



Annual Quality Report (AQR)

Template

for Completion by

Mary Immaculate College

Reporting Period: 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023

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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 2022/23 are 5043.

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 reviewed and revised at the end of the 2022-23 academic year to Revision 2.0. 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, the Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Centre (LEAD), 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

Governance, Compliance & Quality Assurance

During the 2022-23 academic year, a number of appointments were made to enhance existing governance, compliance and quality assurance structures.

Director of Information Governance & Compliance Management

Ms Elaine Mulqueen was appointed to the new position of Director of Information Governance & Compliance Management (Assistant Principal Officer) reporting to the Vice-President of Governance and Strategy. The director assumed the responsibility of Data Protection Officer and Freedom of Information Decision Maker on behalf of MIC.

Coordinator of Risk Management and Internal Audit

Ms Janet Torley was appointed to the new position of Coordinator of Risk Management and Internal Audit (Senior Executive Officer), reporting to the Vice-President of Governance and Strategy. The Coordinator of Risk Management and Internal Audit has responsibility for operationalisation of internal control mechanisms.

Quality Systems Manager

Mr Declan Tobin was appointed to the new position of Quality Systems Manager reporting through the Director of Quality to the Vice-President of Governance and Strategy. The Quality Systems Manager has responsibility for overseeing the development and maintenance of the Institutional Quality Management System (QMS) and to Support the work of the internal control function.

Director of Procurement

Mr Eoin Buckley was appointed to the new position of Director of Procurement reporting to the Vice President Administration & Finance.

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Interculturalism

Sexual Violence and Harassment Manager

Ms. Kathleen Maher was appointed as the MIC Sexual Violence and Harassment Manager.

Lead EDII for the Faculty of Arts

Dr. Susan Liddy, Lecturer in the Media & Communications Department was appointed to the new position of post of **Lead EDII for the Faculty of Arts**. The Lead EDII for the Faculty of Arts role is integral to advancing the implementation of the Athena Swan action plan and EDII progress in the Faculty of Arts.

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Interculturalism (EDII) Activities

Athena Swan Bronze Institution Award Renewal

The EDII Implementation Committee oversaw the development of MIC's application for the renewal of the Athena Swan Bronze Institution Award. This process, supported by the EDII Office, involved consultation with the college community in the form of surveys and focus groups. The application is due to be submitted in December 2023.

EDII Project Awards & Showcase Event

An [EDII Project Awards & Showcase Event](#) took place on May 18th 2023. The purpose of the event was to acknowledge the work of the 10 EDII project teams and highlight the successful projects supported by the EDII Office.

Race Equality

MIC, in collaboration with the HEA and the University of Galway organised the first National Conference on Race Equality held on 20th March 2023 at the University of Galway. At this event, the new *Race Equality Anti-Racism Principles for Irish Higher Education Institutions* were officially launched. MIC signed the [HEA Race Equality Principles](#) in June 2023.

College of Sanctuary and Migrant Support

During the 2022-23 academic year the Director of EDII worked closely with the MIC staff and student community to consolidate efforts as well as engaging with external agencies, local and national to create inter-agency cooperation. National and local MIC activity included English Language Support, student counselling support, MIC Teaching for Inclusion Seminar Series, Migrant, Refugee and Asylum Seeker Learners Response Group and MIC Ukrainian Student Support Network.

University of Sanctuary Scholarship Programme

The University of Sanctuary Scholarship Programme awards were approved by APAC in 2023. These awards are merit based and are awarded by the MIC Office of Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Interculturalism (EDII). This Scholarship Programme is designed to increase participation for International Protection Applicants, refugees, and vulnerable migrant groups on a merit basis. The application process for the MIC designation as a University of Sanctuary is ongoing.

Irish Language Review

In 2022 a working/action group, entitled Meitheal na Gaeilge CMgS (MIC Irish Language Review Working Group), was established with the specific aim of focusing on the development of an Irish language Policy and Strategy, one that seeks to further align with and enact the full provisions of Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021 / Official Irish Languages (Amended) Act 2021 and to implement best practice in terms of the promotion of the Irish Language and the provision of services in Irish to the entire MIC community – students, staff and visitors to the College. Meitheal na Gaeilge CMgS is chaired by the Director of EDII, Prof. Lorraine McIlrath.

Gender Equality Enhancement Fund Projects

MIC was involved in the following GEEF projects during the 2022-23 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)

Student Wellbeing

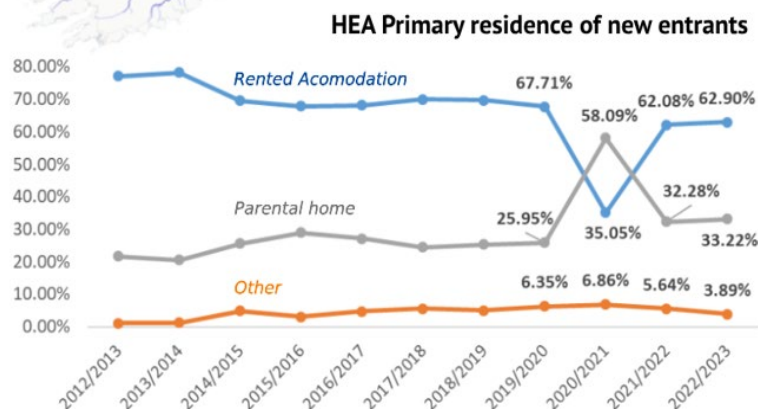
Student Success, Experience and Engagement

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs developed a timeframe for renewed attention on matters relating to student success, engagement and experience in collaboration with the Academic Planning Group (sub-committee of APAC) and MISU.

A data-gathering exercise was undertaken to assist in identifying the issues being experienced by students as a result of external factors including massification and diversification of HE, the cost-of-living crisis, the lack of accommodation nationally, changing demographic patterns, the advent of the 'commuter' student and the challenge of adjusting to life post-pandemic.

STUDENT COMMUTE: ALL ROADS LEAD TO MIC

Data for MIC students with primary residence: Parental home



Professor Liz Thomas, Edge Hill University, an expert in the field of student engagement and success, was invited to provide CPD to both faculties in Semester 1 of the 23/24 academic year.

Work will continue to further develop the strategy in the 23/24 academic year.

Togetherall

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.

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.
- Initiation of the Mary Immaculate Research Information System Project (MIRIS)
- Mapping to the [HEA Principles of Good Practice in Research 2022](#)
- Graduate School Director contributed to the annual review and associated updates of the MIC Handbook of Academic Regulations and Practice
- Implementation of DORA/COARA
- Evaluation of the 2023 Writers' Retreat
- Reviews of the following were completed:
 - Seed Funding Scheme (and in particular the employment of TRAs)
 - PLOA scheme
 - RGS Services
 - Postgraduate Research Sub-Committee Terms of Reference
 - IP Commercialisation Policy
 - RGS Annual Operating Plan
 - RGS Risk Register
- Reviews of the following were initiated:
 - Postgraduate Researcher Funding
 - Staff Research Support Policy

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 for Research and the review report was submitted to the Executive Team.

A Research Ethics Implementation & Facilitation Team was approved by the Executive Teams in October 2023. This group will begin implementing the recommendations of the Heavin Report over the coming months.

Learning Enhancement & Academic Development (LEAD) Activities

Academic Integrity Week, 17-21 October, 2022

MIC's Academic Integrity Week was launched with a keynote address by Dr Mary Davis, Oxford Brooks University. A range of workshops (national, regional and local) formed part of the schedule of events at MIC.

Access Activities

PATH 4 UDL Project

Project Lead: Ms Jean Reale

MIC received an allocation of €82,000, in PATH 4 funding. The Path 4 Phase 1 project is led by Jean Reale and has three distinct and inter-related elements:

- I. Universal Design – Institutional Level
- II. Universal Design for Learning – Teaching Level
- III. Networking

Further information is provided in Section 9 of this document.

MIC Climate Roadmap

The [MIC Climate Roadmap](#) was prepared in consultation with members of the newly-formed **Climate & Sustainability Committee** and other members of staff across the College and its campuses with both expertise and interest in the areas concerned. This roadmap has been submitted to the HEA and SEAI.

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 on 14 June 2023.

Institutional Level Student / Graduate Feedback

Activity	When	Response Rate
Module Feedback Survey*	Semester 1	17.4%
Student Survey.ie	Semester 2	31%
PGR StudentSurvey.ie	Semester 2	27.4%
HEA Graduate Outcomes	April – August 2023	Response Rate 47.13% Total Data Returned 49.24%

*The low response rate for the Module Feedback Survey was discussed at Quality Committee and it was agreed that the number of questions would be reduced from 10 to 4 for the next iteration of the survey in Semester 2 2023/24.

Institutional Policies Approved 2022-23

[Blended Working Policy](#)

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.

Access Activities

Peer Mentoring Project (Pilot)

The Peer Mentoring Project was developed by the Path 3 Project Officer in conjunction with the Head of the MIC Counselling Service 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. Further detail is provided as a case study in Section 9 of this document.

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 2022-23](#)

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 2022-23 academic year. There were no deviations from this schedule.

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 2022-23 academic year:

- Department of Music
- Department of Media and Communication Studies
- Department of Drama and Theatre Studies
- Roinn na Gaeilge

The following Academic Department Peer Reviews took place during the 2022-23 academic year:

- Department of Arts Education and Physical Education
- [Department of Music](#)
- [Department of Media and Communication Studies](#)

The following Professional Service quality reviews commenced in the 2022-23 academic year:

- Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Centre (LEAD)
- Arts Faculty Office
- Education Faculty Office
- Counselling Service

The following Professional Service Peer Reviews took place during the 2022-23 academic year:

- [Academic Learning Centre](#)
- [Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Centre \(LEAD\)](#)

The Department of Drama and Theatre Studies quality review commenced in August 2022. Due to operational reasons, the review was paused in March 2023. The review process will restart in 2024.

Due to various operational reasons including restructuring, post vacancies, accreditation reviews etc., it was necessary to revise the quality review schedules for both academic departments and professional services. The revised Quality Review schedules are as follows:

[Academic Department Quality Review Schedule](#)

[Professional Services Quality Review Schedule](#)

Section 5: Planned Reviews for the Coming Year

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

The following Academic Quality Reviews are planned for 2024:

- Department of STEM Education
- Geography
- Learning, Society, & Religious Education
- Drama & Theatre Studies

The following Professional Service Quality Reviews are planned for 2024:

- Strategic Communications & Marketing
- ICT Services
- Buildings & Estates (incl. Student Accommodation) and Health & Safety Office

Section 6: Quality Activity and Interaction with Third Parties

Céim

The Faculty of Education completed the redesign of their Initial Teacher Education programmes to fulfil the requirements set out in Céim. The application for reaccreditation was submitted to the Teaching Council on 21 April 2023. The Teaching Council on-site visit to Mary Immaculate College took place in Semester 1 2023-24.

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
Arts Education & Physical Education (AEPE)	February 2023
Music	April 2023
Media & Communication Studies	April 2023
Academic Learning Centre	May 2023
Learning Enhancement & Academic Development (LEAD)	June 2023

The Quality Office is currently working with these departments / services to develop their Quality Improvement Plans.

Institutional Review

An Institutional Self Evaluation Team (ISET), a small task and finish group, was formed to assist the MIC Quality Office in the development of the Institutional Self Evaluation Report. The Terms of Reference and membership of the ISET are available [here](#).

Stakeholder feedback has been collected from staff, students and external stakeholders through a combination of focus groups and online surveys. The Institutional Self-Evaluation Report will be submitted to UL on the 15th of December 2023 and the site visit will take place from the 8th – 12th April 2024.

Universal Design – A Whole Institutional Approach

MIC Quality Office staff are currently engaging in the following short courses (PATH 4 UDL Project):

1. Creating Accessible Digital Resources
2. Developing an Accessibility Statement
3. Digital Accessibility a Whole Institution Approach

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

Please list and briefly describe each objective.

IEM

MIC intends to apply for the IEM in the first application window in early 2024. The MIC Quality Office initiated the Self-Assessment to the IEM in October 2023 in collaboration with the MIC International Office. The Quality Office has also initiated the development of an English Language Policy which is a requirement set out in the code.

QQI Degree Classifications Project

The Quality Office will lead MIC's participation in the QQI Degree Classifications Project. The MIC Bachelor of Education and BA Liberal Arts programmes have been selected for inclusion in the project.

QMS Information and Training Programme

The MIC Quality Systems Manager will implement a QMS Information and Training Programme in semester 2 of the 23/24 academic year.

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.

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.

Peer Mentoring Project (Pilot)

The Peer Mentoring Project was developed by the Path 3 Project Officer in conjunction with the Head of the MIC Counselling Service 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.

First year BA students were selected for the pilot as this cohort has the lowest retention rate of the first year undergraduate cohorts. The project commenced with the recruitment of peer mentors from all first year undergraduate students in semester 1 of the 2022-23 academic year followed by a training programme in semester 2. The training modules were as follows:

- Module 1: The Mentor's Role & Referring to Support Services
- Module 2: Communication Skills & Creating Good Boundaries
- Module 3: Online Bystander training
- Module 4: SafeTalk- Suicide Awareness Training
- Module 5: Neurodiversity & LGBTQI+ Awareness
- Module 6: Creating Inclusive Group Meetings
- Module 7: (Optional) Body Project Training

Eighteen students completed the training programme. The Head of Counselling also developed a handbook for the peer mentors. The peer mentors were grouped into small reflective groups (3 groups of 6) facilitated by one of the MIC student counsellors to share any concerns and impact from their mentoring role.

In week 3 of semester 1 of the 2023-24 academic year, the peer mentors and first year BA students were invited to an evening event to provide students with information on the peer mentoring project. BA students that attend the event had a peer mentor assigned to them. It is envisaged that the peer mentors will meet the students assigned to them four times in semester 1.

Recruitment of peer mentors for the 2024-25 academic year commenced in semester 1 of the 2023-24 academic year and training will be provided in semester 2. The plan is to recruit more peer mentors each year with a view to expanding the project to other first year cohorts in due course.

Further information on this project is provided in Appendix 9.1.

UDL PATH 4 Project

The PATH 4 Phase 1 project is led by Jean Reale and has three distinct and inter-related elements:

- IV. Universal Design – Institutional Level
- V. Universal Design for Learning – Teaching Level
- VI. Networking

Project Element 1: Universal Design Institutional Level

Universal Design aims at institutional level to support the whole student experience by ensuring that educators, administrative, senior and technical staff have engaged in digital accessibility training. A whole College suite of CPD short training courses has been developed on the college virtual learning management system Moodle.

The three available short courses are as follows:

1. Creating Accessible Digital Resources
2. Developing an Accessibility Statement
3. Digital Accessibility a Whole Institution Approach

The purpose of this training is to lay a solid foundation to develop accessibility skills, raise awareness about digital inclusion, and reflect on how to embed good digital accessibility practices across MIC. This UD training will assist in providing a fully inclusive and accessible experience for all students and staff from their first engagement with the College. Embedding digital accessibility badged training in the MIC CPD schedule for all staff will ensure that accessibility is high profile within our policies and strategies going forward. Digital accessibility is fundamental to supporting inclusion, as it provides more equitable access for students and staff to engage with MIC as an institution and its services and related educational materials in flexible and meaningful ways. This training will also support our efforts to be compliant with the EU Web Accessibility Directive (Directive (EU) 2016/2102)

The project lead has also been working with the EDII office to include UD as part of the new Athena Swan application. She has also collaborated with the HR department to include the courses as part of the new staff induction programme starting in January.

Project Element 2: Universal Design for Learning at staff teaching level.

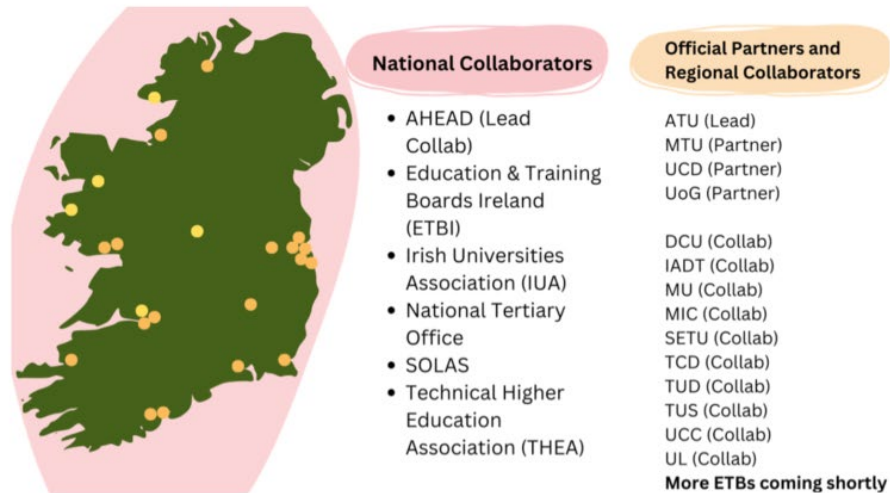
Universal Design for Learning at staff teaching level aims to provide the infrastructure within the College to support teachers to provide UDL designed classroom experiences for all students. A UDL @ MIC initiative has been undertaken to support the development of a cohesive UDL plan across all college activities. UDL @MIC “Learning for All” looks at supporting all staff across the college environment to gain experience and expertise in developing inclusive accessible opportunities for all learners to engage in meaningful learning and college life. Within MIC we have for the last three years facilitated the rollout of the national UDL digital badge for all staff and post graduate students who engage in teaching. At the end of the current rollout in December we will have 110 plus badge holders. The Project Lead is also part of the panel of experts who have designed a new national UD beyond the classroom digital badge which will target all staff involved in student facing services. This badge is currently being piloted nationally and six members of MIC staff are enrolled.

MIC launched a UDL Community of Practice on Monday the 3rd of April which was supported by Professor Niamh Hourigan the Vice President of Academic Affairs. This CoP is going from strength to strength and is hosted each month in a hybrid setting both in person on campus and streamed

for those who can't attend the campus. This space is co-designed by the participants to ensure a UDL lived experience for all. One of the outputs from the CoP is a commitment to research in the area of UDL.

Project Element 3: Networking

The current national team:

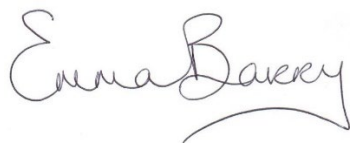


Jean Reale the project lead is a team member on the following PATH 4 national projects.

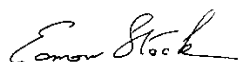
1. The National Charter for the Implementation Universal Design in Tertiary Education (ALTITUDE). MIC are active participants in the project with particular focus on pillars 1 & 3 Learning & Teaching and Digital Environment. Jean is also currently involved in writing the charter position paper.
2. Taking Leadership on the Universal Design Agenda – A Symposium for Higher Education Leaders (Staff Capabilities). Jean has produced video resources to be included in this course.

To date 26 Departments/ Services have booked in for the 30 minute UD introduction (212+ staff). The project lead has completed 7 introduction sessions, 50 staff have registered for the courses on Moodle and 43 certs have been issued to date.

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.



Assistant Director of Quality (Acting), MIC



Chair MIC Quality Committee

This AQR was submitted to the Director of Quality, University of Limerick on: 14th December 2023.

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