

University of Limerick

2022

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**Annual Quality Report University of Lir**  
**Reporting Period 2020-2021**

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**Annual Quality Report University of Lir**  
**PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM**  
**Reporting Period 2020-2021**

## PREFACE

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

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

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

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

# CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE</b>	<b>3</b>
Guidelines on Completing the Report	6
Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template	7
<b>PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM</b>	<b>8</b>
Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)	8
Introduction and Overview of Institution	9
1.0 Internal QA Framework	11
1.1 Governance and Management of Quality	11
1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision	14
2.0 Programme Development and Delivery	16
2.1 Programme Development and Approval	16
2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification	16
2.3 Procedures for Making Awards	17
2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment	18
3.0 Learner Resources and Support	20
4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes	23
5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support	26
6.0 Information and Data Management	28
7.0 Public Information and Communication	30
8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review	31
9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties	Error! Bookmark not defined.
9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Error! Bookmark not defined.
9.2 Collaborative Provision	Error! Bookmark not defined.
9.3 Articulation Agreements	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<b>PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM</b>	<b>37</b>
Guidelines on Completing Part B	37
1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments	38
1.1 Strategic QA Updates	38
1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR	43
1.3 Governance and Management	45
1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review	47

<b>2.0 IQA System - Enhancement and Impacts</b>	<b>50</b>
2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity	60
<b>3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period</b>	<b>61</b>
3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives	61
3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods	65
3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period	65
3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period	65
<b>4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies</b>	<b>66</b>

## Guidelines on Completing the Report

The AQR is aligned with QQI's Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and with the ESG (2015). A mapping of the ESG to QQI Core QA Guidelines is included in Table 1 below; the structure of Part A of this report template aligns with the first column of the table. Additional guidance on completing this template and reference material is included in each section. Institutions should adhere to this guidance and have regard to QQI Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. **The guide text within each section should be deleted before submission of the report.**

### Submission Process and Timeline

The deadline for submission of the AQR each year is in February of the relevant year, with the call for submission sent to institutions in November of the preceding year. Once the call for submission has been made, QQI will provide access to QQI's provider portal, QHub, to the designated institution contact(s) to facilitate submission of the report. Through QHub, each institution will have access to an editable version of its AQR for the previous reporting period. This document can then be amended/updated to reflect any changes or developments that occurred during the current reporting period before submitting the final report to QQI.

### Completing the AQR

- When completing the AQR template, all relevant colleagues in the institution should be consulted.
- Consider whether external audiences will be able to understand the terminology used (particularly local abbreviations and acronyms); it may be helpful to include a glossary.
- Aim to avoid duplication in the report - where information is relevant to more than one section, the first mention may be referenced in subsequent sections.
- Provide reflections on what worked well, but also what may have been tried but did not work.

### Report Structure

#### Part A: Internal QA System

Part A of the AQR comprises a record of each institution's current QA policies and procedures and should provide links to those policies and procedures. Private HEIs may provide links to the policies and procedures approved by QQI during initial access to validation (IAV) or reengagement. It is the responsibility of each HEI to ensure before submission of the AQR that all links are correct and functional, and that the policies and procedures referred to are the most up-to-date versions available. Given that the AQR is submitted in respect of a discrete reporting period, it may be helpful for institutions to establish a SharePoint/OneDrive folder (or similar) for each reporting period that contains the current versions of their policies and procedures, and that hyperlinks to these versions of the documents be provided in the AQR

Part A is to be completed only if there have been **material** changes to QA policies and procedures during the reporting period. Such changes may include the approval and implementation of new policies or procedures, or significant amendments to existing ones.

#### Part B: Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE)

Part B of the AQR documents and captures QA activities, developments and enhancements undertaken by institutions **during the reporting period** and their **impact**. Insofar as is possible, institutions should demonstrate in Part B how plans set out in the previous AQR were progressed during the reporting period - these may be plans linked to strategic objectives, to reengagement advices, or to institutional review recommendations.

#### Case Studies

In each reporting period, QQI may request updates on specific thematic areas or may invite the institution to submit case studies in response to specific topics. Further, institutions may include case studies to share good practice on topics of their choosing, demonstrating QA and QE in action. In formulating case studies, institutions are encouraged to reflect on and highlight areas that may be of interest to other institutions and would benefit from wider dissemination. Further guidance is provided in Part B.

## Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template<sup>1</sup>

### Legislation

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

### QQI Documents

#### Statutory QA Guidelines (QAG)

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

#### Other QQI Policy Documents

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

### Other National/International References

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

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<sup>1</sup> These links will be updated as further guidance documents are published.

## PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Table 1

Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)				
AQR Part A Section	QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.	QAG Core Sub-section Title	ESG Standard No.	ESG Standard Title
1.0 - Internal QA Framework	2.1	Governance and Management of Quality	1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
	2.2	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance		
2.0 - Programme Development and Delivery	2.3	Programmes of Education and Training	1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
4.0 - QA of Research Activities and Programmes			1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review				
5.0 - Staff Recruitment, Development and Support	2.4	Staff Recruitment, Management and Development	1.5	Teaching Staff
2.3 - Teaching, Learning and Assessment	2.5	Teaching and Learning	1.3	Student-centred Teaching, Learning and Assessment
	2.6	Assessment of Learners		
3.0 - Learner Resources and Supports	2.7	Supports for learners	1.6	Learning Resources and Student Support
6.0 - Information and Data Management	2.8	Information and Data Management	1.7	Information Management
7.0 - Public Information and Communication	2.9	Public Information and Communication	1.8	Public Information
2.0 - Programme Delivery and Development	2.10	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
9.0 - Details of Arrangements with Third Parties				
2.0 - Programme Development and Delivery	2.11	Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review			1.10	Cyclical External Quality Assurance
4.0 - QA of Research Activities and Programmes	QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes			



## Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for the University of Limerick for the reporting period **1 September 2020 - 31 August 2021**.

It is to be submitted by **Friday, 25 February 2022**.

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

### University of Limerick

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

UL has undergone relatively rapid growth. In 1989, the University had 3,490 students and currently has 18,489<sup>2</sup> students. The campus is situated on 366 hectares of land, making it geographically one of the largest universities in Ireland, and it is situated five kilometres from Limerick City. The University's age and location have facilitated the development of a range of modern cultural and sporting facilities. The University has four faculties which have subsidiary academic units, namely (i) Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; (ii) Business (Kemmy Business School); (iii) Education and Health Sciences; and (iv) Science and Engineering.

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

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

### Development and Approval of AQR

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

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

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

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

## 1.0 Internal QA Framework

### 1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

Overall authority for the affairs of the University is vested in the [Governing Authority](#), whose functions include approving high-level strategy and policy, statutes and regulations. The Provost/Deputy President (PDP) reports directly to the Governing Authority on all quality-related issues. Matters relating to internal audit or risk management are dealt with by the [GA Audit and Risk](#) sub-committee.

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

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

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

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

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

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

[strategy](#) (*Engaged Learning*), which includes a specific commitment to quality in all our activities; and (c) our [research and innovation strategy](#) (*Excellence and Impact 2020*), the first objective of which commits us to maximising the quality of research outputs across all disciplines. These strategic documents each have associated implementation plans, which are subject to regular monitoring and review.

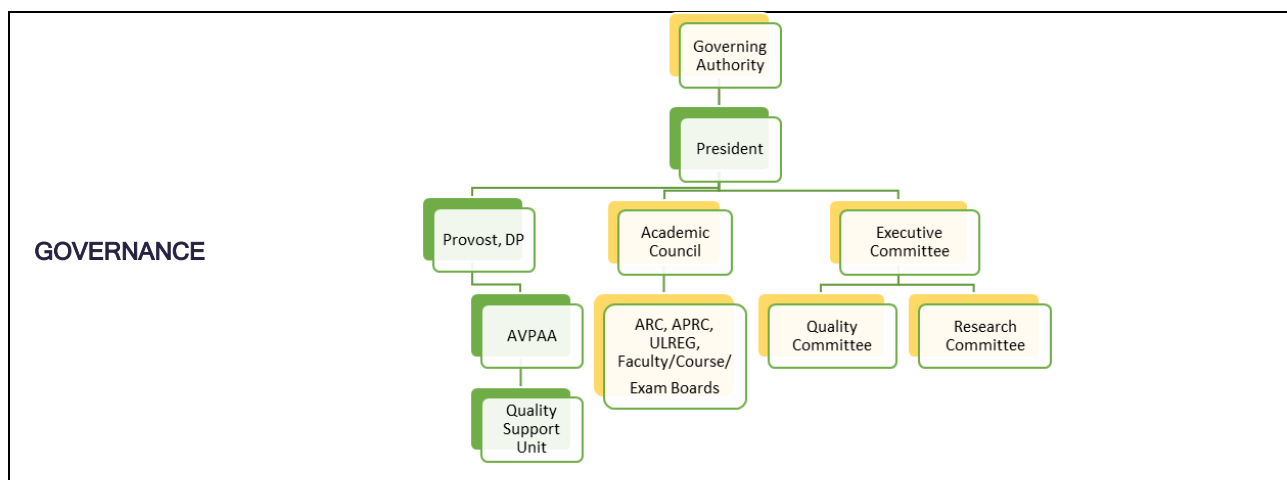
The University's decision-making processes and procedures are outlined on the Corporate Secretary's website [here](#).

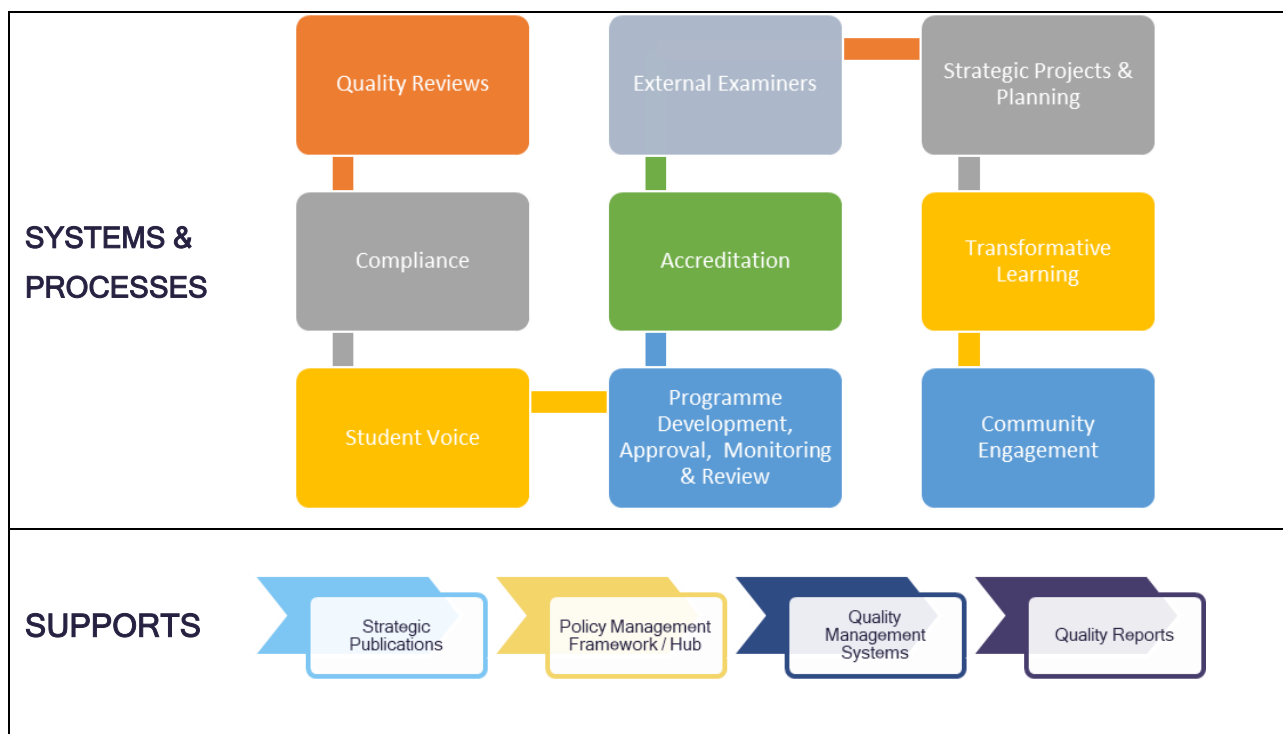
The University is committed to assuring and enhancing the quality of its activities and to fostering a quality culture throughout the institution. The University recognises the pursuit of quality, and hence excellence, as a core value. Responsibility for the quality of our activities rests at institutional, local and individual level. The University Quality Policy is available [here](#). The University's Quality Manual is available [here](#). UL's [risk management policy](#) and associated processes also represent a core university system linking risk, quality and strategy.

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

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

## UL Internal Quality Assurance Governance, Systems and Supports





## External Quality Assurance



## Representation of Learners and External Stakeholders

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

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

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

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

## 1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

### Collaborative Provision & Transnational Delivery of Programmes

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

### Delivery to International Learners

In July 2015, QQI published a Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners. The Code of Practice (or 'the Code'), which both draws upon and informs international effective practice, can be accessed [here](#) or from the [QQI website](#). The Code represents a set of threshold requirements particular to the provision of education and training to international learners. In the introductory text, QQI indicates that compliance with the Code should be integrated into the provider's quality assurance policies and procedures.

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

### Linked Providers

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

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

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

providers. The MoUs/MoAs, and hence the exact profile and scope of the resultant QA oversight, are tailored to best suit individual institutional contexts and are approved ultimately by Academic Council and Executive Committee.

## 2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

### 2.1 Programme Development and Approval

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

New programmes are formally approved in five stages by five different groups: the host department, host faculty, Executive Committee, Academic Programme Review Committee (APRC) and Academic Council. Academic Council approves new programmes on the advice of APRC. Students and representative stakeholders of the academic units (faculty and department/school) proposing the programme are represented on Academic Council.

Procedures for institution-wide programme design, approval and modification are stored on SharePoint. The approval process procedures and guidelines, including defined criteria, are documented in *Procedures for Processing Programme Proposals* and *Guidelines to Ensure Quality and Consistency of Submissions*, respectively. Joint or dual degrees are subject to the provisions of UL's policy on [Collaborative and Transnational Provision](#).

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

### Apprenticeship Programmes

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

### 2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

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



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

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

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

In accordance with the Academic Programme Review Policy (which is covered in more detail in section 4.3), each programme's course review board is provided with the following sets of anonymised data, which they use in their annual and periodic programme review reports:

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

## 2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

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

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

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

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

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

## 2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

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

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

Under the terms of the University's [Academic Programme Review Policy](#), all taught programmes are subject to formal annual review by the relevant course review board with a commitment to periodic review (usually every five years) by a panel that includes external personnel. Master's and PhD theses by research are monitored by means of an annual progression and monitoring system involving research review panels within each academic unit. The theses are examined and reported upon by internal and external examiners.

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

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

A checklist for course directors in planning for blended learning was developed during the Covid pandemic. [Programme Planning Checklist Course Director.pdf \(ul.ie\)](#). The checklist provides signposting to the key tasks involved in the planning, development and coordination of programmatic approach to blended learning during the academic year 2020/21. The intention is that these actions will provide for a more coherent and consistent student experience across the programme and is designed to complement the [Guidelines](#) for preparing teaching and learning.

### 3.0 Learner Resources and Support

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

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

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

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

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

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

Led by the [UL Global](#), the University's compliance with the Code of Practice for Provision of Education and Training to International Learners is documented [here](#).

The [Centre for Transformative Learning](#) offers a number of [initiatives to students](#) to support their learning, including the [First Seven Weeks programme](#), [study skills and exam technique](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Blended Learning**

UL has committed to a blended learning strategy for the academic year 2020/21. General information and supports for students is available [here](#). Details of IT supports for students during the pandemic are available [here](#).

CTL has provided supports and resources for students in order to help them to maximise their engagement and enhance their experience of teaching, learning and assessment in the online context. Students did not choose to experience their learning in the remote setting and

consequently for the majority this is a new and somewhat daunting experience for them. The first resource developed was a set of guidelines on [Learning online in UL](#) which has an accompanying [short recording](#) to ease accessibility for students.

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

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

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



## 4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

Overall research strategy and policy is articulated by the University's: (a) [strategic plan](#); (b) [research strategy](#), which is informed by the overall strategic plan; and (c) [quality policy](#). The management of [institutional-level research](#) is largely the responsibility of the Vice President Research, who is supported by the Office of the Vice President Research. Research-related policies and procedures are available [here](#). The University Research Committee, which reports to Executive Committee, advises and reports on research priorities for the University.

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

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

UL is committed to ensuring that all research carried out under its auspices meets the highest standards of [integrity](#), and that an environment of research integrity prevails through the promotion of good research practices, together with the use of fair, effective, and transparent procedures to address research misconduct. In support of the Research Integrity Policy, UL has appointed a Research Integrity Officer from among its senior faculty and research integrity champions are in place within each faculty.

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

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

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

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

All members of the University staff and students are required to plan and conduct their investigations in accordance with appropriate ethical standards. Staff should ensure that they have knowledge of any relevant disciplinary guidelines on research ethics and that any empirical research has the required approval by the Faculty's Research Ethics Committee and/or other bodies as required. Research on patients (i.e. people who are receiving treatment as a result of an illness) falls within the remit of the Committee but requires ethical clearance from the relevant hospital Research Ethics Committee prior to the research commencing.

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

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

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

Faculty Committee Information can be found at:

- [Kemmy Business School Ethics](#)
- [Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences Ethics](#)
- [Education & Health Sciences Ethics](#)
- [Science & Engineering Ethics](#)

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

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

The activity under each of the categories is collated from various data sources both internal and external to UL. The internal data sources include but are not limited to the UL Research information system (ULRIS), Student Record System, Agresso financial system, and MyIP (research contracts and commercialisation activity). External data sources include bibliometric databases from Web of Science, Scopus, InCites, and Scival. Examples of key measures captured under the four categories include:

- Top 10% publications



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

## 5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

### Staff Recruitment

The University's HR policies and procedures for the recruitment of [academic](#), [support](#) and [research](#) staff comply with Irish public sector recruitment and appointment procedures. Recruitment policies, procedures and practices comply with the [Universities Act 1997](#), the [Employment Equality Acts 1998/2004](#), the [Equal Status Acts 2000/2004](#), [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012](#), [Athena Swan](#) and the [HR Strategy for Researchers \(HRS4R\) | UL - University of Limerick](#). The University's [Equality and Diversity Policy](#) is designed to ensure that the University's procedures and practices operate in a manner that is consistent with the institution's commitment to equality of opportunity and do not discriminate against individuals on grounds of gender, gender identity, gender expression, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveler community, socio-economic status, ethnicity, national identity or neurodiversity.

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

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

### Staff Management

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

### Staff Development

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

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

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

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

## 6.0 Information and Data Management

### Information Technology and Systems

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

The University operates the following information management systems:

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

Profiles of the student population as well as student progression, success and drop-out rates are gathered, reported and analysed in a number of ways. The Institutional Research Officer gathers statistics on student admission and progression. Reports on student progression per programme are compiled and presented to course directors, heads of department/school, faculty deans and Executive Committee.

The Office of the President compiles student profile data for inclusion in the University's annual Strategic Dialogue self-assessment report to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) - see the published HEA's [Higher Education System Performance Institutional and Sectoral Profiles](#) for details.

The annual institutional-level [Student Exit Survey](#) process includes internal longitudinal benchmarking and benchmarking against our linked providers.

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

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

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

## Records Management and Retention

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

## Data Protection and Freedom of Information

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

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

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

## Key Performance Indicators

The university has agreed a suite of KPIs with the HEA as part of its mission-based performance compact. These KPIs are reported annually to the HEA in our self-evaluation report, as part of the strategic dialogue process.

A suite of KPIs were developed to monitor the UL@50 Strategic Plan - these were agreed with EC and GA. This listing was prepared through extensive consultation with senior management, reviewing the new strategy, consideration of the KPIs used in previous strategies, data requested and reported on by the HEA, and discussions with GA. As the strategy is now being recalibrated in response to institutional review recommendations, further work on KPIs has been put on hold, pending the outcome of the strategic plan review.

As part of the university's response to the COVID-19 pandemic the COTEC team put in place an operational dashboard, which is distributed to EC and GA (see attached). This dashboard includes a series of weekly metrics from various support divisions on their activities. Metrics include online support calls, post graduate and non-EU applications and offers, website statistics, usage of online meeting tools and online learning platforms, research awards and publications, library digital services activities, student fee debt and collections, volume and value of purchasing and expenses, payroll value and headcount, etc. In addition the Information Technology Division has developed a dashboard for academic departments that sits on the Virtual Learning Environment, providing analytics on student engagement by module.

## 7.0 Public Information and Communication

### Public Information

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

The University adheres to the Freedom of Information Act 2014, which informs institutional practice in this area. Section 8 of the Act requires FOI bodies to prepare and publish as much information as possible in an open and accessible manner on a routine basis, having regard to the principles of openness, transparency and accountability as set out in sections 8(5) and 11(3) of the Act. Links to each section of the University's FOI Publication Scheme are maintained by the [FOI section](#) of the Corporate Secretary's Office. Links include:

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

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

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

The [Marketing and Communications Division](#) is responsible for gathering and disseminating a wide range of information to audiences both internal and external to the University. The Division also manages the University's institutional social media accounts. The University's Social Media Strategy and Social Media Policy are available [here](#). The focus of the strategy is to develop a core tier of social media channels and adopt a proactive social media publishing process that integrates the four faculties and key business units. The Division supports the campus-wide University Social Media Community Group and offers training, strategic advice and policy guidelines. Information regarding UL Open Days is published annually on the University website.

### Learner Information

The online prospectuses for [undergraduate](#) and [postgraduate](#) programmes and the [Graduate & Professional Studies](#) (GPS) and [UL Global](#) websites specify details of (or provide links to) the University's programme offerings. The published information for each programme specifies the programme's title; NFQ level; entry requirements; duration; structure; list of modules; career prospects; student profiles; video clips from students, graduates and staff; and a contact name and email address for requesting more information. Hard copies of the prospectuses and supplementary programme descriptor documents are made available to the public during open days, career fairs and information evenings.

Current and prospective research students can access information on the University's research activities and offerings on the [Research](#) and [GPS](#) websites.

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

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

## Publication of QA Reports

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

The University publishes the reports from its institutional reviews ([2012](#) and [2020](#) to date) on the Office of the President and QSU websites. Quality assurance policies are available on the University policy [hub](#). Quality assurance procedures are available on the QSU [website](#) and are also published on individual unit websites.

## 8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

### Self-Evaluation

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

- The University collects, analyses and reports upon a whole range of datasets and other information to external stakeholders (e.g. the HEA, QQI and Department of Education and Skills). These activities are undertaken by a wide range of (largely) support units and offices/officers, as relevant to functional area.
- At an institutional level, the strategic plan sets priorities, objectives and measures of success. Progress on the achievement of the plan's aims and objectives, as defined in terms of indicators of success and outcomes, is monitored on an ongoing basis by Executive Committee and Governing Authority.
- The University's research strategy specifies action items and targets for each strategic objective. The Vice President Research oversees regular reviews of the strategy and reports on performance against targets to Executive Committee and Governing Authority. These KPI's are embedded into HEA compact and Knowledge Transfer Ireland reports which take place on a regular basis.



- Self-evaluation activities (and associated authorship of a self-evaluation report) are carried out as part of academic, research and support unit quality reviews. Review reports are made [publicly available](#), and the review recommendations form the basis of a subsequent quality improvement plan (QIP). The implementation of the QIP is monitored by the QSU, the PDP/CO, the relevant dean and the university Quality Committee.
- UL implements an [external examination process](#) for both taught and research programmes, and external examiner reports are considered at local unit and individual level. External examiners are requested to contact the Office of the Provost/Deputy President directly if they have particular concerns.
- Under the terms of UL's [Annual Programme Monitoring and Periodic Review](#) policy, all taught programmes are subject to formal annual monitoring by the relevant course review board with a commitment to periodic review (usually every five years) by an external panel. The review outcomes are considered at departmental and faculty level and by Academic Council's APRC.
- Student feedback is gathered by means of the [module satisfaction survey](#) and [student exit survey](#), and detailed and/or aggregate reports are considered by individual academics, heads of department, course boards, deans, Executive Committee and Academic Council.
- All UL support units are required to implement a QMS. A requirement of the QMS is the inclusion of a 'QMS Audit' process, whereby all processes are audited by trained QMS auditors on an annual basis. An [Inter-Department Audit Process](#) is in place to help units prepare for quality reviews. The audits are referred to as 'inter-department' because they are conducted by trained auditors both from within the unit under review and from other UL support units. The purpose of the audit process is to ensure that all components of the unit's QMS are audited for compliance with UL's quality framework. The process allows for a sharing of best practice and a focus on inter-department collaboration. Support units are also required to complete an annual quality report, which provides valuable input for the annual institutional quality report (AIQR).
- Faculties provide an annual quality report, which is linked to the annual programme monitoring process and resulting faculty action plan.
- Systematic and ongoing risk assessment exercises (feeding into risk registers) are undertaken by academic and support units in line with UL's [risk management policy](#), the implementation and monitoring of which is undertaken by Executive Committee and Governing Authority's [Audit and Risk Committee](#).
- Led by the QSU, the University conducts compliance exercises to document the extent to which the institution meets its external QA obligations. This work is guided by the *Process for Assessing Compliance with Statutory and Related Quality Requirements* (an internal document stored on SharePoint). Once the University receives notice of a new or revised quality requirement, the QSU coordinates an exercise that assesses the extent to which the University complies with that requirement. Examples include the 2015 ESG and QQI guidelines and codes of practice. Responsibility for assessing how the University complies with the requirement lies with the unit(s) or officers that have functional responsibility in the area concerned. Refer to the [Compliance](#) page of the QSU for more details. Identified enhancement opportunities lead to the development of a QIP, which is implemented by relevant units.



## Periodic Review

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

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

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

## External Panelists

In compliance with the [guidelines](#) for the periodic quality reviews of academic, research and support units, the review groups include senior academics (academic units), peers (research units) and cognates (support units), who come from outside the Republic of Ireland and work in disciplines that provide them with a strong degree of familiarity with the core activities of the unit under review. The expert panelists on academic and research unit reviews typically have a significant international reputation in their field of expertise and come from a prestigious international university or other appropriate institutional setting. The expert panelists on support unit reviews are typically directors or senior members of a similar unit in a leading international university or comparable educational institution outside Ireland. The QSU maintains a record of all quality review group members.

In compliance with the University's [procedures for the recruitment of academic staff](#), selection panels include one or two (depending on the level of appointment) external and one internal

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

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

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

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

### **How the Internal QA System engages with External Quality Assurance?**

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

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

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

The University is required to undergo statutory external review through a process of self-evaluation and site visit from an external panel of peer experts. Recommendations arising from self-evaluation and those recommended by the panel are incorporated into an institutional quality improvement plan. The Quality Committee has oversight of the implementation of that plan.

Nationally, the University contributes to inter-institutional dialogue on quality-related issues through its participation on the Irish Universities Association Quality Committee. Internationally, the University engages with quality trends in higher education by participating in relevant

international conferences, such as those organised by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

University of Limerick

2022

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**Annual Quality Report University of Limerick**  
**PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE**  
**ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT**  
**Reporting Period 2020-2021**

## PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

### Guidelines on Completing Part B

As outlined in the general guidelines for this template (p.5), **Part B** of the AQR documents and captures QA activities, developments and enhancements undertaken by institutions **during the reporting period** and their **impact**.

Insofar as is possible, institutions should demonstrate in Part B how plans set out in the previous AQR submission were progressed during the reporting period - these may be plans linked to strategic objectives, to reengagement advices, or to institutional review recommendations.

Part B of the AQR is an opportunity for self-reflection and critical evaluation of the effectiveness of QA activities over the reporting period. Institutions are encouraged to reflect both on what worked well and what did not work well, and to consider impact measures, using both quantitative and qualitative evidence (metrics, benchmarks and feedback/judgement) in how they led to specific QA improvements and enhancement.

Part B provides evidence of quality improvement and enhancement and impact<sup>2</sup> of QA activities within the totality of an institution's QA system.

**Section 1** pertains to internal quality assurance implementation and developments since the previous reporting period.

**Section 2** deals with institutional analysis of IQA enhancements and impacts including activities undertaken in respect of academic integrity, and the enhancements and impacts resulting from same.

**Section 3** relates to IQA developments and plans for the next reporting period.

**Section 4** provides an opportunity for institutions to illustrate IQA in action through case studies in relevant thematic areas.

Institutions are invited, if they wish to do so, to use case studies to demonstrate quality in action and to highlight areas of practice for dissemination at any point in this part of the report.

#### Case Studies

QQI recommends that written case studies should:

- Be between half a page and two pages in length;
- Relate to a specific time- and subject-bound issue;
- Include an introduction that sets out a brief overview of contextual matters;
- Include any relevant supporting data and data analysis;
- Include links to any sources cited;
- Include a clear concluding paragraph with overview of key outcomes/learning.

Although case studies will generally be in written form, institutions may also provide links to audio-visual/multimedia case studies. QQI does not prescribe a format for case studies.

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<sup>2</sup> The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education have considered impact and measures leading to development and improvement specifically in terms of teaching and learning. See: <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/wp-content/uploads/NF-2020-Insights-from-Practice-About-Impact-in-Teaching-and-Learning-web-ready.pdf>. This is a very useful reference, though impact in the context of this report should be considered

# 1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

## 1.1 Strategic QA Updates

### Quality Enhancement from Internal Monitoring and Review

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

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

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

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

- The University's digital capacity has been enhanced through a range of projects delivered during AY2020/21. The **ITD Business Intelligence (BI) and Reporting Systems** team provides the technology, skills and advice to help transform the way in which we access, view and analyse data across the campus. A recent example saw the release of the new Post Graduate(PG) Course Applications Dashboard using the Microsoft PowerBI platform. This dashboard provides a view of the number of applicants for the many PG courses and updates each week with the latest statistics. It replaces a manually populated spreadsheet that was very labour intensive to produce with a solution that is now fully automated using data directly fed from the Student Information System (SI).
- The Learning Technologists Forum is a community of practice and encourages collaboration between faculty and staff who support Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) in UL. The LTF has provided many additional opportunities for collaboration since the start of the Covid 19 pandemic, where new and enhanced online learning requirements were identified and implemented. The LTF and Information Technology Division (ITD) have collaborated to roll out the Panopto Lecture Capture system and Program Site templates in SULIS during Summer 2020. Both projects were delivered in very short timeframes and benefitted from close alignment with the LTF in terms of requirements gathering, Continuous Professional Development delivery and campus wide communications. The LTF meets regularly throughout the year and provides an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss topics of interest with their peers, to share their learnings and to consider how TEL can be used in new and innovative ways. This dialogue and feedback provides insights into how TEL is used across the faculties in UL and feeds into ITD's continuous improvement process for existing systems and services.
- The **Cooperative Education & Careers Division**, in partnership with Northern Trust, has won the *2021 Excellence in Employability Award for Building Effective Strategic Partnerships* for its work on the Mid-West Disability Forum. CECD partnered with Northern Trust to establish and deliver the Mid-West Disability Forum. The focus of the forum was on creating equity for students and graduates with disabilities, specifically through reducing barriers to their employment across recruitment + selection, on-boarding + induction, disclosure, technology support and shared actions. The forum is a unique and innovative partnership that extends to the broader industry community across the sectoral spectrum.

- **Graduate Careers Fair:** The Cooperative Education & Careers Division (CECD) hosted the 2020 Graduate Careers Fair on October 10th. The largest careers fair nationally, it attracted over 120 employer partners -regional, national and global -across the IT, engineering, manufacturing, financial services, education, food, law, pharmaceutical and construction sectors. To roll out the event, CECD moved the fair to a virtual platform, allowing students and employers to engage with each other through virtual presentations, video calls and online chat facilities. Over 1600 final year students attended the fair and feedback from both students and employers has been excellent.
- **UL Academic Registry** has won the 2021 Irish Education Award for Excellence in Professional Services. Over the past year, the Academic Registry has continued to evolve and improve as the support backbone for UL, to enable an excellent student experience and to collaborate with their colleagues, the UL community and their counterparts in other third-level institutions to deliver first-class, dynamic, customer-centric support throughout the student journey.
- **The UL Enactus team** were crowned the winners of the Enactus Ireland National Competition 2021. The UL team pitched a range of projects with national and international impact and displayed successful models of collaboration between students, academic and business leaders who are committed to solving challenges in local communities by leveraging innovative and entrepreneurial actions.
- The **School of Allied Health** were winners of a National Forum's Disciplinary Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment (DELTA) Award. The UL DELTA team has again secured a prestigious national award granted to discipline groups who demonstrate a record of excellence in teaching and learning enhancement and who commit to an ongoing, clearly articulated and shared process of continued enhancement. The DELTA Award team is a successful multidisciplinary group of academics, practice education staff and students with members are drawn from the disciplines of human nutrition and dietetics, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and speech and language therapy. The team's application focused on inter-professional education (IPE), which we recognise as a vital part of preparing health sciences students for post-registration working in multidisciplinary teams.
- The **Library**, in collaboration with ITD and the IUA funded [EDTL](#) (*Enhancing Digital Capacity in Teaching & Learning*) project provided digital skills workshops for students in Weeks 4, 5 & 6. These workshops were designed in direct response to UL student feedback in the [INDeX \(Irish National Digital Experience\) survey](#). The workshops provided over 20 hours of instruction delivered by UL librarians, ITD and the UL Lead for the EDTL project on tools and technologies available to UL students to assist with their academic work. Further details on the LevUL UP project aims, findings and impact are available [here](#).
- **Kemmy Business School:** The second cohort of MSc Economics and Policy Analysis double degree students (in partnership with EQUIS and AACSB accredited HEC Liège) graduated on 30 June. The MSc in Economics and Policy Analysis at UL is specifically designed to equip students with the practical skills required for a career in economics. The current global economic crisis demonstrates the need for well-educated and trained economists in a number of spheres. The programme has a strong applied public policy focus that prepares graduates for positions that require the application of economic knowledge and practical skills. The programme has recently been ranked 30th in Western Europe by EdUniversal Best Masters and is also the first and only Masters in Economics in Ireland that offers the potential to obtain a double degree, through our partnership with the Business School of the University of Liège in Belgium. HEC Liège is one of the best Business Schools in Europe and was recently awarded EQUIS accreditation.
- **Reimagining Assessment–Community of Practice:** Reimagining assessment from the perspective of the educator and the learner has become increasingly important in recent times. A mutual appetite exists for a shared understanding of assessment and how this can be realised in an ever-changing context. In light of this, a community of practice was established, led by DCU and the Centre for Transformative Learning, UL, with input from other HEIs across the sector. The overarching aim was to create a distributed sense of learning, in a bid to bridge the perceived gap through sharing examples and resources on the process and product of assessment. Funded by the SATLE19 fund, an interactive resource was launched by Prof



Susan Deeley, University of Glasgow who delivered a keynote on Student-staff partnerships in learning and assessment.

The **EMerge peer-support network** was launched in November 2020 to establish a collaborative and supportive environment for early and mid-career academics (EMCAs) to realise their career objectives through mentoring and development of shared academic and research opportunities at the University of Limerick (UL). EMerge connects members across the university campus with the aim of offering informal peer support, supporting skill and career development, championing EMCA ideas and research activities, promoting the visibility of EMCAs, offering a voice for EMCAs, and promoting a university culture that nurtures a strong talent pipeline at UL.

University of Limerick, Mary Immaculate College and Limerick Institute of Technology held a successful conference in learning and teaching. The theme of the conference was *Celebrating Innovation, Opportunities and Inspirations in Learning and Teaching* and took place online 14th May. The programme of events included an opening keynote by Dr Helen King, University of the West England, a plenary session with our recent regional teaching excellence award winners, a student panel and a series of very interesting and innovative talks. The conference event was complemented by a series of recorded talks, which were available to view the following week.

**UL sustainability:** UL [sustainability website](#) has been recently launched. The 2020 [UL Sustainability Report](#) is the result of an initial institutional mapping exercise to offer an overview into the diversity of sustainability work, that goes on across our campus and matched the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework. UL has made a submission to the annual international University Impact rankings at the end of November.

University of Limerick has improved its position in the 2020 UI GreenMetric World University Rankings. UL has climbed to 17th out of over 900 universities worldwide in the rankings, which measure each participating university's commitment to an environmentally friendly future.

- **University of Limerick and TENI launch gender identity e-resource for schools:** University of Limerick and the Transgender Equality Network of Ireland have launched a new e-resource to help to ensure that schools are more inclusive of young people who are trans and gender diverse. The resource has arisen from a two-year research project exploring the experiences of trans and gender diverse youth in second-level schools in Ireland. This research was a collaboration between the School of Education at UL and the Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI). It was co-funded by the Irish Research Council and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions as part of the Collaborative Research Fellowships for a Responsive and Innovative Europe (CAROLINE) programme. [The e-resource](#) has been designed to support second-level school staff in learning about gender identity and expression and ensuring that schools are inclusive of young people who are trans and gender diverse. It was designed to work in tandem with the school-based training and supports offered by TENI.
- **UL's Greentown Project wins first place at European Crime Prevention Awards:** The Greentown research project based at University of Limerick has won a major European Crime Prevention award. The innovative research project is a strategic partnership between UL's School of Law and the Department of Justice on the design, implementation and evaluation of youth justice interventions. The pilot initiative is aimed at disrupting recruitment of children by criminal gangs and was awarded first place at the European Crime Prevention Awards. The award committee particularly noted that the Greentown project "holds an unparalleled theoretical foundation. It is well designed with a methodological and holistic approach. The project is a good example of a multi-agency approach.... the project is well documented and as a result can be replicated in other countries. Although the project is in its early stages it is considered one to keep a close eye on in the future."
- **QS Stars:** University of Limerick has achieved the highest possible standard in the QS Stars rating system, the only university in Ireland to achieve this in 2021. UL joins an exclusive group of 57 universities worldwide to receive the overall five-star status in the ranking, which is considered one of the most influential and credible ratings for universities globally. The advantage of the QS rating system over a global ranking is that it signals to potential staff and students, as well as to future partners, the areas in which UL excels. In addition to the overall



five stars rating, UL has earned the highest five-star rating in several other areas: Teaching, Employability, Research, Internationalization, Facilities, Innovation, and Inclusiveness.

- **Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings 2021:** UL climbs to 50<sup>th</sup> place globally (3<sup>rd</sup> nationally), THE Impact Rankings assess the contributions made by universities worldwide to achieving a more sustainable world through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The main highlights for UL are as followings:
  - Ranked 10<sup>th</sup> for SDG11: Sustainable Cities and Communities. Top ranking Irish university
  - Ranked 35<sup>th</sup> for SDG16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. Ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> nationally
  - Ranked 39<sup>th</sup> for SDG17: Partnership for the Goals. Ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> nationally
  - Ranked 62<sup>nd</sup> for SDG8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. Ranked 4<sup>th</sup> nationally
- **APEX Network:** On 10 June, APEX, the Academic, Professional Empowerment Network was launched. It is an Athena SWAN (AS) initiative, progressed by the AS Career Development Working Group. APEX aims to provide networking and relationship building opportunities to all UL staff, the embedding of AS principles and professional EDI culture across the university, knowledge and sharing of best practice and a platform for discussion and engagement. The Staff Pulse Survey highlighted that C19 has adversely affected belonging to a team/organisation and increased loneliness and isolation, challenges APEX targets.
- **Teaching Excellence:** The Regional Teaching Excellence Award is a collaborative process between UL, MIC, and LIT, which aims to showcase and champion outstanding practice in Higher Education teaching from across the Region. Out of the nominated faculty from across the institutions, five academics were ultimately shortlisted, with Noreen Heraty, Department of Work and Employment Studies, Kemmy Business School emerging as the recipient of this award.

## Changes to QA System

The University of Limerick [Policy Hub](#) is the single authoritative source for the University's Statutes and Policies. The Policy Management Framework and Policy Framework Toolkit are targeted at those responsible for developing and revising policy documents. They contain a variety of links to information that will assist in the policy development and review process.

During the reporting period, the following policies were approved.

Policy Title	Sub Committee	Approval Body	Approval Date
Long Service Awards Policy	FHRAMC	GA	25/09/2020
Personal Development Leave Scheme	FHRAMC	GA	25/09/2020
Policy for Conflicts of Interest	FHRAMC	GA	25/09/2020
Selection Procedures for Deans & Vice Presidents	FHRAMC	GA	25/09/2020
Intellectual Property Policy	FHRAMC	FHRAMC	11/12/2020
Policy for the Disposal of Assets	FHRAMC	FHRAMC	11/12/2020
Anti-Fraud Policy	ARC	GA	05/02/2021
Further Study Policy	FHRAMC	GA	05/02/2021
Policy for the Recruitment of Staff	FHRAMC	GA	05/02/2021

Internal Audit Charter	ARC	GA	16/04/2021
Policy for Retention of Academic Staff	FHRAMC	GA	16/04/2021
Policy for the Award of Distinguished Professorships	FHRAMC	GA	16/04/2021
Risk Appetite Statement	ARC	GA	18/06/2021
Risk Management Policy	ARC	GA	18/06/2021
Student Substance Use and Misuse Policy	AESAC	GA	08/07/2021
High Performance Athlete Policy		AC	03/03/2021
Student Complaints Policy and Procedures Amendments		AC	19/05/2021
Health Research Policy		AC	16/06/2021
Policy on the Use of Data to Enhance Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Learning Analytics)		AC	16/06/2021
Student Survey & Feedback Mechanisms Policy.		AC	16/06/2021

GA - Governing Authority; AC - Academic Council

## 1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No.	<b>Planned objectives (Previous AQR)</b> Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	<b>Update on Status</b> Provide brief update on status, whether completed or in progress. If an action was planned in the previous AQR, but not completed, provide reasons/short reflections for the delay/non-completion.
1	Digitising quality assurance processes	<b>Objective in Progress</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a robust and scalable process for virtual quality reviews -<b>completed</b></li> <li>• Initiate project for digitisation of Quality Improvement Plans - <b>in progress</b></li> <li>• Digitise collaborative approval process - <b>rescheduled to 2021/22</b></li> </ul>
2	Improve use of student feedback and learning analytics data	<b>Objective in Progress</b> <i>StELA project - completed</i> Outputs from the project include policies on the use of data to enhance learning and a student survey and feedback mechanism policy. The recommendations of the project are being implemented via the StELA Live project and the creation of a working group to review student feedback mechanisms.  <i>Better integration of data from studentsurvey.ie into programme and service monitoring - in progress</i>
3	Enhancement of the annual programme monitoring and periodic programme review process and procedures	<b>Objective in Progress</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consultation on draft procedures for periodic programme review : - <b>in progress</b> and scheduled for 2021/22.  This process was dependent on the completion of work relating to the curriculum framework development project.</li> <li>2. Further digitisation of annual monitoring process as part of the StELA project - <b>In Progress</b></li> </ol> <p>The annual programme monitoring report has been digitised using the Qualtrics survey tool. Further work is planned in 2021/22 to make data required for programme monitoring and periodic programme review more easily accessible.</p>
4	Revision of academic integrity policy and procedure to align with national guidelines published by the National Academic Integrity Network	<b>Objective in Progress</b>  This work has been scheduled for AY 2021/2022 on foot of the launch of the guidelines in September 2021.
5	Enhancement of postgraduate admissions processes	<b>Objective Completed</b>  The objectives of this significant project were to provide an enhanced user experience for applicants and UL business users, improve turnaround time on application decisions by moving to an enhanced Online Application Form. Since its introduction OLAF has proved extremely beneficial to both the applicant and admissions teams. From the Admissions team perspective the

		benefits include: • Decrease in queries arriving into the GPS general inboxes from applicants having difficulty completing the application process. • Ability to manage clearance checks completely within the SI system. • Great oversight of an applicant's journey. • One-stop shop for required documentation - previously managed in several ways, general inboxes, admissions teams inboxes, faculty and post. • GPS can now measure the number of documents required and requested by admissions teams - as a result we are looking into the programme specific documentation being requested to streamline the process even further.
6	Upgrade to the University's Financial Management System (Agresso)	<p><b>Objective Completed</b></p> <p>The Agresso Financial System was rebranded to be named Unit4 Enterprise Resource Planning (U4 ERP). A major upgrade project was undertaken involving the <b>Finance Department, Information Technology Division, Unit4</b> and Support Consultants to upgrade to the latest version M7 which also included an upgrade to the technical platform. This new system went live on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021. The new FMS system gives the University the opportunity to plan further developments to meet increasing business requirements including data management, Brexit and remote working. It provides an improved end user experience. UL's implementation of this latest version of the finance application U4 MRP M7 is in line with best practice within the sector.</p>
7	Enhancement of University website and public information	<p><b>Objective in Progress</b></p> <p><i>1. Web accessibility:</i> This project progressed well during the reporting period. Accessibility statement drafted, due for release 2022. Accessibility hub being creased as central repository.</p> <p><i>2. Integration with systems;</i> This project was suspended due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been restarted in Sem 1, 2021/22</p>
8	Continued enhancement of Student Information System	<p><b>Objective in Progress</b></p> <p>The programme is a two-year programme starting in October 2020 and running until September 2022. Further progress has been achieved as planned on foundational and additional projects.</p>
9	Integrate recommendations from CINNTE review with strategic initiatives and operational plans	See progress report.

## 1.3 Governance and Management

### 1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Governing Authority	25.09.20, 16.10.20 (SM), 30.10.20, 13.11.20, 11.12.20, 15.01.21, (SM), 05.02.21, 05.03.21 (SM), 26.03.21, (SM), 16.04.21, 18.06.21, 08.07.21 (SM), 26.08.21 (SM). Finance Workshop for GA took place 13 & 20 May 2021. SP Consultation with GA took place 06 May 2021.
GA Access, Equality and Student Affairs	14.10.20, 03.12.20, 16.02.21, 30.03.21, 27.05.21.
GA Audit and Risk Committee	10.09.20, 01.10.20 (FRR), 04.11.20 (FRR), 12.11.20, 20.01.21, 02.03.21 (FRR), 11.03.21, 30.03.21, 03.06.21, 15.06.21 (FRR).
GA Finance, HR and Asset Management Committee	14.09.20, 27.11.20, 02.02.21, 01.04.21, 25.05.21, 30.08.21.
GA Governance Committee	16.10.20, 25.02.21, 02.03.21.
Executive Committee	02.09.20, 09.09.20, 16.09.20, 01.10.20, 14.10.20, 29.10.20, 11.11.20, 25.11.20, 09.12.20, 14.12.20, 15.12.20, 13.01.21, 25.01.21, 03.02.21, 09.02.21, 19.02.21, 24.02.21, 10.03.21, 22.03.21, 07.04.21, 15.04.21, 22.04.21, 05.05.21, 19.05.21, 02.06.21, 15.06.21, 28.06.21, 08.07.21, 20.07.21.
Campus & Infrastructure Sub-Committee (SC)	03.09.20, 21.10.20, 19.11.20, 29.07.21
Education and Student Experience SC	26.10. 21
Equality and Human Rights SC	No meetings convened during the time period.
Global Engagement and Strategy SC	08.10.20, 29.03.21, 08.06.21
Operations SC	24.09.20, 22.10.20, 25.11.20 , 28.01.21 25.02.21, 25.03.21, 27.05.21, 24.06.21 26.08.21
Quality SC	28.10.20, 30.11.20, 10.02.21, 05.05.21
University Research Committee	30.09.20, 30.10.20, 18.11.20, 16.02.21 22.03.21, 28.04.21, 28.05.21, 14.06.21 14.07.21
Academic Council	16.09.20, 07.10.20, 04.11.20, 09.12.20 20.01.21, 03.02.21, 03.03.21, 19.05.21 16.06.21
Academic Council Grading Committee	24.09.20, 22.10.20, 23.10.20, 19.11.20 17.12.20, 14.01.21, 11.02.21, 11.03.21 15.04.21, 13.05.21

Academic Programme Review Committee	24.09.20, 22.10.20, 23.10.20, 19.11.20, 17.12.20, 14.01.21, 11.02.21, 11.03.21, 15.04.21, 13.05.21
APRC Accelerated Approval Sub-Committee	03.09.21, 16.06.21
Academic Regulations Committee	01.09.20, 13.10.20, 24.11.20, 05.01.21, 09.02.21, 23.03.21, 20.04.21, 25.05.21
AHSS Faculty Board Meetings	04.11.20, 02.12.20, 10.02.21, 24.03.21, 08.04.21 (additional meeting)
KBS Faculty Board Meetings	14.10.20, 11.11.20, 10.02.21, 24.03.21
S&E Faculty Board Meetings	21.10.20, 02.12.20, 17.02.21, 24.03.21
EHS Faculty Board Meetings	14.10.20, 18.11.20, 17.02.21, 24.03.21
Research Ethics and Governance Committee	02.11.20, 14.12.20, 08.03.21, 21.06.21
University Teacher Education Board	06.10.20, 01.12.20, 26.01.21, 30.03.21, 04.05.21, 29.06.21
Management Group	02.09.20, 08.10.20, 20.11.20, 10.12.20, 28.01.21, 18.02.21, 15.04.21, 20.05.21, 24.06.21.
Library Information Resources Development Committee	No meetings convened during the time period.

\* SM - Special Meeting

\*\* FRR - Fundamental Risk Register

## 1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

### New Senior Appointments

- Chief Financial & Performance Officer (Member of Executive Committee)
- Director of Human Resources (Reporting to CCO)
- Director of Marketing and Communications (Reporting to CCO)
- Head of HR- Central Services (Reporting to Director of HR)
- Dean, Kemmy Business School
- Dean, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
- 13 Heads of Academic Departments

## 1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

### 1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Unit of review for which report has been published during reporting period	Date of completion/reason for conducting review (if not planned) or non-completion (if planned but not conducted)	Links to relevant publications
National Council for Exercise and Fitness (NCEF)	23 December 2020	<a href="#">Link to QRG Report</a>
Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS)	12 March 2021	<a href="#">Link to QRG Report</a>
Information Technology Division	17 May 2022	<a href="#">Link to QRG Report</a>

## 1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels<sup>3</sup> involved in IQA

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

	Total	Academic Schools/ Department	Professional Services/Support Unit	Approval/Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review	Other
Number of review/ evaluation processes		2	1				
<i>of those:</i>							
On-site processes							
Desk reviews							
Virtual processes		2	1				
Average panel size for each process type*		6	6				

\* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

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



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

Type of Expert/ Role on Panel	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
		Male	Female	Other, or unspecified			UK, incl . NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair	3	2	1			2	1		1	2	
Secretary	3		3		3					3	
Academic/Discipline Specific	8	5	3		1	3	4		6	2	
Student Representative	3		3		2	1				3	
QA	1	1			1				1		
Teaching & Learning											
External Industry /Third Mission	2	1	1			2				2	

## 2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

### Programmes of Education and Training

#### 1. Reimagining assessment - an Irish Community of Practice

Within the dynamic context of Higher Education there is a demand on all stakeholders to be engaged, collaborative and proactive in the progression of key initiatives which can be advanced across institutional boundaries and cultures. Considering this, and with a view to meeting the demands of educators around the role of assessment, a community of practice was established with the objective of bringing together educational experts who had a shared interest and passion for student assessment. The CoP is defined as ‘...groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly’ (Wenger, 2011:1). By sharing our experiences and challenges, we sought to validate assessment practice in, and across, our institutions. The overarching aim focused on encouraging the sharing of robust, authentic, transparent, and coherent assessment strategies in a bid to develop a meaningful student learning experience and simultaneously reduce the stress on educators assessing students.

The inter-institutional CoP first met in September 2019 evidencing a sectoral appetite to further progress the assessment debate in a collaborative manner. To this end and to sustain this self-formed and voluntary CoP, we successfully collaborated on a bid for national funding to advance the work. The subsequent two CoP meetings took place online. The resulting [interactive resource](#) aims to bridge the perceived gap through sharing examples and resources on the process and product of assessment. It focuses on the three critical elements of assessment identified in discussions: workload, groups, and feedback. A summary of the project is available [here](#).

#### 2. Collaborative Activities

- **Immersive Software Engineering Programme:** University of Limerick has collaborated with a number of leading international technology companies to redefine computer science education. The Immersive Software Engineering (ISE) programme which is an integrated undergraduate and Masters degree programme will seek to meet increased global demand for developer talent with the internet economy rapidly growing. ISE will bring the concept of ‘residencies’, which are more common to medical degrees, and use them as a key feature for the first time in computer science education. During the four years, ISE students will complete five paid residencies, each between three and six months long. During residencies students will be a part of real, professional teams solving problems like improving access to financial services around the world, fighting the climate crisis, and building next generation instrumentation for healthcare.
- **YERUN:** UL and the University of Rijeka (UNIRI) in Croatia have joined Young European Research University Network (YERUN), a cluster of highly-ranked young universities in Europe that strengthens and facilitates cooperation in the areas of scientific research, academic education and services which benefit society.
- **Collaborative Agreement:** SSPC, the SFI Research Centre based at University of Limerick, has announced a new collaboration with US company Applied Materials, Inc.

to address key challenges in the pharmaceutical industry. The collaboration agreement will develop and deploy materials engineering solutions to help solve critical drug development, formulation and manufacturing challenges facing the pharmaceutical industry. The collaboration will apply precision materials engineering to pharmaceutical industry manufacturing as part of Applied Materials, Inc.'s product portfolio transformation. It is a prime example of how academic groups and companies working together are playing a vital role in the innovation and development process.

- **Preparing for Academic Advancement Programme:** A project led by the Directors HREDI of UL, NUI Galway, and Maynooth University was successful in securing funding to roll out a pilot 'Preparing for Academic Advancement' (PAA) programme. The aim of this sectoral modular programme is to support Senior Lecturer level/Associate Professor level academic women to submit a successful application to Associate Professor level and, in doing so, support institutions in achieving the very ambitious HEA target of at least 40% representation of men and women at full professorial level by 2024.
- **Structured PhD Programme:** In January, 140 Algerian students arrived at the University of Limerick as part of a specially designed International Structured PhD programme. The ground-breaking initiative by the Algerian Government to use English as the official language of teaching and learning at the country's universities will be supported through the specially designed programme offered to the country's visiting students. The programme, which launched in 2019/20, is scalable over four years to an intake of 400 PhD students and potentially expandable across a range of disciplines at UL including business, education and science and engineering.

### 3. Community Engagement Academic Programmes

UL Engage - <https://www.ul.ie/engage/>

UL Engage supports university/community collaborations in all shapes and sizes through a variety of new and existing UL programmes and projects. UL Engage serves as the hub for civic engagement activities across campus and works with all divisions and faculties to amplify, incubate and co-ordinate the various ways that students, faculty and staff in the University of Limerick can work to make a difference.

From the beginning, UL's institutional ambition to be 'excellent and relevant' reflected an intuitive concern with providing a link between the academic institution and the wider community for the benefit of all. As a national leader in integrated learning, UL not only offers work placements and exchange opportunities, but has also developed innovative and bespoke community engaged academic programmes and learning supports for staff and students.

- **Professional Diploma in Community Engagement (level 9):** The Professional Diploma in Community Engagement is designed to meet the needs of professionals and practitioners in community-based settings in the public, semi-state and not-for-profit sector. The curriculum has been co-designed with Tusla Education Support Service to assist Home School Liaison workers (teachers seconded to a role mediating between

family and school) from our national Child and Family Support Agency, to gain practical experience working with people from communities of socio-economic deprivation. <https://www.ul.ie/gps/community-engagement-professional-diploma>.

- Students combine community engaged learning in engaged research design; engaged research delivery; and project evaluation with graduate modules in their chosen field.
- Community Research + Development, offered by the Department of Politics and Public Administration (course video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PishZdMI8IY> )
- Community Research + Journalism, offered by the Journalism Unit in the School of Language and Communication (course video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzV5zsKIFcl&feature=youtu.be> )
- In 2020 a new stream was offered by the Department of Sociology in Community Research + Sociology

## Supports and Resources for Learners

### 1. First Year Ambassador Programme

As a way of engaging with first-year students the First Year Ambassador Programme was launched by the Centre for Transformative Learning. This programme aims to promote the participation of first-year students through the development of audio-visual content: podcasts, Blogs and Vlogs. First-year students have the opportunity to share their experiences of university life with other first-year students in a digital format. The programme aims to encourage the development of digital skills and a sense of empowerment and agency among students.

### 2. Ensuring Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement in Digital Environments: Case Study from UL Library on the introduction of the Electronic Reading List Service

This case study highlights the new Electronic Reading List Service introduced at the University of Limerick during the COVID-19 pandemic, at a time when providing students with their essential reading in electronic format became an urgent and critical imperative. The aim of this service innovation, led by the Library, was to provide UL students with seamless access to the essential electronic books and articles they needed for their courses within their virtual learning environment. The project involved the integration of new library reading list software (Leganto) with the university's VLEs, the introduction of significant new library processes and workflows and the close liaison with UL faculty to build electronic reading lists for thousands of modules taught during 2020/21.

The Glucksman Library at the University of Limerick regularly undertakes quality initiatives to ensure continuous improvement and a digital change agenda that places the student experience at its centre. The library's survey, LibQUAL, is run every 2-3 years and consistently identifies 'the main texts I need for my work' as a significant priority for undergraduate and taught postgraduate students. The most recent survey pre-pandemic indicated this area as needing improvement, with students reporting difficulties getting access to both the print and electronic books they needed for their course reading. For some courses, material was on reading lists that the library was unaware of, in others the class size was such that the library did not have enough copies or had insufficient electronic access. The introduction of the Reading List Service provided a systematic digital solution to connect

library collection development activities with academic registry data on course instructors and class participants, thereby ensuring high quality, evidence-based decision making.

The pandemic accelerated the rollout of the service, when in March 2020 the library building closed and library staff issued a call to lecturers to identify the essential ebooks required for teaching their modules online. This, combined with the subsequent move to online and hybrid learning and the library's commitment to resourcing each module with an online reading list, gave the project added impetus and focus.

Deep engagement with faculty and university leadership took place and began with campus emails, issued by the Vice President Academic, and requests to Executive Deans, Assistant Deans of Academic Affairs, Heads of Departments, and module leaders, to supply reading lists as a matter of urgency. An immense effort went into building the service, with library staff working remotely on tasks like systems integration, liaising with faculty to get their reading lists, building thousands of lists in the system, connecting every book and article to library holdings and buying titles not already in the library collections. Negotiating with publishers to source electronic versions of books and digitizing articles was a sizeable part of the process so that students could access their course readings from home.

By the end of 2021, 80% of modules had an electronic reading list integrated into Sulis or Moodle, from a starting point of 30% at the beginning of the pandemic. Feedback from students and faculty has been extremely positive. High usage data indicates that the Reading List Service has been an overwhelming success and one that is set to continue post pandemic. The Electronic Reading List Service significantly enhanced the student experience in terms of how learners access and engage with academic resources and represented a meaningful step forward in the digital transformation of teaching and learning in the University of Limerick.

### 3. UL Learning Centres

UL's learning centres play a crucial role in the success of our students, via helping them to study and learn more effectively and become self-directed and confident learners. They provide supplementary academic learning support (SALS) that engage students through innovative, learner-centred, and peer-led tutoring schemes, thereby augmenting existing teaching and learning activities.

- **Maths Learning Centre:** A total of 19,334 visits were made to the MLC's online support sites during the period between the summer repeats 2020 and the end of week 15 Semester 2, 2021. Students visiting these sites had access to live group support sessions, 24/7 support material, amongst other resources. In addition, a total of 382 appointments with MLC tutors were booked and attended throughout the year. The vast majority of these were on a 1-1 basis.
- **Peer Supported Learning Centre:** 2020/21 was a challenging year for the PSLC but the move of its supports online proved quite the hit with the students. 11 modules across 3 faculties were supported targeting a total of 1032 individual students with just under 47% attending the sup[1]ports. 2414 visits to our online PSLG sessions were recorded and a total of 35 student peer leaders were employed to provide the supports.
- **ICT Learning Centre:** During AY 2020/21, the ICTLC moved its supports online. These supports include drop-in sessions, one-to-one appointments, live group sessions, and our Prepare and Repeat (PAR) sessions. In total, 416 students, primarily from the core ICT courses, attended the supports with a total of 2517 visits recorded. PAR, our first-year

retention initiative, was successfully delivered online this Spring using the framework developed in the DLSH initiative. In January, the ICTLC, in partnership with the PSLC, ran an initial UL Cybercamp Online (ULCCO) targeting 37 secondary school transition-year students of whom 30 were female. This successful pilot helped us to redesign the UL Cyber[1]camp as an online camp and our ULCCO will run again this summer with 120 2nd level students from the Midwest region attending our 3 camps.

- **The Regional Writing Centre:** The Regional Writing Centre, employed and trained 14 peer tutors in the AY2020/21, accommodating 428 hours of peer tutoring in writing for academic assessment and publication. 161 students completed feedback surveys, 98.76% reporting positively, saying that they would recommend the resource to other students; 91% report leaving their sessions with greater confidence. The tutoring hours offered were significantly increased in the wake of the pandemic, 830 hours over the period, all tutors engaging online from February 26th, 2020 onwards. The uptake, however, fell steadily throughout the year, 428 hours, down from 518 hours the previous non-Covid year. The uptake of Quick Queries, online asynchronous queries requiring 15 minutes or less to answer, on the other hand, increased significantly, 279 quick queries answered, 122 more than in the previous year, the combined statistics suggesting a preference for asynchronous online interaction. The RWCUL delivered over 18 workshops in the 2020/1 AY to over 300 students. The RWC also worked to develop well over 600 academic writers in collaboration with the Faculty of S&E, the Graduate and Professional Studies and the Flexible Learning Centre through AW 4006, Peer Tutoring in Academic Writing, ME4001, Introduction to Engineering, ME6051, Advanced Technical Communication for Engineers, and the FortWRITE PhD Writing Festival with the University of Ulster, as well as through other activities.

## Information and Data Management

### 1. Research Performance Dashboard

In December 2020, the Office of the Vice President Research launched their Research Performance Dashboard providing an overview of research activity for publications and research awards. Developed in-house by Research Support Services using Microsoft Power BI, the dashboard provides data on research funding awards, publications, international publication collaborations by faculty, institute, department. The dashboard is easy to navigate and updated quarterly with the latest research data. Access to the dashboard is available to UL senior management or their nominees. The dashboard is a valuable tool for management to assess research performance and facilitate decision making and planning within the university.

### 2. IT Security Case Study

Over 2021, cybersecurity has become an area of increasing focus with several high-profile ransomware incidents in Ireland and internationally. In the Higher Education sector alone, recent cybersecurity incidents affecting universities across Europe have led to the suspension of classes & assessments, leaking of sensitive data to the Dark Web and the complete shutdown of campus services for some universities. As part of the University's Digital Evolution, ITD aligns to international frameworks such as NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology) to improve our cybersecurity posture. In practical terms, this means that we focus on improvements in five key areas as outlined in this picture.



ITD's key focus is to ensure university critical assets are resilient to cybersecurity events. We continuously assess the threats and vulnerabilities that might impact the delivery of these services. Some of our Cyber Security protections (e.g., backups, patching, antivirus compliance) are measured and maintained under KPI's in our QMS, and we have developed processes to quickly detect potential cybersecurity issues and improved our abilities to contain and respond to a detected cybersecurity event. As part of our ongoing efforts to protect UL digital resources from the evolving threat landscape, a sample of some of the key improvements delivered by ITD to improve our security posture over the last 12 months include:

1. Roll out of **Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)** across the campus community, significantly reducing the potential for staff & student accounts to be compromised.
2. Deployment of **InTune, a modern workplace management solution** to secure UL devices in use outside of the University's network.
3. Development of additional **IT Security Awareness Training** material.
4. Regular reviews of our **Incident Response** procedures by our internal ITSIRT (IT Security Incident Response Team).
5. Focus on **Privileged Access Management** monitoring and review processes
6. Engaging with partners to actively test our cybersecurity defences with **scenario-based penetration tests** and deep network vulnerability scanning.

To give an example of a specific improvement around managing and securing UL remote devices as a result of remote working, the InTune project was instrumental in bringing end user devices to a more secure compliance and manageable state.

*Intune - A Modern Workplace Management Solution - Specific Example:*

- With the onset of remote working in March 2020, we had over 2000 staff Windows 10 laptops most of which were now being used remotely.
- Many of these devices were running a version of Windows 10 that was due to fall out of support by May 2021. These devices could only install Windows updates over the VPN as they were configured to get them from our on-premises WSUS.
- ITD determined there were too many risks associated with downloading a large Windows 10 feature update over the VPN via our traditional WSUS infrastructure.
- This drove ITD's shift towards 'modern device management' and the use of Microsoft Endpoint Manager (Intune) as the mechanism to deliver this new approach as it would give us greater visibility on remote devices that we did not have at the time.
- Starting with this project the move to Intune allowed us to manage the Windows update settings for remote Windows 10 devices regardless of their location.
- This was achieved by Hybrid Azure Active Directory (Hybrid AAD) joining ITD managed staff Windows 10 laptops and then enrolling them in Intune.
- From there the patching of these devices was managed via Windows Update for Business (WUfB).
- This ensured ITD could keep devices more compliant regardless of being on or off campus and the reporting capabilities in Intune allowed use to track the compliance rate of these devices on an on-going basis.

This new process aligned with Microsoft's 'Windows as a Service' approach to managing Windows 10 where Windows 10 is continually updated, while still allowing ITD control the rollout of future feature updates. It also simplified the management of remote devices resulting in less physical infrastructure requirements. For the end user the move to Intune provides a better experience by centrally managing the update process on behalf of the user via the WUfB settings in Intune management portal.

## Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

### 1. Enhancing Quality Review Processes

The periodic quality review of functional units (academic, research, support and affiliates) at the University of Limerick (UL) represents a cornerstone institutional quality assurance/quality improvement mechanism. UL's quality review process was developed and continues to evolve in order to satisfy university quality policy and meet legislative QA requirements. Quality reviews of units take place at least once every 7 years. UL complies with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, which places a legal responsibility on universities to establish, maintain and enhance QA procedures relating to their activities and services (Part 3, Section 28).

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, the university was in year 3, Q1 of a 7-year cycle of quality reviews. The university's institutional CINNTE review was delayed to later in 2020 because of the pandemic. The CINNTE review took place in a virtual environment in August 2020. The university was facing a period of considerable uncertainty during an evolving pandemic and overnight pivot to emergency remote working and teaching. The Executive Committee Quality Committee approved the use of online quality reviews until the second half of 2022. This fuelled the need to fast track the design and development of an online quality review platform and ensure business continuity. See Section 4 Case Study "**Design and Implementation of an Online Quality Review Platform**".

### 2. Enhancing student feedback - StELA Project

The University of Limerick provides a number of channels to allow students evaluate and provide feedback on their learning experience. The most common student evaluation channels take the form of surveys, which range from institutionally sponsored surveys to local level initiatives. Known challenges with this approach include a lack of oversight and governance of the volume, frequency and timing of survey activity and the resulting impact on student response rates. This in turn, affects the perception of the reliability and validity of that feedback.

In many cases, the formal survey reporting mechanisms at institutional, faculty, unit and programme level rely predominantly on manual processes. This resource-intensive approach elongates the period between an issue arising and the opportunity for action and closure of the feedback loop. As the resulting datasets and reports are viewed in isolation and not correlated, institutional capacity to respond effectively to the student voice at programme and discipline level is reduced. This interdisciplinary T&L initiative took a first principles approach to evaluating why and how student feedback is requested across a range of disciplines and learning contexts from the perspective of teaching staff, students and faculty management.

The Student Evaluation & Learning Analytics (StELA) project had four goals

- To encourage student engagement
- To increase credibility among staff in student feedback mechanisms
- To use existing datasets to respond to provide feedback on the student experience



- To co-create policy with staff and students on the use of data and on student feedback mechanisms

Stakeholder engagement was facilitated through 2 streams - staff and student. Students were invited to take part in focus groups which asked their views on the use of data to enhance their learning and programmes of study and on how student feedback should be used. Staff took part in a survey and in follow up focus groups which asked their views on what data should be used to enhance student learning and how responses to student feedback can be improved.

Quality enhancements as a result of the project:

- ✓ Use of Data for Enhancement (Learning Analytics) Policy
- ✓ Student Survey and Feedback Mechanisms Policy
- ✓ Calendar of institutional surveys
- ✓ Working Group on Student Feedback Mechanisms approved
- ✓ Resources developed for staff on how to use student feedback in their teaching

Further information on the project including reports from each phase can be found at [Student Evaluation and Learning Analytics - StELA | UL - University of Limerick](#)

## Internationalisation

### EMERGE Consortium

UL is a member of the EMERGE Consortium, a European consortium which seeks to connect and transform individual educational and research-based programs for the benefit of students, researchers, and local communities. The EMERGE consortium has seven members:

- Université Rennes 2 (France)
- Europa-Universität Flensburg (Germany)
- Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences (Norway)
- Univerzita Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici (Slovakia)
- Université Bretagne Sud (France)
- Universitatea Dunărea de Jos din Galați (Romania)
- University of Limerick

Combined, the seven institutions have more than 105,000 students. While each has different cultures, languages, and educational programs, the common aim is to build a new long-term joint strategy with a bottom-up approach which will have an impact on, and support, all activities. Activities range from teaching and learning to research and innovation, whilst encouraging new forms of student and staff mobility in a globalised learning environment. The aim is to create systemic and strategic changes in how the institutions cooperate and operate, for the benefit of communities and local stakeholders. On 11-12th March 2021 the International Relations Office of Rennes 2 hosted the first EMERGE Staff Week, using online collaborative workshops that involved more than 40 members of the consortium. The aim of this first EMERGE Staff Week was to strengthen links between partners, to develop remote collaboration, to work on common themes, and to continue the dynamics of European project submission, particularly regarding the European Universities Initiative. UL

looks forward to hosting the next EMERGE Staff Week for the consortium in January 2022.

## Continued Integration of UN sustainable development goals (SDG)

### *Student as social entrepreneurs and global citizens* - UL Enactus Case Study Introduction and Objectives

It is increasingly acknowledged that social enterprises have an important role to play in the achievement of the UN's new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and social enterprises hold solutions to the many challenges brought about by Covid. Therefore, students must be challenged to actively participate in the broader societal dialogue of the issues covered by the SDGs and be equipped with the curiosity, determination and skills to actively engage in identifying solutions to social inequalities to improve the society in which they choose to live and work in. Thus, it is incumbent on educational institutions to provide a supportive infrastructure and a learning environment that promotes an understanding of the complex challenges faced by businesses and the interlinkages between the social, economic, commercial and environmental dimensions of sustainable development through in curricula and extracurricular activities facilitating students.

The UL Enactus team is an important vehicle for students to proactively address real world problems by taking matters into their own hands and acting as social entrepreneurs and social innovators. The objective of the initiative is to create a learning climate and culture in which students give back and benefit the livelihoods of individuals and communities who may not have the same opportunities.

The social issues addressed are wide ranging, including austerity, ageing population, the integration of refugees, food waste, poverty, suicide, reintegrating prisoners, empowering women and minority groups and environmental concerns such as plastic waste. The group consists of 143 students from across a range of disciplines.

The success of their projects is demonstrated nationally and internationally as The UL Enactus team were crowned winners of the Enactus Ireland competition after competing against 10 other Irish Universities. It was the first ever win for a UL team. The team went on to a global stage to represent Ireland in the Enactus World Cup in October 2021- see World Cup Presentation <https://youtu.be/2mUHtufChyl>.

The winning projects included [Anytime of the Month](#) which sets out to alleviate the effects of period poverty in Ireland and tackles the stigma and lack of education around periods through awareness campaigns, secondary schools education workshops, network of friendly strangers, workplace ambassador programmes and the provision of period products to those most in need. The enterprise works with 21 third level institutions across Ireland and the UK while also providing a menstrual health education programme to secondary schools across Ireland. The team are also working with companies nationwide to remove the stigma in the workplace and have expanded into sports, recently partnering with the Camogie Association to address the implications of and problems of period poverty with girls in sports. *Anytime of the Month* also won first prize at the Social Enterprise Northern Ireland and Community Finance Ireland competition.

Another, [Moyo Nua](#) has developed agricultural seeding planters for smallholder farmers in Africa. The project utilises simplified agricultural technologies that are both ergonomic and environmentally friendly and are validated by the farmers themselves. This project has a successful partnership with Goal who collaboratively have piloted the use of the seeding planters in Malawi. This pilot received very positive feedback and there is interest to scale the pilot to other regions of Malawi. The planters will be manufactured by local blacksmiths and distributed via local community shops generating a circular sustainable local economy.

Further recognition of the impact of this project, Moya Nua were crowned the inaugural winners of the World Trade Centre's Association 'Peace through Trade Competition 2019 and the first Irish project to achieve this award. Two members of Moyo Nua project, Jack O'Connor and Catherine Hallinan, travelled to the World Trade Centre's 50th Annual General Assembly in Querétarom Mexico where they presented their project to an international delegate of 500 business professionals from 91 countries. (<https://www.wtca.org/world-trade-center-queretaro>).

The team also has an article printed in FORBES magazine:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jennysplitter/2019/05/09/meet-the-irish-college-students-working-on-a-seed-planter-for-farmers-in-malawi/#17ab61a62955>.

The Sparked project - [www.sparked.ie](http://www.sparked.ie) designs and delivers an online Youth Development Programme to over 286 Transition Year students across a range of school types. In addition, Sparked provide a range of CV building workshops, building confidence and presentation skills workshops to TY students and work in tandem with teachers and corporate sponsors. Restart <https://restartsocialenterprise.com> which integrates International Protection Applicants to the local community through a portfolio gardening and catering projects. They also provided employment training to 13 International Protection Applicants which resulted in 3 of the participants gaining employment. They have produced a cookbook titled 'Restart Cookbook' which contains a mix of practical recipes from different cultures for use by all family members.

These social leaders inspire other students and serve as role models providing roadmaps, approaches and toolkits enabling other students to be social changemakers.

In summary, encouraging and facilitating students to act as social entrepreneurs increases their awareness and understanding of the rapidly changing, interdependent and unequal world in which we live. By challenging stereotypes and encouraging independent thinking, students critically explore the root causes of SDG issues and how they interlink and provide sustainable solutions that enhance the economic, physical and mental wellbeing of individuals and communities. They have developed and tested successful models of collaboration between students, academic and business leaders who are committed to solving challenges in local communities by leveraging innovative and entrepreneurial actions. They demonstrate in a very practical manner how future business leaders can extend beyond a purely financial bottom line to a triple bottom line to measure impact in terms of financial, social, and environmental benefits to the community.

Further information available from Dr Briga Hynes, Kemmy Business School,  
[Briga.Hynes@ul.ie](mailto:Briga.Hynes@ul.ie)

## 2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

The University continues to work with NAIN and welcomed the publication of the Academic Integrity National Principles and Lexicon of Common Terms and the Academic Integrity National Guidelines late 2021 (both available here - [link](#)). On initial scoping, it is clear that our internal processes match the overarching principles set out in both documents. There are specific developments that will be required within the University to socialise the recalibration of academic misconduct to academic integrity - these will be required for both staff and students. Based on international best practice guidelines this area needs to be led by a specific team within the University who will work with staff and students promoting academic integrity and managing matters where the principles of academic integrity have been breached. The requirements to achieve this and deliver on the national guidelines at a more granular level will be considered by the University Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (ULTAC) by the end of this academic year.

A [website](#) has been created to provide resources for staff on academic integrity.

### 3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

#### 3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No.	<b>Relevant objectives</b> Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	<b>Planned actions and indicators</b>  <i>Note: Include details of unit responsible, and how planned action will address the relevant strategic priority and/or reengagement advice/CINNTE recommendation.</i>  <i>If the institution is preparing for cyclical review, include how the planned actions will address the relevant review objective(s).</i>
1	Development of the Curriculum Development Framework	The Curriculum Framework Working Group which has representation from a range of stakeholders has been created with a remit to develop of recommendations for the development of an institutional Curriculum Development Framework for UL. The group will report in 2021/22
2	Development of the Academic Model	The Academic Change Advisory Group (ACAG) was set up in February 2021 to advise the SITS project on the Academic Model and Progression, Grading and Awards. The current SITS project phase “Foundations for Digital Transformation” is part of an ongoing programme to improve and secure our student records and associated systems and processes. The SITS Steering Committee provides overall governance of the programme of work. The SITS programme team provides a monthly update to faculty and supports department representatives at the Student Administrative Systems User Group. The programme team plans to give a full update to Academic Council on progress across all key programme projects in early 2022.
3	Development of Model for Periodic Programme Review	Arising from the recommendations of the CDF and Academic Model groups, the model, criteria and procedures for periodic programme review will be finalised. This project is being led by the Director of Quality.
4	Working group on student feedback mechanisms	This working group is being set up as an outcome of the StELA project and will make recommendations to Academic Council and the University Executive on the student feedback mechanisms currently in use at module, programmatic and service level. It is scheduled to report in June 2022.
5	StELA Live	'STELA Live' is funded under the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning <a href="#">SATLE 2020 call</a> and builds on the new <a href="#">Policy on the Use of Data to Enhance Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Learning Analytics)</a> and other outputs of the cross-

		<p>6 campus consultation conducted as part of the <a href="#">STELA project</a>. The project is lead by the Centre for Transformative Learning. The project will:</p> <p>Complete a consultation process with UL relevant data owners and gatekeepers (Academic Registry, Data Protection Officer, Business Intelligence Unit, Quality Office, and Registrar) to scope and resource access and extraction of student success data and seek approval for use, informed through the <a href="#">national ORLA Data Conceptual model</a>. Recruitment of a dedicated researcher position for the project. February-December 2021</p> <p>Baseline analysis of the variables that best predict performance and progression in 4 large first year selected modules (KBS, AHSS, and S&amp;E), accessing and triangulating existing data including information in SI, learning analytics from the VLE and other platforms, and other variables of engagement (continuous assessment, attendance, etc). January 2021-March 2022</p> <p>Design of a protocol for intervention to improve the academic experience of students through the delivery of timely, personalised, and actionable student feedback which is informed by the preceding baseline analysis and current data of engagement with learning platforms (VLE, Panopto, etc) informed from the perspective of teachers, students, and relevant support services at UL. May-August 2022</p> <p>(IV) Pilot of implementation in SEM1 2022/23 and evaluation of impact.</p>
6	Sustainability initiative	<p>With the active support of UL's Executive Committee, a newly appointed Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Working Group has been established to bring together expertise from multiple disciplines and functional areas across UL and beyond. Its aim is to guide UL in actively working towards the UN SDG's and ultimately the journey towards becoming a more Sustainable University. The first task of the group is to craft a holistic strategy for January 2022 centered around a series of ambitious missions with clear measurable, targets. This strategy will map an agile path forward and enable the wider UL community to make active and transparent progress towards the SDGs. Further information on this initiative and the activities of the working group can be found at <a href="#">Sustainability   UL - University of Limerick</a></p>
7	Further digitalisation of key processes	<p>Quality assurance processes such as appointment and approval of external examiners, availability of data for annual monitoring of programmes and approval of collaborative provision are being digitised.</p>
8	Development and publication of Student Charter in line with Code of Governance for Irish Universities	<p>In order to comply with the requirements of the <a href="#">Code of Governance</a> for Irish Universities (2019), UL will develop and publish a quality customer charter (student charter) setting out the quality of education learners can expect and the level of service the general public and other stakeholders can expect of the University. The charter will be supported by an action</p>

		<p>plan, describing in detail how the commitments and standards set out in the charter, and other enhancements, will be delivered and evaluated by the University. The development and implementation of the University's Student Charter and Quality Charter Action Plan will involve a 4-step cycle:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consultation with learners and stakeholders;</li> <li>2. Commitment to quality standards;</li> <li>3. Evaluation of performance; and</li> <li>4. Reporting on results.</li> </ol>
9	Virtual Learning Environment project	<p>UL has been funded, through the <a href="#">Human Capital Initiative</a>, to upgrade the <b>Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)</b>. <a href="#">Dr. Darina Slattery</a> led the first phase of this project from January-June 2021. Phase 1 involved undertaking a literature review, benchmarking against other institutions, consulting with the wider community, and defining the VLE requirements. On completion of phase one, Tracey McKillen took over as Project Lead of procurement, implementation, and adoption of the new VLE (phases 2-4).</p> <p>To inform the UL VLE review, Darina consulted widely with <b>other higher education institutions</b> about their VLE review processes and experiences with other VLEs. These institutions include UCC, UCD, TUD, and CIT, each of whom have adopted a new VLE in the past 2-3 years.</p> <p>See VLE Case Study (Section 4) for further details.</p>
10	Revision of academic integrity policy and procedure to align with national guidelines published by the National Academic Integrity Network	<p>Based on international best practice guidelines this area needs to be led by a specific team within the University who will work with staff and students promoting academic integrity and managing matters where the principles of academic integrity have been breached. The requirements to achieve this and deliver on the national guidelines at a more granular level will be considered by the University Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (ULTAC) by the end of academic year '21/'22.</p>
11	Continued enhancement of Student Information System	Project is due to complete in September 2022
12	Further enhancement of Admissions systems	Integration of admissions process with customer relationship management system.

13	Web Development	Introduction of a new Drupal Content Management System (CRM). Publication of a UL Accessibility Statement and development of an Accessibility Hub. User Experience Research project to redesign UL website to be more user focused.
14	Participation in the National Forum Discipline & Network Funded Project - Exploring Student and Staff Learning experiences of Problem Based Learning	<p>The project is focused on 3 strands of T&amp;L enhancement in PBL/EBL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Enhancing students' success when engaging in PBL in digital spaces</li><li>- Supporting educators to adopt digital PBL</li><li>- Extending PBL to provide an inclusive approach</li></ul> <p>The steering committee is comprised of representatives from UCD, TCD, UCC, MU, MIC, UL, DKIT, Ulster University and aiming to extend its representation to Munster TU, LIT, Athlone IT, DCU and TU Dublin and student representatives.</p>



## 3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

### 3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Bernal Research Institute	22-25 Nov 2021	n/a
Human Resources Division	6-9 December 2021	2-4 December 2014
Health Research Institute (HRI)	14-18 February 2022	n/a
Faculty of Education and Health Sciences (EHS)	7-10 March 2021	n/a
UL Global	23-26 May 2022	29 September - 1 October 2015

#### External Quality Assurance

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Kemmy Business School, EQUIS review	October 2021	n/a

### 3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

[Link](#) to quality review schedule beyond the upcoming reporting period.

## 4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

### Early and Mid-Career Academic Support Network: EMerge Case Study

Evidence suggests that many early and mid-career academics (EMCAs) report high levels of stress when embarking on an academic career, which not only has a negative impact on their wellbeing, but also, has the potential to limit their achievements in teaching and learning contexts (Hollywood et al., 2019). These struggles have been amplified during the global pandemic where online working has become normative, and many EMCAs have not benefitted from informal social support from colleagues and mentors (Byrom, 2020). In fact, there has been a call for new initiatives to support the successful integration into the early stages of an academic career to promote the sustainability of the academic profession (Hollywood et al., 2019).

The EMerge peer-support network was launched in November 2020 to establish a collaborative and supportive environment for early and mid-career academics (EMCAs) to realise their career objectives through informal mentoring and peer-support, and the development of shared academic and research opportunities at the University of Limerick (UL). EMerge was founded by Dr. Elaine Kinsella (Department of Psychology), Dr. Jennifer McMahon (Department of Psychology), and Dr. Niamh Cummins (School of Medicine) in order to provide a platform for informal, peer support for EMCAs across the UL campus during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

The purpose of this network is to connect members across the university campus, to offer informal, peer support to EMCAs, to champion EMCA ideas and research activities, to promote the visibility of EMCAs at UL, to offer a voice for EMCAs, to support skill- and career-development opportunities for EMCAs, and to continue to nurture a culture where more established academics seek to include EMCAs on ongoing projects to develop a strong talent pipeline at UL. This inter-disciplinary network is open to all researchers who identify as early or mid-career researchers. EMerge is independent from formal university structures and works collaboratively with HR, the Office of the Vice President Research, Research Committees, and other research structures to support EMCAs at UL.

Since the launch of the peer-support network, EMerge have hosted regular peer-support events such as coffee mornings, seminars, and workshops (with internal and external speakers), as well as the “EMerge in Conversation” with series with diverse colleagues across campus. All network activities are co-ordinated via Microsoft Teams, Twitter and emails. All activities have been hosted online to date, with plans to host in-person events when it is safe to do so.

At present, there are 154 EMerge members at UL. The member feedback surveys have been extremely positive - overall, members particularly value having a space to connect and share experiences, as well as learning practical strategies and tools for improving work habits and wellbeing. With just three volunteers (Elaine, Jenny and Niamh) managing the network, EMerge are currently seeking to expand the committee membership and resources available to increase the range of supports and activities available.

*EMerge contact details:* Twitter: @EMerge\_UL; Email: [emerge@ul.ie](mailto:emerge@ul.ie); Teams: UL:EMerge

### EMerge PhD Network

In February 2021, EMerge PhD was launched to offer informal, peer support for PhD students at UL using the same successful format followed by the EMerge academic staff network. The EMerge PhD network is led 'by PhD students for PhD students'. EMerge PhD is led by Meghan Gilfoyle, Mairead C. Conneely, Aidan Buffey, and Clare Walsh. Dr Dylan Scanlon was a member of the founding committee. The EMerge PhD committee meet regularly with the EMerge founders for support and knowledge sharing: Dr. Elaine Kinsella (Department of Psychology), Dr. Jennifer McMahon (Department of Psychology), and Dr. Niamh Cummins (School of Medicine)

#### **Brief Overview of EMerge Activities since launch**

November 4<sup>th</sup> 2020 - Launch of EMerge network and seminar Dr Katie Robinson & Dr Brian Carson: "The good, the bad and the ugly: Experiences of early and mid career academics"

November 11<sup>th</sup> 2020 - Survey on how EMerge can help you

November 17<sup>th</sup> 2020 - Coffee morning (virtual)

December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2020 - Coffee morning (virtual)

December 17<sup>th</sup> 2020 - Coffee morning (virtual)

January 11<sup>th</sup> 2021- Coffee morning (virtual)

January 27<sup>th</sup> 2021- Coffee morning (virtual)

February 5<sup>th</sup> 2021-Launch of EMerge-PhD peer network

February 8<sup>th</sup> 2021- Coffee morning (virtual)

February 10<sup>th</sup> 2021 - "EMerge in conversation with" (ADRs) Dr Niamh NicGhabhann NicGhabhainn & Dr. Deirdre O'Loughlin

February 24<sup>th</sup> 2021- Coffee morning (virtual)

March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021- External Talk from Professor Samantha Dockray (UCC): "I don't shine if you don't shine': Creating a supportive work climate in academia"

March 10<sup>th</sup> 2021- Strategic conversations with EMerge on UL@50

April 14<sup>th</sup> 2021: Realigning your values and research priorities in an academic context with Professor Jennifer Schweppe

April 28<sup>th</sup> 2021: Coffee morning (virtual)

May 19<sup>th</sup> 2021: Coffee morning (virtual)

May 26<sup>th</sup> 2021: Guest Lecture with Dr. Elaine Toomey "Open Science for Early-Mid Career Academics"

June 30<sup>th</sup> 2021: Coffee morning (virtual)

June 17<sup>th</sup> 2021: EMerge Strategic Consultation UL@50 Phase 2

#### **References**

Byrom N. (2020). The challenges of lockdown for early-career researchers. *Elife*. 12,9. doi: 10.7554/eLife.59634. PMID: 32530421; PMCID: PMC7292644.

Hollywood, A., McCarthy, D., Spencely, C. & Winstone, N. (2020) 'Overwhelmed at first': the experience of career development in early career academics, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 44:7, 998-1012, Doi: 10.1080/0309877X.2019.1636213

## UL Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Review: Phase 1: Case Study

### Introduction

In January 2021, UL embarked on the first phase of a [VLE review](#), which was led by Dr. Darina Slattery, under the direction of the [UL VLE Steering Committee](#). The review was funded through the [Human Capital Initiative](#). The main goals of the VLE review were to identify one single VLE for all UL programmes and to deliver significant teaching and learning improvements to the academic community. The principles governing the VLE review can be found [here](#).

At the time, the supported VLE platform in UL was Sakai, but there were also several groups of Moodle users on-campus. UL decided to use the HEA framework to procure a new VLE, which meant that Blackboard, Brightspace, Canvas, itslearning, and Moodle were under consideration. The remainder of this case study focusses on the activities and outcomes from phase 1, which ran from January to June 2021.

### Phase 1 Activities

The first activity undertaken by the Project Lead was to establish a VLE Project Team, comprising educational technologists, IT staff, and teaching and learning support staff (14 members in total, including the Project Lead). The Project Lead also established a larger Academic Users' Group comprising academic staff from the four faculties, as well as administrative/ support staff, and student representatives. The Project Lead consulted widely with other Irish Higher Education Institutions, especially those that had undertaken similar VLE reviews in recent years. Those consultations provided UL with a wealth of information about different kinds of consultation strategies and lessons learned during VLE implementations.

The Project Lead also consulted widely with the academic community. Any staff member who used a VLE in any capacity was invited to participate in a survey in April and May 2021, to identify their VLE requirements. In total, 245 responses were received across the four faculties. In addition, all survey respondents who chose to provide their names were subsequently invited to engage in follow-on focus groups, where they could elaborate on their VLE requirements. In terms of student engagement, the Project Lead carried out interviews and focus groups with undergraduate and postgraduate representatives, as well as interns from the [Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning \(EDTL\) project](#), about what they like/ dislike in VLEs and what they would like to see in a new VLE. Every staff and student requirement was documented in an extensive VLE Requirements document, which was shared with the VLE Project Team.

During phase 1, the Project Lead also engaged extensively with the six vendors and service providers that were initially under consideration. They were invited to give demonstrations of specific features of their platforms, with a view to giving the wider campus community an overview of what each platform had to offer. They were also invited to share any additional

resources that the campus community might wish to review. All resources were [posted online](#), for the benefit of the wider community.

All the activities in the first phase of the VLE review were informed by findings from literature, as well as recent student surveys, including [ISSE](#), [INDEX](#), and the UL Emergency Remote Teaching, Learning and Assessment survey. In addition to the VLE Requirements document, another outcome of phase 1 was a substantial report, documenting the phase 1 activities and outcomes.

## Conclusions

In June 2021, Ms. Tracey McKillen took over as Project Lead for Phases 2-4, which include procurement, implementation, and adoption. Dr. Slattery remains an active member of the VLE Project Team.

In June 2021 the VLE Review and Implementation Project entered phase two, the procurement phase. In phase one demonstrations were organised for the VLE project team with six VLE vendors on the HEAnet VLE Procurement Framework. The initial part of the procurement phase is using both the VLE project principles and the VLE requirements document from phase one to shortlist the six vendors down to two. Five Stakeholder Groups have been established for the VLE Review: 1) VLE Steering Group, 2) Academic User Group, 3) ITD, 4) VLE Project Team, and 5) Disability Services. Each Stakeholder Group has been asked to select their top two vendors based on agreed selection criteria. The shortlisting of vendors was completed by August 2021.

## Community Based Projects: Case Studies 2021

The [UL Engage](#) website gives details of UL Engaged projects with communities, as well as accredited engaged learning and engaged research.

All UL Engage listed projects must comply with UL Engage guidelines for submission. These are:

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

The project listings all conform to the same style, to provide consistent information. The green tab outlines the project in user friendly language for a non-specialist audience. It explains, what we're doing; why we are doing it; who we are working with; and how we evaluate the project.

The orange tab provides details, where relevant, of any curriculum-based learning that the project supports. It explains to would-be students, what the project module involves; the rationale for the module and project; who students can expect to work with; and how their work will be evaluated.

The red tab provides details, where relevant, of any research associated with the project. The information follows the same format: what is the research; why is it necessary; who is collaborating; how is it evaluated.

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

### Projects in 2021 include:

- **Music Therapy supports for Chronic Pain (2020 - current):** Together, a team of researchers, clinicians and people with chronic pain, are developing a music therapy programme for people with chronic pain in Ireland. We offer individual and group music therapy to explore how music and music therapy might help adults with chronic pain. Devising a protocol for working in this way and publishing research in this area is important as this is a very underdeveloped area of work in Ireland. Together we have created international livestreamed events to share information, raise awareness, and train clinicians, music professionals, and members of the public, particularly members of Chronic Pain Ireland, our partner. Our aim is to develop music therapy services that are useful and practical for people living with pain, and to be an international leader in research in this area. Link: <https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/7011>
- **Sing Yourself Better (2020-2021):** Led by Dr Hilary Moss and Ms Liz Helitzer, this project focuses on community-engaged research that explores the contribution singing can make to health and wellbeing. In 2020 -21, researchers at UL contacted 2,736 Irish stakeholders with links to singing for health and wellbeing, collecting information about singing groups and choirs across the country. The data that they collected forms a national and international public resource not only for singers, but for a health professional looking to make referrals, for policy makers seeking to promote well-being and respiratory health, and for carers and communities who would like to get involved. To see the map, go to: [www.singireland.ie](http://www.singireland.ie) Link: <https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/7141>
- **HAPPEE (2021 - current): (Health Alliances for Practice based Professional Education and Engagement)** The HAPPEE initiative is designed to improve outcomes for children and families living in the regeneration communities by facilitating UL students from the disciplines of physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, human nutrition and dietetics and music therapy to complete their professional placements in the schools. The students provide collaborative, evidence-based and best practice therapy supports to the pupils and school, which complement existing HSE-funded essential therapy services. This innovative interprofessional education approach is recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a key strategy to address current complex challenges in healthcare. Link: <https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/7651>
- **Supporting people with Dementia and their family carers through music (2020 - current):** A team of researchers, clinicians and people living with dementia, led by Dr. Hilary Moss and Ms Lisa Kelly, are together developing telehealth (online) music therapy services for people living with dementia and their family caregivers. Through collaboration and engagement with members of The Dementia Research Advisory Team at The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, this project will develop accessible online music therapy programmes for those who are at risk of isolation, living in isolated rural areas, have limited mobility or increased cognitive decline. Link: <https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/7181>

- **Well-being Way (2020-2021):** The Well-Being Way was a project organized by CWELL students, it is a coffee-table sized booklet, designed to provide relief from the isolation and loneliness caused by cocooning and COVID-19 social distancing measures. The book is accompanied by a sensory pack with materials for activities outlined in the book. 1400 packs were distributed in local Limerick communities. Allied to this the students delivered an online workshop highlighting elements of the book, which was included in the Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival Link: <https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/7001>
- **Hands on With Horses (2021 - current):** A 25+ years partnership between School of Natural Sciences and Clonshire Equestrian Centre providing hands-on experience to support all equitation modules. The collaboration offers 'applied science with horses' - adding multi-disciplinary and vocational insights into all aspects of equitation - horse handling, health, sport and science. Link: <https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/7761>
- **Limerick Food Partnership (2021 - current):** A partnership between Limerick Food Partnership and the School of Allied Health, MSc Human Nutrition and Dietetics programme to facilitate intercultural integration and diversity through an initiative between dietetic students and four migrant communities in Limerick to gain an understanding of specific food cultures. This collaboration allowed MSc dietetic students to research the food culture and diet of Nigerian, Bangladeshi, Polish and Palestine communities. Looking at how food is usually prepared, served and how their native diet is preserved here in Ireland. Link: <https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/7751>
- **UP Le Gaeilge (2019 - current):** A short annual six-week Irish language support intervention co-designed by parents, Home-School Community Liaison Co-ordinator, tutor from Limerick Clare Education and Training Board and academic and support staff at Aonad na Gaeilge (The Irish Language Centre), University of Limerick. Previous formats involved a language support session for parents on their own for the first hour and this was followed by a joint session for parents and children together. The aim was to work on basic Irish language greetings and phrases and to introduce parents to a few rhymes each week with a view to them using these at home with the children. Link: <https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/5681>
- **Limerick Voice (2016 - current):** Running since 2008, Limerick Voice is a community collaboration between UL Journalism students, the Limerick Regeneration agency and communities living in Limerick city and county. A local newspaper and website for Limerick city and county. The project is responsible for production of a local newspaper distributed with the Limerick Leader as well as the project's website: [www.limerickvoice.com](http://www.limerickvoice.com) Link: <https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/1571>
- **UL Meitheal 2019 - 2021:** This project draws together a range of existing strengths and initiatives across UL in order to advance an Irish prototype for a "Civic University". The primary objective is to build a sustainable UL infrastructure for community engagement by developing an internal coordination framework, designed to foster information and knowledge exchange between diverse academic and practitioner expertise in existing UL engaged activities. Details: <https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/5441>
- **Knowledge for Change (K4C) 2019 - current:** K4C is a UNESCO sponsored global consortium of Higher Education Institutions committed to best practice community- based learning and research. The K4C consortium provides training and mentorship for Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR). To date, 8 UL staff have been trained and operate 4 K4C Engagement Hubs in: Learning; Health; STEMM; Languages and Culture. The hubs are designed to provide a point of contact for external communities and organisations interested in UL Engage activities in these areas.
  - Health: <https://www.ul.ie/engage/healthandwellbeing>
  - Languages and Culture: <https://www.ul.ie/engage/languagesandculture>
  - Learning: <https://www.ul.ie/engage/learning>



- STEM: <https://www.ul.ie/engage/stemm>
- **FLEURIR - French Language Learning as part of the UL Academy for Children (2019 - current):** The Access Office in UL is developing an academy for primary school children in areas of Limerick experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and has partnered with Our Lady Queen of Peace in Janesboro as a pilot school. The Access Academy offers a French language programme, co-designed with the school to meet their identified needs. The programme was delivered by School of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics in UL. COVID-19 restrictions meant that the programme was delivered online accompanied by an activity workbook book to support and track their learning. In addition to language learning the children will also increase their cultural and language awareness and be exposed to the concept of global citizenship. Link: <https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/6871>
- **REPPP - Action Research Project (2019 - 2020):** There are 105 Garda Youth & Diversion Projects (GYDP) based in communities across Ireland. 16 of these projects are now engaged in an evidence informed Action Research Project led by REPPP on behalf of the Dept of Justice and Equality (DJE). This project uses the Systematic Evidence Review as a starting point for potential reform and involves co-designing with practitioners, new guidance on relationship-building to improve the effectiveness of 'on the ground' practice. Link: <https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/5771>
- **Executive Leadership - Policy Complexity (2018 - current):** The Programme is designed for people with responsibility for addressing complex problems. The word 'problem' should be understood as something that needs to be dealt with, resolved or solved. Examples include addressing problematic drug use, ending homelessness, reducing crime in a neighbourhood, and improving health, education or employment prospects. While the causes of such problems are structural and rooted in poverty, inequality and deprivation, they also involve difficulties or limitations with services or facilities, and feature people whose behaviour causes difficulties to themselves and others. Link: <https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/5771>
- **The Greentown Project - Policy Complexity (2019 - 2020):** The Greentown Project is a policy-research collaboration between the Department of Justice and the University of Limerick. It involves an evidence-informed and design-led targeted community intervention which aims to reduce the influence of criminal networks on children. The Greentown programme's objectives are to reduce network capability for recruiting children to commit crime and to provide an exit route for children who are already engaged or embedded. The programme is informed by a significant evidence base which includes multiple primary studies, evaluation findings and deliberation with international academics in the area of organised crime, and national experts in the areas of youth justice, child welfare, policing and community development. Link: <https://www.ul.ie/engage/node/6421>



## Design and Implementation of an Online Quality Review Platform: Case Study

### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The periodic quality review of functional units (academic, research, support and affiliates) at the University of Limerick (UL) represents a cornerstone institutional quality assurance/quality improvement mechanism. UL's quality review process was developed and continues to evolve in order to satisfy university quality policy and meet legislative QA requirements. Quality reviews of units take place at least once every 7 years. UL complies with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, which places a legal responsibility on universities to establish, maintain and enhance QA procedures relating to their activities and services (Part 3, Section 28). When the Covid-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, the university was in year 3, Q1 of a 7-year cycle of quality reviews. The university's institutional CINNTE review was delayed to later in 2020 because of the pandemic. The CINNTE review took place in a virtual environment in August 2020. The university was facing a period of considerable uncertainty during an evolving pandemic and overnight pivot to emergency remote working and teaching. The Executive Committee Quality Committee approved the use of online quality reviews until the second half of 2022. This fuelled the need to fast track the design and development of an online quality review platform and ensure business continuity.

### AIMS

The aim of the online quality review platform was to ensure continuity of the university's cycle of quality reviews by providing an easy to use, secure, online, browser-based platform for quality review.

### DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- **Business Continuity:** To ensure continuity of the university's cycle of quality reviews to comply with its statutory obligations and quality assure its services
- **Process Enhancement:** To map and digitise the existing face to face quality review process, addressing the immediate requirements of the online pivot and longer-term sustainable process enhancements
- **Technology:** To leverage existing software approved by the University's cloud governance group (IT security, data protection provisions, legal - SLAs and contracts), accelerating delivery of project
- **IT security:** To provide a secure document repository with appropriate access controls and multifactor authentication and single sign on (SSO)
- **UX design:** To provide a single secure platform for accessing documentation, managing meetings and online collaborative workspace, focussing on user experience and interface design<sup>[1]</sup>. A browser-based design was preferred, to reduce the need to install any bespoke software.
- **Risk mitigation and minimisation** reduced risk of data loss, improved document version control, reduced single point failures (unavailability of key staff), creation of contingency plan for each review, reduced reliance on emails
- **Improved document visibility and collaborative approach** all QRG members can contribute to real-time document, viewing each other comments. This reduces duplication and informs a collaborative "think tank" in the absence of face-to-face discussions. In the event that a member of the QRG is unavailable, their contributions to each session are available in the online document and can be presented by another QRG member.
- **Corporate Branding and reduced maintenance:** MS Teams has multiple add-ins that facilitate a consistent look and corporate brand from with the MS Teams site. Tabs can be added that link directly to university websites, unit websites and social media streams and content. This gives the MS Teams site a familiar website feel, building on existing webpages that have been built

on the UL web. You can also link to external sites such as official university social media accounts/news sites.

## PROJECT OUTCOMES

At a glance quality enhancements as a result of the project:

- ✓ Cycle 3 of quality reviews continue online
- ✓ Improved compliance with GDPR
- ✓ Increased IT security
- ✓ Enhanced risk mitigation and risk minimisation
- ✓ Improved process transparency and document visibility
- ✓ Improved implementation of UL's Brand Guidelines
- ✓ Reduced reliance on email
- ✓ Cloud-based platform that is hardware independent
- ✓ One-stop shop for quality review
- ✓ Collaborative and real-time document creation online
- ✓ In-built document version control, backup and recovery
- ✓ Reduced in administrative burden
- ✓ Sustainable process improvement for face-to-face reviews
- ✓ 3-click embedding of existing webpages, multimedia and social media feeds

## PROCESS

### Stakeholder Consultation and Process Mapping

The existing quality review process was mapped, and consultations took place with colleagues from the Quality Office in Mary Immaculate College, our linked providers, on the key features required from an online review platform. The success of the UL's CINNTE review supported the use of MS Teams as a robust online platform, fit for purpose medium for conducting a quality review.

### Research and Design

The design and research phase focussed on an analysis of the functional capabilities of MS Teams, beyond the common use of meetings and video calls. This analysis determined that an underlying SharePoint site was created when a Team was created in MS Teams. This SharePoint site would serve as the document repository.

### Usability, Look and Feel

The MS Teams site is a one-stop shop for the entire quality review designed to deliver a seamless user experience. With no need to leave the MS Teams site to access documentation, visit a website or join a meeting; all the documents are available on this site and email is not used for sharing documentation. The review platform has a clean, fresh look with multiple add-ins supporting the embedding of webpages, multimedia, and social media streams.

The MS Teams site is organised into channels representing the stages of the pre-site visit and site visit stages of the process, and private channels for subsets of the QRG and the QSU.

1. Channel 1 - Pre-site visit (briefing documentation etc.)
2. Channel 2 - private QRG channel - where all private meetings of the QRG take place
3. Channel 3 - QRG report channel - where the final QRG is collaboratively written by all member of the QRG

4. Day 1 - Day 4 channels - a day by day schedule of meetings including meeting links. These channels have now been incorporated into the Landing Page to streamline the site.
5. QSU-chair channel - a private channel to share documentation between the chair and the QSU.
6. Private meeting notes channel - for the recording secretary to record (type) real-time online meeting notes.

### Embedded websites, multimedia and social media streams

There is no substitute for being able to visit UL's campus and grounds in person, however, the review platform features a virtual tour of UL and its facilities as shown in Figure 1, and can be used to host multimedia and social media streams.

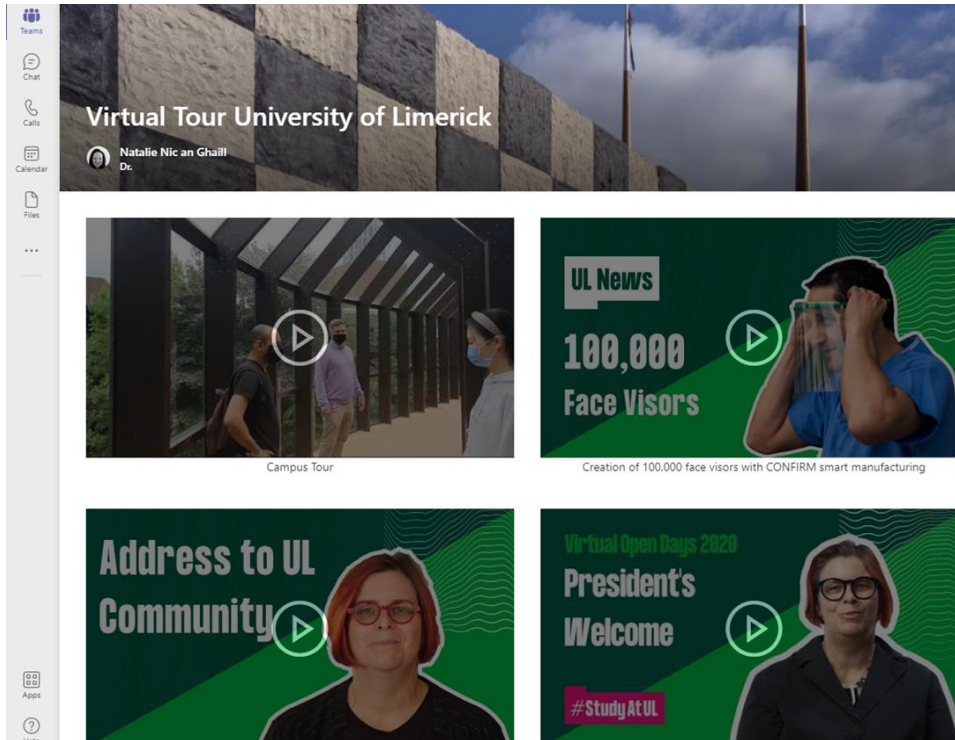


Figure 1 Virtual Tour of UL

The virtual tour page can be tailored to reflect the activities of the unit under review, transforming it into a virtual storyboard. The research cluster videos page from the Bernal Institute is shown in Figure 2. The virtual storyboard showcases the unit's successes and gives the QRG real insight into the unit's activities.

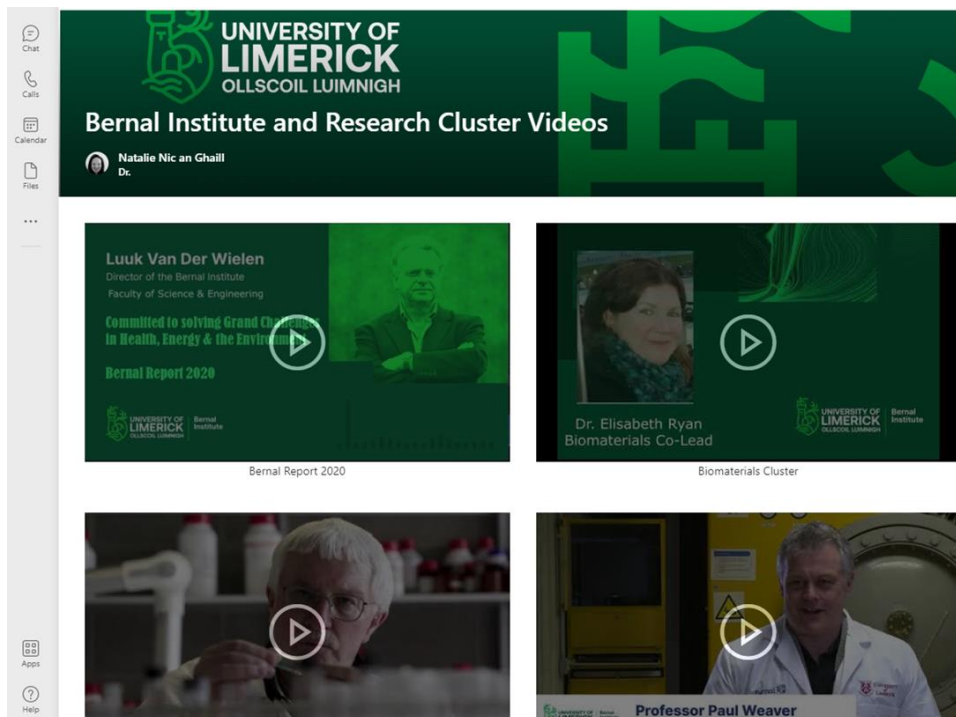


Figure 2 Research Cluster Videos page for Bernal Institute Quality Review

Embedding official social media streams into the review platform provides another conduit for the QRG to familiarise themselves with the unit under review, as shown in Figure 3.

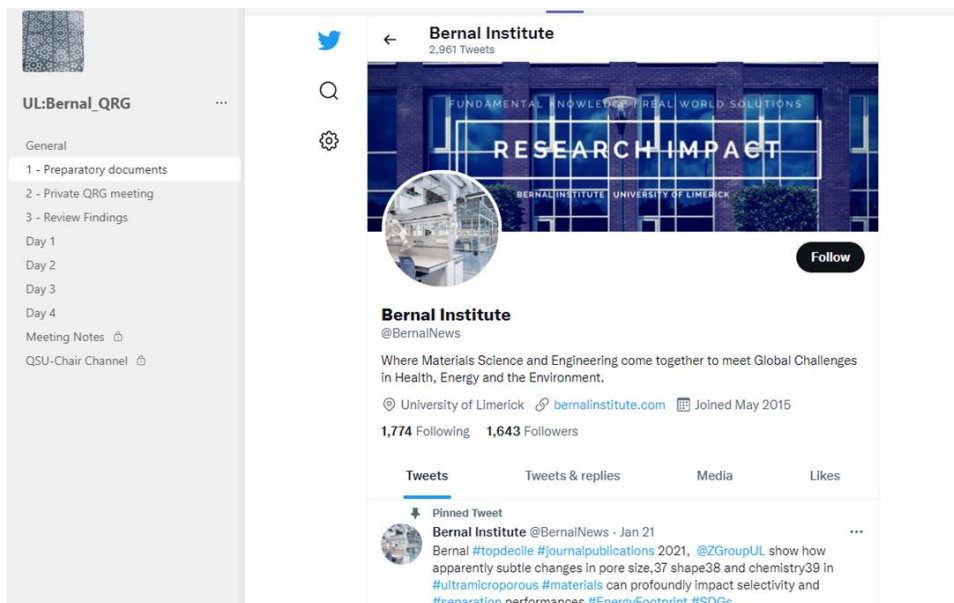


Figure 3 Embedded Twitter feed from official Bernal Institute

Key information about the unit under review can also be shared with the QRG by embedding the relevant section of the unit's website. Figure 4 shows the "Our People" page from the Bernal Institute. The QRG can use the filters on the page to search for staff. This approach streamlines the information flow using existing information repositories, with the need to leave the review platform.

Figure 4 Embedded Webpage of Bernal's "Our People" webpage retaining functionality of master website

The university's profile is refreshed on the university website regularly, with updates to key facts and figures, latest achievements etc. Embedding official UL websites in the review platform ensures the most up to date information is provided with a consistent look and feel while ensuring compliance with UL Brand Guidelines. The university profile is shown in Figure 5 and Figure 6.

Figure 5 Embedded UL Profile page compliant with UL Brand Guidelines



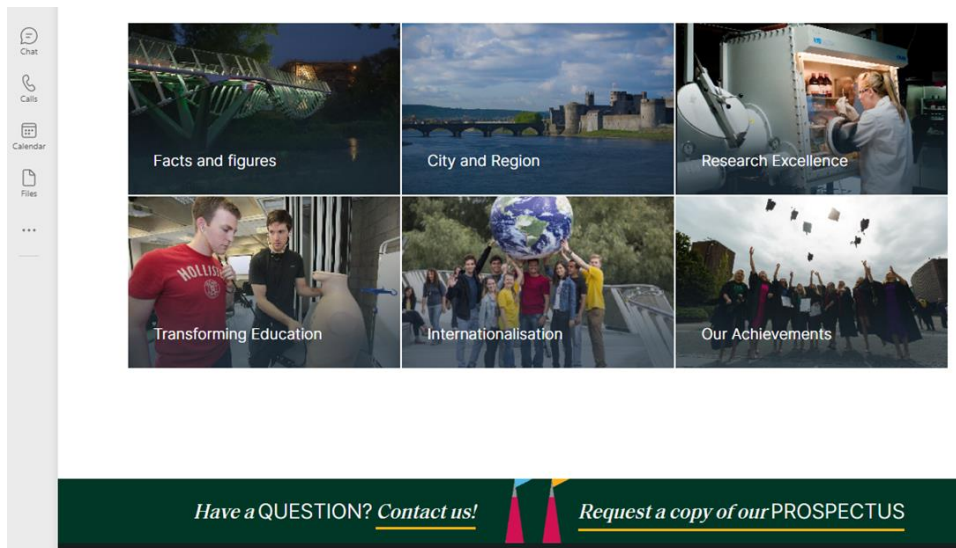


Figure 6 Embedded UL Profile page with information tiles

### Parallel MS Teams site for QSU and unit under review

A parallel MS Teams site is created for logistics and planning between the QSU and the unit under review. The same design principles are used for this site and the documentation required for the unit under review is shared on this site. This includes the QRG nomination form, SAR, Appendices, draft schedule and attendance list for review.

### Review meeting schedule and security

A schedule of reviews is uploaded to the review platform. The schedule contains hyperlinks to join each meeting and also to the meeting attendance list. The attendance list contains the roles and affiliation of each meeting participant. The following security features apply to each meeting:

- The lobby is enabled and the review coordinator admits the QRG in the first instance, followed by the meeting participants once the QRG indicate the meeting can start.
- Chat is disabled. This ensures that no parallel discussion can take place during the meeting. After the meeting, it ensures that no chat messages are delivered to meeting participants that have left meeting (or those that were invited but did not join).
- A separate meeting link is used for each meeting - meeting access control.
- At the end of each meeting, the QRG leave the meeting and join a private meeting on the private QRG meeting channel.

### Post-meeting feedback

An online form is made available to all meeting participants after meeting with the QRG. This form gives meeting participants an opportunity to elaborate on any points they felt they could not clarify during a meeting. It can also be used by participants who had internet connectivity issues or those that could not join the meeting. The form should be submitted within 1 hour of the end of the meeting.

### ONBOARDING

Evidence to date suggests that most users of MS Teams view it only as a meeting tool similar to Skype or WhatsApp. They are not familiar with the additional functionality that is used for the online review platform. A key part of the success of the online review platform is appropriate onboarding from an early stage in the process. To this end:

- Each channel on the MS Teams site has incorporates visual signposting for onboarding, to guide the user through the site and demonstrate what they can achieve in each channel, as shown in Figure 7.
- An overview of the quality review process is embedded in the platform, guiding users through the process and providing links to all key documentation, as shown in Figure 8.

- Early onboarding - encouraging early use and engagement with platform - all documentation is shared via the MS Teams site from the initial email with the QRG. This gets users familiar with the platform and ensures there are no issues with access for the virtual site “visit”.
- A briefing meeting is scheduled prior to the review to introduce the QRG to the platform, demonstrating key functionality and navigation.
- Collaborative document writing is a cornerstone of the process, and the QRG are requested to contribute to a single online document to provide their preliminary feedback prior to the review.

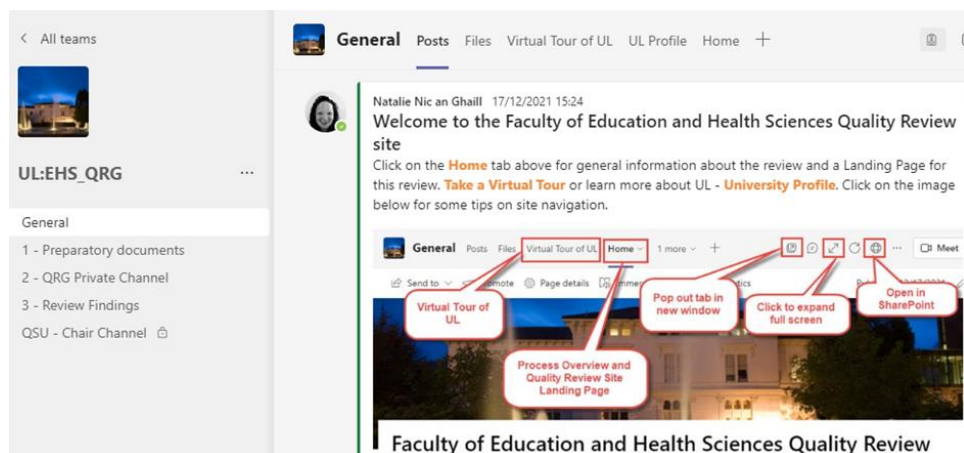


Figure 7 Visual signposting on review platform's landing page

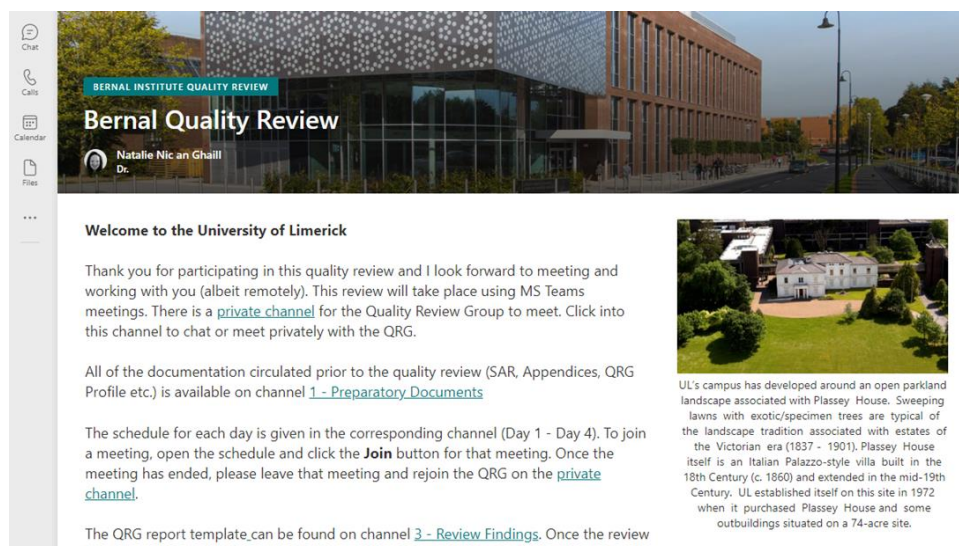


Figure 8 In-built process overview with hyperlinks to key channels

## QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT

Feedback on the process is requested from each QRG member after each quality review. To date, there have been 5 online quality reviews and feedback has been given by 28 QRG members. QRG satisfaction <sup>[2]</sup> ranged from 97% - 100% across all of the feedback questions prior to review, as shown in Figure 1. Satisfaction with the online review platform and collaborative online workspace ranged from 90% - 100% as shown in Figure 2. These very high satisfaction levels demonstrate the overall quality of the online review platform and its success as a robust and effective mechanism for quality reviews.



## QRG Feedback - Report Online Review Platform 28 responses, 5 reviews

Prior to the review - Please indicate how you found the following:

28 Responses



Figure 9 Feedback on onboarding for online quality review platform and communication prior to review

28 Responses

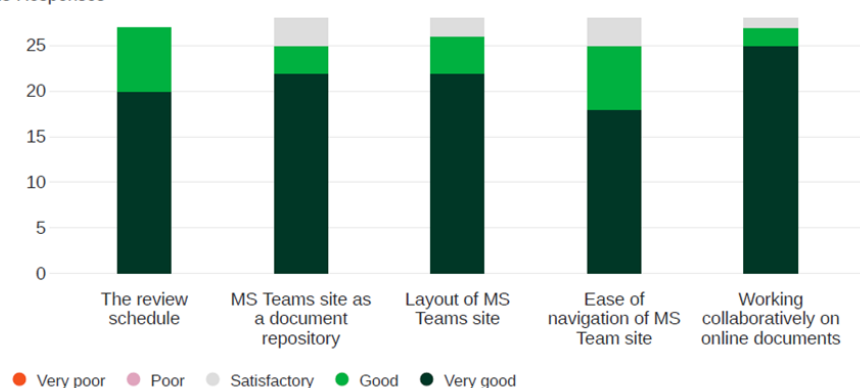


Figure 10 Online review platform feedback

### CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

An agile approach to continuous improvement is employed and feedback from QRG members is translated into process improvements between reviews. Based on feedback from the last review, a new Landing page has been incorporated into the site, to act as a single point to access all information. This landing page has a familiar SharePoint feel and is designed to improve the site navigation and usability. The impact of this enhancement will be measured by comparing the QRG feedback shown in Figure 2 prior to change to that after the next review.

### Shared practice and knowledge

This online review platform model has been well received within UL and has been rolled out in other areas, for example, this model was used the KBS EQUIS accreditation team as a base room for their recent accreditation, which they successfully attained. The international panel complimented the team on the professional site and ease of use.

### SUSTAINABILITY



The majority of elements designed for the online review platform will be retained as part of a hybrid model when face to face quality reviews can resume. This model can be transposed in its entirety (excepting the MS meeting schedule) for face-to-face reviews. The key process enhancements are outlined in the table below.

*Table 1 Key process enhancements and project outcomes*

"Old" process	New process	Enhancement
<b>Hard copy of documentation sent by registered post to QRG with supplementary documentation on USB key.</b>	MS Teams site used as online document repository. Can be accessed via browser or app.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GDPR compliance</li> <li>• Improved access control - QRG access granted for review and removed after with a button click.</li> <li>• Browser access improves flexibility - no requirement to download app.</li> <li>• If MS Teams app already downloaded, this can also be used.</li> </ul>
<b>Meeting notes were typed on recording secretary's own laptop and distributed by email to QRG</b>	Meeting notes are typed real-time in document on private Teams channel and transferred to a QRG-visible channel once complete.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced risk - notes are typed directly to MS Teams (SharePoint).</li> <li>• SharePoint version control and backup by default. This reduces the risk of data loss due to hardware failure and increases IT security of confidential documentation.</li> <li>• QSU have access to this channel and the real-time notes in the event that recording secretary unavailable. Note taking can resume immediately using nominated replacement.</li> </ul>
<b>Each QRG member provided with a separate template as an email attachment and asked to provide their preliminary findings after reading the SAR. Completed templates emailed back to QSU. QSU copy and paste the contents of each template to a master template. Duplicate requests for additional data manually removed. Master template of pre-visit findings emailed back to QRG.</b>	A single online template provided. Each QRG member writes to this template. Synthesis document available in real-time to all QRG.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidential information not shared by email.</li> <li>• Large reduction in administrative burden for QSU in compiling documentation.</li> <li>• QRG have visibility of each other's findings, reducing duplication, prompting further discussion and increased opportunity to understand each other's thinking prior to the review.</li> </ul>
<b>Requests for additional data sent as an attachment to unit under review. Unit completes document and returns to QSU by email. QSU forward email attachment to QRG.</b>	Unit completes response to additional data requests on MS Teams site, uploading any supporting documentation. QSU transfer this to review platform.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure document transfer eliminating use of email</li> <li>• Response to additional data requests available on demand on Teams site without the need to find emails.</li> <li>• Increased IT security and GDPR compliance.</li> <li>• Simple file transfer (drag and drop) between sites.</li> <li>• Reduced administrative burden.</li> </ul>
<b>Unit under review email copy of SAR and Appendices to QSU.</b>	Parallel MS Teams site for unit under review and QSU to serve as document repository and communication platform.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidential documentation in single document repository and not shared by email</li> <li>• New members of the unit's internal quality team can be added to the MS Team and have access to correspondence and documentation</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed documentation can be easily transferred to the main quality review platform</li> </ul>
<b>Hard copies of UL Profile sent to QRG by post</b>	A tab is created within the MS Teams site to point to the UL Profile/ appropriate website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistency of UL Brand guidelines and website feel.</li> <li>Most up to date version of website and profile available</li> <li>No maintenance required by QSU on the site</li> </ul>
<b>Outlook meeting requests sent to QRG. QRG leave MS Teams site to access meeting request in Outlook calendar.</b>	A schedule with embedded meeting links available on MS Teams site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrated single platform with quick and easy join options for meetings</li> <li>Meeting participants do not have visibility of QRG email addresses (NB in ensuring no contact between the QRG and unit/meeting participants outside of scheduled meetings)</li> </ul>
<b>The review coordinator from the QSU receives documentation to their personal email box.</b>	All documentation stored on MS Teams site.	<p>Risk mitigation and reduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If review coordinator is unavailable, the documents are available on Teams site (not in an individual's email)</li> <li>The review coordinator is not needed as an intermediary for the QRG pre-visit summary as this is completed in real-time online</li> </ul>
<b>General emails to QRG from review coordinator's personal email account</b>	Dedicated <a href="mailto:review.coordinator@ul.ie">review.coordinator@ul.ie</a> mailbox created. All QSU members have access to this account.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record of communications with QRG available as contingency in case review coordinator unavailable.</li> </ul>
<b>Individual QSU member is meeting organiser for Teams meeting</b>	<a href="mailto:Review.coordinator@ul.ie">Review.coordinator@ul.ie</a> is the meeting organiser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All meetings are created by the review coordinator account and all QSU have access to this account</li> <li>This ensures that if the review coordinator is unavailable that the meeting can still be started, participants can be admitted from the lobby</li> <li>Ensures that a new meeting does not need to be created if the review coordinator is unavailable or if there needs to be updates/ changes to the schedule or individual meetings</li> </ul>

## ACRONYMS

RC review coordinator

QSU Quality Support Unit

QRG Quality Review Group

SAR self-assessment report

QA Quality Assurance

MFA Multi factor authentication

SSO single sign on

GDPR General Data Protection Regulation

SLA service level agreement

MS Microsoft

<sup>[1]</sup> Based on Nielsen's usability heuristics ( <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ten-usability-heuristics/>)

<sup>[2]</sup>  $\Sigma(\text{very good} + \text{good})/\text{total responses}$



## The Mid-West Disability Forum: Case Study

**Introduction:** The University of Limerick partnered with Northern Trust to launch the Mid-West Disability Forum in September 2020. The purpose of the forum was to bring stakeholders together to focus on the experience of higher education students and early career graduates in the context of disability. The forum was underpinned by a commitment to engaging with stakeholders across the full spectrum, from those organisations with significant experience and expertise in diversity and inclusion, to those who are finding their foothold in the inclusionary arena.

**Partnership:** The Forum partnership brought together two key perspectives, viz., industry and higher education. Northern Trust (NT) is a global financial services company, employing over 1,600 people in its Limerick and Dublin bases. As a Disability Confidence Champion, NT embraces and supports its employees, clients and community groups affected by disability. The University of Limerick has a longstanding proactive commitment to empowering all student learners by supporting them in developing their employability and future graduate capital. In the area of employability-relevant disability, UL has extensive and specific provision across its Cooperative Education undergraduate placement and the careers programmes.

**The Forum:** By intention and design, the focus of the forum was pragmatic and action-oriented. Over the course of eighteen months, each of the four forum events focussed on specific issues such as recruitment selection, on-boarding, management of disclosure, work needs assessment, reasonable accommodation, and assistive technologies. A similar framework was deployed across all of the events, with 5-6 speakers speaking for ca. 7-8 minutes, followed by an open discussion. Panellists were drawn from employers, experts through lived experience, subject matter experts, support agencies and higher education institutions. They included e.g., The Open Doors Initiative (Employers for Change), Association for Higher Education Disability and Access, Willing, Able, Mentor (WAM), HeadWay Ireland, EmployAbility, CloudAssist, Regeneron, Johnson & Johnson, Northern Trust and the UL Assistive Technology Centre.

**The Learnings:** Each event attracted up to eighty participants, reflecting the interest in learning about both the business case and the pragmatics of developing a culture of genuine inclusion in the workplace for our undergraduates and graduates. There was a diversity of reported learnings. Perhaps surprisingly for some participants, employers considered that most reasonable accommodations are either small or cost neutral. Disclosure emerged as one of the most challenging aspects of disability in an employability context - this is from the perspectives of both the student candidate and the employer. The practical session on assistive technology demonstrated how technology has reframed the experience of the workplace for students and graduates with disabilities, and, more tellingly, how universal design continues to change the world of work for all of us.

**Recognition:** Overall, the Mid-West Forum focused on moving stakeholders from a policy or legislative framework to assertive action; on effecting a shift from preoccupation with the acknowledged challenges to the development of an informed view and an assertive curiosity around solutions. The Forum's drive for inclusion was recognised by two awards. It was the recipient of the Effective Strategic Partnership Award presented by the Association for Higher Education Career Services (AHECS) and the Northern Trust Chairman's Award. UL continues

to support and work with Forum employers to determine optimal ways to support students and early-career graduates with disabilities to succeed in their work organisations.

## Digital Learner Support Hub

### Development of a Framework for a Digital Learner Support Hub (DLSH)

#### Authors

Clem O'Donnell, ICT Learning Centre, University of Limerick (UL)  
James Murphy, Regional Peer-Supported Learning Centre (LC), UL

#### Impact and Findings

The development, as part of this initiative, of an online portal within UL's VLE to operationalise the DLSH framework has given the LCs an effective and flexible tool to allow the LCs to deliver quality fully online and blended learning support that will have an impact into the future across the disciplines.

This project informed us how important it was to have multiple avenues to capture impact particularly in a student-centred project such as the DLSH. As the diverse nature of the students involved across the disciplines showed us that just as students within and across the disciplines may have different learning styles, they can also have preferences in terms of providing feedback.

Some prefer direct involvement in focus groups and others prefer a more anonymous form such as surveys. Having these various mechanisms allowed us to

capture a more complete picture of the students' perceptions of the project and where changes needed to be made.

The use of a video as the presentation output for the initiative resulted in team members learning how to present the overall project aims and impact through this medium. The SATLE support network meetings helped the DLSH team a great deal with this learning.

Involvement in this SATLE initiative and the development of the DLSH portal has allowed the LCs to change some staff-led synchronous online supports to be peer-led synchronous and asynchronous supports instead. The use of these peer-led supports was received positively by early-stage students (as evidenced in the focus group discussions) and we believe is highly sustainable into the future.



#### Aims

DLSH is a framework that allows content to be deployed easily and sustainably, acting as a 'one-stop-shop' for the LCs academic support services to UL's students. Conceived to address the increasing need to provide a more flexible, responsive learner support, it ensures UL's commitment to a HE accessible to all types of learners, including part-time, mature, study-abroad, and those students with disabilities.

While supporting students more flexibly, the project addresses some of the constraints on accessibility, reachability, and sustainability of current F2F services offered by the LCs such as scheduling in a manner that suits both tutors and tutees, and resourcing in terms of tutors, physical space, and associated costs.

The LCs fashioned a framework based on literature, best practice, and feedback from our stakeholders that allowed each centre to offer the best blend of online support in an engaging, structured, and accessible way to students. What developed was a delivery framework based around blended learning with both passive and active learning elements to ensure a good mix of student-to-content, student-to-tutor, and student-to-student interaction.



#### Visuals

DLSH is built around a 3-tier model that allows different opportunities to help students while maintaining their self-learning

- "I used them as the DLSH supports ultimately enhanced my overall learning experience. The live sessions and burst videos reinforced my understanding of content covered in the lectures and certainly improved my overall programming confidence."
- "They initially taught the method in a clear and concise way, using one or two examples rather than using a million examples and me getting confused."
- "I needed help with maths as my lecture notes were too in depth, the DLSH provided me with accessible content."

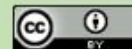
#### Want to Learn More?

For more information on what DLSH is, how we implemented it, and what we learnt please visit our website (<http://pslc.ul.ie/dlsh/>), view our promo video (<https://tinyurl.com/22udfxux>) or email us at [dlsh@ul.ie](mailto:dlsh@ul.ie)



VIT&L Teaching & Learning Showcase 2021


This project was funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education




Link to Poster [here](#).



## Problem-Based Learning in Digital Spaces



# Problem-Based Learning in Digital Spaces



(A work in progress)

### FACILITATE

The Irish Enquiry/Problem-Based Learning Network  
<http://pblfacilitate.wordpress.com>

### Aims

- Explore the student and staff experiences of transitioning to PBL in digital spaces.
- Develop support resources for students.
- Share practice of PBL in digital spaces.

### Suddenly Digital

Enquiry/Problem-based learning (E/PBL) are forms of student-centred teaching approaches that encourage active learning and critical thinking through investigation.

Traditionally done in small-group F2F work, online E/PBL involves different skills of collaboration, and engagement with material. Lockdowns required an immediate shift to digital spaces, and we aim to explore experiences of students' and staff.

### 3 Work Packages

1. Sampling of student and staff experience of PBL in digital spaces.
2. Development of resources to support student transition to PBL with digital tools.
3. Webinar series in Spring 2022 to enable practice sharing, exploring challenges and opportunities of digital PBL.

### Actions

Survey of staff and students' experiences of transition to digital PBL, incl. Lander (2008) scale of student engagement (data collection on-going).

Focus groups exploring experience and meaning of PBL in digital spaces (q's shaped by survey; Nov 2021).


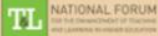
Practice sharing webinar series to take place spring 2022.

### Resources

Support videos addressing challenges raised by students, guided by students' and staff experiences of success, to be developed. To be shared at:  
<https://pblfacilitate.wordpress.com/resources/>


### References

Lander, K. (2008) An Evaluation Survey for Psychology Tutorials. Manchester: Centre for Excellence in Enquiry-Based Learning (CEEBL)

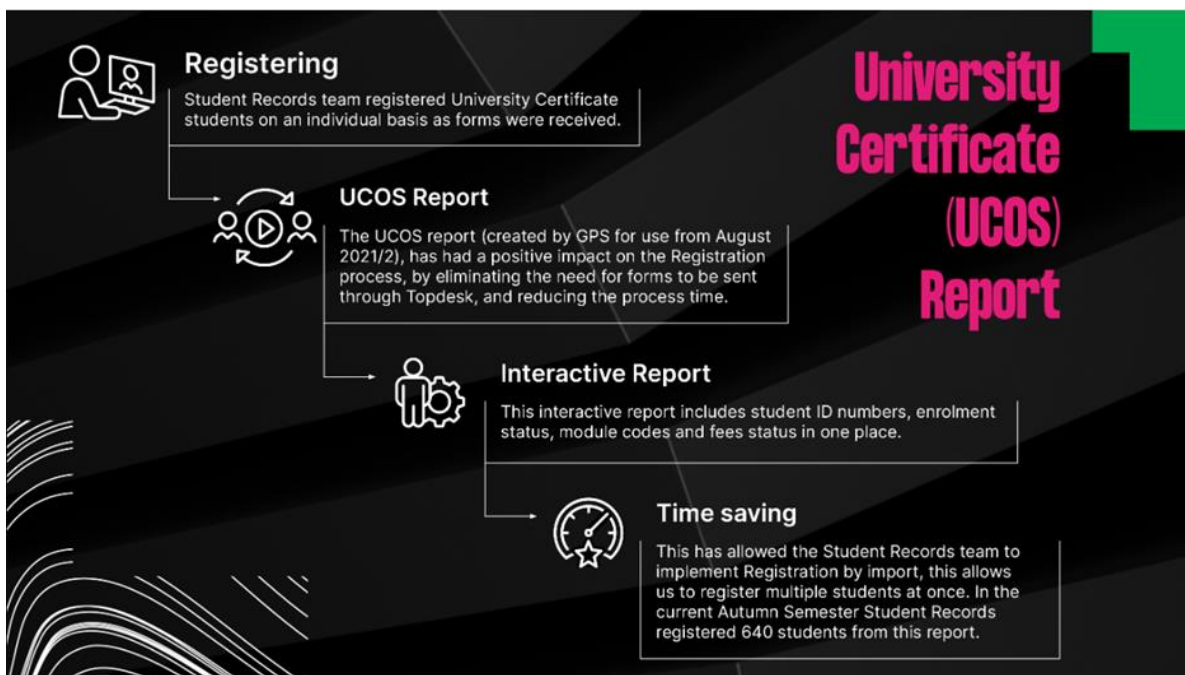
VIT&L Teaching & Learning Showcase 2021

NF Network & Discipline Fund



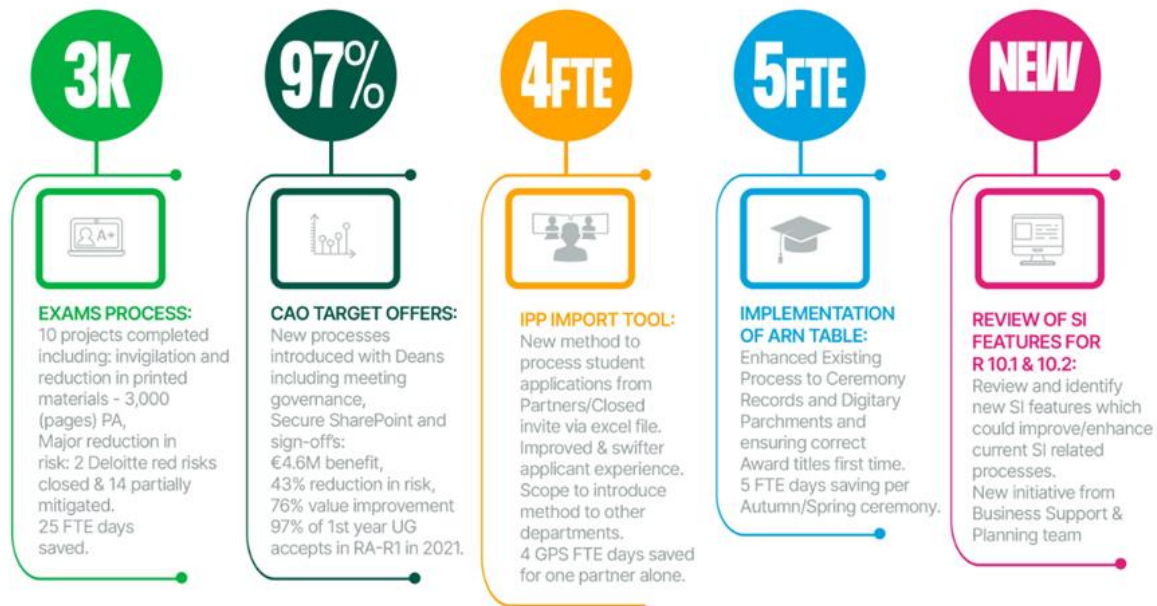


## Academic Registry Process Improvements

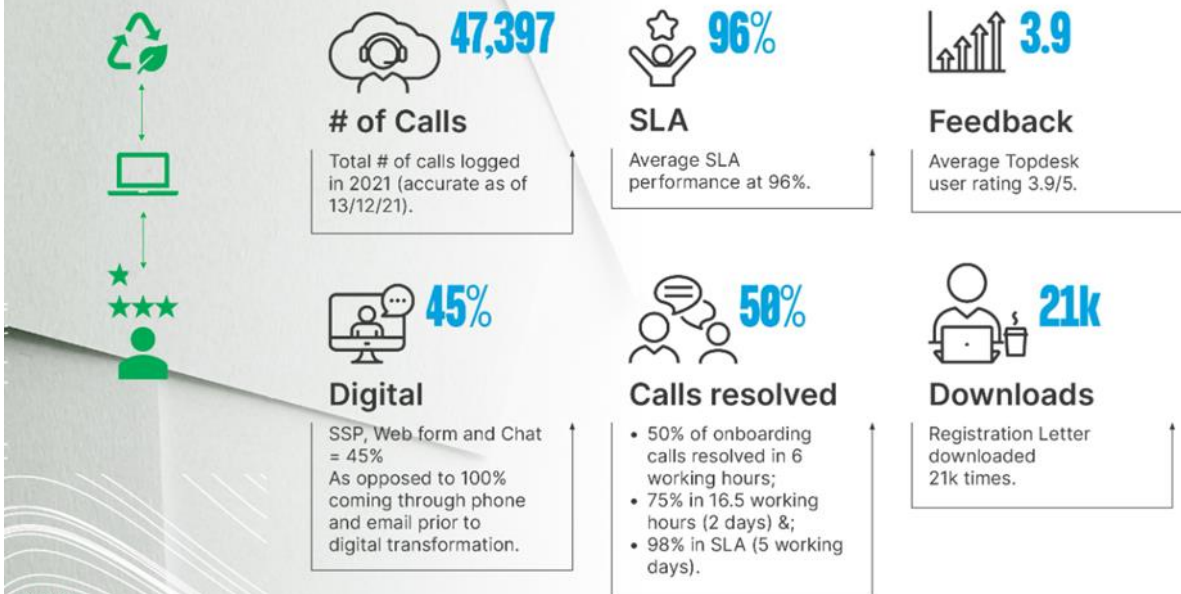




## Improving our customer experience and process efficiency



## Customer Service Achievements



# Customer Service Projects



## Staff Topdesk

Staff queries via Topdesk launched in July 2021.



## Flywire

Significant time saving and improved user experience.



## Process Maps

8 Call Management Processes Developed for roll out.



## Space Definition

Future physical space requirements defined.



## Skills

Skills Improvement: Cross skilling plan identified and customer experience workshops commenced, with 51 staff across Academic Registry in attendance.



## Commitment

Team commitment: One committed team to achieve goals.



## Collaboration

Cross team collaboration and support.

# 118 INITIATIVES

(December 2020 - November 2021)

## 10

### People first

- Planning tool for Records team
- Knowledge Management utilising Topdesk
- Annual staff survey
- Phase 1 Panopto training for Staff
- Weekly exec meeting for Service & Operations teams
- Education Awards Winner: Excellence in Service Provision

## 40

### Process efficiency

- Improvements to enrolment process for non standard students
- RACI for AR staff for On boarding
- Implementation of phone system for Service team
- Improve Topdesk for routing of calls
- OLAF for direct applicants

## 24

### Student centric

- Implementation of outsourced student card production
- Implementation of feedback from CAO student survey
- Improve communications content for On boarding
- Improve enrolment process for School of Medicine, LM050 students
- Personalised timetables for alternative to Erasmus students

## 7

### Faculty focus

- Programme Management survey
- Online option for module contact hour in ASCS
- Improve cross functional collaboration: SLCS
- Improve CAO Target Offers process
- Invigilation support for online Spring exams for KBS (Pilot)

## 37

### Reduce risk

- 16 Internal audits
- UGRA measure and analyse phase
- Additional controls for student home email reducing GDPR risk
- Remove keyman dependencies for On boarding
- Improved security for access to CMIS & delivery of progression decisions

### Academic Registry Initiatives in practice / Case studies:

#### Case study #1 CAO / On boarding

##### CAO target offers

- New processes introduced with Deans including meeting governance, secure SharePoint and sign-off's:
- 43% reduction in risk
- 76% value improvement
- 97% of 1st year accepts in RA-R1 in 2021

97%

##### Improved On boarding process

- Hybrid orientation with online and on-campus tours
- Simplification in ID verification process
- Improved targeted communications and content for on boarding
- 50% of on boarding calls resolved within 6 working hours
- 75% in 16.5 working hours (2 days) and
- 98% in SLA (5 working days)

50%

#### Case study #2 Digital Transformation

##### Staff Topdesk

- Introduction of Academic Registry staff Topdesk in July 2021:
- 45% of all Self service, web form and chat is now Digital
- As opposed to 100% coming through phone and email prior to Digital transformation.

45%

##### SLA

- 96% Topdesk calls are answered within SLA
- Average Topdesk user rating 3.9/5

96%

3.9/5

##### Online document service

- Registration letter downloaded 21k times since its launch in 2021
- (Digitary the new student online document service launched January 2022).

21k

##### Online payment service

- Fywire online payment for students launched:
- Previous analysis (Sept 2021) showed: 5 mins per transaction (3.2 mins per phone call answered - average of 2 calls per transaction to reach student).
- 610 transactions x 5 min per transaction = 3,050 min (equivalent to 8FTE days, which were re-deployed to prioritise time critical or complex tasks).

CAO / On boarding improvements and Digital Transformation = better student experience with information and services available 24/7.