Maynooth University CINNTE Review

Post review Implementation plan.

27th September 2019

Maynooth University welcomes the report of the independent Review Team for the CINNTE Quality Review. We consider the report to be comprehensive, thorough and fair. We are grateful for the many commendations and also for the recommendations which will assist us in the pursuit of further progress in quality enhancement throughout the University. The University has been on a steep growth trajectory over most of the last decade which has brought both opportunities and challenges as noted in the report. Expansion and diversification have been accompanied by a balanced commitment to both teaching and research and a strongly student-centred ethos.

We are pleased that the Review Team have affirmed that Maynooth University consistently makes sure that academic practices and policies are aligned with QQI, National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (NFETL) and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area; and that programmes are aligned with the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

We welcome in particular the commendations in relation to the University's progress towards embedding a culture of quality evaluation and enhancement and the systematic efforts to build a strong culture of self-evaluation. The Review Team also commend the University for its ambitious new Strategic Plan in which planning and development are aligned with quality assurance and enhancement. The Strategic Plan in section 11.2 affirms the commitment of the University to "*use the CINNTE review to …..further develop a culture of continuous quality enhancement and to formalise the links between quality assurance and strategic planning at institutional, faculty and departmental levels*".

The Review Team was very much guided by the University's own self-evaluation report which identified some areas where progress has been constrained by the scarcity of resources, and also some practices and procedures that can be further enhanced. Most of the recommendations can be aligned with actions already contained in the *Maynooth University Strategic Plan 2018-2022.* The University will continue to seek additional resources to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan in ways that will safeguard and continue to enhance its reputation for quality.

In response to the Quality Review, the University has prepared this implementation plan, which outlines the University's planned actions in relation to each of the main recommendations. The actions listed here are cross-referenced to priorities in the University Strategic Plan.

FIVE PRIMARY OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *The Review Team recommends that the University begin to address its most severe infrastructure issues, in spaces and staffing, before the problems seriously impact both quality and reputation.*

Infrastructure: Given its trajectory of growth it is not surprising that the availability of physical infrastructure has been challenging. Since 1998, Maynooth University has constructed or redeveloped 48,000m^2 of academic space, mainly on the north campus. Nevertheless, additional physical infrastructure is required. At present the University has a Net Academic Area of 5.2m^2 per student FTE, which makes it more resource constrained than average for Irish Universities.

The University is committed to significant expansion of the buildings infrastructure over the life of the current strategic plan, which states that:

> *We will significantly invest in new and existing teaching spaces and learning infrastructure, providing state-of-the-art flexible facilities to meet the changing needs of our growing student body* (4.1.2).

The University has already taken steps to address this, including:

- Acquisition of additional lands which provide space for development.
- Completion of a campus masterplan which provides a long term vision for the campus.
- Securing finance through borrowing which will enable significant development.

The University has, since the site visit, secured a major capital grant of €25m from government under the Higher Education Strategic Infrastructure Fund (HESIF). This, along with borrowings, will allow a €57m capital programme to proceed, which will see a new teaching and learning building on the North campus, which when completed will add approximately 10,000m^2 to the infrastructure portfolio, along with refurbishment of 5,700 m^2 of existing space, including the Arts Building.   The project will provide a net additional 2,538 classroom seats/laboratory workstations in a range of configurations: large lecture theatres, active and collaborative learning rooms, flexible seminar rooms and classrooms, studio space and science laboratories. The new build will accommodate 60 academic staff, 20 postdoctoral researchers and 75 postgraduate researchers.

The University has also planned a €15m Student Centre and a major sports development.

Staffing: The University recognises that staffing has been a key challenge, in the context of reductions in the resource per student. Through the recession, the University worked to maintain the core academic staff student ratio, even though at times this constrained the resources available for other priorities. While at times this has resulted in under-investment in some of the professional administrative and technical roles, recent improvements have been made in these with increases in staffing in Registry, Finance, Human Resources, the Deans' office and in academic departments. Academic staff increases are agreed following annual staffing reviews, which provide an objective mechanism for academic staff allocation.

The University is committed, in its Strategic Plan, to maintaining an appropriate staff-student ratio:

> *We will benchmark our staff-student ratio in detail at broad discipline level against other Irish universities, and set and maintain an appropriate target staff-student ratio* (4.1.1).

Short term actions related to recommendation 1

No	2019/20 actions	UE member(s) leading
1.1	Commence construction of the new academic building project in Autumn 2019.	Vice President Estates and Capital Development
1.2	A comprehensive and successful application for state funding under the HESIF scheme was completed, to provide the additional funding needed for the new academic building project.	Vice President Estates and Capital Development
1.3	Additional space will be acquired in New House to accommodate the expansion of the Law Department.	Vice President Estates and Capital Development
1.4	The new Student Centre will move to the tender phase, with a view to construction commencing in 2020.	Vice President Estates and Capital Development
1.5	Short term extension of lease on the South campus	Vice President Academic/Bursar
1.6	Maintain the current academic staff student ratio	Deans/ University Executive
1.7	Increase the staffing in some key areas, particularly in IT services.	University Executive

2. *The Team recommends that the University address workload management issues by developing a fair and consistent model for workload management.*

The university is committed, in its Strategic Plan, to a review of the academic workload models.

> *We will ensure appropriate balance between research, teaching and service through a review of academic workload models, work practices and teaching commitments to enable the optimal teaching and service contribution from each academic colleague and department.(9.1.3)*

Building on the existing departmental workload models, the university will review the existing practices, with a view to developing a system of fair and transparent workload allocation.

Short term actions related to recommendation 2

No	2019/20 actions	UE member(s) leading
2.1	Establish a working group on academic workload models.	Vice President Academic / Director Human Resources
2.2	Review existing principles and practices inside the university and externally.	Vice President Academic / Director Human Resources
2.3	Develop proposals and secure agreement on appropriate academic workload models.	Vice President Academic / Director Human Resources

3. The Team recommends that the University develop a more robust system for staff development, promotion, and succession, together with mechanisms for regular feedback to all staff members on their strengths and on areas of national development.

The University recognises a need for a more robust system of staff development, and feedback. Enhancements are identified in the Strategic Plan, which states that:

1. *We will support the development and advancement of our staff through:*
   • Clear career frameworks and progression pathways for all categories of staff;
   • Appropriate performance management and development systems;
   • A formal induction and mentoring programme for early career academic, research and support staff; and,
   • Renewed and significant investment in mentoring and staff development for all parts and levels of the organisation. (9.1.1)

2. *We will implement an enhanced and integrated staff recognition and reward policy to support the development and advancement of staff and the strategic objectives of the University, including:*
   • A range of awards to recognise service and achievement;
   • Enhanced academic promotion processes with regular promotions rounds;
   • A researcher career framework;
   • Clear regrading and appropriate promotion opportunities and processes for library, information services ,administrative, technical, professional and general services staff. (9.1.2)

Short term actions related to recommendation 3

No	2019/20 actions	UE member(s) leading
3.1	Strengthen the staff development function in HR with recruitment of additional staff.	Director Human Resources
3.2	Introduce a standard annual induction for new staff.	Director Human Resources
3.3	Expand the range of staff development activities provided through HR.	Director Human Resources
3.4	Increase staff awareness of staff development opportunities.	Director Human Resources
3.5	Recommence the PG Diploma in Teaching and Learning, for academic staff.	Dean of Teaching and Learning
3.6	Review and relaunch the academic promotion schemes.	Director Human Resources /President
3.7	Complete the external benchmarking of administrative grades, and align new posts with the agreed framework.	Director Human Resources

4. ***The Team recommends that the University, following a thorough survey of institutional needs, improve the quality of its information management platform and portfolio as well as its capacity for data analysis needed to succeed with the new Strategic Plan.***

The University recognises that there is a need to strengthen its capacity to collate and analyse its own data. In recent years the University has developed a standard set of Key Performance Indicators, which are reported annually to the Governign Authority. It has also developed a standard format for reporting staff and student numbers, which are shared with Heads of Departments annually as part of an annual academic staffing review. Substantial work has been done in data cleaning and verification in the HR database.

The University is planning to migrate to a standard reporting tool, which will allow a wider range of users to access and analyse data.

Short term actions related to recommendation 4

No	2019/20 actions	UE member or unit leading
4.1	Review capacity in Institutional research office.	Vice President Academic
4.2	Review the institutional KPIs	Institutional Research Office
4.2	Develop an institutional reporting tool	IT services

5. *The Team recommends that the University develop a better system for collecting and utilising student input on courses, teaching, and the student experience, and for providing regular feedback to students on how their input has helped to improve teaching and learning.*

The University has, since 2013, had a student feedback system in which every student is surveyed about each module in each academic year. The responses from students have been very positive and consistent over time.   However, the response rates have declined and it seems that this system is no longer getting the attention of the majority of students.

Recognising this issue, the University Strategic Plan includes an action to review and refine the student feedback system, stated as:

> *We will further develop and refine our approach to gathering student feedback and information on the effectiveness of teaching, informed by the best available evidence, with the goal of better supporting departments in enhancing teaching and learning (7.1.4).*

Short term actions related to recommendation 5

No	2019/20 actions	UE member(s) leading
5.1	Review the options for student feedback.	Vice President Academic/ Dean of Teaching and Learning
5.2	Introduce an agreed approach to collection and analysis of student feedback which closes the loop by reporting information to students and facilitating dialogue between departments and other offices with students	Vice President Academic/ Dean of Teaching and Learning
5.3	Introduce a strengthened student complaints process.	Vice President Academic

Other recommendations

	Recommendation	Short term actions and longer term goals of the Strategic Plan 2018-22	Responsible
1.	Reconsider the balance among spending priorities to avoid negative consequences particularly to its student-oriented reputation.	Short-term: Develop a strategic budget model. Long term: Strategic Plan 11.1.3 *We will ensure our financial and business planning processes and resource allocation processes are easy to understand, transparent, and support the strategic objectives of the University, specifically planned growth, excellence in research and scholarship, quality teaching and learning, widening participation and an increase in postgraduate and international enrolments.*	Bursar
2.	Address its communication gaps, particularly between executive offices and departments. Improvements in this area can also ensure that quality enhancement initiatives are more systematically captured through the governance structures and can be properly tracked back to quality assurance processes.	Short term: Enhance internal communication through periodic email; continue direct 'town hall' updates to staff. Establish protocols for communication of key events, and associated email lists. Long term: Strategic Plan 13.1 *We will build on our collegial ethos and excellent reputation with more structured internal communications processes and strategic external communications and marketing.*	Dir Ext Relations
3.	Develop a plan to evaluate the longer-term impact of its ambitious new curriculum through possible surveys of employers, alumni, and graduate students.	Short term: Conclude the first phase of the curriculum evaluation by end 2019. Long term: Strategic Plan 7.1.4: *We will further develop and refine our approach to gathering student feedback and information on the effectiveness of teaching, informed by the best available evidence, with the goal of better supporting departments in enhancing teaching and learning.*	Quality office.
4.	Develop a transparent and flexible workload model for both academic and administrative staff to address concerns that have resulted from increased enrolment along with budgetary constraints.	See key recommendation 2	
5.	Develop a timescale and funding plan for the kind of robust staff development articulated in the new Strategic Plan.	See key recommendation 3	

	Recommendation	Short term actions and longer term goals of the Strategic Plan 2018-22	Responsible
6.	Take steps to clarify the purposes and goals for the critical (thinking) skills and experiential learning components of the new curriculum, and that the experiential learning model be further developed.	Short term: Document clearly the purposes of the critical skills and experiential learning components of the curriculum , and ensure consistent understanding of these items. Longterm: Strategic Plan: 3.2: *We will provide students with an enhanced range of co-curricular and extra-curricular experiences, affording them broader opportunities to develop their skills and competencies for work, life and engaged citizenship.*	Dean of Teaching and Learning
7.	Develop and clearly publicise to students and staff policies and procedures for handling student complaints about grading and instruction.	See key recommendation 5	
8.	Develop procedures to improve student participation in course and programme evaluation and to make student feedback more meaningful and usable.	See key recommendation 5	
9.	Increase coordination of support services and evaluate current capacity and resources to ensure that resources available to learners are adequate.	Short term: Appoint a Director of Student Services with responsibility for coordination. Long term: Strategic Plan 4.2.5: We will review the funding model for, and invest appropriately in, student services and supports, with an emphasis on supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students.	University Executive.
10.	Take measures to ensure the closing of feedback loops to students as a result of their responses and also explore opportunities to record student feedback electronically from various sources for longitudinal purposes.	See key recommendation 5	
11.	Invest in robust staff development opportunities, particularly for support staff.	See key recommendation 3	

	Recommendation	Short term actions and longer term goals of the Strategic Plan 2018-22	Responsible
12.	Consider a pattern of regular meetings between the President and the President of the Students' Union in order to enhance the partnership.	Short term: Agree arrangements for liaison between the University and the MSU. Long term: Strategic Plan 4.1.4 *We will develop the relationship between the University and Maynooth Students' Union, clarifying the role and responsibilities of each and aligning our strategies for student life, clubs and societies, and student support.*	President
13.	Clarify areas of responsibility between the University and the Student Union that include clubs and societies, athletic teams and recreation.	Short term: Agree mechanism for management of Clubs and Societies.. Long term: Strategic Plan 4.1.4 *We will develop the relationship between the University and Maynooth Students' Union, clarifying the role and responsibilities of each and aligning our strategies for student life, clubs and societies, and student support.*	VPA/ Bursar
14.	Develop transparent and easily accessed information about University policies and procedures for addressing student complaints, appeals, as well as plagiarism.	Short term: Strengthen the University policies page Long term: Strategic Plan 3:. *Revised academic policies, rules and regulations.* 4.2.1 *We will take an integrated whole-of-university approach to student administration and supports, considering the lifecycle needs of each category of student (undergraduate and postgraduate, full-time and part-time, domestic and international, traditional and access) and ensuring that policies, processes, systems and supports meet the differing needs of an increasingly diverse student cohort.* 7.1.5 *We will bring together and review our policies that guide teaching and learning to create a single integrated Teaching and Learning Policy framework.*	University Executive
15.	Engage in an institution-wide evaluation of all the data requirements necessary, existing and new, to build a robust infrastructure that can support the new Strategic Plan.	See key recommendation 4	

	Recommendation	Short term actions and longer term goals of the Strategic Plan 2018-22	Responsible
16.	Develop a strategy for improving the quality of its website that is appropriate for the new Strategic Plan and for engaging the audiences important to its future.	Short term: Review the university website, once IT resources become available. Long term: Strategic Plan 10.2.1: *We will reorganise the IT Services function and funding model to support a dual approach to IT governance and service delivery, balancing operational IT (managing the stability, security and accuracy of existing systems) with agile IT (focusing on innovation, adaptability and speed to develop new solutions).*	Dir External Relations.
17.	That in advance of collaborative overseas partnerships commencing with student enrolments, clear protocols and processes regarding the quality of teaching provision are put in place, to ensure that quality is assured and maintained.	Ensure that the planned courses in FZU are taught by suitably qualified staff, and in line with MU curriculum and processes Strategic Plan 5.2.5: *We will offer MU or joint programmes with international strategic partner universities provided (i) we can be assured of the quality and academic capacity of the partner and the programmes; (ii) the successful provision of the programmes will enhance the profile and reputation of Maynooth University; and (iii) the partnership is financially sustainable.*	Dean FSE
18.	Consider driving forward institutionally-led strategies for enhancement, particularly in the following areas: internal communication, procedures for student feedback on courses and programmes, staff development and performance management programmes, as well as oversight of staff workloads, the continued enhancement of teaching and learning, the platform for information technology and data analysis, as well as the University website.	See key recommendations 2, 3, 4 and 5	

	Recommendation	Short term actions and longer term goals of the Strategic Plan 2018-22	Responsible
19.	Establish a University widening participation committee to ensure the long-term sustainability of the widening participation success of the University.	Review the oversight of widening participation and recommend an appropriate governance structure. Long term: Strategic Plan 6.1.1: *We will appoint a Vice-President for Equality and Diversity, and establish an oversight structure and cross-functional implementation team to advance, in an integrated manner, equality, diversity, inclusion and interculturalism across the entire University community.* *2. We will take an institution-wide approach to ensure that the principles of equality, diversity, inclusion and interculturalism are considered in all aspects of the University strategy, policy, processes, systems and functions.*	VP Equality Diversity and Inclusion.
20.	Dedicate further services for international students with a focus on integration within the Maynooth University student body.	Short term: Review the supports and services provided for incoming international students. Long term: Strategic Plan 5.4.1 *We will take a student life-cycle approach to the provision of services in support of incoming and outgoing students*.	Director International.