



Annual Quality Report (AQR)

Template

for Completion by

Mary Immaculate College

Reporting Period: 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024

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Completing the AQR

The University of Limerick's commitment to quality is articulated in its institutional quality statement (<http://www.ul.ie/quality/quality-ul>), which commits the university to a culture of continual quality improvement and to complying with national statutory quality requirements.

The purpose of this template is to facilitate Mary Immaculate College (MIC) – a linked provider of the University of Limerick (UL) – to complete an Annual Quality Assurance Report (AQR) in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 as amended.

Instructions for completion and submission:

Fill in the reporting period and complete the text boxes by overwriting the grey text. While there is no exact word limit, it is expected that each completed text box would fill approximately half a page to one and a half pages (guideline only). Hyperlinks to websites and documents can be inserted. Additional supporting material can be submitted along with the completed template.

Please include the MIC quality manual/quality framework document when submitting this AIQR. The former should incorporate an overview description of quality governance as well as institutional-level quality policies and procedures. Please indicate in Section 1 below any changes that have been made (in the current reporting period) to the quality manual/framework document.

Please email this completed AIQR along with the MIC quality manual/quality framework document and any additional relevant documents to the UL Director of Quality, sinead.osullivan@ul.ie by 30 October annually.

Introduction and Overview

Please provide a brief overview of Mary Immaculate College and a link to the Quality Manual

Founded in 1898, Mary Immaculate College (MIC) is a distinctive and inclusive university-level, Catholic College of Education and the Liberal Arts that offers undergraduate programmes as well as a range of research-based and taught postgraduate programmes at certificate, diploma, master's and doctorate levels. Qualifications in the professional development and lifelong learning categories complement the course offerings so that MIC now has a range of programmes from Level 4 up to Level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications. Student numbers have grown over the past decade. Total enrolments for the academic year 2023/24 are 5180.

In 1991, an academic linkage governed by a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) was established between MIC and the University of Limerick (UL). Based on the MOU, UL accredits MIC's Level 6 to 10 programmes.

MIC is a Linked Provider of UL as defined in the [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012](#). UL is the Designated Awarding Body for all higher education programmes at MIC except where other arrangements are jointly agreed by UL and MIC. As a Linked Provider of UL, MIC is subject to review and external quality assurance by UL.

MIC is committed to ensuring the very highest standards of excellence in its teaching, learning, research and support activities. Quality assurance underpins a cohesive and consistent approach to delivering excellence in teaching, learning, research and services. The College community has a collective responsibility for quality assurance and quality enhancement, and this is enshrined in the [MIC Mission Statement](#).

MIC's [Quality Policy](#) commits the College to the highest standards of quality in its core mission of academic teaching, learning, research and support services through a process of quality assurance and quality enhancement. MIC Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures as outlined in the [MIC Quality Manual](#) are underpinned by statutory guidelines. The MIC Quality Manual was recently reviewed and revised (Revision 2.2). Revisions are recorded in the revision history of the manual.

Development and Approval of AQR

Briefly outline the process for development and approval of the AQR

This Annual Quality Report was developed by the MIC Quality Office in consultation with the relevant stakeholders from the college community including the Research and Graduate School (RGS), the Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Centre (LEAD), the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Interculturalism (EDI) Office, the Access & Disability Office, the Faculties and Student Life. This report was reviewed and approved by the [MIC Quality Committee](#), a sub-committee of An tÚdarás Rialaithe (Governing Authority), prior to submission to the University of Limerick.

Section 1: Quality Assurance and Enhancement Activity and Evolution at Institutional Level

Please describe institutional-level quality assurance or enhancement activity that occurred during the reporting period (e.g. an institutional-level quality-review-related activity). Please include reference to any amendments made to systematic, institutional-level quality assurance or quality enhancement mechanisms, activities, policies or governance arrangements during the period.

Appointments

During the 2023-24 academic year, a number of appointments were made:

College President

Professor Dermot Nestor was appointed as the 11th President of Mary Immaculate College in August 2024. Prior to his appointment as College President Professor Nestor was based in Sydney where he was Professor of Hebrew Bible at the Australian Catholic University (ACU). He joined ACU in 2011 from the School of Religions and Theology at Trinity College Dublin where he completed his BA (Hons) and his PhD on the topic of ancient Israelite identity. At ACU Professor Nestor served as National Head of School (Theology) and for an extended period, as Executive Dean for the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy.

City Connects

Dr Eucharía McCarthy was appointed as National Director of the National Centre for City Connects Ireland (NCCCI) and Mr Gerry Cullen was appointed as National Lead Implementation Manager. NCCCI, aims to establish a ground-breaking school-based system of intervention from its base at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. City Connects is designed, developed and delivered in partnership with schools and services and was originally established at the Mary E. Walsh Center for Thriving Children in Boston College, USA. In collaboration with Boston College, MIC has been the lead implementation partner for City Connects in Ireland. Following a successful pilot scheme, running since 2020, in 10 DEIS Band 1 primary schools in the North East Inner City, Dublin, almost €600,000 in Department of Education funding will be allocated to the NCCCI to further develop and expand the programme. This brings to €1.8m the total investment in City Connects in Ireland.

Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Centre (LEAD)

Director of Teaching & Learning

Dr Katherine Whitehurst was appointed to the position of Director of Teaching and Learning.

Digital Learning Manager

Mr Tom Kinsella was appointed to the new position of Digital Learning Manager (Senior Executive Officer) and is responsible for the leadership, management, delivery and development of digital learning technologies and to actively promote change and support new ways of working in accordance with college priorities and observed needs.

Student Counsellors

The capacity of the Student Counselling Service was increased through the creation of 4, 0.5 FTE permanent counselling posts.

Institutional Review

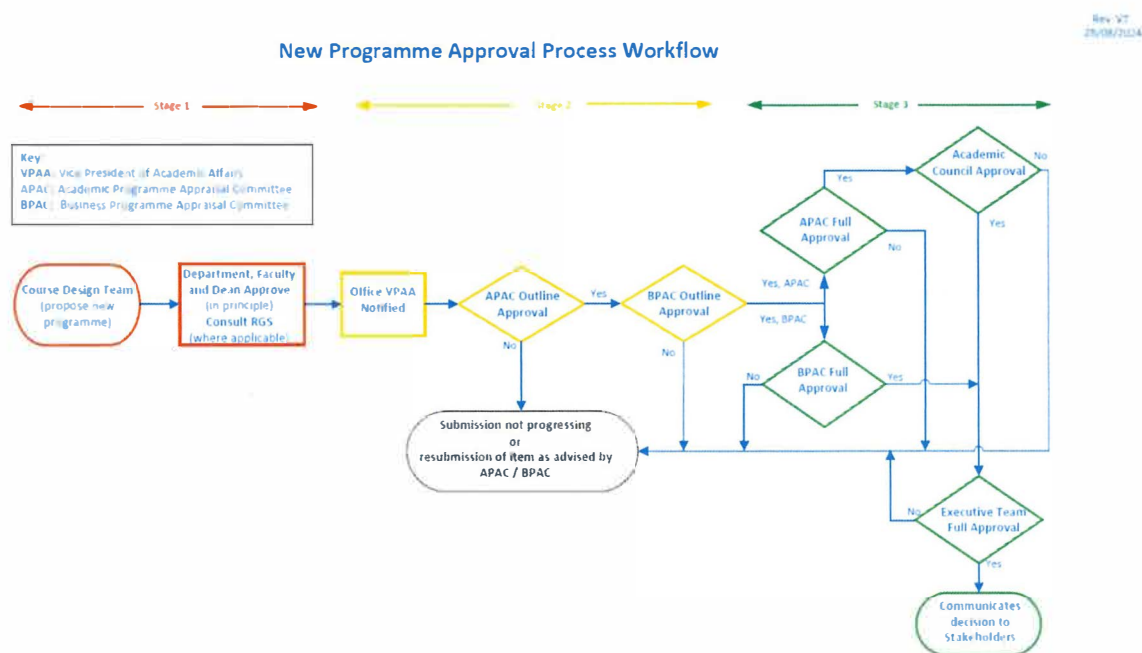
UL conducted an Institutional Review of MIC to assess both the adequacy of MIC's quality assurance procedures and the extent to which MIC is implementing the procedures effectively. The review was carried out by an international team of independent experts and peers who visited MIC between the 8th and 11th April 2024 and issued their Institutional Review Report in July 2024.

MIC has developed an Institutional Review Implementation Plan (IRIP) to address the recommendations set out in the MIC Institutional Review Report. The IRIP has been approved by MIC's Quality Committee, adopted by An tÚdarás Rialaithe (MIC Governing Authority) and is included as **Appendix 1.1** for ratification.

New Programme Approval Process

The MIC Academic Programme Development Standard Operating Procedure was revised to ensure that decisions on education and training matters are made independently of commercial considerations. A new committee the Business Programme Appraisal Committee (BPAC) was formed to facilitate separation of educational and financial consideration of new programme submissions. Programme approval now follows the three-stage process outlined in figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 MIC New Programme Approval Process



QQI Degree Classification Project

MIC participated in QQI's Degree Classification Project, an analysis of the variation in Honours Bachelor's Degree (HBD) classifications 2012-2022. MIC completed the required programme case studies of the Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Arts programmes which focussed on significant changes to programme structure, duration, content, teaching strategies etc. that may have impacted on the degree classification profile. The case studies were submitted to QQI along with MIC's responses to the questions posed by QQI in relation to HBD classifications. QQI is performing a meta-analysis of the reports provided by HEIs.

MIC Ability Pathways (MAP) Project

The [MIC Ability Pathways \(MAP\) Project](#) commenced in September 2024 and is a newly designed programme building on the expertise generated through the Certificate in General Learning and Personal Development (CGLPD). MAP will offer a transitioning programme ensuring that learners will be supported in identifying a suitable pathway to employment or further education and training. The College will be among 10 institutions across Ireland to offer innovative courses in the area following a recent €10 million funding announcement from Higher Education Minister, Simon Harris TD.

Dr Orla Slattery has been appointed as the Director of the MAP programme.

Diversification of Undergraduate Programme Offering

MIC diversified its programme offering through the introduction of the Bachelor of Arts in, Education, Home Economics and Business Studies on the Thurles campus (first intake in AY 23-24) and the development of two new programmes within the Faculty of Arts on the Limerick Campus, the Bachelor of Arts in English Language & Literature and the Bachelor of Arts in English and Drama.

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Interculturalism (EDII) Activities

Athena Swan

MIC's Athena Swan Bronze Institution Award was renewed in March 2024.

The Faculty of Arts under the leadership of the EDII Faculty Lead, Dr Susan Liddy, continue to embed and enact actions stemming from the MIC Faculty of Arts Bronze Award in 2023.

The MIC Faculty of Education commenced work on their application and submission for their first Athena Swan Bronze Award under the leadership of the EDII Faculty Lead, Dr Dorothy Morrissey and the Faculty of Education Self-Assessment Team.

Education Awards EDI Award

The MIC EDII Office were awarded the Excellence in Diversity, Inclusivity and Equality Award at the Education Awards ceremony which was held on the 25 April 2024.

Aurora Leadership Development Programme

13 MIC staff members completed the Aurora Programme for 2023-24 and were formally awarded their Certificate in Leadership on the 10th September 2024 by the Director of EDII. A further 17 MIC staff are participating in the 2024-2025 programme and each participant will work with a mentor over the coming year.

EDII Project Awards & Showcase Event

11 Projects were funded under the 2nd round of the EDII Project Awards. These were showcased at an event hosted by MIC's Acting President, Professor Niamh Hourigan on September 3rd 2024. Details of the 11 projects can be accessed at the following link [EDII Projects 2024](#).

MIC Race Equality Strategy

MIC having signed the [HEA Race Equality Principles](#) in 2023, highlighted this commitment at the 2024 Africa Day hosted on the 30th May 2024. At this event the participants engaged in a World Café beginning the process of developing a Race Equality Strategy for MIC. This will be further developed over the coming months to align with the forthcoming MIC and EDII Strategic Plans.

On the 22nd of February 2024 MIC in association with [Places of Sanctuary Ireland](#) and [UNHCR Ireland](#) held a day of solidarity to celebrate refugees in education.

Irish Language Policy

Following the establishment of the Meitheal na Gaeilge CMgS (MIC Irish Language Review Working Group), the MIC Irish language Policy was developed, approved and enacted at MIC. The aim of the Policy is, to align with and enact the full provisions of Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021 / Official Irish Languages (Amended) Act 2021, to implement best practice in terms of the promotion of the Irish Language and, provision of services in Irish to the entire MIC community, students, staff and visitors to the College.

Gender Equality Enhancement Fund Projects

MIC was involved in the following GEEF projects during the 2023-24 academic year:

- Edited Academic Publication entitled Transforming Gender Equality and Inclusion within Higher Education in Ireland – Contemporary Perspectives. (Lead – MIC)
- Addressing the Gender Pay Gap in Irish Higher Education
- Engaging Men in Gender Equality Work
- Integrating Gender into ITE Teaching, Learning and Outreach (Lead– MIC)
- Athena Swan Support and Bespoke Training for Smaller HEIs; with Carlow College, NCI and NCAD and Athena Swan Ireland. (Lead MIC).

FemFest 2024

FemFest was held 5th to 7th March 2024 with a vibrant programme of cultural events including literature, performance, visual art and more across both the Limerick and Thurles campuses. Events were planned and curated by the FemFest committee with the support of the MIC EDII Office. The biannual festival celebrated the contemporary and historical experiences and achievements of women and is a collective effort by staff and students. All events were free and open to the public. Justine McCarthy, columnist with The Irish Times opened the festival with a talk entitled 'A Lot Done, More to Do' on Tuesday 5 March. Further information on the range of events held is available [here](#).

Policies and Guidelines

A number of EDII related policies have been developed, approved and enacted including the MIC Gender Expression and Identity Policy, MIC Irish Language Policy and MIC Menopause Guidelines. The EDII office launched the MIC Menopause Champions, Guidelines and Café on 28 May 2024.

LGBTQI+ Staff Network

The LGBTQI+ Staff Network, established in 2023, marked the first anniversary of the network. Meetings are held bi-monthly to progress activities, alongside a monthly coffee morning. To further support the work of the Network, two rainbow pedestrian crossings on campus were installed at the front and back entrance to the Limerick campus. In April 2024, the network hosted a Mid-West LGBTQIA social networking event allowing for individuals and communities to get to know each other and to explore opportunities for joint working and future developments.

MIC Teaching for Inclusion Seminar Series

The MIC Teaching for Inclusion Seminar Series continued in 2023-2024 with further recorded sessions to help the wider education community engage in activities that underpin EDII. A full listing of the seminars can be accessed [here](#).

MIC Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment (ESVH)

The MIC ESVH Working Group has been established, Terms of Reference developed and meetings held in March and September 2024. Twelve members have been appointed to the Working Group internally from MIC and includes external members from the Limerick Rape Crisis and an Gardai Síochána. The SVH Manager is a member of the following national network groups; ESVH Practitioner Network; Speak Out Practitioner Network; and the National ESVH Advisory Network.

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) sought proposals from interested institutions for financial support to deliver the following actions contained in the Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in HEIs (ESVH) Implementation Plan 2022-2024. MIC was successful in two of the applications:

- Supporting neurodivergent students as they navigate intimate relationships within higher education.
- Developing a Gender Based Violence First Responder Training Structure.

ESVH activities also included:

- 1702 students reached through various forms of ESVH training and workshops during the academic year 2023-2024 which included consent sessions, healthy relationships and the impact of coercive control on children.
- Disclosure training offered to both staff and student leaders and delivered by the Galway Rape Crisis Centre with 35 staff in attendance.
- Rape myths poster campaign in partnership with MISU to educate and raise awareness of the concept of rape myths that exist in society.
- Women's Aid delivered workshop and panel discussion.
- MIC collaborated with UL and TUS in hosting Denim Day on Wednesday 24th April 2024 when staff and students wore denim clothing in support of victims of sexual violence.

Access Activities

Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH)

The Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) is a dedicated HEA fund, currently divided into five strands, committed to increasing participation by under-represented groups in higher education.

MIC currently supports the PATH strands of work detailed in figure 1.2 below. MIC works collaboratively with the Midwest cluster on strands one, two and three of the PATH schemes and independently on PATH 4 and 5.

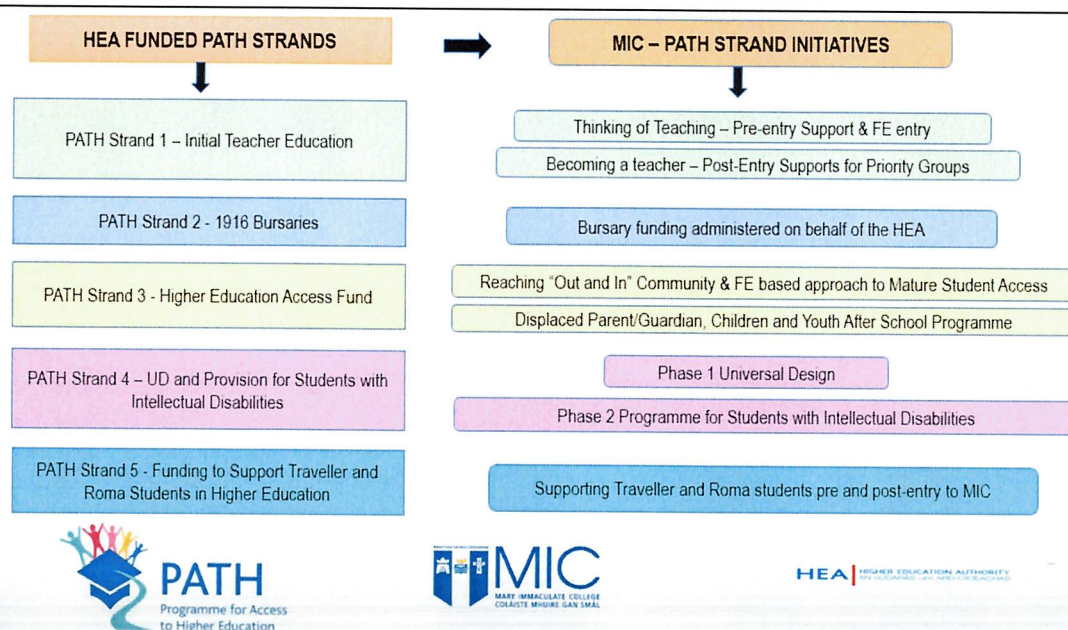


Figure 1.2 MIC PATH Strand Initiatives

PATH Strand 1 Phase 2 Diversity in Teacher Education

MIC is the cluster lead for this project which offers a comprehensive framework of supports for socioeconomically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, Travellers and mature students at pre-entry and post entry to initial teacher education.

The project team are working with colleagues in UL and TUS on a research project focused on exploring the experiences of students with disabilities on ITE programmes.

The PATH 1 team are continuing to promote the newly developed FET direct entry routes into teacher education programmes.

Ms Nicola Moses was appointed as Project Manager in January 2024.

PATH Strand 3 Phase 2

The 'Reaching Out and In Project' continues to work in collaboration with community partners and further education and training centres to target mature students interested in progressing to higher education.

PATH 3 – (Additional Funds) Family Learning Project for Migrant and Displaced Families

Dual approach:

- To provide children who are displaced from their home countries and are newcomers to the Irish education system with the opportunity to gain support in their learning and achievement in schools via personalised homework support.
- To support their parents and older family members to gain English language skills, advice, information and guidance in accessing opportunities and pathways in local education institutions and programmes.

This project was completed successfully at the end of April and the family learning model developed will be continued by the partner organisations (Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB), Doras, Limerick Youth Service, Scoil Mhathair De, and Barnardos in the coming year. On the 17th of April the President of MIC, Professor Eugene Wall presented letters of commendation to the student volunteers who supported the project.

PATH Strand 4 - Improving course provision in higher education for students with intellectual disabilities

Mary Immaculate College (MIC) has received €626,000 in funding from the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to run a three-year pilot programme designed to enhance the third level education and future career opportunities of learners with intellectual disabilities.

PATH Strand 5 – Fund to Support Traveller and Roma Students

MIC continues to provide direct funding support, mentoring, and additional academic learning support to Traveller and Roma students.

Learning Enhancement & Academic Development (LEAD) Activities

Generative AI and Academic Integrity Conference

In the 2023/24 academic year LEAD organised with our regional partners (UL and TUS) and NAIN, the Navigating the New Frontier: Generative AI and Academic Integrity conference which was held in October 2024. The conference was made possible by SATLE funds. The two-day hybrid conference included 2 keynote addresses, 5 panels consisting of 15 presentations, and a roundtable discussion, attracting speakers from as far as Canada and the United Kingdom. The conference attracted 272 registrations (118 in-person and 154 online). The conference brought together scholars, students, educators, and policy makers from across the globe to explore the relationship between Generative AI and Academic Integrity within the Higher Education (HE) sector. It specifically questioned how Generative AI can be used whilst still upholding the values of Academic Integrity.

Graduate and Academic Teaching Excellence Centre (GATE Centre)

LEAD have begun the development of the Graduate and Academic Teaching Excellence Centre (GATE Centre) (a SATLE funded project). The centre will see staff and postgraduate students supported to use and learn about new educational technologies for hybrid, hyflex and/or online teaching, in a practical and hands-on space. It will give staff the space and resources to produce digital artifacts for their teaching. Postgraduate students will expand their transversal skills as well as their understanding of digital tools for education.

Authentic Assessment Case Studies

In partnership with MIC academic staff, LEAD produced multimodal case studies that highlighted best practice in authentic assessment and UDL in the College. The case studies can be viewed here: [Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Centre \(LEAD\) | Case Studies](#). At the end of 2024, 5 case studies have received 389 views.

Academic Integrity Policy Development

In 2023, the MIC T&L Directorate gave approval to develop a new academic integrity policy and guidance microsite. A subcommittee including representatives from Student Academic Administration, the Research and Graduate School, Student Life, Assistant Deans and academic staff from both faculties, the Students' Union President and Postgraduate Student Representative, the SATLE Project Lead, the T&L Projects Manager, and the Digital Learning Manager worked to complete a first full draft of the policy. As of August 2024, a full draft of the policy had been completed and has entered the consultative phase.

UDL & UD

The MIC UDL Community of Practice (CoP) initiative is supported by members of LEAD, including an Assistant Professor in Academic Practice/Director of Teaching and Learning, the Digital Learning Manager, a Learning Designer, the T&L Projects Manager, and a member of Strategic Communications. LEAD hosted monthly CoP sessions in the 23/24 academic year. These monthly sessions were run in a hybrid fashion to enhance the accessibility of the CoP. In addition to this, a MS Teams page was created for staff to share resources. These sessions were designed to support peer learning and a greater understanding of how the UDL principles can help to enhance teaching, learning, assessment, and feedback.

UDL Badge

Since 2022 an Assistant Professor in Academic Practice from LEAD has acted as a coordinator and a facilitator for the Badge. In AY 23/24 there were 21 UDL badge completions, 1 Facilitator badge and 4 UD beyond the Classroom badges (PATH 4 Project), a total of 110 badges in all have issued to date.

Knowledge Base

To support staff with their queries and provide round-the-clock access to support materials related to digital tools for teaching and learning, LEAD maintains a publicly accessible Knowledge Base (KB). This was established in 2021 in response to a need for a reliable, easily updated, single source of just-in-time support and guidance. The KB has since grown organically in response to identified needs from the LEAD Support Inbox, as well as in support of new or upgraded technologies for teaching, learning and assessment.

At the time of writing, the Knowledge Base serves over 285 topic-specific support articles.

Academic Year	2023/24		2022/23		2021/22	
Semester	S2*	S1	S2	S1	S2	S1
KB Consultations	5,514	2,719	1,397	627	1,819	1,191

Figure 1.3 Moodle Knowledge Base Average Monthly Consultations

*During Semester 2 of 2023/24 the LEAD KB incorporated guidance for students on working with assignments requiring the submission of video materials which resulted in a pronounced spike in KB consultations.

As the above data suggests, staff are engaging with the Knowledge Base in growing numbers. The use of this resource demonstrates staff's growing use of technology in their teaching as well as the perceived value of these resources to staff looking to use digital technologies or to apply new pedagogical approaches in their practice. The spike in average monthly consultations demonstrated most recently further highlights staff usage in addition to the support of students for very specific tasks.

Research & Graduate School

Research & Graduate School Quality Assurance / Quality Enhancement Activities

- External Review of MIC Research Ethics Clearance Pathways and Processes by Prof. Ciara Heavin, Chair, University Ethics Committee, University College Cork (ongoing from AY 22-23).
- Roll-out of the Mary Immaculate Research Information System Project (MIRIS) (ongoing from AY 22-23).
- Ongoing implementation of DORA/COARA (ongoing from AY 22-23).
- Review of the mapping exercise related to the HEA Principles of Good Practice in Research 2022.
- Review of Postgraduate Researcher Funding (ongoing from AY 23-24).
- Graduate School Director contributed to the annual review and associated updates of the MIC Handbook of Academic Regulations and Practice.
- Evaluation of the 2024 Writers' Retreat.
- Reformatting and standardising of all SOPs, T&Cs, forms, etc., to comply with institutional standards.
- Annual Reviews of the following were completed:
 - Seed Funding Scheme
 - Research Group Support Scheme
 - Training provided to staff and PGRs (research integrity, methods, ethics, etc.)
 - PLOA scheme
 - RGS SOPs, Codes of Practice and Policy documentation
 - Postgraduate Research Sub-Committee Terms of Reference
 - IP Commercialisation Policy
 - RGS Annual Operating Plan
 - RGS Risk Register
 - Postgraduate Researcher forms, SOPs, Codes of Practice and Funding documentation
 - Staff Research Support Policy

Note on review of MIC Research Ethics Clearance Pathways and Processes

A review of frameworks, processes and pathways currently used at MIC for dealing with research ethics clearance was completed by Prof. Ciara Heavin (Chair, University Ethics Committee, University College Cork). The review applied to all ethics clearance arrangements currently in place for the purpose of conducting research involving human participants by undergraduates, postgraduates, researchers and academic staff at MIC, as well as their research collaborators and research teams. The review was guided by terms of reference that were approved by the College President, the MIREC Chair and the Vice-President Research and the review report was submitted to the Executive Team.

A Research Ethics Implementation & Facilitation Team was approved by the Executive Team in October 2023. This group began implementing the recommendations of the Heavin Report in AY23/24.

Institutional Level Student / Graduate Feedback		
Activity	When	Response Rate
Module Feedback Survey*	Semester 2	6.7%
HEA Graduate Outcomes	April – August 2024	Response Rate 50.08% Total Data Returned 51.74%
<u>HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey</u> MIC's Institutional Data Analyst, Caitriona McGrath has joined the HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey Data and Good Practice Group which was established to help HEI colleagues share best practice around data and survey management.		
<u>MIC Student Learning Partnership and Dialogue Forum</u> Student and staff representatives from the Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Education, the MIC Thurles School of Education and MISU attended the annual MIC Student Learning Partnership in April 2024 to discuss student issues. The discussion includes feedback from the in-semester staff student forum held in the Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Education and School of Education Post-Primary each semester. The President and Vice-President of MISU, class representatives, deans, assistant deans, head of school and senior administrators participated in the forums.		
Institutional Policies Approved 2023-24 Probation Policy Managing Staff Sick Leave Policy Professional Services Staff Overtime Policy Bereavement Leave Policy (Published on Staff Portal) Protected Disclosures Policy Quality Policy Career Break Policy Academic Promotions Policy and Procedure ICT Policies (Published on Staff Portal) • Responsible Computing Policy • Credit Card Security Policy • ICT Security Awareness Policy & Acceptability • ICT Backup Policy • ICT Change Management Policy • ICT Security Policy • ICT Disaster Recovery Plan • ICT Web Content Filtering Policy • Information Security Policy • User Access Control Policy Intellectual Property Commercialisation Policy Gender Expression and Identity Policy Parental Leave		

Section 2: Quality Assurance and Enhancement Activity and Evolution at Local Level

If relevant, please describe local-level quality-related innovations introduced by individual MIC units/offices during the reporting period.

Faculty of Education

Final Evaluation of Phase One of the LINC Programme 2016-2020

The [Final Evaluation of Phase One of the Leadership for INClusion in the Early Years Programme 2016-2020](#) was launched in May 2024. This evaluation details the LINC programme's progress in meeting the needs of its participants and its effectiveness in supporting early childhood teachers in their practice of including all children fully in ELC settings. This evaluation details the LINC programme's progress in achieving these aims during its first phase, focusing primarily on the 2018-2020 period.

Faculty of Education Assessment Sharing Day

The Assistant Dean in the Faculty of Education organised two faculty assessment sharing days at the start of the Autumn and Spring semester for AY 2023/24. This day is used to plan and discuss teaching and assessment practices. The aim of the assessment sharing day is to ensure quality and consistency in both teaching, learning and assessment across modules and programmes, and especially to share innovative good practice. The day is divided into two parts. The morning session is opened with a keynote from the Learning Enhancement and Academic Development (LEAD) centre focusing on a specific teaching and learning topic, and this is followed by a small number of presentations from faculty who wish to share good practice in relation to teaching, learning and assessment from the previous academic year (or module assessments that were commended by External Examiners). The second part of the day is devoted to module sharing information sessions, where the module coordinator shares the module content, proposed assessment activities and assessment submission dates with their colleagues.

Faculty of Education Continual Professional Development – New Primary Curriculum Framework and Curriculum Specifications, March 27 2024

The redeveloped Primary School Curriculum will have significant implications for Initial Teacher Education (outside of Céim). As part of the preparation for the introduction of the new Primary Curriculum Framework and the redeveloped Primary School Curriculum, the Acting Dean organised a Faculty CPD day to share information and discuss the new curriculum specifications on Wednesday 27 March 2024. The four briefing sessions were facilitated by Faculty members who are leading or key specialists on the curriculum development groups. The aim of the briefing sessions was to help contextualise the key developments, implications for MIC's ITE programmes and for teacher educators. It is intended to have follow up briefing sessions for faculty during the 2024/25 academic year.

Faculty of Arts

Faculty of Arts Student Workload Balance App

The Faculty of Arts employs a browser-based application designed to help faculty effectively manage and balance student workloads throughout each semester. This initiative was spearheaded by Professor William Leahy, Dean of Arts, who was motivated by a commitment to support students in efficiently meeting their academic responsibilities.

In Spring 2021/22, discussions between Prof. Leahy and Assistant Dean Ronan Flatley clarified what would be useful for students and faculty. Mr Blaž Podobnik, Data Analytics Manager in the Quality Office, and Dr Flatley collaborated to define the user and technical requirements, leading to the development of a pilot specification for Autumn 2022/23.

At the start of each semester, Heads of Department input the module-level data using a Qualtrics survey. Following the successful pilot initiative, the application was fully implemented in the 2023-24 academic year and is now an integral part of the Faculty's academic resources.

Section 3: Implementation of Quality Governance and Oversight

Please attach (or provide a link to) the MIC published academic calendar for the reporting period and, if relevant, please indicate and discuss deviations from the detail therein that occurred in practice. If not incorporated into the academic calendar, please attach or provide a link to the schedule of meetings of key governance and quality committee meetings (e.g. an tÚdarás Rialaithe, an Chomhairle Acadúil and any sub-committees thereof). If relevant, please indicate and discuss deviations from the detail therein that occurred in practice.

MIC Academic Calendar

MIC Academic Calendar 2023-24

There were no deviations from this calendar.

Schedule of Meetings of Key Governance and Quality Committee Meetings

Appendix 3.1 contains the Schedule of Meetings of Key Governance and Quality Committee Meetings for the 2023-24 academic year. Three additional meetings of the Board of Trustees and two additional meetings of An tÚdarás Rialaithe were added to the schedule – these are highlighted in bold.

MIC Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures

The [MIC Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures](#) was reviewed and updated and was approved by UL Academic Council in June 2024.

Section 4: Internal Quality Reviews Undertaken During the Reporting Period

Please provide detail of any internal quality review activity that occurred during the reporting period.

Please include the name of the unit/activity/academic programme(s) reviewed, the composition of the quality review team (names, positions and home organisations), the dates of the review site visit, a link to any published review reports and any post-review quality improvement plan (QIP) oversight activity undertaken, as appropriate.

Please also include a brief update on the overall status of the internal unit/activity/programme review cycle, focusing on any deviations therefrom.

The following Academic Department quality reviews commenced in the 2023-24 academic year:

- Department of STEM Education

The following Academic Department Peer Reviews took place during the 2023-24 academic year:

- Roinn na Gaeilge

The following Professional Service quality reviews commenced in the 2023-24 academic year:

- Strategic Communications & Marketing Office

The Quality Review schedules are published on the [MIC Quality Office Quality Reviews Webpage](#).

There has been one change to the professional services schedule. MISU requested that their quality review be brought forward to the 2024-25 academic year to align with the development of their new strategic plan. Buildings & Estates agreed to swap places with MISU on the schedule and their review will now take place in 2026.

Section 5: Planned Reviews for the Coming Year

Please outline the schedule of reviews planned for the coming year.

The following Academic Quality Reviews will commence in AY 2024-25:

- Geography
- Reflective Pedagogy & Early Childhood Studies

The following Professional Service Quality Reviews will commence in AY 2024-25:

- MISU
- ICT Services

Section 6: Quality Activity and Interaction with Third Parties

Faculty of Education

Qualifications Advisory Board Review

The Faculty of Education participated in the pilot implementation review process by the Qualifications Advisory Board (QAB) which entailed an external review of MIC's BA ECCE programme. The Faculty submitted a comprehensive self-evaluation report and course materials to the QAB. The second aspect of the review was a site visit by the external Implementation Review Team on Tuesday April 18th. The review team met with members of Executive Team, BA ECCE programme team and students. The Qualifications Advisory Board (QAB) which was jointly instituted by the Minister for Education and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on a non-statutory basis, is tasked with reviewing Initial Professional Education (Level 7 and Level 8) Degree Programmes for the Early Learning and Care (ELC) Sector. This is one aspect of the overall strategy to support the development and upskilling of the Early Learning and Care workforce.

NCCA Consultation on Curriculum Specification

As part of the redevelopment of the Primary School Curriculum, the NCCA launched the consultation process for five curricular 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 NCCA is currently working on the specifications for each of the five curriculum areas. Within these, Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) will be integrated into the Primary Language Curriculum. The Department requested the primary ITE providers to provide details on their current provision for MFL within each primary ITE programme and options to integrate MFL into the ITE programmes. MIC submitted this information on June 26 2024, and the President attended a meeting with the DES in July 2024 to discuss the integration of MFL into the ITE programmes

The NCCA Consultation on Curriculum Specification process includes a number of components, including written submissions, questionnaires, and focus group events. The Faculty of Education participated in a number of the focus group events. The Faculty of Education also submitted a written response for each of the five areas. The five responses were submitted on June 13th 2024.

Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education

Throughout September 2023 to August 2024, the College liaised with the Teaching Council regarding the reaccreditation process. MIC reaccreditation documentation was submitted to the Teaching Council in April 2023, and the onsite visit from the Teaching Council took place in October 2023. In December 2023 MIC received notification that it received conditional registration for all its ITE programmes. MIC was required to submit a clear plan that details the recruitment measures being undertaken and associated timeline involved to ensure that sufficient staff members have been recruited to bring the programme in line with the Student: Staff ratio (SSR) of 15:1. MIC has been working to address the SSR requirement and in this context adopted a phased approach to satisfy the SSR requirement. MIC is committed to concluding the Céim recruitment process by April 30 2025. The post-primary ITE programmes have been granted full accreditation status.

ITE Teaching Education Policy Statement Meeting – July 2024

As part of the implementation of the ITE Teaching Education Policy Statement, the Department of Education has committed to organising a process of annual dialogue with each centre for Initial Teacher Education (ITE). The first annual dialogue meeting took place on 18 July 2024. The meeting was attended by MIC President, Acting Dean of Education, Head of School of Education Thurles, and representatives from University of Limerick and Technological University of the Shannon. The key discussion points were around the role of centres of education, and the opportunities and challenges they create for quality in ITE. There was also a discussion around inclusive education in ITE and particularly current experiences of preparing the next generation of teachers to teach all students.

Section 7: Progress on Objectives outlined in Last Year's AQR

Please report on progress made on each of the objectives outlined in last year's AQR.

Quality Review Work

As noted in section 4, the peer reviews have been completed for the following quality reviews:

Department / Service	Peer Review Visit
Roinn na Gaeilge (English Translation)	December 2023

The Quality Office is currently working with Roinn na Gaeilge to develop their Quality Improvement Plan. The Quality Office continues to work with academic departments and professional services to monitor the implementation of their Quality Improvement Plans.

Institutional Review

The MIC Quality Office has identified the actions required to address the Institutional Review recommendations within their remit. These are included in the Institutional Review Implementation Plan attached to this report.

Section 8: Quality-Related Objectives over the Coming Reporting Period

Please list and briefly describe each objective.

TrustEd (IEM)

The Quality Office will work with the International Office and other stakeholders to develop MIC's IEM Application Statement (IEMAS) for submission to QQI in March 2025.

QMS Information and Training Programme

The MIC Quality Systems Manager will continue to implement a QMS Information and Training Programme in the 24 / 25 academic year and will manage the development of Quality Management Systems within the services.

Review of Academic and Professional Service Quality Review Guidelines

The Quality Office will complete a review of the Academic and Professional Service Quality Review Guidelines in consultation with key stakeholders in the quality review process including College Senior Management. The review will also address a number of the recommendations set out in the Institutional Review Report.

Section 9: Additional Information / Case Studies

Please use this section to provide additional information relating to quality assurance/enhancement or to include additional case studies. Student Wellbeing

Togetherall

In 2023, the MIC Counselling Service rolled out the [Togetherall](#) online community platform to MIC students. Togetherall is a safe, online community where people can support each other and take first steps in supporting their own wellbeing. The tool is a 24/7 early intervention tool designed to integrate with existing mental health services currently available to students.

Positive statistics from AY 2023-24, indicate that the Togetherall online mental health platform has supported MIC students who were experiencing concerning levels of distress and for whom the platform was their only resource*. The MIC Counselling Service therefore continued to promote this self-help and online community platform to MIC students.

*In 2023-24, data relating to MIC students accessing Togetherall, shows that the platform:

- **Reached Underrepresented Students:** 8% of students identified as from an ethnic background; 13% identified as male
- **Reached Those Not Seeking Formal Mental Health Support:** 53% of MIC students accessing the platform indicated that they are not seeking formal mental health support; 8% have no formal or informal support at all
- **Reached At-Risk Students:** 16% of MIC students accessing the platform considered suicide prior to joining Togetherall; 19% considered self-harm prior to joining Togetherall
- **Intervention from Togetherall Clinicians:** 21% of students had 1:1 interactions with Togetherall clinicians.

Peer Mentoring Project

The Peer Mentoring Project was developed in September 2022 by the Path 3 Project Officer in conjunction with the Head of MIC Counselling Service and supported by MISU, the MIC Counsellors, the MIC Occupational Therapist and the MIC EDII Office. The Peer Mentoring Project is a proactive quality enhancement mechanism for the retention and progression of students.

Peer mentors from the AY 2022-23 cycle made themselves available in the first semester of AY 2023-2024 to support new first year BA students. The take up by students(mentees) of the programme, despite advertising through MISU social media and student emails was however low.

A focus group with peer mentors at the end of the 2nd semester of AY 2022-3 academic year identified potential issues with student hesitancy to self-refer, which due to GDPR restrictions is currently the only way for students to be assigned a mentor. This feedback informed the approach/steps taken in AY 2023-24 for helping first year BA students connect with a mentor and develop greater understanding of its value:

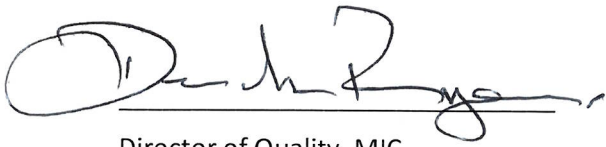
- Created a designated peer mentor page on the MIC website to make the programme visible to prospective students and parents/guardians.
- Developed a video with peer mentors describing the programme and the benefits to mentors and mentees in being involved.
- Establish events in semester 1 where peer mentors as a group can be more visible (through their hoodies) in a helping/ social role.
- Involve mentors as ambassadors in orientation week.

Recruitment was undertaken in semester 1 of AY2023-24 for a new cohort of peer mentors. A recruitment drive through social media and posters was directed to all first years followed by a training programme in semester 2. The training modules were the same as in the pilot.

Twelve students completed the training programme in Semester 2 of 2023-24. The peer mentors were grouped into small reflective groups (3 groups of 4) facilitated by one of the MIC student counsellors during semester 2 to share any concerns about their mentoring role and/or impact from the training modules ahead of starting with new BA students in September 2024.

The plan is to continue recruiting more peer mentors each year with a view to expanding the project to other first year cohorts in due course, monitoring uptake and engagement strategies. There is only the requirement for mentors to offer one semester of support, however if they wish to join in on subsequent years – placements permitting- they are welcome to contribute.

I confirm that this AQR was reviewed and approved by the MIC Quality Committee and constitutes a comprehensive and accurate account of quality-related activities pertaining to MIC over the reporting period.



Director of Quality, MIC



Chair MIC Quality Committee

This AQR was submitted to the Director of Quality, University of Limerick on: 31st March 2025.

Revision history of this template

Rev.	Date	Approved by	Details of change	Process owner
1	4 Sept 2017	Director of Quality, UL VPA&R, UL	Initial release	Director of Quality, UL
2	June 2022	Director of Quality, UL Provost/Deputy President (UL)	Report format updated to include additional sections.	Director of Quality, UL