Institutional Review Report 2023

University College Cork

CINNTE

Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Contents

Foreword

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training in Ireland. One of QQI's most important functions is to ensure that the quality assurance (QA) procedures that institutions have in place are effective. To this end, QQI carries out external reviews of higher education institutions on a cyclical basis. This current QQI cycle of reviews is called the CINNTE cycle. CINNTE reviews are an element of the broader quality framework for institutions composed of Quality Assurance Guidelines; each institution's Quality Assurance Procedures; Annual Quality Reports (AQR); and Dialogue Meetings. The CINNTE review cycle was intended to run from 2017 to 2023 but has been extended to 2024. During this period, QQI has organised and overseen independent reviews of each of the Universities, including newly established Technological Universities, the Institutes of Technology and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI).

Each CINNTE review evaluates the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of each institution. Reviews measure each institution's compliance with European standards for quality assurance, regard to the expectations set out in the QQI quality assurance guidelines or their equivalent and adherence to other relevant QQI policies and procedures. CINNTE reviews also explore how institutions have enhanced their teaching, learning and research and their quality assurance systems and how well institutions have aligned their approach to their own mission, quality indicators and benchmarks.

The CINNTE review process is in keeping with Parts 2 and 3 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) and based on the internationally accepted and recognised approach to reviews, including:

- the publication of review cycle documents including handbook, terms of reference etc.;
- a process of self-evaluation and Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER);
- an external assessment and site visit by a team of reviewers;
- the publication of a review report including findings and recommendations; and
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken.

This QQI CINNTE review of University College Cork was conducted by an independent review team in line with the Terms of Reference in Appendix A. This is the report of the findings of the review team. It also includes the response of University College Cork to the report.

The Review Team

Each CINNTE review is carried out by an international team of independent experts and peers. The 2023 institutional review of University College Cork was conducted by a team of six reviewers selected by QQI. The review team was trained by QQI on 16 January 2023. The Chair and Coordinating Reviewer undertook a virtual planning visit to University College Cork on 14 February 2023. The main review visit (MRV) was conducted in-person by the full team between 6 and 10 March 2023.

CHAIR
Professor Joanne Wright

Professor Joanne Wright, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) at the University of Sydney, is responsible for the University's strategy around teaching, learning and students' educational experience. She oversees institution-wide development of better support for student learning and the student experience, including the approach to student support, curriculum renewal, new thinking in pedagogy, learning and teaching analytics, face-to-face, online and blended learning, and quality assurance. Prior to joining the University of Sydney, Professor Wright was Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) for the University of Queensland (UQ). She previously held senior level academic leadership roles for many years, starting with her position as Dean of the Faculty of History and Social Sciences at Royal Holloway University of London in 2002. Professor Wright has held responsibility for teaching and learning portfolios at the University of Sussex and the University of South Australia where she also held the appointment of Acting Vice-Chancellor for a period, before moving to UQ in 2013. She was at the forefront of UQ's work on blended learning and curriculum reform and led the University's teaching and learning response to the global pandemic. Professor Wright has well-established relationships in the higher education sector, serving as a member of several national advisory bodies and working groups through Universities Australia and the Group of Eight (Go8). She has a joint Honours Degree in Politics and Government and History from the University of Kent at Canterbury, an M.Litt. Strategic Studies from the University of Aberdeen and a PhD in International Relations from the Australian National University.

COORDINATING REVIEWER
Professor David Croke

Professor David Croke is a graduate of Waterford Institute of Technology in Biotechnology, a graduate of The University of Dublin (Trinity College) in Biochemistry and Genetics and a Fellow of the Royal College of Pathologists (UK). He is an Emeritus Professor in the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) University of Medicine & Health Sciences, having previously served as Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences (2006-2010) and as Professor of Biochemistry & Co-Chair, Department of Molecular & Cellular Therapeutics (2006-2014). Professor Croke was RCSI Director of Quality Enhancement (2010-2021) and led the establishment of the Quality Enhancement Office and the implementation of quality assurance/quality improvement policies, procedures and structures encompassing the undergraduate, postgraduate and professional activities of RCSI. He has participated in internal & external Quality Review Panels in the Irish universities and served as External Review Panel Chair for a number of Institutional and Programmatic Reviews within the Catalan university system under the aegis of AQU-Catalunya. He is also involved in the accreditation of international medical schools through his membership of the Accreditation Commission on Colleges of Medicine.

INTERNATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE REPRESENTATIVE
Professor Claire O'Malley

As Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global) at Durham University, Professor Claire O'Malley is responsible for the strategic leadership and implementation of the University's international agenda. She

joined Durham University in January 2018 from the University of Nottingham's Malaysia Campus, where she served as Dean of the Faculty of Science and then Vice Provost for Research and Knowledge Exchange, 2014-18. During that time, she chaired the Research and Innovation Committee for the EU-Malaysia Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Prior to moving to Malaysia, Claire was Professor of Learning Science in the School of Psychology, University of Nottingham, UK, since 2004. She has extensive experience of service on UK and international funding panels. She was a member of ESRC's Research Committee (2012-14) and Vice Chair of ESRC Grants Board (2004-8). Claire has also served on a number of international funding panels, including NSF, ANR, DFG and German Council of Science and Humanities, NWO, FCT, Swiss Research Council, Israeli Research Council, Royal Society of New Zealand Marsden Fund, Australian Research Council, amongst others. Claire holds an undergraduate degree in Psychology and Philosophy and a PhD from the School of Education from the University of Leeds and is a Chartered Psychologist with the British Psychological Society.

LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE
Jakub Bakonyi
Jakub Bakonyi is a fifth-year law student and public administration graduate at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland with expertise in higher education governance and quality assurance. Jakub is a former president of the Jagiellonian University Students' Union and the Alliance of Kraków Universities' Student Unions. He has successfully established and implemented a wide range of social programmes and initiatives. He has extensive experience of and held memberships in national and international academic community institutions, including Jagiellonian University, General Council of Science and Higher Education, Polish Accreditation Committee, Students' Parliament of the Republic of Poland, European Students' Union (ESU), European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO). In his spare time, Jakub is a fan of politics, history, travelling and new technologies.

NATIONAL HE SECTORAL REPRESENTATIVE
Professor Pat Guiry
Professor Pat Guiry is currently Director of the Centre for Synthesis and Chemical Biology and Full Professor of Synthetic Organic Chemistry at University College Dublin (UCD). He is a current member of UCD's Governing Authority and the University's Finance, Remuneration and Asset Management Committee. He was elected as a member of the Senate of the National University of Ireland (2012-present) and since 2018, is the Chair of the Board of the Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition Ltd. In 2022 he was elected President of the Institute of Chemistry of Ireland. Professor Guiry is currently the elected President of EuChemS Division of Organic Chemistry (2022-24). Previously, he was elected as a member of the Royal Irish Academy (RIA) in 2013, took on the role as Science Secretary of the RIA from 2016-2020 and was elected President of the RIA in March 2023. He was awarded the Boyle-Higgins Medal by the Institute of Chemistry of Ireland in 2013 and is a recipient of the Science Foundation Ireland Mentorship Award in 2020. He holds a BSc (Hons) in Chemistry, UCD (1986) and a PhD (1990) and was a Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Oxford (1990-1993). A keen tennis player, with 19 Irish national titles to date, he represented Ireland in 2022 in the Austria Cup (ITF World Team Competition) in Florida and has represented Ireland since 1999 in the ITF Italia Cup, Trabert Cup, Dubler Cup and Fred Perry Cup.

INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVE
Joan Mulvihill
Joan Mulvihill, Digitalisation and Sustainability Lead for Siemens in Ireland, has been at the forefront of driving technology adoption in Ireland for the past decade. Serving as CEO of the Irish Internet Association for seven years followed by two years as Centre Director for the Irish Centre for Cloud Computing, Joan's role in leading digitalisation for Siemens customers builds on her deep commitment to and understanding of the needs of Irish business to create sustainable value. With her colleagues at Siemens, Joan believes in collaborating with customers in the leveraging of collective domain expertise, creative thinking and problem solving to realise solutions that transform businesses and create a sustainable future.

Section 1

Introduction and Context

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University College Cork (UCC) was established in 1845 as one of three Queen's Colleges located in Belfast, Cork and Galway. It became University College Cork under the Irish Universities Act of 1908. The university first admitted students in 1849 and since that time has developed a tradition of creativity, discovery and innovation that has been well embedded in the institution during its 177-year history. It provides education and training for over 24,000 students, of whom 3,900 are international students representing more than 138 countries.

UCC offers a research-led curriculum across 120 degree-level programmes in humanities, business, law, architecture, science, engineering, medicine and dentistry. It has made significant progress in its commercial and research engagement with enterprise. It is a national leader in areas such as nanotechnology, microbiome, food and marine research, and is Ireland's leading campus for sustainability. UCC is also a research-intensive university, internationally competitive in a number of key areas and playing a key role in the development of Ireland's knowledge economy.

All programmes leading to UCC awards are positioned on Ireland's National Framework of Qualifications. The university's academic structure for the delivery of its research and education consists of four Colleges within which there are 27 Schools supported by over 3,200 academic and professional staff.

UCC has a well embedded quality culture that permeates all aspects of university life and is 'characterised by an ambition for excellence in teaching, research and service, and enabled by a highly collegial ethos across a committed and creative academic, research and support staff cohort' (ISER, p. 16).

Alignment between the university's mission, goals and commitment to quality enhancement is reflected in a range of initiatives reflected in its Strategic Plan 2017-22 which clearly links mission and quality. This is embedded further in UCC's new Strategic Plan 2023-28, which seeks to secure the university's future in a rapidly changing environment by committing to a more sustainable approach. This new strategic plan was launched only weeks in advance of the MRV.

Section 2

Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)

Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)

METHODOLOGY

University College Cork (UCC) commenced its self-evaluation process in January 2022 with the formal framework for the process receiving approval from the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) and the University Leadership Team (ULT) in February 2022. The key elements of this framework were an evidence-based approach to evaluation, alignment with implementation of the 'UCC-2022' strategic plan and development of the strategic plan 2023-2028 and a participation and engagement strategy designed to achieve comprehensive university-wide consultation. Implementation of the framework was led by the Director of Quality Enhancement as Institutional Review Coordinator and supported by the Quality Enhancement Manager as Programme Manager. The Institutional Review Group (IRG) was the main driver of the self-evaluation process, leading the development of the Institutional Self Evaluation Report (ISER) and the Institutional Profile (IP) [ISER Vol. 2:2a & Vol. 2:2b], in consultation with the QEC and Academic Council (AC) and reporting to the ULT. The IRG met on eleven occasions between March and December 2022, at which point the completed ISER and IP documents were brought to the various levels of university governance for formal approval.

The work of preparing the thematic chapters of the ISER and the supporting evidence was undertaken by a group of 'Chapter Leads', all of whom are senior members of university staff. Each Chapter Lead was supported by a member of staff of the Quality Enhancement Unit (QEU) and by a member of the IRG. The QEU also provided the Leads with comprehensive resources to support their work [ISER Vol. 2:2c]. These resources included

analyses of the outcomes of internal and external review processes, data gathered in connection with the university's strategic initiatives and input from external peers. In addition to managing all aspects of their topic-specific self-evaluation, the Chapter Leads were responsible for consultation with students and staff both during the drafting of their respective chapters and during the integration of each chapter into the final ISER document. The IRG was also responsible for liaison with two External Peer Advisors who acted as 'critical friends' to bring valuable external perspectives to the self-evaluation process. The IP was developed by a dedicated team [ISER Vol. 2:2e] which assembled an extensive data-set to underpin the presentation of the university's activities, services and external engagements [ISER Vol. 2:2d]; this incorporated case-studies of good practice and output from desk-based analyses and benchmarking exercises across a range of comparator institutions.

UCC's aim to make comprehensive university-wide consultation a central part of the self-evaluation process was driven by a Communications and Engagement Plan [ISER Vol. 2.2f] which sought to facilitate the effective engagement of a number of stakeholder groups for input and feedback (including Workshops & Focus Groups), to enable the collation of stakeholder feedback to inform the development of the ISER & IP documents and to ensure widespread awareness of the Institutional Review process among students and staff. The review team was particularly impressed by the measures undertaken to ensure that all students and staff were aware of the CINNTE Review. In addition to face-to-face Workshops and Focus Groups, the QEU developed a suite of web-based resources including 'The Review

Signpost' newsletter to mark key milestones, a series of 'Institutional Review & You' videos describing the stages of the process and a range of resources aimed at all members of the university community. The review team commends these initiatives. It was clear from discussions with a number of stakeholder groups (including the Students' Union Sabbatical Officers, undergraduate and postgraduate students, representatives of academic and professional services staff and members of the IRG) that UCC was successful in spreading awareness of the review process within the university community. Again, based upon discussions with stakeholders, the review team commends UCC for the breadth and depth of consultation with students and staff during the self-evaluation process.

Another noteworthy element of the self-evaluation process was the Good Practice Case Study Symposium facilitated by the QEU in October 2022. This involved 34 poster presentations by students, academics and professional services staff showcasing initiatives in education, training, research, service delivery and other student-facing areas. The Symposium was mentioned repeatedly by staff and student stakeholder groups who met the review team during the MRV and was consistently described as an effective means to learn about quality enhancement initiatives across the university. The review team commends the role of this initiative in reinforcing UCC's culture of quality.

The review team was persuaded by the documentary evidence and by its discussions with stakeholders that the self-evaluation process undertaken by UCC was both comprehensive and collegial, such as to inform future similar processes undertaken by the university. In that context, the review team endorses the suggestion that UCC would develop an Institutional Self-Evaluation Toolkit based upon their experience of this CINNTE review to support the university's preparation for future strategic and institutional reviews [ISER Vol. 1:2.8].

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW PROCESS

The ISER, IP and supporting documents submitted by UCC in the context of this CINNTE review were excellent and provided the review team with a comprehensive evidence-base for their work. UCC presented their ISER in two volumes. Volume 1 contained a detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of the university's academic, research and service provision divided into thematic chapters, while Volume 2 presented a compendium of supplementary information cross-referenced to the chapters of Volume 1, including a number of case-studies of good practice. Each thematic chapter of the ISER (Vol. 1) followed a uniform structure setting out the specific self-evaluation methodology for that theme, a description of the chapter topics and activities, an analysis of effectiveness, areas identified for enhancement, instances of good practice, 'horizon issues' (i.e. emergent issues likely to impact future developments) and 'signature initiatives' (i.e. distinctive instances of strategic enhancement relevant to the chapter theme). Volume 1 of the ISER struck an excellent balance between narrative description of the elements of each chapter and analysis of the effectiveness of the related university structures, policies and processes, while Volume 2 provided additional descriptive material and evidence to expand as required on the matching content of Volume 1. The IP provided a data-rich overview of the university which was informative in positioning the institution within the region and more broadly in the context of Irish and international higher education and research. The review team commends both the rigorous self-evaluation process undertaken by UCC in preparation for the review, and the high quality and comprehensive nature of the ISER and supporting documents that resulted from it.

As noted above, it was clear to the review team that the university designed and implemented a comprehensive and effective framework to drive the self-evaluation process. The ISER presented a reflective view of UCC's current position and future ambitions which fed into the rich discussions that the review team had with the wide range of stakeholder groups involved in the MRV. It is notable that there was a high

degree of convergence between the outputs of the CINNTE self-evaluation process and those of the parallel process leading to the development of the new UCC Strategic Plan, which goes to the consultative nature of these processes and the extent of the university community's engagement with them. In particular, the review team commends UCC's manifest commitment to quality review as evidenced by their engagement with the CINNTE process despite negotiating difficult circumstances as the university emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic.

ENGAGEMENT OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

It was evident to the review team that UCC is proactive across the range of its activities in seeking external input and in using that input to inform strategy and other processes. UCC engages with its collaborative providers, local civic society, employers, alumni and state agencies on a regular basis. The analysis of reports arising from internal and external review processes (including professional accreditation processes, external examiner reports, etc.) and a range of other inputs from external sources formed a key element of the evidence base for self-evaluation [ISER Vol. 1:2]. In the context of the drafting of the ISER, the IRG was the conduit for expert external review and advice from two distinguished external peer advisors who brought valuable external perspectives to the process. The review team commends the involvement of these external peer advisors as an example of good practice in institutional self-evaluation. During the MRV, the review team had an opportunity to meet with representatives of collaborative education providers, employers (including multinational corporations), state agencies, local groups and civic authorities who spoke warmly of the university's openness and engagement.

Section 3

Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Quality Assurance/ Accountability

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

In reaching its overall assessment of QA procedures at UCC, the review team had regard to the ISER, the IP, the AQRs, Securing Our Future – Strategic Plan 2023-2028, additional information asked for by the review team and sessions conducted during the MRV.

The review team was unanimous in its conclusion that:

- UCC has demonstrated the effectiveness of its QA procedures and the extent of their implementation.
- UCC has made progress towards the development and implementation of a unified institutional QA infrastructure.
- UCC procedures are compliant with the European Standards and Guidelines and have had regard to QQI QA Guidelines.
- UCC has demonstrated the enhancement of quality through governance, policy and procedures.
- UCC has implemented procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression in keeping with the QQI policy restatement.

The review team was confident that the documentation supplemented by a series of interviews across a wide spectrum of academic and professional units as well as external stakeholders provided clear evidence of UCC's commitment to both quality assurance and quality enhancement.

Both the Governing Body and the University Leadership Team (ULT) demonstrated openness, self-reflection and an appetite for robust, evidence-informed debate. The review team also noted the strong and effective role of the QEU in the production of strategic quality documents and in the operation of quality assurance and enhancement across the university.

In several interviews with staff and students, the review team heard examples of perceived inconsistent application of policies and standards among the Colleges. While the review team acknowledges the university's existing policy on carry-forward of credit and the ongoing development of a policy on lecture recording, it heard accounts from students of instances of different College and School practices around carry-forward of credit and lecture recording. Students also expressed concern around variation in the use of the full range of marks available. This was confirmed in one staff session with a member of academic staff in one discipline area telling the review team that marks above 60 were rarely used and that the context of the discipline was understood by local employers. Academic staff also reported variation in the use of marking rubrics and staff workloads.

The review team was unable to establish the veracity or extent of variations but would like to recommend that UCC should develop a system for ongoing monitoring of the implementation of university policies and procedures across the Colleges to identify and remedy inconsistencies.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

UCC has a clear organisational structure around the governance and management of quality assurance and quality enhancement.

At the apex is the Governing Body. The functions of the Governing Body and the roles and responsibilities of officers and members are set out

in the *Regulation on Conduct of Governing Body Business* as amended by the Governing Body at its meeting on 18 September 2018. The regulation also sets out expectations around confidentiality, conflict of interest and behaviour.

The Governing Body meets six to seven times a year and currently has 39 members, including an independent chair. The university community is represented by an appropriate mix of executive staff, senior and junior academic staff, professional staff, current undergraduate and postgraduate students and alumni. The remaining positions are nominated by selected organisations in Cork, the Minister for Education and Skills, the National University of Ireland, councils of the administrative counties of Cork, Waterford, Kerry, Limerick and the joint county councils of Tipperary. The Lord Mayor of Cork and the Mayor of the City and county of Waterford are also on the Board. A Nominations Committee makes recommendations to various appointing bodies on the basis of skills existing and skills required.

The review team notes that the Governing Body is aware of the need to reduce its size necessitated by the HEA Act 2022 and commends its preparedness through timely planning and the development of a skills/competency framework for new Governing Body members and the establishment of a Selection Committee.

In conversations with both the President and members of the Governing Body, the team was impressed by the level of trust and openness that each displayed. The team is sure that UCC benefits as a result and wishes to commend the Chair of the Governing Body and the President in their openness to challenge and demonstration of robust debate.

The Governing Body's work is supported by eight sub-committees covering finance, audit and risk, strategy, research and innovation, student experience, people, academic promotion appeals, dispute resolution and disciplinary appeals.

The university's new strategy, '*Securing Our Future' Strategic Plan 2023-28*, was released shortly before the MRV. Further comments on the Strategic Plan can be found in the sections below. But given that the Governing Body is the ultimate owner of the strategy, the team wishes to record that it was impressed by the depth of participation in the production and knowledge of the strategy across all sections of the University. It is a credit to the Governing Body that it has overseen such an inclusive and supported strategy. The team commends The UCC Strategic Plan 'Securing our Future' 2023-2028 as an ambitious and considered document. The review team would like to commend the university for its consultative approach, its transparency and for the enthusiasm it has generated among staff and students. All sections of the UCC community and external stakeholders praised the President for his leadership, which was experienced as consultative, transparent and motivating.

The President is the CEO of the university and is supported by a leadership team comprising portfolio holders, deans of academic colleges and directors of professional services. Through many interviews, the team heard evidence and examples of the environment of openness and honesty that pervades the leadership team and commends the President and the senior leadership team for their openness and transparency.

In governance terms, the Governing Body and the President are supported by the Academic Council which controls the academic governance of the university. Its functions and membership are set out in the Principal Statute as adopted by the Governing Body on 7 April 2020. Academic Council currently has a membership of over 300 which the review team recognizes as extremely large relative to other Universities of the size and shape of UCC.

The review team explored the size and functioning of Academic Council with many stakeholders, and while there was some recognition that UCC's governance structure was complex, there was strong agreement that it was effective.

Academic Council delegates much of its operational work to a smaller (41 member) Academic Board which is charged with maintaining standards and consistency across the devolved

College structure. Academic Council has been operating a further seven sub-committees. The Review team agrees (as have other reviews) that this represents a heavy administrative overhead and notes that the university is in the process of reducing this to 4. The Review team applauds the university for this action and suggests that it review the effectiveness of these new committees after an operating period of three years.

In several of its meetings, the review team asked participants to explain governance and decision making. Respondents were not always clear about accountability and decision-making routes. The review team recommends that the university take the opportunity afforded by governance changes to the Governing Body and Academic Council to clarify and update its schedule of accountabilities and decision making.

The formal governance system is underpinned by a clear quality framework which contains principles and processes and is informed by the student voice and a strong system of external benchmarking and verification. The external benchmarks include the National Framework of Qualifications, European Framework of Qualifications, QQI External Review and various Professional, Statutory and Regulating Bodies. National and International student surveys are also referenced.

Processes fall into one of four categories: 'regular' comprising ongoing activity such as module and programme approval, 'annual' comprising external examiner reports and module and programme monitoring, 'periodic' comprising deep dives into various components of the academic endeavour and 'strategic enhancement' comprising executive initiated thematic reviews and enhancement activities.

UCC takes a comprehensive approach to periodic reviews with school-based academic quality reviews, research quality reviews and professional service quality reviews operating on a seven year cycle. The review team notes the disruption caused by the pandemic and the efforts the university has made to get "back on schedule". UCC also uses thematic reviews to address strategic issues impacting on or requiring a response from the

university. Those reviews undertaken to date have been commissioned by the university leadership team and have addressed research, academic governance, work integrated learning/work placements and teaching and assessment with technology.

A key coordination and oversight role is played by the Quality Enhancement Committee, chaired by the President. The Quality Enhancement Committee receives and considers Periodic Quality Review Reports and unit-based Quality Enhancement Plans. It then constructs an annual report for the Governing Body which refers to any issues requiring further consideration to Academic Council or the University Leadership Team.

In 2016, UCC acquired the Irish Management Institute (IMI) and incorporated it as an academic unit within the Business School and the College of Business and Law. Recognising that these sorts of mergers can be difficult and time-consuming, the team wishes to commend the degree to which the IMI has been integrated seamlessly into UCC programme validation, management and quality enhancement structures.

LINKED PROVIDERS AND COLLABORATIVE PROVISION

UCC no longer has any linked providers. However, it has a number of collaborative programmes which are subject to the same rigorous and approval process as UCC programmes (ISER, p. 26). In addition, the university takes note of the IHEQN *Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision*. Inter-institutional programmes or programmes involving external partners are governed by a memorandum of agreement (or similar instrument) and must be signed off by either the President or Deputy President.

Munster Technological University (MTU) is a long-standing and significant partner and collaborator for UCC. Joint programmes meet the standards of both universities, and a Joint Board oversees quality assurance, reporting back to both universities. The Joint Board also acts as a mechanism for

encouraging deeper collaboration and as an escalation point. The review team heard evidence from both parties that this arrangement works well and is effective and efficient. The team commends the excellent governance provisions for UCC-MTU joint programmes including comprehensive review of documents by UCC Academic Board and Academic Council, and the pragmatic shared approach to quality assurance adopted by both parties.

In interviews, the team heard evidence that the scope for collaboration with MTU may not be fully explored, noting changes to higher education and further education across the region. The team noted the suggestion that UCC should re-envision the relationship with MTU given its new multi-campus structure, noting that all current UCC-MTU collaborations are legacy instances with the former Cork Institute of Technology, with no instances involving the Institute of Technology Tralee for example.

A similar overarching Joint Academic Standards Committee exists to ensure the quality of programmes offered as part of the partnership with Turning Point Institute (ISER, p. 27) is maintained. The review team also notes the successful incorporation of the Irish Management Institute (IMI) within UCC QA standards and procedures.

The university does not, at this point, have significant collaborative or joint provision with overseas providers. A relationship with Minzu University in China centres on a joint programme in Environmental Science and Management. It is governed by a Joint Board of Studies and a Joint Academic Standards Board. However, the programme is new and small in scale. The review team notes the governance structure, but it is too early to make an assessment of effectiveness.

PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

New programme and course proposals and approval are developed and delivered in line with the statutory requirements of QQI and in alignment with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).

This section will include details of UCC's activities in (a) course development and delivery for continuing professional development and (b) its management of clinical research.

A) Continuing Professional Development (CPD

Some of the training courses developed under CPD are clearly of benefit to current UCC staff, with examples including:

i. Leadership Training: All staff newly appointed to management/leadership positions undertake leadership development. A revised and extended leadership programme was introduced for 2021/22 in collaboration with the IMI, resulting in a 187% increase in leadership engagement. This programme includes participation in a peer-support network and a coaching discussion.

ii. The Aurora Programme is a women-only leadership development programme, originally developed by Advance HE in the UK, to address the small numbers of female leaders in senior positions. A dedicated programme was created by Advance HE for UCC, targeting women in lecturer, research and professional services roles (administrative and technical) across all academic disciplines and university administration. It is designed to introduce key leadership topics and skills in the workshops and action learning sessions. 160 women at UCC have participated in the Advance HE Aurora – Women's Only Leadership Ignition Programme since its launch nine years ago.

In addition, the Office of the Vice President for Learning and Teaching supports a wide range of CPD activities for staff through the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (CIRTL) which provides support for all staff in their teaching and learning roles. A digital badge is available to research supervisors who undertake

the supervisor training workshop and assessment which is run by CIRTL with the Dean of Graduate Studies. CIRTL has developed a new 10 credit module entitled 'Inclusive Supervision' which was rolled out in January 2022. The Dean of Graduate Studies runs 'Surviving the Viva' workshops for supervisors to help support students, but also to keep them up to date regarding any changes in regulations/policies, such as the UCC Policy on the Supervision of Research Students. Supervisors can also avail of the masterclasses in supervision and the IUA Collaborative Webinar Series for Research Supervisors (2021-22 pilot programme).

CIRTL coordinates activities to enhance the professional development of teaching and learning of staff through credit bearing courses, short courses resulting in digital badges, as well as supporting staff with curriculum development through interactive Learning Design workshops and Design Sprints, modelling a student as partner approach. Staff engagement with professional development is very high and over the past five years, 584 staff have undertaken a credit bearing course and 350 have undertaken short courses leading to digital badges. The review team also noted that it was not possible to apply for promotion without such a qualification, which is a good approach to enable the desired outcome. A selection of the courses offered include: three credit-bearing courses, a Postgraduate Certificate, Diploma and MA in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education; Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice and Leadership for Higher Education Professional Services staff; and CPD modules on Digital Education and Inclusive Academic Practice. Staff also engage in short courses offered through the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and are supported to access National Forum funding for seminars relating to teaching and learning, and to engage in competitive schemes such as the DELTA discipline award, network funding calls and National Forum Research Fellows scheme.

The review team highly commends the level and quality of the CPD programmes developed within UCC for its staff.

In addition, the review team welcomed in the UCC ISER details of the provision/delivery of a high standard of quality training that is accredited and/or recognised nationally/internationally for PhD students and research staff across UCC. Initiatives that have been implemented to deliver research integrity training include: Epigeum Online Training, UCC's Digital Badge in Responsible Conduct of Research and a series of modules within UCC CPD and PhD Programmes. The UCC Digital Badge in the Responsible Conduct of Research has been widely recognised as an impactful initiative to raise awareness among the research community of current policies and approaches in ensuring the highest standards in the conduct of research. The review team again highly commends the development of these training courses, noting that many research funding bodies, e.g. SFI, now require all researchers funded by them to provide evidence of successfully completing Epigeum courses.

The UCC ISER and IP outlines the role of the Adult Continuing Education (ACE) centre, an integral part of UCC taught programme provision, which has offered part-time education (NFQ levels 6 to 9) to Cork and the wider Munster area since 1946. With approximately 3,000 students every year, a distinctive educational experience for part-time adult learners is offered, promoting both lifelong and life-wide learning. Courses are delivered flexibly on campus, in the community, online and through blended modes of delivery. The portfolio includes open access courses and a broad range of non-accredited short courses which are attractive to retirees and all those who wish to continue their lifelong learning journeys. The centre manages the university's response to the government's upskilling initiative, Springboard+, with an annual intake of approximately 300 students. More recently, a large number of microcredentials have been developed in response to learning needs from both employer and community organisations. ACE is committed to grassroots development and community delivery, connecting with a diversity of adult learners. The review team commends the role of ACE and its role in embedding UCC into the local community and region.

The review team also noted that ACE's ethos of equality, diversity and inclusion for all is evident in the initiatives that have focused on marginalised and disadvantaged groups, including the development of a Level 7 Diploma in Leadership in the Community for Traveller Women which was co-created with Southern Traveller Health Network (25 Travellers graduated in 2021). Further examples include the UCC Sanctuary Scholarships scheme which provides learning opportunities for asylum seekers; and the ACE Response to Ukraine Crisis, whereby a rapid intervention course to over 100 displaced Ukrainians over a six-week period was delivered. Once again, the review team highly commends these initiatives.

B) Oversight and Management of Clinical Research

The UCC ISER describes how it manages its clinical research, a vital component of any well-functioning healthcare system which represents a key element of UCC's Research and Innovation Strategy. To support the development of this core objective and to facilitate UCC PIs (based both on the campus and in the teaching hospitals) to undertake clinical research, especially in areas in which UCC acts as a clinical trial sponsor, the review team commends the dedicated clinical research support infrastructure, which was put in place in partnership with CoMH, OCLA and Clinical Research Facility.

This infrastructure is vital to ensure that clinical research is adequately governed and managed, and that the significant regulatory requirements are appropriately complied with. The review team commends the key actions taken including: the appointment of a Clinical Research Reporting Officer and the establishment of a (Clinical) Sponsorship Office, and provision of the technical expertise required for the planning and conduct of clinical research, including a broad range of additional skills and expertise in the areas of insurance, sponsorship, contracts, governance, financial planning and research support.

Finally, the review team commends the UCC initiative, in collaboration with the Irish Medical Council, to implement a joint process to undertake periodic review and accreditation of the School of Medicine in parallel.

STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT

The university has identified 'Our Staff, Our Culture' as goal four of the five strategic goals in the Strategic Plan 'Securing our Future' 2023-2028. The strategy document outlines the commitment to the creation and implementation of a People and Culture plan to attract, develop and retain global talent. The review team strongly endorses this goal given the stated intention of the university to intensify its focus on research, and the inevitable additional resources that will be required to support this intent against a backdrop of strong global competition for talent.

Recruitment

The context of the past years, such as sector-wide restrictions on hiring, promotions, redundancy and other employment practices, is accepted by the review team as having impacted the university's HR strategy. From a quality perspective, the review team is satisfied that all standards are being met under the comprehensive framework of regulations, policies and guidelines as provided in the University Principal Statute and subject to the relevant external guidelines and legislation as presented in the ISER and supported through meetings with university staff.

In light of the recruitment needs of the university going forward, the ISER itself provides a recommendation to enhance the speed and efficiency of the recruitment process with specific reference to the length of time to get posts approved, advertised and interviewed. The review team agrees and suggests that this, like other self-identified recommendations, is progressed.

The role of UCC Futures cannot be overstated in the context of recruitment and the university's strategic vision. This strategic group will be critical to meeting the future recruitment needs aligned to strategy. As it appears the University Leadership Team agree the criteria for post approval and prioritisation of posts for approval, the actual approval of posts is held by the UCC Futures group. It will be important to ensure strong communication and clarity of accountabilities in this process, although we note the recent success

of the Search Committee in receiving and indeed managing 815 applicants for eight posts.

A notable concern for the review team arising from meetings with staff was a lack of specificity in the size and shape of the university going forward and as such the target recruitment needs by type, academic, research, professional. It is the recommendation of the review team that more urgent consideration be given to the future size and shape of UCC, to inform a recruitment strategy to meet the future resource needs of the university.

The review team recognises that the issue of housing is an impediment to onboarding new staff, particularly from overseas. It is accepted as a global issue not unique to UCC and is to some extent outside the immediate scope of control of the university, but it is noted as a potential risk to the capacity to recruit staff internationally. The review team is supportive of the specific reference to mitigate this risk by employing a more focused approach to such practical onboarding supports that may be required going forward as documented by UCC as an area identified for enhancement.

Recruitment and Diversity
A commendation from the review team arising from its meetings with staff was the ongoing whole institution approach to embedding the UN Sustainable Development Goals in research, innovation, teaching and learning at UCC. From a recruitment perspective the review team notes the specific commitments to the University's Athena Swan Action Plan 4.1.4 which focuses on the development of ethical employment guidelines for hourly occasional staff members. There is clear best practice coming from the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Unit in informing and advising on initiatives to support the recruitment of a diverse workforce. This includes a target of 40% female applications for academic posts by 2023. We note also the importance placed on data and evidence-based decision making in supporting an equitable workplace. A specific referenced example of note is the Gender Pay Gap Group that was set up to establish and share best practice.

Management – Staff Workload
It is noted that the HR function is changing and in

support of the strategy there is change towards a more distributed model of people management whereby management is empowered and enabled to manage people issues as a first point of contact rather than all staff issues being directed to HR. It is the intention that this will allow the HR function to provide the supports to those people managers to ensure consistency, trust, empowerment with confidence, meaningful and timely communications.

The observation of the review team when specifically asking about this balance between central and devolved responsibilities, is that the staff interviewed felt that the balance "is about right".

With regard to the devolved management structure, the review team considered the workload issues that may arise, particularly in the context of the ambition to increase PhD numbers. While academic staff felt that they could reasonably cope with meeting the academic/research needs of more PhDs, they felt less confident that they could meet the 'whole student' duty of care needs given the pressures of such low stipends. While the issue of stipend is not within the scope of this review, the impact for workload cannot be ignored and is flagged as a potential issue.

It is the recommendation of the review team that UCC implement with consistency workload models across the university which include provision for research supervision (particularly that of PhD students).

Performance Management
In consideration of performance management and addressing the development needs of staff, the review team learned that these needs are captured through the annual survey with reference to the Irish Universities Talent Network. While the review team was confident that the benchmark for what excellence looks like is clearly understood and communicated for research excellence, the benchmark for teaching excellence was less clearly understood. It is therefore noted by the review team that greater consistency of performance standards for teaching would serve the overall performance management process from mapping skills sets, roles and performance management.

Performance Management is recognised in the university strategy in the context of developing university leaders and delivering enhanced and effective performance management that recognises, promotes and rewards strong performance and that can address gaps. While the review team notes that recognition and reward for strong performance, the management of poor performance is less well defined. Also, putting performance management in the context of career development, the link between performance management and career development for the professional staff is also lacking given the timeframes of promotional calls to date.

Career Development
There is a clear statement of commitment to the establishment of career development frameworks and structured programmes to support all categories of staff on their career journey. In meetings with the review team, staff noted the efforts made by the university to promote and deliver enhanced gender balance from the existing role holder population. Such measures include the general support and encouragement of women to apply for roles, the digital badge programme, the Aurora Leadership Programme and the Leadership Development Programme. Additionally, there is a strong mentoring and coaching panel for all staff with reasonable uptake and positive feedback. Noting how difficult it can be in any large university structure to disseminate best practice across functional units, the review team suggests that UCC should encourage school managers to set up informal networks within and across the colleges to share expertise and innovative practices.

It is noted by the review team that the challenges of personal circumstances have historically limited the opportunities for some colleagues to progress their careers and keep pace with their peers. In response to this the team was pleased to see the creation of a 'Personal Circumstance Process' whereby a candidate can submit a Personal Circumstance form to ensure the protection of the pattern of career progression in the event of a

candidate taking statutory leave. The review team also recognises the Returner Scheme supports for those returning from leave which are equally commendable as good practice.

Given the strategic importance of research to the university, the review team acknowledges the value of the research sabbatical and the positive feedback it has received from those staff interviewed by the review team.

Career Progression – Consistency across all categories of staff

The issue of greatest concern for the review team in the area of career development is the career development of professional staff. This concern is raised in the ISER but was also vocalised as a matter of great frustration and disappointment during the site visit meetings. While in 2019 there was an agreement to develop an administrative promotions scheme to facilitate more regular calls for promotion on a similar frequency to such calls in respect to academic staff, it was noted again in the ISER that the 2022 quality review showed that the system of promotions for administrative staff is not fit for purpose. This was confirmed in the interviews carried out by the review team, noting considerable annoyance and dejection by staff that felt their professional career progression was of secondary importance as manifested by the slow delivery on a career development infrastructure for technical and administrative staff. While career progression for all job families cannot practically be the same, there needs to be a more fit-for-purpose means of ensuring equitable timely recognition and reward for all staff.

The review team urges the university to address this inconsistency in the management of career development across all job families without delay – and notes that in the Strategic Plan, under section 4.4, there is a commitment to establish career development frameworks and structured programmes to support all categories of staff on their career journey. The specific reference to the consideration of the frequency of staff promotion calls is noted here as of particular importance with respect to staff engagement and retention.

There was considerable frustration and unhappiness expressed in some meeting sessions with regard to promotion cycles that are 'too long and unclear'. While some departments, most notably Food Science, were very confident in their strong mentorship programme and practice, others said that they experienced little to no mentoring support and that its effectiveness rests with the individuals concerned. It was also observed that while mentoring and pastoral support is valuable to a point, their value can only be fully realised when the necessary functional/financial supports can be provided in tandem.

Future of Work

The Future of Work nationally and internationally is enabled by greater digitalisation and was expedited by the COVID-19 pandemic. This is also true for UCC. The review team recognises the work being undertaken in the piloting of a blended work scheme with an underlying focus on output and delivery rather than hours in the workplace. The current pilot scheme of a minimum of 2 days per week on campus for roles that can be delivered remotely, will inform how policy will look going forward. It is understood by the review team that, while this has been challenging for some managers, it has mostly been well received as a positive experience.

The review team acknowledges the current draft legislation on the future of work and the role of the university's Flexible Working Group that was set up to inform how future work-life balance statutory rules will be implemented.

UCC's strategy document outlines a desire to implement a Future of Work Model which is driven by a culture of high performance, professional development, excellent and effective communication. While remote working and/or flexible working are features of the Future of Work Model, they are only effective when the foundations of excellence in people and performance management and quality processes and policies are applied consistently. It is clear that the university recognises this, and for this reason we commend the initiatives currently underway and strongly urge the university to address the concerns raised herein with

respect to performance management and career progression.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

As a research-intensive university, UCC is committed to excellent research that is connected with teaching and learning. Through its Academic Strategy, UCC has extended the internationally recognised Connected Curriculum model to provide the basis for a transformed and outstanding student learning experience through a Connected University approach. This approach takes a holistic view of the learning experience which involves enhanced synergy between teaching, research and innovation coupled with transformative investment in people, technology and physical infrastructure. The Connected Curriculum approach provides the basis for delivering a world-class student learning experience by educating students to make impactful changes both nationally and internationally, integrating six key components which UCC believes to be central to its graduates: research-based teaching; employability; sustainability; inter- and trans-disciplinarity; global reach; and civic and community engagement.

The university portfolio of taught programmes includes major awards which are all positioned on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), and in alignment with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) expectations for first and second cycle awards. All programmes are designed in a modular format, are European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credit-rated and developed through a learning outcomes approach. Programmes are offered as single subject degrees (e.g. Bachelor of Law), or multiple subject degrees (Bachelor of Arts) delivered over a three or four year period at undergraduate level. Taught postgraduate programmes (ca. 6% of postgraduate students in UCC) include minor and major awards ranging from 30 ECTS to 120 ECTS.

The quality of UCC programmes is guaranteed by external accreditation nationally and internationally. UCC programmes across the university are accredited by professional, regulatory and statutory bodies which attest to the quality of learning and

provide assurance to learners and wider society regarding the quality of graduate outcomes. This includes over 40 external accreditation bodies (statutory and professional bodies) including internationally recognised accreditation bodies such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and the Association of MBAs (AMBA). UCC also assures the quality of its programmes through the input and oversight from external experts to assess the quality of new programmes under development, as well as external examiners to evaluate the quality of current programmes and assessment. Additionally, UCC has a comprehensive periodic quality review process, based on international peer review, to enable ongoing quality assurance and enhancement of all programmes.

UCC has clear policies and defined processes for programme approval and monitoring and strives to be student centred, responsive, innovative and creative in all endeavours. Equality, diversity and inclusion are central to recruitment, admission, and the delivery of programmes. Furthermore, ensuring the student body gains the highest quality learning experience prepares them for engagement in wider society following completion of UCC programmes.

Even though the review team's visit was nearly two years post-pandemic, they wish to commend the learning and teaching community, including the Library and IT staff, at UCC for overcoming the significant challenges of pivoting to fully online delivery and in the adjustment to the post-COVID 'reality' of university life. Despite the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, UCC facilitated ongoing learning and progression for students throughout 2020 and 2021 as Ireland endured successive phases of lockdown. During the review team's visit, the pressures this period had placed on all members of the community were acknowledged. However, students and staff also reflected positively on the sense of community that underpinned UCC's response to the emergency. Canvas, UCC's dedicated virtual learning environment (VLE), came online in the 2019/2020 academic year allowing students to access the learning content for their modules, submit assignments and other assessments as well as engage with other students and lecturers

through an online module forum, so critical during the pandemic. Since then, there have been over 1,770,000 assessment submissions, 656,942,429 page views, 660,571 submissions of assessments to Turnitin (a tool for testing the originality of assessment to protect against plagiarism) and 92,239,609 minutes of recorded lecture content watched.

While agreeing that the advent of the technological universities creates increased competition in the undergraduate space for UCC, the review team strongly suggests that UCC should aim to be the destination of choice for top level undergraduates in the Munster region.

External examining is an important reference point for the quality and standards of taught programmes providing assurance of academic standards and advice on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. While the review team was impressed overall by the systems put in place by UCC to manage and respond to the input provided by external examiners, it wishes to recommend that examination papers submitted to external examiners for review should be accompanied by the cognate sample answers where feasible / appropriate, which is standard practice across the third level sector in Ireland.

Discussions with staff and students showed that there was a perceived lack of consistency across schools and colleges on the topic of lecture recording, a key issue of concern for students. The review team noted that processes were underway to ensure consistent and mandatory lecture recording and urges their rapid completion. The team, drawing on its collective experience and evidence from students, was of the view that in order to support students learning by Access, the choice regarding participation should not be left to individual members of academic staff, who currently feel free to diverge from the policy on specious academic or discipline-specific grounds. Indeed, the review team felt that best practice would suggest going one step further in that UCC should develop a mechanism which requires heads of colleges/schools to sign-off annually to affirm that their colleges/schools are compliant with university policies, including that on the recording of lectures.

The students were keen to point out that the benefits of lecture recording far outweigh the risk that it might negatively impact lecture attendance, a view shared by the review team.

In response to a question regarding the implementation of annual module and programme monitoring at UCC, a comment was made to the effect that the process currently is 'organic' and depends on the level of change required to a module at a specific point in time. The hope was expressed that the new Curriculum Management IT System will give better access to data. As they were described, the current systems / processes for monitoring modules year-on-year did not seem fit for purpose in permitting the early detection of problems. It seems clear (even at this early stage in the process) that UCC is 'on a journey' towards full implementation of annual module and programme monitoring. The review team recommends that UCC develop formal systems for module and programme monitoring as the new Curriculum Management IT system comes online to facilitate this. While students did have opportunities to give feedback on the courses (usually at the end of individual modules), they have no clear sense of changes being implemented in response to their feedback. Clearly, more work is necessary (as recognised by the President) to close the feedback loop with students, perhaps through 'you said, we did' initiatives at school and college level.

UCC colleagues spoke of the decision some years ago to cease module-specific student satisfaction surveys, citing survey fatigue as the main reason, and they described the ongoing pilot study involving some 1,000 students which aims to provide an evidence-base for the reintroduction of these surveys. In the opinion of the review team, this is to be encouraged. In addition, UCC needs to ensure, possibly via the ongoing pilot project, that student satisfaction data is appropriately gathered and factored into the assessment of the quality of modules and programmes across UCC.

UCC staff recognised that the planned introduction of Programme Boards across the university would involve a balance between risk and opportunity; specifically, the risk of proliferating further levels of governance versus the opportunity to develop

robust processes for module and programme development and monitoring. In the area of the development of new programmes, the review team suspected that the colleges may wield too much influence in that they hold responsibility for developing the business case for new degree programmes. The discussion of the apportioning of responsibility for new programme development and approval led the review team to wonder if the university has put in place adequate systems for [a] market research to probe likely demand for new programmes, and [b] due diligence to ensure the bona fides of potential transnational / collaborative partners. Clearly this is crucial to the university's internationalisation ambitions as set out in the new Strategic Plan.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

The university has recently reviewed and revised its assessment framework in line with its revised Strategy as set out in *UCC 2022 – Delivering a Connected University*. The aim has been to provide a framework for the consistent application of assessment principles and practices, whilst recognising the need to remain sensitive to subject-specialist needs and professional and statutory body requirements.

The original strategy is set out in detail in *Assessment Framework: Principles and Plan* (June 2021). The ISER explains that UCC's philosophy of assessment is transformative in supporting the development of critical, analytical and creative thinking skills and underpins the approach to supporting student success through assessment.

During the pandemic, an Examinations Business Continuity Planning Group (EBCG) was established to advise on practice for online assessment. It was set up as an executive committee of Academic Council, with over 50 representatives from the academic community, professional service units and members of the Students' Union. The EBCG enabled changes to be made to assessment and mitigation policies and communications to staff and students. The EBCG adopted a number of principles, including that any necessary changes to a module's assessment methods needed to be

appropriate for module learning outcomes and were acceptable to relevant external accrediting bodies. It was also aligned to QQI's Guiding Principles for Alternative Assessments. However, it also adopted a principle of subsidiarity, with local decision making by schools and departments. The effectiveness of the EBCG was reviewed, using a self-evaluation (reported in the ISER) and an external review by Professor Jim Walsh (Maynooth University). It does not seem that students were involved in the review. The external reviewer however was very complimentary.

Taking in turn UCC's two overarching philosophical principles underlying the purpose of assessment:

1) The approach to assessment should be transformative, and 'supports the development of critical, analytical and creative thinking skills; skills that are embedded in fairness and academic rigour' (Assessment Framework: Principles and Plan, p. 6).

During various meetings with academic staff and students, a number of issues of concern were raised, especially by students, in terms of inconsistencies across different schools and colleges in assessment practice, particularly in grading and in the development of comprehensive assessment rubrics and the use of marking scales. For example, concerns were expressed by undergraduate students about apparent differences in the assessment strategies between schools and colleges citing, for example, their perception that it is possible to score very highly (up to 100%) in data-intensive disciplines, e.g. Science and Engineering, but almost impossible to score above 70% in more discursive disciplines, e.g. Arts and Law. This was recognised by academic staff, who noted disciplinary differences, and argued for the system of examination boards as the safeguard for standards and consistency, with mitigation for divergence across disciplines being provided by the involvement of chairpersons from different disciplines to ensure independence. The team was also concerned to learn from meetings with those professional services units with central responsibility for matters of teaching, learning and assessment, compared with views

from colleges, that the final say on assessment strategy and methodology seems to lie with the colleges rather than with the university centrally. Whilst the review team recognise in governance terms that the responsibility for assessment strategy lies with the colleges, it wondered if there was consistency in practice across the colleges. The defence of 'differing disciplinary norms' did not seem credible to the review team which, instead, recommends the mandatory development and implementation of marking schemes and rubrics to ensure consistency and fairness for assessments in all programmes across the university. This also extends to the need for the university to monitor grade inflation over the years by benchmarking at national, and even international, level and developing mechanisms to deal with inconsistencies where they arise.

It was also apparent from meetings with academic staff that external examiners were relied upon heavily in terms of their input to independent evaluation and adjudication of curriculum and assessment standards and practices. However, it was a matter of concern to the team that external examiners are not uniformly given access to sample answers when they are reviewing draft examination papers. While the review team was impressed overall by the systems put in place by UCC to manage and respond to the input provided by external examiners, it nonetheless recommends that examination papers submitted to external examiners for review should be accompanied by sample answers, where feasible and appropriate.

2) Feedback on assessment of performance is critical to student learning (Assessment Framework: Principles and Plan, p. 6).

Review team meetings with students revealed that, while students did feel they had opportunities to give feedback on courses including assessment (usually at the end of individual modules), they had no clear sense of changes being implemented in response to their feedback. Indeed, the meeting with the IRG on the second day of the review visit exposed the university's arguably 'patchy' engagement with student feedback in general and specifically in relation to assessment. However, the review team commends the role of the Skills

Centre in identifying modules where delivery is problematic as, for example, exemplified by spikes in demand for support from students on specific degree programmes and by increased failure rates over time.

Other matters that came up included policies and processes around ensuring academic integrity. The review team were impressed with the coherent approach to dealing with academic integrity issues through the appointment of an Academic Integrity Officer, widespread use of Turnitin for screening of submitted work, a university-wide plagiarism policy, effective disciplinary policies and procedures and the input of the Skills Centre (Library) in educating students about the issues. The review team was impressed by the readiness of the university community to contemplate changes to assessment strategy and methodology in response to new challenges posed by artificial intelligence systems, e.g. ChatGPT, and by the greater availability of analytics data relevant to student engagement with university IT systems.

Another area of comment and discussion concerned the effectiveness and efficiency of processes for recording marks. The Assessment Framework refers to plans to address workload issues associated with assessment, including investing in examination scheduling software and developing more innovative and inclusive approaches to assessment. These plans are still in development it seems. When asked what UCC staff would stop doing to increase effectiveness, the responses included: (i) reducing the need for repeated manual entry of the same sets of marks across IT systems, (ii) review of the progression criteria in embedded Marks and Standards and (iii) simplifying processes for local and university examination boards. Nonetheless, the review team were impressed by the efforts of UCC to streamline external examiner processes and to ensure that maximum value is derived from their input to ongoing programme monitoring.

Finally, an area of concern for the team was surfaced during discussions with postgraduate students. The students spoke variously of their involvement in demonstrating to students in undergraduate teaching laboratories and of

tutoring students in Arts programmes. While recognising that all postgraduate students involved in examinations hold university appointments as Assistant Examiners, the review team members were concerned at the extent, in some cases, of their involvement in grading final year essays and final degree examination papers and suggests that this be kept under review to ensure compliance with university policy on an ongoing basis.

SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS

In addition to the documents submitted, the review team met a cross-section of students from across the university. The team met with international students, study abroad students, postgraduate research and coursework students, equity students, undergraduate students and student representatives. The team also had dedicated meetings with staff providing key student services such as Library, IT and Student Support Services. Although the team found the overall strategy for the provision of services and the delivery of services to be sound, with some areas of good practice, it has also come up with some recommendations especially as regards to postgraduate and international students. (See also section on Access, Transfer and Progression below.)

Support for learners at UCC is approached from a holistic perspective, bringing together the curricular and extra-curricular experience and involving university and student providers of services. 'Begin, Belong and Become' is the name given to the framework within which this operationalised. The Graduate Attributes Programme provides a further overarching theme for students to chart their personal and academic development journey.

Support for student learning is provided from three areas of the university. Within the Deputy President and Registrar's Office, the Student Experience Office runs a range of services including health and wellbeing, student counselling, student life, accommodation and community life, careers, sports, student societies and several more (ISER, p. 56). The Office of the Vice-President for Learning and Teaching provides library services and the UCC Skills Centre. To supplement these central

services, the colleges provide academic learning and pastoral support.

The 'Begin, Belong and Become' framework is operationalised as transition into UCC and is centred on some pre-arrival and orientation activities ('Begin'). 'Belong' is linked to a range of support activities as students transition through UCC and includes peer support programmes, clubs and societies, skills support and counselling to name a few. The university also provides advice, guidance and support around sexual misconduct and bystander intervention. Activities associated with 'Become' are linked to transitioning out of UCC and into employment. A Career Services Learning Hub provides students with a range of physical and virtual supports and tools and an employability award that students can use as evidence of their capabilities.

UCC's International Office offers a range of supports dedicated to international students. This includes activities such as orientation, advice on visa compliance and cultural acclimation. The team heard from several international students as to how much they enjoyed and learned from field trips arranged by the International Office. The review team commends the 'Propel' module (developed by UCC Career Services) which permits local and international students to get a clear view of the labour market in Ireland, developing their long-term employability, and can be taken from their home country before arriving at UCC.

The university seeks and receives student feedback on its services from a number of sources, including the Irish Student Survey. As noted above, the team recommends that UCC swiftly adopts a more systematic approach to internal student surveys. The team was very interested to read about the student forum and felt that it was a valuable exercise provided that the feedback loop to students is closed. The students the team spoke to were supportive of the forum but felt that they were not informed of outcomes.

The students involved in discussion with the team were generally appreciative of the learning support services offered by UCC. Several students in different sessions named the First Year Experience

Coordinator and individuals in the Skills Centre and the Careers Centre as being particularly effective and empathetic. The review team commends the role of the First Year Experience Coordinator in detecting and managing students likely to want to drop-out of programmes and Student Support Services generally on the retention and quality of the international student experience.

Several student groups singled out university support for postgraduate students as an area for improvement. The team heard from postgraduate students that their experience can vary greatly between colleges, and that some who hold assistant examiner appointments can face significant additional workload through their involvement in university examinations. Graduate students also spoke of silos and of how difficult they sometimes found it to make connections across disciplines. Given the university's strategic aim to increase postgraduate and international student numbers substantially, the review team recommends that UCC should undertake comprehensive resource planning to ensure that student service provision is scalable to meet increased demand.

At the same time, the team also heard evidence from international research students that the support and opportunities that they received at UCC were transformational both academically and personally. The review team commends the 'life-transforming' experience for international students provided by exposure to UCC programmes of study, the UCC community and to university life and the uniformly high level of satisfaction evident among international students for the learning supports provided to them and their overall student experience.

INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

The ISER refers to the commitment by the university to invest in the development of an enhanced Curriculum Information Management System (CIM) to provide a suite of appropriate quality and management information on programmes and modules, to address the current variability in the nature and quality of feedback across departments,

schools and colleges. This is to be welcomed, as are the plans to develop enhanced IT-based options for the systematic collection and handling of marks and handling of academic integrity issues. It also refers to the Digital Masterplan for IT Services (2021). Again, it is good to see this roadmap, but it is not yet clear how much of it has already been developed and how much is in planning for future implementation.

The ISER describes the current digital learning infrastructure, which consists of several key technology platforms, e.g. the Canvas VLE, Panopto for lecture recording, Turnitin for managing academic integrity, MS Teams for collaboration, Qualtrics for managing surveys, amongst others. However, it is not clear how coherent or integrated these platforms are. Notwithstanding this, UCC was able to swiftly pivot to online teaching, learning and assessment in a timely and successful fashion at the start of the pandemic and for which positive feedback was given by the external reviewer referred to in the section on assessment.

Governance and management of IT services provision is overseen by the IT Steering Governance Committee, which prioritises technology projects and funding to meet the university's technology infrastructure strategy and the digital masterplan. The library services also include professional posts dedicated to the use of digital technology to support academic staff in embedding technology resources in the curriculum and in digitising existing resources as well as developing new digital resources. Evaluation of digital services is undertaken annually and formally discussed at the university's Learning and Teaching Committee. IT services also use a suite of metrics and sources of feedback that are reported to ULT and used to track and enhance digital service provision. The university has developed a roadmap for digital education and the Digital Education Plan is being reviewed by Academic Board during 2023. The university recognises the need for optimising the integration of data and systems such as curriculum management and student records, including the use of learning analytics, and has begun the development of an enterprise data strategy which will in future include learning systems data.

UCC also has an ongoing Digital Records Management (DRM) Project which is intended to ensure that records and data are managed effectively through policies and procedures and systems that not only support business processes, but crucially enable legal and regulatory compliance, as well as preserving the university archives. The remit also includes means for protecting the security and integrity of records and data, including personal data. Arrangements for the governance and management of records, including for ensuring statutory reporting and data protection compliance are set out in the most recent AQR and seem to the review team to be well managed.

The review team wish to commend IT Services for their support and services. However, several areas for consideration arose during various meetings. The need to focus efforts on creating readily usable management information dashboards to enable a joined up cross institutional approach to understanding and interpreting data for better evaluation and decision making. Plans are being developed to address this, and it is recognised that these are challenges faced by many institutions. While UCC has developed a data warehouse to aggregate data and analytics across the spectrum of its activities, it is clear that the richness of this data has not yet been accessed in an effective way. The need for training and development for students in GDPR matters and generally to engage students in transparent discussions around the use of their data, especially in the future development of learning analytics in Canvas. These issues will become even more acute as the university responds to the use of AI systems such as ChatGPT. The need for mandatory cybersecurity training for all staff and students. The team makes two recommendations in this area. The first is given the crucial importance of library and IT services to the quality of the student experience, UCC should strive to protect existing budgetary allocations for these services against competing internal demands, and to continue to lobby for greater HEA funding support to permit their adequate resourcing. The second is that UCC should consider the appointment of a Chief Information Officer who can work with the Director of IT to take forward solutions to issues like those mentioned above.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

UCC places great emphasis on effective communication, which has been identified as one of the key enablers in the new strategic plan. To fulfil its mission, UCC operates many digital communication channels, including websites, social media profiles, digital signage and newsletters. They allow the university to reach various audiences, including prospective and current students, staff, alumni, business and the wider community.

The UCC website, which is the primary source of information for most stakeholders, has been designed in line with modern user experience standards. As a result, it is easy to navigate, search and filter. The intuitive layout allows for quick access to information addressed to specific groups of recipients. A sitemap has been built in to facilitate browsing and inform external search engines. The websites have also been adapted to make content accessible to all users, including those with disabilities, and on different devices like mobile phones. All critical documents, including regulations and policies, are published in formats that are compatible with screen readers.

The website provides comprehensive information on education and training programmes, research and related services, including all the information required by the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. The Recruitment and Admissions Office works with schools and colleges to keep programme and module information up to date.

The website is overseen by the Web Content Team in the Office of Marketing and Communications, and its governance is underpinned by the university's website and social media policy. The policy requires content to be timely, relevant and accurate to the audience for whom it is developed; easy to find and understand; inclusive and accessible to all; consistent in use of language style, structures, voice and tone; extensible and reusable. It also stipulates that content should always reflect UCC's values and priorities. Subsequently, the policy defines some basic rules, roles and responsibilities.

Furthermore, the university has its own visual identity and branding standards that all websites and other media must adhere to.

The QEU website is a valuable resource of quality assurance policies, procedures, and evaluation reports, as well as review schedules, thematic analyses, case studies of good practice and guidelines for student reviewers. The site is frequently updated with rich and relevant content to ensure it stays current. However, it may be helpful to consider making the QEU website more easily accessible from UCC's homepage for the convenience of stakeholders and to increase its visibility.

UCC has made a significant step towards promoting transparency and consistency by launching the Academic Policy and Document Portal. This online platform serves as a central repository for all the university's academic policies, ensuring that their latest versions are accessible to relevant stakeholders and used across the University. The portal is maintained by the Office of Academic Affairs and Governance.

UCC also runs official social media profiles on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube. The profiles are managed by the Marketing and Media teams in the Office of Marketing and Communications. Aside from that, UCC engages with the public through various outreach programs such as podcasts, public and private tours, regular press releases, digital magazines and printed publications. Through these initiatives, UCC aims to foster strong relationships with its stakeholders and keep them informed about the latest developments at the institution.

In conclusion, UCC has implemented procedures and policies to ensure that all published information is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible. As outlined in the ISER, UCC conducts annual user experience surveys. The most recent survey in 2022 showed that the overall assessment of the websites was 90%. During the site visit, stakeholders confirmed that they were satisfied with the quality of public information.

OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

UCC has a number of arrangements for collaborative provision, both nationally and internationally. The most significant national collaborative arrangement is with Munster Technological University (MTU). There is also a validation arrangement with the Turning Point Institute (TPI) for counselling and psychotherapy training. There are also a number of joint/double degree arrangements, articulations and collaborative programmes internationally, including with universities in the UK, France, Sweden, Switzerland, Latvia as well as outside of Europe in Brunei, Thailand and China.

All collaborative programmes are approved through Academic Board and by a Programme Approval Panel. Memoranda of Agreements are signed off by the Deputy President and Registrar and/or the President.

Collaborative programmes with MTU are governed by an MTU-UCC Joint Board, which is a joint board of the MTU Academic Council and UCC's Academic Board. There is a Joint Academic Standards Committee to oversee the governance and academic quality of programmes delivered under the UCC-TPI partnership. The agreement between UCC and Minzu University of China is co-taught by UCC and MUC staff and has governance arrangements similar to national joint programmes, with a joint Board of Studies and a joint Academic Standards Board.

Given the need to further develop the university's global strategy, there is a recognised need to strengthen the arrangements for governance and quality assurance of transnational education provision. UCC has recently appointed a new Vice President for Global Engagement to further develop UCC's international profile and to develop enhanced UCC's principles, policies and procedures for TNE. The review team were unable to meet the new VP Global Engagement during the review visit because the appointee was not yet in post and was away from the university at the time. However, much reference was made to the strategic importance of this new

senior management position. The review team recommends that, given the weight attached to the role of the newly appointed Vice President for Global Engagement, UCC should develop an appropriately and strategically resourced Global Strategy which includes a student recruitment plan with specific college and university targets based on sound market research and marketing.

SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

It was readily apparent to the review team, both from the ISER and associated documents and from its interactions with staff and stakeholders, that UCC has a well-developed culture of quality which is manifested in an evaluative and evidence-based approach to policy development and decision making. Periodic review is an integral part of quality assurance and is regarded positively by staff [ISER Vol. 1:3.6]. For example, the recent periodic review of the School of Law was described by stakeholders during the MRV as being a very positive process which led, via the Quality Enhancement Plan, to governance change within the school and enhanced approaches to marketing and communications. The review team was impressed also by the pragmatic shared approach to quality assurance adopted by UCC in the context of collaborative provision, which was highlighted by stakeholders representing its partner institutions during the site visit. UCC has been effective in its use of thematic review as a bridge between quality and strategy in key areas of its operations [ISER 1:3.7.5]. It was clear, for example, in discussions with stakeholders that the two research quality reviews conducted to-date have had a significant impact on the development of the university's research strategy. The review team commends UCC's approach to thematic review and endorses the university's ambition to further strengthen thematic review as a strategic quality tool [ISER Vol. 1:3.9(1)]. The review team also commends UCC's ongoing efforts to align periodic review and external professional accreditation processes to minimise the impact on the programme and school under review [ISER Vol. 1:3.7.2]; academic staff and heads of school who met with the review team raised this matter and emphasised the need for UCC to

develop approaches which recognise the synergy between QA review and accreditation. Overall, the review team commends the role of the QEU in developing policies and procedures for quality assurance and enhancement and, together with the QEC, in embedding the culture of quality within the life of the university.

Module and programme monitoring and review are included in the UCC Quality Framework [ISER Vol. 1:3.3] and it is clear that the input of external examiners is a key element of both [ISER Vol. 1:5.5.3]. The review team commends the efforts of UCC to streamline external examiner processes and to ensure that maximum value is derived from their input to ongoing programme monitoring. It was evident from discussions with a number of stakeholder groups that the implementation of annual module and programme monitoring at UCC currently is somewhat organic and depends on the level of change required to a module or programme at a specific time-point. The review team was impressed by the level of investment in IT systems, in particular the Curriculum Management IT System, and by the account of stakeholders that the policy and process to codify and migrate course modules to the new curriculum management system has been very effective in disseminating best practice and in bringing about greater consistency across schools and colleges in module presentation. Given that the full implementation of the Curriculum Management IT System will give better access to module and programme data, the review team recommends that UCC would develop and implement more formal module and programme monitoring and review processes.

The student voice is one of the key inputs to quality assurance, and it was clear from the ISER [ISER Vol. 1:7.4] and from discussions with stakeholders that UCC makes good use of the Irish Student Survey as an indicator of student opinion. However, this instrument does not yield information on student satisfaction with course modules or with programmes overall. During the site visit, UCC colleagues spoke of the decision some years ago to cease module-specific student satisfaction surveys, citing survey fatigue as the main reason, and they described the ongoing pilot

study involving some 1,000 students which aims to provide an evidence-base for the reintroduction of these surveys. The review team welcomes this initiative and encourages the university to ensure that student satisfaction data is appropriately gathered and factored into the assessment of the quality of modules and programmes across UCC.

RESEARCH

UCC is an internationally competitive, research-led university that plays a key role in catalysing economic growth in Cork, the Munster region and beyond. Whilst also informing learning and teaching within the university, strategic development of research is focused on the creation and development of world-leading clusters of researchers, building on the research strengths of the university and in alignment with key strategies of the Irish government. UCC has over 1300 registered research students, 90% of whom are at PhD level, with over 250 research graduates per academic year, representing a significant development and training of the human capital so critical to a knowledge-based economy. Research in UCC is conducted across all four colleges and many of the research students are based in the university's Research Institutes, Centres and Units (RICUs), the SFI-funded Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs) and Centres for Research Training (CRTs).

A) Research Governance and Quality Assurance

Research at UCC is guided by a variety of policies, which are publicly available on the university website. The Academic Council Research & Innovation Committee (ACRIC) has oversight of policy related to research and innovation, and reports to Academic Council and Academic Board. College Vice-Deans of Research and Innovation and the Director of Research Support Services are also members of ACRIC, providing a direct link to Colleges and then Schools. Research Institutes, Centres and Units (RICUs) are guided by the RICU Governance Policy and Procedures on Establishment, Review Disestablishment of RICUs. SFI Research Centres hosted by UCC are independently reviewed every two years by an international review panel assembled by SFI.

Research-related policies and regulations have been continually updated and are generally adopted, driven by internal consultation and feedback, and in response to external bodies, and Regulations, such as SFI, IRC, IUA and GDPR respectively. The review team considers that the research QA processes show due regard for QQI's Core Statutory QA Guidelines and Topic Specific QA Guidelines for Research Degree Programmes and that the research community recognises the important contributions that QA and evaluation activities make to better outcomes.

The review team commends UCC for the two research quality reviews conducted to date in 2009 and 2015 and their evident impact on the development of the university's research strategy. The review team welcomes the ongoing development of a research charter to clearly place research within the university's priorities and the positioning of research and innovation within the new strategic plan. The charter sets out 12 commitments that define the core principles, culture and values that support its researchers in creating – and securing – the future through excellence in research. Delivery of the commitments set out in the charter, including a series of specific enabling actions, features prominently in the new institutional strategic plan. The review team also welcomes the imminent appointment of a new Dean of Doctoral Studies, reporting dually to the VP for Research and Innovation and to the Registrar, to enhance the 'PhD student journey' within UCC.

B) Performance, Metrics, and Rankings

The review team commends UCC Research for delivering significant grant income from exchequer and non-exchequer sources, which allows researchers across all disciplines to conduct innovative, collaborative research to deliver impact in line with UCC's research mission and goals. Research income figures for the academic year 2020/2021 show that UCC achieved an investment of €96.3 million. The profile trajectory over the last 10 years has been positive with a 21% increase over the period, very much in line with other third level institutions in Ireland. 32% of UCC's research income is now secured from non-exchequer sources, primarily Europe (Horizon2020)

and industry. Indeed, UCC's success in engaging competitively with EU funding programmes was also reflected in the European Research Ranking tables – in 2020, UCC was ranked 33rd out of hundreds of institutions across Europe and is the number one ranked institution in Ireland. Enterprise funding has levelled off since 2015 at circa €10m.

In 2012 SFI launched the largest ever joint industry exchequer programme of research in the state. UCC's performance in the inaugural 2012 round led nationally with the institution leading four of the seven centres funded, co-leading one, and partner in the remaining two. In 2019, six of the original research centres were awarded renewal funding – three of these research centres are located within UCC, while the institution co-leads another and is a partner in the remaining two. UCC hosts three SFI centres: APC Microbiome Ireland, MaREI, and IPIC (Irish Photonic Integration Centre) and co-leads the Insight Centre for Data Analytics. Of the 16 research centres funded by SFI, UCC leads on three, co-leads a fourth and is a partner on nine others. UCC also hosts Ireland's largest research institute, the Tyndall National Institute. Home to over 500 researchers, Tyndall focuses on solving societal challenges through deep-tech innovation in materials, devices, circuits and systems in the core market areas of communications, agri-tech, energy, environment and health.

Analysis of scholarly output generated from UCC research activity reveals a steady increase over the last 10 years, in line with other Irish institutions. 2,375 research articles (as indexed by the Scopus database) were published by UCC researchers in 2020 (the last fully indexed year), a 26% increase over the last decade. Comparative analysis of the citation impact performance of scholarly outputs, combined across all disciplines and over the five-year period between 2014-2018, indicates that all Irish universities have consistently performed above the world average with UCC publications delivering the highest citation impact in 2020. Indeed, UCC's success in this regard was also reflected in the recent announcement of the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Ranking for 2022 which revealed that UCC is the leading university in Ireland for research impact as measured by citation performance. In addition,

the review team also noted that, of the 35 Ireland-based researchers included in the Highly Cited Researchers 2021 List, 13 are principal investigators from APC Microbiome Ireland. The significant international focus to UCC's research activity is reflected in the generation of 8,176 scholarly publications since 2017, produced in collaboration with over 4,900 institutions from over 140 countries.

UCC's innovation programmes are continuously growing, demonstrating UCC's position as an innovation leader. In a recent Knowledge Transfer Ireland Report from 2021, UCC is ranked among the top universities across all metrics and is the leader in research industry funding, and licence, options or assignments executed. During a discussion on UCC's track-record in fostering spin-out companies, UCC colleagues spoke of their ambitious plans to develop UCC as an 'Innovation Campus' and to establish some thirty spin-out companies in the next five years; they also described the current Ignite and Sprint initiatives in this area. However, the review team wondered if this is a realistic ambition.

C) Research and Innovation in the new UCC Strategic Plan 2023-2028

UCC's ambition is to be the leading university in Ireland for research and innovation and the review team commends the plans to prioritise addressing global grand challenges through the lens of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the UCC Futures Framework, an ambitious new programme of research prioritisation coupled with an innovative academic recruitment strategy across ten indicative areas of strategic importance that will build a foundation for economic, societal and cultural resilience, and prosperity. These plans fit neatly into UCC's commitment to and track-record of achievement in sustainability, and the ongoing whole institution approach to embedding the UN Sustainable Development Goals in research, innovation, learning and teaching at UCC which the review team also commends.

In addition, UCC plans to significantly increase PhD student numbers, which have not grown in line with the level of the previously noted increased research income, with principal investigators

historically preferring to hire postdoctoral fellows instead of PhD students. The review team recommends that UCC should develop a coherent strategy to underpin this aim to substantially increase PhD student numbers which prioritises an entrepreneurial approach over reliance on exchequer funding and which specifies detailed targets, timelines, implementation mechanisms and required supports, including infrastructure and equipment.

D) General Comments

As noted previously, the review team recognised the university's excellent research output and its high impact. In an effort to further enhance research at UCC, the review team encourages the university to consider targeting resources (including training and funding) to promote greater research activity among academic staff who have few current PhD students. It appears that a proportion of academic staff are minimally research active or are research inactive. The heads of departments spoke of sabbatical leave, mentoring and targeted funding for PhD student recruitment, as possible means to encourage greater involvement in research, and the review team endorses these suggestions.

Arising from its discussions with stakeholders around research, the review team noted the KPIs (including publications with industry, joint patents, IP licensing and spin-out company development) used currently to measure the impact of the university's research and would encourage UCC to consider a more innovative approach to KPIs that encompasses more creative metrics to more fully capture the breadth and depth of the university's scholarly endeavours.

The review team noted that, beyond an ambition to "keep raising the issue with Academic Council", UCC colleagues, including members of ACRIC and vice-heads of research committees and research centre directors, offered no meaningful solutions to the key problem of the ongoing repair and replacement of key items of research equipment and infrastructure. There are examples in other universities of internal funding schemes to fund and replace research equipment.

It was apparent from the review team's meeting with the members of the Governing Body that there was an absence of clarity on the specifics of the strategy to increase postgraduate numbers at UCC and the ambition to make UCC the postgraduate study location of choice in research areas that the university excels in. Furthermore, while the review team agrees that the advent of the technological universities creates increased competition in the undergraduate space for UCC, the review team wonders at the wisdom and feasibility of seeking to position UCC so firmly in the postgraduate space in the next five years. The review team heard that the heads of colleges seemed to view the undergraduate market as being exclusively regional, i.e. Munster, and the postgraduate market as being exclusively international.

The review team approved of the initiatives undertaken by UCC to embed risk management in the development of collaborative research partnerships, including policies on conflict of interest, appropriate due diligence and strong legal contracts.

Students' Union officers identified the lack of awareness of, and the relatively poor availability and accessibility of support services for postgraduate students, particularly PhD students, as compared to undergraduates. The officers spoke of the need to establish services tailored to the needs of postgraduate students. The review team noted this particularly in the context of UCC's strategic aim to substantially increase postgraduate student numbers. The review team was pleased to hear postgraduate students expressed satisfaction with policies and procedures for postgraduate research supervision, feedback, progression, and where necessary, conflict resolution.

Following discussion with ACRIC, the review team believes that there is a manifest need for clarity across the university as to where research supervision, specifically PhD student supervision, sits within workload modelling and within the criteria for academic promotion.

While the review team recognised the university's high aspirations for industrial engagement, it would caution that successful implementation of

the industrial engagement strategy will require careful and robust business planning and granular monitoring guided by clearly defined KPIs.

The research institute directors flagged the inadequate stipends paid currently to PhD students as a major disincentive to participation in PhD programmes, especially when coupled with the increasing cost of living and the accommodation crisis; they spoke of falling applications and of a slippage in applicant quality, with better qualified candidates choosing to go into industry rather than research. The review team believes this will impact on the university's plans to increase student numbers. Furthermore, the review team met with PhD students from the Arts and Humanities who were not on a PhD stipend and were more self-funded to a significant level, meaning they were not able to fully commit to their research as they were working part-time to support their studies. In related discussions, the review Team was concerned by the apparently widespread use of graduate students as tutors, especially in Arts disciplines. While noting the UCC Finance Office Postgraduate Student Funding Guidelines, the review team was concerned that any deviation from these norms might pose potentially serious risks to the university in terms of reputational damage and legal exposure, including possible liability for back-pay. Graduate students also commented to the review team that there was an amount of 'siloing' within disciplines and schools which can inhibit research collaboration, and the review team suggests that UCC should implement mechanisms to promote connection between graduate students in different schools and colleges to promote cross-disciplinary collaboration.

It was clear from discussions that, while academics are largely satisfied with and hopeful for the revised academic promotions process, some members of university technical staff perceive a relative lack of opportunities for career progression, something that could ultimately also impact on research at UCC.

The review team encourages UCC to pay more attention to routine maintenance of standard laboratory equipment which impacts the quality of research output, space allocation to ensure researchers have space to do their research, ensuring that supports that engage with researchers are effective in allowing them sufficient time to focus on their research and that networking for post-doctoral graduates is facilitated.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

In reaching its overall assessment in relation to quality enhancement at UCC, the review team had regard to the ISER, the IP, the AQRs, the 'Securing our Future' Strategic Plan 2023-28, additional information asked for by the review team and sessions conducted during the MRV. The review team is clear and unanimous in its view that UCC has innovative and effective practices for quality enhancement which can be seen in its governance, policy and procedures.

The review team would like to state at the outset of this section that the preparation of the review documentation, including consultation, the quality of the review documentation and the self-reflection demonstrated by the documentation gave it a most solid base to work from. It gave the team confidence that it could engage constructively with university representatives and a methodology that allowed the team to focus on areas where it felt it could add most value. Consequently, the team commends UCC's clear focus on quality enhancement and quality assurance evidenced by the ISER and associated documents and the role of the QEC in the process.

The review team found clear evidence of strongly embedded and largely effective quality enhancement activities. As noted above, the review team was also very impressed by the strong commitment to openness, transparence and appropriate evidence-based challenge. These values are very clearly modelled by the President and his leadership style which was widely appreciated within and outside the university.

Although implementation plans are currently being drawn up, the process used to construct and the ambition of the new Strategic Plan 'Securing our Future' 2023-2028 are clear indicators of a

transformational quality enhancement exercise. Stakeholders interviewed by the review team were able to describe the consultative process undertaken to produce the plan and the majority took part. The Students' Union representatives were notably pleased with the consultative process, although they felt that the Student Success goal was not ambitious enough. The review team also heard evidence that the new strategic plan had motivated the UCC community after the difficult period associated with the pandemic. The review team commends the university community for the development of such a well-regarded and ambitious strategic plan.

Crucially, the review team heard from the college heads that they felt ownership and that the university strategic plan and college plans were aligned. The review team welcomed this but felt that the President needed a stronger strategic lever to deliver on the university's goals. The review team considered that the President's Strategic Fund was insufficient to enable him to drive change and lift performance in the desired ways and recommends that the amount of the President's Strategic Fund be reviewed and increased.

In addition to values, the strategic plan clearly sets out mission and vision. Both mission and vision are reflected in the history of the university and in the current lived experience. The mission of a 'connected' university is evidenced in the curriculum, research themes and industry partnerships. Inclusivity and sustainability also run deep in all that the university does and provide it with cohesion and a strong sense of purpose. The review team commends the university's commitment to and initiatives in the area of sustainability, and the ongoing whole institution approach to embedding the UN Sustainable Development goes in research, innovation, teaching and learning at UCC.

The strategic plan sets out clear and ambitious targets around five goals; Research and Innovation, Student Success, Global Engagement, Staff and Culture and Our Place, Our Future. At a more operational level, the university has a set of KPIs and evidence of monitoring can be found in the ISER and in the AQRs. The setting and monitoring of targets are supported by the Strategic Planning

and Institutional Research Office. The review team noted the desire of management to enhance data quality and flows to assist with quality enhancement and decision making.

The QEC plays an important role in quality enhancement and quality assurance. The review team heard evidence that the President's chairing of this committee was an important manifestation of the university's commitment to quality and quality enhancement. The presence of the President on the Committee also allowed for the swift resolution of issues, with inconsistent implementation of lecture recording being raised as an example. The review team commends the role of the QEC in developing policies and procedures for quality assurance, and in embedding the culture of quality within the life of the university.

Periodic reviews which happen across academic and professional units and research every seven years (allowing for COVID interruptions) are a major source of quality enhancement. All of these reviews have a specific enhancement dimension to their objectives and have external peers as members of panels alongside students. After each periodic review, the unit reviewed produces a Quality Enhancement Plan to address any recommendations. Evidence of the effectiveness of periodic review was contained in the documentation (ISER, p. 18) and observed in interviews with the review team.

The university offers several qualifications that also carry professional accreditation which can often impose a high administrative cost. In order to minimise this, UCC adapts the scope and sequencing of its periodic reviews (ISER, p. 19). The team heard evidence that UCC, in collaboration with the Irish Medical Council, is exploring a joint process to undertake periodic review and the process for professional accreditation in parallel. The team commends this initiative and is confident that there will be sector-wide interest in its results.

The AQRs submitted to QQI and viewed by the review team, along with the university's response to the European Universities Association Institutional Evaluation Programme (April 2020), provide further evidence of quality enhancement at UCC.

Finally, in its ISER, UCC identifies areas for enhancement in most chapters. The review team agrees that these are appropriate areas for enhancement. The team commends UCC for its self-reflection and recommends that the university proceeds with the enhancement measures that it has identified.

THE ALIGNMENT OF THE INSTITUTION'S MISSION AND TARGETS FOR QUALITY

UCC has recently published its new strategy: *Securing Our Future: UCC Strategic Plan 2023-2028*. In this, its stated mission is "*to create and sustain and inclusive environment and culture to enable transformative research and learning for the enrichment of society and the stewardship of our planet.*" There are five pillars to the strategy: research and innovation; student success; global engagement; people and culture; place and footprint.

The coherence and connectedness of the five pillars in the strategy are to be commended. The strategy has developed over a two-year period, as outlined in *UCC 2022: Delivering a Connected University*. As remarked earlier in this report, the review team have been impressed with the inclusive engagement by staff and students right across the University in the development of the strategy. It is clear that the vision of the President and the mission of the university as it enters its next phase of the strategy, is shared by all.

The five objectives for each of the five pillars are clearly stated and translated into specific priority actions. However, there is variable specificity in the strategic KPIs that will be used to track and measure delivery. This is perhaps understandable, given that the new strategy has only recently been developed, but it will be crucial to develop these indicators early on.

The Research and Innovation Strategy is outlined in the UCC Futures framework, which identifies 10 themes for prioritising research. Some of these priority areas are already being actively developed, such as the exciting Future Humanities theme, with its Radical Humanities Laboratory. This firmly sets the scene for a truly interdisciplinary initiative to address global challenges, e.g. as expressed in the UN SDGs, that sees humanities and social sciences as core to the understanding and delivery of what are often seen as technological challenges. A proactive recruitment campaign is underway to attract global academic talent to each of the 10 research themes. However, as remarked earlier in this report, it will be important to ensure clear communication and accountabilities between the group responsible for delivering the hiring strategy – UCC Futures – and the Governing Body, which is the body responsible for agreeing and approving the criteria for new posts. Whilst there is a clear priority action for transformation of UCC's research culture in order to drive up performance, the details of how research performance (or under-performance) is to be managed are less clear. Remarks have already been made about addressing gaps in this aspect earlier in this report.

The second pillar, Student Success, builds upon the work begun in the Connected Curriculum project, referred to throughout this report and supported by the Curriculum Management System being developed. As with the Research and Innovation Strategy, some of the work on the priority actions has already begun, other action areas are still to be implemented (e.g., integrated data to monitor student experience). Again, there is rather little detail on specific KPIs that will be used to track progress in this area. One priority action area (2.2) outlines the need to develop market-facing postgraduate programmes aligned with the UCC Futures framework. However, there is relatively little detail of how these programmes will be identified through market research and how they will be aligned with teaching and research priorities, given that, as already identified, new academic programmes are developed 'bottom up' through schools and colleges. A clearer framework is needed for the governance and oversight of new programme development that is aligned to strategy. Similarly, it would be important to understand more clearly how UCC reviews the performance of existing programmes (in terms of cost-effectiveness and efficiencies) and subsequently decides to end some programmes or modules if they are not delivering, in order to free up academic and administrative staff time to focus on new programme delivery (cf. earlier comments on workload).

The third pillar is Global Engagement. Whilst there are broad ambitions stated in this aspect of the strategy, this is perhaps the least well-developed strategic area. This area will be crucial for the development of a sustainable financial strategy to underpin the whole of UCC's strategy. It is central to the ambitions for postgraduate programme development, which is largely an international market. It is central to the improvement in global rankings of UCC, which creates a virtuous circle: international students care about league tables. However, a really strong positive element of the strategy is its alignment with the UN SDGs, which will ensure greater voice and prominence of UCC in increasingly important sustainability rankings, and in areas that future international (and home) students care about and increasingly use to choose institutions.

The Staff and Culture pillar of the strategy is very clearly set out, with clear and specific objectives closely aligned with the institution's mission around an inclusive environment and culture. The need for the development of a clear performance management framework, considering teaching as well as research excellence, has already been referred to earlier in this report.

The final pillar is dedicated to developing and maintaining a strong sustainability strategy, including in research, education and thought leadership, as well as a carbon management plan for the physical estate. UCC already excels in this area and has achieved well-deserved national and international recognition for its efforts towards sustainability and the SDGs. This element of the strategy is very closely aligned to its mission.

INNOVATIVE AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICES FOR QUALITY ENHANCEMENT
The review team would like to single out two examples of innovative practices for quality enhancement. UCC has nominated its 'Student Reviewers in the Internal Quality Review Processes at University College Cork – A Quality Enhancement Journey based on Partnership' as a signature initiative (ISER, p. 20). Many universities involve students in their review processes, but the review team views the way students are trained, rewarded and supported makes UCC's approach

sector leading. The Quality Peer Reviewer digital badge and the Student Digital Space are great examples of quality enhancement innovation.

As part of periodic reviews, units are asked to identify examples of best practice for review panels to endorse. By 2022, this has evolved into a Good Practice Symposium, a collection of case studies from across the university, including academic and professional units. UCC has decided to make this a biennial event. The review team felt that this was an innovative way to share best practice and to recognise and celebrate excellent performance and commends the university for it.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION (ATP)

A combination of the ISER (volumes 1 and 2), the AQRs, interviews during the MRV and a survey of publicly available UCC web pages allows the review team to conclude that procedures adopted by UCC are in-keeping with the QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ATP
UCC has an Office of Recruitment and Admissions which oversees a range of activities and services relating to access, transfer and progression. In terms of access, UCC offers a number of programmes and supports that target under-represented groups with the aim of increasing equity of access to its qualifications. Students from lower socio-economic groups, mature students, educationally disrupted students, students seeking entry through further education routes, refugee and students with disabilities all have access to specific admissions pathways and supports.

The review team was particularly impressed by the UCC PLUS program and its collaboration with Cork ETB. This programme was developed in response to an observation that students from particular schools were flowing into FET rather than directly into HE. The aim is to encourage and assist a transition from FE to HE. The programme has both pre-entry elements and post-entry elements. The team noted the rigorous evaluation of access initiatives carried out by UCC staff and was pleased

to learn of the success of the programme and noted its positive impact on the Roma community in particular (ISER Vol. 2).

The review team was also pleased to note that UCC has begun to embed Universal Design for Learning in all activities and especially the focus on a digitally inclusive university experience. It is clear to the team that equity and equal access is firmly anchored in the university's culture. A compelling illustration of this is the collaboration across central services and academic departments along with 'academic staff volunteering to tutor students one-to-one in bespoke ways that meet their educational needs.'

The dedication of professional staff and the effectiveness of support mechanisms for under-represented groups (and others) became evident to the review team during meetings with staff and students. The Skills Centre was praised by staff and students, and the Library and Health Centre were also able to demonstrate support and add value to all students with appropriate sensitivity and nuanced services to equity groups. The review team commends the tremendous work of the UCC Access and Widening Participation functions in promoting and facilitating access to higher education.

The ISER presented the review team with evidence that, despite the programmes mentioned above and the clear dedication of the staff, the numbers of students from under-represented groups was below both target and national averages (ISER, p. 58). On the other hand, evidence for the success of UCC's access programmes and the supports offered post-admission comes from the high retention rates of these students. The review team was presented with data showing that the retention of first year equity students was generally equal to or better than the total population (ISER, p. 39). The review team commends the strategy of providing

peer-support from second and third-year students, including students from the same catchment population, to prevent drop-out in response to family and/or societal pressure.

In interviews with students, the review team heard that the costs and availability of accommodation were currently a significant barrier to access and completion. The team was sympathetic to this and noted that students in many cities and countries were facing similar issues. The team also recognised that the university was limited in what it could do. Nonetheless, the team would urge the university to explore what more it might be able to do to assist students. The review team suggests that students should be able to access financial and other supports through the UCC Plus programme after their first registration if their financial situation changes dramatically even if they did not enter UCC via one of the formal access routes.

In accordance with the QQI policy for Access, Transfer and Progression, the university offers opportunities for students to change programmes within UCC and into UCC, subject to meeting entry criteria and availability of a place. There is a clear and readily available Recognition of Prior Learning Policy that defines when and how credit can be granted. In terms of Recognition of Prior Learning, the team was also pleased to note that UCC was leading a national project across HEIs in Ireland to grow RPL for learners. The aim of this national project is to work 'in partnership with enterprise, learners and other HEIs to bring RPL from the margins to the mainstream' (ISER, p. 43). The team agrees that there is strong alignment between this aspiration and UCC's mission and commends the range, quality and responsiveness of the services made available to Access students by the UCC Access and Widening Participation functions, schools and colleges, and their sector leading work on the use of RPL to promote access to higher education and, in particular, the development of innovative 'Group RPL' approaches.

In terms of looking forward, the team agrees that the development of a framework for credit accumulation will be important as the micro-

credential and shorter-form credential market matures alongside learner demand for alternative pathways and lifelong learning.

The provision of clear and comprehensive information is a requirement of the QQI policy for Access, Transfer and Progression. The review team's investigations revealed numerous examples of this, and it is confident that UCC is compliant with this requirement. The review team noted the Virtual Open Day platform and felt that it is a valuable supplement to written information and the more traditional in-person open days. The review team commends the investment in modification of physical facilities, e.g. laboratory benches, fume hoods etc., to facilitate participation by students with physical disabilities in laboratory-based degree programmes.

Section 4

Conclusions

Conclusions

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

The review team wishes to express its gratitude to UCC for its wholehearted participation in the CINNTE Review process, and for the degree to which students, staff and external stakeholders engaged warmly and openly with the team. As noted earlier in this report, the documents submitted by UCC were excellent and provided the review team with a comprehensive evidence-base for their work. Following a detailed review of the documents, the review team's approach during the MRV was to focus its discussions with stakeholders on areas where the team felt that it could add value, rather than on revisiting issues covered in detail by the ISER and supporting documents.

The review team was confident that the documentation, supplemented by a series of interviews across a wide spectrum of academic and professional units as well as external stakeholders, provides clear evidence of UCC's commitment to both quality assurance and quality enhancement. The review team was persuaded by the documentary evidence and by its discussions with stakeholders that the self-evaluation process undertaken by UCC was both comprehensive and collegial, such as to inform future similar processes undertaken by the university. It is clear that the university recognises the rapidly changing nature of work, and for this reason the review team commend the HR initiatives currently underway and strongly urge the university to address the concerns with respect to performance management and career progression. It was readily apparent to the review team that UCC has a well-developed culture of quality which is manifested in an evaluative and evidence-based approach to policy development and decision making. The review team is clear and unanimous in its view that UCC has innovative and effective practices for quality enhancement which can be seen in its governance, policies and procedures.

The review team acknowledges the magnitude of the work undertaken by the IRG and the QEU in coordinating the self-evaluation exercise which formed the core of the review. It is noteworthy that this work was undertaken and successfully concluded as the university emerged from the COVID pandemic and ran in parallel with the development process which produced the Strategic Plan 2023-2028 'Securing our Future'. While it has been mentioned previously, the review team wishes again to commend the measures undertaken by UCC to raise awareness of the CINNTE review process among students and staff (including workshops, focus groups and web-based resources) and to disseminate best practice within the university, e.g., the Good Practice Case Study Symposium facilitated by the QEU. The review team wishes also to note the openness of the President and the university leadership team, the appreciation for UCC expressed by its external stakeholders and the engagement and positivity of the students and staff who met with the review team.

This report seeks to provide an overview of the review team's assessment of UCC's policies and processes for quality assurance and enhancement, and to contextualise the commendations and recommendations listed below. It is important to state that, overall, the review team finds UCC to have a mature and pervasive culture of quality with many examples of good practice in evidence. The review team was pleased also to read a significant number of proposals for quality enhancement measures in the text of the ISER, and it wishes to endorse these proposals and to encourage UCC to proceed with their implementation. The review team offers its commendations and recommendations as 'critical friends' who look forward to UCC's continued success and to the realisation of its justifiably ambitious strategic goals.

Findings

The review team was unanimous in its conclusion that:

- UCC has demonstrated the effectiveness of its QA procedures and the extent of their implementation;
- UCC has made progress towards the development and implementation of a unified institutional QA infrastructure;
- UCC procedures are compliant with ESG and have had regard to QQI QA Guidelines;
- UCC has demonstrated the enhancement of quality through governance, policy and procedures;
- UCC has implemented procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression in keeping with the QQI policy restatement.

COMMENDATIONS

Strategy (inc. Global Engagement)

1. The review team commends the UCC Strategic Plan 'Securing our Future' 2023-2028 which is an ambitious and considered document. The review team further commends the University for its consultative and transparent approach, and for the obvious enthusiasm that this has generated among staff and students. All sections of the UCC community and external stakeholders praised the President for his leadership which was experienced as consultative, transparent and motivating.

2. The review team commends the university's commitment to and track-record of achievement in sustainability, and the ongoing whole institution approach to embedding the UN Sustainable Development Goals in research, innovation, learning, teaching and university life at UCC.

Governance

3. The review team commends the degree to which UCC is prepared to transition to the new Governing Body structure (mandated by the HEA Act), through timely planning and the development of a skills/competence framework for new Governing Body members and the establishment of a Selection Committee.

4. The review team commends the degree to which the Irish Management Institute (IMI) has been integrated seamlessly into UCC programme validation, programme management and quality enhancement structures.

Quality Assurance & Enhancement

5. The review team commends UCC for its self-reflection and recommends that the university proceeds with the enhancement measures that it has identified.

6. The review team commends UCC's clear focus on quality enhancement and quality assurance, evidenced by the ISER and associated documents.

7. The review team commends the role of the Quality Enhancement Unit (QEU) in developing policies and procedures for quality assurance and enhancement and, together with the QEC, in embedding the culture of quality within the life of the university.

8. The review team commends the Case Study Symposium which arose from the self-evaluation and which proved to be an effective mechanism to disseminate best practice within the university community.

9. The review team commends the high quality and extent of the ISER and supporting documents submitted to underpin the CINNTE Review of UCC, and the role of the QEU, IRG and QEC in the process.

10. The review team commends the inclusion, training and rewarding (via digital badges) of students on periodic reviews, which it regarded as being sector leading. The review team also commends the university for the inclusion of students in other deliberative and decision-making bodies.

11. The review team commends the UCC initiative, in collaboration with the Irish Medical Council, to implement a joint process to undertake

periodic review and accreditation of the School of Medicine in parallel.

Staff

12. The review team commends the development and implementation of a new promotions process for UCC academic staff including clearly defined career pathways and rolling promotion 'calls'.

13. The review team commends the role of the Centre for Teaching and Learning in the upskilling of UCC staff and in promoting a scholarly approach to teaching characterised by enquiry and an enhancement focus.

14. The review team commends the practice of gathering information on staff development needs from a variety of sources, including staff surveys, the Performance and Development Review process and the work of HR Business Managers within the colleges.

15. The review team commends the development of good policies and procedures in the area of Gender Equality including initiatives to document the gender pay-gap, to assist staff returning from statutory leave and to identify and mitigate barriers to promotion.

Campus

16. The review team commends the Campus Infrastructure Team for their sector-leading initiative in developing a campus masterplan which has undergone repeated updating over the decades since it was first implemented through benchmarking against peer institutions in Ireland and overseas.

Student Services

17. The review team commends the supports offered by the Skills Centre as key enablers of student success.

18. The review team commends the role of the First Year Experience Coordinator in detecting and supporting students who may be at risk of dropping out of programmes, and the combined impact of the Skills Centre, the First Year Experience Coordinator and student support services generally on the retention of undergraduate students and the quality of the international student experience.

19. The review team commends the 'Propel' module which permits local and international students to get a clear view of what it is like to study at UCC, and to have this information delivered in their own language.

20. The review team commends the strategy of providing intensive peer support from second and third year students (including students from the same catchment population) to prevent drop-out in response to family and/or societal pressure.

21. The review team commends the investment in modification of physical facilities (e.g. laboratory benches, fume-hoods, etc.) to facilitate participation by students with physical disabilities in laboratory-based degree programmes at UCC.

22. The review team commends the range, quality and responsiveness of support services made available to Access students by the UCC Access and Widening Participation functions, and their sector-leading work on the use of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to promote access to higher education including, in particular, the development of innovative 'Group RPL' approaches.

Teaching, Learning & Assessment

23. The review team commends the efforts made by UCC to streamline external examiner processes and to ensure that maximum value is derived from their input to ongoing programme monitoring.

24. The review team commends the examples of innovative approaches to teaching evident across the schools and colleges, including the use of augmented reality and virtual reality technology.

25. The review team commends the coherent approach to dealing with academic integrity issues through the appointment of an Academic Integrity Officer, widespread use

of Turnitin for screening of submitted work, a university-wide Plagiarism Policy, effective disciplinary policies and procedures and the input of the Skills Centre (Library) in educating students about the issues.

Research (inc. postgraduate research students)

26. The review team commends the two research quality reviews conducted to date and their evident impact on the development of the university's research strategy and, further, commends the ongoing development of a research charter to clearly place research within the university's priorities and the positioning of research and innovation within the new UCC Strategic Plan.

27. The review team commends the prioritisation of research focus through development of the 'UCC Futures' framework.

28. The review team commends the imminent appointment of a new Dean of Doctoral Studies, reporting dually to the VP for Research and Innovation and to the Registrar, to enhance the 'PhD student journey' within UCC.

29. The review team commends the pivotal role played by the research institutes and centres, in enhancing UCC's reputation and international standing as a research-led university.

30. The review team commends the appointment of a Clinical Research Reporting Officer, the establishment of a (Clinical) Sponsorship Office, and provision of the technical expertise required for the planning and conduct of clinical research, including a broad range of additional skills and expertise in the areas of insurance, sponsorship, contracts, governance, financial planning and research support.

Library & Information Technology Services

31. The review team commends the dedication and proactivity of Library staff in ensuring an excellent student experience and maximal access to Library space, collections and services during and after COVID-19.

32. The review team commends the role of the IT staff across the university in enabling the 'pivot' to online delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the adjustment to the post-COVID 'reality' of university life.

33. The review team commends the level of investment in IT systems to underpin implementation of the Connected Curriculum across UCC and to support more coherent and useful data gathering, dissemination and data-informed decision making.

International Students

34. The review team commends the professionalism, knowledge and expertise of the International Office staff, their achievements in promoting UCC as a destination of choice for international students and the excellent management of the Office against the background of considerable change and challenge.

35. The review team commends the uniformly high level of satisfaction evident among the international students at the support provided to them and their overall experience as UCC students.

36. The review team commends the 'life-transforming' experience for international students provided by exposure to UCC programmes of study, to the UCC community and to university life.

Collaborative Provision

37. The review team commends the excellent governance provisions for UCC-MTU joint programmes including comprehensive review of documents by UCC Academic Board and Academic Council (including Joint Programme Board of Study reports, minutes, student feedback and performance statistics), and the pragmatic shared approach to quality assurance adopted by UCC and MTU.

38. The review team commends the dual registration of students on UCC-MTU collaborative programmes, allowing access to facilities on both campuses, and the pragmatic application of governance policies and procedures regarding students.

External Relationships

39. The review team commends the degree to which external stakeholders in industry and civic society appreciate UCC's openness and willingness to engage at all levels, and the value that UCC adds to Cork, the Munster region and beyond.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategy (inc. Global Engagement)

1. Recognising the ambition of the new UCC Strategic Plan, the review team recommends that UCC should set sufficient income growth targets which include substantial non-exchequer components. The developing financial model should prioritise 'quick wins' to boost university income, such as the development of high-volume economic-fee-based postgraduate taught programmes informed by market research.

2. The review team recommends that the university reviews the size of the President's Strategic Fund, benchmarks it against other research-intensive universities and adjusts it accordingly.

3. The review team recommends that, given the weight attached to the role of the newly appointed Vice President for Global Engagement, UCC should develop an appropriately and strategically resourced Global Strategy which includes a student recruitment plan with specific college and university targets based on sound market research and marketing.

4. The review team recommends that UCC's strategic goal of increasing the number of postgraduate (particularly PhD) students should be more coherently elaborated (including clearly specified targets, timelines and implementation mechanisms) and should avoid over-reliance on exchequer funding.

5. The review team recommends that UCC should undertake careful and robust business planning and granular monitoring guided by clearly defined KPIs to optimise the implementation of its ambitious industrial engagement strategy.

Governance

6. The review team recommends that, taking into account proposed changes to governance, the university should update its published governance scheme to clarify accountability and associated decision-making workflows, and further recommends that UCC should develop a system for ongoing monitoring of the implementation of university policies and procedures across the colleges to identify potential inconsistencies in their application and, where appropriate, to remedy these.

Staff

7. The review team recommends the consistent implementation of workload models across the university which include provision for research supervision (particularly that of PhD students).

8. The review team recommends that UCC should address the slow delivery of a career development infrastructure for administrative and technical staff in order to provide a fit-for-purpose mechanism to ensure equitable and timely recognition and reward for staff.

Students

9. The review team recommends that UCC should ensure, via the ongoing pilot project and related initiatives, that student satisfaction data is appropriately gathered and factored into the assessment of the quality of modules and programmes across UCC.

10. The review team recommends that UCC should implement mechanisms to promote connection between graduate students in different schools and colleges as a means of promoting cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Student Services

11. Given the university's strategic aim to increase postgraduate and international student numbers substantially, the review team recommends that UCC should undertake comprehensive resource planning to ensure that student services provision is scalable to

meet the increase in demand.

12. The review team recognises the quality of support services provided to students at UCC but recommends, in support of that, the development of an omni-channel communication strategy to optimise student awareness of and engagement with the services available.

Teaching, Learning & Assessment

13. The review team recommends that UCC should introduce formal processes for annual module and programme monitoring enabled by the new Curriculum Management IT System.

14. The review team recommends that UCC should prioritise the development and implementation of comprehensive assessment rubrics (including marking schemes) to ensure equivalence of grading – especially at exit degree award level – between disciplines, schools and colleges.

15. The review team recommends that examination papers submitted to external examiners for review should be accompanied by the cognate sample answers where feasible / appropriate, which is standard practice across the third level sector in Ireland.

Library & Information Technology Services

16. The review team recommends that, given the crucial importance of Library and IT services to the quality of the student experience, UCC should strive to protect existing budgetary allocations for these services against competing internal demands, and to continue to lobby for greater exchequer funding support to permit their adequate resourcing.

17. The review team recommends that UCC should seek to maximise the value of its significant investment in IT systems and data-capture through the appointment of a Chief Information Officer charged with the development of a Data Strategy for the university to support data-driven decision making and quality enhancement at all levels within the university.
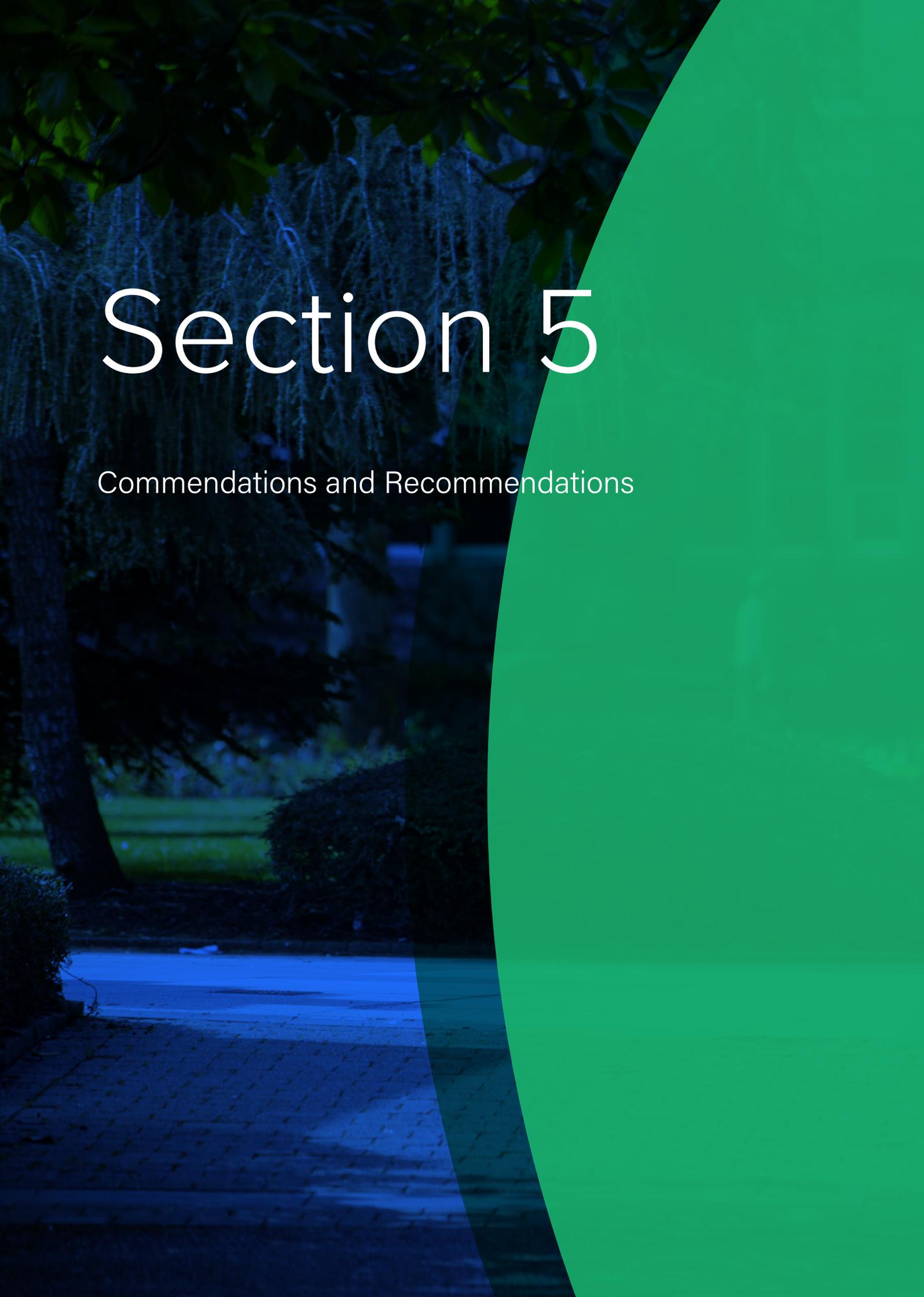
Section 5

Commendations and Recommendations

Top 5 Commendations and Recommendations

TOP 5 COMMENDATIONS

1. The review team commends the UCC Strategic Plan Securing our Future 2023-2028 which is an ambitious and considered document. The review team further commends the University for its consultative and transparent approach, and for the obvious enthusiasm that this has generated among staff and students. All sections of the UCC community and external stakeholders praised the President for his leadership which was experienced as consultative, transparent and motivating.

2. The review team commends the university's commitment to and track-record of achievement in sustainability, and the ongoing whole institution approach to embedding the UN Sustainable Development Goals in research, innovation, learning, teaching and university life at UCC.

3. The review team commends the role of the First Year Experience Coordinator in detecting and supporting students who may be at risk of dropping out of programmes, and the combined impact of the Skills Centre, the First Year Experience Coordinator and student support services generally on the retention of undergraduate students and the quality of the international student experience.

4. The review team commends the range, quality and responsiveness of support services made available to Access students by the UCC Access and Widening Participation functions, and their sector-leading work on the use of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to promote access to higher education including, in particular, the development of innovative 'Group RPL' approaches.

5. The review team commends the degree to which external stakeholders in industry and civic society appreciate UCC's openness and willingness to engage at all levels, and the value that UCC adds to Cork, the Munster region and beyond.

TOP 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recognising the ambition of the new UCC Strategic Plan, the review team recommends that UCC should set sufficient income growth targets which include substantial non-exchequer components. The developing financial model should prioritise 'quick wins' to boost university income, such as the development of high-volume economic-fee-based postgraduate taught programmes informed by market research.

2. The review team recommends that UCC's strategic goal of increasing the number of postgraduate (particularly PhD) students should be more coherently elaborated (including clearly specified targets, timelines and implementation mechanisms) and should avoid over-reliance on exchequer funding.

3. The review team recommends that the university reviews the size of the President's Strategic Fund, benchmarks it against other research-intensive universities and adjusts it accordingly.

4. The review team recommends that UCC should seek to maximise the value of its significant investment in IT systems and data-capture through the appointment of a Chief Information Officer charged with the development of a Data Strategy for the university to support data-driven decision making and quality enhancement at all levels within the university.

5. The review team recommends that, taking into account proposed changes to governance, the university should update its published governance scheme to clarify accountability and associated decision-making workflows, and further recommends that UCC should develop a system for ongoing monitoring of the implementation of university policies and procedures across the colleges to identify potential inconsistencies in their application and, where appropriate, to remedy these.
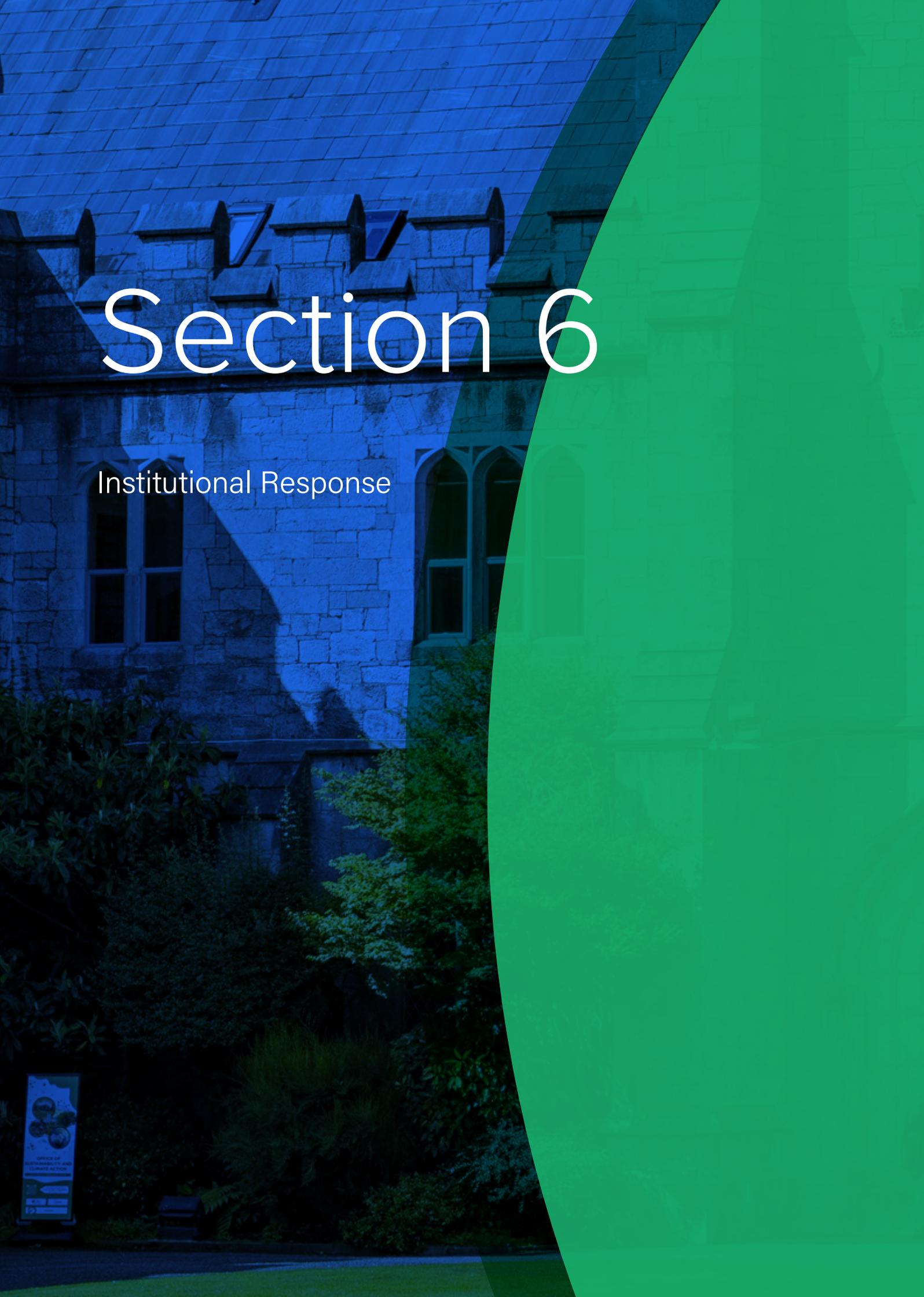
Section 6

Institutional Response

Institutional Response

RESPONSE TO THE QQI CINNTE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT 2023 OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK

University College Cork has a strong commitment to the strategic enhancement of all activities supporting the delivery of its institutional mission for research, education, and services, underpinned by an enhancement-led approach to quality. The QQI CINNTE Institutional Review process has been an important and welcome reference point for the university to assess the completeness and effectiveness of its quality arrangements, through the process of self-evaluation and in the engagement with the Peer Review Team.

I welcome the recognition of UCC's commitment to quality as demonstrated through its engagement with the CINNTE process and in particular the Review Team's acknowledgement of the "rigorous self-evaluation process undertaken by UCC in preparation for the review, and the high quality and comprehensive nature of the ISER and supporting documents that resulted from it". Preparation for the Institutional Review was undertaken concurrently with the development of the University's Strategic Plan (2023-2028) with both processes involving extensive engagement with staff, students and stakeholders. There was a high level of convergence between the outcomes of these separate processes which underlines the connection of university staff and students as active participants in both endeavours and gives confidence in the outcomes.

The acknowledgement in the top five commendations of the "ambitious and considered" nature of the UCC Strategic Plan 2023-28: *Securing our Future,* underpinned by a consultative approach that has enthused all participants, affirms my commitment as President along with the University Leadership Team to strive for, plan and attain excellence in our activities to benefit students, stakeholders and wider society. The Strategic Plan is based on a thematic prioritisation for transformative change in response to geopolitical challenges, the escalating climate crisis and accelerating societal and economic pressures associated with the aftereffects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Implementation of the Strategic Plan (2023-28) is already underway supported by a comprehensive governance and programme management structure with reporting milestones on the achievement of planned actions to the university community and the university's Governing Body. Outcomes from the CINNTE Institutional Review will be mapped into the Strategic Plan work programme and operational projects as appropriate. An Institutional Action Plan outlining the planned response to the recommendations of the CINNTE Report will be provided and will be monitored subsequently through the institution's quality processes.

I thank the Peer Review Team, led by Professor Joanne Wright, for the constructive dialogue with staff, students and stakeholders of the University maintained throughout the site visit. I thank also QQI colleagues for their role in supporting and managing the Institutional Review process from initial briefing sessions through to the conduct of the site visit and production of the report. From the perspective of this university, the entire process was useful, welcome and positive.

Professor John O'Halloran
President, University College Cork

Appendices

Appendix A: Terms of Reference for the Review of Universities and other Designated Awarding Bodies

These are the Terms of Reference for the Review of a Designated Awarding Body (DAB). The concept of a Designated Awarding Body is derived from the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012 (The 2012 Act) and is defined as '*a previously established university, the National University of Ireland, an educational institution established as a university under Section 9 of the Act of 1997, the Dublin Institute of Technology and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland*'. The following institutions are Designated Awarding Bodies:

Dublin City University	National University of Ireland, Galway
Technological University Dublin	Maynooth University
University College Cork	The National University of Ireland
University College Dublin	The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
University of Limerick	Trinity College Dublin

In 2016, QQI adopted a policy on cyclical review in higher education which sets out in greater detail the scope, purposes, criteria, model and procedures for review. These are represented in the Terms of Reference and the Handbook for the Review of Designated Awarding Bodies. QQI has introduced an annual reporting process for institutions whereby institutions are required to submit an Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR). The aim of the AIQR is to provide a contemporary account of quality assurance (QA) within an institution. Information is provided through an online template, and it is published. Collated annual reports are provided to periodical review teams. Annual reporting allows institutions and QQI to engage on a regular basis. Published annual reports assist with documentation management for institutions in reviews and lessen the burden on institutions in the lead-up to a review.

This review cycle is being conducted in a very changed context for higher education. The landscape for higher education has been significantly reshaped since the last cycle of reviews commenced. Smaller colleges have been merged with universities and many institutes of technology are reorganising and preparing mergers as part of the Technological University process. New alliances and clusters, envisaged by Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape have commenced. A new approach to public funding has been introduced and operated by the Higher Education Authority (HEA). Initiatives for enhancement such as the *Irish Survey of Student Engagement* (ISSE) and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (NFETL) have been formalised at a national level. These developments mean that

there are new sources of information and external benchmarks available to institutions that can be used to inform self-evaluation in this review cycle. Key measurements such as entry profiles, student retention, graduate profiles and staff and student satisfaction rates can provide some quantitative evidence of the quality of an institution's offer.

The 2012 Act states that QQI shall consult with the HEA in carrying out the review. QQI has agreed with HEA that this will take the form of engagement with QQI on the Terms of Reference and confirmation of the status of the institution within the higher education system, sharing individual institutional profiles and data with the team.

This is the third review round of Designated Awarding Bodies. Previous rounds took place in 2004-2005 and 2009-2012.

1. 2 PURPOSES

The Policy for the Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions highlights four purposes for individual institutional reviews. These are set out in the table below.

Purpose	Achieved and measured through:
1. To encourage a QA culture and the enhancement of the student learning environment and experience within institutions	– emphasising the student and the student learning experience in reviews – providing a source of evidence of areas for improvement and areas for revision of policy and change and basing follow-up upon them – exploring innovative and effective practices and procedures – exploring quality as well as quality assurance within the institution
2. To provide feedback to institutions about institution-wide quality and the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality and the overall effectiveness of their quality assurance.	– emphasising the ownership of quality and quality assurance at the level of the institution – pitching the review at a comprehensive institution-wide level – evaluating compliance with legislation, policy and standards – evaluating how the institution has identified and measured itself against its own benchmarks and metrics to support quality assurance governance and procedures – emphasising the improvement of quality assurance procedures
3. To contribute to public confidence in the quality of institutions by promoting transparency and public awareness.	– adhering to purposes, criteria and outcomes that are clear and transparent – publishing the reports and outcomes of reviews in accessible locations and formats for different audiences – evaluating, as part of the review, institutional reporting on quality and quality assurance, to ensure that it is transparent and accessible
4. To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice	– using the expertise of international, national and student peer reviewers who are independent of the institution – ensuring that findings are based on stated evidence – facilitating institutions to identify measurement, comparison and analytic techniques, based on quantitative data relevant to their own mission and context, to support quality assurance – promoting the identification and dissemination of examples of good practice and innovation

Section 2 Objectives and Criteria

2. 1 REVIEW OBJECTIVES

Objective 1

To review the effectiveness and implementation of the QA procedures of the institution through consideration of the procedures set out, primarily, in the AIQR. Where necessary, the information provided by the AIQR is supplemented by additional information provided through documentation requests and interviews. The scope of this includes the procedures for reporting, governance and publication. This also incorporates an analysis of the ways in which the institution applies evidence- based approaches to support QA processes, including quantitative analysis, evidence gathering and comparison. Progress on the development of QA since the previous review of the institution will be evaluated. Consideration will also be given to the effectiveness of the AIQR and ISER procedures within the institution.

The scope of this objective also extends to the overarching procedures of the institution for assuring itself of the quality of its research degree programmes and research activities.

This objective also encompasses the effectiveness of the procedures established by the institution for the assurance of the quality of collaborations, partnerships and overseas provision, including the procedures for the approval and review of linked providers, joint awarding arrangements, joint provision and other collaborative arrangements such as clusters and mergers.

Objective 2

To review the enhancement of quality by the institution through governance, policy, and procedures.

To review the congruency of QA procedures and enhancements with the institution's own mission and goals or targets for quality.

To identify innovative and effective practices for quality enhancement.

Objective 3

To review the effectiveness and implementation of procedures for access, transfer and progression.

Objective 4

Following the introduction of a statutory international education QA scheme, to determine compliance with the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners.

2. 2 REVIEW CRITERIA

Criteria for Objective 1

The Review Report will include a specific qualitative statement on the effectiveness of the QA procedures of the institution and the extent of their implementation. The report will also include a specific statement about the extent to which the QA procedures can be considered compliant with the ESG and as having regard to QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (G). These statements will be highlighted in the Review Report.

The statements may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements, recommendations and possibly recommendations for directions in reference to this objective.

The criteria to be used by the team in reaching conclusions for this objective are:

- *ESG*
- QQI *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (Core)*
- QQI *Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Universities and Other Designated Awarding Bodies*
- QQI *Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Research Degree Programmes*
- Section 28 of the 2012 Act
- The institution's own objectives and goals for quality assurance

Where appropriate and actioned by the institution, additional QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines will be incorporated.

The QQI *Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Independent/Private Providers* may be an appropriate reference document if they have been adopted as their linked provider(s).

Criteria for Objective 2

The Review Report will include a specific qualitative statement on the enhancement of quality by the institution through governance, policy, and procedures.

The statements may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations in reference to this objective. If identified, innovative and effective practices for quality enhancement will be highlighted in the report.

The criteria to be used by the team in reaching conclusions for this objective are:

- The institution's own mission and vision
- The goals or targets for quality identified by the institution
- Additional sources of reference identified by the institution.

Criteria for Objective 3

The report will include a qualitative statement on the extent to which the procedures are in keeping with QQI policy for Access, Transfer and Progression.

This statement may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations and possibly recommendations for conditions in reference to this objective.

The criterion to be used by the team in reaching conclusions for this objective are:

QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression

Criteria for Objective 4

When the statutory international education quality assurance scheme is in place, the report will include a qualitative statement on the extent to which the procedures are compliant with the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners.

This statement may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations and possibly recommendations for conditions in reference to this objective.

The criterion to be used by the team in reaching conclusions for this objective is the

Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners

Key questions to be addressed by the review for each objective

– How have QA procedures and reviews been implemented within the institution?
– How effective are the internal QA procedures and reviews of the institution?
– Are the QA procedures in keeping with European Standards and Guidelines?
– Are the QA procedures in keeping with QQI policy and guidelines, or their equivalent?
– Who takes responsibility for quality and QA across the institution?
– How transparent, accessible and comprehensive is reporting on quality and QA?
– How is quality promoted and enhanced?
– Are there effective innovations in QA and quality enhancement?
– Is the student experience in keeping with the institution's own stated mission and strategy?
– Are achievements in QA and quality in keeping with the institution's own stated mission and strategy?
– How do achievements in QA and quality measure up against the institution's own goals or targets for quality?

Section 3 The Review Process

3. 1 PROCESS

The primary basis for the review process is this handbook.

3. 2 REVIEW TEAM PROFILE

QQI will appoint the review team to conduct the institutional review. Review teams are composed of peer reviewers who are students and senior institutional leaders and staff from comparable institutions as well as external representatives. The size of the team and the duration of their visit will depend on the size and complexity of the institution but in general the review team for a Designated Awarding Body will consist of 6 persons. Each review team includes a Chairperson and Coordinating Reviewer, and may be supported by a rapporteur, who is not a member of the team, to take and collate notes of meetings. A single team may undertake the review of two different institutions.

Reviewers are not QQI employees, but rather peers of the institution. The institution will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed composition of their review team to ensure there are no conflicts of interest, and QQI will ensure an appropriate and entirely independent team of reviewers is selected for the institution. QQI has final approval over the composition of each review team.

There will be appropriate gender representation on the review team. The team will consist of carefully selected and trained and briefed reviewers who have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their tasks. The team will operate under the leadership of the Review Chairperson.

The review team will be appointed in keeping with the following profile:

1. A Review Chairperson

   The role of the Chairperson is to act as leader of the review team. This is an international reviewer who is a (serving or recently former) senior third-level institution leader – usually a head of institution or deputy head of institution or a senior policy advisor who:

   - possesses a wide range of higher education experience;
   - demonstrates a deep understanding of the complexities of the higher education system;
   - understands often unique QA governance arrangements;
   - has proven experience in the management of innovation and change.

2. A Coordinating Reviewer

   The role of the Coordinating Reviewer is to act as secretary to the team as well as to be a full review team member. This is usually a person with expertise in the higher education system and prior experience in participating in external reviews. As the coordinating reviewer is responsible for drafting the report, he or she will possess proven excellent writing abilities.

3. A Student Reviewer

The role of the student reviewer is to represent the student voice in the review team. The student reviewer will be typically a PhD student with significant experience of higher education or an undergraduate student who has completed a specific programme preparing them for the role or who has previously had a key role in other institutional reviews.

4. An External Representative

The role of the external representative is to bring a 'third mission' perspective to the review team.

In addition to the specific roles above, the full team complement will include a range of experts with the following knowledge and experience:

- International reviewer experience
- EQF and Bologna expertise
- Experience of higher education QA processes
- Experience of managing research within or across institutions
- Experience in governance
- Experience and proven ability in the advancement of teaching and learning

Details of review team roles and responsibilities can be found in Appendix B.

3. 3 PROCEDURE AND TIMELINES

The outline set out in the policy (below) will be elaborated further and timelines will be set out to accompany it, through discussion and consultation.

Step	Action	Dates	Outcome
Terms of Reference (ToR)	Completion of an institutional information profile Confirmation of ToR with institution and HEA	9 months before the main review visit (MRV)	Published Terms of Reference
Preparation	Appointment of an expert review team Consultation with the institution on any possible conflicts of interest	6-9 months before the MRV	Review team appointed
Self-evaluation	Forwarding to QQI of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)	12 weeks before the MRV	Published ISER (optional)
Table continues overleaf.			

Step	Action	Dates	Outcome
Desk Review	Desk review of the ISER by the team	Before the initial meeting	ISER initial response provided
Initial Meeting	An initial meeting of the review team, including reviewer training and briefing	5 weeks after the ISER, 7 weeks before the MRV	Team training and briefing is complete. Team identify key themes and additional documents required
Planning Visit	A visit to the institution by the Chair and Coordinating Reviewer to receive information about the ISER process, discuss the schedule for the main review visit and discuss additional documentation requests	5 weeks after the ISER, 7 weeks before the MRV	ISER initial response provided
Main review visit	To receive and consider evidence on the ways in which the institution has performed in respect of the objectives and criteria set out in the Terms of Reference	12 weeks after the receipt of ISER	A short preliminary oral report to the institution
Report	Preparation of a draft report by the team	6-8 weeks after the MRV	
	Draft report sent to the institution for a check of factual accuracy	12 weeks after the MRV	
	Institution responds with any factual accuracy corrections	2 weeks after receipt of draft report	
	Preparation of a final report	2 weeks after factual accuracy response	QQI Review Report
	Preparation of an institutional response	2 weeks after final report	Institutional response
Table continues overleaf.			

Step	Action	Dates	Outcome
Outcomes	Consideration of the Review Report and findings by QQI together with the institutional response and the plan for implementation	Next available meeting of QQI committee	Formal decision about the effectiveness of QA procedures *In some cases, directions to the institution and a schedule for their implementation*
	Preparation of QQI quality profile	2 weeks after decision	Quality profile published
Follow-up	*The form of follow-up will be determined by whether 'directions' are issued to the institution. In general, where directions are issued, the follow-up period will be sooner and more specific actions may be required as part of the direction.*		
	Preparation of an institutional implementation plan	1 month after publication of review report	Publication of the implementation plan by the institution
	One-year follow-up report to QQI for noting. This and subsequent follow-up may be integrated into annual reports to QQI	1 year after publication of review report	Publication of the follow-up report by QQI and the institution
	Continuous reporting and dialogue on follow-up through the annual institutional reporting and dialogue process	Continuous	Annual Institutional Quality Report Dialogue Meeting notes

Note: The total period from start to finish is approximately 15 months but will depend on QQI committee meeting dates.

Appendix B: Main review visit Schedule

Day 1: Monday, 6 March 2023

Time	Meeting with	Indicative Purpose
09.00 - 09.30	Institutional Coordinator (full review team to meet with institutional coordinator on Day 1)	Meeting with the Institutional Coordinator
09.30 - 10.00	Private Review team Meeting	
10.00 - 10.30	President and Registrar	Private Meeting with President and Registrar. To discuss institutional mission, strategic plan. Roles and responsibilities for QA and enhancement.
10.30 - 11.30	University Leadership Team (ULT)	Discuss institutional mission, strategic plan. Roles and responsibilities for QA and Enhancement.
11.30 - 12.00	Private Review team Meeting	
12.00 - 12.25	Governing Body Representatives	Discuss mechanisms employed by the Governing Body for monitoring QA & QE and how it ensures effectiveness
12.30 – 12.55	Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) members	Discuss mechanisms employed by the Quality Committee for monitoring QA & QE and how it ensures effectiveness
13.00 - 14.00	Review team Lunch	
14.00 - 14.40	Heads of College	Discuss how the University monitors the effectiveness of its QA/QE processes and structures and how it ensures the outcomes are enacted in an appropriate, consistent and timely manner.
14.45 - 15.10	Student Union Officers	Discuss student engagement and student role in the University in QA, Strategic Planning and decision-making processes.

Table continues overleaf.

Time	Meeting with	Indicative Purpose
15.00 - 15.45	Management and staff involved in staff development and human resources	To discuss staffing issues and constraints; and policies and procedures for staff promotion, diversity, recruitment and appraisal.
15.15 - 15.45	Private Review team Meeting	
15.45 - 16.25	Parallel Session Student Representatives: Undergraduates (Groups 1 and 2)	Discussion with students from all Faculties, to include representation from different years, disciplines and service users.
16.30 - 17.10	Parallel Session Student Representatives: Postgraduates (Group 1)	Discussion with students from all Faculties, to include representation from different years, disciplines and service users.
17.00 - 17.45	TCD Students' Union and Graduate Students' Union Officers	To discuss student engagement and student role in quality assurance, strategic planning, and decision-making processes.
17.15 - 17.30	Private Review team Meeting	

Day 2: Tuesday, 7 March 2023

Time	Meeting with	Indicative Purpose
08.15 - 08.30	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator to clarify issues from previous day and review today.
08.30 - 09.10	Quality Enhancement Team / Members of the IRG - Institutional Review Group excluding UE members	Discussion on experience of implementing quality assurance throughout the institution.
09.15 - 09.55	Members of Academic Board (AB) and Academic Development & Standards Committee (ADSC)	Discuss role of committee in governance of QA procedures for approval of new programmes and modifications to current programmes
10.00-10.30	Private Review team Meeting	
10.30 - 11.10	Members of Academic Council Research & Innovation Committee (ACRIC) and Vice-Heads of Research Committees	Discuss role of committee in governance of QA procedures for research and innovation
11.15 - 11.55	Members of Academic Council Learning & Teaching Committee and Vice-Heads of L&T Committees	Discuss role of committee in governance of QA procedures for Teaching and Learning
12.00 - 13.00	Review team Lunch/Break	
13.00 - 13.40	Staff from IT, Library Services	
13.45 -14.25	Staff from Student Support Services	To discuss involvement in QA and enhancement
14.30 -15.00	Private Review team Meeting	
15.00 - 16.00	Campus tour	

Day 3: Wednesday, 8 March 2023

Time	Meeting with	Indicative Purpose
08.15 - 08.30	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator
08.30 - 09.10	Directors: Research Institutes & Centres	To discuss the implementation of QA procedures for research
09.15 - 09.55	Academic Staff and post-doctoral researchers and technicians	Staff experience of research management and supervision, the relationship between teaching, research and innovation, QA and enhancements and the impacts on the research student experience.
10.00 -10.40	Parallel Academic staff from various Colleges (Groups 1 and 2)	To discuss involvement in QA and enhancement
10.45 - 11.15	Private Review team Meeting	
11.15 -11.55	Graduate Students	To discuss QA & QE procedures with taught postgraduates and research postgraduates
12.00 - 12.40	Academic Council members	Discuss mechanisms employed by Academic Council for monitoring QA & QE and how it ensures effectiveness
12.45 -13.45	Review team Lunch/Break	
13.45 - 14.25	Access and Widening Participation: Staff	To discuss QA aspects of student recruitment, admission, progression with particular reference to entrants via Access routes
14.30 - 15.10	Access and Widening Participation: Students	To discuss quality of student experience for those admitted via Access routes
15.15 - 15.45	Private Review team Meeting	
15.45 -16.25	International Office: Staff	To discuss involvement in QA and enhancement in International Education
16.30 - 16.55	Parallel Sessions International Students - incoming & outgoing (Groups 1 and 2)	To discuss international student engagement in the University, particularly the student learning experience
17.00 – 17.30	Private Review team Meeting	

Day 4: Thursday, 9 March 2023

Time	Meeting with	Indicative Purpose
08.45 - 09.00	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator
09:00 -09:15	Additional session: Strategic Plan	
09.15 -09.45	Staff from Finance and Campus Infrastructure	To consider funding prospects and opportunities to further develop the campus facilities to support teaching, research and the wider student experience
09.50 -10.25	Staff from collaborative providers, partners and/or PRSBs	To discuss arrangements re QA with collaborative providers
10.30 -11.10	Staff from Human Resources incl. staff development	To discuss HR procedures that support QA & QE among all staff
11.15 - 11.45	Private Review team Meeting	
11.45 -12.25	Parallel Sessions External Stakeholders (Groups 1 and 2)	To discuss engagement of external stakeholders in strategic management and QA structures
12.30 -13.10	Staff supporting implementation of undergraduate curriculum	To discuss involvement in QA and enhancement
13.15 - 14.15	Review team Lunch/Break	
14.15 - 15.10	Heads of School and Department	To discuss Quality Management Processes at the School Level, implementation & how their effectiveness is ensured
15.15 - 17.00	Private Review team Meeting	
16.30 - 17.00	QQI joining the team to gather high-level feedback	

Day 5: Friday, 10 March 2023

Time	Meeting with	Indicative Purpose
09.00 - 11.00	Private Review team Meeting	
10.30 - 11.00	QQI Meets with Institutional Coordinator (Review team not in attendance)	To gather feedback
11:00 - 11.30	QQI meets with Review team	To discuss Review team's key findings
11.30 -12.00	Private Review team Meeting	
12.00 – 12.30	Meeting with President	
12.30 -13.00	Oral Report	
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch	
14:00 - 17:00	Private Review team Meeting	

Glossary

Term	Definition
AACSB	The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
ACE	Adult Continuing Education
ACRIC	The Academic Council Research & Innovation Committee
AMBA	Association of MBAs
AQR/AIQRs	Annual Quality Reports/ Annual Institutional Quality Reports
ATP	Access, Transfer and Progression
Begin, Belong and Become	Name given to UCC's holistic learner support
CDT(s)	Centre(s) for Doctoral Training
ChatGPT	Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered language model developed by OpenAI
CIM	Curriculum Information Management System
CINNTE	The name given to QQI's current higher education institution (HEI) review cycle
CIRTL	Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CRT	Centres for Research Training
DAB	Designated Awarding Body
DELTA	Disciplinary Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment
DRM	Digital Records Management
EBCG	Examinations Business Continuity Planning Group
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System – facilitates the movement of students with recognised credits between institutions and across borders
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
EHEA	The European Higher Education Area

Term	Definition
ESG (2015)	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations
HEA	Higher Education Authority
IMI	Irish Management Institute
IP	Institutional Profile
IRC	Irish Research Council
IRG	Institutional Review Group
ISER	Institutional Self-Evaluation Report
ISSE	Irish Survey of Student Engagement
IT	Information Technology
IUA	Irish Universities Association
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
MS	Microsoft
MTU	Munster Technological University
MUC	Minzu University of China
NFETL	National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
OCLA	Office of Corporate and Legal Affairs
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
Propel	Module (developed by UCC Career Services) which clarifies all students view of the Irish labour market
QA/E	Quality Assurance/Enhancement
QEC	Quality Enhancement Committee
QEU	Quality Enhancement Unit
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Term	Definition
RICUs	Research, Institutes, Centres and Units
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SDGs	(The United Nations) Sustainable Development Goals
SFI	Science Foundation Ireland
Springboard+	Government initiative offering free/heavily subsidised qualifications at various levels in areas where there are employment opportunities
THE	Times Higher Education (World university rankings)
TNE	Trans National Education
TPI	Turning Point Institute
TurnitIn	A tool for testing the originality of assessment to protect against plagiarism
UCC	University College Cork
ULT	University Leadership Team
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment (Canvas – name given to UCC's VLE)