

Table of Contents

PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD	2
2023-2024: THE YEAR IN NUMBERS	3
RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	6
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS & STUDENT LIFE	12
TEACHING & LEARNING EXCELLENCE	18
CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT & SUSTAINABILITY	21
OUTREACH, ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNITY INITIATIVES	24
EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION	26
INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT	29
GOVERNANCE & STRATEGY	31
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW 2023/24	37
LOOKING AHEAD: STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR 2030	39
APPENDIX A	40
APPENDIX B	42

PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

"Believe that a further shore is reachable from here."

—Seamus Heaney, *The Cure at Troy*

It is my great honour to contribute this foreword as the new President of Mary Immaculate College. While the privilege of leading the College through the 2023-2024 academic year was not mine, it is with deep admiration that I acknowledge and celebrate the outstanding accomplishments presented in this Annual Report. These achievements are the result of that sense of dedication, of collaboration, and of shared purpose that defines the spirit of MIC.

This year's report captures an extraordinary period in the life of the College: from the conferring of just over 2,000 graduates to significant achievements across all components of the research ecosystem, local, national, and international collaborations, and a wide range of impactful initiatives across teaching, engagement, inclusion, and infrastructure. The College's success in securing planning permission for a transformative new library, the further development of inclusive and international education pathways, and the affirmation of excellence through institutional and programme-level reviews are just a few of many notable highlights.

These achievements and outcomes reflect the exceptional leadership of my predecessor, Professor Eugene Wall, who retired in August 2024 after more than forty years of devoted service to MIC. Professor Wall's presidency was marked by strategic vision, steadfast commitment to social justice, and an unshakeable belief in the transformative power of education. Under his guidance, the College expanded its mission, strengthened its academic profile, and extended its influence nationally and globally. It is no exaggeration to say that we inherit a college made stronger, more confident, and more future-focused by his stewardship.

In accepting the torch, I do so in the knowledge that the path ahead is both inspiring and demanding. The challenges facing higher education are complex, but as this detailed report makes clear, MIC is more than equal to the task. Our community continues to demonstrate not only resilience, but courage, and imagination - qualities that are essential in charting the next stage of our shared journey.

I commend this Annual Report to you as a record of an institution that continues to thrive, to serve, and to lead with integrity.

Professor Dermot Nestor



President | Mary Immaculate College,

INTRODUCTION

The 2023-2024 academic year represented a truly extraordinary chapter in the distinguished history of Mary Immaculate College. As we celebrated our 125th anniversary, the College demonstrated once again why it stands as one of Ireland's leading institutions for education and the liberal arts, achieving remarkable milestones that underscore our enduring commitment to excellence, innovation, and social justice.

This anniversary year was marked by unprecedented achievements across every facet of our institutional mission. Our research community produced ground breaking work that garnered international recognition, from the most comprehensive study of Catholic education in Ireland since the foundation of the state to pioneering climate change education initiatives that will shape policy and practice nationwide. The conferring of just over 2,000 graduates in October 2023 represented not just individual achievement but collective testimony to the transformative power of education that has defined MIC for over a century.

Our commitment to academic excellence was powerfully affirmed through rigorous external review processes. The resoundingly positive findings of our institutional quality review panel, the successful reaccreditation of all eleven initial teacher education programmes by the Teaching Council, and the recognition of our research excellence through prestigious awards and fellowships all speak to the exceptional calibre of our academic community.

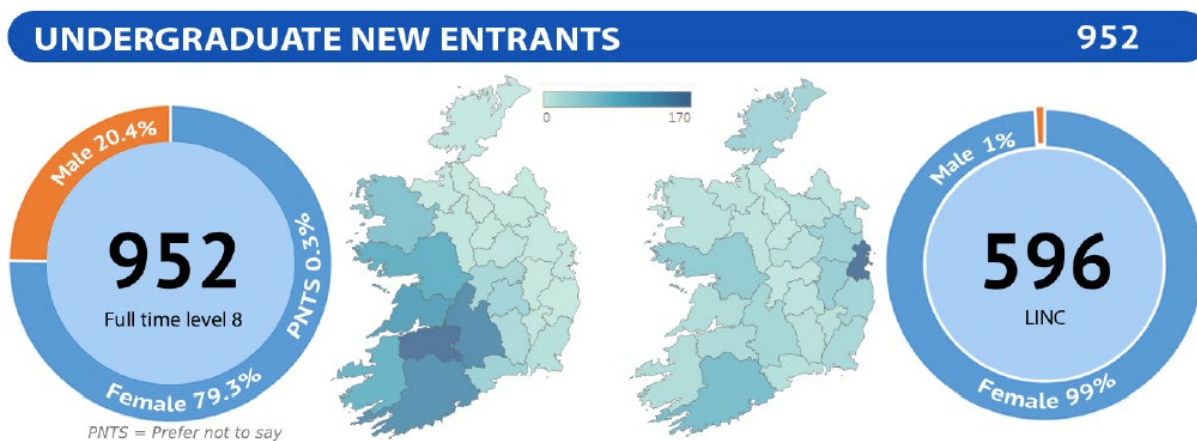
Infrastructure development reached new heights with the granting of planning permission for our transformative library project—a development that will serve as a beacon of learning for generations to come. The acquisition of additional sports facilities and the ongoing enhancement of both our Limerick and Thurles campuses demonstrate our commitment to providing world-class facilities for our growing student community.

Perhaps most significantly, this year saw the continued expansion of our impact beyond the campus gates. The launch of the National Centre for City Connects Ireland, our pioneering partnership with Boston College that brings evidence-based educational interventions to vulnerable communities, exemplifies our commitment to social justice in action. Our international partnerships flourished, from our collaboration with Brazilian educators through the CAPES programme to our deepening relationships with leading universities across the United States, Europe, and beyond.

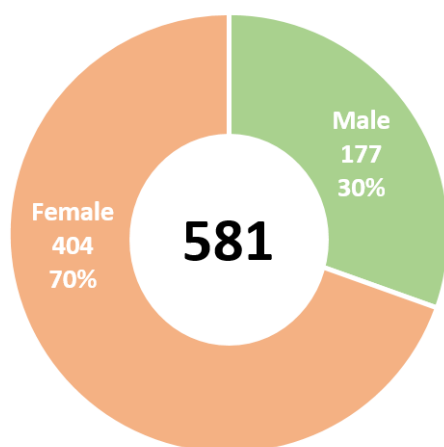
The achievements detailed throughout this report, whether in equality, diversity, and inclusion initiatives, international engagement, community outreach, or academic innovation, all reflect the dedication and excellence of our staff, students, and broader college community. They represent not just a celebration of our 125-year heritage, but a confident foundation for the exciting journey ahead.

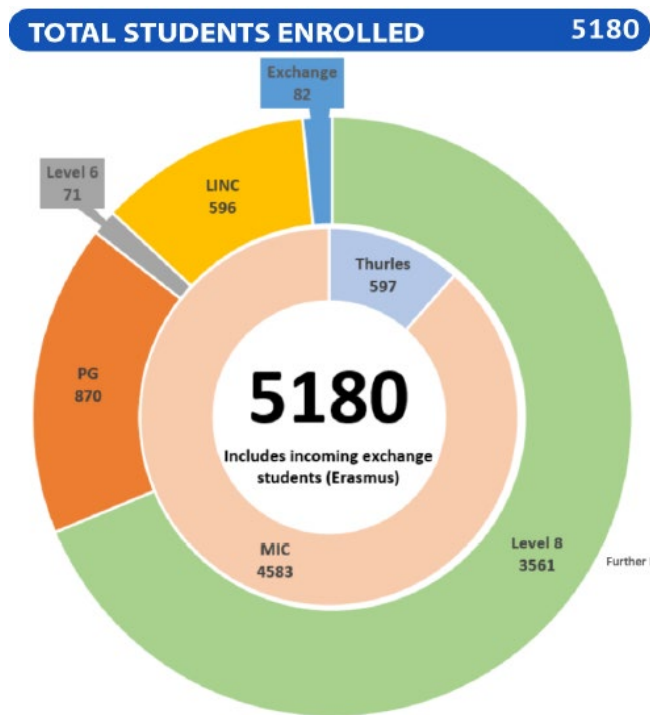
2023-2024: THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

Student Enrolment Numbers

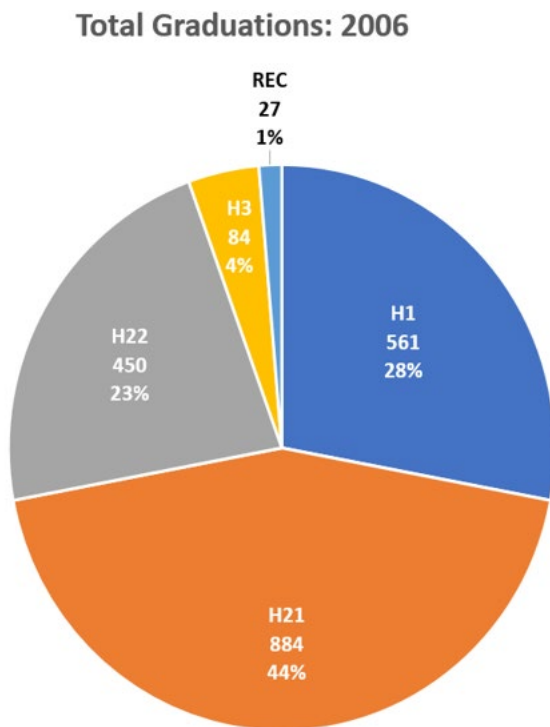


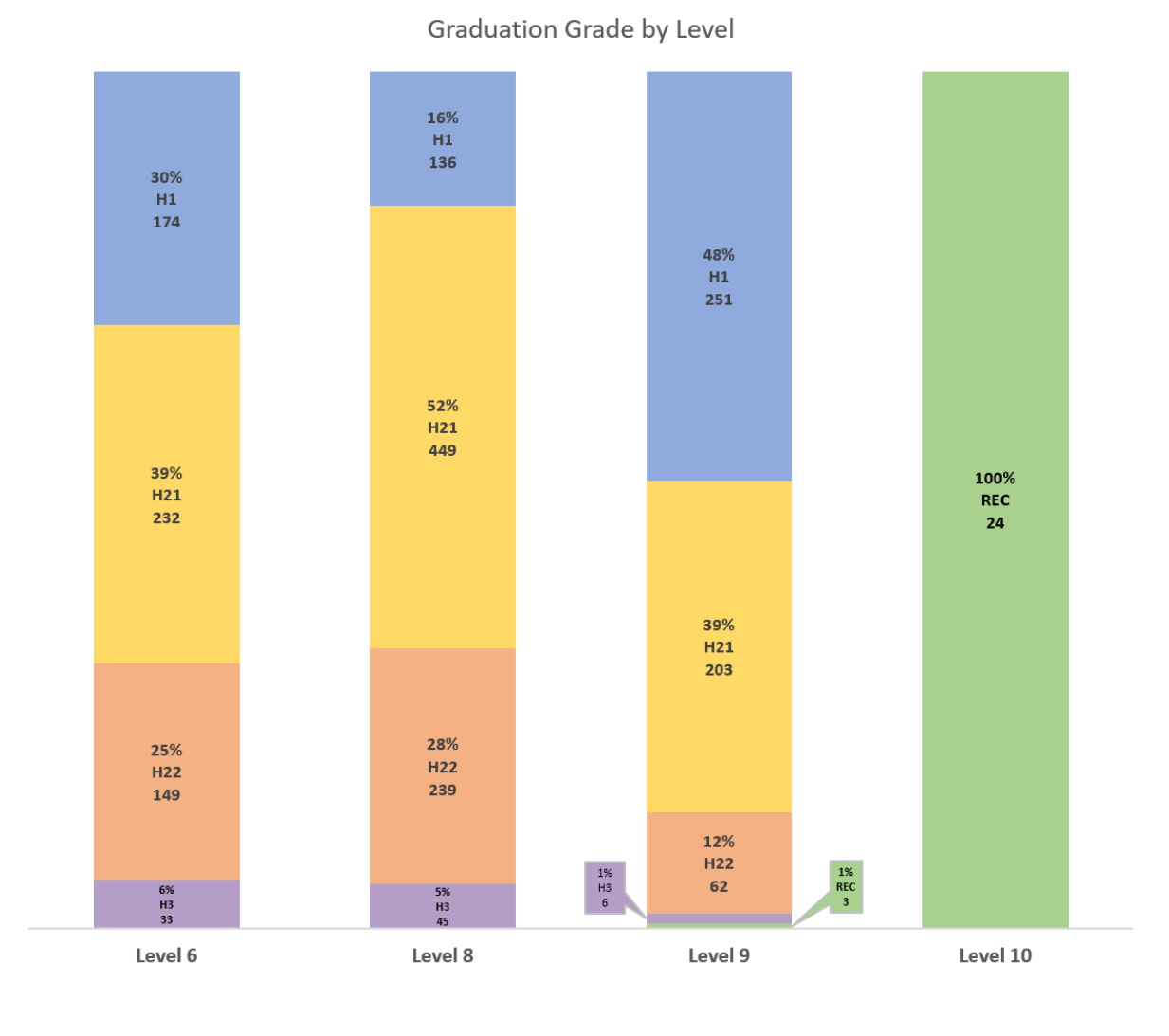
Total 1st Year PG Students (581)





Student Graduation Numbers





RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

Mary Immaculate College (MIC) continues to affirm its position as a research-performing institution of national and international standing, with a mission to generate knowledge that is transformative, engaged, and deeply rooted in the College's values of human dignity, educational excellence, and social justice. The academic year 2023–24 witnessed exceptional research productivity across all faculties, evidencing a strong scholarly culture and a maturing research infrastructure that supports sustained intellectual leadership.

A High-Performing Research Environment

Over the 2023–24 academic year, researchers at Mary Immaculate College produced more than 440 scholarly outputs, reflecting a vibrant, multidisciplinary research environment. These encompassed peer-reviewed journal articles, authored and edited monographs, scholarly book chapters, commissioned research reports, and presentations, all showcased through national and international academic fora. The outputs originated from both the Faculty of Education, the School of Education at Thurles and the Faculty of Arts. In the Faculty of Arts, for instance, peer-reviewed work appeared in journals such as *Geographical Journal* and *Electronic Journal of Combinatorics*, reflecting geography and mathematics research streams, while broader contributions included publications on Irish literature, Irish history, philosophical

inquiries into noise and consciousness, and musicology. Similarly, Education Faculty outputs covered domains from critical thinking and digital pedagogy to wellbeing, inclusive practice, STEM engagement, Universal Design for Learning, and teacher identity—demonstrating the interplay between professional practice and original scholarship. The full spectrum of research outputs is now available within the PURE, the leading CRIS database, and is fully searchable there and through the College's own CRIS, 'MIRIS,' which was developed during the reporting year.

This breadth across professional programmes, grounded in rigorous academic study, underscores MIC's dual role as a research-performing higher education institution and a generator of praxis-engaged knowledge, contributing substantively to academic advance, public discourse, and community-centric knowledge transfer.

MIC's research is distinguished by its **integration with professional academic networks**, with outputs appearing in high-quality, peer-reviewed journals such as *Irish Educational Studies*, *Pastoral Care in Education*, *Frontiers in Education*, *Research Studies in Music Education*, and *Religions*, among others. Substantial contributions were also made through policy-focused and commissioned reports that were peer-reviewed and disseminated through professional channels, including research commissioned by the NCCA, the Teaching Council, and networks such as SCoTENS.

Grounding Programmes in Research

A defining characteristic of MIC's academic identity is the close integration of research and teaching. Across initial teacher education, inclusive education, psychology, music, applied linguistics, and beyond, academic programmes are **grounded in original research and scholarly inquiry**. This scholarly integration ensures that MIC's professional and postgraduate programmes remain responsive, current, and critically informed.

Structured doctoral programmes (PhD, EdD, and research master's) continued to grow in strength, with a number of successful doctoral completions this year in areas such as inclusive pedagogy, mindfulness in education, wellbeing and leadership, critical digital literacies, and teacher professional learning. MIC's Research & Graduate School has played a central role in facilitating this development, providing researchers with ethics support, funding guidance, publication mentorship, and a robust environment for interdisciplinary collaboration.

Research for Public Good and Praxis

Beyond the academy, MIC researchers are committed to **the dissemination and transfer of knowledge to wider communities**. Research conducted at the College actively informs public policy, professional practice, and social understanding. Outputs such as the *Toolkit for Supporting Children in Care* and national studies on teacher wellbeing, the inclusion of neurodivergent learners, and the role of mindfulness in post-Catholic education demonstrate MIC's ability to produce research that is not only academically rigorous but also socially engaged and practice-based.

Scholarly work on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), inclusive assessment, and collaborative practices between classroom teachers and allied professionals is directly shaping school-level practices and teacher education frameworks. Similarly, MIC's arts and humanities research has extended its influence into cultural, historical, and linguistic domains, with outputs in corpus linguistics, gender studies, Irish identity, and music pedagogy contributing meaningfully to public discourse.

Catholic Education Research Initiative

Following the most comprehensive piece of research into the ethos of Catholic primary and secondary schools in Ireland since the foundation of the state, a series of reports (six), entitled *Identity and Ethos in Catholic Primary and Secondary Schools in Ireland: Exploring the Attitudes and Behaviours of Stakeholders*, was published on 23 April.

The body of research, which included feedback from 4,000 members of Boards of Management, Principals and Teachers in Catholic schools, was undertaken by a team of academic researchers, based at Mary Immaculate College (MIC) and the Mater Dei Centre for Catholic Education, as part of the Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education (GRACE) project, to establish a clear baseline and a set of signposts for the advancement of Catholic education at primary and secondary levels in the Republic of Ireland.

Over the course of three years, the research team explored the identity and ethos in Catholic primary and secondary schools in Ireland, examining the relationship between the stated policy regarding the Catholic identity of these schools and the lived reality within them.

American Conference for Irish Studies (ACIS) 2024

MIC welcomed over 350 delegates from Ireland and across the globe for the multidisciplinary American Conference for Irish Studies (ACIS) in June, in a coup for MIC as the event only takes place outside the United States every four years.

Patrick O'Donovan TD, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, officially opened the multidisciplinary event, which was a huge success. Plenary speakers included Paul Lynch, the Booker Prize-winning author of *Prophet Song*, and attendees also enjoyed 120+ parallel panels, nine book launches, a gala dinner, and complementary cultural activities.

Conference Topics

Topics under discussion included Gothic literature, crime fiction, the millennial novel, Northern Ireland, podcasts, the 1798 Rising, AIDS, motherhood, the legacy of mother and baby homes, the Irish in Argentina, mixed marriages, settler colonialism, Irish American propaganda, women's prison poetry, Irish dance, murals, capitalism, Brexit, protest art, Irish radio, climate change, photography of the famine and more.

ACIS 2024 was supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Limerick City & County Council and Fáilte Ireland.

The cross-faculty organising committee comprised Dr Richard Butler and Prof. Eugene O'Brien (conveners); Dr Deirdre Flynn, Dr Síle Ní Choincheannain, Dr John Morrissey, Dr AnneMarie Brosnan, and Professor Bill Leahy.

T-REX: The Teachers' Research Exchange

In October, MIC signed a contract for funding for the Teachers' Research Exchange (T-REX) project. T-REX is an online social network for practising teachers, student teachers, and higher education researchers to collaborate, learn, and share their work together. The project, led by Marie Ryan (Department of Reflective Pedagogy and Early Childhood Studies), and Marek McGann (Department of Psychology), is a collaboration with MIC as lead partners in a consortium including University of Limerick, University of Galway, Marino Institute of Technology, DCU Institute of Education, Education Support Centres of Ireland, and Oide (Leadership Division).

This new phase of research builds on two previous development phases and aims to scale up teacher involvement and engagement with T-REX to form a vibrant, active community of practice for education research in Ireland. Funded by the Department of Education, Teaching Council, and NCCA, the project has a two-year course with ambitious goals for greatly expanding membership and participation in the community.

International Recognition

On 22 November, Dr Marek McGann was invited to present on T-REX to an OECD workshop on innovative practice in collaboration between schools and universities. This was part of the European Commission's effort to support practice sharing and innovations in education internationally.

The T-REX Project entered a new phase with the appointment of a full-time T-REX National Coordinator. Interviews for the position took place in January, with a competitive field of highly qualified candidates. The National Coordinator took up their role in April.

Work also continued building relationships with national bodies and teacher research programmes around the country. The Project built an association with the national TL21 programme (Teaching & Learning in the 21st Century) which is run by Dr Anthony Malone in Maynooth, and webinars took place in March to staff at *Oide*, the national body for professional development for teachers and school leaders.

Network of Researchers in Catholic Education Conference

The 2023 annual conference of the Network of Researchers in Catholic Education (NfRCE) was held in MIC on October 19 and 20. This two-day international conference on the theme 'Fluidly Faithful? Catholic Education and the Institutional Church' saw delegates coming to MIC from Canada, Australia, the USA, Europe, the UK, and Ireland.

The Irish Institute for Catholic Studies jointly organised the conference with the Network for Researchers in Catholic Education (NfRCE) and the Catholic Association of Teachers, Schools and Colleges (CATSC). Four keynotes and 44 papers focused on various aspects of the complex and dynamic relationship between Catholic schools and the Institutional Church.

The conference set out to showcase and analyse critically the latest international research on the opportunities and challenges Catholic educators face in schools, universities, and colleges across the globe. It is estimated that 17.7% of the world's population is Catholic, and the Catholic Church is the largest educational provider in the world.

Keynote Speakers

- Professor Quentin Wodon, from UNESCO and formerly lead economist and lead poverty specialist with the World Bank, keynoted on Catholic Leadership in Africa
- Professor Roisín Coll, St Andrew's University Glasgow, on Catholic teacher education in Scotland
- Professor John Sullivan from Liverpool Hope University was presented with the NfRCE lifetime Catholic Research achievement award for his distinguished publication and research output on Catholic education
- Dr Aiveen Mullally from Marino Institute of Education and Patricia Kieran from MIC keynoted on their research on belief fluidity among initial teacher education students in Ireland

Revolutionising Education Through Play Conference

Mary Immaculate College (MIC) hosted the third edition of its international conference series focused on Revolutionising Education Through Play on 2 March.

Teachers' Professional Journeys: The First Decade

With an overall cost of €2.8 million, Teachers' Professional Journeys: The First Decade is Ireland's first longitudinal study of teachers. The study represents a commitment from the Department of Education and the Teaching Council to listen to the voices and experiences of teachers in a way that can shape and reshape future policy on teaching and teacher education.

The study is led by Professor Paul Conway (PI), University of Limerick, with Professor Aisling Leavy (Mary Immaculate College) and Professor Emer Smyth (Economic and Social Research Institute) acting as co-PIs. The research is also supported by two teams of Associate Researchers at Mary Immaculate College (Professor Déirdre Ní Chroinín, Dr Johanna Fitzgerald, Dr Mairead Hourigan) and the University of Limerick (Dr Antonio Calderon, Dr Aoife Neary, Dr Niamh O'Meara).

The innovative accelerated longitudinal design involves research with cohorts of graduates from initial teacher education (from the classes of 2019, 2022, 2025, and 2026), covering primary, post-primary, and further education. The Teaching Council and the Department of Education are funding the study. The study, which is due to be completed in 2030, will investigate the key personal, educational, professional, and systemic influences that define and shape teachers' early career experiences.

MIC Thurles Summer School

The MIC Thurles Summer School took place from 11-13 June with a very special focus of celebrating 20 years of the Ombudsman for Children's Office. The theme was how children's voices have changed the landscape of education and participation over the past two decades.

The three-day, on-campus event concentrated on conversations regarding the journey travelled, and yet to be travelled, in supporting diverse voices in our educational system. The event saw a host of national and international speakers and participants from a range of educational, civic, and other organisations.

Climate Change Education Research

MIC academic Dr Anne Dolan was awarded New Foundations funding by the Irish Research Council (IRC) to support her research and work in promoting climate change in teacher education at the post-primary level.

New Foundations funding awards are granted to projects or research that will reach communities across the country and beyond, focusing on diverse societal challenges and government policy issues. Dr Dolan's funding was awarded by the IRC in partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs (Irish Aid) and the Department of Education under a funding strand dedicated to education for global citizenship and sustainable development.

Project Objectives

Dr Dolan's project, supporting climate change education in post-primary schools through the development of a community of practice, aims primarily to develop a network of educators working in post-primary teacher education, which can research the opportunities and obstacles for integrating climate change education in post-primary schools in Ireland and to disseminate findings from this research.

Director of Research at MIC, Dr Richard Butler, commented: "On behalf of the Research & Graduate School and the community of researchers at Mary Immaculate College, I would like to congratulate Dr Anne Dolan for securing this prestigious Irish Research Council New Foundations award. It will showcase some of the most exciting research work currently being undertaken at MIC on the issue of climate change education."

67 projects nationwide were awarded New Foundations funding by the IRC this year. Director of the Irish Research Council, Dr Louise Callinan, noted: "The collaboration between researchers and policymakers represented in these awards aligns with the ambitions of Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy to strengthen evidence-based policymaking and deliver enhanced outcomes for citizens and society."

Pathways Funding Award

Congratulations to MIC academic Dr Ailbhe McDaid, who was awarded over €500,000 by the Irish Research Council (IRC) and Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) in late June.

Dr McDaid, who is an Assistant Professor in MIC's Department of English Language and Literature, was awarded the prestigious funding under the IRC-SFI Pathways Fellowship, which supports excellent early career researchers from all disciplines towards becoming research leaders of the future.

The €590,000 funding was awarded to Pathologies of Violence: Inscriptions of Global Conflict in Irish Literature 1922-present (PATHOS), a new research project led by Dr McDaid. PATHOS will document the development of global ethical citizenship in recent Irish writing, situating Irish literature in a global context by considering how international crises reach Irish shores.

Royal Irish Academy Recognition

Heartiest congratulations to Dr Christiane Schönfeld who became the first MIC academic to be appointed to the prestigious Royal Irish Academy. She was recognised for her exceptional contribution to the humanities and research.

Dr Schönfeld was one of 28 academics admitted to the Academy at a special ceremony in Dublin on 24 May.

Appointed as Head of Department in 2009, she published widely on German literature, creative women, and marginalised individuals such as prostitutes or exiles, including monographs on the representation of the prostitute in German Expressionism, and on the History of German Literature on Film. She was an initiator and co-founder of the Irish Centre for Transnational Studies at MIC and co-edited the works of one of the most influential playwrights of the Weimar Republic—the anti-fascist and exile, Ernst Toller.

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS & STUDENT LIFE

Student Engagement, Success, and Achievement

From September 2023 to August 2024, Mary Immaculate College continued to demonstrate excellence in student engagement, success, and holistic development. With over 5,000 enrolled students and one of the highest retention rates in Ireland (>95%), the College created a dynamic, inclusive, and empowering educational environment. This year's achievements, spanning academic performance, cultural contribution, civic engagement, and athletic excellence, reflected MIC's commitment to student-centred learning, recognition, and institutional transformation.

Academic Engagement and Pedagogical Quality

MIC's commitment to academic excellence was reaffirmed in 2023–2024 through multiple institutional milestones. The Bachelor of Education programme received full reaccreditation from the Teaching Council, with reviewers praising the programme's spiral curriculum, strong emphasis on reflective practice, integration of pastoral care, and orientation toward social justice and inclusion.

MIC's postgraduate provision saw measurable growth, with interest in graduate study increasing by 5.4% at master's level (over 550 referrals) and 8% at doctoral level (over 3,000 referrals and 500+ enquiries). At the Spring 2024 conferring ceremonies, 24 doctoral and professional doctorates were awarded, marking a significant increase in graduate research outputs and supporting MIC's ambition to deepen its research culture.

Graduation and Awards Excellence

October 2023 saw almost 2,000 graduates conferred with academic awards across the College's 50+ undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Education and the Liberal Arts.

Excellence at the 2024 Conferring Ceremonies

MIC celebrated the outstanding achievements of its student body through prestigious awards at the 2024 conferring events. Gold Medals were awarded to:

- **Hannah O'Driscoll** (B.Ed Primary Teaching): also received the Peadar Cremin Fellowship, Bonn Vere Foster Award, and certificate for excellence in Music Education
- **Sarah Ryan-Purcell** (B.Ed & Psychology): recipient of the Diocese of Limerick Medal and West Chester University Scholarship

- **Chloe Troy** (BA Education, Business & Accounting): recipient of the TUI Medal and ASTI award
- **Jenny Bent** (PME): awarded the Vere Foster Medal and top dissertation prize
- **Áine Gleeson, Aisling Knox, Megan O'Sullivan, and Callum McGeary** also received faculty gold medals for top results in Arts and ECCE programmes

These awards reflected academic excellence, commitment to professional practice, and high achievement across MIC's faculties.

Annual College Awards

The MIC Annual College Awards took place on 29 November in the Lime Tree Theatre, acknowledging and celebrating the academic, sporting, and other notable achievements of over 100 students, graduates, and alumni, with almost €600,000 being presented in scholarships, awards, and bursaries.

Other highlights of the night included the Alumni Awards, with four remarkable alumni being recognised for their various contributions to society:

- **Petula Martyn**, RTÉ multi-media journalist and presenter
- **Tómas Ó Sé**, five-time All-Ireland Kerry footballer, sports media pundit and primary school principal
- **Miriam Keegan**, sustainable fashion educator and designer
- **Declan Hannon**, Captain of Limerick's All-Ireland hurling team

Alumni Reunion

MIC welcomed back over 150 graduates to the MIC Limerick campus on 7 October for the annual Alumni Reunion. Graduates from classes as recent as 2018 and as far back as 1958 participated.

Ashling Murphy Memorial Scholarship

The MIC College awards ceremony saw the emotional presentation of the inaugural Ashling Murphy Memorial Entrance Scholarship, presented in Ashling's memory to First Year primary teaching students, Catherine Joyce and Róisín Ni Chonchuir. The two talented young musicians opened the ceremony with a performance and were presented with the scholarships by the President and Dorothy McGinley, President of the INTO. This scholarship is jointly awarded by Mary Immaculate College and the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) to the amount of €4,000, which will be a bursary awarded to a first year Bachelor of Education student for their exceptional achievement (solo, ensemble and in the community) and talent in the field of traditional Irish music.

Institutional Investment in Recognition

In total, over €600,000 was awarded in 2023–2024 through scholarships, prizes, and bursaries, reinforcing MIC's support for talent, inclusion, and holistic achievement:

- **Entrance Scholarships:** 47 first-year students awarded €2,000 based on Leaving Certificate results

- **Camogie 120 Bursaries:** €5,000/year (4-year award) supporting teaching students engaged in sport
- **Foundation Awards for Excellence:** Five students recognised for leadership in music, sport, and public engagement
- **University of Sanctuary Scholarships** (December 2023): Supported two postgraduate students from migrant backgrounds with full fees and a €3,000 stipend

Sports Achievements and GAA Excellence

Student Outstanding Achievement of the Year

The **Student Outstanding Achievement of the Year** was awarded to **Adam Hogan**, third-year BA student and Clare hurler. In 2024, Hogan achieved remarkable success across multiple competitions:

- Won the **Fitzgibbon Cup** with MIC
- Captured **All-Ireland** and **National League** titles with Clare
- Led Feakle to the **Clare Senior Championship**
- Was named **GPA Young Hurler of the Year**

This award underscored the College's commitment to the dual career model and recognition of holistic achievement.

Sports Scholarships and Support

- **Nine Munster GAA bursaries** (€750 each) were awarded to top-performing athletes
- **Elite Sports Scholarships** were conferred on athletes competing at national level, including Anna Horan, Aoife Dillane, and Cian Scully
- **MIC–GPA Scholarships** (€4,000 each) supported postgraduate athletes Diarmuid Ryan and Niamh Murphy

Fitzgibbon Cup 2024

One of Higher Education GAA's premier titles, the Fitzgibbon Cup, returned to MIC for the third time after our senior hurling team defeated reigning champions, the University of Limerick, on 17 February.

The College celebrated the achievements of the squad and management team, led by MIC Alumnus and former Cork hurler, Jamie Wall, with a Celebratory Gala Dinner at the Limerick Strand Hotel in Limerick on Monday, 11 March. An Tánaiste, Micheál Martin TD, was the special guest on the night and presented the winning team with their Fitzgibbon Cup medals, following a speech where he emphasised that aspiring to play and win in third-level sport is "a precious jewel in the college experience".

MIC Gaelic Games Club Launch

The MIC Gaelic Games Club was launched on 22 April by the President of the GAA, Jarlath Burns, in an event attended by over 80 MIC staff, students, sports coaches and representatives from a variety of Gaelic Games organisations and clubs from across Munster.

The MIC Munster GAA Centre of Excellence for Child Coaching and Gaelic Games Promotion was founded in 2023, and the establishment of a GAA club is one of its foundational

objectives. The new club is intended to create an overarching umbrella that will unite all four codes: Hurling, Gaelic Football, Camogie and Ladies Football; foster a sense of community; focus on student involvement and empowerment, and have a strong emphasis on inclusion and diversity.

As part of the launch, Ger Ryan, Munster GAA Chairperson, presented MIC Fourth Year Bachelor of Education students with Certificates of completion of the Gaelic Games Leadership programme. As part of this initiative, the 17 students, who were awarded certificates, organised a recent Gaelic Games Blitz for local primary schools on campus.

Cultural, Civic, and Inclusion Recognition

MIC recognised students who demonstrated leadership in culture, global citizenship, and social inclusion through various awards and initiatives:

Awards and Recognition

- **CRAOL Gold Award:** MA graduate Nasratullah Taban and alumni were honoured for a radio documentary on girls' education in Afghanistan
- **EDII Student Project Awards** (Spring 2024): Ranging from €500 to €5,000, these supported student-led equity and inclusion initiatives, such as STEM outreach to Traveller families and multilingual education projects
- **LINC Conferring** (October 2023): 537 graduates from the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years programme were celebrated for advancing inclusive practice in Ireland's ECCE sector

Events, Engagement, and Enrichment

- **Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival:** MIC hosted over 12 events in March–April 2024, including lectures, arts workshops, and family-friendly science sessions
- **Culture Night** (September 2023): MIC's Limerick and Thurles campuses staged concerts, heritage events, and drama performances celebrating Irish culture and student creativity
- **Student Experience Days** (Spring 2024): Hosted in-person engagement events for prospective students, with SU panels, campus tours, and faculty taster sessions
- **Wired FM:** 120+ students produced weekly live broadcasts, supporting creativity, community engagement, and experiential learning

Student Awards for Community Service

At a special awards ceremony on 17 April, 20 MIC students were commended for their valuable contributions to their community through voluntary tutoring of primary and post-primary students, and supporting the parents of migrant children in engaging with their child's learning.

Four current undergraduates volunteered on a pilot programme of learning support for recently-arrived migrant families from January to April and delivered the initiative with *Scoil Mháthair Dé* students in LCETB's O'Connell Avenue campus in Limerick City.

The programme aimed to provide children who are displaced from their home countries, and who are newcomers to the Irish education system, with the opportunity to gain support in their learning and achievement in schools through personalised homework support. The project coordinator, MIC Lecturer, Santhi Corcoran, developed a family learning model in collaboration with EAL team coordinator Simon Ratcliffe, in LCETB, which also supported parents and older family members in gaining English language skills, advice, information and guidance in accessing opportunities and pathways in local education institutions and programmes.

Also commended were 16 MIC students and graduates from the College's post-primary programmes based at the MIC Thurles campus who prepared and delivered weekly classes supporting Leaving Certificate students in Maths, Irish and Business Studies in 2021 and 2022, which formed the basis for the Family Learning Project.

Strategic Alignment and Future Outlook

Student achievement in 2023–2024 directly supported MIC's strategic priorities:

- **Retention and progression:** Awards and recognition structures supported engagement and motivation
- **Graduate success and visibility:** Postgraduate scholarships, alumni awards, and national media coverage raised MIC's profile
- **Equity and access:** Inclusion-focused awards and Sanctuary Scholarships strengthened MIC's commitment to the SDGs
- **Community impact:** Through civic awards, cultural events, and service learning, students contributed meaningfully to public life

Student success at MIC is not only measured in grades, but in contribution, resilience, and voice. In every classroom, community, and competition, MIC students are forging futures that matter.

Programme Developments

Home Economics Programme Launch

The new programme at MIC Thurles, BA in Education, Home Economics and Business, was launched in September 2023 by Minister for Education, Norma Foley. This new development was agreed upon by the College and the Department of Education in June 2022. At the time, the Department of Education requested a September 2024 start date but subsequently returned to seek a September 2023 commencement.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Tipperary ETB allowed the programme to progress with access made available to culinary and textile facilities on their nearby Archerstown premises. The programme currently has restricted access to an enrolment of 15 students per annum. To support greater diversity in the teaching profession, of those 15 places, five are reserved for mature and QQI graduates. The CAO records for 2023 revealed very strong demand for the programme with over 400 mentions, with 123 first preferences registered.

CAO Results 2024

The CAO Round 1 offers for 2024 were made on 28 August, and MIC had two of the education programmes with the highest points in the country. The B Ed in Education and Psychology

(MI008) degree, the only one of its kind in Ireland, not only remains a highly sought-after programme attracting the highest calibre of applicant but the 2024 CAO minimum points requirement of 590 makes it, along with MIC's Bachelor of Education—International (MI004), the teacher education programme with the highest points in the country. The minimum points requirement for the B Ed—International was 565.

Other programme highlights included:

- **B Ed Primary Teaching (MI005):** 488 points (down from 497 in 2023)
- **Gaeltacht students (MI006):** 451 points
- **BA in Education, Home Economics, and Business Studies (MI022):** 531 points (up from 509 in 2023)
- **BA in English Language and Literature (MI009):** 387 points (only programme of its kind in Ireland)
- **BA in Drama and English (MI010):** 378 points (only programme of its type in Munster)

Early Childhood Education Celebration

In November, a celebratory event was held to mark 20 years of the Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education and Care (BA ECCE) at the College.

MIC Ability Pathways Project: Mapping Inclusive Futures

MIC was recently awarded €626,000 to launch the MIC Ability Pathway (MAP) Project under the Path 4-Phase 2 funding initiative from the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The project is being led by Dr Orla Slattery.

The MAP Project aims to map inclusive futures for, and with, people with intellectual disabilities (ID) and to provide a pathway to meaningful community engagement in an inclusive third-level environment which has an established history of educational excellence and community inclusion. It will achieve this by creating a programme which will provide:

1. The educational foundation through the Certificate in General Learning and Personal Development (CGLPD), which is a two-year fully-accredited Level 4 QQI award
2. An additional transitioning programme which will enable learners to become active members of their communities and fulfil their personal life goals and ambitions by transiting to further education and training and/or employment

The CGLPD encompasses eight distinct modules, which have been designed to support the holistic development of learners with ID and is underpinned throughout by the UDL framework. The project will culminate in a multi-stakeholder project evaluation that will harness the voices of all key stakeholders by producing empirical research based on qualitative and quantitative data collection from all project participants, including the learners, their families and community stakeholders.

Leadership for INClusion in the Early Years Programme

The Leadership for INClusion in the Early Years (LINC) Consortium led by MIC and including Early Childhood Ireland and Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education—Maynooth University was invited by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability,

Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to extend enrolment of students on the LINC programme for another academic year from 2024/2025.

To date, from the initial establishment of the LINC programme in 2016, there have been 5,153 graduates, and from 2020, in excess of 2,000 students have completed the LINC+ CPD Programme. The LINC programme contributes significantly to the number of students in the Faculty of Education, which is now at 3,818, inclusive of LINC students.

Final Evaluation Launch

The final evaluation of Phase One of the LINC programme was launched in June 2024. The evaluation builds on the Interim Evaluation of the LINC Programme published in 2019. The Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) Programme Consortium, comprising MIC, Early Childhood Ireland and Maynooth University—The Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education hosted the Launch of the Final Evaluation of Phase One of the Leadership for Inclusion in Early Years (LINC) Programme 2016-2020 on June 6 2024.

The report reaffirms the programme's profound impact, underlining its crucial role in equipping Inclusion Coordinators (INCOs) with the knowledge and skills necessary to create inclusive environments where all children can thrive.

Teresa Heeney, CEO of Early Childhood Ireland, praised the LINC Programme, stating that it "has elevated professional development for educators" in the ELC sector and that countless children across Ireland now benefit.

The LINC Consortium was nominated in the Best Marketing/Communications Team, Best Online Learning Experience and Best Research Project categories at the Education Awards.

TEACHING & LEARNING EXCELLENCE

CEIM Programme Accreditation

All initial teacher education programmes at MIC were reviewed by the Teaching Council with reference to [Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education](#), published by the Teaching Council in October 2020. This review followed an intensive period of consultation by the Teaching Council with all ITE providers from October 2019. From October 2020 to April 2023, the Faculty of Education prepared the documentation for submission of the 11 programmes listed below to the Teaching Council. The process was underpinned by the core values of consultation, collaboration, collegiality, participation and democracy and a commitment to data collection and analysis in the faculty's endeavours to identify opportunities beyond compliance during the re-accreditation process.

[Faculty of Education's Eleven Initial Teacher Education Programmes Submitted to the Teaching Council:](#)

Programme Title

Bachelor of Education (B Ed)

Programme Title

B Ed International

B Ed in Education and Psychology

Professional Master of Education (Primary Teaching)

BA in Education, Business Studies and Accounting

BA in Education, Business Studies and Religious Studies

BA in Education, Gaeilge and Business Studies

BA in Education, Gaeilge and Religious Studies

BA in Education, Mathematics and Gaeilge

BA in Education, Mathematics and Business Studies

BA in Education, Home Economics and Business Studies (Commencing AY 23/24)

Review Panel Visit and Outcomes

As the Final Phase in the reaccreditation process, a Review Panel from the Teaching Council visited MIC Limerick and MIC Thurles on 22 and 23 October. Colleagues across the Faculty met with and presented to the panel. The panel also invited contributions from graduates, current students and former principals. At the end of the visit, the Review Panel members communicated their appreciation for the warm welcome, the comprehensive documentation they received and the professionalism of all colleagues they met during their visits.

Following the visit of the Teaching Council (TC) Review Panel to MIC Limerick and MIC Thurles on 23 and 24 October regarding the accreditation of MIC's 11 initial teacher education (ITE) programmes, the TC Review Panel's reports were received by MIC on 13 December 2023.

The TC Review Panel captured the essence of each of the programmes in a comprehensive, rigorous, meticulous and authentic manner. Specifically, the TC Review Panel noted "the deep commitment of the staff to providing high quality Initial Teacher Education in MIC" and acknowledged "the openness and rigour with which MIC, Limerick used the accreditation process to reflect, review, and reimagine their original conceptual framework to ensure that the overall programme structure and design fully aligns with the 'Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education'."

The 11 ITE programmes being delivered at MIC Limerick and MIC Thurles met all of the criteria set out in the Teaching Council's document: Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education to the highest level of excellence. The Teaching Council informed the College that re-accreditation would be granted provided the non-compliance with the TC's staff::student ratio of 1::15 in the affected programmes was rectified within six months.

Staff-Student Ratio

Regarding the primary programmes (B Ed/B Ed in Education & Psychology and PME), a key compliance criterion related to the staff::student ratio. The College submitted a detailed recruitment plan to the HEA regarding a phased staffing expansion and following completion of funding arrangements a 15:1 ratio is now in operation.

Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology (DECPsy)

Memoranda of Agreement with the HSE and the National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS) were in various stages of completion. As per the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

with the HSE, which was in place for three cohorts of trainees (2023-26, 2024-27, 2025-28), seven funded places were agreed for AY 2024-25. The HSE covered 60% of the fees and provided a salary of approximately €41,000 to trainees. The MOA with NEPS covered one cohort of trainees (2023-26). Funding arrangements for AY 2024/25 had yet to be agreed with NEPS, and a meeting was scheduled to clarify bursary arrangements for AY 2024/25 and to highlight the need for longer-term planning.

The majority of Year 2 and Year 3 trainees availed of a bursary of €30,000/year from NEPS commencing January 2023. MOAs were in place with NEPS for these cohorts.

Ten DECPsy trainees graduated at the MIC Graduation Ceremony on Friday, 27 October.

Curriculum Development and NCCA Consultation

As part of the redevelopment of the Primary School Curriculum, NCCA launched the consultation process for five areas: Arts Education; Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in the Primary Language Curriculum; Social and Environmental Education (SEE); Science, Technology and Engineering Education (STE); and Wellbeing.

The consultation process included several components, including written submissions, questionnaires, and focus group events. The redeveloped Primary School Curriculum had significant implications for Initial Teacher Education (outside of Céim). The Faculty of Education worked on the completion of the written submission for each of the five areas. As part of this preparation, a briefing morning on the new curriculum specifications was organised on Wednesday, 27 March.

Most importantly, the briefing sessions were facilitated by Faculty members who led, or were key specialists on, four of the curriculum development groups:

- **Science, Technology and Engineering Education (STE):** Prof. Aisling Leavy
- **Social and Environmental Education (SEE):** Dr Anne Dolan
- **Arts Education:** Dr Ailbhe Kenny & Dr Dorothy Morrissey
- **Wellbeing:** Dr Richard Bowles, Dr Gerard Farrelly & Dr Margaret Nohilly

DELTA Awards Recognition

A Physical Education Teacher Education Team at MIC was one of four teams nationally to be honoured for their "remarkable contributions" by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) at the Disciplinary Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment (DELTA) Awards on 29 May.

The ceremony celebrated outstanding achievements in teaching, learning, and assessment by teams from higher education institutions across Ireland. The MIC staff team was introduced by Dr Katherine Whitehurst, Director of Teaching and Learning at the LEAD Centre, at the event. The team was led by Dr Michelle Dillon and included Professor Déirdre Ní Chróinín, Dr Richard Bowles, Dr Niamh Kitching, Laura Harrison and Dr Rosemarie Martin together with postgraduate research students Grace Cardiff and Gráinne Regan, and undergraduate students Rachel Dwyer and Emma Tarrant.

On 25 April, MIC was awarded two prestigious Education Awards in recognition of excellence in the areas of Diversity, Inclusion and Equality and in Community Academic Collaboration.

MIC and the Middletown Centre for Autism were jointly awarded the Best Community Academic Collaboration Award for their well-established partnership on the delivery of the Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma and the MA in Autism Studies.

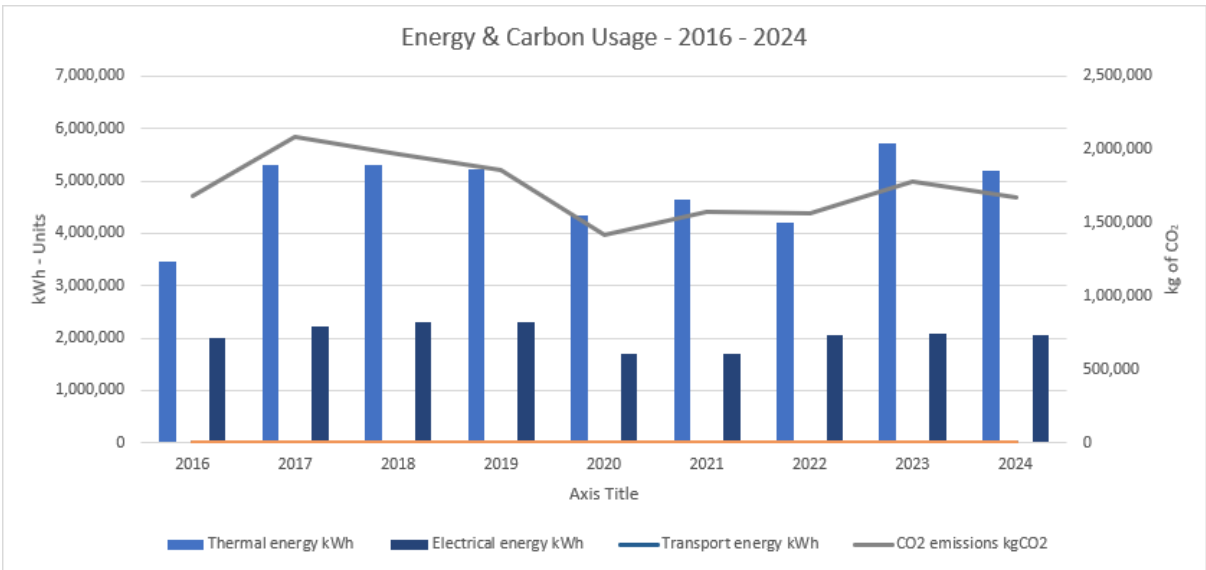
CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

Climate Action and Sustainability

Mary Immaculate College made significant strides in advancing its climate action and sustainability agenda during the 2023/24 academic year, demonstrating leadership in addressing one of the defining challenges of our time. Our commitment to environmental stewardship aligns with our institutional mission and values, while fulfilling our obligations under the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate.

Climate Action Performance

Exceptional progress was made in our decarbonisation efforts during 2023/24. The College achieved a reduction in emissions of 113,038 kg CO₂, successfully avoiding displacement of over 113 tonnes of carbon emissions to the atmosphere. This significant achievement represents both our institutional commitment to climate action and the collective efforts of our campus community.



Source: SEAI Monitoring Report for MIC, 2024

Our primary energy usage reduced across all energy types, with thermal energy (gas and kerosene) decreasing by 532,720 kWh, electrical usage reducing by 44,833 kWh, and transport emissions falling by 64 kWh. These reductions yielded both environmental and financial benefits, with the College saving almost €60,000 (€59,608) in energy costs during the year.

Since establishing our baseline in 2018, MIC achieved an 18.4% reduction in total emissions, demonstrating steady progress toward our 2030 target. Our baseline emissions of 1,913,671.5 kgCO₂ were reduced to 1,560,751.2 kgCO₂, with particularly impressive reductions in electricity-related emissions, which decreased by 75% within the overall reduction.

Building Energy Performance

The College's commitment to energy efficiency was reflected in our improved Building Energy Rating (BER) certifications. Our Thurles campus achieved a remarkable improvement, advancing from a B2 rating in 2023 to B1 in 2024, with CO₂ emissions reducing by 21% from 38.59 kgCO₂/m² to 30.46 kgCO₂/m². This achievement was particularly noteworthy given the age of our building stock and reflected the dedicated efforts of our Green Campus Committee at Thurles.

Our Limerick campus maintained its C3 rating while achieving a slight reduction in emissions to 61.66 kgCO₂/m² from 63.87 kgCO₂/m² in the previous year. Given the challenges of maintaining ratings for older building stock, this represented a positive outcome and demonstrated our ongoing commitment to energy efficiency across all campuses.

Climate Action Roadmap 2030

MIC's Climate Action Roadmap 2030 (CAR/MIC 2030) represents our comprehensive response to the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate's call for leadership in climate action. The roadmap establishes six thematic categories that guide our sustainability efforts:

1. **An Emissions-First Focus:** Prioritising direct reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
2. **Institutional Ethos:** Embedding sustainability in our mission and values
3. **Innovation in Teaching & Learning:** Integrating climate education across curricula
4. **Research & Knowledge-Sharing:** Advancing sustainability research and dissemination
5. **Partnership & Stakeholder Mobilisation:** Collaborative approaches to climate action
6. **Leadership & Governance:** Ensuring accountability and strategic direction

Our main deliverable is a 64% reduction from the College's baseline GHGs (inclusive of SCOPE 2 electricity usage) to 679,458.3 kg CO₂ by 2030, and we remained steadfastly committed to achieving this ambitious target.

Renewable Energy and Infrastructure

The College prioritised the transition to renewable energy sources as a cornerstone of our sustainability strategy. Key initiatives included a target to install 50 kW of additional solar PV panels by Autumn 2025, alongside feasibility studies for geothermal heating systems to replace fossil fuel-dependent infrastructure.

Our deep retrofit programme, commencing in 2025 with the library project, will reconstitute the library footprint to Nearly Zero Energy Building (NZEB) standards. This project exemplifies our commitment to transforming our built environment while preserving our heritage buildings.

Education for Sustainable Development

As a College of Education and the Liberal Arts, MIC recognised our unique responsibility to educate future generations about climate change and sustainability. We integrated Education

for Sustainable Development (ESD) across our teacher education programmes, ensuring that our graduates were equipped to embed environmental literacy in schools.

The College set a target to bring a minimum of 15% of all modules across our provision into alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, utilising the STARS Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System. This ambitious goal reflected our commitment to producing graduates who are climate-literate and prepared to lead sustainable, ethical lives.

Sustainable Campus Operations

Beyond our core emissions reduction efforts, MIC implemented comprehensive sustainability initiatives across campus operations. Our waste segregation programme successfully replaced single-use 'black-bag' bins with recycling facilities throughout campus, while our 'no-plastic' campus initiative eliminated single-use plastics from College operations.

The College invested in sustainable transport infrastructure, including expanded secure bicycle parking and water-managed shower facilities to encourage active commuting, alongside collaboration with TFI Bikes to provide shared mobility options.

Research and Innovation

MIC's research community continued to make significant contributions to climate and sustainability knowledge. Notable achievements included our involvement in the €1.3 million Aquabalance Project, investigating sustainable aquaculture practices to support climate-neutral coastal communities, and our collaboration with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland on educational programme development.

Challenges and Opportunities

While celebrating our achievements, we acknowledged the challenges ahead. A gap of 880,192 kgCO₂ remained to our 2030 target, necessitating accelerated action across all dimensions of greenhouse gas emissions, particularly fossil fuel use. The age of our building stock, with some structures approaching 200 years old, presented unique challenges for retrofit and energy efficiency improvements.

A concerning trend emerged in student commuting patterns, with almost 20% of MIC students now commuting more than 50 kilometres per day—a vast increase over pre-COVID patterns. We worked closely with our Students' Union to address this challenge and its environmental implications.

As we moved forward, MIC remained committed to achieving our climate targets while maintaining our position as a leader in sustainability education. Our new Strategic Plan (2025-2030) will place a core emphasis on the centrality of climate action and sustainability across all dimensions of the College's mission.

MIC Limerick Campus Development

Throughout 2023 and 2024, MIC progressed through the planning process for the new Library project with Limerick City & County Council.

Library Project Progress

The longstanding ambition of the College to construct a future-facing Library building in the Limerick Campus took a major step forward with Exchequer funding granted towards the project, with the remaining cost to be borne by the College from its own dedicated fund. The project was granted planning permission by Limerick City & County Council on 23 February 2024, and completion of the new building in 2027 is eagerly awaited.

Site Acquisition for Sports Development

A contract to purchase a strategically significant site adjacent to the College was signed on 17 June 2024 and will be used to develop additional outdoor multi-purpose sports facilities and a clubhouse. It is intended that this facility will not only augment facilities for students at the Limerick campus but will also provide for diversification of opportunities for participation in sport.

MIC Thurles Campus Enhancement

Following the launch of the Home Economics programme on the campus, a study was undertaken to examine how facilities specific to this programme could be provided on campus in the future. Currently, MIC avails of the Tipperary ETB kitchen facilities at Archerstown under an agreed MoU for the purpose of supporting practical components of the Bachelor of Education, Home Economics and Business Studies students.

Student Study Hub

The College introduced a contemporary space for student congregation and study, individually or in collaborative clusters, in the main building on the St. Patrick's Campus.

OUTREACH, ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

City Connects National Centre

Based on the positive, collaborative working relationships between Boston College and MIC, and the commitment to expand City Connects beyond the North-East Inner City (NEIC) in Dublin, BC identified the need to establish a centre in Ireland. The proposed National Centre for City Connects Ireland (NCCCI) was to be located within the CDU in MIC, which played a strategic role in the development of City Connects in Ireland to date.

Funding and Development

The Department of Education approved funding of €148,771 per annum for a permanent post in the CDU for a National Lead Implementation Manager for the City Connects Project in MIC. The CDU submitted an application to the DE for further funding of €432,573 to staff and resource the NCCCI in MIC permanently.

A City Connects Showcase was held in the NEIC Primary Schools, Dublin, on 17 October to celebrate the visit of Dean Stanton Wortham of Boston College. Representatives from the

Department of Education, which funds the City Connects Pilot Project in the NEIC, MIC, TUSLA, the Department of An Taoiseach, NEIC Principals, pupils, parents, coordinators and key stakeholders attended the showcase to celebrate the positive impact of City Connects in the NEIC.

BC and MIC submitted an application to the DE for €13,230 to part-fund a Professional Learning Visit to BC in March 2024 for the 10 Principals in the NEIC. This visit provided the principals with an opportunity to deepen and solidify their expertise through engaging in peer-learning with principals in Boston who had been engaged in the long-established implementation of City Connects in the U.S. BC sourced a funding donation to cover half of the travel and subsistence costs for the principals for this visit.

Research and Evaluation

In addition to overseeing the implementation of City Connects in Ireland, MIC also engaged in research and evaluation for City Connects. Dr Ruth Bourke led a Rapid Independent Evaluation of the City Connects Pilot in the NEIC 2020-2023. Prof. Emer Ring provided advisory support for this evaluation, which was submitted to the Department of Education and Skills on 31 October.

In the spring of 2024, the Child Poverty and Well-Being Programme Office was established within the Department of the Taoiseach. Six priority areas were identified, with education featuring prominently. On 1 August, the Taoiseach launched ['From Poverty to Potential: a Programme Plan for Child Poverty and Well-Being 2023-2025'](#). The role of the Programme Office was to coordinate and support inter-departmental and cross-sectoral initiatives to tackle childhood poverty and to promote childhood well-being. In discussions with the Department of Education, it was signalled that two MIC initiatives, City Connects and the Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology (DECPsy) programme, fell directly within the strategic ambit of the Plan and were being supported on that basis.

Official Launch

MIC was very pleased to welcome Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD, to campus on 30 May to launch the National Centre for City Connects Ireland (NCCCI)—a ground-breaking school-based system of intervention pioneered in Boston, which has incredible potential to make a difference across Ireland.

The event was attended by close to 100 attendees, which included officials from the Department of Education, Tusla, NEIC principals, City Connects Ireland Coordinators, educators and MIC staff.

The guest of honour was the Executive Director of City Connects at Boston College, Prof. Mary Walsh, and she was joined by her colleagues, Dr Claire Foley and Tina Chen-Xu. The event was live-streamed for the audience across the water.

Following a wonderful speech by Prof. Walsh, Minister Foley spoke at length, praising the importance of innovative and inclusive initiatives such as City Connects, and made special mention of the contribution made by the Irish diaspora.

City Connects was designed, developed and delivered in partnership with schools and services and was originally established at the Mary E. Walsh Centre for Thriving Children in Boston

College. In close collaboration with Boston College, and in the first international expansion of the programme, MIC was the lead implementation partner for City Connects in Ireland.

Thanks to a successful pilot scheme, running since 2020 in 10 DEIS Band 1 primary schools in the North East Inner City (NEIC) in Dublin, almost €600,000 in Department of Education funding was allocated to the NCCCI to further develop and expand the programme. This brought to €1.8m the total DE investment in City Connects in Ireland.

Community Engagement and Public Service

MIC and Limerick's Directly Elected Mayor

Following negotiations with RTÉ, it was agreed that the Upfront programme with Katie Hannon would be televised live from the College on May 28, featuring a debate involving all 15 candidates in the contest to become the first directly elected Mayor of Limerick.

200 people attended the debate, which marked the first televised debate of the Limerick Directly Elected Mayor campaign and the first ever outside broadcast of the Upfront programme. The debate was split into two panels with topics including the powers of the new office, housing, transport, healthcare, and the rural/urban divide. There was plenty of lively discussion and interactions.

Diocese of Limerick Interagency Safeguarding Conference

Creating a 'community of practice' and demystifying the processes around safeguarding to create a safer world was the focus of a Diocese of Limerick Interagency Safeguarding Conference held at MIC on 16 May.

The event, entitled 'Working Together to Protect Children and Adults Who May be Vulnerable', saw representatives from Tusla, the HSE, and An Garda Síochána make presentations to around 60 attendees, including staff from relevant agencies, members of religious communities, and lay people.

Bishop of Limerick, Brendan Leahy, emphasised that the occasion was an opportunity to "recognise again the extensive safeguarding protocols and procedures which are led by many committed people across the country" as well as stay informed about the "very significant developments in the policies and practices of the statutory agencies."

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

The many positive developments during 2023/24 included the appointment of the inaugural Director of EDII, Prof. Lorraine McIlrath; the establishment of the EDII Office, and the EDII team growing to four, including a Sexual Violence Harassment Prevention & Response Manager. The broader MIC staff contributed as EDII Champions and more.

EDII Office Establishment and Growth

The EDII Project Awards for staff, student and community collaborations were developed with over 20 funded. Over 70 staff undertook the EDI Online programme in 2022/23, and more than 30 women availed of the Advance HE Aurora Programme. The EDII Office was involved in over

70 events during the 2022/23 academic year and hosted 48. Pride pedestrian crossings were installed on campus, offering a visible articulation of the importance of EDII at MIC.

EDII worked to embed a college-wide response to social and international challenges, such as the war in Ukraine. The MIC Teaching for Inclusion Seminar Series and English Language programmes for migrant communities continued in this vein. In addition, the EDII Office launched two postgraduate Sanctuary Scholarships in 2023 that were successfully awarded and was accepting applications for four undergraduate and two postgraduate scholarships for 2024/25.

Athena Swan Achievement

In June 2022, the MIC Faculty of Arts was awarded its first bronze department-level Athena Swan award, and the Faculty of Education commenced its application process in 2024. At the start of 2023, the process of renewing the Bronze institutional Athena Swan award began, and that was submitted in early 2024.

MIC received a second bronze Athena Swan Institution Award on 4 April. MIC became a member of the Athena Swan Charter in 2018 and achieved the initial Bronze Institutional Award in 2019 on the first application, which was a fantastic achievement. Securing a second award and sustaining the success of objectives set out in the four-year action plan from 2019-2023 represented a huge amount of work by Professor Lorraine McIlrath, Director of Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Interculturalism (EDII) and the EDII team.

Key Achievements

Some of the achievements during the timeframe of the first AS Action Plan included:

- The creation of a central MIC Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Interculturalism (EDII) Office
- The appointment of the Director of EDII and two newly appointed EDII Faculty Leads in Arts and Education
- The development of the MIC EDII Strategic Plan that aligned with the Athena Swan Action Plan 2019-2023 and Charter

Governance and management committees all achieved a minimum of 40% female representation, and the MIC Executive Team was restructured, with female representation increasing from 13% to 50%. The MIC Faculty of Arts attained the Athena Swan Bronze Departmental Award in 2022, and the College successfully developed and awarded six annual University of Sanctuary Scholarships.

The 2023-2027 Athena Swan Action Plan focused on existing and new areas to further commit to implementing change across MIC over the next four years.

Faculty of Education Application

The Faculty of Education worked on its Bronze Athena Swan submission during the year. The Self-Assessment Team (SAT) for the Faculty of Education (FE) Athena Swan Bronze Award submission was set up in Semester 2 AY 23/24. The SAT comprised 16 members and was subdivided into six working groups:

Working Group

Student profile

Staff profile

Supports to advance careers

Culture, inclusion and belonging

Student and staff consultation

College/Faculty governance and the Athena Swan process

Members

Dr John O'Shea, Dr Deirdre Brady, Dr Orla Slattery

Dr Eamonn Mitchell, Dr Mairéad Hourigan, Frank White

Dr Ailbhe Kenny, Ivan Daly, Dr Neasa Ní Chuaig

Dr Ruth Bourke, Dr Mary Moloney

Dr Dorothy Morrissey, Dr Angela Canny

Dr Dorothy Morrissey, Prof. Lorraine McIlrath, Karen Fisher

EDII Project Awards Showcase

The MIC Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Interculturalism (EDII) Office hosted the EDII Project Awards 2023-2024 Showcase in early September, where attendees gathered to recognise the impacts of the various funded EDII projects from the last academic year.

Over 20 projects were funded over the last two years, and this event also marked the official launch of the 2024-2025 EDII Project Awards. Sums ranging from €500 to €5,000 were awarded over the forthcoming year.

This showcase featured seven presentations—both in-person and via video—that highlighted successful initiatives that took place across the College and the region. Conducted by staff, students, and community partners, featured projects included:

- Neurodiversity and the Academy
- The Citizenship Referendum: 20 Years On
- Trans Inclusion Workshops for Teacher Education
- WOW! The Wonders of Williams: Enabling Children with Williams Syndrome to Create Digital Resources
- EDNIP World Café and Learning Exchange Event
- Brazilian Urban Instrumental Music from the Late 19th Century and its Entanglements with Race and Gender: A Workshop on Choro
- Migrant Parents and Cooking for Cohesion
- Traveller Parent Engagement in Science for Fun
- Diversity and Intercultural Education Network (DIEN)
- Creating Spaces and Events for Learning and Creativity

On a related note, there were several presentations delivered by MIC staff and 2023-24 EDII Project participants, as well as the keynote address by Director of EDII, Prof. Lorraine McIlrath, at the national Equitas Conference in June.

MIC's Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Interculturalism (EDII) Office was awarded the Excellence in Diversity, Inclusivity and Equality Award at the Education Awards.

Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

Summary Statement of Compliance with Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014

MIC demonstrated a strong commitment to promoting equality, preventing discrimination, and protecting human rights as required under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. This commitment aligned with the College's historic mission of social justice and was integrated into its strategic framework, particularly through the current and forthcoming strategic plans.

Strategic Alignment and Policy Framework

MIC's approach to equality, diversity, inclusion, and interculturalism (EDII) was embedded within the strategic plan 'A Flourishing Learning Community 2020-2023'. This strategic direction, which emphasised the College's social justice ethos, was further reinforced by various policies and initiatives alongside the development of the EDII Office, overseen by a director and team.

The College planned to integrate Section 42 obligations into the upcoming 2024-2028 strategic plan to ensure continuous alignment with its statutory duties. In addition, a capacity-building process for all MIC staff and students, as well as a formal assessment, was under development. This assessment process would involve the development of a Working Group and a whole institutional exercise to inform the college community of duties and responsibilities. This assessment would also inform the strategic development of MIC and the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, and Interculturalism strategy.

Key EDII Policies & Anti-Racism Principles

MIC developed a new domestic violence leave policy to support the statutory domestic violence leave introduced by the Government in November 2023, which was currently undergoing wider review and consultation.

Mary Immaculate College (MIC) reinforced its commitment to respecting cultural diversity and promoting equity in society with the signing of the Higher Education Authority (HEA)'s Race Equality Anti-Racism Principles for Irish Higher Education Institutions. This document was also framed and hung in several public spaces on campus.

All of these policies and guidelines were upheld and monitored by the MIC Executive Team, EDII Office, and the Equality Committee that reported into the Governing Authority and were reviewed every 2 years.

INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

CAPES Partnership with Brazil

A group of 30 Brazilian teachers was enrolled in a year-long Graduate Diploma in Mentoring and Leadership in Schools (International) at the College, as a result of a partnership between MIC and the CAPES Foundation, which is a public foundation within the Ministry of Higher Education in Brazil.

In mid-August, 28 teachers from public schools in Brazil travelled to Ireland to complete a postgraduate diploma in education leadership and management at MIC. The educators participated in a selection process earlier that year, run by the CAPES federal funding agency in Brazil, and had all of their costs covered by the Brazilian government during their nine-month stay in Ireland.

Since 2009, CAPES has funded international mobility programmes for 5,000 public school teachers. This was the third group of educators to travel to MIC to complete postgraduate education leadership training. The initial group consisted of 19 school directors who studied at MIC in 2019.

Strategic Partnerships in the United States

MIC Visit to the USA

Following an MIC visit to the University of Notre Dame, Indiana (UND) in June, a new scholarship was to be named after Jay Caponigro, RIP, who was Director of Community Engagement at UND. The scholarship would bring several MIC Education students on a short visit to UND for a school placement experience in South Bend schools. This was further discussed with Dr Brian Ó Conchubhair (UND) when he visited MIC from 4-7 December as a member of a quality review panel.

On the evening before the commencement of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU) Annual Meeting, Prof Eugene Wall, Dr Holly Cowman, and Dr Patricia Kieran welcomed more than 100 guests to the residence of the Irish Ambassador to the U.S.A., H.E. Geraldine Byrne Nason. The guests were representatives of partner universities, many of whom were attendees at the Annual Meeting, along with other distinguished guests. The event served to showcase MIC in the year in which the College celebrated 125 years since its foundation. This was the second year in a row that Ambassador H.E. Geraldine Byrne Nason and MIC co-hosted this event.

Boston College Collaboration

An essential element of consolidating and expanding the role of City Connects in Ireland was the strengthening of the partnership with Boston College and the other national stakeholders in Ireland. Towards this end, MIC visited Boston College in mid-May with a delegation relating to City Connects from the Department of Education, Tusla and the National Educational Psychological Service. As always, the spirit of collaboration was exceptional and laid the groundwork for the launch of the National Centre for City Connects Ireland (NCCCI) at MIC Limerick later in the month.

As the visit coincided with Boston College's splendid conferring ceremonies, Director of International Engagement, Holly Cowman, was awarded an Executive EdD in Higher Education with a doctoral dissertation entitled: 'Quality over quantity: Implementing Ireland's new, student-centred national strategy for international higher education'.

Notre Dame Scholarship Programme

On 21 May, Prof Eugene Wall and Dr Holly Cowman attended a special event hosted by Pádraig Manning, Deputy Consul General of Ireland in Chicago. The event honoured six Third Year B Ed students who were on scholarships from the Keough-Naughton Institute for Irish

Studies at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana. The scholarships, founded in honour of the late Jay Capanigro, enabled students to spend a week in South Bend schools.

Notre Dame is one of the premier Catholic research universities in the US, and it was great to further strengthen MIC's links there.

St John's University Partnership

Prof Eugene Wall and Dr Holly Cowman paid a visit to MIC partner institution, St John's University in Queens, New York City, on 24 May and received a warm welcome from the Office of International Education there.

St John's had been running its signature Western Europe Semester and Western Europe: Business programmes in MIC for several years with great success. These programmes allowed St John's students to study in three unique European cities over one semester: Limerick, Paris and Rome.

MIC and St John's University were nominated in the Best International Collaboration Project category for the Western Europe Semester Programme at the Education Awards.

A meeting also occurred with Deputy Consul General, Gareth Hargadon, in the Consulate General of Ireland in New York. He commended MIC on the active and fruitful links the College had with multiple institutions across the US, and the strong educational links were reflected in the array of valuable joint programmes.

GOVERNANCE & STRATEGY

MIC Trustees & Governing Authority (*An tÚdarás Rialaithe*)

2024 brought an end to the 2018-2024 term of the MIC Governing Authority which had overseen a remarkable period of growth and development at the College, including consolidation of the integration of the Thurles Campus, implementation of the 2018-2024 Strategic Plan, *A Flourishing Learning Community*, appointment of Professor Eugene Wall as College President, the complex process of ensuring that the library construction project remained a viable strategic project, navigation of the circumstances arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, and a major dialogue with the University of Limerick aimed at a closer structural alignment.

The MIC Trustees, whose reserved powers include appointment of the College President and the fundamental strategic direction of the College as an entity with a Main Object, were equally faced with addressing significant events during this period, successfully steering the institution through challenges and meeting the call of opportunity, in collaboration with the Governing Authority. The members of each body are listed in Appendix A of this report, with some serving on one or both for 10 years. The College is indebted to them for their service and their wisdom in an era where the requirements of governance have become more demanding than ever before.

Appointment of Professor Dermot Nestor as 11th College President

In August 2024, following a rigorous recruitment and selection process overseen by the College Trustees, MIC announced the appointment of Professor Dermot Nestor — an acclaimed biblical scholar originally from Limerick City — as its 11th President. At the time, Professor Nestor was serving in Sydney as Professor of Hebrew Bible at Australian Catholic University, where he had held pivotal roles including National Head of School (Theology) and Executive Dean of Theology and Philosophy. His academic credentials include a BA and PhD from Trinity College Dublin, focusing on ancient Israelite identity, and a strong record of scholarly publications and PhD supervision. The appointment, slated to commence in early November 2024, marked a transition following the retirement of Professor Eugene Wall .

Upon accepting the role, Professor Nestor expressed profound humility and deep gratitude, particularly acknowledging the MIC Trustees and his predecessors for the legacy they had extended to him. He emphasized his ambition for institutional growth, committing to build upon MIC's Catholic heritage and its teacher education and liberal arts mission rooted in Catherine McAuley's founding vision. His international experience, especially in interdisciplinary, collaborative, and internationally engaged initiatives, positions him to lead MIC through its 125th anniversary and beyond.

MIC-UL Strategic Dialogue Process

A high-level dialogue group consisting of the two Presidents, along with senior executive colleagues, met over the course of the year to explore the possibility of forging a closer structural relationship between the two institutions. The discussions were externally chaired by Prof. Tom Collins.

The group met on 16 occasions, which included two briefing meetings with Dr Alan Wall, CEO of the HEA as well as meetings with the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science. The discussions culminated in the development of a shared set of proposals and a related model. Although it was not agreed by DFHERIS that the model could be put into effect at this time, the process brought about a greatly enhanced spirit of partnership between UL and MIC, which continues to catalyse a range of innovative collaborations.

Institutional Self-Evaluation and Quality Review

The College underwent its second institution-level quality review in 2024, with the last review completed in 2017. Preparations for the 2024 review cycle led to the submission of a comprehensive Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) to the University of Limerick, our accrediting partner, in December 2023.

External Review Panel

An external review panel was appointed by the University of Limerick, with academic peers drawn from the higher education sector in Ireland, the UK, and Sweden, as well as a representative of the Irish student community and a professional colleague representing the broader community engagement mission of HEIs. The external review panel members were:

- Professor Emeritus John L. Davies (Chair)
- Professor Stella Jones-Devitt, Professor of Critical Pedagogy, University of Staffordshire
- Professor Lena Adamson, Associate Professor of Psychology, University of Stockholm
- Dr Paul O'Leary, Head of Quality Promotion and Academic Programme Development, SETU

- Ms Michelle Moore, Parent-Child+ Senior Programmes Specialist, National College of Ireland
- Ms Sarah Porcenaluk, Doctoral Candidate, University of Galway

Institutional Quality Review: A Resounding Endorsement of Excellence

The Review Panel delivered a resounding endorsement of the quality culture and practices at MIC. In their report, the Panel members found *"a pervasive and well-functioning QA/QE culture, actively supported by a caring and committed staff"* (Review Panel Report, 2024, p. 49). This finding speaks to the collective dedication of the entire College community to maintaining the highest standards in all aspects of its work.

Particularly noteworthy was the Panel's recognition of our student-centred approach. They observed *"a very caring and supportive culture for students at MIC, which is a practical expression of the College's ethos, with an undoubted staff commitment at all levels in helping achieve the best possible student outcomes"* (Review Panel Report, 2024, p. 18). This validation confirms that our Catholic ethos and social justice mission continue to permeate every aspect of the student experience.

The Review Panel also highlighted our innovative approach to data-informed decision-making, noting that *"MIC's investment in the e-OLAS system positions the College as potential thought-leaders in the Irish HE sector by utilising data-driven decision-making to continually improve the quality of the student experience"* (Review Panel Report, 2024, p. 49). This recognition positions MIC at the forefront of quality enhancement practices nationally.

Our research endeavours received particular commendation, with the Panel acknowledging *"a coherent effort to address MIC's aspirations for university-level status through the advancement of research"* and praising our *"comprehensive, impressive and effective"* CPD programme supporting staff research advancement (Review Panel Report, 2024, p. 55).

The Panel's endorsement extended to our external engagement activities, specifically highlighting our partnership with Boston College's Lynch School of Education on the City Connects programme as *"commendable specifically due to its evidence-based initiative [that] empowers teachers and schools to support students and families facing socioeconomic challenges"* (Review Panel Report, 2024, p. 55).

Student satisfaction emerged as a consistent theme throughout the review. As the Panel noted, *"Students from all groups at the site visit expressed very high satisfaction with MIC. All students thought their learning experience to date corresponded with their expectations if not more"* (Review Panel Report, 2024, p. 54).

This institutional review provides independent verification that Mary Immaculate College continues to deliver on its mission while maintaining robust quality assurance processes. The Panel's recommendations provide a roadmap for continued enhancement, ensuring that we build upon our strengths while addressing areas for development. As we look to the future, this external validation reinforces our position as a leading institution in Irish higher education, committed to excellence in teaching, research, and service to our community.

Key Quality Enhancement Milestones and Initiatives

Reform of Academic Programme Approval Procedures

MIC completed a significant revision of its Academic Programme Development Standard Operating Procedure, designed to ensure educational and academic decisions remain independent of commercial influence. A new Business Programme Appraisal Committee (BPAC) was established to review financial and strategic viability in parallel with academic merit of programme development and modification proposals. The revised three-stage process strengthened governance, safeguarded academic integrity, and clarified roles in programme development.

Implementation of a New Programme Approval Workflow

The three-stage approval framework now encompasses:

- Initial Concept Approval by the Academic Planning and Approvals Committee (APAC)
- Financial and operational appraisal by BPAC
- Final academic scrutiny by Academic Programmes Approval Committee (APAC)

This workflow supported enhanced transparency, separation of academic and financial considerations, and better stakeholder engagement.

Engagement in QQI Degree Classification Analysis

MIC actively participated in QQI's Degree Classification Project (2012-2022), contributing two detailed case studies:

- Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.)
- Bachelor of Arts (BA)

These case studies addressed changes in curriculum structure, teaching strategies, assessment models, and duration, providing a robust analysis of factors that may have contributed to shifts in degree classification profiles. MIC also submitted formal responses to QQI's queries to assist in the national meta-analysis.

Quality Review Process 2023-2024

Departmental Quality Review:

- Department of Theology and Religious Studies (completed)
- Department of Psychology (planning initiated; review scheduled for 2024-2025)

Professional Services Quality Review:

- Library Services (completed; recommendations under implementation)
- ICT Services (underway; includes benchmarking against sectoral best practice)

Academic and Support Unit Self-Evaluations:

- Revised self-evaluation templates piloted in selected units to increase alignment with strategic objectives and enhance evidence-based reporting

Module Evaluation and Feedback Enhancements:

- Refinement of student feedback mechanisms including the integration of e-OLAS analytics for real-time module-level review and improved closing-the-loop practices

Annual Quality Reporting (AQR):

- Strengthened integration of institutional data sets into the annual quality cycle to support continuous improvement, strategic planning, and external compliance

System Performance Framework

The HEA launched its new System Performance Framework at the end of September 2023 and followed this by requesting submission of the first draft of a new 'Performance Agreement 2024-2028'. This followed completion of the second cycle of the HEA strategic dialogue and implementation of the previous agreement (termed the Performance Compact). It is noteworthy that the external peer review panel asked to evaluate the College's engagement with the second cycle offered high commendation for its implementation of its performance compact, describing the institution's approach as both strategic and future-oriented. Particularly praiseworthy was MIC's performance under Key Strategic Objectives 5 and 6, which focused on continuous quality improvement and operational excellence. The panel remarked that *"the MIC response to this objective is exemplary,"* citing the College's capacity to develop dynamic, integrated systems such as QUILLE and e-OLAS. These innovations were acknowledged as instrumental in ensuring institutional agility, enabling MIC *"to act quickly in evaluating successes, in having the agility to change strategic and operational outcomes if necessary, and in developing an evidence-based understanding of what...works and what doesn't."* This level of responsiveness and foresight was seen as indicative of a high-functioning academic institution that is deeply attuned to sectoral challenges and opportunities.

In moving to the new framework, College management met with the HEA on 24 January 2023 as part of the schedule of activities aimed at submission and adoption of the 2024-2028 System Performance Agreement. Per schedule, a preliminary draft was submitted to the HEA by the College in November 2023, and the meeting of 24 January was convened as an opportunity for feedback from the HEA on the contents of the draft. An iterative drafting process, punctuated by several engagements with the HEA towards refinement of the contents of the draft, continued until May 2024, at which time the College formally submitted the Agreement for adoption. This document was placed before the Executive Team and the Governing Authority before its submission. Engagement with the HEA in respect of the first draft was constructive and supportive of the objectives set out by the College.

Academic Promotions

Following approval of a revised promotions policy by members of *An tÚdarás Rialaithe* at the end of 2023, a call for a new round of promotions was issued on 20 December 2023. This promotions round made up to three (3) Senior Lecturer appointments in the Faculty of Education and up to three (3) Senior Lecturer appointments in the Faculty of Arts.

The successful applicants were:

Faculty of Education:

- Dr Anne Dolan, Department of Learning, Society and Religious Education

- Dr Mary Moloney, Department of Reflective Pedagogy and Early Childhood Studies
- Dr Gwen Moore, Department of Arts Education and Physical Education

Faculty of Arts:

- Dr Sabine Egger, Department of German Studies
- Dr John Morrissey, Department of Geography
- Dr Róisín Ní Ghairbhí, Roinn na Gaeilge

The overall quality of the applications received was commended by the Promotions Board and reflected the very high standards at which academic colleagues were performing.

The College strongly endorsed the importance of establishing and maintaining an academic culture where professional excellence is recognised and rewarded through career advancement and remains committed to continuing promotional rounds.

Official Languages Act Compliance

Compliance Summary for Academic Year 2023/2024

MIC complied with the Official Languages Act during the 2023/2024 academic year. The Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021 significantly strengthened the provisions of the Official Languages Act 2003. In particular, Section 4B of the 2021 Amendment introduced new obligations for public bodies to actively promote and use the Irish language for official purposes. One such obligation was the inclusion of a report on compliance within the institution's annual report.

2024 Highlights

The MIC official appointed under Section 4B of the Official Languages Act (as amended) was contacted by the Irish Language Services Advisory Committee. This committee was established under Section 18(C) of the Acts by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. MIC was selected to participate in research led by the University of Galway. As part of this initiative, 187 staff members completed an anonymous survey that would inform the first National Plan for Irish Language Public Services.

The Irish Language Review Group completed a new Irish Language Policy, which was approved by the College Executive Team. The policy was circulated for consultation in line with the college's policy development protocol and was approved by *An tÚdarás Rialaithe* and is published on the College website.

In accordance with Section 10A of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021, MIC submitted its compliance report to *An Coimisinéir Teanga* on 28 March. This section mandated that:

- At least 20% of all advertising placed by a public body annually must be in the Irish language
- A minimum of 5% of the annual advertising budget must be allocated to Irish language media

These initiatives reflected MIC's ongoing commitment to fostering a bilingual environment and fulfilling its statutory obligations under the Official Languages Act. Challenges remain in

establishing the College as a leading exemplar of excellence in giving tangible expression to the vibrancy of the Irish language on its campuses. A new strategic plan for the language, based on the newly approved Irish language policy, as well as the appointment of a new coordinator of Irish language services, will contribute to the accomplishment of these crucial objectives.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW 2023/24

Financial Performance 2023–2024

Mary Immaculate College (MIC) concluded the 2023–2024 academic year in a sound financial position, generating a surplus of €1.928m. A significant portion of this surplus was ring-fenced for the achievement of the required staff-student ratio of 1:15, which was a condition of the College's successful application for re-accreditation of its professional education provision by the Teaching Council of Ireland. The HEA contributed an amount intended to contribute towards the bulk of the cost to the College of reaching this ratio through the Funding for the Future Grant, extended to the College outside of its Core Grant allocation for the period. Completion of the recruitment and selection processes, designed to bring about the staff-student ratio, was largely reflected in the subsequent Financial Statements for 2024-2025.

This surplus reflected prudent financial stewardship of the College and a strategic approach to managing both recurrent and development expenditures. Total income rose to €69.1m, representing a 10% increase on the previous year. This uplift was driven by a combination of increased State grant funding (up €3.4m), academic fee income (up €1.2m), and growth in other income streams such as externally funded research and postgraduate programmes.

Expenditure Management

The College's expenditure also rose, increasing by 5% year-on-year to €68.5m. Key cost drivers included a €3 million increase in payroll, aligned to strategic staff recruitment and the addition of 53 new positions, and a €0.9m increase in operational costs. Significant areas of investment included student support services, research, the library, and Governance & Strategy, all of which recorded cost increases of over 20% compared to the previous year.

Student Enrolment and Fee Income

MIC's student enrolments reached 5,439 during the year, and this figure includes continued growth at the MIC Thurles campus. This increase in student numbers contributed directly to the growth in fee income, while postgraduate enrolments remained steady at approximately 15% of the overall student body.

Capital Development and Reserves

The College's reserves remained robust, with unrestricted reserves standing at €38.8m (excl Revaluation Reserve). Specific reserve allocations continued to support MIC's forward-looking capital development agenda, notably the flagship Library Project. Planning permission was secured in February 2024, and An Bord Pleanála upheld this in July 2024. Additionally, MIC acquired a 4-acre site in June 2024 to enable the future development of sports facilities, further aligning campus growth with student experience enhancement.

Infrastructure Investment

On capital investment, the College completed a programme of minor works under Buildings & Estates totaling €1.8m, partially funded through a €1 million devolved grant from the exchequer. Key advances were also made in procurement compliance and internal controls,

contributing to continued confidence in governance and financial integrity.

The 2023–2024 period also saw significant work undertaken to update MIC's Climate Action Roadmap and associated capital planning frameworks, ensuring the institution remained aligned with national sustainability and infrastructure standards.

Financial Summary for 2023-2024

Income	€'000
State Grants	26,269
Other Programme Grants	2,960
Academic fees	24,994
Research and Self-Funded Programmes	4,379
Other income	2,398
Interest and Investment income	319
Deferred funding for pensions	7,833
Total income	69,152
Amortisation of state capital grants	1,309
	70,461
Expenditure	€'000
Staff costs	36,684
Other operating expenses	18,470
Depreciation	1,812
Pension cost	11,567
Total expenditure	68,533
Surplus for the year	1,928
Actuarial gain/(loss) in respect of pension schemes	(23,420)
Movement on pension receivable	23,420
Gain on Investments	418
Loss on Revaluation of Tangible Fixed Assets	(2,906)
Total comprehensive expense for the year	(560)
Represented by:	
<u>Unrestricted Reserve:</u>	
- Income and expenditure reserve	1,991
- Revaluation Reserve	(2,906)
<u>Restricted Reserve:</u>	
- St Patrick's Reserve	355
Total comprehensive expense for the year	(560)

Overall, MIC's financial outturn reflected both the stability and strategic agility of the College in navigating a complex and evolving higher education landscape, positioning the institution strongly for further growth and innovation.

LOOKING AHEAD: STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR 2030

Celebrating a Year of Distinction

The 2023–2024 academic year marked a defining chapter in the legacy of Mary Immaculate College. In our 125th anniversary year, the College not only celebrated its past but also powerfully demonstrated its relevance and resilience in a rapidly changing educational landscape. From national policy-shaping research to global engagement initiatives and institutional quality recognitions, MIC has proven itself to be a centre of scholarly excellence, student achievement, and community impact. The successes captured throughout this report are testament to the commitment and creativity of our staff, students, and partners.

A Platform for Future Growth

The achievements of the past year have positioned the College for continued growth and transformation. Strategic investment in campus development, sustainability, academic quality, and inclusive practice has laid the foundation for an ambitious next phase. The formal reaccreditation of all initial teacher education programmes, progress toward climate action targets, the expansion of doctoral education, and the establishment of the National Centre for City Connects Ireland are among the many milestones that underscore the College's capacity to lead through innovation and care. These initiatives demonstrate that MIC is not just meeting expectations—it is setting new standards.

A Community of Purpose

Throughout the year, what has been most striking is the strength of community that underpins every endeavour at MIC. Whether in research consortia, student success stories, alumni engagement, or social inclusion projects, the College consistently fosters relationships built on trust, mutual respect, and a shared sense of purpose. The review panel's recognition of MIC's "caring and supportive culture" affirms that our ethos is not abstract—it is lived daily in classrooms, communities, and collaborative initiatives.

Charting the Course Ahead

As we look toward the implementation of our 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, the story told in this report is both a culmination and a prologue. The accomplishments of 2023–2024 offer a strong platform for an ambitious future rooted in educational transformation, social justice, and global citizenship. With new leadership, renewed strategic direction, and an unwavering commitment to excellence, MIC is poised to navigate the coming years with vision, confidence, and care; lighting pathways for generations to come.

APPENDIX A

Membership of MIC Trustees 2023-2024

Bishop Brendan Leahy, Chairperson

Dr Áine Lawlor, Deputy Chairperson

Bishop Raymond Browne

Sr Frances Minahan RSM

Dr Marie Griffin; Mr Sean Burke

Fr Gerard Whelan SJ

Sr Angela Hartigan RSM

Mr Richard Leonard

Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly

Membership of MIC Governing Authority (An tÚdarás Rialaithe) 2023-2024

Most Rev. Brendan Leahy (An Cathaoirleach)

Dr Áine Lawlor

Prof. Eugene Wall, President

Prof. Kerstin Mey, President UL

Prof. Niamh Hourigan, Vice-President Academic Administration

Mr Michael Keane, Vice-President Administration and Finance

Mr Cillian Callaghan, MISU President

Mr David Chisanga, MISU Vice-President

Ms Emma Barry

Mr Fachtna O'Driscoll

UR2025#03 Att. 4.5.1

Mr Seán McMahon

Ms Áine Finucane (resigned April 2024)

Ms Mary Considine

Prof. Kerstin Mey

Ms Helen O'Donnell

Judge Tom O'Donnell

Ms Catherine Kelly

Dr Marie Griffin

Ms Maedhbh Uí Chiagáin

Mr Eamon Stack

Mr Gerry Reeves

Mr Declan Madden (resigned November 2023)

UR2025#03 Att. 4.5.1

APPENDIX B

Graduation Numbers 2023-2024

Programme	No. of Graduates
BA	163
BA in Contemporary and Applied Theatre Studies	6
BA in Early Childhood Care and Education	93
BA in Early Childhood Studies	1
BA in Education, Business Studies, and Accounting	22
BA in Education, Business Studies, and Religious Studies	32
BA in Education, Gaeilge, and Business Studies	41
BA in Education, Gaeilge, and Religious Studies	8
BA in Education, Mathematics, and Business Studies	9
BA in Education, Mathematics, and Gaeilge	11
Bachelor of Arts (BA) - Total	386
Bachelor of Education (B Ed)	427
B Ed and Psychology	43
Bachelor of Education International	13
Bachelor of Education (B Ed) - Total	483
Certificate in Early Childhood Studies	1
Certificate in Education Studies	2
Certificate in English for Academic Purposes	120
Certificate in Advanced English for Academic Purposes	28
Certificate in Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC)	537
Certificate in Pastoral Ministry	23
Certificates – Total	711
Dioplóma Iarchéime san Oideachas san Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta	5
Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education	1
Diplomas – Total	6
Graduate Certificate in Autism Studies	55
Graduate Certificate in Digital Leadership in Education	1

UR2025#03 Att. 4.5.1

Graduate Certificate in Middle Leadership and Mentoring in Primary and Post-Primary Settings	31
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Graduate Certificates – Total	87
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Graduate Diploma in Adult and Further Education	20
Graduate Diploma in Autism Studies	8
Graduate Diploma in Digital Leadership in Education	3
Graduate Diploma in Education	1
Graduate Diploma in Education for Sustainability and Global Citizenship	1
Graduate Diploma in Inclusive Special Education	49
Graduate Diploma in Leadership of Wellbeing in Education	2
Graduate Diploma in Literacy Education	1
Graduate Diploma in Mentoring and Leadership in Schools International	30
Graduate Diploma in Middle Leadership and Mentoring in Primary and Post-Primary Settings	2
Postgraduate Diploma in Education Studies	1

Graduate Diplomas – Total	118
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Master of Arts	3
Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics	11
Master of Arts in Autism Studies	1
Master of Arts in Christian Leadership in Education	8
Master of Arts in Climate, Justice, and Sustainability	6
Master of Arts in History	9
Master of Arts in Modern English Literature	13
Máistreacht san Oideachas	18

Masters – Total	69
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Master of Education	14
Master of Education in Digital Leadership in Education	6
Master of Education in Education for Sustainability and Global Citizenship	4
Master of Education in Educational Leadership and Management	13
Master of Education in Inclusive Special Education	1
Master of Education in Leadership of Wellbeing in Education	9
Master of Education in Literacy Education	7
Master of Education in Middle Leadership and Mentoring in Primary and Post-Primary Settings	5

UR2025#03 Att. 4.5.1

Master of Education – Total	59
Doctor of Philosophy	13
Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology	11
Professional Master of Education (PME)	61
Total Graduating Numbers	2006