council examination boards will consider recommendations from faculty examination boards and submissions from both internal and external examiners before determining students' final awards.

University Research Committee and its sub-committees and working groups includes staff across disciplines and career stages together with representation from the Postgraduate Students' Union (PSU). These members are involved in strategic planning and development across a range of areas including talent development, open science, infrastructure and systems.

In 2020, UL EMerge network of early and mid-career academics was established by the academic community providing peer support and networking opportunities. While YES Bernal (Young Engineers and Scientists) a community of early career researchers runs an active schedule of networking and support evens to boost future opportunities for postdoctoral researchers and research students within the Bernal Institute.

Externally funded research centres and principal investigators are subject to ongoing review cycles from their funders. These involve external international scientific panels who seek input from centre members across career stages. Bernal Institute has a Supervisory Board whose membership includes international expertise across the research development and innovation sector.

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

Collaborative Provision

The University's policy on Collaborative and Transnational Provision sets out a University-wide approach to collaborative and transnational arrangements in line with the strategic plan and related faculty and divisional strategies. The policy outlines the principles that the University use to evaluate proposals for partnerships with institutions. The policy and its associated procedures provide direction to staff in evaluating complex proposals, drafting agreements and developing new and existing collaborations, thereby encouraging consistency, transparency and good practice across UL.

The Office of the Provost 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.

Transnational Delivery of Programmes

In July 2015, QQI 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. 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.

Linked Providers

In the context of the 2012 Education and Training Act and in its role as a designated awarding body, the University accredits a number of programmes offered by linked providers. The University's linked provision arrangements are guided by its Linked Provider Framework. The framework covers linked provider approval, annual monitoring and periodic review processes, which include clear governance guidelines.

As a designated awarding body, the University has established relationships with two educational linked providers: Mary Immaculate College (MIC), Limerick and the Garda College, Templemore, Co. Tipperary.

QA procedures for engaging with linked providers are governed by memorandums of understanding and agreement (MoUs/MoAs) between the University and individual linked providers. The MoUs/MoAs, 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 Executive Committee.

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

2.1 Programme Development and Approval

In accordance with QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guideline 3.1 (Programme development and approval) and European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) no. 2 (Design and approval of programmes), the University follows a well-established, rigorous process for developing and approving new programmes. The process and its related procedures and guidelines are documented internally on SharePoint. All new programmes must align with the institutional strategic plan, with justification included in approval documentation, and must comply with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The NFQ level, award type, learning outcomes, entry requirements, total credits, calculated credits, mode of delivery (full-time, part-time, blended, distance, evening, etc.), progression points and core pathway must all be specified on the programme submission application form for subsequent consideration by the approving groups. The University's Awards Title Framework is available here.

New programmes are formally approved in five stages by five different 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 APRC. Students and representative stakeholders of the academic units (faculty and department/school) proposing the programme are represented on Academic Council.

Procedures for institution-wide programme design, approval and modification are stored on SharePoint. The approval process procedures and guidelines, including defined criteria, are documented in *Procedures for Processing Programme Proposals* and *Guidelines to Ensure Quality and Consistency of Submissions*, respectively. Joint or dual degrees are subject to the provisions of UL's Joint and Dual Degree Awards Policy.

Following approval by Academic Council, the modification or creation of programme records is maintained by the Programme Management Office of the Academic Registry Division. Further information is available here.

Apprenticeship Programmes

The provision of statutory apprenticeship programmes is an aspect of the University's work-based learning delivery and collaborative provision. The University's Policy and Procedures for the Provision of Apprenticeship Programmes provides direction to staff and potential partners when considering the provision of statutory apprenticeships. Adherence to the policy and its related procedures assures that statutory apprenticeship programmes are developed and delivered in accordance with statutory requirements and those of the University of Limerick. The policy is guided by QQI's Topic Specific Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines for Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes and QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards as key external reference points but is also interdependent with other University policies and procedures relating to programme development, teaching, learning and assessment.

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

The University's policies and procedures in relation to admission, progression and recognition of prior learning are informed by QQI's Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training.

The online prospectuses for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and the Graduate & Professional Studies and International Education Division[2] websites specify the admission processes and entry criteria for the University's programme offerings. Programme award titles are aligned with the institution's Award Titles Framework. The Access and Widening Participation Policy provides for entry mechanisms, programmes and support services that ensure equality of entry, participation and outcome for all student groups at the University. The Recognition of Prior Learning Policy complies with national and European principles on recognition and recognises all types of prior learning, including that acquired by formal, non-formal and informal routes. Appeals with regard to admissions decisions are managed under the admissions appeals process for undergraduates and postgraduates.

The Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures specifies the regulations relating to learner admission (sections 1.2, 1.3, 5.3, 5.4), progression (4, 5.5, 5.6), recognition (1.4, 1.5, 2) and certification of awards (1.6, 5.2). The handbook is updated annually to ensure all regulations and procedures remain fit for purpose. Handbook updates are recommended by Academic Regulations Committee (ARC) and approved by Academic Council. The Academic Programme Transfer Policy specifies conditions under which students can apply to transfer between programmes internally or from a programme in another higher education institution (HEI).

The Institutional Research Officer gathers statistics on student admission and progression. Reports on student progression per programme are compiled and presented to course directors, heads of department/school, faculty deans and Executive Committee.
In accordance with the Academic Programme Review Policy (which is covered in more detail in section 4.3), each programme's course review board is provided with the following sets of anonymised data, which they use in their annual and periodic programme review reports:

- Course data report, including:
  - Application data – CAO + international
  - New entrant CAO points – minimum and median
  - New entrant entry mode – DARE, FETAC, HEAR and mature
  - Student enrolment and progression data
  - First-year presence and progression after one year
  - Graduates by award level
- Course-specific results from the Student Exit Survey
- External examiner reports from the previous three academic years
- Graduate first destination reports
- All available annual programme review reports since the previous periodic review.

2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

The UL Academic Council approves the entry requirements, programmes of study and award titles of all degrees, diplomas and certificates that are offered by the University.

[2] From September 2020, UL Global

Programme learning outcomes and the curriculum designed to achieve those outcomes are articulated as part of the initial approval of a programme by Academic Council. These outcomes are mapped to the appropriate NFQ award descriptor. Learning outcomes for all modules are outlined in the University of Limerick Book of Modules. Assessment of modules is based on the achievement of those learning outcomes.

Each student's performance is considered at the University Exam Board, and award recommendations are then considered at the next meeting of Academic Council.

Learners who successfully complete major, minor, supplemental or special-purpose awards receive a University of Limerick parchment fixed with the UL seal and endorsed by the UL President and Vice President Academic & Registrar. Graduands in receipt of major, minor, supplemental or special-purpose awards are conferred at the next scheduled conferring ceremony. Unless otherwise approved by the Vice President Academic & Registrar graduands in receipt of awards of less than 30 credits are conferred in absentia. Graduands in receipt of awards of 30 credits or greater will be invited to receive their award at the conferring ceremony.

Details of the University's procedures for certification of awards and their alignment with the National Framework of Qualifications is available on the university website.

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

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).

The UL Academic Council is charged under the Universities Act 1997 with ensuring academic standards and the quality of all awards made by the University. In accordance with the University's quality assurance procedures, Academic Council appoints external examiners to all taught programmes to provide an independent view and report on student performance, programme outcomes and proposed awards. Academic Council examination boards will consider recommendations from faculty examination boards and submissions from both internal and external examiners before determining students' final awards. The University's External Examiners Policy is available here.

Under the terms of the University's Academic Programme Review Policy, all taught programmes are subject to formal annual review by the relevant course review board and to periodic review (usually every five years) by a panel that includes external personnel. Master's and PhD theses by research are monitored by means of an annual progression and monitoring

system involving research review panels within each academic unit. The theses are examined and reported upon by internal and external examiners.

Working with UL's four faculties, Graduate & 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.

A checklist for course directors in planning for blended learning was developed during the Covid pandemic. Programme Planning Checklist Course Director.pdf (ul.ie). The checklist provides signposting to the key tasks involved in the planning, development and coordination of programmatic approach to blended learning during the academic year 20/21. The intention is that these actions will provide for a more coherent and consistent student experience across the programme and is designed to complement the Guidelines for preparing teaching and learning.

3.0 Learner Resources and Support

The provision of module resources is the responsibility of relevant academic and support units. Relevant examples of the latter include Information Technology Division (ITD), Buildings and Estates, the Library and the Student Affairs Division. Where review processes (course review board annual programme review, external examiner reports, student surveys) point to a shortfall in a programme's learning resources and/or learner supports, the course director liaises with the head of department/school to rectify the situation.

Academic Registry is the main provider of administrative services (e.g. maintains student records, administers end-of-semester examinations, issues graduate parchments and transcripts, and develops and administers procedures for complying with the University's academic regulations and marks and standards) to units running programmes of study and their students. Academic Registry is subject to periodic quality review and, through its quality management system (QMS), regular QMS auditing.

The main learner support units (Access Office, Mature Student Office, Disability Support Services, Counselling, Chaplaincy and Student Health Centre) reside in the Student Affairs umbrella division. The Access Office works to promote and support the participation of students from groups that have been under-represented in the third-level education sector. The Mature Student Office supports mature students who are registered on full-time undergraduate programmes and students who are registered on the Mature Student Access Certificate. The office helps to ease these students' transition into full-time higher education. Students with additional requirements are supported by Disability Support Services, which provides a range of services to students, including assistive technology. The Disability Support Services handbook provides detailed information for current and prospective students. Pastoral care is provided to students through the Personal Academic Support System (PASS), Counselling, Chaplaincy and the two students' unions (Student Life and Postgraduate Students' Union). The Student Health Centre's service is provided to registered students only.

Undergraduate programmes include either a six-to-eight-month cooperative education placement ('Co-op') or practice placement (clinical or teaching). Both types of placement are formal, compulsory and academically accredited elements of the programme. For programmes with professional placements regulated in part by an accrediting body such as the Medical Council or Teaching Council, placements are restricted to sites that are recognised by that accrediting body. In addition to Co-op, language students may undertake an Erasmus placement at a European partner institution.

The Careers Service (a section of the Cooperative Education & Careers Division) offers support to students and recent graduates in developing and implementing successful career plans and facilitates the recruitment process for students and employers.

The remit of the University's Access, Equality and Student Affairs Committee includes ensuring that "policies prepared are in accordance with good practice, student equality and diversity principles, and student, University and legislative requirements".

Led by the International Education Division, the University's compliance with the Code of Practice for Provision of Education and Training to International Learners is documented here.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning offers a number of initiatives to students to support their learning, including the First Seven Weeks programme, study skills and exam technique

workshops, and a number of student support centres (the five learner support centres listed in section 6.2.2 and SESU).

HR's Learning, Development and Equal Opportunities section provides training and development courses to support the development of research skills for research and academic staff. Popular programmes include networking for research, grant writing, communicating research effectively, research ethics and PhD supervision. In addition, the Human Resources Division (HR) operates a research coaching programme, which brings together those involved in research to exchange experience and provide each other with guidance and support in achieving research outputs, including publications, books and research grants.

The Buildings and Estates Department manages and allocates space on campus in accordance with the University's Space Management Protocol (approved by Executive Committee). Buildings and Estates ensures that all aspects of the University's infrastructure are safe.

The Glucksman Library, which is managed and quality assured by the Library and Information Services Division, provides information resources and facilities to students, staff and researchers.

In relation to research, laboratory space and associated equipment falls under the auspices of the individual academic unit and/or research institute in which the facilities reside.

As part of their periodic quality reviews, academic, research and support units evaluate and report upon the adequacy of their physical premises, equipment and facilities. Any recommendations put forward to a unit by the reviewers are itemised in the unit's post-review quality improvement plan.

Students are asked to give feedback on teaching and learning facilities. The Exit Survey asks students about the appropriateness of the learning environment while the Module Satisfaction Survey (MSS) asks students to rate how they feel about their modules' resources, rooms and facilities.

The institutional Safety Statement provides a framework for the organisation of safety throughout the University. The statement includes guidelines for personnel with delegated safety duties who will, by their actions and encouragement to others, ensure that the University continues to be a safe place in which to work and learn. The Health & Safety Essentials booklet, to be read in conjunction with the Safety Statement, provides guidance on the very broad scope of health & safety at work. The purpose of the booklet is to summarise the main points of the Safety Statement (Part 1) and provide information on a number of general health and safety issues relevant to the whole institution (Part 2). Further details of health and safety policies and procedures, including Garda vetting and foreign police clearance, are available on the Health and Safety page of the HR website.

Blended Learning

UL has committed to a blended learning strategy for the academic year 20/21. General information and supports for students is available here. Details of information technology (IT) supports for students during the pandemic are available here.

The Centre for Transformative Learning (CTL) has provided supports and resources for students in order to help them to maximise their engagement and enhance their experience of

teaching, learning and assessment in the online context. Students did not choose to experience their learning in the remote setting and consequently for the majority this is a new and somewhat daunting experience for them. The first resource developed was a set of guidelines on Learning online in UL which has an accompanying short recording to ease accessibility for students.

The Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning (EDTL) three-year project is aimed at enhancing the digital attributes and educational experiences of Irish university students through mainstreaming digital in teaching and learning activities in Irish Universities, by addressing the professional development of all who teach or support teaching and learning. Supports have been developed to develop and enhance students' experience of online teaching learning and assessment. Resources developed for students by students include a video and set of guidelines on how students can best plan for effective learning during Covid-19; online exams advice for students; student success for online assessment for each of the faculties KBS, SEN, AHSS and EHS

EDTL@UL workshops will be available soon as part of the UL Library's Digital Skills programme for students, #Take1step. These digital skills workshops will cover a range of topics and will be available between academic week 4 and week 6.

The five learning centres are all providing support to students within the remote context with a high level of engagement in the services and supports available. Further details available: CTL annual report (July 2019-July 2020) and Autumn Newsletter 2020.

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

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 policy. The management of institutional-level research is largely the responsibility of the Vice President Research & Enterprise, who is supported by the Research Office. Research-related policies and procedures are available here. The University Research Strategy Board, which reports to Executive Committee, advises and reports on research priorities for the University.

At an institutional level, the management of master's and PhDs by research falls under the auspices of Graduate & Professional Studies (GPS). Information on postgraduate research is given on the Postgraduate Research page of the GPS website. Academic regulations affecting postgraduate research students are included in the Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures (in particular in chapters 2 and 5). In addition to providing access to that handbook, the Codes of Practice and Regulations page of the GPS website provides access to the policies, procedures, forms and guidelines that underpin the research postgraduate processes. GPS reviews and, where necessary, updates on an ongoing basis these forms, documents and relevant academic regulations.

QA measures are in place to collectively ensure the effective oversight of the quality of institutional research throughout the full lifecycle of research projects. The Research Portal provides information and relevant forms relating to research projects, including procedures relating to research proposal development, authorisation, submission and management. The Research Projects section of the Finance Department oversees and reports on financial aspects of research activity. The Human Resources Division publishes HR policies and procedures relating to research staff on its Research Staff web page.

UL is committed to ensuring that all research carried out under its auspices meets the highest standards of integrity, and that an environment of research integrity prevails through the promotion of good research practices, together with the use of fair, effective, and transparent procedures to address research misconduct.

UL's Research Integrity Policy applies to all employees of the University, as well as all Adjunct, Emeritus, and visiting personnel officially engaged in research work at the University and/or undertaking any research activity in the University's name. This policy is aligned with the **National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity In Ireland (2014)**

- IUA national policy statement on ensuring research integrity in Ireland
- Procedure for Managing Allegations of Misconduct in Research
- Conflicts of Interest -Protocol and Procedures relating to Research Activities

The Office of the Vice President of Research maintains overall responsibility for research ethics and governance structures at the University. This is facilitated by the Operating Guidelines for the Governance and Oversight of Research Ethics and the ULREG Terms of Reference .

ULREG (University of Limerick Research Ethics Governance committee) is primarily concerned with research related policies, procedures and governance, whilst all research ethics applications are considered at Faculty level by Research Ethics Committees (RECs). All appeals of Faculty REC decisions are referred to ULREG. The current chair of the

University of Limerick Research Ethics & Governance committee is Paul Reynolds, Edge Hill University.

All members of the University staff and students are required to plan and conduct their investigations in accordance with appropriate ethical standards. Staff should ensure that they have knowledge of any relevant disciplinary guidelines on research ethics and that any empirical research has the required approval by the Faculty's Research Ethics Committee and/or other bodies as required. Research on patients (i.e. people who are receiving treatment as a result of an illness) is not within the remit of the Committee and should be referred to the Mid-Western Regional Hospital Research Ethics Committee. Ethical clearance must be gained before any research begins.

Faculty Research Ethics Committees are charged by the University to consider the ethics of proposed research projects which will involve human subjects and to agree or not as to whether the projected research is ethical.

Faculty Research Ethics Committees must be consulted about any research proposals which involve:

- Direct experimentation on individuals;
- Surveys or questionnaires administered to individuals;
- Use of data derived from individual records where individuals might be identified.
- Experimentation which involves animals

Faculty Committee Information can be found at:

- Kemmy Business School Ethics
- Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences Ethics
- Education & Health Sciences Ethics
- Science & Engineering Ethics

The quality of research is reviewed through the quality reviews of academic units, research institutes and support units. The latter include the Research Office, Graduate & Professional Studies, Finance, HR, Library and Information Services Division, ITD and Buildings and Estates, all of which contribute to a greater or lesser extent to achieving the University's research goals. Several of the above support units regularly develop, deliver or coordinate various research-related professional development courses, which are widely advertised throughout the institution by email. Executive Committee assesses the quality of research through its review of the Research Office's annual research report.

The University of Limerick measures its research performance under four broad categories including publications, funding, research postgraduates, and impact. These are reported annually. In addition, the data is captured quarterly in order to meet ongoing requests for research performance metrics from Research Institutes, Departments/Schools, Executive Committee, etc.

The activity under each of the categories is collated from various data sources both internal and external to UL. The internal data sources include but are not limited to the UL Research information system (ULRIS), Student Record System, Agresso financial system, and MyIP (research contracts and commercialisation activity). External data sources include bibliometric

databases from Web of Science, Scopus, InCites, and Scival. Examples of key measures captured under the four categories include:

- Top 10% publications
- Book and book chapter publications by high impact publishers
- Research postgraduate graduations
- Funding awards
- Impact case studies
- Spin-outs
- Licences

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

Staff Recruitment

The University's HR policies and procedures for the recruitment of academic, support and research staff comply with Irish public sector recruitment and appointment procedures. Recruitment policies, procedures and practices comply with the Universities Act 1997, the Employment Equality Acts 1998/2004, the Equal Status Acts 2000/2004 and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. The University's Equality and Diversity Policy is designed to ensure that the University's procedures and practices operate in a manner that is consistent with the institution's commitment to equality of opportunity and do not discriminate against individuals on grounds of gender, gender identity, gender expression, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveler community, socio-economic status, ethnicity, national identity or neurodiversity.

The University's recruitment and staff development procedures for academic staff are designed to ensure that teaching staff are suitably qualified and experienced for their teaching and research roles. Applicants called to interview are required to submit references prior to interview, and subsequent offers of employment are subject to receipt of satisfactory references. Prior to taking up an offered position, the successful candidate must submit evidence (original copies) of academic, professional or technical qualifications. PhD qualifications are the norm for academic staff.

The recruitment policies are reviewed regularly, updated as required, approved by Governing Authority and published on the HR website.

Staff Management

Terms of probation and tenure are addressed in each new hire's contract and job specification. Members of staff report to and are managed by their line manager. Established members of staff (i.e. those with a contract of at least 10 months) participate in the University's formal, mandatory Performance and Development Review System (PDRS). The PDRS is designed to identify the continuous professional development (CPD) needs of staff and to ensure those needs are met. Section 5.3.2 provides more details on the PDRS.

Staff Development

Newly recruited members of staff participate in an intensive, one-day general induction programme delivered by HR. General induction includes reference to web-accessible HR employee policies and procedures, including the Code of Conduct for Employees and the Acceptable Behaviour in the Workplace Policy. In addition, new staff are provided with local induction to familiarise them with their designated roles and responsibilities and their place within the unit.

Ongoing CPD is a central feature of the University's professional development environment. Through the PDRS, the head of department/school meets with each member of staff to agree on specific CPD requirements for that staff member. The Centre for Transformative Learning (CTL) operates a peer observation of teaching process whereby an academic member of staff observes a colleague's teaching and gives them feedback on how their teaching could be improved. The CTL offers the Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) process, which is designed to provide useful information to individual lectures on their students' experiences of the modules

they teach. The CTL promotes graduate diploma and master's courses in teaching, learning and scholarship. In conjunction with the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and the Midwest Regional Cluster, the CTL offers teaching staff regular workshops on various aspects of pedagogy and a wide variety of resources and supports for improving their teaching. The University's Learning Technology Forum provides a coordinated approach to the use of technology-enhanced and blended learning. CTL have a dedicates website offering specific supports for staff with the move to online learning. The site covers continuity of assessment, alternative to end of semester exams, guidance on assessment choices and tools and guidelines for online teaching.

The HR Learning, Development and Equal Opportunities section promotes and coordinates professional training and development courses, including teaching-related courses, and a campus-wide mentoring scheme.

The UL **Researcher Development Programme** gives researchers an opportunity to develop and enhance the skills, knowledge and attributes necessary to complete their research and support their longer-term career ambitions. The UL **Researcher Development Programme** enables an individually tailored developmental journey. It consists of a suite or training programmes and 'lunch and learn' sessions where researchers can learn the skills required to excel on projects and enable them to forge their own successful career. Full details of the programme are available on the HR website.

6.0 Information and Data Management

Information Technology and Systems

In addition to maintaining and developing the University's network and communications infrastructure, including the campus data centre facilities, the Information Technology Division (ITD) maintains a suite of enterprise applications and software systems that are critical to the teaching, learning, research and administrative goals of the institution. The IT strategy, *UL Enable 2018-2022*, is about positioning IT in the institution as an enabling and leading capability for the University in realising its mission and strategic objectives. A list of IT-related policies and regulations is available on the ITD website.

The University operates the following information management systems:

- SI (Student Record System)
- Agresso (Finance Management System)
- Core (HR Information Management System)
- ULRIS (Research Information System)

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. The Institutional Research Officer gathers statistics on student admission and progression. Reports on student progression per programme are compiled and presented to course directors, heads of department/school, faculty deans and Executive Committee.

The Office of the President compiles student profile data for inclusion in the University's annual Strategic Dialogue self-assessment report to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) – see the

published HEA's Higher Education System Performance Institutional and Sectoral Profiles for details.

The annual institutional-level Student Exit Survey process includes internal longitudinal benchmarking and benchmarking against our linked providers.

The University's Student Engagement & Success Unit (SESU) undertakes research and analyses data relating to student engagement. The source of the data is the Studentsurvey.ie .

The Academic Registry Division maintains and controls the University's student records through its student records system (SI), from which various officers and offices can extract and tailor data to generate reports. Reports are generated from SI for relevant internal stakeholders at institutional level (e.g. Academic Council and Executive Committee) and local level (e.g. course review boards). Reports are generated from SI as required for external stakeholders, such as the HEA and the Department of Education and Skills.

A list of University programmes is generated annually from SI for submitting to the HEA. Twice a year (mid-semester), a 'not-registered' report is generated from SI and sent to the HEA and grant-funding bodies (e.g. SUSI). The security of SI is maintained through access levels, which are controlled by ITD and the system administrator in the units that use SI. Academics input their students' assessment results into the system, and data integrity scripts are run (Oracle Discoverer) to check the accuracy and completeness of the data.

Records Management and Retention

The University operates an institutional records management and retention policy. Policies and procedures on the maintenance and retention of quality-related documentation at unit level form part of each support unit's QMS. One of the quality management processes of the QMS is documentation control. All QMS processes are published on the Quality section of each unit's website.

Data Protection and Freedom of Information

Data protection forms part of the remit of the Corporate Secretary's Office. The University operates a data protection policy, which was revised in 2018 to reflect changes under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), a European Union (EU) regulation introduced in May 2018 to strengthen and unify data protection within the EU. GPDR replaces the Irish Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003.

The Corporate Secretary's Office website has a dedicated web page that outlines how and why the University shares personal data with third parties and lists all relevant parties. The Corporate Secretary's Office also manages the University's freedom of information function. The University complies with the Freedom of Information Act 2014 and has an FOI unit and FOI officer.

The Corporate Secretary's Office website includes an Information and Compliance page. In addition to the aforementioned records management, FOI and data protection, this page provides information on the Disability Act, the Official Languages Act, copyright and environmental regulations.

Key Performance Indicators

The university has agreed a suite of key performance indicators (KPIs) with the HEA as part of its mission-based performance compact. These KPIs are reported annually to the HEA in our self-evaluation report, as part of the strategic dialogue process. These KPIs were based on the previous strategic plan and are reported annually.

7.0 Public Information and Communication

The University regularly updates its website so that its wide range of stakeholders can easily source information relevant to them. The Office of the President is responsible for maintaining the high-level pages, such as those providing information on institutional leadership, Governing Authority, Academic Council and strategic publications. Individual units are responsible for maintaining their own websites, all of which are accessible from the University homepage.

The University adheres to the Freedom of Information 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 the University'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

The Corporate Secretary's Office website also includes sections on data protection, records management and environmental information.

The University's 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 the University. The Division also manages the University's institutional social media accounts. The University's Social Media Strategy and Social Media Policy are available here. The focus of the strategy is to develop a core tier of social media channels and adopt a proactive social media publishing process that integrates the four faculties and key business units. The Division supports the campus-wide University Social Media Community Group and offers training, strategic advice and policy guidelines. Information regarding UL Open Days is published annually on the University website.

Learner Information

The online prospectuses for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and the Graduate & Professional Studies (GPS) and International Education Division websites specify details of

(or provide links to) the University's programme offerings. The published information for each programme specifies the programme's title; NFQ level; entry requirements; duration; structure; list of modules; career prospects; student profiles; video clips from students, graduates and staff; and a contact name and email address for requesting more information. Hard copies of the prospectuses and supplementary programme descriptor documents are made available to the public during open days, career fairs and information evenings.

Current and prospective research students can access information on the University's research activities and offerings on the Research and GPS websites.

All programmes published on the online prospectuses lead to an award. Once a programme has been selected on the GPS website, the page specifies whether the programme leads to an award and, if so, what the award is. The International Education Division's International Foundation Programme web page makes it clear that the programme does not lead to an award itself but provides international students with an alternative application route to undergraduate study.

Information on internal transfer and progression is available in the Student Handbook, which all new students receive during enrolment.

Publication of QA Reports

QA evaluation reports are published at unit level in the context of the periodic quality review process for academic, research and support units. The outputs of the process for each unit include (i) a reviewers' report, which is published on the QSU website; and (ii) a quality improvement plan (QIP) for the unit, which is based on the recommendations from the reviewers' report. The final QIP implementation summary report is published on the websites of the QSU and the relevant unit, and the QSU informs the campus community (by email) about the publications.

The University publishes the reports from its institutional reviews (2004 and 2011 to date) on the Office of the President and QSU websites. Quality assurance policies are available on the University policy hub. Quality assurance procedures are available on the QSU website and are also published on individual unit websites.

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

Self-Evaluation

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, the following:

- The University collects, analyses and reports upon a whole range of datasets and other information to external stakeholders (e.g. the HEA, QQI and Department of Education and Skills). These activities are undertaken by a wide range of (largely) support units and offices/officers, as relevant to functional area.

- At an institutional level, the strategic plan sets priorities, objectives and measures of success. Progress on the achievement of the plan's aims and objectives, as defined in terms of indicators of success and outcomes, is monitored on an ongoing basis by Executive Committee and Governing Authority.
- The University's research strategy specifies action items and targets for each strategic objective. The Vice President Research & Enterprise oversees regular reviews of the strategy and reports on performance against targets to Executive Committee and Governing Authority.
- Self-evaluation activities (and associated authorship of a self-evaluation report) are carried out as part of academic, research and support unit quality reviews. Review reports are made publicly available, and the review recommendations form the basis of a subsequent quality improvement plan (QIP). The implementation of the QIP is monitored by the QSU, the VPAASE/COO, the relevant dean and the university Quality Committee.
- UL implements an external examination process for both taught and research programmes, and external examiner reports are considered 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 Monitoring 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 APRC.
- Student feedback is gathered by means of the module satisfaction survey and student exit survey, and detailed and/or aggregate reports are 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 quality report (AQR).
- Faculties provide an annual quality report, which is linked 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.
- Led by the QSU, the University conducts compliance exercises to document the extent to which the institution meets its external QA obligations. This work is guided by the *Process for Assessing Compliance with Statutory and Related Quality Requirements* (an internal document stored on SharePoint). Once the University receives notice of a new or revised quality requirement, the QSU coordinates an exercise that assesses the extent to which the University complies with that requirement. Examples include the 2015 ESG and QQI guidelines and codes of practice. Responsibility for assessing how

the University complies with the requirement lies with the unit(s) or officers that have functional responsibility in the area concerned. Refer to the Compliance page of the QSU for more details. Identified enhancement opportunities lead to the development of a QIP, which is implemented by relevant units.

Periodic Review

In line with international good practice and national statutory requirements, the University of Limerick undertakes periodic quality reviews of its educational, research and related services every seven years. Coordinated by the Quality Support Unit, the review process represents one cornerstone institutional quality assurance and enhancement mechanism. Information relating to both the current and previous cycle of quality review activity is available on the QSU website. Prior to each cycle of reviews, the QSU engage in a campus-wide consultation process. Timelines are agreed for the review cycle which are approved by the Executive and published on the QSU website.

Quality review guidelines for the various streams of reviews are prepared in consultation with relevant stakeholders. Quality review guidelines are approved by the relevant VP/CO. The QSU co-ordinates the quality review process, offering support and guidelines to all units. There are three key stages to the process:

a) The unit/Faculty/institute under review initially undertakes a self-analysis exercise, identifying its strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities for improvement. The unit/Faculty/institute documents these findings in a self-assessment report (SAR), which is circulated to the review team prior to the site visit.
b) A quality review group (QRG), comprising internationally recognised experts, is appointed to review the unit. The QRG members study the SAR prior to the site visit and provide preliminary comments to the QSU for circulation to the review team. The site visit is a three-day event on campus at which the review team (QRG) meet with faculty and staff of the unit. They also meet with students and a range of internal and external stakeholders. This leads to the production of a concise report by the QRG (commendation and recommendations), which is read back to the unit at the conclusion of the site visit.
c) Follow-on activities which include discussion of the report by the UL Quality Committee, publication of the report on the QSU website, the creation of a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) by the unit/Faculty, and presentation of the report and QIP to Quality Committee. The final stage of this process is a progress update meeting with the relevant VP/CO 12-18 months after the review, where the Director of the Unit reports on all the actions taken by the Unit/Faculty relating to the report recommendations.

External Panelists

In compliance with the guidelines for the periodic quality reviews of academic, research and support units, the review groups include senior academics (academic units), peers (research units) and cognates (support units), who come from outside the Republic of Ireland and work in disciplines that provide them with a strong degree of familiarity with the core activities of the unit under review. The expert panelists on academic and research unit reviews typically have a significant international reputation in their field of expertise and come from a prestigious

international university or other appropriate institutional setting. The expert panelists on support unit reviews are typically directors or senior members of a similar unit in a leading international university or comparable educational institution outside Ireland. The QSU maintains a record of all quality review group members.

In compliance with the University's procedures for the recruitment of academic staff, selection panels include one or two (depending on the level of appointment) external and one internal subject specialist. In compliance with procedures for the recruitment of research scholars, selection panels include at least one external and at least one internal subject specialist. In compliance with procedures for the recruitment of support staff, selection panels include a person external to the unit who has expertise in the unit's business. In compliance with the procedures for the promotion of academic staff, promotion panels include two external academics.

In compliance with the Academic Programme Review Policy, (i) expert personnel may be invited onto the course review board (for annual programme review) at the discretion of the chairperson, and (ii) the period programme review panel will include two external academic subject experts and at least one employer representative.

In accordance with the University's QA procedures, Academic Council appoints external examiners to all taught programmes to provide an independent report on student performance, programme outcomes and proposed awards. The External Examiner Policy specifies the examiners' roles and function, how they are appointed (including reference to conflict of interest) and how the system is administered.

External examiners of research programmes are approved by the relevant head of department/school and the Assistant Dean Research and appointed by Academic Council. Two-thirds of external examiners of taught programmes and PhD theses are international.

How the Internal QA System engages with External Quality Assurance?

Led by the QSU, the University conducts compliance exercises to document the extent to which the institution meets its external QA obligations. This work is guided by the Process for Assessing Compliance with Statutory and Related Quality Requirements (an internal document stored on SharePoint). Once the University receives notice of a new or revised quality requirement, the QSU coordinates an exercise that assesses the extent to which the University complies with that requirement. Examples include the 2015 ESG and QQI guidelines and codes of practice. Responsibility for assessing how the University complies with the requirement lies with the unit(s) or officers that have functional responsibility in the area concerned. Refer to the Compliance page of the QSU website for more details.

Identified enhancement opportunities arising from these activities lead to the development of a QIP, which is implemented by relevant units.

The University submits an annual quality assurance report (AQR) to QQI. Following submission of the report to QQI, the University publishes the report on its website. Publication of the AQR by the University is interpreted by QQI as publication of the University's QA procedures.

The University is required to undergo statutory external review through a process of self-evaluation and site visit from an external panel of peer experts. Recommendations arising from

self-evaluation and those recommended by the panel are incorporated into an institutional quality improvement plan. The Quality Committee has oversight of the implementation of that plan.

Nationally, the University contributes to inter-institutional dialogue on quality-related issues through its participation on the Irish Universities Association Quality Committee. Internationally, the University engages with quality trends in higher education by participating in relevant international conferences, such as those organised by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	25
Awarding bodies	0
QA bodies	0

1. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Business Studies https://www.efmdglobal.org/accreditations/business-schools/efmd-accredited/
Date of accreditation or last review	June 2015
Date of next review	N/A (new EQUIS accreditation currently being sought)

2. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Irish Medical Council
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Medicine Bachelor of Surgery https://www.medicalcouncil.ie/Education/CareerStage-Undergraduate/QualityAssurance/Medical-School-Accreditation/
Date of accreditation or last review	16 October 2019
Date of next review	2024

3. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Teaching Council
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Science in Physical Education
Date of accreditation or last review	May 2014
Date of next review	2021

4. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Teaching Council
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Science (Education) in Biology with Physics or Chemistry or Agricultural Science
Date of accreditation or last review	15 April 2015
Date of next review	2022

5. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Teaching Council
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Technology (Education) in Materials and Architectural Technology
Date of accreditation or last review	15 December 2014
Date of next review	TBC

9.2 Collaborative Provision

Type of arrangement	Total number
Joint research degrees	1
Joint/double/multiple awards	14
Collaborative programmes	5
Franchise programmes	0
Linked providers (DABs only)	2

1. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Linked Provider
Name of body (/bodies):	Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
Programme titles and links to publications	Full list of programmes available at www.mic.ie
Date of last review	30 November 2016
Date of next review	2023

2. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Linked Provider
Name of body (/bodies):	Garda College, Templemore
Programme titles and links to publications	BA in Applied Policing Postgraduate Diploma in Serious Crime Investigation
Date of last review	n/a
Date of next review	2023

3. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Joint/double/multiple awards
Name of body (/bodies):	KEDGE Business School, Marseilles Audencia Business School, Nantes, France La Rochelle Business School, France Nagoya University of Commerce and Business, Japan Kozminski University, Warsaw, Poland

Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Business Studies Bachelor of Business Studies with French/German/Japanese/Spanish
Date of last review	
Date of next review	2024/25

4. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Joint/double/multiple awards
Name of body (/bodies):	KEDGE Business School, Marseilles Audencia Business School, Nantes, France La Rochelle Business School, France Nagoya University of Commerce and Business, Japan Kozminski University, Warsaw, Poland
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Arts in International Business
Date of last review	29 July 2016
Date of next review	2021

5. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Collaborative Programmes
Name of body (/bodies):	Irish Revenue Commissioners
Programme titles and links to publications	Diploma in Applied Tax Administration
Date of last review	20 January 2020
Date of next review	2024/25

6. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Joint/double/multiple awards
Name of body (/bodies):	National University of Ireland Galway University College Dublin
Programme titles and links to publications	Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership
Date of last review	December 2020
Date of next review	December 2024

9.3 Articulation Agreements

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

Articulation agreements - Total number	**24**

1. Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Shandong University of Technology, China.
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Science in Computer Systems www.sdut.edu.cn
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	October 2015
Date of next review	Currently being reviewed
Detail of the agreement	Students study 2 years at Shandong University of Technology and 2 years at University of Limerick

2. Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Henan Polytechnic University, China.
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Engineering in Electronic and Computer Engineering www.hpu.edu.cn
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	June 2020
Date of next review	Further 5 year extension currently being processed
Detail of the agreement	Students study 2 years at Henan Polytechnic University and 2 years at University of Limerick

3. Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Henan Polytechnic University, China.

Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Engineering in Civil Engineering www.hpu.edu.cn
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	June 2020
Date of next review	Further 5 year extension currently being processed
Detail of the agreement	Students study 2 years at Henan Polytechnic University and 2 years at University of Limerick

University of Limerick

2021

Annual Quality Report University of Limerick
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2019-2020

PART B: QUALITY ASSURANCE / QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1 Strategic QA Updates

Strategic Objectives

The University's new "UL@50 Strategic Plan" was launched on 1 November 2019. The plan was launched on the site of the planned new UL City Campus in the former Dunnes Stores site at Sarsfield Bridge and Honan Quay in the city centre. The plan was launched earlier in the UL Concert Hall to an audience of 450 staff.

The plan evolved from a multi-stakeholder engagement process across the University. Four key themes shaped the development of UL@50 and are embedded with the plan: 1) Transforming learning; 2) Digital transformation; 3) City and culture; 4) Health and wellbeing. The five goals of the new strategic plan are: 1) Transforming Education; 2) Research Excellence; 3) Internationalisation; 4) City and Region; 5) Operating Model.

In November 2019, UL launched its Equality and Human Rights Strategy. The strategy was developed through discussions and meetings within UL and by learning from other universities in Ireland and the UK. UL has established an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board to co-ordinate the work. Recognising 13 grounds of equality and built around 10 themes, the strategy will be implemented through the academic and support structures of the University.

The Healthy UL Framework was launched on 22 November 2019, in response to the Healthy Ireland Framework. The framework clearly demonstrates how the University will collectively work together to improve the health and wellbeing of students, staff and visitors to the campus. The ambitions and actions outlined in the framework align with the University Strategic Plan (UL@50) and sets out a programme of work over the next three years.

Quality Enhancement from Internal Monitoring and Review

The University is committed to assuring and enhancing the quality of its activities and to fostering a quality culture throughout the institution. The University recognises the pursuit of quality, and hence excellence, as a core value. Responsibility for the quality of our activities rests at institutional, local and individual level.

All professional service units within UL implement a bespoke Quality Management System (QMS), based upon the seven quality management principles specified in the ISO9001:2015 quality management standard. Continual improvement (Principle 5) is the ethos underpinning quality management systems. Improvement is essential for a unit to maintain current levels of performance, to react to changes in its internal and external conditions and to create new opportunities for quality enhancement.

All academic and professional service units proactively engage with periodic quality reviews and use the review findings to drive both unit-level and institutional-level quality enhancements.

Examples of quality enhancement at both unit and institutional levels are outlined below:

- The Cooperative Education and Careers Division was announced as the winner of the Best University and Employer Engagement Strategy ward at the 2019 Institute of Student Employers (ISE) awards. The ISE awards benchmark outstanding performance and recognise excellence across a number of categories. ISE is the leading independent voice for student employers in the UK. It brings together employers, the higher education sector and other partners and provides leadership in all aspects of student development and employability.
- The University of Limerick won the award for Best Student Campus in Ireland for the second year in a row at the 2020 Irish Education Awards.
- The International Education Division (IED) won the award for Best Erasmus Programme for the third successive year at the Education Awards, which recognise, encourage and celebrate excellence among third level education providers across the island of Ireland.
- UL has received a REACT Excellence award for its integrated work on reducing the harm for students from excess alcohol use. The work was led from the Student Affairs Division. The Minister of State and Education congratulated the ten Irish institutions involved in this ground-breaking initiative.
- The first UL Student Engagement Scholar has been appointed in the Faculty of AHSS. This scholarship will support a student leadership initiative for new and existing students in the Arts programmes. This initiative is a collaborative effort between the AHSS Faculty, Centre for Transformative Learning and Student Affairs Division.
- Four UL staff were trained as Knowledge for Change Mentors through the UNESCO accredited K4C Mentor Training Programme in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education, hosted by University of Victoria, Canada. UL is one of only two European Centres of this global network. Five further staff will be trained in the coming year.
- The official unveiling of the refreshed University of Limerick Brand took place on 22 October 2019. The brand refresh project was underway for the past year, with the campus community and external stakeholders participating in workshops, surveys and focus groups.
- 448 students were recognised for their voluntary contributions to more than 80 host organisations over the past year. This is the ninth cycle of the President's Volunteer Award (PVA) programme and UL students have contributed more than 137,000 hours locally, nationally and internationally to many charitable endeavours, underlining the value placed on giving something back to society.
- SSPC, the SFI Research Centre for Pharmaceuticals hosted at UL, has been awarded Pharma Research Centre of the Year and the Pharma Education and Training Award at the 2019 Pharma Industry Awards. This is the third consecutive year SSPC has been awarded Pharma Research Centre of the year.
- The Health Sciences Academy (HSA) was launched by the Minister of State for Mental Health and Older People. The Academy is a partnership between UL, the UL Hospitals Group and HSE Mid-West Community Healthcare, that aims to become a global standard-bearer for improving patient care through medical research, education and clinical and community-based practice.

- An initiative by the Algerian Government to use English as the official language at the country's universities, will be supported through a special designed PhD programme at UL. The four-year contract will facilitate the conversion to English as a teaching medium with the Ministry of National Education (Algeria) as the country moves to increase the visibility of research in higher education institutions. It is expected that 400 students will participate in the project over the four years.

Changes to QA System

The University of Limerick Policy Hub is the single authoritative source for the University's Statutes and Policies. The Policy Management Framework and Policy Framework Toolkit are targeted at those responsible for developing and revising policy documents. They contain a variety of links to information that will assist in the policy development and review process. During the reporting period, the following policies were approved.

Policy Title	Sub Committee	Approval Body	Approval Date
Risk Appetite Statement	ARC	GA	27/09/2019
Policy Management Framework	GWG	GA	27/09/2019
Acceptable Usage Policy	ARC	GA	27/09/2019
IT Security Policy	ARC	GA	27/09/2019
Framework for the Management of Severance Agreements	FHRAMC	GA	01/10/2019
Quality Policy		AC	02/10/2019
Procedure for Managing Allegations of Misconduct in Research	FHRAMC	AC	02/10/2019
Linked Provider Framework	AC	AC	02/10/2019
Flexible Working Hours Scheme		FHRAMC	26/11/2019
Policy for Management and Reporting of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory (PSRB) accreditation	AC	AC	11/12/2019
Policy and Procedures for the Provision of Apprenticeship Programmes		AC	04/03/2020
Protected Disclosures Policy and Procedures	FHRAMC	GA	24/04/2020
Policy on Collaborative and Transnational Education Provision		AC	20/05/2020
Official Entertainment Policy	FHRAMC	GA	18/06/2020
Travel & Subsistence Policy	FHRAMC	GA	18/06/2020

Contextual Factors: Maintaining Quality Assurance During Covid-19 Pandemic

Business Continuity Plan/Crisis Management

UL has an agreed Crisis Management Plan with a designated process for setting up a Crisis Operation Team based on the nature and severity of any incident. The Crisis Operations Team was brought together in January 2020 as the Coronavirus crisis emerged in China and was chaired by the Deputy President and Chief Operating Officer (DPCOOR), to develop a response to the situation. UL COTEC was formed when the Executive Committee (EC) joined the Crisis Operations Team on 31 January 2020 as it became apparent that the crisis was escalating and the campus would be closed. UL COTEC, chaired by the President, has successfully managed the campus closure and the initial response to the pandemic. Given the potential impact and duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was decided to bring together the Crisis Operations Team (COT) with the Executive Committee to ensure holistic oversight and decision making for the duration of the crisis.

Academic Planning and Decision Making

The committees of Governing Authority, Executive and Academic Council continued to meet virtually to progress the business of the University while managing the COVID-19 crisis. The Academic Planning Group (APG) was convened by COTEC following the closure of UL due to the COVID-19 global pandemic crisis. APG had a remit and delegated authority to take urgent decisions in the best interest of student welfare and success. These included a remit to assess and address the impact of the pandemic and respective public health measures on the delivery of UL academic programmes and the respective support infrastructure, systems and regulatory framework. On the 9th of April, Academic Regulations Committee proposed to Academic Council that it should temporarily devolve its responsibility to the Academic Planning Group until September 2020 so that decisions relating to academic regulations could be expedited. This enabled APG to make temporary changes to the academic regulations, to manage the COVID-19 pandemic. APG developed 16 guiding principles on which academic delivery would be based for the academic year 2020/21.

The Academic Programme Review Committee (APRC) added 4 additional meetings to its calendar between June and September in order to process any programme or module modifications that were required due to the impact of COVID-19 through an agreed accelerated approval process. Amendments to 46 programmes were considered under this process.

Staff Development

A range of support materials was developed and delivered by the Learning Technology Forum to support academic staff in moving to emergency remote teaching.

Student & Staff Feedback

APG commissioned a survey of the staff and student experience with respect to emergency remote teaching, learning and assessment which was undertaken between May 22nd and June 4th2020. The results of this survey have provided information which has informed Guidelines for Online Teaching and Assessment, 2020-21.

Supporting the Region

On request for facilities from ULH and the HSE, UL provided the Sports Arena as a field hospital. The specifications were developed by the HSE for a 100-bed intermediate care facility to be managed by the ULH, with contributions from UL staff and nursing students.

A UL Virtual Hub for contact tracing was established at the request of the HEA. The Hub supervised 70 Revenue staff via an online Microsoft Teams site. UL student volunteers carried out between 40 and 70 calls per day and answered queries from revenue staff. UL staff acted as Hub managers.

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

The following objectives were outlined in the University of Limerick 2020 AIQR (Section 5.1)

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR)	Update on Status .
1	Evaluation of the impact on quality assurance and enhancement of the implementation of the University's new strategic plan, UL@50: Strategic Plan 2019-2024.	**Objective in progress**: Progress on this objective was impacted greatly by the Covid-19 pandemic. Following the institutional review, one of the top five recommendations was to conduct a review and re-calibration of the UL@50 Strategic Plan. A University-wide working group, reporting to the President, has been established to oversee this task.
2	Evaluation of the impact of the implementation the University of Limerick Equality and Human Rights Strategy on quality policies and procedures.	**Objective in progress**: At the end of the first year of implementation of the Equality and Human Rights Strategy, a review of the impact has shown much progress to date. • University policies and procedures must explicitly include EHR. A template was developed by Corporate Governance for new and modified Policies stating that the Policy must include a commentary on Equality and Human Rights. Policies will not be approved without this. • EHR has been embedded into the University Quality Review Process. At a recent desk review of UL linked providers, the Special Advisor to the UL President on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) was a member of the review panel to assess compliance. • The Web project Accessibility sub-committee has been working on ensuring that UL web pages are accessible, and have also input to Teaching and Learning on the EU Accessibility Directive (Directive (EU) 2016/2102).
3	Evaluation of the impact on quality assurance and enhancement of the development of the Healthy UL Framework.	**Objective complete** The Healthy UL Steering Group and Sub-Groups have been maintained throughout COVID 19. Healthy UL's electronic presence has been developed (UL webpage, YouTube channel and Twitter account). Following the development of comprehensive survey instruments, baseline surveys were completed in 2019 with staff (640 responses) and students (1240 responses). These surveys are currently being repeated with 200+ responses from staff and 880+ responses from students to date. Each Healthy UL Sub-Group has identified and developed Actions Plans to match the Healthy UL objectives. We have continued to establish and strengthen links with a wide range of stakeholders both on campus and in the wider community. The first Healthy UL Annual Report will be presented to Executive Committee in January 2021. The Annual Report provides extensive detail on each of the Healthy UL Actions.

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR)	Update on Status .
4	Approval and publication of a UL-wide Policy Management Framework with supporting procedures and platform.	**Objective complete**. The UL Policy Management Framework and supporting Toolkit were published on the University website. Notification was sent from the Corporate Secretary's office to all staff and students. A Policy Hub was developed as a central repository for all policy-related processes and procedures. The Policy Hub is the single authoritative source for the University's Statutes and Policies.
5	Using funding from the Strategic Alignment Teaching and Learning Enhancement (SATLE) Fund 2019, the Student Evaluation & Learning Analytics (StELA) Project will provide the basis of the development of the University's student evaluation and survey policy and use of data for student success policy.	**Objective in progress.** Work on the project was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in it being postponed to the academic year 2020/21.
6	Ongoing preparations for the University of Limerick Institutional Quality Review.	**Objective complete**: Intensive preparations for the institutional review took place between September '19 and early March 2020. A meeting between the University, QQI and the review Chair and Co-ordinating reviewer took place on 4 Feb '20. Following the meeting the site visit schedule was finalised. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, the review was postponed from March to August 2020. A virtual review took place between 19 and 28 August, which consisted of 24 online meetings between the panel and a range of staff and students, as well as relevant external stakeholders. The review report is due for publication end January 2021.
7	Evaluation of the impact of the new Executive Committee structure on quality assurance and enhancement.	**Objective complete**. Following re-structuring of the Executive Committee, a new sub-committee was established with responsibility for the oversight of quality assurance and quality enhancement activity across the University. Terms of Reference for the Executive Committee Quality Committee (ECQC) were formally approved in May 2020. A SharePoint site was established as a central repository for committee activity. The committee met three times during the reporting period (10 Feb, 5 May and 26 Aug). Annual schedule of meetings and agreed action plan in place.
8	Enhancement of the annual programme monitoring and periodic programme review process and procedures.	**Objective in Process** A CRIC Implementation Working Group was established and has met 8 times since January-June 2020. In looking at implementation issues, the group has taken a twin track approach of looking at (i) curriculum

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR)	Update on Status .
		development and (ii) supporting programme lifecycle policies (i.e. programme development and accreditation, annual programme and periodic review): **i) Curriculum Development** • Development of Framework Documentation – curriculum frameworks from a range of national and international universities have been reviewed and a synthesis of best practice is being compiled against which a UL framework can be benchmarked. • A review exercise on the development of graduate attributes is also underway. **ii) Policy review and redevelopment** The following tasks have been completed: • https://www.ul.ie/quality/sites/default/files//QR%20Guidelines%20for%20Support%20Units%20rev5%20Oct%2020%202Dec20.pdf for new programme development has been generated. In acknowledging the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a transitional measure, the CRIC Implementation Working Group has also considered a series of initiatives which will strengthen the existing programme accreditation and modification processes through APRC.
9	Development of a suite of academic quality policies to include the following: • Collaborative and Transnational Education Provision Policy • Policy on Provision of Apprenticeships • Work-Based Learning Policy • Policy for Management and Reporting of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB)	**Objective complete:** The following academic policies were approved during the reporting period: • Policy on Collaborative and Transnational Education Provision (May '20) • Policy for the Management and Reporting of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) (December '19) • Policy and Procedures for the Provision of Apprenticeship Programmes (May '20)
10	As part of the restructure of the Office of the VPAASE, a unit for Student Complaints, Appeals, Disciplinaries and Garda Vetting will be created at the end of 2019. Three full-time equivalent (FTE) members of staff will work in the unit.	**Objective complete**: A unit has been set up within Office of the VPAASE to deal with Student Complaints, Appeals, Disciplinaries and Garda Vetting. The unit is resourced by three full-time staff. Links to individual services are outlined on the University website.

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Governing Authority	27 Sept 19, 1 Nov 19, 6 Dec 19, 31 Jan 20, 13 March 20 (Special Meeting), 19 Mar 20 (Special Meeting), 24 Apr 20, 26 May 20 (Special Meeting), 12 June 20, 09 July 20.
GA Access, Equality and Student Affairs Committee	26 Sept 19, 31 Oct 19, 22 Nov 19, 24 Jan 20, 20 Mar 20, 22 May 20.
GA Audit and Risk Committee	9 September 19, 14 November 19, 27 February 20, 19 March 20, 3 June 20, 16 June 20.
GA Finance, HR and Asset Management Committee	1 October 19, 26 November 19, 18 February 20, 15 April 20 (Special Meeting), 18 June 20.
GA Governance Committee	18 October 19, 22 November 19, 26 March 20, 22 May 20.
Executive Committee	17 Sep 19, 9 Oct 19, 30 Oct 19 (Special Meeting), 13 Nov 19, 11 Dec 19, 15 Jan 20, 12 Feb 20, 4 Mar 20, 5 Mar (Special Meeting), 31 Mar 19, 14 Apr 19, 30 Apr 19, 20 May 19, 3 Jun 19, 16 Jun 10, 23 Jun 19, 1 Jul 19.
Campus & Infrastructure Sub-Committee (SC)	7 Nov 19, 3 Dec 19,27 Feb 20, 23 Jul 20.
Education and Student Experience SC	6 May 20, 15 Jun 20, 19 Oct 20.
Equality and Human Rights SC	13 Nov (launch), 5 Feb 20, 13 May 20, 24 Jun 20.
Global Engagement and Strategy SC	5 Mar 20, 8 Jun 20.
Operations SC	30 Oct 19, 12 Nov 19, 25 Nov190, 17 Dec 19, 23 Jan 20, 25 Feb 20, 25 Mar 20, 21 May 20, 23 Jul 20.
Quality SC	3 Mar 20, 28 May 20, 31 Aug 20.
University Research Committee	25 Sep 19, 18 Mar 20, 27 May 20.
Academic Council	2 Oct 19, 11 Dec 19, 4 Mar 20, 20 May 20, 17 Jun 20.
Academic Council Grading Committee	4 Sep 19, 24 Sep 19, 5 Dec 19, 17 Jan 20, 18 May 20, 5 Jun 20, 17 Jun 20, 26 Jun 20
Academic Programme Review Committee	5 Sep 19, 3 Oct 19, 7 Nov 19, 12 Dec 19, 9 Jan 20, 6 Feb 20, 5 Mar 20, 16 Apr 20, 14 May 20
Academic Regulations Committee	3 Sep 19, 15 Oct 19, 26 Nov 19, 7 Jan 20, 11 Feb 20, 24 Mar 20, 21 Apr 20, 26 May 20

Body	Meeting dates
Faculty Boards	**AHSS**: 30 Oct 19, 4 Dec 19, 5 Feb 20, 18 Mar 20 **EHS**: 25 Sept 19, 20 Nov 19, 12 Feb 20, 25 Mar 29 **KBS**: 9 Oct 19, 20 Nov 19, 12 Feb 20, 25 Mar 20 S&E: 23 Oct 19, 4 Dec 19, 12 Feb 20, 25 Mar 20
Research Ethics and Governance Committee	7 Oct 19, 2 Dec 19, 9 Mar 20, 11 May 20
University Teacher Education Board	8 Oct 19, 3 Dec 19, 18 Feb 20, 14 Apr 20
VPAASE Management Group	16 Sep 19, 21 Oct 19, 25 Nov 19, 16 Dec 19, 23 Jan 20, 24 Feb 20, 23 Mar 20, 27 Apr 20, 25 May 20, 22 Jun 20
Library Information Resources Development Committee	16 Oct 19, 6 May 20

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

New Senior Appointments

- Executive Vice President Research
- CEO at University of Limerick Foundation
- Interim Dean of the Faculty of Science and Engineering
- Chief Academic Officer, UL Hospitals Group
- Healthy UL, Manager
- Associate Vice President Global Engagement
- Head of Customer Service, Academic Registry
- Director, Office of the President
- Operations and Process Accountant
- Internal Communications Manager
- University Solicitor

1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Unit of review for which report has been published during reporting period	Date of completion/reason for conducting review (if not planned) or non-completion (if planned but not conducted)	Links to relevant publications
Library and Information Services Division	19 September 2019	LISD published report
Cooperative Education and Careers Division	5 December 2019	CECD published report
Buildings and Estates Division	5 March 2020	B&E published report
UL Institutional Review	August 2020 / Jan 2021	UL Institutional Review Report

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels[3] involved in IQA

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

	Total	Academic Schools/ Department	Professional Services/Support Unit	Approval/Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review	Other
Number of review/ evaluation processes					49 new programmes. 142 programme modifications.		
of those:							
On-site processes			3				
Desk reviews				2			
Virtual processes							
Average panel size for each process type*			5				

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

[3] QQI acknowledges that the terminology used to describe the groups of individuals that conduct peer review/evaluation varies from institution to institution.

(ii) Composition of Expert Review Teams/Panels involved in IQA

	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
Type of Expert/ Role on Panel		*Male*	*Female*	*Other, or unspecified*			*UK, incl. NI*	*Other European*	*Outside of Europe*	*Similar*	*Different*
Chair	3	2	1			2	1				3
Secretary	3		3			3					3
Academic/Discipline Specific	6	3	3				2		4	6	
Student Representative	3	2	1			3					3
QA	3	2	1			3				3	
Teaching & Learning											
External Industry /Third Mission											

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

1. Governance and Management of Quality

Revised Executive Committee Structure

A new executive committee structure was approved in January 2020. The following sub-committees of the Executive Committee were created

- Operations Committee
- Campus and Infrastructure Committee
- Education and Student Experience Committee
- University Research Strategy Board
- Global Engagement Strategy Committee
- Equality and Human Rights Committee
- Quality Committee

Each sub-committee has a number of working groups relevant to its remit.

The objective of the Quality Committee is to promote a quality culture throughout the University and it advises the Executive Committee (EC), Academic Council (AC) and Governing Authority (GA), as requested to do so by those committees, in relation to the development, implementation, effectiveness, review or enhancement of any aspect of quality policy or process.

The effectiveness and impact of this revised structure will be evaluated in accordance with the sub-committees' terms of reference.

Policy Development

1. Policy Management Framework

The Policy Management Framework and Policy Framework Toolkit were approved during the academic year 2019/20 and are targeted at those responsible for developing and revising policy documents. The framework, which was developed by the Corporate Secretary's Office requires those developing or revising University policies to follow a consistent approach in the development, publication and implementation of polices. The University of Limerick Policy Hub was launched in September 2020 as the single authoritative source for the University's Statutes and Policies to support this initiative.

2. Policy on Collaborative and Transnational Education Provision

Following a compliance report by QSU in 2018 and work initiated by the International Education Division, an overarching Policy on Collaborative and Transnational Provision was developed and proposed to Academic Council during the academic year 2019/20 and was formally approved in May 2020. .This policy

- Defines the strategic, academic and operational principles by which collaborations are considered and entered into

- Prescribes the due diligence required
- Outlines the considerations for the contents of the memorandum of agreement to ensure that the rights and obligations of each of the partners is clearly understood
- Codifies collaborations by type i.e. co-delivery, franchise, linked provider, apprenticeship, joint, dual, articulation and study abroad.
- Outlines responsibilities in the development and approval of partnerships and agreements
    - Documented role of the Course Director to agree operational issues
    - Newly formed Standing Panel on Collaborations
    - Role of University Solicitor in reviewing agreements
    - Use of the University signing policy
- Commits to the development of a bank of template agreements for each type of collaboration defined
- Commits to the development of a single source of information on collaborations and agreements
- Provides a 'ready reckoner' (Appendix 4 of Policy document) to assist those developing partnerships gather the requisite information required.

The expected impact is that all collaborative provision is developed and approved systematically and within the policy and procedures approved by the University. The impact of the implementation of this policy will be evaluated through monitoring of the development and approval of collaborative programmes.

3. Policy on Provision of Apprenticeship Programmes

In order to support the development of programmes leading to statutory apprenticeships, the Policy on Apprenticeship Programme Provision was developed by the Quality Support Unit in conjunction with Graduate and Professional Studies unit who is responsible for the management of the Universities statutory apprenticeship programmes.

The expected impact is that apprenticeship programmes are developed and approved systematically and within the policy and procedures approved by the University. The impact of the implementation of this policy will be evaluated through monitoring of the development and approval of apprenticeship programmes.

4. Policy for Management & Reporting of Professional, Statutory & Regulatory Bodies (PSRB)

This is a policy basis on which the University can consider amendment or replacement of internal quality assurance procedures with those of the external accrediting body e.g. replacement of periodic programme review by professional accreditation or Faculty review by school/unit-based accreditation. It also mandates the publication of a central university wide register of PSRB accreditations to enable improved information to students, prospective students and to QQI.

The expected impact of this policy is to increase the complementarity of internal quality assurance and external professional accreditation requirements and where possible and appropriate reduce the administrative burden of these processes on course boards, departments and faculties.

2. Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

Case Study: HR Online Recruitment Pack

The Challenge

Feedback from some of HR's key internal customers was that the time required to recruit staff took too long - from the creation of the original Recruitment pack by the Hiring Manager through to the final interview process. The need for a more efficient process that satisfies the requirements of UL's recruitment policies and procedures was required.

How the Challenge was Addressed

From an analysis of the feedback received and a review of the current process, senior management with the HR team identified a number of initiatives to improve the recruitment process

- Creation of an online Recruitment pack that would assist in the creation of recruitment packs, create greater tracking and accountability of packs in progress and assist the approval process
- Revised Recruitment policies and procedures and subsequent change approval process
- Provide KPI statistics for greater analysis capability.

An initial draft business requirements document (BRD) was created by members of the HR Recruitment team and shared for review with ITD's Project development team. A broader working group was then created which included other members of the HR team but also Faculty Managers who are key stakeholders of the recruitment process. Regular meetings revised the BRD before final submission and monitored the development and testing of this new tool.

Phase 1 of this project was planned to encompass the release of the new online recruitment tool to a pilot group only for testing and feedback. A subsequent Phase 2 development would capture all the feedback from Phase 1 and provide an online recruitment pack that would satisfy the needs of all competitions.

The release of the online recruitment tool to the pilot group took place in June 2020. All those involved in the pilot group were invited to a launch meeting and detailed support documentation shared. Valuable feedback has been gathered from Phase 1 and the development of Phase 2 is planned to begin in early 2021.

Impact of Online Recruitment Tool

For users of the online recruitment pack process, the time to approve new packs has reduced and it is easy to see where potential bottlenecks in approval are arising. Reminder emails generated by the tool promote a more efficient approval process. Those updating a pack for the first time online familiarize themselves with the screens but once familiar with these screens realize efficiencies when preparing subsequent packs.

Overall, the time spent creating and waiting for approval of a recruitment pack has reduced for those in the pilot. Subsequent development and roll out to other teams from Phase 2 will see these benefits shared across campus.

The workflow framework created by ITD for this project can be replicated to create other online workflow processes and HR have already identified other possible project so to avail for this design.

3. Teaching, Learning & Assessment

The University has used funding from the Strategic Alignment of Strategic Alignment of Teaching & Learning Enhancement (2019) fund to support enhancement in its teaching and learning activities. The projects funded by this initiative are outlined below.

Integrated Formative Feedback for Learning and Growth (iFLAG)

Assessment of students in higher education increasingly emphasises the developmental role of assessment. Thus, the generation of meaningful feedback by teachers on student's work is necessary to guide student's future learning and performance.

The School of Allied Health at the University of Limerick have introduced written feedback practices on their professional qualification programmes of Dietetics & Nutrition, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Speech & Language Therapy. However, a central problem remains. For written feedback to be effective it must be used by the student for whom it is intended otherwise the learning value is diminished. While students are often keen to view grades this is not necessarily true for written feedback.

This T&L intiative is a systematic attempt to improve this situation and aims to develop the use of feedback through building feedback systems Feedback from all the student's assessments across all modules and teachers during the semester will be synthesised so that individualised core learning points are identified to help students target central learning issues which may be impacting overall student performance. This will be agreed in student-teacher meetings with learning actions decided. The process will encourage students and teachers to form learning partnerships and encourage students to be active participants in their own learning.

Individual student e-portfolios will be hosted on the university's internal website to support this exercise. We will provide student and staff training on the systems and retrieve student and staff perspectives to guide further development of the feedback system.

Supporting First Year Students Working with Spatial Information

Numerous research studies have highlighted that young adolescents across the globe often struggle when learning with visual information that includes spatial data. In an increasingly visual world spatial data is now embedded across disparate disciplines including; STEM, Architecture, Business, Geography, and Medicine among others. Both 2-D and 3-D spatial data can be found in drawings, diagrams, flowcharts, graphs, x-rays, scans and other computer models.

In recent years, researchers have found a significant positive correlation between spatial skills and overall success at third level. Despite being ranked highly in international metrics of literacy such as PISA, Irish students consistently underperform in aspects relating to 'Space and Shape'. Research has found that spatial skills can be improved significantly through

appropriate intervention and this can have a significant impact on retention in first year of university. Furthermore, studies have also found that more female than male students require and benefit from this support especially in the STEM disciplines.

Under this T&L initiative, we will conduct an inter-disciplinary scoping study across different faculties at UL to develop an evidence-based intervention to support students who have under-developed spatial skills on matriculation.

This intervention will have potential to transform the students learning experience, develop the skills for their future professional and personal lives, while also improving retention rates and overall academic performance.

Development of a Strategy and Framework for a Digital Learner Support Hub

The aim of this T&L initiative is to develop an action plan, structure and mechanisms for a digital learner support hub, available to all UL's learning centres (LCs) to facilitate blended and fully-online delivery of our supplemental academic learner support schemes, to complement existing face-to-face ones.

UL's learning centres play a crucial role in the success of our students, via helping them to study and learn more effectively and become self-directed and confident learners. They provide supplementary academic learning support (SALS) that engage students through innovative, learner-centred, and peer-led tutoring schemes, thereby augmenting existing teaching and learning activities. The SALS schemes are delivered on group and one-to-one basis, and facilitated by student peer tutors/leaders, who are UG and PG students, trained, guided and supervised by the relevant LC team.

Currently, while the SALS schemes continue their success and positive impact, there are a few constraints that limit the accessibility, reachability, and sustainability of these important services. They mainly relate to: a) scheduling in a manner that suits both tutors and tutees; and b) resourcing particularly in terms of appropriate tutors, physical space, and associated cost. There is also an increasing need to provide a more flexible and responsive learner support, to ensure UL's commitment to a higher education accessible to all types of learners, including part-time, mature, life-long, industry and CPD learners.

Simulation in Nursing and Midwifery (SINM) Project

This T&L initiative is a Simulation in Nursing and Midwifery (SINM) project that introduces simulation technology pedagogy into Year 4 BSc Nursing and BSc Midwifery programmes at University of Limerick.

Aligned to the Teaching and Learning Practice pillar of the DELTA Framework (National Forum 2019), this student-centred approach supports nursing and midwifery students in transition to the clinical internship component of their BSc programmes.

The SINM project aims to achieve greater student engagement during this transition time, leading to improved critical thinking, clinical decision-making and problem-solving skills. Over the duration of one semester, students of three identified nursing modules and one midwifery module, designed to consolidate learning and prepare students for clinical internship, will actively engage with simulation technology pedagogy during clinical skills teaching.

This student centred, technology enhanced pedagogy will focus on active, collaborative, experiential and flexible learning, using real life co-created clinical scenarios, high fidelity mannequins and standardised/simulated patients (SPs), achieved through the introduction of professional actors.

Through the recording of these simulated scenarios, student reflection, self-assessment, peer performance review and debriefing with peers and facilitators will be achieved. This will support students to consider alternative and improved approaches to nursing and midwifery care delivery.

Staff and students (n=125) will evaluate the scoping initiative via feedback and focus group interviews, with findings contributing to future evidence-based pedagogy. Evaluation will determine sustainability, potential impact on clinical practice, and capture student learning experiences along with staff teaching experiences, thus providing useful insights for nurse and midwife educators.

4. Supports and Resources for Learners

Case study: Social Light

Introduction

UL Éist is a primary care psychology service which supports students presenting with mild to moderate mental health needs. The service operates a stepped-care model, which means that students are matched to the appropriate level of intervention according to their needs. Step 1 is the least intensive (workshops or support from an Assistant Psychologist (AP)), while step 4 is the most intensive (referral to specialist service). Effort is always made to start with the least intensive intervention.

Initiative Conception

In the academic year 2019-2020 it was observed that a high number of students were presenting to the service with social difficulties. This included but was not limited to; social anxiety, trouble fitting in, shyness, social nerves and difficulties making friends in college. The APs observed this trend during drop-in appointments and set out to design an intervention to target this effectively and efficiently in order to improve service provision.

The spectrum of the social issues presenting to the service was integral to the group's design. It was important to design a group that would be open to the entire student body, so that even those with the most 'minute' of difficulties would be encouraged to join. As a result, 'Social Light' was designed which was a workshop to help students learn skills for socialising in a non-judgmental, non-stigmatising and importantly, non-diagnostic workshop. It was widely advertised and referrals were also made through UL Éist's drop-in service.

Initiative Structure

The group was planned for delivery over eight weeks, covering a different skill each week. Each session was planned to follow a specific structure: (1) skill introduction, (2) social exposure through group work and (3) relaxation skills practices. Skills to be covered included: psychoeducation on the fight/flight response, self-awareness, thought challenging, developing conversation skills, assertive communication, forming friendships, maintaining friendships, self-compassion and set-back management.

Attendance and Evaluation

Although interest was high for the group, approximately seven attended the group each week. There was a total of fifteen attendees across five sessions, with four students attending consistently. Evaluation of the group was planned by using the Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation form (CORE-34). This scale was chosen to measure the group due to a subscale for risk (of suicide/self-harm) and scale that tracks changes in social functioning. The questionnaire was sent to attendees prior to each group.

Outcome

The informal feedback from attendees was very good. For instance, one student emailed: *'I feel like I have definitely made progress in the right direction even from the few sessions we did have.'*

Unfortunately, *Social Light* had to be concluded early when the service closed due to Covid-19. Therefore 'before and after' CORE-34 data is not available to compare the efficacy of the group. However, the APs' interest in students with social difficulties continued on into the pandemic, despite the conclusion of Social Light. This experience resulted in a research project in which the experiences of the socially-anxious during social distancing and externally imposed social isolation through the pandemic were investigated.

Conclusion

The groundwork put into *Social Light* has informed the facilitation of future groups. For instance, an online resilience workshop for PhD students that was recently held followed a CBT model with a similar structure to that of *Social Light* - introducing the skills for the matter at hand, having the student experientially learn them in some capacity, followed by relaxation. Running this group also demonstrated the capacity of the service to respond to prevalent concerns and produce initiatives to target these. This is essential for a mental health service in order to best use limited resources. The facilitation of the group evidences that APs can independently design and run clinical initiatives, with support from supervising psychologists to manage issues that occur at the time. Targeted efforts such as these will hopefully reduce wait-lists in the future by enhancing step 1 of UL Éist's stepped-care model.

5. Information and Data Management

Case Study: Providing UL Graduates with 24*7 Secure Access to Electronic Award Documents

Introduction

Aligning with the University's initiative to enhance the student experience, Academic Registry identified a requirement to improve the provision of electronic award documents (Parchments, Transcripts and European Diploma Supplements) to our graduates.

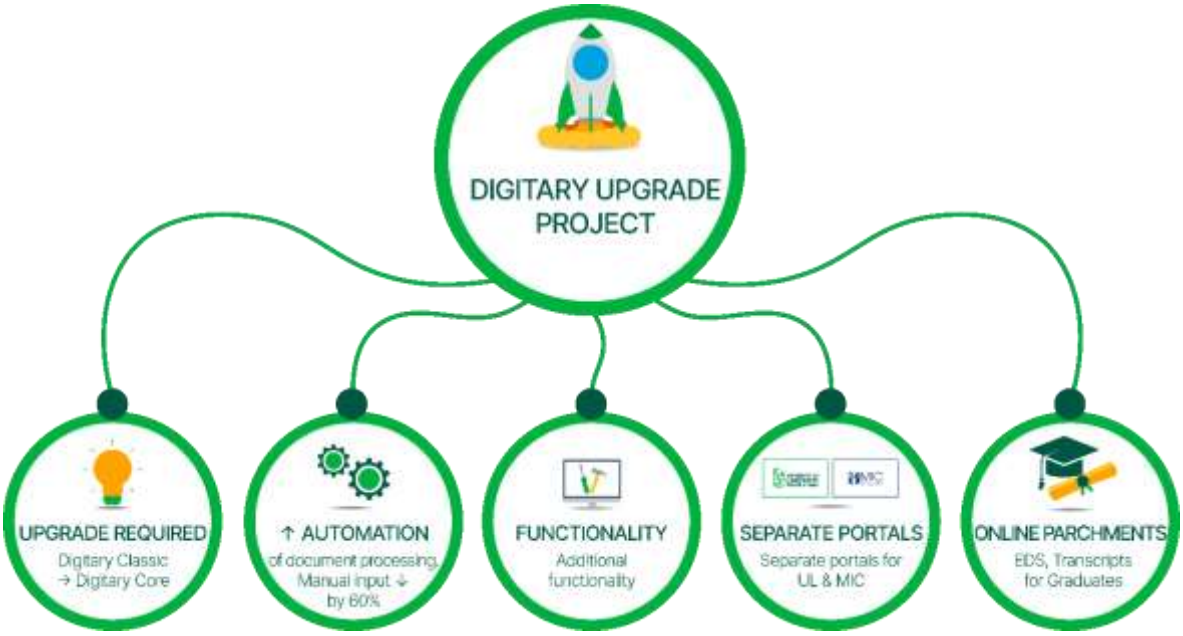


Figure 1: The Digitary Upgrade Project at University of Limerick

Project Implementation

In 2019, Academic Registry commenced a project to deliver graduates of UL and Mary Immaculate College a service that allowed graduates to access their electronic award documents in a secure manner.

In early 2020, Digitary CORE was implemented. Digitary CORE is a secure cloud platform which allows graduates to access their digitally signed award documents online. During 2020, all graduates from UL and MIC were provided with an electronic version of their award documents after graduation on Digitary CORE. To date there is over 36,000 electronic award documents available on Digitary CORE. Graduates from previous academic years also benefit from this platform, as their electronic award documents are made available to them on Digitary CORE on request.

Benefits

As this system is available 24*7 it allows graduates to access and securely share their e-award documents with third parties such as employers and other education providers. Academic Registry have also realised additional benefits from the implementation of this system, reporting a reduction in 60% manual effort producing electronic award documents on Digitary CORE as opposed to the previous system. As UL and MIC graduates automatically receive their e-award documents after graduation, this service greatly enhances the student experience by providing our graduates with their award documents in a user friendly, accessible, and secure method.

In terms of COVID-19, there have been clear benefits for our graduates. This includes the fact that the University was able to instantly issue electronic award documents to the graduating medical class of 2020 in April, during the campus closure. This allowed the graduates to register and become available for work immediately following graduation.

In addition, all graduates being able to securely issue award documents to third parties means a reduction in the requirement to send original documents by post, and in the current situation, allows employers and other education institutions to verify documents electronically even if their employees are working from home.

Case Study: Enhancement of Postgraduate Research Student Support arising from Studentsurvey.ie Feedback

The *Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs) National Report* of 2019 emphasised the importance of generic, transferable and research skills for PGRs in their ability to manage projects, as well as their capacity to communicate information effectively to diverse audiences while conducting their research.

Furthermore, the HEA's *Higher Education System Performance Framework 2018-2020* notes that, the 'quality of provision in higher education is crucial to ensuring that graduates have the right skills, competences and experience in order to contribute fully to future economic, social and cultural development'.

With the onset of the pandemic and campus closure, Graduate and Professional Studies (GPS) embarked on a weekly series of webinars for PGRs which sought to ensure that students would continue to receive high-quality instruction in skills relating not only to the research process, but also broader personal and professional training and development.

A previous national student study survey in 2013[4] had highlighted how student engagement with 'college' life is important in enabling them to develop key capabilities such as critical thinking skills, analytical competencies and intellectual development. That report emphasised that students who engage in the life of the institution have a higher quality experience than those at institutions where engagement is not promoted. GPS is acutely aware of the need for greater engagement at a time when student isolation from the campus community is so prevalent.

Therefore, since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, GPS has been providing UL PGRs with weekly webinars dealing with aspects of doctoral studies and career preparedness. The webinars are conducted via Microsoft Teams and are frequently attended by over one hundred UL PGRs currently based in countries as diverse as Algeria, Australia, Uganda, Spain, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Malaysia, Luxembourg, India and France.
The webinars provided to UL PGRs since March 2020 have included the following topics:

- Critical thinking for PGRs
- Dealing with Imposter Syndrome and Self-Doubt
- Demonstrating the 'Impact' of PhD Research
- Design of Experiments
- Disseminating Your Research
- Doing a Literature Review
- Doing Your PhD During a Pandemic: Challenges & Supports

[4] The Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) 2013 summary report
https://studentsurvey.ie/sites/default/files/2019-10/ISSE_summaryreport_2013.pdf

- Getting Published in Peer-Reviewed Journals - A Practical Guide
- National Framework for Doctoral Education: What it Means for You
- Plan Your Successful Career in 10 Steps
- Planning for Life After Your PhD
- Project Managing Your Thesis
- Research Integrity and Ethics
- Secrets to becoming a Successful Researcher
- Student Wellbeing
- Surviving The Viva
- The Importance of Data Management Planning
- Using the Researcher Development Framework (RDF)
- Working With Your Supervisor
- Writing a Successful Funding Proposal
- Writing in Academic Contexts

Furthermore, since mid-March, GPS has put together a parallel webinar series on Statistical Training for postgraduate researchers. These interactive, half-day workshops have provided UL PhD and Research Masters candidates with the opportunity to engage with the following topics:

- Research Questionnaire Design
- Introduction to Data Analysis in SPSS
- Statistical Inference with SPSS
- Multi-Variable Data Analysis in SPSS
- Correlation and Simple Linear Regression in SPSS
- Multiple Regression in SPSS

6. Quality Assurance of Research Activities and Programmes

Case Study: Research Impact and UN Sustainable Development Goals

The University of Limerick has championed the area of research impact since 2014, impact has been highlighted as a goal within successive research and organisational strategies. The Research Impact Committee (RIC), a standing sub-committee of the University Research Strategy Board (URSB) (now University Research Committee or URC, was established in late 2018 with responsibility for strategy and policy, skills development and external engagement in support of the research impact agenda. Chaired by Prof Helena Lenihan, the RIC includes senior academics from across all faculties, the Head of Learning and Development, HR, and the Research Strategy and Policy Manager. In 2019, the University of Limerick Research Impact Committee oversaw a benchmarking exercise of their case study programme. The benchmarking examined updates to the UK's Research Excellence Framework (REF) in REF2021 and recommendations from the 2016 independent review of REF (Stern Report)[1], the rollout of the *Excellence in Research for Australian (ERA)* national research evaluation,

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[1]MINISTER OF STATE FOR UNIVERSITIES, SCIENCE, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (2016)BUILDING ON SUCCESS AND LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE, AN INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK, [ONLINE] AVAILABLE AT HTTPS://ASSETS.PUBLISHING.SERVICE.GOV.UK/GOVERNMENT/UPLOADS/SYSTEM/UPLOADS/ATTACHMENT_DATA/FILE/541338/IND-16-9-REF-STERN-REVIEW.PDF, [ACCESSED 07/07/20[

Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research national research evaluation and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) Programme. In response to this exercise, the committee implemented a number of improvement actions to bring it in line with best practice and build in the UN SDGS:

1. Inclusion of UN Sustainable Development Goals section within the case study template.
2. Internationalisation of the case study programme by opening up to inclusion (and encouragement) of international co-authors on the case study and listing of countries (including and beyond Ireland) where impacts occurred.
3. Eligibility criteria defined broadly to ensure no perceived barriers for any disciplines, particularly in the area of outputs. Inclusion of the REF 2021 glossary on output types. It is hoped that this level of detail will support the development of case studies across all disciplines.
4. The case study guide now includes a wide list of types of research outputs which can be submitted as part of a case study to bring it in line with the REF standard. In all cases demonstration of rigour in terms of research excellence is a pre-condition to the development of a subsequent case study. The imperative is for case study authors to demonstrate a clear link between the impact of their research and the underpinning research outputs.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals have been embedded within the research impact case study templates and all new case studies published in 2020 have articulated their contribution towards the SDGS. In addition, the SDGS have been incorporated into training programmes for research impact under the remit of the University Research Committee. Find out more at www.ul.ie/researchimpact

Case Study: Managing Postgraduate Research Thesis Submission Process & PhD Viva Voce Examinations Virtually

Context and Introduction:

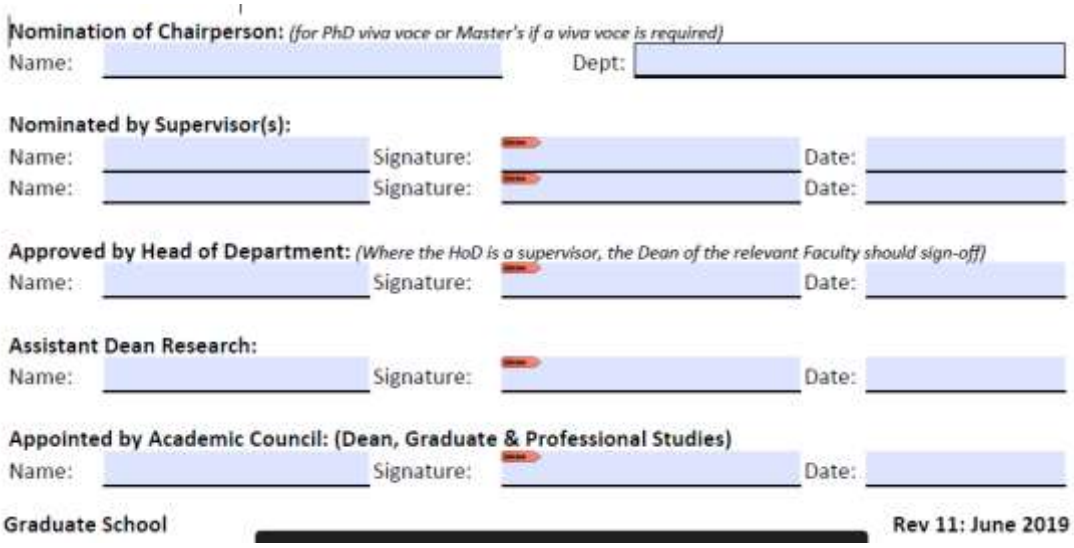
As part of the ongoing continuous improvement relating to the quality processes within the Graduate & Professional Studies (GPS), GPS and Arcane IT Solutions who are aligned within the University's Information Technology Department have been reviewing the postgraduate research forms which underpin the administrative processes for the research thesis submission and examination process which continues to evolve.

1) Process Improvement- Postgraduate Research Thesis Submission & Postgraduate Research Forms:

As part of ongoing developments many of the postgraduate research forms have been amended to facilitate online completion and digital signatures. This process of continuous improvement proved to be worthwhile in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic which resulted in the University transitioning to remote working from March 2020 onwards.

For example, the Nomination of Examiners' PGR-1, Examiners' Report Master's Degree PGR-5, Examiners' Report PhD PGR-6 were upgraded to facilitate digital sign-off using Adobe Acrobat Reader DC which is available from the UL Network. Adobe Acrobat Reader DC enables the user to populate and digitally sign the PDFs. (see screenshot 1 below of the PGR-1 nomination of examiners form).

Screenshot 1



Nomination of Chairperson: *(for PhD viva voce or Master's if a viva voce is required)*
Name: _____ Dept: _____

Nominated by Supervisor(s):
Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____
Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Approved by Head of Department: *(Where the HoD is a supervisor, the Dean of the relevant Faculty should sign-off)*
Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Assistant Dean Research:
Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appointed by Academic Council: (Dean, Graduate & Professional Studies)
Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Graduate School **Rev 11: June 2019**

The technical modifications to the postgraduate research forms facilitated the completion and digital sign-off the forms by the relevant signatories in a remote working environment, while streamlining the processes.

In terms of the submission of the soft bound thesis for examination, the limited access to campus for both students and staff, resulted in postgraduate research students not being allowed to present in person to Graduate & Professional Studies either the soft-bound copy of their thesis for Examination and subsequently their final hardbound thesis. As an immediate response, Covid-19 guidelines for the submission of a soft bound and hard bound copies of a research theses were developed. These guidelines facilitated the electronic submission by the primary supervisor (on behalf of the student) of a verified PDF version of the thesis via email to the GPS staff member responsible for the thesis submission, while copying gpsresearch@ul.ie; The establishment of a generic email contact point for queries relating to research student processes and procedures facilitates GPS staff dealing with postgraduate research student queries to monitor and respond queries in a timely manner.

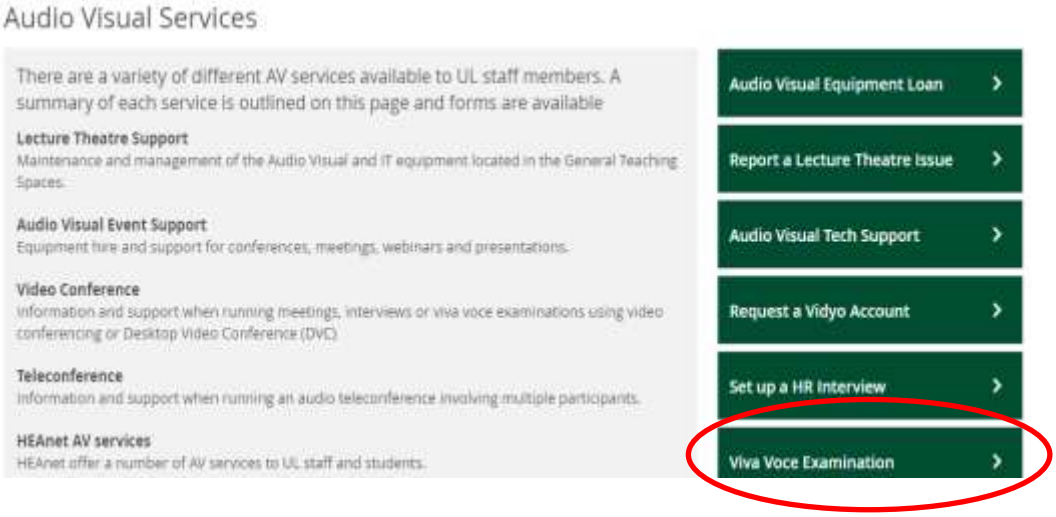
2) Process enhancement and modification -PhD *Viva Voce* Examinations virtually

Additionally, in order to ensure that research students *Viva Voce* examination were not adversely affected by the transition within the third level education sector to remote working, it was decided in early March 2020, to ensure that the *Viva Voce* Examinations should continue, albeit in a virtual environment for the both the Candidates and the Examination Panel. Previously the *Viva Voce* Examinations were hosted on campus and only in exceptional circumstances were *Viva Voce* Examinations held remotely. In order to ensure that the *Viva Voce* Examinations were not unduly delayed, detailed Guidelines on the use of Video Conferencing (VC) to undertake *Viva Voce* Examinations were agreed with the appropriate stakeholders. Furthermore, these guidelines have been reviewed at regular intervals following feedback from participant in the process.

The information Technology department (ITD) within UL continue to be very supportive in providing technical support to ensure that the *Viva Voce* Examinations can be conducted remotely. There is a facility for the academic departments and schools who organise the *Viva Voce* Examination to request technical assistance in terms of test calls in advance of the *Viva Voce* Examination. Queries relating to same, must be logged at least two weeks prior to the date of the *Viva Voce* Examination. Both the aforementioned guidelines, allied with the technical support (see screenshot 2 below) from ITD have enabled *Viva Voce* examination to

be conducted remotely. During the July, September and December University Examination Boards 2020, where a total of 112 PhD were ratified.

Screenshot 2



The aforementioned improvements which implemented to ensure that that key processes that underpin the administration and management of Postgraduate Research Thesis Submission Process and PhD Viva Voce Examinations provide some practical examples of enhancements that have taken place.

7. Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Student Evaluation and Learning Analytics (StELA) Project

Funded under the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning Strategic Alignment of Teaching & Learning Enhancement (2019) fund, the StELA project seeks to find ways in which the data already gathered by the university through its administrative, teaching and learning activities can supplement existing student feedback mechanisms such as the module satisfaction survey and exit survey. The outputs of the project include a learning analytics policy and a policy on student evaluation as well as enhanced interactive programme reporting. Work on the project was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in it being postponed to the academic year 2020/21.

8. Community Engagement

UL Engage (https://www.ul.ie/engage/) was established in September 2015. The aim of UL Engage is to integrate civic and community engagement into the University's core missions in research and teaching. Our communities include local and global connections with all kinds of stakeholders in civic, public or professional spheres, with policy makers, product users, third sector organisations, community groups and residents. UL Engage supports university/community collaborations in all shapes and sizes through a variety of new and existing UL programmes and projects.

UL Engage serves as the hub for civic engagement activities across campus and works with all divisions and faculties to amplify, incubate and co-ordinate the various ways that students, faculty and staff in the University of Limerick can work to make a difference.
In February 2020 UL appointed its first Head of Community Engagement, leading a team of staff responsible for UL engagement.
Staff details and organisation: https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/6061

UL ENGAGE Reports provide peer reviewed, international standard book number (ISBN) archived reports of UL Engage associated projects, programmes and partnerships. The aim of UL Engage Reports is two-fold: first, to provide evidence of impact and innovation in existing UL community-university initiatives; and second, to provide a practical resource – in terms of inspiration and information - for new and prospective partnership projects. List of reports: https://www.ul.ie/engage/learning/resources/193/sub-categories/2221/list

1. UL Meitheal 2019 - current

This project draws together a range of existing strengths and initiatives across UL in order to advance an Irish prototype for a "Civic University". The primary objective is to build a sustainable UL infrastructure for community engagement by developing an internal coordination framework, designed to foster information and knowledge exchange between diverse academic and practitioner expertise in existing UL engaged activities.
Details: https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/5441

2. Knowledge for Change (K4C) 2019 – current

K4C is a UNESCO sponsored global consortium of Higher Education Institutions committed to best practice community- based learning and research. The K4C consortium provides training and mentorship for Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR). To date, 8 UL staff have been trained and operate 4 K4C Engagement Hubs in: Learning; Health; STEM; Languages and Culture. The hubs are designed to provide a point of contact for external communities and organisations interested in UL Engage activities in these areas.
Health: https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/6141

Languages and Culture: https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/6131

Learning: https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/6151

STEMM: https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/6121

3. UL Volunteering

The President's Volunteer Award (PVA) at the University of Limerick draws on a long-established student volunteering culture. The primary goals of the PVA is to harness, acknowledge, support and grow the contribution that our students make to their communities both on and off-campus through their volunteering. The PVA is a unique higher education student volunteer award. In addition to academic achievements, the PVA is included on the UL student transcript. As such, the PVA's robust criteria ensures that UL student volunteers commit to their chosen club, society, organisation and communities for a period of time as well as reflecting on this commitment and volunteer practice.

Opportunities are also provided to UL staff to volunteer with groups such as Junior Achievement Ireland.

4. Academic Programmes

CWELL – a level 7 diploma ***designed by communities for communities***

The Community Wellness, Empowerment, Leadership and Life skills (CWELL) diploma is a unique academic programme that has been co-designed with local Limerick communities to address their community-identified needs. The CWELL diploma programme represents a long-term university commitment to supporting both individuals and communities in under-represented parts of Limerick. The course acronym reflects the curriculum content, which is designed to apply to both individual and community needs in terms of: managing physical and mental well-being; empowering individuals and groups to identify and advocate for their needs; and developing the necessary leadership and life skills to address personal and community development objectives in a proactive and strategic manner. https://www.ul.ie/gps/community-wellness-empowerment-leadership-and-life-skills-cwell-diploma

MA Community Research+ A level 9 taught Masters programme

This innovative cross-disciplinary and practice based graduate programme comprises a common 'engaged research and practice' core augmented by disciplinary specific academic training and research. To achieve this the MA Community Research Plus+ programme combines traditional lecture-based graduate studies with real time, real-life, on-the-job research training in UL Engage-supported community/university collaborative projects (locally and internationally).

Students choose one of three areas of graduate specialism:

- Community Research + Development (Course details: https://www.ul.ie/ppa/content/files/MA_Community_Research_Info.sheet.Development.pdf; course video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PishZdMI8IY)
- Community Research + Journalism (course details: https://www.ul.ie/ppa/content/files/MA_Community_Research_Info.sheet.Journalism.pdf; course video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzV5zsKlFcI&feature=youtu.be)
- Community Research + Sociology (beginning A/Y 2021)

9. Integration of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

UL is committed to the development and implementation of a holistic approach to sustainable development, in partnership with the communities we serve, locally and regionally and in our national and international alliances. With the aim of enabling our students, graduates and staff as 'active citizens' who contribute to the well-being and future of our planet. UL Sustainable Development website is available here.

Our Charter outlines the University's commitment to:

1. The principles of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
2. Pioneering educational experiences for our students to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to promote sustainable development.
3. Undertaking research that provides insights and potential solutions to the sustainable development challenges.
4. Contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by ensuring our campus is environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive.
5. Building and shaping our interactions with external stakeholders to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals across our region and beyond.
6. Reporting on our activities in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The two underpinning pillars of the strategy are:

1. Inspiring Global Citizenship (Our People)
2. Driving Sustainable Development (Our Planet)

The University 2019 Sustainable Development Report outlines this strategy and plans for the strategic approach which will see the SDGs embedded across every facet of university life. This is crucial to ensure deep meaningful engagement and alignment across the whole organization. The report also provides examples of how each of the 17 SDGs are being addressed by initiatives involving staff and students of the University.

UL has maintained a top 20 position in the UI Green Metric World University Rankings, rising from 20th in 2019 to 17th in 2020 out of over 900 universities worldwide in 2020. These rankings measure each participating university's commitment to an environmentally friendly future.

This ranking has been achieved through a range of green initiatives on campus such as removable of disposable cups, being more energy and waste aware, the use of dedicated walking / cycle paths that now link the university with Limerick city.

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity

The University holds the principle of academic honesty at the core of its work both for students and staff. Academic integrity is supported through teaching and learning, learning support services, library and information services and through policy and regulation. Breach of academic integrity policy and regulations are deemed as a major offence within the University's Code of Conduct.

Research Integrity

The University is committed to ensuring that all research carried out under its auspices meets the highest standards of integrity, and that an environment of research integrity prevails through the promotion of good research practices, together with the use of fair, effective, and transparent procedures to address research misconduct.

UL's Research Integrity Policy and associated Procedure applies to all employees of the University, as well as all Adjunct, Emeritus, and visiting personnel officially engaged in

research work at the University and/or undertaking any research activity in the University's name. This policy is aligned with the **National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity In Ireland (2019).**

- University of Limerick Research Integrity Policy
- Procedure for Managing Allegations of Misconduct in Research
- IUA national policy statement on ensuring research integrity in Ireland

Recent Initiatives Undertaken

As part of its work in supporting faculty move to online teaching, the Learning Technologists Forum dedicated three articles in its series Quick Tips for Teaching Online series to promoting and supporting academic integrity in online assessment.
Article 1 looks at why students cheat and how academic staff can promote academic integrity.

The second article develops this theme and on the development of good writing skills and the use of assessment design to promote academic integrity.

The final article focuses on plagiarism and when it is suspected or detected how it is managed within the University.

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No.	**Relevant objectives** **Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable**	**Planned actions and indicators** *Note: Include details of unit responsible, and how planned action will address the relevant strategic priority and/or reengagement advice/CINNTE recommendation.* *If the institution is preparing for cyclical review, include how the planned actions will address the relevant review objective(s).*	**Strategic Objective**	**Lead Unit**
1	Digitising quality assurance processes	• Develop a robust and scalable process for virtual quality reviews • Initiate project for digitisation of Quality Improvement Plans • Digitise collaborative approval process	Operating Model	Quality Support Unit
2	Improve use of student feedback and learning analytics data	• Completion of StELA project • Better integration of data from studentsurvey.ie into programme and service monitoring	Academic Transformation	Quality Support Unit
3	Enhancement of the annual programme monitoring and periodic programme review process and procedures	This objective is also referenced in recommendations from CINNTE review. 1. Consultation on draft procedures for periodic programme review 2. Further digitisation of annual monitoring process as part of the StELA project	Academic Transformation	Office of the Provost & Deputy President

4	Revision of academic integrity policy and procedure to align with national guidelines published by the National Academic Integrity Network		Academic Transformation	Office of the Provost & Deputy President
5	Enhancement of postgraduate admissions processes	Move to online admissions system	Operating Model	Graduate & Professional Studies
6	Upgrade to the University's Financial Management System (Agresso)	To enhance system functionality and enhance usability of the system.	Operating Model	Finance Office
7	Enhancement of University website and public information	1. Web accessibility 2. Integration with systems	Operating Model	Marketing & Communications
8	Continued enhancement of Student Information System	The programme is a two year programme starting in October 2020 and running until September 2022). The programme consists of two sets of projects , Foundation Projects and Additional Projects. The foundation projects are the main projects within the programme. They are designed to address fundamental and structural issues in how the system has been implemented and how the processes round the system operate. Additional projects that have been identified as part of the work done to date in the programme of enhancement and in the consultation process with key stakeholders.	Operating Model	Academic Registry
9	Integrate recommendations from CINNTE review with strategic initiatives and operational plans	Initial implementation plan can be viewed here		

3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

The objectives and guidelines for each review can be viewed at Current Review Cycle | Quality Support Unit (ul.ie)

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
National Council for Exercise and Fitness (NCEF)	30 Nov - 3 Dec 2020	n/a
Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS)	22 - 26 Feb 2021	n/a
Information Technology Division	10 - 13 May 2021	23 - 26 Mar 2015

External Quality Assurance

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Review Body
CONFIRM research centre	15-16 September 2020	Science Foundation Ireland
LERO research centre	1st-3rd March 2021	Science Foundation Ireland

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

Schedule by Annual Calendar: Cycle 3 Schedule (by annual calendar) approved 261120.pdf

Schedule by Academic Year: Cycle 3 Quality Review Schedule (AY) 261120.pdf

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

Theme 1: Response to Emergency Situation – Covid 19 Pandemic

Case 1: Accelerated OneDrive & Microsoft Teams Implementations

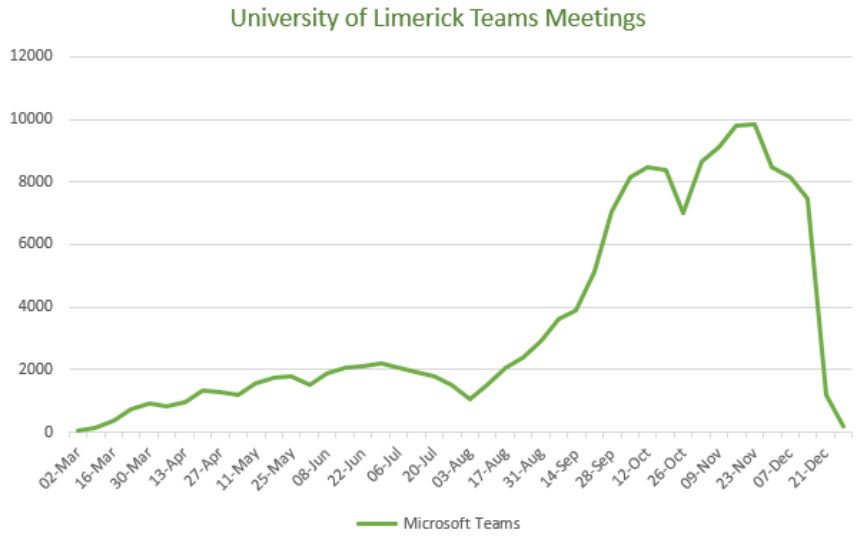
From early February 2020, UL's Crisis Management team were meeting regularly to plan for & respond to the evolving health concerns relating to the Coronavirus outbreak. As the national situation worsened in early March, it was agreed that in the best interests of the 16500 students and staff, that UL would go online and continue the semester online, leveraging the technologies at the disposal of the staff and students. With IT security, service scalability and availability as key considerations, UL's IT Division moved to accelerate its Microsoft Teams implementations to support remote collaboration across the campus community. Microsoft Teams provides a powerful tool for collaboration with University colleagues, students and external users.

Key features

Meetings & Calls	Meetings and calls in Teams include audio, video, and screen sharing.
Chat & Conversations	The chat function on Microsoft Teams allows you to have threaded conversations, helping you store brainstorming sessions, conference calls, and other meetings into one, easy to find place.
File Sharing & Collaboration	Store your files in a document library which can be shared with other team members. Real-time collaboration on Word, PowerPoint, and Excel documents.
Breakout Rooms	Breakout rooms allow you to create sub-meetings within your Teams meeting for smaller groups of participants to collaborate and have discussions. Up to 50 Breakout rooms can be created for a single meeting. Ideal in a teaching environment.

Statistics & Growth

There has been widespread uptake of Microsoft Teams as can be seen from the following graph of online Teams meetings in the University.



With Microsoft Teams, the UL community can communicate and collaborate effectively from the safety of their homes and take advantage of a secure, next-generation approach. The widespread adoption of Teams over the last 10 months has helped ensure business continuity while building a more digitally enabled student base and workforce, by facilitating ongoing teaching, learning, research and support activities in a time when traditional face-to-face engagement is not recommended.

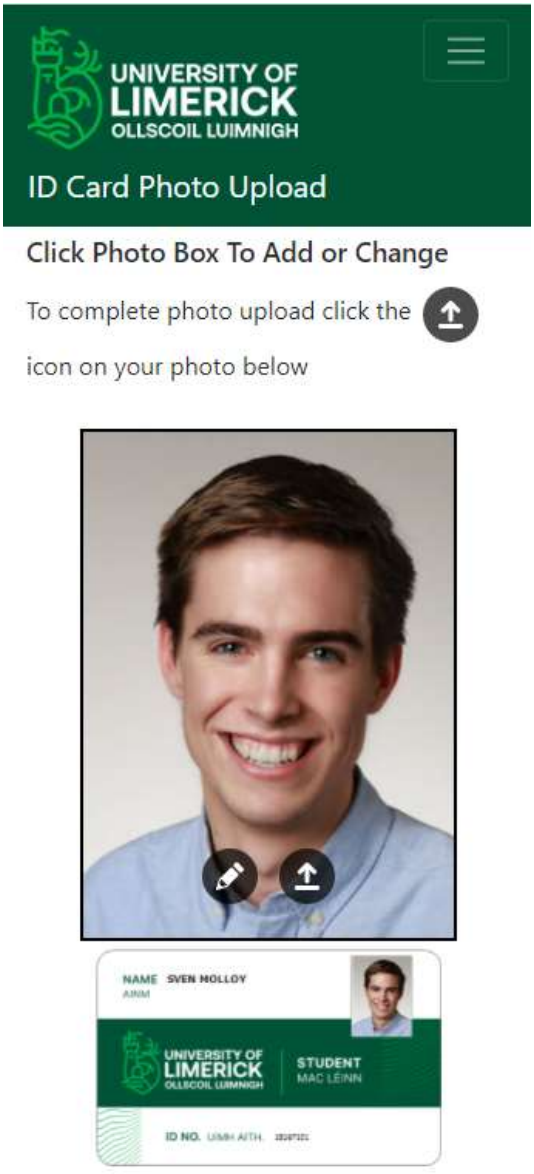
Case 2: Electronic Signing of Documents

The sudden shift to remote working in late March 2020 presented many challenges for existing university processes. One such challenge, “How can legally binding agreements be signed remotely?” DocuSign was identified as the solution, a web-based eSignature platform, which was rapidly rolled out by ITD in April.

DocuSign not only allows documents to be remotely signed with any device, it also encapsulates documents with a tamper proof certificate, ensuring signed documents remain legally binding.

"With DocuSign nearly 80% of agreements are now signed within 24 hours, irrespective of the signatory's location. Agreements can even be signed using a mobile phone, so the convenience level is extremely high. Other benefits include the reduction of paper use and reduced storage requirements, thereby reducing ULs carbon footprint."
(Director, Technology Transfer Office)

Case 3: UL Student ID Card Production (WebCenter)



September Orientation is always a bustling time for incoming students and support staff. The epicentre being UL's enrolment centre, EG0-10, where over the course of a week, thousands of students pass through completing enrolment and receiving their student card.

With the onset of the 2020 pandemic, a huge effort was undertaken to move orientation week online. One major aspect being the production of student ID cards. To overcome this challenge ITD introduced WebCentre, an online portal for collecting student photographs. WebCenter enabled the creation of a streamlined process where students could enrol online and receive their student card by post, within 7 days. WebCentre was an outstanding success, with over 4,500 students receiving their student card by the end of Week 1.

Case 4: Research Agreements and IP Management – pivot to online

The Technology Transfer Office (TTO), at the University of Limerick handles a large volume of research agreements and patent and intellectual property records. The impact of Covid-19 led to a rapid migration of workflows and records to the virtual space.

By the beginning of May 2020, 6 weeks after the March lockdown, the TTO team had enabled full remote access to all research agreement and IP records (over 60Gigabytes) and had introduced eSignature for all legal documents. The benefits of this transition are felt in terms of efficiencies and access to data, enabling better collaboration. Previously, agreements would typically take 3-7 days to obtain hand signatures. With DocuSign nearly 80% of agreements are signed within 24 hours, irrespective of signatory location. Agreements can even be signed using a mobile phone, so the convenience level is extremely high. Other benefits include the reduction of paper use and reduced storage requirements, thereby reducing ULs carbon footprint.

With the implementation of a cloud-based platform for internet protocol (IP) management, all research agreement and IP records are now stored in the cloud and assessable from anywhere with an internet connection. A further benefit of eSignature is that it is being warmly welcomed by UL's industry research partners, in particular in a remote working environment, due to its ease of use and convenience.

Theme 2: Operational Excellence

Case 5: Implementation of UL HR Business Partner Model

2020 was what is arguably the most challenging year ever for the University of Limerick and the third level sector in general. This has also translated into a very difficult year for UL HR. 2020 has seen UL HR deliver a new operating model while at the same time delivering on our goals for the year in a very different and more difficult environment. The HR Business Partners (HRBPs) are HR professionals aligned with the strategic and operational objectives of the University of Limerick. They provide HR services to the Deans, Heads of Schools and Departments and the leaders of the Academic, Research and Support Divisions. The HRBP's are strategic partners to these leaders.

The new business partner model delivered real benefit to the faculties and divisions in 2020 and without it we would have struggled to achieve the results we did. Operations moved online and delivered an improved workflow solution, see below examples of success:

- we upgraded our operating platform jumping from version 21 to 28;
- all staff are on Core portal for the recording of annual leave;
- we have improved governance in the area of document control and storage through the use of new technologies;
- we delivered a pilot research recruitment procedure to speed up the process that resulted in changes to the recruitment policy;
- we have delivered on the department of education pension audit and data project;
- We have fed into the major campus changes from H&S in relation to Covid;
- 2,500 training spaces were made available;

- In Equality and Diversity we lead the way nationally with 11 faculties/schools/departments accredited;
- we have delivered on a new internal communication plan that has seen a transformation in not only how we communicate in the back half of 2020 but also what we communicate;
- A number of legacy cases were closed successfully during the year.

Normal business activity continued through lockdown and while the delivery model changed, the service offered surpassed expectations across a number of areas.

Impact on Service Delivery

One key focus of the HRBP team during this period has been to support managers and their teams in the context of a move to remote working due to Covid 19. The BPs have taken a lead role in reviewing and communicating Government Circulars related to Covid-19 advice during this period and have been at the forefront of devising HR strategies to implement the Circulars. This also involved ensuring that the online FAQs for staff related Covid-19 queries were kept up to date and accurate during this period prior to the appointment of an Internal Communications Manager and continued to work with the new communications role after his appointment.

The HRBPs also have had a key role in the return to work processes in recent months, acting as a liaison between various HR units and the Senior Management across the University in ensuring that return to work protocols were followed.

- **Employee Relations:** The HRBP's are involved in the ER cases in their respective areas and act as a conduit to resolve as many as possible in an informal manner. This input can be in the form of mediation, managing long term sick cases, working with occupational health, coaching or advising managers, acting as a single point of contact for HR queries and supporting managers in dealing with grievances/investigations.
- **Recruitment:** In the area of recruitment the HRBP's advised managers on succession planning, restructuring in departments and new posts, assisting with the review of job descriptions and assist the recruitment team in screening and shortlisting.
- **Compensation & Benefits:** The HRBP Team are involved in Compensation & Benefit issues on a daily basis in their assigned areas. In 2020 they have started a review of contract of indefinite duration (CID) claims and resource allocation for people on CID. This involved the creation of a standard assessment process and criteria which is a big step forward for UL. They also were key to the change in the management of annual leave.
- **Communication to and from Faculties/Divisions:** The HRBP Team have acted as the HR link between Departments/Divisions and HR providing two-way feedback / communication.
- **Projects, Process improvement and contribution to policies/documents/frameworks:** The HRBP Team have been involved in reviewing and updating 16 policies and procedures within HR in 2020.
- **Organisational Design:** The HRBP Team have been involved in Org Design providing advice and expertise across the University. The following are examples of some of the departments supported during the past few months:
    - PAASE area
    - GPS
    - Academic Registry
    - ITD
    - Student Affairs

- Finance
- PCC

Case 6: New Service Model for UL Academic Registry

Introduction

As part of a larger programme of work, UL Academic Registry (ULAR) identified a need to modernise and digitise its service model in order to best meet the needs of our customers (including applicants, students, graduates and other stakeholders).

Implementation

In January 2020, a project was established to implement a new service model at ULAR. This involved working across a series of workstreams including process design and implementation, team design and creation, systems modifications, as well as policy definition and training for the team (Fig 1, below). The fundamental structure of this new service model centres around a new front line service team (the "Student Hub") and a new call tracking system to manage queries throughout the division. The Student Hub is now the dedicated first line team, in managing all interactions with customers, escalating queries across the division where necessary.

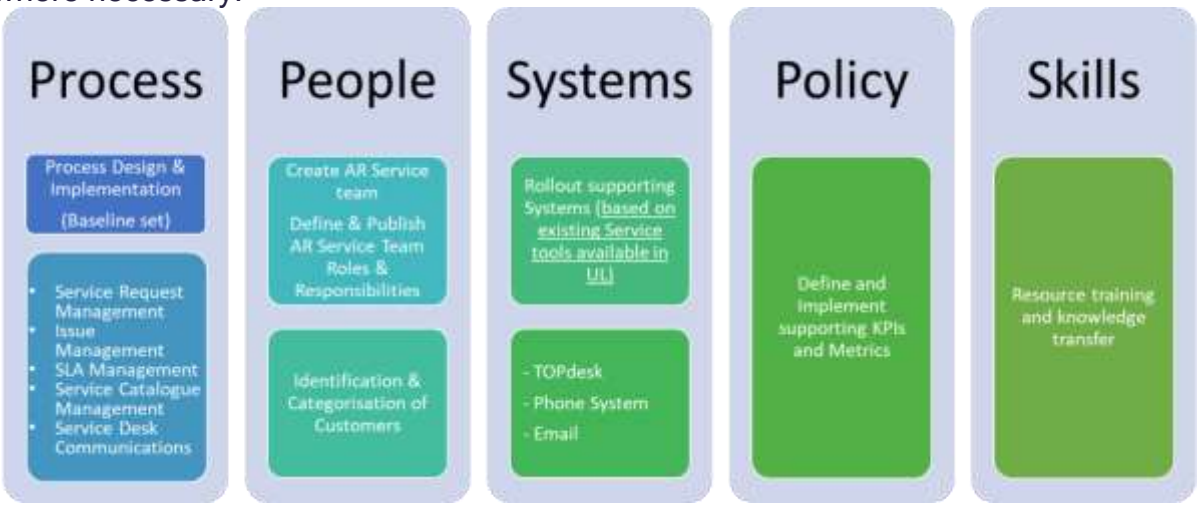
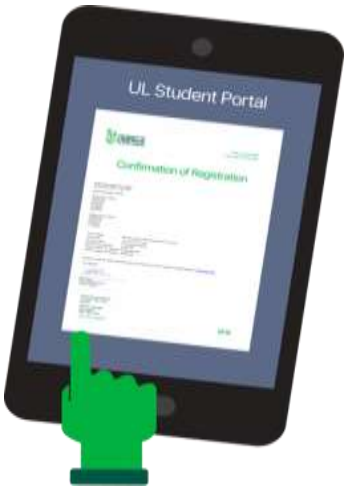


Figure 2: UL Academic Registry Service Model: Design & Implementation Project

Go Live

The new service model was launched in late August 2020, ahead of the start of the new academic year, and, to date, over 18,000 'calls' (queries/service requests) have been resolved through this new service model – over 8,000 calls alone during September 2020. Students can now submit a query via the Student Hub Online, which prompts them with suggested responses, and then allocates them a call number. Internally, ULAR can now manage the calls submitted, manage the prioritisation and target dates and respond to the customers. It also allows a future focus on root-cause analysis on different call types in order to apply efforts into a continuous improvement process in order to drive quality improvement initiatives throughout the division.



Self-Service

The service model is more than just than query management: as part of ULAR's commitment to quality improvements including self-service where possible, ULAR and UL ITD have introduced a new self-service function for students to enable the generation of a registration letter via our student portal. This new service means that students no longer need to contact us for this letter, improving the direct service for the student requiring a letter. It also has a further improvement in reducing our overall turnaround time for other calls by reducing the number of calls for us to manage manually. Since launch, this letter has been generated by students over 8,500 times, and is being accepted by Department of Social Protection for social welfare claims, by SUSI, and more recently, by an Garda Síochána as part of the proof of travel for education purposes during inter-county travel restrictions.

Responding to need during the Pandemic

In March 2020, along with other higher education institutions, the UL campus closed, re-routing staff to providing the service from home. Previously, ULAR issued certified transcripts and letters in a hard copy format, with a 'wet' signature and stamp. ULAR, in conjunction with UL ITD, implemented a new method of issuing secure signed e-documents. Secure PDFs, signed using Global Sign certificates, enabled the issuance of documents electronically. Even though paper copies are now possible again, the majority of students continue to opt for the secure electronic version.

Benefits

While initially commenced as a project to improve our service model, the above projects have significantly improved the University's response to COVID-19 in providing a better remote service for students, and in providing access to electronic documents previously provided in hard copy.

Case 7: Keeping Quality Front and Centre – The Benefits of a Quality Standard

The Challenge

How does a HR Division maintain a Quality focus in the face of a busy operational environment? Last year, the HR Division of the University of Limerick (with over 1600 staff), completed over 225 recruitment competitions, close to 3,000 transactions relating to contracts/salary/leave, and 2,500 training places. This is not to mention the work of Health and Safety in this exceptional year, as well as that of Employee Relations, Pensions, Equality and Diversity, and HR Systems. And all this within a legal and governance framework. This case study will outline how the HR Division has continued to embed Quality into its day-to-day work.

How the Challenge was Addressed

The HR Division at the University of Limerick is the only HR Division in an Irish University with International Standards Organisation (ISO) accreditation. For the HR Division at the University of Limerick, the continued growth of its ISO accredited quality system has helped to maintain an active and integrated focus on Quality. Having a Quality standard means that Quality becomes part of what we do rather than an addition to what we do.

The central principles of a Quality standard mean that it is used on a regular basis. The HR Division's ISO system has now developed to include systems and structures for: planning; identifying customer feedback; mapping processes; KPIs; creating a document management system; conducting internal audits; carrying out management reviews; managing corrective and preventative actions; managing risk.

The quality system has driven many improvements including recruitment processes and system developments. There are always improvements to be addressed and the quality system helps to smooth the path towards implementation of these.

Impact of Accredited Quality Management System

For our customers, having a quality system brings advantages including a focus on continuous improvement, maintaining a consistent approach, minimising mistakes, and following up on customer feedback.

Over the last year, over 130 changes were made to processes, policies and other related documents. These changes resulted from sources including internal audits and corrective and preventative actions.
There are also benefits for the Division itself. The quality system provides a structure for training new staff. It also helps to manage risk by having a clearly defined and standard process.

The fact that the system is audited annually helps to maintain focus. It is not without its challenges and does require time and attention. However, the real benefit comes from the fact that the Quality system helps us to provide a consistent standard of service to our customers, while adding to this through continuous improvement initiatives. Quality now forms part of our daily and weekly work and has become part of the fabric of the HR Division.

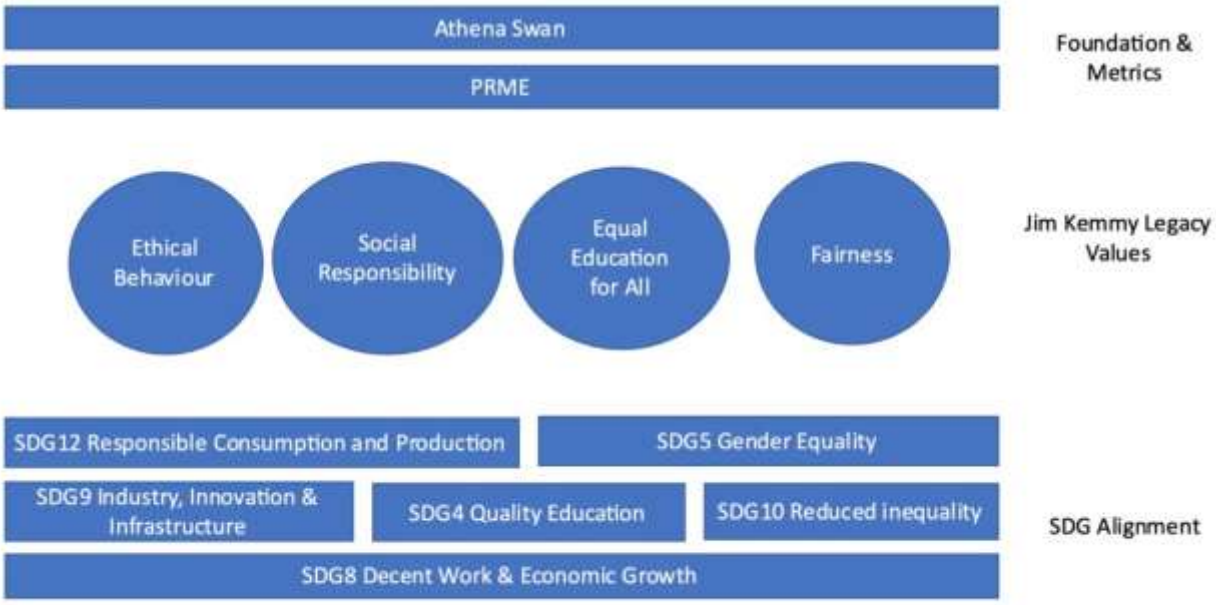
Theme 3: Mission and Strategy

Case 8: KBS PRME

In June 2008, the Kemmy Business School signed up to the UN Principles of Responsible Management Education Initiative (PRME), becoming the first Irish business school to do so. The PRME principles are inspired by internationally accepted values including the principles of the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC). They seek to establish a process of continuous improvement among institutions of management education in order to develop a new generation of business leaders capable of managing the complex challenges faced by business and society in the 21st century. The mission is to inspire and champion responsible management education, research, and thought leadership globally, and to support the delivery of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Biannual SIP Report

Since 2014 and on a biannual basis, the KBE PRME committee prepares a 'Sharing Information on Progress '(SIP) report. For the last 3 cycles this has included reporting on school activities specifically in relation to the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. Over this period of time, and facilitated by the reporting process, KBS has continued to develop its teaching, research and outreach actives in line with the UNSDGs. The PRME reporting process has provided the opportunity for important work toward aligning our own mission and identity with PRME, UNSDGs and more latterly Athena Swan (see figure 1). This is an ongoing process, where we continue to identify and support faculty led initiatives while considering where we might, as a business school, have the most impact.



Aligning KBS's mission and vision with PRME and UN Global Goals

PRME SIP 2020

The 2020 SIP reporting round brought with it some challenges, coming as it did during a global pandemic. The education system is in a time of great change. In a response to the Covid 19 pandemic universities around the world have moved to a hybrid online/on-campus model, with many more choosing to go completely online. As a school, KBS has played an active leadership role in the transition to online learning, translating expertise residing in a small number of our online programmes into a fully online offering for all our programmes. Our approach has meant that many of the activities and initiatives were successfully transitioned to the online format, including teaching, student volunteering as well as academic conferences and webinars (e.g., CSSI 2020 international conference which we hosted in June 2020). While the current crisis has posed many challenges, it has also focused our attention on the complexity of the issues we face, in terms of health, climate and the economy, and brought to bear how vital it is to come together to design the solutions required. As a school we are leading on the Covid response through innovation in our teaching, research and external engagements. In doing so we are drawing on our expertise from our PRME engagements and at the same time we have seen an expansion of interest in PRME from across the faculty. Now more than ever there is a clear understanding from across the faculty of the need for the business school to provide leadership in the areas of responsible management education and sustainability. We are emboldened by

the top-level research that our colleagues are engaged in, in the high-quality teaching and learning experience that we pride ourselves on, and by the open and transformative relationships we continue to develop with our external partners.

KBS and the UNSDGs

Building solutions requires KBS to leverage its knowledge and experience by creating relevant and valuable intellectual property combined into a suite of solutions that can progress social and environmental solutions using the core skill sets within the KBS. Below we offer a framework to indicate the key areas that drive our current (2018-2020) SDG engagement, where we have 1) core disciplinary expertise, and 2) where SD goals are more the context in which KBS faculty and researchers are currently impacting. In this approach, we recognise that for any academic, context can become core disciplinary focus. As a business school, goals 4 (quality education) and 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure) are core to our areas of expertise and impact across all our SDG work. Finally, all areas of work are driven by a partnership approach. Importantly SDG 17 is regarded both as a mechanism to support cross sector and disciplinary engagement, but it is also an area of (research) expertise in its own right within the school.

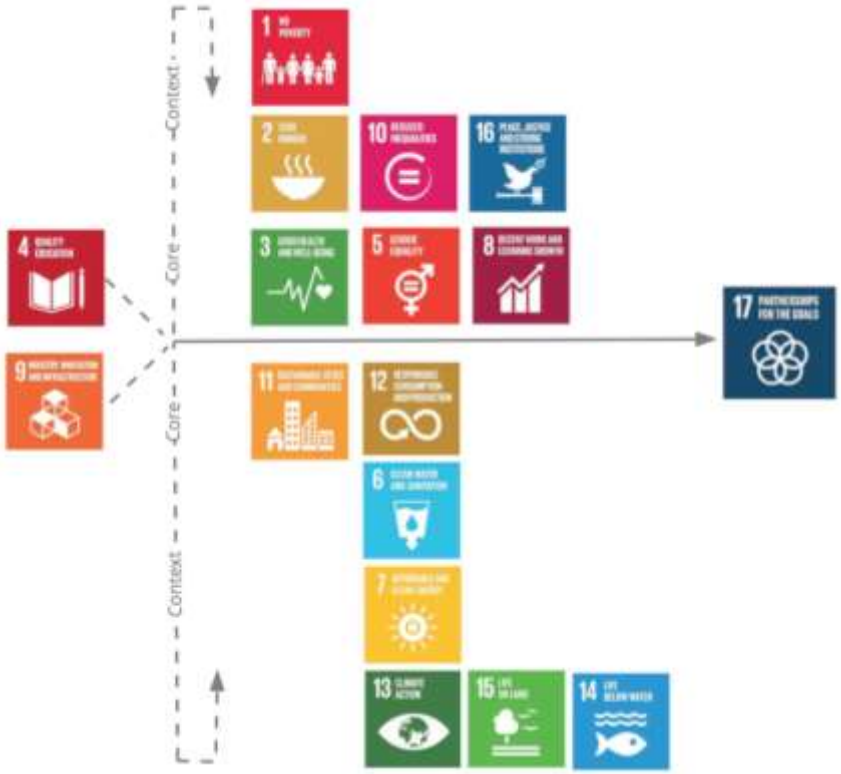


Figure 2: KBS SDG framework outlining the impact on multiple goals in core disciplinary areas or as context in ongoing research/teaching/external

SIP 2020 Exemplar Cases

We will offer two exemplar cases from the 2020 SIP report. 1) focuses on a core disciplinary strength in health and wellbeing at work and 2) exemplifies an important strength in interdisciplinary and place based SDG work.

- Work-related stress is estimated to cost the economy of the European Union more than €20 billion per year (EU-OSHA, 2014) and the health and well-being of workers is an issue of major concern for most organisations and governments. Despite this, traditional workplace wellness initiatives have been found to have little effect (e.g., Song & Baicker, 2019). Researchers at the KBS are spearheading research to establish evidence- based solutions to address this, for example, Dr Deirdre O'Shea advances our understanding of how to tackle worker well-being. Her research examines individual-level interventions and investigates the extent to which many popularised psychological constructs are effective or not in workplace settings. Prof Donald Truxillo, Kemmy Chair of Work and Employment Studies, also examines evidence-based solutions to tackle worker well-being. His research examines issues related to workplace safety and health and age-related issues in perceived ability to work. Dr Sarah MacCurtain, Dr Juliet McMahon and Dr Caroline Murphy examine issues of bullying, harassment, and injustice in organisations, as well as to health-related issues specific to caring roles.

- +CityxChange is a smart city project granted funding by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) is the host and leads the consortium together with the Lighthouse Cities Trondheim and Limerick. Prof Stephen Kinsella of KBS is one of the lead academics on this project and collaborating with Limerick City Council. +CityxChange brings the two aspiring Lighthouse Cities Trondheim (NO) and Limerick (IE) together with their distinguished Follower Cities Alba Iulia (RO), Pisek (CZ), Võru (EST), Smolyan (BG) and Sestao (ES), to underline their ambition to achieve sustainable urban ecosystems that have zero emissions and establish a 100% renewable energy city-region by 2050. A key output of the project so far is the Bold City Vision (BCV) framework. The BCV framework helps cities identify and address key opportunities and actions on their way towards becoming smarter and more sustainable. The framework incorporates the process of creating a city vision and goals that situate the ambition of creating Energy Positive Cities within the cities overarching planning and management process.

Future Direction

Over the coming two years we look forward to deepening our involvement with PRME, and the PRME champions group specifically. This will include involving more active faculty involvement with PRME activities and initiatives. For example, we have faculty who have volunteered to join subgroup research projects and PRME taskforces. This engagement will be encouraged and recognised at the executive level of the school. We will further work to align PRME into all areas of the school's activities, making it core to the organisation and mirrored in our structures. This is part of our ongoing work to build on our Kemmy legacy, and to forge our unique identity as a business school.

Theme 4: Community Engagement

Case 9: Community Engagement Projects – Case Studies 2019

The UL Engage website gives details of UL Engaged projects with communities, as well as accredited engaged learning and engaged research. All UL Engage listed projects must comply with UL Engage guidelines for submission. These are:

- projects **must include details of collaborating partners and/or their organisational logos for project verification**. This ensures that the projects listed are real and authenticated by our collaborating partners.
- Projects **must also include details of how the project is evaluated** – because our engagement is not reflexive and responsible if we do not ask 'how well are we doing?'

The project listings all conform to the same style, to provide consistent information. The green tab outlines the project in user friendly language for a non-specialist audience. It explains, what we're doing; why we are doing it; who we are working with; and how we evaluate the project. The orange tab provides details, where relevant, of any curriculum-based learning that the project supports. It explains to would-be students, what the project module involves; the rationale for the module and project; who students can expect to work with; and how their work will be evaluated. The red tab provides details, where relevant, of any research associated with the project. The information follows the same format: what is the research; why is it necessary; who is collaborating; how is it evaluated.

Details on project partners and contact information for project partners are given for all projects under the black tab. Any resources – like photos, articles, reports, podcasts etc., are available under the grey 'Resources' tab.

Projects in 2019 include the following:

The Greentown Project (2019-2020) The Greentown Project is a policy-research collaboration between the Department of Justice and the University of Limerick. It involves an evidence-informed and design-led targeted community intervention which aims to reduce the influence of criminal networks on children. The Greentown programme's objectives are to reduce network capability for recruiting children to commit crime and to provide an exit route for children who are already engaged or embedded. The programme is informed by a significant evidence base which includes multiple primary studies, evaluation findings and deliberation with international academics in the area of organised crime, and national experts in the areas of youth justice, child welfare, policing and community development. Details: https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/6421
Healthy Moms (2018-2020) The 'Healthy Moms' project is a community-based project supported by the CWELL programme. Healthy Moms provides peer-to-peer fitness programmes for young mothers in the Moyross area. The classes, which are designed and delivered by CWELL adult learners, are intended to incentivise young mothers to meet with each other and develop a more healthy lifestyle. Classes are offered in the morning while children are at school at minimal cost (€2 a class). Transport is provided for those who did not have their own. Laura

(CWELL team member & fitness instructor) facilitated the classes and created individual workout plans for each participant. Details: https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/6351
Limerick – Let's Talk about Our Mayor (2019-2020) The Limerick Mayor project facilitates a public consultation process for Limerick people concerning the establishment of a Directly Elected Mayor. A series of 'community conversations' will invite Limerick people to examine their attitudes, expectations and hopes regarding the new mayor's role. In response to COVID-19, this consultation will be predominantly online, with face-to-face meetings under strict social distancing rules. The project has developed a range of online resources to enable friends and family groups to facilitate and record their own opinions. Details: https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/6411
Social CWELL Tea Dances (2019 – current) The Social CWELL Team organise tea dances for older people in Limerick City. Each ticket costs €5 and includes a sandwich meal and live music. The 2020 themed events planned included: Valentine's Day, Halloween, Easter and a Summer Ball, all in Thomond Park. Tea Dances include bonnet and costume competitions, with a raffle at each event using donated spot prizes. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 restrictions, the social events were cancelled. However, the bonnet competitions and Easter egg raffle went ahead online, using the St Munchin's Facebook page. One raffle was held for children under 12 and a second for adults over 55.
Southill Hub Community Garden (2019-20) The Green CWELL project team is restoring the Southill Hub community garden, under the able direction of community gardener, Barbara Mulcahy. The project team has planned a series of family-oriented events to foster community interest in maintaining the garden in the future. The project aims to ensure that the garden is organic and sustainable, as well as providing a pleasant, inclusive, and accessible space for the whole community. The plan is that the garden will be suitable for community use by all ages and people living with disabilities. Details: https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/6401
UP Le Gaeilge (Undercover Parents with Irish) 2019 – current A Community-Based participatory research (CBPR) project designed to foster an inclusive and holistic approach to nurture well-being and develop Irish medium in the school community area. Details: https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/5681
Research Evidence into Policy, Programmes and Practice 2019 Evidence informed reform of Garda Youth Diversion projects Details: https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/5771
Executive Leadership – Policy complexity 2018 – current A programme for people working to address complex needs in the care of children and young people. Details: https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/5761
Measuring Effectiveness in Youth Justice 2019 – current A study of how to make better use of evidence generated routinely in the Irish Youth justice system in order to inform youth justice policy and practice Details: https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/5691

Pilot Bail supervision Scheme for Children (2017-2019) An evaluation of if and how the Bail Supervision scheme contributes to changes in young people's behaviour Details: https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/5611
Developing the potential of Community Energy Action groups to transition to a low Carbon society (2017-2019) A project to develop, test and revise a community toolkit to map out and systematically address strategies, targets, policies, measures and schedules to support transition to, measure and maintain a low carbon emissions strategy. Details: https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/4751
Supporting urban communities moves towards environmental sustainability (2018-2020) This project provides communities with detailed, up to date guidance on implementing sustainability programmes of sufficient significance to qualify for EU and international accreditation. Details: https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/1761
Addressing the Environmental Impacts of Infant Feeding Decisions in Healthcare and Society (2017-2019) Details: https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/1081
Measuring community greenhouse gas emissions - application in EU communities (2017-2019) Ballynagran Energy Plus - A community-based project to carbon footprint through community actions relating to transport, energy and food. Details: https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/1071

Appendix 1: Glossary

AQR Glossary

AHSS	Arts, Humanities and Social Science
AP	Assistant Psychologist
APG	Academic Planning Group
APRC	Academic Programme Review Committee
AQR	Annual Quality Report
ARC	Academic Regulations Committee
B&E	Buildings and Estates
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BCV	Bold City Vision
BRD	Business Requirements Document
BSc	Bachelor of Science
CAO	Central Applications Office
CBPR	Community-Based Participatory Research
CECD	Cooperative Education and Careers Division
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CID	Contract of Indefinite Duration
COO	Chief Operating Officer
CO-OP	Cooperative Education Placement
CORE	Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluations
COT	Crisis Operations Team
COTEC	Crisis Operations Team, Executive Committee
CPD	Continued Professional Development
CRIC	Curriculum Review and Innovation Committee
CSSI	Cross-Sector Social Interactions
CTL	Centre for Transformative Learning
CWELL	Community Wellness, Empowerment, Leadership and Life Skills
DAB	Designated Awarding Body
DARE	Disability Access Route to Education
DELTA	Data, Evaluation, Learning, Technology and Analysis
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DPCOOR	Deputy President, Chief Operating Office and Registrar

ECQC	Executive Committee Quality Committee
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
EDTL	Enhanced Digital Teaching and Learning
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EHS	Education and Health Science
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance
ER	Employee Relations
ERA	Excellence in Research for Australia
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines
EU	European Union
EU-OSHA	European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
FHRAMC	Finance, Human Resources and Asset Management Committee
FOI	Freedom of Information
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GA	Governing Authority
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GPS	Graduate and Professional Studies
GWG	Governance Working Group
HAS	Health Sciences Academy
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEAR	Higher Education Access Route
HEBPs	Human Resources Business Partners
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HR	Human Resources
HSE	Health Services Executive
IED	International Education Division
iFLAG	Integrated Formative Feedback for Learning and Growth
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
IP	Internet Protocol
ISBN	International Standard Book Number
ISE	Institute of Student Employers
ISO	International Standards Organisation
IT	Information Technology

ITD	Information Technology Division
IUA	Irish Universities Association
K4C	Knowledge for Change
KBS	Kemmy Business School
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LC	Learning Centre
LISD	Library and Information Services Division
MA	Master of Arts
MIC	Mary Immaculate Collage
MoA	Memorandum of Agreement
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSS	Module Satisfaction Survey
MYiP	Research Contracts and Commercial Activity
NCEF	National Council for Exercise and Fitness
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NTNU	Norwegian University of Science and Technology
PASS	Personal Academic Support System
PDRS	Performance and Development Review System
PG	Postgraduate
PGRs	Postgraduate Research Students
PISA	Programme for |international Assessment
PRME	Principles of Responsible Management Education
PSRB	Professional Regulatory and Statutory Bodies
PSU	Postgraduate Students Union
PVA	President's Volunteer Award
QA	Quality Assurance
QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
QMS	Quality Management System
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
QRG	Quality Review Group
QSU	Quality Support Unit
RDF	Research Development Framework
REC	Research Ethics Committee
REF	Research Excellence Framework

RIC	Research Impact Committee
SALS	Supplementary Academic Learning Supports
SAR	Self-Assessment Report
SC	Sub-Committee
SDGS	Un Sustainable Development Goals
SEN	Science and Engineering
SESU	Student Engagement and Success Unit
SET	Student Evaluation of Teaching
SFI	Science Foundation Ireland
SI	Student Information System
SINM	Simulation – Nursing & Midwifery
SIP	Sharing Information on Progress
SPs	Standard/Simulated Patients
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
SSPC	Scientific Foundation Ireland Research Pharmaceutical Centre
StELA	Student Evaluation and Learning Analytics
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
SUSI	Student Universal Support Ireland
T&L	Teaching and Learning
TTO	Technology Transfer Office
UG	Undergraduate
UL	University of Limerick
ULAR	UL Academic Registry
ULH	UL Hospitals Group
ULREG	ul Research Ethics and Governance
ULRIS	UL Research Information System
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organisation
UNGC	United Nations Global Compact
URC	University Research Committee
URSB	University Research Strategy Board
VP	Vice President
VPAASE	Vice President Academic Affairs and Student Engagement
YES	Young Engineers and Scientists