TERMS OF REFERENCE

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW OF MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE

2016

Section 1 Background and Context for the Review

1.1   Context and Legislative Underpinning

In 2016, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) will undertake an institutional review of Mary Immaculate College (MIC) on behalf of the University of Limerick (UL).

Founded in 1898, MIC is a Catholic College of Education and the Liberal Arts. The College offers a wide range of programmes in education and the liberal arts at both undergraduate and postgraduate level and over 3,000 students are engaged in studies at the institution. MIC is a linked provider of the University of Limerick. This means that, based upon the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two institutions, UL is the academic accrediting body for all higher education programmes at MIC, save 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 or, if requested, QQI. MIC is also subject directly to QQI for the review and oversight of Access Transfer and Progression arrangements.

In November 2015, the University of Limerick wrote to QQI and requested that QQI conduct an institution-level external quality assurance review of MIC. Also, in November 2015, UL wrote to MIC to advise that they had made the request to QQI and that the request had been accepted by QQI.

Instruments that underpin the basis for this review include the following:

- the Universities Act 1997
- the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, specifically Section 42
- the Memorandum of Understanding between the University of Limerick and Mary Immaculate College

Review, in this context, refers to the formal review of the effectiveness of the institution-wide quality assurance policies and procedures established and implemented by MIC. This is a review in accordance with the Terms of Reference set out in this document.

1.2   Purposes

The purposes of this review process are:

1. To provide an external evaluation of institution-wide quality, the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality, and the overall effectiveness of quality assurance at the institution by:
   - encompassing the comprehensive, institution-wide procedures for teaching, learning, services and research at MIC;
   - emphasising the responsibility for quality and quality assurance at the level of the institution;
   - promoting the improvement of quality assurance procedures.

2. To encourage a Quality Assurance (QA) culture and the enhancement of the student learning environment and experience by:
   - emphasising the student and the student learning experience in the review;
   - providing a source of evidence of areas for improvement and areas for revision of policy and change within the institution;
   - exploring the area of quality enhancement, innovative and effective practices and procedures.
3. To improve public confidence in the quality of institutions by promoting transparency and public awareness by:
   - consulting on and publishing terms of reference for the review;
   - publishing the reports and outcomes of the review;
   - publishing a brief, institutional quality profile at the end of the process;
   - assessing the transparent and accessible reporting on quality and quality assurance by the institution.
4. To support systems-level improvement of the quality of higher education by:
   - ensuring that there is consistency in the approach to the review to that for similar institutions.
5. To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice by:
   - using the expertise of international, national and student peer reviewers who are independent of the institution;
   - ensuring that findings are based on evidence;
   - facilitating the institution to identify its own metrics and benchmarks for quality relevant to its own mission and context;
   - identifying examples of good practice and innovation for further dissemination.

Section 2 Objectives and Criteria

2.1   Review Objectives

Objective 1

To support institutional strategic planning, governance and ownership of quality assurance and enhancement. The main aim of this objective is to consider the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures in the context of planning and governance within the institution along with the mission and strategy of the institution.

Objective 2

To support the institution in meeting its responsibility for the operation of internal quality assurance procedures for education, training, research and other services, including but not limited to internal reviews, that are clear and transparent to all its stakeholders, and which provide for the continuing evaluation of all academic, research and service departments and their activities, as outlined in Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015 (ESG 2015). This objective also encompasses the responsibilities of the institution for the quality assurance arrangements and procedures for collaborative provision and partnerships. Examples of

these arrangements are the forthcoming incorporation of St. Patrick's College, Thurles and the joint programmes and partnerships with, for instance, the Institute of Technology, Tralee and the University of Groningen.

As this is an initial quality assurance review, the emphasis will be on evaluating compliance with quality assurance standards and guidelines, particularly ESG. However, where evidence exists of institution-led innovations and initiative in quality enhancement, the review will provide the institution with feedback on these.

Objective 3

To evaluate the extent to which MIC planning, structure and procedures support its responsibilities as a higher education institution with qualifications in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and as an institution that engages with national, European and international guidelines and standards (guidelines listed below), particularly in accordance with the Bologna process.

2.2 Review Criteria

In line with practice in the Irish higher education sector generally, and Ireland's commitment to the Bologna Process, the key criterion is compliance with the standards from Part 1 of the ESG 2015. Though very recent, the 2015 standards build incrementally on the 2009 standards. Accordingly, QQI will provide the review team with a gap analysis between the ESG 2009 and the 2015 revised set. Any standards pertaining solely to ESG 2015 will be used exclusively to guide this institution towards the development of future quality assurance policies and procedures, rather than as criteria for evaluating compliance.

This criterion should be considered in conjunction with the accompanying guidelines as set out in Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015). These guidelines provide additional information about good practice and in some cases explain in more detail the meaning and relevance of the standards.

The criterion for MIC as a higher education institution in the NFQ is intended to assist the examination of MIC's role, acting as a linked provider of UL[1], in implementing QQI (NFQ) policies and procedures for access, transfer and progression, including UL-derived procedures. This criterion derives from Access Transfer and Progression - QQI Policy Restatement 2015.

2.3 Augmentation of criteria

The criteria above will be augmented by the Team with guidelines derived from the following:

1. QQI
   - Quality Assurance Guidelines 2016
2. Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB):
   - Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Higher Education (2009);

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1   This UL review of the quality assurance arrangements of MIC will also incorporate, where appropriate, UL-derived procedures carried out by MIC. As the UL procedures for NFQ implementation are incorporated, the site visit of the review team will also include interviews with representatives of UL.

- National Guidelines of Good Practice for the Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes (2012)

3. Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC):

- Policy for Collaborative programmes, Transnational programmes and Joint Awards (Revised 2012)

4. Irish Higher Education Quality Network:

- Principles of Good Practice in Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement for Higher Education and Training (2005);
- Principles for Reviewing the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Procedures in Irish Higher Education and Training (2007);
- Provision of Education to International Students: Code of Practice and Guidelines for Irish Higher Education Institutions (2009);
- Draft Guidelines for Transnational and Collaborative Provision; Consultation Document 2012 (v. 8/10/12)

5. European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA):

- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area – 3RD Edition (2009)
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). (2015)

Section 3 Review Process

3.1   Process and timeline for the review

The primary basis for the review process is the bespoke handbook developed for the review.

In line with best national and international practice, the review process will consist of the following elements:

- agreement of terms of reference for the review between the QQI executive and UL, following consultation with MIC and public consultation;
- an institutional self-evaluation review process resulting in an Institutional Self Evaluation Report (referred to as ISER henceforth) to be prepared by MIC addressing the agreed objectives, criteria and terms of reference;
- the appointment of a review team by QQI, in agreement with UL and following the removal of conflict of interest though consultation with MIC, comprising national and international representation to conduct the review process;
- completion of an ISER by MIC;
- a review of the MIC ISER by the review team and consideration by the team of any other information they might consider relevant;
- a planning and site visit to MIC by the review team;
- preparation of a review report by the team for submission to QQI and UL, which will include findings and recommendations in relation to the objectives as set out in this terms of reference;
- preparation of an institutional response by MIC, including a plan with timeframe for implementation of changes, if appropriate;

- consideration of the review report by UL together with the institutional response and the plan for implementation of changes, if appropriate;
- publication and dissemination by MIC, UL and QQI of the review report and MIC response; MIC may choose to publish the ISER;
- a published one-year follow-up report by MIC for consideration by UL;
- if the review team identifies in its review report what it considers to be significant causes of concern, a timeframe for addressing issues will be agreed with MIC.

3.2   Review Team Profile

A review team will be appointed by QQI, using the profile set out below. QQI will be the point of contact between the review team, UL and MIC.

The review team will be appointed in keeping with the following profile:

- a review Chair – an international reviewer who is a (serving or former) senior third level institution leader - usually a President/Rector or Deputy President/Rector;
- an international reviewer who is a senior third level institution leader from a similar institution to MIC;
- a coordinating reviewer (acting as a full member of the team) with experience of institutional, national and/or European quality assurance processes;
- a student representative (current or former - less than 2 years) with direct experience of institutional and/or national quality assurance processes within or outside of Ireland;
- a representative of external stakeholders (national and international) which could be an employer, an employer representative or someone from the broader community of interest to MIC;
- one Irish reviewer (with recent or former experience – within the last five years) at a senior level with experience of quality assurance processes at an Irish third level institution;

3.3   Timeline

Timeline	Action or milestone in the process	Actor/s
9-10 months before team visit	Agreed timeframe for Institutional Review process	QQI, UL, MIC
9-10 months before team visit	Publication of Draft Terms of Reference (TOR) for consultation Draft TOR to UL Academic Council for noting Draft TOR to MIC for consultation TOR published on QQI website for public consultation	QQI, UL, MIC
Approx. 6-9 months before team visit	Terms of Reference established and published by QQI and UL, following consultation	QQI, UL
Approx.6-9 months before team visit	Publication of the Review Handbook	QQI
Approx.6-9 months before team visit	Confirmation of appointment of Review Team members by QQI, in agreement with UL, following assurance of removal of conflict of interest with MIC	QQI, UL and MIC
3 to 6 months before team visit	Completion of the ISER	MIC

Timeline	Action or milestone in the process	Actor/s
August 2016	Submission of the ISER and other supporting documentation to QQI for distribution, to the Review Team, and to UL for noting	MIC
Approx. 8 weeks before site visit	Training of Review Team members for institutional review	QQI, UL
Approx. 7 weeks before site visit	Feedback by Review Team members on initial impressions of the ISER	Review Team, QQI
Approx. 7 weeks before site visit	Pre-visit Planning Visit between Review Team representatives, QQI and MIC	Review Team/ QQI/MIC
End November 2016	Site visit to MIC by Review Team (Main Review Visit) (4-5 days approximately) Preliminary (oral) feedback on findings by the Review Team	Review Team/ QQI/MIC
January 2017	Draft report on findings of the Review Team sent by QQI to MIC for factual accuracy	QQI
3 Weeks following receipt of draft report	MIC response to QQI with any factual corrections required	MIC
2-4 Weeks following receipt of factual accuracy response	Final report on findings of Review Team sent by QQI to MIC and UL	QQI
6-8 weeks following receipt of report	Response by MIC to QQI including plan with timeframe for implementation of changes, if appropriate	MIC
Next available UL Academic Council meeting	Consideration of report and MIC response by UL Academic Council Consideration of report and MIC response by UL Governance Authority Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance Subcommittee Publication of report and response on website once approved for publication by UL Executive Committee	QQI, UL, MIC
12 months after adoption	Follow up report by MIC to UL Publication of the follow-up report and UL response on website once adopted	MIC, UL

3.4   Role of QQI in Review

In accordance with the functions set out in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012, sections 35 and 84, QQI will:

1. Publish draft TOR for the review of MIC for consultation
2. Agree and publish final TOR for the review of MIC
3. Contact, confirm and appoint review team members
4. Facilitate the review process with UL and MIC
5. Provide UL and MIC with advice on process and criteria
6. Support the review activities of the review team and advise the team on criteria and policy
7. Act as a point of contact between the review team, MIC and UL
8. Organise visits in cooperation with the review team and MIC
9. Provide training to the review team
10. Edit reports for approval and publication

11. Advise UL on the findings set out in the review report and the response of the institution

12. Publish the review report and the response of the institution

3.5 Review Costs

In keeping with standard practice, the costs of the review will be paid by the institution (MIC). UL and MIC will discuss arrangements for the disbursement of costs. As an agent acting on behalf of UL, QQI will bill UL directly for expenses incurred (including fees paid to reviewers). QQI overheads for the review will be covered by the current UL relationship fee paid by UL to QQI.