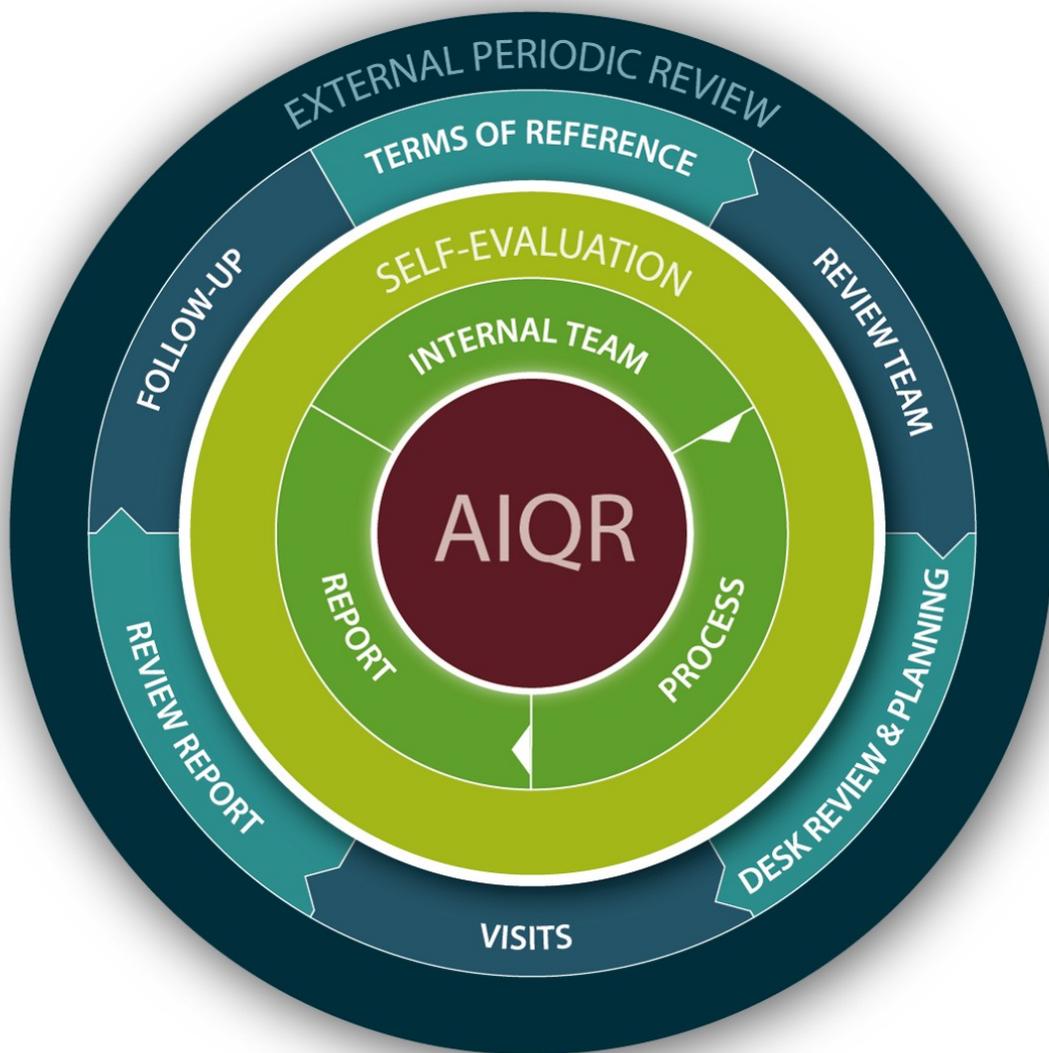


University of Limerick

Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report 2018

Based on the reporting period 1 September 2016 – 31 August 2017



The Cyclical Review Process

Part 1

Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures

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

1. Overarching Institution Quality Policy

A brief synopsis of the overarching institution quality policy which sets out the links between QA policy and procedures and the strategy and strategic management of the institution.

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

UL's overarching institutional [quality statement](#) commits the University to enhancing the quality of its academic programmes, teaching, research and service to the community and to complying with statutory and regulatory requirements relating to quality assurance (QA) and quality improvement (QI). The University'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 various [UL policies](#). The arrangements have evolved and are tailored to institutional organisational structure and mission. They are developed and overseen by relevant institutional and local unit-level governance committees and are reviewed by various means, including internal quality reviews and periodic institutional (external) reviews. Cornerstone institutional-level QA processes are described in our annual [institutional profile](#).

2. Quality assurance decision-making fora

A brief description of institution-level quality assurance decision-making fora

The University's administrative and academic organisational structures are available [here](#). Overall authority for the affairs of the University is vested in the [Governing Authority](#), whose functions include approving high-level strategy and policy, statutes and regulations. Amongst its subcommittees is the Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance Committee, whose terms of reference are available [here](#).

The University's [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.

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

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

All UL service (support) units report to a senior member of Executive Committee, as per the [administrative organisational chart](#). As with academic units, periodic [quality reviews](#) are undertaken for all support units. In the case of both academic and support units, quality review reports and the implementation of the associated quality improvement plans are monitored by Governing Authority's Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance Committee and by the [Vice President Academic & Registrar](#) (VPA&R).

Confirmation of QA Policy and Procedures

1. Programme Design and Approval (ESG 1.2)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance policy and procedures for the design and approval of new programmes.

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

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

2. Programme Delivery and Assessment (ESG 1.3)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance policies and procedures for the ongoing delivery and assessment of programmes.

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

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

3. Research Quality (ESG 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.9)

Links and/or text relating to any specific quality assurance procedures for the design, approval, delivery, assessment and monitoring of research programmes, if they exist.

Overall research strategy and policy is articulated by the University's: (a) [strategic plan](#); (b) [research strategy](#), which is informed by the overall strategic plan; and (c) [quality statement](#). Procedures relating to the quality of research are many and varied according to purpose. Regulations pertaining to postgraduate research students are included in the University's [Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures](#) (in particular chapters 2 and 5). Under the management of the Vice President Research, both the [Graduate School](#) and [Research Office](#) develop and oversee the implementation of a wide range of [policies, procedures and codes of practice](#) pertinent to research activity, including postgraduate activity, research centres, research project management/lifecycle and intellectual property. These documents are published on the SharePoint portal.

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

UL operates recruitment policies and procedures for [research scholars](#), [research staff](#) and [academic staff](#).

4. Student Lifecycle (ESG 1.4)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures that are encompassed by the student lifecycle.

Policies and procedures for student enrolment, registration, assessment, grading, performance standards, progression and academic awards are all incorporated into the University's [Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures](#). In line with **ESG 1.4 (Student admission, progression, recognition and certification)**, UL operates policies and procedures relating to access, recognition of prior learning, admission processes and criteria. Admissions procedures for undergraduate entry is operationalised in the main by the [Admissions](#) section of the [Academic Registry Division](#), with the majority of undergraduate students entering through the national Central Applications Office (CAO) system. In support of UL's [access policy](#), the [Access Office](#) promotes and supports the participation of students from groups that have been under-represented in higher education.

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

Also in line with **ESG 1.4**, UL operates student induction processes through the Academic Registry's [Orientation Programme](#), the [Centre for Teaching and Learning's First Seven Weeks programme](#) and the [International Education Division's 7-day orientation/welcome programme](#) for new international students. UL collects, monitors and acts upon information on student progression and maintains graduation and student records in a number of ways. Under governance of the Steering Group, Academic Registry maintains, controls and develops the University's student records, including all personal information, grant records, student registrations, module grade entry, performance reports and student results, the issuing of all graduate parchments and the publication of all class and examination schedules. Student progression information is considered at a number of fora, most notably the faculty exam boards, the Academic Council Grading Committee and the University Exam Board. Student progression is also considered during the annual programmatic review process, at which course boards propose quality enhancements on the basis of (in part) annual programme performance metrics.

5. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring the competence of teaching staff, including staff recruitment and staff development.

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

- **Pursues clear, transparent and fair processes for staff recruitment:** Relevant [policies and procedures](#) are published on the [Human Resources](#) website, including recruitment and appointment procedures and packs for academic (as well as research and support) staff.
- **Operates conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching:** [Academic role profiles](#) for all academic grades clearly articulate the importance of teaching. Teaching portfolios form a core element of academic staff [promotion](#) and [progression](#). Teaching activity forms a prominent element of the [academic workload allocation policy](#) and automatically forms a core element of UL's Performance and Development Review System ([PDRS](#)) as applied to academic staff. Moreover, the importance of teaching is articulated and emphasised in [strategic institutional publications](#), including the strategic plan (*Broadening Horizons*), the teaching, learning and assessment strategy (*Engaged Learning*) and the research and innovation strategy (*Excellent and Impact 2020*). Teaching-related activities form a core determinant of resource allocation to academic units. UL invests very significant resources in its [Centre for Teaching and Learning](#) and runs annual teaching excellence awards.
- **Offers opportunities for and promotes the professional development of teaching staff:** The Centre for Teaching and Learning offers and promotes certificate and graduate diploma courses in teaching, learning and scholarship as well as a myriad of additional professional development opportunities for teaching staff. The [PDRS](#) facilitates opportunities for teacher professional development. The HR [Learning, Development and Equal Opportunities](#) section promotes and coordinates training courses, including teaching-related courses, and a university-wide academic mentoring programme.
- **Encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research:** Aim 1.1 of our [strategic plan](#) commits us to fostering a research-led educational ethos at all levels of the curriculum, and Activity 1.1.2 of our [teaching, learning and assessment strategy](#) commits us aligning teaching with research. Progress in both instances is monitored through implementation and programmatic reviews.
- **Encourages innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies:** Aim 1.1.5 of our strategic plan commits us to further embedding technology-enhanced learning across the curricula, while Activity 1.3.1 of our teaching, learning and assessment strategy commits us to further developing a technology-enhanced pedagogy. UL established the Technology Enhanced Learning Unit ([TELU](#)) to realise these strategic commitments.

6. Teaching and Learning (ESG 1.4, 1.5, 1.6)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring the quality of teaching and learning.

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

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

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

7. Resources and Support (ESG 1.6)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring funding and resources for learning, teaching and research. Also, links and or text relating to the quality assurance procedures for learning resources and student support.

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

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

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

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

All supports are accessible. Students are informed about the services available to them in a variety of ways, including [orientation week](#) and the [First Seven Weeks programme](#) for first-year students, student advisor system referrals and the [student gateway portal](#) on the UL homepage. In addition, individual support (and academic) units provide relevant information on their own web pages.

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

are considered as part of their annual [PDRS](#) (Performance and Development Review System) activities.

8. Information Management (ESG 1.7)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for collecting, analysing and using relevant information about programmes and other activities.

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

- **At a strategic institutional level**, the strategic plan, the teaching, learning and assessment strategy and the research and innovation strategy all articulate specific aims and objectives, each with accompanying outcomes and targets. Internal procedures are in place to routinely monitor, document and report progress to key decision-making individuals or committees, including Executive Committee, Management Council, Academic Council and Governing Authority. For example, the implementation, monitoring and review of the [strategic plan](#) is described on page 68 of that document.
- **Profiles of the student population as well as student progression, success and drop-out rates** are gathered, reported and analysed in a number of ways. Under governance of the Steering Group, the [Academic Registry Division](#) maintains, controls and develops UL's student records through its student information system, from which various officers and offices can extract and tailor data to generate reports for appropriate internal stakeholders at institutional level (e.g. Academic Council and Executive Committee), at local level (e.g. course review boards) and for external stakeholders (e.g. HEA, DES). Among other responsibilities, UL's Student Engagement & Success Unit ([SESU](#)) undertakes research and data-analytics relating to student engagement.
- **The student voice:** Information relating to students' levels of satisfaction with their programmes is gathered in a number of ways. Cornerstone institutional-level student surveys include [student evaluation of teaching surveys](#), [module satisfaction surveys](#) and [student exit surveys](#), for which survey reports are delivered to relevant internal stakeholders for consideration and follow up (e.g. Academic Council, Executive Committee, heads of department, course directors, course boards and individual academics). The UL institutional survey register recorded an additional 35 surveys, which, in the main, targeted one or more specific cohorts of students (first-year students, international students, etc.).
- **Institutional processes** provide a framework for individual students or student groups to avail of various local mechanisms to receive immediate feedback on modules and programmes of study during delivery, with a view to local consideration and response. These mechanisms include direct contact with a lecturer, head of department, academic advisor or student representative. Student feedback and dialogue is also facilitated by student representation on various committees and boards, both at institutional level (e.g. Governing Authority, Academic Council and faculty boards) and local level (e.g. course review boards).

- **External examiner reports** are considered by relevant programme review boards, and the outcome of programme reviews are considered at departmental and faculty level and by the Academic Programme Review Committee in accordance with UL procedures.
- The **quality review process** for [academic units](#) and [support units](#) requires input from students, customers and stakeholders. The quality review reports, which address all aspects of units' operations, are considered by Executive Committee, the relevant dean and the VPA&R.
- A comprehensive range of **learning resources and support services** are provided by UL to facilitate student learning. The programme approval process incorporates a detailed analysis of the resources required by each programme, including student supports. Academic and support department quality reviews include an evaluation of the provision of learner resources and supports by the department under review.
- **Career paths of graduates:** The [Cooperative Education and Careers Division](#) provides comprehensive career advice and support to students and organises work placements for students. The division conducts an annual First Destinations Survey of graduates, which helps inform relevant strategic planning activity as well as local and institutional decision making.
- **The Research Office** uses a research information system (ULRIS) for tracking research output and publications and has numerous internal processes for recording, monitoring and reporting upon research activity.
- **The Marketing and Communications Division** is responsible for gathering and disseminating a wide range of information to audiences both internal and external to UL.

9. Self-evaluation and Monitoring (ESG 1.9)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for self-evaluation and internal monitoring.

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

- Self-evaluation activities (and associated authorship of a self-evaluation report) as part of both [academic](#) and [support](#) unit quality reviews. Review reports are made [publicly available](#), and the review recommendations form the basis of a subsequent quality improvement plan. The implementation of the plan is monitored by the Quality Support Unit, the VPA&R, the relevant dean and the Governing Authority Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance Committee.
- An external examination process for both [taught](#) and research programmes, with feedback of external examiner reports at local unit and individual level. External examiners are requested to contact the Office of the VPA&R directly if they have particular concerns.
- Annual self-evaluation (and periodic external evaluation) of individual programmes by course review boards, informing programmatic enhancement activities. The review outcomes are considered at departmental and faculty level and by Academic Council's Academic Programme Review Committee (APRC).
- Student feedback by means of the [module satisfaction survey](#) and [student exit survey](#), with detailed and/or aggregate reports being considered by individual academics, heads of department, course boards, deans, Executive Committee and Academic Council.

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 Risk Management Committee.

10. Stakeholder Engagement (ESG 1.1)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.

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

- The systematic inclusion of student representation in all aspects of University governance and quality assurance activity (e.g. student representation on Governing Authority, Academic Council, faculty boards, course review boards and review panels of academic units).
- As part of the quality review process for both academic and support units, individual units identify their customers and stakeholders and reflect upon levels of engagement with a view to identifying opportunities for enhancing quality. The quality reviewers meet with key stakeholders as part of review site visits, and key stakeholders (e.g. student and employer representatives) form part of the quality review team.
- As part of their [QMS](#), individual support units identify and seek feedback from their core customers and stakeholders.
- Engagement with employer and related stakeholders is largely facilitated by the [Research Office](#) (research, intellectual property and technology transfer), the [Cooperative Education and Careers Division](#) (managing a network of over 2,000 employers in the context of student placements) and the [Continuing and Professional Education](#) unit. These networks and linkages are routinely used to identify employer and related stakeholders for participation in QA activities (such as the external examining process, unit quality reviews and periodic programmatic reviews).

11. Engagement with Other Bodies (ESG 1.1)

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

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

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

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

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

12. Provision and Use of Public Information (ESG 1.8)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for the provision of clear, accurate, up-to date and accessible public information.

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

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

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

13. Linked Providers (for Designated Awarding Bodies) (ESG 1.1)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring engagement with linked providers including the procedures for approval, monitoring, review, withdrawal of approval and appeal for linked providers.

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

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

Ongoing QA monitoring and dialogue is pursued via submission by the linked provider to UL of an Annual Institutional Quality Report coupled to an annual follow-up meeting.

14. DA Procedures for use of QQI Award Standards (IoTs only)

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

N/A

15. Collaborative Provision (ESG 1.1)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for engagement with third parties for the provision of programmes.

The Office of the VPA&R follows internal guidelines when responding to requests for accreditation from external bodies. These guidelines, which are retained on an internal SharePoint site, have been informed by the [IHEQN guidelines on collaborative provision](#).

16. Additional Notes

Any additional notes can be entered here.

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17. Internal Review Schedule

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

Year	2016/17
Areas/Units	Office of the President (Sept '16); Nursing & Midwifery (Nov '16); Clinical Therapies (Jan '17); Culture & Communication (Mar '17); Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics (Apr '17)
Number	5
Link(s) to Publications	http://www.ul.ie/quality/support-unit-reports http://www.ul.ie/quality/academic-unit-reports-cycle-2

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

Year	2018/19
Areas/Units	Students' Union (Oct '18); Postgraduate Students' Union (Oct '18); UniJobs (Dec '18); Irish World Music Academy (Feb '19); Bernal Institute (Apr '19)
Number	5
Link(s) to Publications	http://www.ul.ie/quality/current-review-cycle

Year	2019/20
Areas/Units	Library & Information Services Division (Sept '19); Faculty of Education & Health Sciences (Oct '19); Cooperative Education & Careers Division (Dec '19); Buildings & Estates (Mar '20)
Number	4

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Link(s) to Publications	http://www.ul.ie/quality/current-review-cycle
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Year	2020/21
Areas/Units	Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences (Oct '20); Student Affairs Division (Nov '20); National Council for Exercise & Fitness (Dec '20); Human Resources Division (Jan '21); Kemmy Business School (Feb '21); Lero Research Institute (Apr '21); Information Technology Division (May '21)
Number	7
Link(s) to Publications	http://www.ul.ie/quality/current-review-cycle

Year	2021/22
Areas/Units	Faculty of Science & Engineering (Oct '21), Finance (Jan '22); Health Research Institute (Feb '22); International Education Division (May '22)
Number	4
Link(s) to Publications	http://www.ul.ie/quality/current-review-cycle

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

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

AIQR - PART 1

Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures	AIQR2017 Part 1 Final.docx
PRSBs	24
Awarding Bodies	0
QA Bodies	1
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	First Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	EFMD
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Business Studies; http://www.efmd.org
Date of last review or accreditation	20-06-2015
Next review year	2020
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Second Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Irish Medical Council
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Medicine Bachelor of Surgery; https://www.medicalcouncil.ie
Date of last review or accreditation	8-2-2011
Next review year	2019
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Third Set of Records

Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	The Teaching Council
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Technology (Education) in Materials and Architectural Technology; http://www.teachingcouncil.ie
Date of last review or accreditation	15-12-2014
Next review year	2019
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Fourth Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	The Teaching Council
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Technology (Education) in Materials and Engineering Technology; http://www.teachingcouncil.ie
Date of last review or accreditation	15-12-2014
Next review year	2019
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Fifth Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	King's Inns
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Laws (Law Plus); https://www.kingsinns.ie/cmsfiles/entrance-examination/Schedule-of-Approved-degrees-2014.pdf
Date of last review or accreditation	22-10-2009
Joint research degrees	1
Joint/double/multiple awards	3
Collaborative programmes	5
Franchise programmes	2
Linked providers (DABs only)	3
Section: Collaborative Provision	First Set of Records

Type of arrangement:	Linked providers (DABs only)
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Full list of programmes available at www.mic.ie
Date of last review	30-11-2016
Next review year	2023
Section: Collaborative Provision	Second Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Linked providers (DABs only)
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Garda College Templemore
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	BA Applied Policing Postgraduate Diploma in Serious Crime Investigation
Date of last review	17-11-2014
Next review year	2021
Section: Collaborative Provision	Third Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Linked providers (DABs only)
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Limerick Institute of Technology
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Level 10 Research Awards
Date of last review	15-06-2016
Next review year	2021
Section: Collaborative Provision	Fourth Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Joint/double/multiple awards
Name of the Body (Bodies)	KEDGE Business School, Marseille, France
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Arts in International Business
Date of last review	29-7-2016
Next review year	2021

Section: Collaborative Provision	Fifth Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Joint/double/multiple awards
Name of the Body (Bodies)	National University of Ireland, Galway
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Professional Diploma in Mathematics for Teaching
Date of last review	8-2-2013
Next review year	2020
Section: Collaborative Provision	Sixth Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Joint/double/multiple awards
Name of the Body (Bodies)	National University of Ireland, Galway
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Master of Science in Sustainable Resource Management: Policy and Practice
Date of last review	2-9-2013
Next review year	2018
Section: Collaborative Provision	Seventh Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Joint research degrees
Name of the Body (Bodies)	University of Pavia, Pavia, Lombardy, Italy.
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	PhD
Date of last review	1-11-2016
Next review year	2018
Section: Collaborative Provision	Eighth Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Collaborative programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	The Revenue Commissioners
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Applied Taxation; Diploma in Applied Taxation
Date of last review	14-2-2014
Next review year	2019

Section: Collaborative Provision	Ninth Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Franchise programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Independent College of Science and Technology, Athens, Greece.
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Science in Psychology; Master of Science in Psychological Science
Date of last review	20-10-2014
Next review year	2018
Do you wish to make a final submission?	Yes, this is my final submission
On behalf of the President/Provost/CEO I confirm that the information submitted in this AIQR is accurate and correct.	Confirmed
Overview of internal governance, policies and procedures (Word Template).	Confirmed
Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies.	Confirmed
Collaborative Provision.	Confirmed
Articulation Agreements.	Confirmed
Date of Final Submission	16-02-2018

Parts 2-6

Institution-led QA – Annual Information

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

Part 2: Institution-led QA – Annual

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

Section 1: Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Developments

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

- A schedule for University of Limerick (UL) internal quality reviews (cycle 3 – which runs from academic year 2017/18 to 2023/24, inclusive) was approved by UL’s Executive Committee in March 2017 and was subsequently presented for noting to Governing Authority’s Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance Committee in April 2017. While the core quality review process characteristics remain the same for all reviews, tailored process guidelines for the various review streams (faculty, research institutes, support units, subsidiary units, etc.) will be prepared in consultation with the relevant stakeholders, including the units themselves. The review schedule is available [here](#). In the revised process for cycle 3 reviews, facilitation has been made to include identified enhancements from one review to another, should they be required.
- As a designated awarding body, UL coordinated an institutional quality review of Mary Immaculate College (MIC). The review was undertaken by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) on behalf of UL between 28 November and 1 December 2016.
- During the reporting period, a process was instigated to facilitate an annual quality reporting mechanism from MIC. The process involves the completion of an annual quality report by MIC and a follow-on inter-institutional quality meeting.
- A template was designed by the Quality Support Unit (QSU) for the completion of annual quality reports by all support units. The objectives of the process were: a) to ensure a continued focus on quality assurance between unit-level cyclical reviews; b) to help the QSU complete the Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR) by providing examples of quality assurance/quality enhancement activities undertaken at unit level; and c) to facilitate the sharing of best practice among quality teams.
- Revised [quality review guidelines](#) were published in January 2016. Five units underwent quality reviews using the revised guidelines, which significantly enhanced the post-implementation review process. One unit participated in the post-review implementation

meeting using the revised process. An analysis of the impact of the changes made is provided in Part 3, Section 2 of this report.

- The [Governance of Irish Universities 2012](#) sectoral code includes a requirement for Governing Authority (GA) to undertake periodic self-review. The relevant provision (page 45 of the code) reads “*The Chairperson should lead a periodic review by the governing authority of its own effectiveness.*” With input from the Corporate Secretary’s office, the QSU devised a survey instrument. The survey questions (taken from a previous review in 2012) were streamlined by theme and were written to give due regard to the [Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies](#). The proposed survey questionnaire was considered by GA at its meeting of 31 March 2017, and the finalised survey was distributed electronically on 11 April 2017. The survey remained open until 26 April 2017. This final survey report was circulated to GA members in advance of their meeting of 25 May 2017. The core data were presented at that meeting by the Director of Quality. The survey report and presentation facilitated members of GA to consider and discuss the findings and to draw evidence-based conclusions about the effectiveness of the GA.
- [Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures](#): During the reporting period, four revisions were made to the UL Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures. Updates were formally approved by Academic Council on 7 December ’16, 1 March ’17, 17 May ’17 and 14 June ’17.
- Following extensive consultation and in-depth analysis of best practice across higher education and beyond, the [UL Marketing and Communications Strategy](#) was launched in April 2017. The strategy takes a progressive approach to building the marketing and communications infrastructure and capability for engaging UL’s audience more effectively. It also introduces an integrated and consistent approach to improve external client engagement.
- To enhance compliance with ESGs, the Plassey Campus Centre at UL commenced a pilot project to create ‘Living Learning Communities’ in residence. This project involves significant development of our communal facilities to create collaborative learning space/hubs in the residences. Another key element of the project the introduction of a series of learning support opportunities that help first-year students to successfully transition to university life here at UL and that support the progression of existing students.

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

- In October 2016, at a specially convened meeting of Governing Authority, the UL Chancellor announced the appointment of the new president of the University of Limerick. [Professor Desmond Fitzgerald](#) was previously Vice President for Health Affairs at University College Dublin and Chief Academic Officer of Ireland East Hospital Group. His term as President commenced on 1 May 2017.
- In October 2016, Governing Authority approved the [Acceptable Behaviour in the Workplace](#) policy. The purpose of the policy is to promote acceptable behaviour and deal with unacceptable behaviour if it arises. The policy applies to management, fellow employees, subordinates, service providers, customers, clients or other business contacts with whom employees would reasonably come into contact in the course of their employment.
- In October 2016, Governing Authority approved the [Procedures for the Recruitment/Appointment of Academic Staff in Exceptional Circumstances](#) policy. The policy sets out clear procedures for recruiting and appointing personnel to academic posts in limited exceptional circumstances, such as candidates in receipt of a portable European Research Council or similar award or those with critical skills for strategic needs. The aim of the policy is to attract and select, in limited exceptional circumstances, the above-defined candidates in a fair, transparent and effective manner.
- In December 2016, Academic Council approved the [Research Integrity Policy](#). Research integrity relates to the performance of research to the highest standards of professionalism and rigour and to the accuracy and integrity of the research record in publications and elsewhere.
- In February 2017, Academic Council approved the [University of Limerick Student Fitness to Practise Policy](#). Fitness to practise means having the necessary skills, knowledge, health and character to undertake and complete, safely and effectively, a programme that includes elements of professional practice, experiential learning or clinical work. A dedicated [website](#) in support of the policy was created.
- In May 2017, Academic Council approved the [Clinical Research Policy for UL Sponsored Regulated Clinical Trials](#). In alignment with UL's policy on research integrity, this policy was developed to provide a framework for the governance of regulated clinical trials. In addition, UL established the UL Clinical Research Board (CRB), which has certain delegated responsibilities to oversee clinical trial activities on behalf of the University.
- In July 2017, UL appointed a Research Integrity Officer. Reporting to the President, the Research Integrity Officer assists UL to put in place appropriate policies and practices regarding adherence to principles of research integrity. The establishment of this position is in accordance with the [National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity](#) and is outlined in the UL Research Integrity Policy. Faculty research integrity champions have been nominated to assist the Research Integrity Officer with raising awareness of research integrity issues across the campus.

1.3 The schedule of QA governance meetings.

Governing Authority (GA)

6 October 2016
24 November 2016
26 January 2017
23 February 2017
31 March 2017
27 April 2017
25 May 2017
29 June 2017
21 August 2017

Finance Committee (GA sub-committee)

7 November 2016
21 March 2017
27 June 2017

Human Resources (GA sub-committee)

22 September 2016
4 January 2017
15 March 2017
19 June 2017

Strategic Planning & Quality Assurance (GA sub-committee)

7 September 2016
8 February 2017
13 April 2017
7 June 2017

Campus Development (GA sub-committee)

20 June 2017

Access & Student Affairs (GA sub-committee)

31 March 2017
29 June 2017

Audit & Risk (GA sub-committee)

5 September 2016
6 November 2016
14 February 2017
11 April 2017
13 June 2017
4 August 2017

Academic Council

5 October 2016
7 December 2016
1 March 2017
17 May 2017
14 June 2017

Academic Council Grading Committee

31 August 2016
26 September 2016
1 December 2016
13 January 2017
8 May 2017
31 May 2017
14 June 2017
30 June 2017

Academic Programme Review Committee

9 September 2016
7 October 2016
4 November 2016
2 December 2016
6 January 2017
10 February 2017
10 March 2017
21 April 2017
19 May 2017

Academic Regulations Committee

6 September 2016
18 October 2016
29 November 2016
10 January 2017
14 February 2017
28 March 2017
25 April 2017
30 May 2017

Executive Committee

Weekly meetings from 31 August 2016 to 19 July 2017.

Faculty Boards (KBS = Kemmy Business School; EHS = Education and Health Sciences; S&E = Science and Engineering; AHSS = Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences)

14 September 2016	AHSS
28 September 2016	EHS and S&E
12 October 2016	KBS
9 November 2016	KBS
16 November 2016	EHS

Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report

30 November 2016	S&E and AHSS
1 February 2017	EHS
15 February 2017	AHSS
8 February 2017	KBS and S&E
29 March 2017	KBS, EHS, S&E and AHSS

University Teacher Education Board

10 November 2016
9 February 2017
20 April 2017

Section 2: Reviews in the reporting period

2.1 Internal reviews that were completed in the reporting period.

Unit Reviews

Office of the President (September 2016)

[Link to published report](#)

Department of Nursing and Midwifery (November 2016)

[Link to published report](#)

Department of Clinical Therapies (January 2017)

[Link to published report](#)

School of Culture & Communications (March 2017)

[Link to published report](#)

School of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics (April 2017)

[Link to published report](#)

Linked Provider Reviews

Mary Immaculate College Institutional Review (November 2016)

[Link to published report](#)

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

Number of new Programme Validations/Programme Approvals completed in the reporting year	
New taught programmes	33
New structured programmes (i.e. taught and research)	2
Programme modifications	119
Number of Programme Reviews completed in the reporting year	9
Number of Research Reviews completed in the reporting year	0

Number of School/Department/Faculty Reviews completed in the reporting year	4
Number of Service Unit Reviews completed in the reporting year	1
Number of Reviews of Arrangements with partner organisations completed in the reporting year	1

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

Composition of Panels	%
Internal	1
National	15
UK	35
EU	8
Student	19
Other	19

Chair Profile	%
Internal	0
Similar Institution	0
Different Institution	0
International	100

Section 3: Other Implementation Factors

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

- **Module Satisfaction Survey (MSS):** In October 2016, MSS requests were distributed to those UL students who were undertaking one or more modules that semester. This represented some 59,200 individual requests to over 13,000 students taking one or more of approximately 1,300 modules on offer. Some 22,343 responses were received, which represents an overall response rate of 38%. The reporting structure is as follows:
 - Individual module reports made available to module lecturer
 - Reports detailing all departmental modules sent to heads of department (copied to faculty dean)
 - Report summarising departmental and faculty-level aggregate data sent to Executive Committee
 - Summary institution report made [publicly available](#) (with notification to all staff and students)
- **Student Exit Survey:** The 2016 student exit survey was launched in April 2016. The online survey was distributed to final-year students of all UL taught programmes, and the response rate was 32% for bachelor's programmes and 21% for non-bachelor's programmes). The reporting structure is as follows:
 - Individual programme reports to programme team
 - Departmental report to head of department
 - Institutional-level report to Executive Committee and Academic Council
 - Support unit reports to support units
 - Summary institution report made [publicly available](#) (with notification to all staff and students)
- **Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning (SET):** UL's Centre for Teaching and Learning provides a structured approach to getting feedback from students about individual approaches to teaching – [Student Evaluation of Teaching \(SET\)](#). This process is voluntary and confidential and is designed to provide useful information to individual lecturers on their students' experiences of the modules they teach. In the academic year, 277 lecturers requested a SET, which involved 364 modules and 5,022 student responses.
- **Peer Observation of Teaching:** The observation of teaching by peers has continued to provide a forum for colleagues to be observed and act as the observer. With 61 participants engaging with the process and inter-institutional partnerships being established during the reporting period, this network is providing a valuable platform for dialogue on teaching and learning. To support the initiative, the Centre for Teaching and Learning facilitated Shannon Consortium regional peer observation workshops on 29 September '16 and 16 February '17.
- **Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE):** ISSE is a national survey that is distributed annually to first-year, final-year and postgraduate students across the country. The survey covers a range of aspects of student life, and the results can help inform local and national strategies. The ISSE was open to UL students from 30 January to 17 February 2017. Several initiatives were

undertaken across campus in an effort to increase the response rate this year. The UL ISSE response rate for 2016/17 was 14.3% (up from 13.4% in 2015/16).

- **Postgraduate Research Experience:** This exit survey is run annually and asks participants about their experiences as a UL postgraduate research student (master's by research and PhD). The responses inform the Graduate School and UL as a whole about the experience of postgraduate researcher and help them to improve future levels of support. The responses are also used to inform policy and improve the postgraduate research experience. The number of respondents over the three-year period 2015 to 2017, inclusive, ranged from 37 to 41, and the response rates varied from 31% to 37% with a mix of gender, award level and mode of attendance.
- **The International Student Barometer Survey** takes place every two years and gives rise to a Global ISB Ranking Sheet as part of the results. The ranking sheet gives percentage figures and rankings against a wide range of criteria, and the metrics are then compared to previous years. UL has maintained its strong position in the International Student Barometer Survey, published in January 2017. The survey was undertaken by independent research group i-graduate and involved 159,536 international students across 182 institutions worldwide. Rankings included the following:
 - For the student learning experience, UL ranks:
 - 1st in Ireland & UK for English language support
 - 2nd in Ireland for quality lectures, course organisation and optimal class size
 - 9th in Europe for academic English and 10th for learning support
 - For campus living, UL ranks:
 - 1st in Ireland and 6th globally for social and cultural student integration
 - 1st in Ireland for campus environment and campus accommodation support
 - For career and employability, UL ranks:
 - 1st in Ireland and 2nd in Europe for graduate employability
 - 1st in Ireland and 3rd in Europe for career services
- An analysis of data from the **library survey** (LibQUAL) over a ten-year period was conducted to explore how changes and improvement in library services over the decade have impacted on user perceptions. The data indicate that library users are much more satisfied with services now than they were during the first survey iteration in 2007. The UL surveys were also benchmarked against international averages. The international benchmarking indicated that the rate of improvement in user perceptions at UL is far higher than UK, US and Irish averages.
- The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) conducted a survey on the Personal Academic Support System (PASS) to see how staff were interacting with the revised process. As a result of feedback, a SharePoint site for advisors was developed. The site provides key institutional information as well as supports and resources that can be used with advisees. PASS-related content for students was also created on the Student Engagement & Success ([SES](#)) website. The [Meet your Advisor](#) page includes an outline of the advisor's role.
- **First Destinations Survey:** The Careers Service completes a detailed study that maps the employment and/or study progression outcomes of 3,200+ UL graduates. The findings give interesting insights into employment sectors, geographical location, gender comparatives and earning power of UL graduates. The survey also captures the percentage of UL graduates that opt to continue in further study or training. During the reporting period, there was an 80% response rate to this survey.
- **Trendence Survey:** The trendence Graduate Barometer is an annual online survey about the expectations and preferences of students in their first professional position after graduation. Students are asked which companies they find attractive, how they look for their first

professional position and what factors are important for them in this position. This year, 483 responses were received.

- **Universum Survey:** The results of Universum's Student Survey reveal how students perceive employers. The research functions as a basis for decision-making when choosing target groups, messages and channels for future employer branding campaigns. Moreover, the survey can be used as a control instrument for measuring the appeal an organisation has over its specific target groups. During the reporting period, 1109 responses were received.
- A Module Attendance Survey was conducted by the QSU in May 2017. A summary report was presented to the VPA&R.
- A study analysing programmes and modules with low numbers of students registered was undertaken by the QSU in May 2017. A summary report was presented to the VPA&R.

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

Annual **research postgraduate progression** reports are considered by research review panels, with progression decisions considered by Academic Council. The annual research student progression process was completed by 850 students in autumn 2016.

Institutional-level **progression, retention and completion data** are generated annually. In addition to presentation to the HEA, the data are also considered by a number of committees, most notably the Executive Committee, and are used to inform the development of relevant policies and initiatives. One such initiative is the establishment of the SES Unit, which was created to help students transition to third level.

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

- The Kemmy Business School (KBS) at UL signed a dual degree agreement in July 2017 with HEC Liege in Belgium. The agreement is at postgraduate level and involves students from the MSc in Economics and Policy Analysis at UL and the Master of Economics at Liege. It involves students from both schools studying in UL for their first two semesters and then spending a semester at Liege and completing a jointly supervised dissertation.
- During the reporting period, memoranda of understanding (MOUs) were signed with the following institutions with a view to developing future collaborations:
 - March 2017 Lewis University, Illinois, USA
 - March 2017 Tunku Abdul Rahman, KL, Malaysia
 - March 2017 University of Economics, Ho Chi Minh City
 - April 2017 American University of Ras Al Khaimah, UAE
 - June 2017 UCSI University, KL, Malaysia
 - June 2017 Maasi Mara University, Kenya
 - June 2017 Fanshawe College, Ontario, Canada
 - July 2017 Stain Curup University, Indonesia
 - July 2017 American University of Beirut
- During the reporting period, an MOU resulting in a Joint Research Award was signed by UL and the University of Pavia, Lombard, Italy.
- During the reporting period, UL formally ceased its arrangement with IST College in Athens.
- Science Foundation Ireland – Campus Engage Discover Programme 2016: UL Engage was a collaborator with Campus Engage, DCU, DIT, NUIG, UCC and civic and civil society organisations on a successful funding application to SFI to provide a national programme on community engaged learning. The aim of the programme is to build capacity among higher educational staff, specifically STEM educators in engaged teaching and learning.
- As a result of collaboration between UL’s Centre for Teaching and Learning, the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, the Irish Network for the Enhancement of Writing (INEW), the Educational Developers in Ireland Network (EDIN) and UL’s HR Research section, the Regional Writing Centre at UL delivered six initiatives on writing and the teaching of writing to local, regional and national audiences.
- The Centre for Teaching and Learning has teamed with the HR Division in the [Collaborative Knowledge Exchange for Learning Impact](#) project funded by the National Forum and led by NIUG in collaboration with MIC and DCU. This 18-month project proposes to develop a flexible Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme to enable heads of department and middle management to ‘champion the digital’ and lead the enhancement of teaching and learning.
- During the reporting period, the Centre for Teaching and Learning collaborated with Hibernia College and Cork Institute of Technology in designing the [Teaching online](#) digital badge as part of the [Digital Badge](#) initiative led by the National Forum.
- The [Leaving Certificate Higher Level Mathematics Mature Student Programme](#) is a collaboration between the UL Maths Learning Centre, Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB) and UL Mature Student Office (MSO). This pilot course taught Leaving

Certificate honours mathematics to mature students over two sessions per week through the year. The initiative helps mature students who have previously struggled with the honours maths entry requirements of their programme.

- In May 2017, the UL-led [CONFIRM](#) Centre for Smart Manufacturing was chosen as one of four new world-class SFI-funded research centres. With significant funding pledged from industry, CONFIRM is a unique collaboration between eight Irish academic institutions and 45 industry partners.
- Community Wellness, Empowerment, Leadership and Life Skills (CWELL) is a two-year community-driven diploma programme that was developed in partnership between the community of St. Mary's parish, an under-served area of Limerick city, and staff of UL's Faculty of Education and Health Sciences. The overall aim of the programme is to build capacity in wellbeing, leadership and life skills within the local community. The first cohort of CWELL students graduated in September 2016. In June 2017, funding was awarded by Limerick City Council to further expand CWELL into two new areas in addition to St. Mary's community.
- The [Education Assistive Technology Centre](#) (EATC) was established at UL during the reporting period. The main aim of the assistive technology outreach programme is to increase the use of assistive technology supports by students with disabilities. Furthermore, the programme aims to increase the awareness of assistive technology supports among educational professionals (schools, teachers, educational psychologists, etc.) and the student support network (family members, etc.). EATC also supports the Shannon Consortium partners (i.e. UL, Limerick Institute of Technology, Mary Immaculate College and Institute of Technology Tralee) and develop new HEI customers and partnerships in the mid-west region.

3.3 A description of other implementation issues.

- [UL Practicum](#): The UL Practicum provides a means for academic staff to deliver their curriculum differently – in collaboration with community partners working on real-life projects. The UL Practicum enables students to achieve module learning outcomes via practical and applied experiential learning instead of, or in addition to, more traditional classroom-based pedagogies. Examples of UL Practicum projects are outlined below.
 - a. Launched in February 2017, [City Engage Limerick](#) is a collaborative project between Limerick City and County Council and the School of Architecture, University of Limerick (SAUL). The project entails a series of community engagement events to collect thoughts, hopes and opinions about living in Limerick and creating an accessible vision for the future of the city.
 - b. [Limerick Be Heard](#) is a collaborative project between Limerick Youth Service (LYS), Limerick Comhairle na nÓg and UL's Department of Politics and Public Administration. The project focuses on providing facilitated workshops and 'GE2016 Flashdebates' to explain the Irish electoral system and the stances of all political parties. The project was subsequently developed into a more general educational intervention designed to develop local citizenship and human rights awareness. In spring 2017, the young people from LYS and students from UL co-delivered the Limerick Be Heard 'Youth Engage Schools Roadshow' to five local schools. The project is now being expanded nationally and internationally.
 - c. The International 'Be Heard' Network was established in May 2017. As part of the IRC #Youth Engage project, UL Engage hosted international partners from UMass Boston, American University Beirut, ABF Sweden, IFWEA (International Federation of Workers' Education Associations) and ŽAK Malta to create an international network for engaged scholarship and research on global citizenship. Outcomes include new international modules, summer schools, exchanges and an IRC Caroline application with our international partners.

Part 3: Effectiveness and Impact

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

1. Effectiveness

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

- To assess the effectiveness of the quality review process as a quality assurance tool, the QSU conducted post-review feedback surveys with external quality reviewers. Surveys were conducted in November 2016 for support units and May 2017 for academic units. The response rate was over 90% for both surveys. All respondents considered the review process to be either a 'very effective' or 'effective' quality assurance tool. Particular strengths of the review process identified by the reviewers included the use of formalised quality management systems; the self-assessment process; the engagement by staff both prior to and during the review process; and the rigour, thoroughness and independence of the process. A number of recommendations for improvement were identified, including a review of stakeholder representation, a review of the content and structure of the self-assessment report and the site visit schedule and the dissemination of good practice arising from reviews. These recommendations will be implemented in the coming year with the modification of quality review guidelines for all units. The published surveys feedback report is available [here](#).
- In June 2017, the QSU commissioned an independent study to assess how the student voice at UL is captured in terms of systematic, institutional-level arrangements. Spread over two weeks, the exercise was undertaken by the outgoing president of UL Students' Union. A full report on the outcome will be presented to the VPA&R later in the year.
- During the reporting period, six units presented their initial response and proposed actions to the quality review recommendations (QRG reports) to the Governing Authority Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance (GASPQA) committee. This included four support units (Research – Sept '16, UL Sport – Feb '17, Plassey Campus Centre – Feb '17 and Office of the President – Apr '17) and two academic units (Nursing & Midwifery – Apr '17 and Clinical Therapies – June '17).
- Four units met with the VPA&R to report on the final outcome of their quality improvement plan implementation. These included three support units (Finance – Dec '16, International Education Division – Mar '17 and Research – March '17) and one academic unit (Graduate Entry Medical School – Feb '17).
- All central institutional quality assurance processes and systems (including quality reviews, external examiner process, student feedback systems, etc.) were undertaken as intended during the reporting period.

2. Impact

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

- The revised internal quality review guidelines (2016) places more emphasis on the post-review quality improvement plan implementation phase to maximise the impact of the review. A comparative analysis of the percentage of improvement plan actions fully implemented by units at the time of their implementation review meeting (approximately one year after the review) was undertaken. Units reviewed under the pre-2016 guidelines achieved, on average, full closure of 48% of action items by this stage of the process. For units reviewed under the new (post-2016) guidelines, this metric increased to 76%.
- Following the completion of cycle 2 quality reviews, surveys were conducted with heads of unit and quality team leaders of support units (December '16) and academic units (June '17). There was an aggregate response rate of 79%. All respondents either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the quality review process was beneficial to the department under review. Key themes emanating from the qualitative results on the strengths of the process include the level of support received during the review process, the benefits of the process to the units under review and the actual process itself. Suggested improvements include an overlap of the quality review aims with existing accreditation processes, stakeholder input into the process, the identification of a mechanism to keep a strong focus on quality between reviews and advice on completing the quality improvement plan following the site visit. Full survey reports are [published](#) on the QSU website and outline proposed actions for the coming year.
- During the reporting period, two support units had their quality management systems re-accredited to ISO9001:2015. The Human Resources Division was certified in May 2017 and the Information Technology Division (ITD) in June 2017. The certification is valid for a three-year period with annual interim audits.
- Benchmarking: Following the Plassey Campus Centre (PCC) quality review (June '16), the unit engaged in a benchmarking exercise with the University of Kent (the home university of one of the senior peers on the quality review group). Twelve members of management and staff from Kent spent two days at UL revising operating models in use at both universities and sharing key measures of success. The benchmarking exercise brought exceptional value in terms of understanding key performance indicators (KPIs) and identifying improvement needs. A strong working relationship has evolved between the two partner institutions, which facilitates the ongoing sharing of information.
- Following feedback from students, the Cooperative Education and Careers Division introduced a 'swipe card' system for the submission of cooperative education reports. The new online system makes operations more efficient and cumbersome manual interventions redundant.
- Following a review of UL's awards scheme for excellence in teaching, a new system was rolled out across the institution in 2016/17. In keeping with the stated aims, the new awards scheme, [UL Excellence in Teaching and Pedagogic Support Awards](#), now recognises teaching excellence with respect to three categories: (i) individual awards, (ii) team awards and (iii) award for excellence in the provision of pedagogic support.
- Following an internal review, the [Personal Advisor Support System](#) (PASS) was rolled out institutionally in September '16. The aim the PASS is to develop a network of concerned

lecturers with adequate resources to deal with the inevitable difficulties faced by students. Through this system, student/staff interaction is encouraged and promoted, which contributes significantly to the broader development of all concerned on campus. PASS has a theme-based approach over three semesters: each theme relates to important issues students typically encounter as they move through their learning experience. The themes for each semester are:

- **Semester 1:** *Successful Transitions* (Finding your place, independent and collaborative learning and living, making academic choices, becoming part of the successful UL student community)
- **Semester 2:** *Making Progress* (Interpreting your progress and strategies for improvement)
- **Semester 3:** *Year 2 Is Up to You!* (Applying your learning from Year 1. Preparing for co-op. Expectations and how to handle the workload. Focus on your degree and your future.)

3. Themes

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

Four academic units were reviewed during the reporting period. The four reviews gave rise to 98 commendations and 96 recommendations. Key themes emanating from the commendations included:

- Student learning and support (36%)
- Commitment and collaboration (32%)
- Research (18%)
- Mission/strategic planning (8%)
- Innovative teaching (4%)
- Staff development (2%)

Key themes emanating from the recommendations included:

- Student support (15%)
- Recruitment/staff planning (15%)
- Programme-related (14%)
- Research (10%)
- Strategic planning (9%)
- Facilities (8%)
- Student feedback (6%)
- Governance/mission (6%)
- Other (17%)

Because only one support unit was reviewed in the reporting period, it was not possible to analyse themes. However, the commendations included:

- Commitment and collaboration (34%)
- Process-related (25%)
- Other (continual improvement, communication, systems, etc.) (41%)

The recommendations included:

- Systems/Processes (29%)
- Staff development / succession planning (21%)
- Customer focus (21%)
- Metrics/KPIs (14%)
- Strategic Planning (14%)

Part 4: Quality Enhancement

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

4.1 Improvements and Enhancements for the Reporting Period

Improvements or enhancements, impacting on quality or quality assurance, that took place in the reporting period.

- UL seeks to complement and broaden the impact and application of its research and teaching beyond academic life through a cohesive knowledge transfer strategy closely aligned with its research and teaching missions. In September 2016, [UL Engage](#) delivered a schedule of training workshops for staff, students and community partners on community-engaged research and learning. Seventy-six academic staff attended eight UL Engage workshops.
- In Autumn 2016, the QSU introduced an annual operational planning policy and process document. The process is four-fold and includes: (i) the development of an annual operational plan by the QSU, with input from the VPA&R, who also approves the finalised plan; (ii) the operationalisation of the plan over the calendar year; (iii) the annual review of the plan and recording the extent to which each action item listed in the plan has been completed; and (iv) the generation of an annual performance review report, which reflects the unit's overall performance over the year.
- To enhance the student learning experience, the Information Technology Division upgraded 40 selected teaching and learning spaces with new IT equipment.
- UL's learning management system (Sulis) was upgraded over the summer period. The new version provides a number of new features to users, such as an enhanced user interface optimally rendered for mobile devices regardless of the device used. This version also includes an improved 'lessons tool', which provides more flexibility with a column-style layout and the ability to integrate third-party tools using the latest interoperability standard.
- A project was initiated in November 2016 to evaluate, develop and implement a sustainable student records system (SRS) solution that supports the successful operational development of UL's nine common entry programmes for the 2017/18 academic year. Stakeholders to the project include the SITS Steering Committee, Academic Registry, the four faculties, Cooperative Education and Careers Division, International Education Division, Student Affairs and the Information Technology Division.

4.2 Quality Enhancement Highlights

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

- A new [Information Health Hub](#) was developed in Limerick city by UL's Faculty of Education and Health Sciences in November 2016. The Health Hub allows community-based groups to access health programmes and support information for healthy living. The centre was designed to allow UL students to deliver programmes to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Limerick.
- In 2017, the UL Research Impact Podcast Series was launched. The series, which explores the contributions UL research is making in the real world, has been well received – the channel has consistently ranked number 2 in its iTunes category. The podcasts, 14 of which have been released to date, involve researchers across the spectrum of their career stages, from PhD students to professors. The series reach extends to five continents, including countries such as Kenya, Australia, Canada, USA, UK and India.
- As part of UL's commitments under [Broadening Horizons](#) and [Excellence and Impact 2020](#), an [International Collaborations Database](#) was established in 2017 as a resource available to all staff. The scope of the project focuses on collaboration types that relate to priority areas within our strategic plan. The collaboration types captured include joint publications, adjuncts (inbound and outbound), funding awards, PhD co-supervision, external examiners (inbound and outbound), joint programmes, hosted visitors (inbound and outbound), sabbatical, visiting professors/lecturers, partner universities and patents. The database will be renewed, expanded and further embedded within our research information systems so as to provide us with an invaluable resource to enable us to realise our internationalisation ambitions.
- UL's first annual Teaching Expo took place in March 2017. The event showcased some of the innovative teaching and learning practices across UL and provided a platform for formative discussions and professional development for all staff involved in pedagogic practice and support.
- UL was designated a [University of Sanctuary](#) in recognition of its initiatives to welcome asylum seekers and refugees into the university community. The award was officially presented by the Minister for Justice and Equality at a special ceremony to welcome 355 new Irish citizens on United Nations World Refugee Day (19 June 2017).
- Plassey Campus Centre (PCC) played a leading role on the national task force to assist the Government to develop a national strategy on student accommodation. In particular, PCC led the initiative to develop a low-cost finance solution via the national housing finance agency, which is now incorporated into the published [National Student Accommodation Policy](#).

Part 5: Objectives for the coming year

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

5.1 Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Plans

Plans for quality assurance and quality enhancement relating to strategic objectives for the next reporting period.

- Initiate preparations for the institutional quality review in 2020.
- Review national requirements and national/international best practice for collaborative and transnational provision.
- Review and document UL's compliance with the Code of Practice (International Learners) at postgraduate level.
- Review and document UL's compliance with European Guidelines for Validating Non-Formal and Informal Learning.
- Carry out an assessment of compliance exercise with Statutory Guidelines for the Quality Assurance of Research Degrees.
- Develop an annual quality report template and process for faculties.
- Revise the quality management system (QMS) for support units to remove 'quality jargon' and include a detailed implementation model.
- Develop a tailored QMS for smaller support units.
- Review quality review guidelines to ensure best alignment with ESGs and QQI Core Guidelines and to take into consideration recommendations arising from post-review surveys.
- Develop quality review guidelines for affiliate units to include governance overview.
- Work with the Information Technology Division to develop a virtual learning environment (VLE) for university surveys.
- The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) plans to pilot the two-week [transition module](#) (which looks at the differences between second-level and third-level education, expectation-setting, supports and services for new students, time management and approaches to the first assessment) with the faculties of Science and Engineering and Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.
- CTL to undertake a collaborative project with Campus Life Services to deliver the [transition module](#) to first-year students in residences. The SES Unit will provide training for nominated facilitators to enable the module to be more broadly disseminated.
- A schedule will be compiled by CTL for the delivery of professional development workshops for the [Teaching Online Digital Badge](#). There will also be a piloting stage for badge delivery.

5.2 Review Plans

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

- Review of the Centre for Teaching and Learning (March 2018)
- 90 programmes will be reviewed during the reporting period. Schedule available to faculties on SharePoint

5.3 Other Plans

- Review current practice at UL regarding policy deployment and create a discussion document for senior management.
- Document comprehensive guidelines for internal units for the post-review implementation phase of the quality review process, including an outline of best practice for project managing the implementation of the review recommendations.
- Develop an 'Annual Institutional Quality Report' process and template documentation for linked providers.
- Initiate annual dialogue meetings with linked providers.
- Circulate to relevant UL officers/offices for input/comment the 'Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines' and 'European Standards and Guidelines 2015' compliance documents, which have been initiated by the QSU.
- Document key themes emanating from Cycle 2 quality reviews.

Part 6: Periodic Review

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

6.1 The Institution and External Review

A description of the impacts of institutional review within the institution.

N/A

6.2 Self-Reflection on Quality Assurance

A short evaluative and reflective summary of the overall impact of quality assurance in the reporting period or, over a more extensive period, in the review.

N/A

6.3 Themes

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

N/A