Quality

1.0   Policy Purpose & Objective

1.1   Mary Immaculate College (MIC) is a dynamic higher education institution that embraces students, scholars and staff within a learning community that is defined by the high standards of teaching, learning and research accomplishments set and attained by all within it.

1.1.1   MIC is committed to the flourishing of its learning community and to the enabling of its potential through the provision of a teaching, learning, research and service delivery environment of the highest measurable quality, made evident in the existence of robust processes of regular review and improvement and the fully demonstrable incorporation of best practice approaches to quality assurance and quality enhancement, benchmarked against practice by leading, comparable university-level institutions.

1.1.2   The aim of this policy is to inform all approaches to improvement of the effectiveness of the College's core activities of learning, teaching, research and service delivery, and of management of the quality of outcomes from these activities, through a process of Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement. This policy extends further, to the sustainable achievement of all strategic goals and objectives against the highest measures of quality performance.

1.2   The College asserts its commitment to the embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) across all of its activities in line with its strategic and policy objectives towards outcomes characterised by proactive approaches towards inclusiveness, and by dignity, respect and equality of opportunity for all members of the College learning community.

1.2.1   In respect of the quality of its teaching, learning, research and service delivery outcomes, the College recognises that integration of its EDI strategy and goals within all of its activities and by informing its approach to teaching, learning, research and service delivery with reference to its EDI strategy and goals will be indispensable to its continued delivery of an outstanding learning experience for its students and a positive working environment for staff that is marked by inclusiveness, fairness and equality of opportunity.

2.0   DEFINITIONS

2.1   **Quality Assurance (QA)** as defined in the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* (2016)[1] is a term generally used to describe the processes that seek to ensure that the learning environment (including teaching and research) reaches an acceptable threshold of quality.

[1] Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)

QA is also used to describe the enhancement of education and training provision and the standards attained by learners.

2.2   **Quality Enhancement (QE)** is a proactive process of ensuring that a commitment to continuous enhancement of performance against agreed quality indicators, including the standards and measures required for statutory and regulatory compliance. This process is ongoing, rather than cyclical (and responsive to external requirements), and serves to strengthen institutional quality culture and also to generate recommendations for improvements against given quality indicators.

3.0   SCOPE

3.1   MIC shall have a policy (this policy) for quality assurance that is made public and is underpinned by the MIC's strategic plan. Internal stakeholders shall develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

3.2   MIC is responsible for the academic standards of awards conferred upon its graduates, and for ensuring that the quality of its students' learning experience is adequate and appropriate, to enable students to achieve those standards. In order to discharge these responsibilities, the College has a range of systems and procedures for assuring and enhancing the academic standards of awards and the quality of its educational provision. These mechanisms include:

- Regular Peer Review of Academic and Professional Services;
- Robust programme approval and curriculum review processes;
- Robust approval, monitoring and review of collaborative taught programme arrangements;
- Module evaluation;
- External Examiner Reports;
- Established procedures for the appointment of staff and a comprehensive range of programmes for their ongoing professional development;
- Student Representation, e.g. Student/Staff Consultative Committees of equivalent; and membership of cross-institutional committees (such as Academic Council, the Quality Committee; Programme Boards; and MIC Governing Authority;
- Systematic student participation and feedback in QA/QE processes;
- Regular review of QA/QE processes.

3.3   The College's implementation of its quality assurance and quality enhancement procedures, also enables it to demonstrate how it discharges its responsibilities for assuring the quality and standards of its awards, as required by the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act,* 2012.

3.4   Responsibility for ensuring the quality of the College's activities extends to all departments, divisions, functions and employees of MIC.

4.0   **QUALITY STATEMENT**

Quality teaching, learning, research and support services, and a commitment to continuous quality improvement are core values and strategic objectives of Mary Immaculate College (MIC). The College is committed to the most stringent standards of quality which lie within the university paradigm of higher learning and the will to constantly expand the boundaries of knowledge creation and understanding. As a foundational *raison d'etre*, this shared precept of the Academy finds expression in the opening paragraph of the Mission Statement of the College:

"The College community promotes excellence in teaching, learning and research at undergraduate and postgraduate levels."

Responsibility for the quality of the College's activities rests at institutional, local and individual level.

5.0   PRINCIPLES

5.1   Core principles include:

5.1.1   Quality teaching, learning, research and support services, and continuous improvement are core values;

5.1.2   Quality assurance and quality enhancement are understood to be the joint responsibility of staff, management and the governance bodies of the College;

5.1.3   Internal QA processes and procedures shall promote and support a quality assurance and quality enhancement culture at MIC. These processes and procedures shall be set out in the MIC Quality Manual[2] and be made publicly available;

5.1.4   The quality process of MIC recognises, respects and seeks to reinforce the core value of academic freedom;

5.1.5   Benchmarking and evidence based approach. The College evaluates its achievements against appropriate national and international benchmarks. Its quality assurance processes are evidence- based, where outcomes and feedback from stakeholders (including students, staff, employers and the community, as

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[2] The MIC Quality Manual, a publicly available living document, describes and provides a centralised link to MIC QA processes and procedures.

appropriate) will provide the basis for analyses and conclusions on which improvements are planned;

5.1.6   The College's quality processes are governed by a commitment to collegiality through rigorous peer review, collaboration and exchange of best practice, driven by an ethos of critical self-evaluation;

5.1.7   The College is committed to appropriate quality benchmarking and an evidence- based approach to quality assurance and enhancement. The College evaluates its performance (outputs and outcomes) against national and international benchmarks and its quality processes are evidence-based where information and data generated by engagement with stakeholders (students, staff, employers, partners, regulatory bodies and the wider community) provide the basis for analysis, conclusions and recommendations toward quality improvement plans;

5.2   The key features of the College's quality assurance and quality enhancement processes are:

5.2.1   A commitment to widespread involvement of staff, students and stakeholders in the quality assurance process, inclusive of -

5.2.1.2   Critical self-evaluation and rigorous peer review of academic and professional service areas by Review Groups whose membership will be diverse, all of whom will be independent of the department / service under review;

5.2.1.3   Methodical collection of evidence relating to quality assurance activities, including, as appropriate, service satisfaction and student experience as well benchmarking against external reference points considered to be reflective of best practice;

5.2.1.4   External assessment of professional programmes as appropriate, through accreditation and international review;

5.2.1.5   Multiple avenues for student and staff input to quality assurance and quality enhancement such as Faculty Review, Module Evaluation and Programme Review;

5.2.1.6   Publication of impartial and objective reports of quality reviews of academic and service units;

5.2.1.7   Provision of opportunities and support for the continuing professional development of staff;

5.2.2   Robust and accountable College governance, management and decision-making relating to the quality assurance and quality enhancement policy framework, inclusive of -

5.2.2.1   Effective organisational structures to oversee quality assurance processes and the development and implementation of quality improvement plans;

5.2.2.2   A regular cycle of reviews of academic and service providers;

5.2.2.3   A process for monitoring the progress of implementing recommendations arising from Quality Review Reports;

5.2.2.4   A commitment to identify, sharing and implementing examples of good practice, across the College;

5.2.2.5   Periodic monitoring of the effectiveness of quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms to ensure that they are operating in accordance with best practice;

5.2.3   A commitment to assessing outcomes and processes against the highest external standards, inclusive of -

5.2.3.1   Formal linkage with leading comparator institutions and national and international benchmarking of academic standards and service provision;

5.2.3.2   National and international benchmarking of quality assurance processes with comparable research-led universities;

5.2.3.3   Constructive collaboration with relevant external agencies, in particular Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).

6.0   STATUTORY QUALITY REQUIREMENTS

6.1   The College collaborates constructively with external agencies and bodies whose functions incorporate a quality remit. Most notable in this category are:

- The University of Limerick (MIC's Designated Awarding Body / DAB, as defined by statutory measure; MIC is a Linked Provider / LP of the University within this statutory framework);
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI);
- Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies that accredit particular MIC programmes.

7.0   POLICY SOURCES

7.1   MIC's quality assurance policies and procedures are underpinned by the following statutory guidelines:

- Memorandum of Understanding in Regard to Academic Linkage Between Mary Immaculate College & the University of Limerick;
- University of Limerick Linked Provider Framework;
- UL Handbook of Academic Regulations & Procedures;
- Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines;
- Topic-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Research Degree Programmes;
- Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners;
- Topic-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended Learning;

8.0   POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

8.1   The methodologies employed to ensure quality assurance and quality enhancement are subject to adaptation and change in accordance with recognised best practice and in line with the stated requirements of those bodies with the authority to regulate and evaluate quality standards linked directly to the mission and affairs of the College. As indicated under Section 5.0, above, these methodologies may include, but shall not be limited to, the following:

- Cyclical Institution Quality Review;
- Cyclical Internal Quality Reviews;
- Cyclical Professional Accreditation Reviews (by external bodies);
- Annual and periodic review of all taught programmes;
- Student Surveys (International, National and Local);
- Stakeholder Feedback;
- Implementation of the recommendations of External Examiners

9.0   ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

9.1   As indicated above, Quality Assurance is a collective responsibility. At a general level, institutional-level QA and QE predominantly rests with

- *An tÚdarás Rialaithe* (Governing Authority)
- *An Chomhairle Acadúil* (Academic Council
- Executive Team
- Quality Committee
- Faculty Boards and Deans
- Course Boards
- College President
- Vice-President Academic Affairs
- Vice-President Governance and Strategy

- Director of Quality
- Academic and Professional Services Heads of Department / Line Managers / Supervisors
- Academic and Professional Services Staff

10.0   REVIEW

This policy shall be reviewed by *An tÚdarás Rialaithe* on a five-yearly basis or as required by any circumstances arising (such as the introduction of new regulatory or statutory measures

11.0   REVISION HISTORY

Revision	Document History	Reviewed By ET	Approved By UR
0		ET2015#13	UR2016#03
1	Amendments	ET2019#14; ET2020#13	UR2020#05
2	Minor changes to nomenclature. Changes to 5.2.1.2 to reflect current practice. Addition to policy sources 7.1 (QQI Code for International Learners)	ET2023#09	UR2023#05
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