



UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK

OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

AIQR Template for Completion by Mary Immaculate College

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 Institutional Quality Assurance Report (AIQR) in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

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, Sinéad O'Sullivan sinead.osullivan@ul.ie, by 30 October annually.

Reporting period (academic year): 2020 / 2021

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.

Governance and QA Oversight during the Covid-19 Period.

This Annual Quality Report (AQR) is written in the context of an extraordinary academic year in which the flexibility, compassion and resilience of all College stakeholders was central to maintaining the quality of MIC's activities. The MIC COVID-19 Response Group and its sub-groups, in particular the Academic Response Group (see Appendix 1 for ToRs), continued to operate and provide guidance during the Academic Year 2020/21 in order to meet the ever-changing and multi-faceted challenges presented by the crisis.

Academic Response Group

As reported in the AIQR 2019/20, An Chomhairle Acadúil (CA2020#4) approved the temporary devolution of Academic Programme Appraisal Committee (APAC) powers to the COVID-19 Academic Response group. The rationale for the devolution of powers was that current 'normal' processes/pathways were not feasible given the timeframes on which they operate and the level of work they required in terms of documentation. It was agreed by An Chomhairle Acadúil that this devolution of power relate solely to the programme/module modifications required to be approved during the COVID-19 pandemic. Three main areas were overseen by the Academic Response Group:

- capturing the impacts of COVID-19 on programme delivery and approving changes to programmes as necessary;
- forward planning in relation to programme delivery;
- stocktaking in respect of the new processes and procedures that emerged because of COVID-19 and elements which may be brought forward.

Higher Education Response to Covid-19

Professor Eugene Wall was selected to represent the six Specialist Colleges at the DFHERIS meetings convened by Minister Harris for the purpose of coordinating the higher education sector's response to COVID-19. The meetings were convened to facilitate the continuity of further and higher education against a backdrop of the changing public health status.

Appointments

Faculty of Arts

Professor William Leahy, has been appointed as Dean of Arts and commenced his role on September 1st 2021. Professor Leahy joins MIC from Brunel University, London, where he held various roles including the Head of English, Head of the School of Arts, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and most latterly the Vice-Provost for Students, Staff and Civic Engagement.

Research and Graduate School

Dr Richard Butler has been appointed as Director of Research and joins MIC's Research & Graduate School following his tenure as Associate Professor of Urban History at the University of Leicester.

Dr Julianne Stack has been appointed as Graduate School Director.

Athena Swan

Gender Action Plan Updates

Over 50% of actions included in the Institutional Athena SWAN Action Plan are in progress. The action plan has been adopted as the College's Gender Action Plan by MIC's Governing Authority (an t-Údarás Rialaithe). Progress updates on the Gender Action Plan 2020 to 2023 are reported to the Equality Committee as a standing item on the agenda. The Gender Action Plan has been incorporated within MIC's Annual Operating Plan to ensure that it is embedded in the organisational structures in MIC.

Faculty of Arts

The Faculty of Arts have begun work towards attaining their Athena Swan Bronze Award. A central aspect to the Athena SWAN Self-Assessment process is student and staff consultation. A workplace survey was circulated to all staff within the Arts Faculty, April 2021. The survey analysis will inform the Faculty Action Plan ensuring that the actions will be evidence-based and specific to the Faculty of Arts.

MIC Student Learning Partnership and Dialogue Charter

Following the launch of the [MIC Student Learning Partnership and Dialogue Charter](#) on 5th January, 2021, a taskforce was established for the purposes of assisting with the management and coordination of the charter. The inaugural meeting of the taskforce, chaired by the Vice President Academic Affairs, took place on 11 May 2021 as per the taskforce's terms of reference. Student and staff representatives from the Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Education and the MIC Thurles School of Education and MISU attended the meeting to present their findings from academic year 2020/2021. The rapid move to online academic delivery in March 2020 and its effects due to the emergence of COVID-19 was evident throughout all findings. Overall, satisfaction was expressed by students with online academic delivery, online resources and support from academics.

Academic Integrity Week

MIC is committed to promoting Academic Integrity and enshrining it in the work of all of those who study at MIC. The inaugural **National Academic Integrity Week** took place on the week commencing Monday 19 October 2020 and, MIC in conjunction with MISU, developed a schedule of events to mark the week and demonstrate the steps MIC takes to promote the values enshrined in Academic Integrity (honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility). An [Academic Integrity Hub](#) has been created on the MIC website and includes guidance for students on what is meant by academic integrity. The site includes videos and useful links including links to the newly devised NAIN Academic Integrity Guidelines, Principles and Lexicon of Terms.

Quality Policy

The [MIC Quality Policy](#) was updated to reflect current QA and DAB-LP mechanisms, approved via the *Protocol for Policy Development* and adopted by an tÚdarás Rialaithe.

Digital Teaching and Learning Policy

The Development of a new, multidimensional Strategy for Teaching & Learning (face-to-face and digital), governing integrated academic provision and professional service support by 2020, was a target in the MIC Performance Compact 2019. Integral to this was the establishment of a Digital

Teaching and Learning Policy. Following extensive engagement and consultation with Faculty, Professional Services, Staff and MISU representatives, the [Digital Teaching and Learning Policy](#) was developed, approved via the Protocol for Policy Development and adopted by an tÚdarás Rialaithe.

Quality Enhancement Activities

Staff Professional Development

Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice

The first cohort of 12 students have completed the Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice. The programme is an innovative and flexible professional development programme for those who teach in Higher Education. Feedback from the first cohort was very positive. The following comment is indicative of the feedback received; *“While it has been some time since I learned how to drive, I think my journey over the last year was akin to graduating from 'L' plates to 'N' plates and that the learning will continue going forward! It was a pleasure to work with my peer triad group and have discussions with the other GCAP students during the Friday lunchtime meetings. The online option made the course accessible to me and the lectures and e-tivities were the perfect distraction during the lockdowns”*.

LEAD ‘Looking forward’ CPD

The LEAD team developed the **“Looking Forward”** suite of CPD which supported academic staff in developing their blended (and subsequently online) modules for delivery during AY 2020/21.

Stage 1 (June 2020) Explore: Through a combination of webinars, pre-recorded videos and self-access resources, teaching staff were invited to reflect on the experiences of the Covid-19 pivot to remote learning and consider what pedagogical model would be suited to their student cohort(s) and teaching context so that they could best adapt modules for temporary blended delivery. A series of webinars were delivered; aimed at programme/module coordinators or teams and were focused on the redesign and redevelopment of programmes for a blended approach to teaching and learning.

Stage 2 (Jul-Aug 2020) Plan: LEAD developed a series of exemplars and guidelines focused on three key pedagogical scenarios:

- (i) Large group online teaching
- (ii) Small group collaborative online teaching
- (iii) Individual/self-directed activities.

These exemplars also showcased formative and summative assessment approaches appropriate for a range of teaching scenarios. These resources enabled staff to consider suitable online pedagogical approaches aligned to intended learning outcomes.

Stage 3 (Sept 2020) Design & Develop: In September LEAD provided support and webinars focused on using institutional technologies and platforms to support an online teaching approach. This supported staff to prepare a rich and engaging learning environment underpinned by pedagogical best practice.

Moodle Baseline Document – LEAD created a Moodle baseline course template to ensure quality and consistency for learners and this will be maintained and adapted into the future.

Institutional Policies Approved 2020-21

The following [policies](#) were approved at An tÚdarás Rialaithe in the AY 2020/21:

- Staff Transfer Policy
- Quality Policy
- Remote Working Policy
- Job Sharing Policy
- Time Off in Lieu Policy
- Digital Teaching and Learning Policy
- Carer's Leave Policy
- Academic Promotions Policy
- Code of Conduct for Trustees
- Code of Conduct for members of An tÚdarás Rialaithe
- Code of Conduct for Members of Staff

Institutional Level Student Feedback Data Collection			
Activity	When	Overall / Average Response Rate	
Module Satisfaction Survey	Suspended pending review		
MIC COVID-19 Student Experience Survey	Semester 1	22%	
Student Survey.ie	Semester 2 Week 4 - 6	Started	Completed
		36%	29%
PGR StudentSurvey.ie	Semester 2 Week 4 - 6	Started	Completed
		25%	22%
Exit Survey	Suspended due to COVID-19		
HEA Graduate Outcomes	April – August 2021	47%	
MIC COVID-19 Student Experience Survey	Semester 2	33%	

MIC COVID-19 Student Experience Surveys: The Quality Office continued surveying students during the COVID-19 period seeking feedback on their experiences of the move to remote teaching and learning. The Quality Office undertook a number of comparative analysis including analysis of VLE activity patterns with thematic trends emerging from the COVID-19 student data (Semester 1) and comparisons of MIC and national Studentsurvey.ie data (7 COVID-19 questions). Following consultation with the Quality Committee, it was agreed that the Semester 2 COVID-19 Student Survey would include programme specific questions to allow for more in-depth feedback at programme level.

HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey: An online survey was administered in April and May 2021 followed by phone survey from June to August 2021. The Quality Office employed a Research Assistant for the administration of the phone survey. Despite difficulties related to the recent spate of phone scams, the phone survey proved very successful with an increase of 25% in responses rate compared to previous years. The Quality Office is liaising with the newly established Careers Service in developing additional pathways for dissemination of the data.

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.

Annual Programme Reports for academic year 2020/21.

The Academic Response Group approved a temporary change for the Academic Year 2020/21 to the Annual Programme Review Process. In light of the emergence of COVID-19 and the associated changes to academic delivery, the annual review of programmes was superseded by the need to plan for the temporary pivot. It was, therefore, difficult to progress the Annual Programme Reviews in the normal way. From a quality assurance perspective, however, it was important that the key elements of each programme be captured for the academic year 2019/20. The Quality Office collated key data for each programme and the course boards provided short narratives to accompany this data. The abbreviated reports were considered by Faculty Boards and at a special meeting of Academic Programme Appraisal Committee in April 2021 for noting in lieu of the normal feedback and recommendations.

The Quality Office collated the following information for each programme:

- Enrolment, progression and graduation data
- Feedback from External Examiners
- Feedback from students and staff

The reports were foregrounded with details of the institutional response to the temporary changes to academic delivery (e.g. Academic Response Plan) in order to provide context. A fuller reflection on the current pivot and any long-term changes to programmes arising from this period will be conducted as part of the Annual Programme Review AY 2021/22.

International Office Mapping

The Quality Office undertook a mapping exercise with the International Office in relation to compliance with the (Irish) [Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners](#). The mapping exercised proved very useful in identifying and documenting key processes and procedures related to the code but also in relation to the wider International Office QMS. These exercises help to build on the QMS work undertaken by Departments/Offices and aid in their preparation for Quality Review. There are a number of mapping exercises which stalled during COVID-19 but which will be undertaken as we move out of the Covid-19 period.

Gender dimension – Quality Assurance Documentation & Surveys

The Quality Office discussed the issue of gender dimension in quality assurance documentation and surveys with the MIC Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Manager. It was agreed that all QA documentation will be reviewed and revised where necessary to include gender-neutral terms. Surveys undertaken by the Quality Office will include a question on gender so that the data can be disaggregated by gender if required, for example, in relation to the Athena Swan initiative (subject to data confidentiality requirements).

Survey Workflow and Redaction Process

The Quality Office developed a Qualitative Data Redaction Procedure (see Appendix 2) which:

1. Sets out the steps involved in Quality Office feedback process
2. Articulates the rationale underpinning this process in respect of reviewing and redacting/anonymising survey / focus group / interview commentary
3. Outlines the procedure that facilitates the implementation of the process
4. Specifies circumstances where unredacted commentary may be reported

5. Outlines the procedure for escalating feedback

Survey Administration

As part of an internal re-structuring of the Quality Office to provide for a more streamlined data analytics function, responsibility for survey administration, analysis and reporting has moved to the Data Analytics Function of the Quality Office.

Current Quality Documentation

The following section contains the latest revisions of the Quality Office documentation. A summary of the changes are set out in the revision history of each.

[Quality Policy](#)

[Quality Manual Revision 1.4 \(October 2021\)](#)

[Academic Quality Review Guidelines Revision 2.3 \(October 2021\)](#)

[Professional Services Quality Review Guidelines Revision 1.3 \(October 2021\)](#)

Both Academic and Professional Services guidelines include an updated Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) process which further refines the process of developing and actioning review recommendations.

Quality Review Schedules (Post COVID-19)

[Academic Quality Review Schedule \(September 2021\)](#)

[Professional Services Quality Review Schedule \(October 2021\)](#)

Sharing of Knowledge and Practice

It was agreed at the 2020 ADM that an informal meeting would be held between colleagues in the MIC Quality Office and UL Quality Support Unit once a semester to allow for sharing of practice and knowledge. The first meeting took place in May 2021 and proved to be very valuable.

Quality Improvement Plans (QIP)

Updated status for IRIP and LP QIPs are attached (Appendices 3 & 3B)

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 tUdarás Rialaithe, an Chomhairle Acadúil and any sub-committees thereof). If relevant, please indicate and discuss deviations from the detail therein that occurred in practice.

[Link to the MIC Academic Calendar:](#)

Schedule of Meetings of College Committees 2020/ 2021 (**Appendix 4**)

[MIC College Governance, including Codes of Conduct](#)

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.

Department	Peer Review Group (PRG) Virtual Visit Commencement Dates
Education Psychology, Inclusive & Special Education	11 January 2021
English Language & Literature	18 January 2021
History	26 April 2021
President's Office	15 February 2021

Section 5: Quality activity and interaction with third parties

Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education

The Teaching Council has reviewed its policy on standards for programmes of ITE and launched the revised standards in [Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education](#) on 11 November 2020. Senior Management, in particular, the College President and members of the Faculty of Education engaged extensively with the wide-ranging consultation process which informed the new standards. The Faculty of Education ITE programmes (10) will undergo review in Q2 2023 of the accreditation cycle.

Conference of Heads of Irish Colleges of Education (CHOICE)

Professor Eugene Wall was involved in ongoing dialogue with representatives of the Teacher Education Section of the DES, the Teaching Council, the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN) and the INTO during the period in relation to issues of particular importance to ITE providers impacted by Covid-19, in particular, School Placement.

Section 6: Quality-related objectives over the coming reporting period

Please list and briefly describe each objective.

The following are the quality-related objectives which will be undertaken by the Quality Office in AY 2021/21:

1. Quality Review work

The Quality Office will continue to work with Academic and Professional Services Departments to complete the current cycle of reviews. A hybrid model of both face-to-face and virtual reviews will be used to allow for flexibility and to maximise the potential availability of Peer Review Group members. It is hoped to re-instate the initial face-to-face off-site day for Departments which has proven crucial to the success of the Self-Assessment phase (within public health guidelines).

2. Data Dissemination

One of the key objectives following the internal re-structuring of the Quality Office is to improve the dissemination pathways for survey data in particular. Work has been undertaken to

streamline the production of survey feedback reports. The objective for AY2021/22 will be to improve the timeliness, reach and responsibility for actioning survey feedback.

3. Completion of Stalled Linked Provider QIP action items

It had been hoped to re-commence this work in Semester 2 AY2020/21 however the worsening Covid-19 situation placed further pressure on both the LEAD team and RGS in supporting staff and students. Therefore the work will re-commence in AY2021/22:

LP-06: A mapping exercise of current QA procedures to topic specific guidelines for Blended Learning Programmes

LP-12: A review of the criteria for Reporting and Ongoing Monitoring of Blended Learning Programmes will be conducted

LP-16: The Students Support Section of the Website and Quality Manual will be updated to reflect the requirements of *5.1 Blended Learning Guidelines*

LP-07: A mapping exercise of current QA procedures to topic specific guidelines for *Research Degree Programmes*

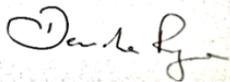
4. Support for CEIM Process

The Quality Office will provide support to the CEIM Internal Review Team in preparation for the CEIM Review. This review will require significant resourcing from the Quality Office.

Section 7: Additional information

Please use this section to provide additional information relating to quality assurance or to report upon relevant quality-focused topics or issues.

I confirm that this AIQR was reviewed and approved by The 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 of Quality Committee, MIC

This AIQR was submitted to the Director of Quality, University of Limerick on: 01 November 2021

Revision history of this template

Rev.	Date	Approved by	Details of change	Process owner
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1	4 Sept 2017	Director of Quality, UL VPA&R, UL	Initial release	Director of Quality, UL
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