Institutional
Review Report 2025

South East Technological University (SETU)

CINNTE

**Dearbhú Cáilíochta
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann**
Quality and
Qualifications Ireland

Contents

Foreword

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training in Ireland. One of QQI's most important functions is to ensure that the quality assurance (QA) procedures that institutions have in place are effective. To this end, QQI carries out external reviews of higher education institutions on a cyclical basis. This current QQI cycle of reviews is called the CINNTE cycle. CINNTE reviews are an element of the broader quality framework for institutions composed of Quality Assurance Guidelines; each institution's Quality Assurance Procedures; Annual Quality Reports (AQRs); and Dialogue Meetings. The CINNTE review cycle runs from 2017-2024. During this period, QQI organises and oversees independent reviews of each of the universities, the institutes of technology and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI).

Each CINNTE review evaluates the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of each institution. The review measures each institution's compliance with European standards for quality assurance, regard to the expectations set out in the QQI quality assurance guidelines or their equivalent, and adherence to other relevant QQI policies and procedures. CINNTE reviews also explore how institutions have enhanced their teaching, learning and research and their quality assurance systems and how well institutions have aligned their approach to their own mission, quality indicators and benchmarks.

The CINNTE review process is in keeping with Parts 2 and 3 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) and based on the internationally accepted and recognised approach to reviews, including:

- the publication of Terms of Reference;
- a process of self-evaluation and Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER);
- an external assessment and site visit by a team of reviewers;
- the publication of a Review Report including findings and recommendations; and
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken.

This QQI CINNTE review of South East Technological University (SETU) was conducted by an independent review team in line with the Terms of Reference in Appendix A. This is the report of the findings of the review team. It also includes the response of SETU to the report.

The Review Team

Each CINNTE review is carried out by an international team of independent experts and peers. The 2024 institutional review of South East Technological University was conducted by a team of six reviewers selected by QQI. The review team was trained by QQI on 17 July 2024. The Chair and Coordinating Reviewer undertook a planning meeting online with South East Technological University on 19 August 2024. The main review visit was conducted by the full team at SETU campuses in Waterford and Carlow between 7 October and 11 October 2024.

CHAIR
Professor Maria Hinfelaar

Professor Maria Hinfelaar is a Dutch native with four decades of international experience in tertiary education. Most recently, she was Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of Wrexham University in the UK, where she completed an 8-year term. She led a team which increased UK and international enrolments and strengthened links with industry and the community, in line with the university's strategy to be an anchor institution for the region. She was successful in expanding the academic portfolio at Wrexham, including the provision of a suite of healthcare programmes commissioned by the Welsh government. Prior to her time in Wales, Maria was President of Limerick Institute of Technology (now the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS)) for nearly 12 years, where she initiated significant development of the institute, adding campus locations in Limerick and Tipperary. Alongside her senior leadership roles, Maria has significant board experience in the education sector such as EduCampus in its setup phase and the QAA as the designated body for QA in the UK. She has also served on the boards of regional agencies both in Ireland and in Wales seeking to develop and promote the economies of their areas, including the North Wales Economic Ambition Board which oversaw a government investment package of £240m. She has always taken a keen interest in how universities engage with industry and the community, and has published research papers on that topic. She holds an undergraduate degree from Leiden University and postgraduate degrees from Leicester University. Her PhD with Maastricht University investigated successes and failures in international retailing and was also published as a book. She is a Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales and of the Higher Education Academy UK. Professor Maria Hinfelaar has recently commenced a term as the Independent Chair of Academic and Professional Council, Griffith College, which has campuses in Dublin, Cork and Limerick. She is an experienced QQI reviewer and has joined Advance HE UK/Ireland to support them with upcoming governance reviews in the sector.

COORDINATING REVIEWER
Dr Fabrizio Trifiro

Dr Fabrizio Trifiro is an international expert in quality assurance and international education. Fabrizio was for over 10 years with the UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), where he led on the quality assurance of transnational education (TNE), strategic international engagement and the international student experience. After the QAA he joined UK ENIC-NARIC to lead stakeholder engagement and the development of services to support the recognition of less traditional modes of learning with a focus on TNE. Fabrizio has acted as a reviewer and consultant for a range of international quality assurance bodies and sector bodies, and has established Q-intled, an independent consulting agency working with education providers, regulators, and sector bodies around the world to unlock the progressive potential of international education. More recently, he has been appointed as Programme Director of the Education World Forum, the world's largest gathering of ministers of education and skills now under the stewardship of Times Higher Education. Fabrizio is a member of the Board of Directors of the International Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (INQAAHE), a member of the Accreditation Committee of the British Accreditation Council (BAC), a member of the Governing Board of Wrexham University, and he is an advisor to the International Education Sustainability Group. Fabrizio holds a PhD in Cultural Studies from the University of London, a MSc in Comparative Research Methods from the University of Sussex,

an MA in International Human Rights from the University of Bologna, and an integrated master's in philosophy from the University of Bologna. He held a post-doctoral fellowship at Trinity College Dublin with the Institute of International Integration Studies.

INTERNATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE REPRESENTATIVE
Dr Petter Aasen

Dr Petter Aasen is a professor of educational science at the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN). His professional career has been divided between academic scholarship and leadership roles. Petter has served as a professor, head of department, dean, CEO, and president/rector at various higher education and research institutions in Norway, including the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, the University of South-Eastern Norway, and the Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education. His research interests encompass the relationship between society and education, education policy, education research policy, the role of research in policy-making and educational practice, and the connection between government policy and educational reforms.Petter has engaged in international research collaborations and partnerships between higher education and research institutions. He has been a member of international teams evaluating education systems and higher education and research institutions in countries such as Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain, Ireland, and for the OECD.

LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE
Nanshin Nansak

Nanshin Nansak is a PhD researcher at Atlantic Technological University (ATU) Sligo, focusing on the mathematical and computational modelling of bioresorbable polymeric implants. Nanshin serves as the postgraduate students' representative at the Student Union of ATU Sligo, advocating for the interests of postgraduate students on different issues. Nanshin is also an NTUTORR Student Champion at ATU, where he collaborates with the student support services and the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) to develop a financial readiness toolkit for students. Nanshin has previous experience in quality assurance review, including programme validation for a Postgraduate Diploma/Master of Business in Sustainability for the Service Industry. Nanshin has over 7 years of teaching and research experience in Mathematics.

QUALITY ASSURANCE REPRESENTATIVE
Dr Rachel Keegan

Dr Rachel Keegan is the Director of Quality and Institutional Research at Dublin City University (DCU). Working closely with the Quality Promotion Committee (QPC) and the university's senior management, Rachel plays a crucial role in developing and managing DCU's quality assurance policies and procedures, ensuring they align with statutory requirements and international best practices. In her role as Director, Rachel has oversight of DCU's cyclical programme of quality reviews and directs the periodic review of quality assurance and enhancement policies and procedures. She coordinates DCU's approach to institutional research and reporting and represents the university on several external bodies. Rachel has been with DCU since 2004, holding various positions across the university, including in the Office of the Vice-President for Academic Affairs, the Graduate Studies Office, and DCU Business School.

INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVE
Cathy Kearney

Cathy Kearney is an experienced HR Business Consultant based in Dublin, working with clients in the private and public sectors. Cathy has previously held HR business leadership roles with large organisations such as Dunnes Stores and BWG Foods. During the Covid-19 pandemic, she led the BWG Foods and Retail Ireland Skillnet response to support the retail sector throughout Ireland. Cathy possesses a deep understanding of HR best practices and is dedicated to people development and skills-based learning that supports career development. Knowledgeable and competent in leading key HR initiatives, Cathy has been to the forefront of implementing transformation and crisis management in previous roles. Cathy is a lifelong learner and most recently completed an MSc in Talent, Leadership, & HR Strategy from Dublin City University (DCU). Cathy is a member of the Digitalisation and Skills Working Group at the Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Employment (DETE), a former Employer Ambassador for Generation Apprenticeship and former Chair of Retail Ireland Skillnet Steering Group. Cathy played a key role in the establishment of the Apprenticeship in Retail Supervision in Ireland.

Section 1

Introduction and Context

Introduction and Context

SUMMARY

South East Technological University (SETU) was established in May 2022 under the Technological Universities Act (2018). As a newly established university, SETU also builds upon the legacies of its antecedent institutions, Waterford Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology Carlow. It is the only university in the South East region, thereby fulfilling a key objective of the 2018 legislation to create universities of and for their regions. This fundamental principle enshrined in legislation is embedded in SETU's strategic plan 2023-2028, Connecting for Impact (hereafter the Strategic Plan), which sets out how SETU aims to deliver for the South East of Ireland through its taught programmes and research portfolio, as well as its extensive engagement activities. The strategic plan articulates a vision to 'be a leading global university with transformative impact on our community, the South East of Ireland and beyond'. Underpinning values place a strong emphasis on being student-centred and acting collaboratively, while embracing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) and sustainability principles.

The development of the strategic plan was seen as an opportunity to galvanise the SETU community at an early stage, creating an agreed path forward. During the main review visit, the review team heard in various sessions of multiple opportunities for staff, students and stakeholders to participate in the strategic planning process. A clear awareness by stakeholders of what is in the plan was also confirmed during the visit. Now that it has been adopted, a transparent structure has been put in place by the President with Executive Management Team leads for each strategic objective and set of actions. Progress is being captured on a key performance indicators (KPI) dashboard, with reports being made to Governing Body in each quarter.

The strategic plan is seen as the key driver for resource prioritisation. Investment proposals will only go ahead if there is a clear fit with agreed strategic goals, for instance SETU's sharp focus on regional skills needs, building research capacity or improving the student experience. There was strong alignment between the ISER and the strategic plan, and this was followed almost immediately by the process to develop and agree the Performance Agreement (2024-2028) with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) under the national system performance framework. This agreement is subject to a cycle of annual strategic dialogue and review. The review team noted that the Performance Agreement presents clear evidence of consistency and coherence with the SETU strategic plan, mapping the objectives and metrics across both documents. This will enable SETU's Governing Body and the Executive Management Team to track the university's performance and make any required adjustments.

Commendation:

- The review team commends the SETU Executive on its structured approach post-merger, including the development of the strategic plan 2023-2028 Connecting for Impact which has resulted in clear prioritisation and target-setting, the Executive ownership of the plan and its dissemination. This strategic focus is also reflected in the ISER and the Performance Agreement with the HEA.

PROFILE

SETU is the only university in the South East region of Ireland, with around 18,000 enrolments and just over 1500 staff (SETU Institutional Profile, 2024). Roughly one third of students are part-time, which is the second-highest proportion for HEIs in Ireland. 47%, by far the largest percentage of students, are studying for Level 8 honours degrees. Research masters and doctoral students still make up only a small percentage of enrolments (3.2% combined), however, numbers have been rising

steadily over the past few years. In line with the Technological Universities Act (2018), SETU's ambition is to grow PhD numbers by 40% over the lifetime of the strategic plan. This is be achieved while also maintaining or growing enrolments on other award types, such as apprenticeships and higher certificates, which are a critical part of the TU remit under government policy. SETU also delivers collaborative programmes with a significant number of educational partners, often at national level. International student recruitment has recovered post-Covid-19, and the aspiration is to grow this activity further.

Taught programmes and research at SETU span a wide range of domains: Business, Health, Engineering, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Agriculture, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Education, Arts and Humanities. This portfolio is delivered across three main sites in Carlow, Waterford and Wexford. Not all sites offer programmes in all SETU subject areas. There appears, however, to be some duplication of provision which may be in line with local demand, pending a portfolio review. The review team heard during the main review visit that SETU has adopted a philosophy of not designating anywhere as the "main" campus, with senior leaders dividing their time between locations. This is further evidenced by staff and students embracing the new identity and brand.

SETU draws the majority of its full-time students from counties in the South East. However, the university is challenged by the considerable outward migration of young people who are studying at institutions outside the region. SETU recognises that the number of students leaving the South East to study compares unfavourably to other regions in Ireland which retain the majority of their students. The ISER, the institutional profile (IP), the strategic plan and the Performance Agreement with the HEA (2024) are consistent in stating SETU's aspiration to address this issue. There is an expectation that, over time, expansion of the academic portfolio coupled with its university status will have a positive impact on SETU's ability to attract and retain students. At this early stage, there is no evidence yet of any uplift in student numbers, but progress has been made with the

addition of some courses that are expected to generate demand: Veterinary Science and Pharmacy were announced as new programmes commissioned from SETU by the Irish government around the time of the review team visit.

External stakeholders who met with the review team echoed SETU's concerns with regard to the outward migration of talent, and a strong desire to work with the university to tackle this shared problem. As will be explained in later sections of this report, SETU has an existing track record of research, innovation and skills training, all of which involve close collaboration with industry and the community in the region. There are ambitious regional plans for economic development, identifying specific sectors of the economy where the South East wishes to be competitive on the global stage. All stakeholders spoke highly of their experience in working with the antecedent institutions before the establishment of SETU, and also expressed confidence in SETU's continued strategic commitment and responsiveness to their organisations and to the wider regional agenda as a true anchor institution, which would help the region to achieve its ambitions.

Commendations:

- The review team commends SETU on its multi-campus ethos as a newly merged technological university (TU) and its efforts to establish that ethos across the entire university community. This has resulted in in a genuine commitment, buy-in and sense of pride in SETU as the new identity.
- The review team commends SETU on the regional support it enjoys as an anchor institution, and its commitment to driving the success of the South East of Ireland as a global leader in specific areas of the economy.

CONTEXT

At the time of the review, SETU was still in the process of reconfiguring structures and systems under a Change Management Framework launched by the President and rolled out through

workshops across the university. This framework visualises and facilitates the steps involved in interpreting and implementing the strategic plan, particularly focusing on how operations can be unified. A new organisational design is key to this change programme, including the redefinition of vice-presidents' roles, the consolidation into cross-campus academic Faculties and the creation of a new layer of senior vice-presidents to strengthen the governance model. These three new posts have been approved by the Governing Body, but at the time of the main review visit they were awaiting sanction at government level.

Other constraints which SETU, and other TUs, contend with, include the absence of a borrowing framework for capital development and the inability to appoint academic staff to professorial grade. These issues are being discussed at national level. It is also noted that the sector has benefited from enabling funding schemes provided by government such as the TU Transformation Fund and various capital grants; these are documented in the ISER.

Commendation:

- The review team commends SETU on its post-merger organisational design, involving the creation of a new senior vice-president layer. The review team understands that the implementation of this organisational design is pending, subject to government approval.

APPROACH

The ISER was developed and completed barely two years into the formation of SETU, so many of the goals and objectives stated in the ISER and mirrored in the strategic plan are aspirational and it is at this stage not yet possible to do a factual assessment of whether they have all been achieved. However, the review team took the view that, where credible plans were in place and were articulated in documentation as well as at meetings during our visit, the trajectory appeared positive. However, the review team was also able to identify challenges which may have an impact on some of the more ambitious goals and these are identified
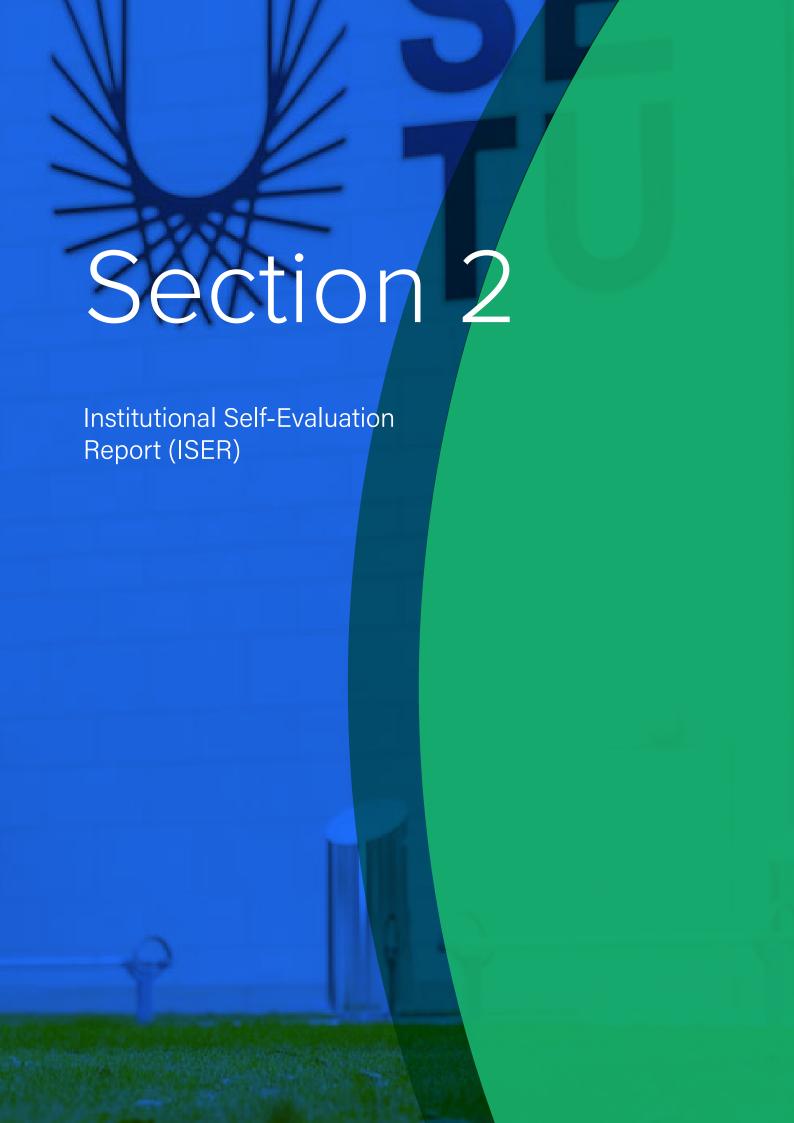
appropriately throughout this report.

The Students' Union is represented at governing body level and through regular meetings with the Executive has had an input into the strategic plan and the ISER. It has been helpful that the two separate student unions under the precursor institutions were proactive in merging their respective organisations as soon as SETU was formed. SETU SU also mirrors the senior leadership team at SETU through a visible presence on all campuses.

The review team met with 195 staff, governors, students and external stakeholders over 29 sessions during the 5-day review visit in October 2024. The review team was provided with key documentation and additional evidence in advance of the visit alongside the ISER, for which the team was very grateful. The team considered its engagement with the SETU community as open, constructive, focused – and, importantly, imbued with enthusiasm and excitement about the opportunities that lie ahead for SETU as a newly forged university. There is also a clear sense that there is still a long way to travel. The ISER itself articulates reflections and directions for further development and improvements in the key areas under the CINNTE Review remit. In that context, the review team has adopted a constructively critical approach and sincerely hopes that the commendations and recommendations presented in this report will serve to enhance what SETU will have to offer in coming years.

Commendation:

- The review team commends SETU on the strong relationship between the Students' Union and the SETU Executive, and the proactive way in which the SU has set up one cohesive structure.

Section 2

Institutional Self-Evaluation
Report (ISER)

Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)

METHODOLOGY

SETU's ISER provides a comprehensive and self-reflective account of the journey that the university has embarked on to become a successful multi-campus technological university for the South East. Building on the strategic plan, the ISER reflects on the measures SETU needs to establish in order to achieve its strategic objectives, and on the main internal and external challenges it faces as it proceeds to align the policies, procedures, structures, and cultures of two legacy institutions.

After introducing the university and its strategy, and the process adopted in developing the document, the ISER outlines the developing management and governance system and quality assurance framework, the various actions and initiatives SETU is undertaking to safeguard and enhance the student experience, how it engages with external stakeholders to realise its regional and global mandate, and its plans to strengthen its research environment, culture and outputs. The ISER concludes by setting out a series of priority areas and recommendations for SETU, as it continues to progress the merger of institutions in compliance with QQI's guidelines for newly formed technological universities and broader national expectations as set out in the Technological Universities Act (2018).

The ISER states that 'the University considers institutional review to be an integral part of its ongoing quality assurance processes'. The review team was able to confirm this during the main review visit, commending SETU on the constructive spirit across the institution in which it engaged with the CINNTE review process, including the development of the ISER document. The review team saw evidence that SETU used the ISER-creation process as an opportunity for open and constructive cross-campus engagement, bringing different communities together to share good practice, and identifying challenges and priority areas in the implementation of the university's strategic plan.

An ISER Steering Committee was established, chaired by the President, reflecting the highest-level oversight and ownership of the process. University-wide involvement was secured through the formation of seven working groups in key areas aligned with the objectives of the CINNTE review: Quality Framework; Academic Delivery; Academic Administration and Information Systems; Learner Experience; Research and Innovation; People; and Engagement – Regional and International. Membership of these working groups, totalling almost 100 people, was drawn from various stakeholders and key committees across the university.

The ISER Steering Committee consulted widely with the student body as part of the ISER process. SETU's Students' Union was represented in working groups, and the President of the Students' Union was a member of the ISER Steering Committee. A number of feedback sessions with students was undertaken as part of the Learner Experience working group. A pilot Student Consultation Group was organised with representatives from two undergraduate programmes. SETU plans to embed this initiative across its academic programmes in the future.

The sharing of the initial draft of the ISER was through a webinar, which also facilitated the

collection of feedback from all key stakeholders. The final ISER draft was presented in a follow-up webinar to provide an update on the changes made. The final document was presented to SETU's Academic Council for initial approval and submitted to SETU's Governing Body for final approval. Once finalised, the ISER was published on the SETU website to share widely with the SETU community and external stakeholders. The ISER was also published in hard copy to support stakeholder engagement during the main review visit, facilitating reference to the document during meetings.
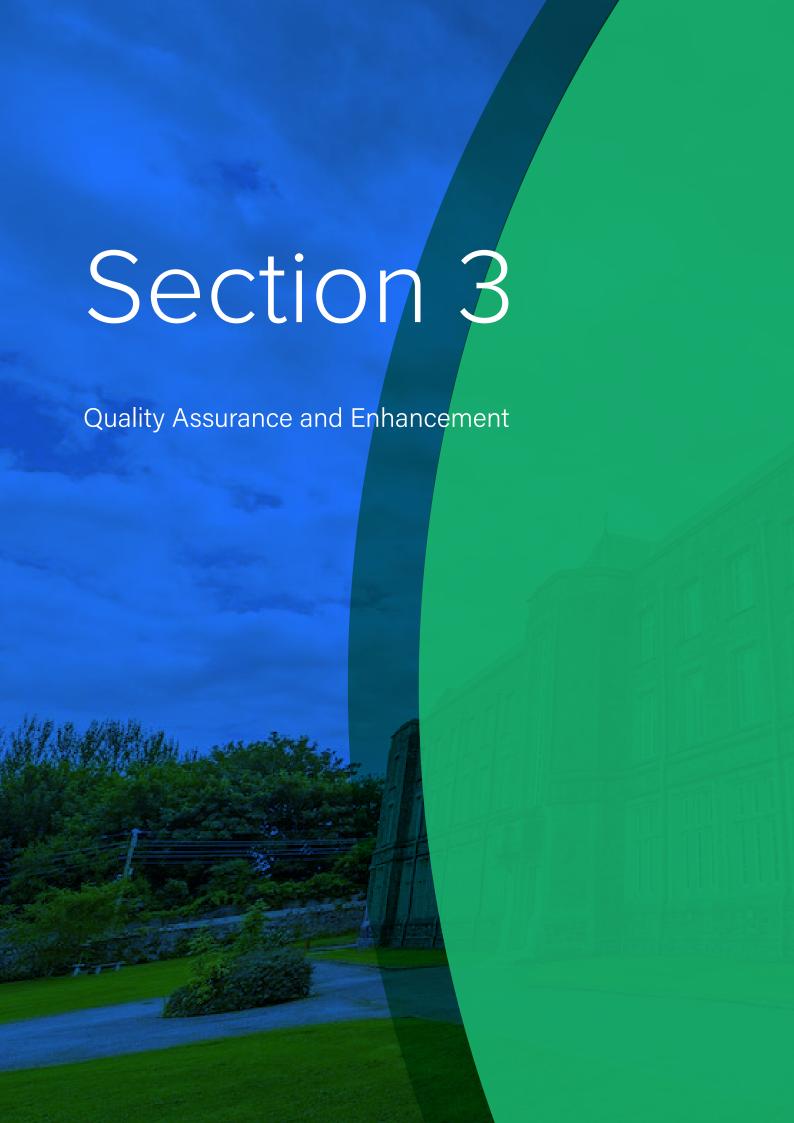
The review team is satisfied that the ISER incorporates broad consultation with internal and external stakeholders, especially students, and that it demonstrates evidence of leadership at all relevant levels of the university. The review team is also satisfied that the development of the ISER is in line with QQI guidelines regarding an institution's engagement practices during the development of the ISER and the CINNTE review process. The review team found the ISER clear, rigorous and evidence-based, informed by wide consultation, self-reflective and providing an honest evaluation of the strengths and weakness of the university. The ISER is well aligned with the objectives of the CINNTE review, it is informed by strategic planning and sets out recommendations for improvements to inform future plans.

The ISER is ambitious in tone and future oriented, reflecting the initial phases of SETU's journey towards a unified multi-campus university. The review team agrees that the 16 overarching recommendations for improvement set out in the ISER identify critical areas for the successful implementation of SETU's strategic objectives and for meeting broader national expectations for the successful establishment of technological universities. However further work is necessary to translate these recommendations into a viable workplan that identifies interdependencies and priority actions, timeframes and required resources. The review team acknowledges that this work of prioritisation has already started, and SETU has shared supplementary work-in-progress documentation that sets out prioritisation of work in aligning areas around specific SETU policies.

The external resource environment, including for example the capability to recruit at full professor grade and the availability of a borrowing framework for technological universities will play a critical role in supporting SETU in this journey, and the ISER provides a realistic assessment of both internal and external challenges.

Commendation:

- The review team commends the university on the constructive approach it adopted in engaging with the ISER. This illustrates its intention and commitment to use the CINNTE review process as an opportunity for collective self-reflection and to inform continuous improvement.

Section 3

Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Quality Assurance/ Accountability

OBJECTIVE 1: CURRENT QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

The evidence presented in the ISER's supplementary documentation and annual quality reports (AQRs), along with conversations with SETU representatives during the main review visit, confirm that SETU has made significant initial progress in establishing a unitary quality assurance and governance framework and associated structures since its establishment as a technological university (TU) in 2022. While largely descriptive, the ISER provides evidence of significant progress in establishing appropriate and effective quality structures, policies, regulations and procedures. Furthermore, the alignment of the recommendations identified by SETU in the ISER to the SETU Strategic Plan, Connecting for Impact, demonstrates a clear roadmap for the university as it continues to establish itself.

Whilst SETU's governance structures are new, and some senior roles have yet to be approved or filled, the review team was impressed by the level of awareness across the institution regarding areas of responsibility and reporting lines for quality assurance and enhancement. The ISER details clear and transparent quality governance and management structures. The emphasis on openness and transparency is notable. The development of a Joint Quality Committee places quality at the centre of SETU's activities. However, as these structures are still bedding in, they will require ongoing monitoring and review as SETU evolves and matures.

SETU has undertaken significant efforts in developing the SETU Quality Framework[1] and a new comprehensive set of Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes[2]. The review team was reassured by the details provided in supplementary documentation, which shows an alignment of core academic policy and processes, including access, transfer and progression (ATP); recognition of prior learning (RPL), assessment; credit accumulation and awards. Additionally, SETU provided evidence of a clear path for continued policy, regulatory and procedural alignment.

An area identified by the review team where there is still significant work to do is in academic integration. SETU has inherited a suite of offerings that include duplicate programmes and award titles across campus locations. As it stands, programmes are still running with their original modular structures and learning outcomes. This has yet to be addressed. The review team understands that academic integration is included in the Programme Portfolio project. This will involve alignment of content in the context of regional needs and student demand, and coherent streamlining of assessment and delivery frameworks to ensure consistent quality and standards across delivery sites. The project was due to initiate at the time of the main review visit, with key appointments being made to lead the process. The review team deems this a critical area for development that requires urgent action.

Principle 2 in the SETU Quality Framework states that 'the approval of programmes should involve input from relevant stakeholders through validation panels, who will be independent of the programme...' and that 'academic approval for programmes will rest with Academic Council' (pg. 11). Supplementary documentation provided with the ISER details the two-stage university review and validation process. Programme validation reports are publicly available on the SETU website. An overarching Policy for Programme Development and Validation is currently in development. Overall, based on the documentation provided, the review team is satisfied that comprehensive procedures

[1] https://www.setu.ie/Craft/assets/policies/SETU-Quality-Framework.pdf

[2] https://www.setu.ie/Craft/assets/policies/Academic-Regulations-for-Taught-Programmes-2024-2025.pdf

are in place for the approval, monitoring and review of academic programmes and that these are being effectively implemented.

It is evident that SETU has adopted an approach to the alignment of regulation, policy and practice which is self-reflective, evidence-based and considers areas of best practice across both the antecedent institutions and externally. This was evidenced not only in the ISER but also through many of the discussions with SETU colleagues who have aligned, or are in the process of aligning, their respective activities, programmes and services. Furthermore, the establishment of the Centre for Organisational Research, Data and Analysis (CORDA) in the President's Office verifies the university's commitment to evidence-informed strategic planning, decision making and quality assurance.

SETU's commitment to quality assurance and enhancement is evident in the ISER, the AQRs and the new strategic plan, which commits to a student-centred education, the promotion of excellence and a collaborative and supportive culture. The ISER emphasises the importance of active engagement and collaboration in quality activities which 'fosters good governance, builds public trust and ensures the University remains fit for purpose in a changing environment' (pg. 21). The review team heard many examples of this collaborative, quality culture in practice during the main review visit and there were many examples of good practice in SETU from across programmes, departments, support and service units, research and external engagement activities. SETU's commitment to a student-centred education was also evidenced in many meetings. However, as later sections in this report will address, some inconsistencies in the quality of the student experience across different student profiles, programmes, campuses and modes of study still need to be ironed out.

Overall, the review team is satisfied that SETU quality assurance procedures are effective and appropriately aligned with the European Standards and Guidelines (2015) and have regard to QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016).

Commendation:

• The review team commends SETU on the significant initial progress made in establishing a unitary quality assurance and governance framework and appropriate and effective quality structures, policies, regulations and procedures.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Since its establishment in May 2022, several key quality assurance governance structures have been established that align with SETU's ambition to be a regionally impactful and globally connected university. In addition to new SETU committee structures, several new senior leadership roles have been filled, with further roles identified and approved, but pending government approval.

SETU's Governing Body and Academic Council were established in 2022, in accordance with the provisions of the Technology Universities Act (2018). Governing Body has overall oversight of the university, and a competency framework has been established to ensure membership includes an appropriate diversity of expertise. Seven committees/subcommittees of Governing Body have also been established to support its work. This approach is consistent in the Irish HE sector. In 2024, SETU undertook an internal review of the effectiveness of its Governing Body and have committed to undertake an external review of effectiveness by an independent third party at a later stage. The university is also committed to replicating this good practice across other committee structures in the future.

In accordance with the Technological Universities Act (2018), Academic Council has oversight of the academic affairs of the university. As detailed in the ISER, 'Academic Council is responsible for the academic governance of SETU and reports, as relevant, to Governing Body, while schools/faculties have a reporting line to Academic Council on academic matters; these reporting lines ensure the flow of relevant information and allow governance oversight' (pg. 15). All minutes of Governing Body[3] and Academic Council[4] are published on the SETU

[3] https://www.setu.ie/about/governance-and-management/
governing-body/members-documents-agendas-minutes

website and a number of university-wide webinars have been organised by the President and Chair of Governing Body to ensure visibility of activities. While there is a published schedule of meetings for the Academic Council and its committees, with papers due to be circulated by the Council Secretary every Thursday before meetings allowing three full working days, SETU colleagues noted that late circulation of some papers also occurred and might hamper members in their preparation.

The new Academic Council structure was established following the work of a design group, whose role was to 'recommend a structure that connects SETU with national and international best thinking in the academic governance space' (ISER, pg. 19). To date, four sub-committees of Academic Council have been established: Taught Studies Programmes, Teaching and Learning Committee; Research and Research Programmes Committee; Student Experience Committee; and Joint Quality Committee (JQC).

The Taught Studies Programme, Teaching and Learning Committee has a broad remit, covering strategic and policy matters, as well as regulatory, academic quality assurance and procedural matters. The committee is tasked with maintaining close oversight of faculty-level matters, while focusing on strategic and policy issues. The committee also has responsibility for undergraduate programmes. Currently, all quality assurance processes, from routine to significant, pass through this committee. Given this broad remit, the committee's Terms of Reference will require continued monitoring as the new SETU structures evolve and mature.

The JQC will ensure that quality sits at the centre of university business, with oversight by both Governing Body and Academic Council. This committee is responsible 'for ensuring the overall Quality of the university based upon reviews of aggregated data and other information and through its interaction with relevant university bodies arising from reviews' (University Joint Quality Committee, Terms of Reference[5]).

The JQC is in its early stages, but work has begun on agreeing its initial focus. At the time of the main review visit, one academic unit and one thematic area had been identified for review. During the visit, the committee was described as an emerging concept. The review team is of the view that work is needed to build awareness of the committee's role and remit, and to determine the best ways to engage and communicate with stakeholders. The current membership includes four members of Governing Body (including one external Governing Body member as Chairperson), three members of Academic Council, the Vice-Presidents for Academic Affairs, Teaching and Learning and Research, Innovation and Impact and two students (one undergraduate and one postgraduate). Two additional members may also be co-opted. While the current membership is narrow, SETU is open to reviewing and broadening membership in the future. The review team suggests that any review might consider the inclusion of representatives of service and professional units and faculty representatives.

The structures put in place by SETU for the management and governance of quality assurance are consistent with those in the sector. Terms of Reference for all committees of the Academic Council are published on the SETU website. There are no published Terms of Reference specific to Academic Council. However, the published Academic Council procedures specify that 'the legislation as pertaining to the SETU Academic Council, including the functions of Academic Council, is set out in s.16 and s.17 of the Technological Universities Act (2018)'.

At the time of the review visit, the university had not yet established new procedures for collaborative and linked provision. Consequently, the procedures of the antecedent institutions continue to be applied during this interim period. The ISER documents that these new procedures will be developed 'as part of the SETU internal quality assurance infrastructure' (pg. 87) but the responsibilities and levels of approval to be applied in a newly established university have yet to be determined. The review team is of the view that SETU may benefit from adopting explicit Terms of Reference for the Academic Council, particularly in defining the committee's responsibilities regarding the approval and oversight of procedures for collaborative and linked provision.

[4] https://www.setu.ie/about/governance-and-management/academic-council

[5] https://www.setu.ie/Craft/assets/policies/Joint-Quality-Committee-Terms-of-Reference-and-Membership.pdf

In February 2023, Governing Body approved a new SETU Quality Framework that sets out an overarching framework for the university. The framework will guide SETU in establishing further policies, regulations and procedures relating to quality assurance and quality enhancement activities. The framework principles are closely aligned to the European Standards and Guidelines (2015).

The university is committed to the creation of a single, unified regulatory framework using a staged and risk-focused approach (ISER, pg. 22). Supplementary documentation provided to the review team demonstrates that much has been progressed to date and there is a clear roadmap for further development. The review team noted the significant volume and complexity of policy, frameworks, regulations and procedures in development over a short period, as well as new quality governance structures leading on these developments. During the main review visit, staff and students described challenges in navigating the new regulatory and procedural processes and in locating the relevant and most up to date documentation on the SETU website. It would therefore be helpful for SETU to promote the single location to access such documents, and to communicate this clearly.

Despite SETU being at an early stage of establishment, the review team found there was strong awareness and buy-in for the new SETU structures, the SETU 'brand' and the new strategic plan. During the main review team visit, conversations indicated a notable level of openness and transparency, particularly led by senior leadership. This approach has fostered a sense of trust and buy-in among SETU colleagues, in particular at the level of Heads of Faculty. During the main review visit, Heads of Faculty described their involvement in the development of the ISER, the new strategic plan and the establishment of new SETU governance and management structures.

Significant progress has been made in creating six new faculties and work is at an advanced stage in developing management structures within each faculty. Heads of Faculty demonstrated a clear understanding of the new SETU organisation framework, a commitment to adopting consistent faculty structures and evidence of collaboration to ensure Academic Council policy is applied in a consistent manner. The review team suggests that SETU may benefit from developing a formal mechanism or forum to support Heads of Faculty in their roles, as the university structures continue to be developed and embedded. Such a mechanism would strengthen the good working relationships that already exists between the Heads as well as underpin, capture and follow up the work of a number of committees, supporting uniform policy implementation and management across the faculties.

During the main review visit, Heads of Department detailed their involvement and engagement in both the review process and the SETU strategic planning process. As key actors in the development of the new university, Heads of Department occupy a key position between strategy and operations. They are responsible for operationalising the strategic plan at the department level, fostering a new SETU culture, interpreting and disseminating new policies, navigating new systems and processes, and managing several key administrative functions. The review team suggests that SETU would benefit from a review of the broad remit of Heads of Department with a view to considering the balance between their strategic, governance, and operational responsibilities, with particular attention to the heavy administrative burden. The review team recommends in particular that SETU establish structures to strengthen the academic governance lines (horizontally and vertically) from senior leadership to Heads of Department, thus empowering Heads of Department as strategic, operational and governance agents.

Commendations:

- The review team commends the ethos of openness and transparency adopted by senior leadership in its approach to the development of the new strategic plan, the establishment of new management and governance structures and in the development of the ISER.
- The review team commends the establishment of the Joint Quality Committee of Governing

Body and Academic Council. Placing responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement with SETU senior leadership demonstrates a strong commitment to upholding the highest of standards and fostering a culture of continuous improvement across the university.

Recommendations:

• The review team recommends that SETU further promote the single location for accessing policy and regulatory documents and consider the most appropriate, accessible and effective channels for communicating policy developments to staff, students and other SETU stakeholders.
• The review team recommends that SETU establish structures to strengthen the academic governance lines (horizontally and vertically) from senior leadership to Heads of Department, thus empowering Heads of Department as strategic, operational and governance agents.

PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

SETU offers programmes and awards across a wide range of disciplinary areas, from Levels 6 to 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Currently, several overlapping programmes and awards are currently offered across the Waterford, Wexford and Carlow campuses. The university has two key and interrelated projects commencing shortly: the establishment of a new academic delivery framework and an academic portfolio integration project. These two initiatives will review the coherence of the programme portfolio and its delivery across campus sites, and consider overlaps, duplications or variations in teaching and learning offerings across the antecedent institution locations.

The ISER (Case Study 2.3, pg. 24) outlines the approach to establishing the new academic delivery framework, led by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Teaching and Learning and involving engagement with senior academics across four international universities. The new framework will address matters relating to modularisation, semesterisation and the delivery, support and assessment of student learning. During the main review visit, it was confirmed that the university has agreed on a work plan with a completion date towards the end of the current 2024/25 academic year. The review team considers this work to be critical to the successful roll-out of other key projects in SETU, in particular, the academic portfolio integration project and the merging of antecedent student record systems.

The academic portfolio integration project was set to commence shortly after the main review visit, with the appointment of three academic leads having recently been approved. These internal, senior academic appointments will require support and buy-in from Heads of Faculty and senior leadership to progress this necessary work in alignment with the strategic ambitions of the university. Close engagement with the newly established CORDA unit will also be required to support evidence-informed decision-making. Additionally, the success of this project is heavily reliant on the successful integration of the student record system, the establishment of a new academic delivery framework and other inter-connected systems, structures, processes and supports.

The university is currently developing a Programme Development and Approval Policy to be implemented in the current 2024/25 academic year. A Policy on the Principles of Academic Delivery was also in development at the time of the main review visit.

Principle 2 of the new SETU Quality Framework commits to the development of programmes that 'is cognisant of national and international requirements and best practices; is inclusive of internal and external stakeholders' perspectives; considers the programme's relevance to stakeholders; reflects upon appropriate assessment methods in the context of learning outcomes to be achieved; and recognises the need to be learner-centred'.

While the review team cannot comment upon the yet-to-be-established SETU Policies on Programme Development and Approval and Academic Delivery, this overarching principle aligns with the approaches taken in the development and delivery of programmes within the antecedent institutions. Additionally, supplementary documentation provided to the review team suggests that SETU is committed to the inclusion of learners in the design, delivery and review of programmes.

The review team also noted that SETU can leverage its close connections with regional and national industry and education partners to inform and enhance curriculum development and review, enriching the experience of students, supporting their career readiness, and supporting the university's commitment to widening participation and life-long learning. This, as outlined further in this report's Other Parties Involved in Education and Training section, is commendable and is part of broader positive engagement with industry and education partners.

Principle 10 of the SETU Quality Framework states that 'measures should be in place for monitoring and periodically reviewing the university's programmes offered, to ensure they achieve their objectives'. Programme Boards are well established in the new SETU structure, however, SETU has yet to establish a new policy for cyclical review and the antecedent institutions' regulations and policies remain in place in the interim. The establishment of the JQC is a key step in leading the development of new policy and procedures for the review of programmes, academic and service areas in SETU.

The ISER also provided evidence of learners being involved in academic quality assurance processes through participation in programme development and review, the consideration of structured student feedback at the institution level (e.g. StudentSurvey. ie and the International Student Barometer) and an effective partnership model with the SETU Students' Union, including a class representative system. The planned establishment of the SETU 100 initiative, which will create an important and innovative way of collecting feedback from the diverse student body and facilitate co-creation, will further support the university in its commitment to a student-centred education which is fit for purpose and attends to the diversity of learners and their needs. During the main review visit, students provided many positive examples of engaging with and providing feedback to the university in established and more informal fora, but it was clear that learners are not always clear on how feedback is acted upon. The review team heard several examples of constructive feedback being provided on curriculum, teaching equipment, technical supports, library and catering facilities and placement but learners were often unsure if or how this feedback was acted upon. There was also evidence that feedback at the module and programme level happens in different ways, to differing extents and using a variety of mechanisms and fora.

Recommendations:

- The review team recommends that work on the academic portfolio integration project and the academic delivery framework progress as a matter of urgency, with appropriate support and resources.
- The review team recommends that SETU establish structured and routine mechanisms for gathering and responding to student feedback at the institution, programme and module levels, adopting a 'we asked, you said, we did' approach.

STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT

SETU's Strategic Plan sets out three staff-specific strategic objectives, under the category 'Our Staff', central to delivering the vision, mission, and values of SETU. The ISER commits to a phased and orderly achievement of these strategic objectives to support the multi-campus university in its transition to a new unitary structure. During the main review visit, this commitment was in evidence yet SETU also acknowledged that significant work remains. The university's appointment of a Vice-President for People, Culture & EDI is regarded by the review team as recognition of the value placed on staff in SETU.

Recruitment

A new Recruitment and Selection (R&S) Policy has been developed taking best practice from the antecedent institutions, with a view to uniformity of practice. The review team was told that this new policy has been communicated and is operational. All interviewers are provided with mandatory interview training, which includes the recruitment process, EDI and unconscious bias awareness training. Additionally, interviewers must undertake refresher interview training every three years.

Some elements of the R&S policy are yet to be fully implemented. For example, the review team heard that interviewing arrangements continue to follow the procedures of the antecedent institutions on the Carlow and Waterford campuses. A working group has been set up to gather feedback on best practice from staff with extensive interviewing experience and implementation of a standardised format for conducting interviews is a priority area for the newly appointed HR integration lead. The review team agrees with this priority area because it supports a systematic approach to a fair and transparent recruitment and selection process across SETU.

A newly developed cross-campus induction programme was launched in 2024. Staff new to the university since 2023 were invited to attend the first two scheduled sessions, where feedback was reported as positive. The HR department communicated that they are committed to delivering this new induction programme on a quarterly basis. The review team suggests that SETU assess the induction programme for its accessibility, consistency, and frequency in supporting the recruitment process and employee experience.

Staff exit interviews were discussed in the context of better understanding why staff may be leaving their employment in SETU. There does not appear to be an established policy or practice regarding exit interviews. Further consideration of the current process for exit interviews is suggested, given the benefits of implementing a comprehensive exit interview process, such as early identification of potential issues, staff retention and continuous improvement.

Job vacancies are currently advertised on the SETU website and national job websites. A commitment to attracting international academic staff was expressed, with research posts advertised on the European careers' website EURAXESS. Further opportunities to attract international staff may exist through SETU's participation in the EU-CONEXUS European University alliance.

During several meetings, the review team heard of the challenges in attracting, recruiting, retaining and rewarding staff. Reasons put forward included existing pay agreements, competition with the private sector and backfilling gaps with temporary employment contracts – where existing staff are seconded to funded projects. The HR team describe recruitment as a key priority, with workforce planning now taking place in a coordinated manner. Department meetings are scheduled to take place in Spring 2025 to determine the individual staffing resources needed for each area in September 2025.

Recommendation:

- The review team recommends that SETU develop a medium to long-term workforce strategy, to determine and enable adequate resourcing of the university and deliver the ambitions of the strategic plan.

Management

The installation of a new HR system to cater for the 1,543 staff members in the university was highlighted during the main review visit. However, this system is unable to provide staff metrics as it is not fully integrated and runs in conjunction with legacy systems. The use of separate IT systems is a challenge for gathering accurate data relating to staff metrics. Work has commenced on aligning the processes to make meaningful staff data available. The review team suggests that a fully integrated and sustainable HR system be provided to realise the plans of the university. The review team heard that staff find it difficult to determine which HR policies and procedures to use while legacy policies are being replaced. Staff described how they have developed their own mechanisms for

tracking which policies to use, however, there is a risk in such practices. Work is in progress to collate HR policies and provide a roadmap for staff on the SETU HR website. With a range of legacy policies and new policies coming on stream, a central repository of policies is necessary.

At the time of the main review visit, a series of posters were in development for an infographic exhibition detailing the new faculty structure. The purpose of this exhibition, planned for November 2024, is to visually communicate the new organisational structure and VP responsibility areas. The impetus for this event came from earlier 'think tanks' and is an example of the engagement, feedback, and actions in the change management process currently taking place. Progress is clear with many workstreams developing concurrently and a focus on systematically implementing best practice. A unique opportunity exists to build the structures and systems committed to in the strategic plan.

Recommendation:

- The review team recommends that SETU appropriately resource the HR digital transformation and fully integrate the HR systems to enable collection and tracking of meaningful staff data in a consistent format and to enhance the employee experience. Such information is necessary to identify areas which may require additional support and resources, measure performance, provide insights and guide decision making. Collaboration with the CORDA unit is suggested to gain their specialist knowledge in establishing a comprehensive reporting approach.

Development
The strategic plan, under Action 11.4, recognises the need for a centralised Learning and Development Unit and commits to increasing expenditure for staff training and development by 30% per annum up to

2028. According to the ISER, expenditure on staff training and development decreased in the period 2022/2023.

SETU currently provide a broad range of training activities delivered through various methods to support staff training and development. Included in this are seminars, conferences, accredited and non-accredited development options with online and blended learning offerings, management development training and an annual continuing professional development (CPD) week. The ISER describes reporting and coordination of training activities across the university as challenging in that there is no centralised system for recording training and development activities, this point was also echoed across meetings with staff. The review team was informed by the HR team that a training analysis is to be conducted to determine the training and development needs of the university. The training needs analysis is a key step that will also require the establishment of a centralised Learning and Development Unit for staff as mentioned in the ISER. The review team agrees with the university's plans to create a centralised Learning and Development unit and the proposed Professional Development Framework. Both these proposed structures will support the plans to deliver comprehensive staff training, development, and progression opportunities in a transparent, accessible, and unified way.

Staff reported to the review team that there are ongoing struggles with workload, due in part to a changing work environment and unfilled vacancies. However, a commitment to the new university and the change process was also expressed by staff. Meetings with student support services were of particular note. It was reported that staffing numbers remained static while at the same time there were increased demands on their services, despite a drop in student numbers. The review team is of the view that employee workload may be an emerging issue that will require greater attention and understanding.

Commendation:

- The review team commends SETU on the recent appointment of a Vice-President for People, Culture and EDI. The elevation of these themes to VP status demonstrates the university's commitment to fostering an inclusive, equitable and supportive environment.

Recommendations:

- The review team recommends that SETU prioritise and expedite the planned establishment of a centralised Learning and Development Unit, and Professional Development Framework.
- The review team recommends that SETU develop a mechanism for monitoring and supporting workload and employee wellbeing, particularly during the transition period and change agenda.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

A key development for the university is the newly structured Academic Council. The council consists of 59 members, four newly formed Academic Council committees and several Academic Council working groups. The new university structure of six integrated faculties is evolving. The staff profile of 835 academic staff (2023-24 Institutional Profile) reports that 44% of SETU's full-time academic staff have PhDs, and there are 17 post-doctoral researchers and ambitions to grow this number.

While new unified regulations, policies and procedures are being developed by SETU, the established regulations, policies and procedures of the antecedent institutions will remain in use until such time as they are replaced. During review meetings with academic staff, the review team heard of difficulties in identifying the latest policies, and the need for a document tracking system. Academic staff described the need for harmonisation to support their work on cross-campus projects. The Faculty of Engineering have put some policies and procedures in a single

location but expressed uncertainty as to whether there is a university-wide approach. The lack of a central repository to access policies is a cross-university issue for SETU.

At review meetings, staff described the opportunities afforded by the merger of institutions. These include being able to work together across campuses, sharing good practice, and professional development opportunities. The integration of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme was referenced as offering valuable insight into the potential benefits for students, in that they experience one programme, one set of modules, and one set of processes. Lecturers reported that at programme level there has been no change for them as yet. The alignment of programmes post-establishment of SETU is recognised by all internal stakeholders as a significant and challenging body of work.

The Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning (CTEL), located in Waterford, and the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC), located in Carlow, have recently been brought together under a single executive function to support academic staff in their development. A broad range of academic development supports are offered including webinars, a community of practice, modules at NFQ Level 9, an accredited universal design for learning (UDL) CPD programme and the provision of many new teaching technologies. N-TUTORR[6] and SATLE[7] funded initiatives are also available to enhance staff capabilities. Combining these two units is significant to realising tangible benefits and optimising a community of practice for the whole university. However, the review team heard that there was a lack of staff training spaces – for instance, a practical pedagogy room for staff to gain experience in using these new teaching tools. A simulated teaching environment for staff is suggested to optimise the innovative technologies available.

SETU's student-centred approach to teaching and learning was evident in the ISER and in the many conversations with staff and students during the main review visit. The university's student charter of 2023, the student experience committee, and the close working relationship with the Student

Union support this commitment. The strategic plan commits to access, equality and inclusion, an innovative and applied curriculum and deep connections to academic and professional networks. Students positively commented on their involvement on programme boards and the student representative system, with an emphasis on the collaborative and active learning that suits students' individual learning preferences.

Undergraduate students identified with SETU rather than their antecedent institutions and expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the academic quality of their programmes, and the balance between class and self-study. They praised the emphasis on practical elements of learning within programmes and believed they compared favourably to those of other institutions. Undergraduates are encouraged to take on projects associated with SETU's research institutes, e.g. Envirocore[8], where final year students engage in projects linked to research happening in the university.

Students commended lecturers for their commitment to them, the universal design for learning (UDL) approach and making learning accessible. Some programmes offer a common first year which was described as valuable in that it offers students choice should they wish to change direction within a cognate area. In addition, students at SETU have access to an institution-wide virtual orientation programme. Students praised the small class and lab sizes, and the one-to-one supportive, open environment. They praised the personal care they received at SETU.

Some students felt that certain modules require updating to reflect developments in artificial intelligence (AI). The review team notes that the GenAI working group tasked with examining GenAI, and reporting to Academic Council, are developing the full use and potential of AI. Academic Council have approved guidelines, resources and tools, developed so far by the working group, to support staff and students. These resources are available on a staff GenAI Hub and GenAI area in the student hub.

[7] https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/funding/   [8] https://www.envirocore.ie/

Employability

SETU places a strong emphasis on providing students with the necessary skills to enhance their employability post-graduation. The Careers Development Centre leads SETU's activities related to student employability. Many programmes offer work placement and opportunities to study abroad. Work placement opportunities are incorporated into 74% of undergraduate programmes (Levels 7-8). SETU's ambition is to incorporate work placement into all programmes by 2028. Students also valued the opportunity to study abroad and gain international experience. However, uptake is low due to perceived barriers including financial costs and inconsistency of student support. A well-defined structured support system and improved communication is suggested. During one review meeting with students, it emerged that supports varied across programmes. As such, the review team is of the view that communications and student access to the comprehensive supports provided by the Careers Development Centre should be reviewed.

Students praised SETU's support in accessing work placement positions, the careers office, mini career fairs, and the opportunities to take part in campus work to help bolster their CVs. Students described how they receive workplace supervision and are allocated a workplace mentor. In addition to the learning received by students during placement, it was clear to the review team that students also benefited the organisations they are placed with.

The strong tradition of effective industry connections in the antecedent institutions has been continued through SETU's close engagement and consultation with industry partners. This was in evidence during the main review visit. This relationship enables current and future employer needs, and labour market skills, to be addressed in programme design. Industry representatives contribute to programme delivery, assessments and act as external examiners. The review team noted that SETU's quality assurance mechanisms ensure continuous improvement and quality enhancement. The growing partnership with the education and training boards (ETBs) is of strategic importance to SETU and provides an opportunity to co-deliver programmes in line with regional skills requirements and to deepen progression routes from further to higher education.

Student Retention

According to HEA[9] figures, SETU's non-progression rates are the second highest in the country. Student non-progression rates are therefore a concern for SETU, and the topic of student retention was raised during many sessions throughout the main review visit. The Institutional Profile reports non-progression for new students at SETU in the years 2021-2022 to be 28%. The ISER sets out SETU's plans to develop several actions and initiatives aimed at improving student retention. For example, a Values in Action Framework, Student Success Strategy, Learner Engagement Analytics by Design (LEAD)[10], SETU Belonging and SETU 100. SETU 100 is a project designed to harness the diverse student voice in a targeted and inclusive manner.

One action to support undergraduate students coming into SETU in 2024 was an enhanced induction for first-year students. Features of the programme included students being brought on campus for two days orientation before other student cohorts returned. Ongoing student orientation and information at an early stage is recognised as a positive action aiding retention. It will be important for SETU to measure and track the effectiveness of such actions in supporting this.

A further response to improve student retention across programmes is the peer mentoring programme, P2P, for undergraduate students. Existing students are invited to become mentors to support first-year students in their transition to higher education. In 2024, training was provided to 250 volunteer mentors. The P2P mentor programme offers a wide range of benefits to mentees, mentors and the university by enhancing a sense of connection, commitment and knowledge with SETU as well as their teaching and learning experience at all levels of study. P2P mentors were very visible during the main review visit and are an integral part of the SETU culture.

The review team heard many times of various external factors relating to accommodation, transport and cost of living challenges and their negative impact on the teaching and learning

[9] https://hea.ie/statistics/data-for-download-and-visualisations/students/progression/non-progression-and-completion-dashboard/

[10] https://www.setu.ie/about/quality-and-teaching/teaching-learning/satle

experience of students. The review team views the matter of student retention and progression as a priority issue.

Commendation:

- The review team commends SETU on the peer-to-peer mentor programme, for the overall positive impact of the scheme and the planned expansion to cater for all new students.

Recommendation:

- The review team recommends that SETU fast track the establishment of a dedicated group, drawing from those with expertise from across SETU to address student retention issues. Further data should be gathered to inform the work of this group, such as breakdown by student cohorts and demographics.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

The Technological Universities Act (2018) specifies that SETU "shall have an Academic Council (AC) which shall control the academic affairs of SETU, including the curriculum of, and instruction and education provided by, SETU". As such, Academic Council has the primary responsibility for ensuring the quality of all academic programmes, the learning environment in which programmes are delivered and the assessment of programmes leading to final award, with oversight provided by Governing Body.

SETU's Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes (2024-2025) were approved by Academic Council in September 2024. The academic regulations govern the management and delivery of all SETU's taught programmes, including the operation of programme and examination boards, delivery of assessment and making of awards. The Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Teaching and Learning has general overall responsibility for the conduct of assessment within the university.

The regulations are publicly available and were informed by national and international policies and guidance as appropriate, such as the Joint-Sectoral Protocol between Designated Awarding Bodies and Quality and Qualifications Ireland for the Inclusion of Qualifications within the National Framework of Qualifications (QQI, 2022), Assessment and Standards, Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (QQI, 2016) and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015). The review team was therefore reassured that relevant external standards and guidelines are being followed by SETU.

SETU's regulations identify procedures and examination rules as they apply to the different frameworks, including Academic Delivery Framework (ADF) and Semesterisation and Modularisation (SAM), and provide appendices for examination rules and academic appeals. Included in the regulations are procedures for mitigating circumstances, academic integrity, and information relating to plagiarism and academic offences. New policies relating to mitigating circumstances and results and appeals are in the initial stages of development. At the time of the review, a unified student complaints policy and academic integrity policy was at the consultation stage. SETU has plans to develop an academic risk policy to support the academic activities of the university.

Academic staff reported that different operational practices originating from antecedent institutions, which are still valid within the regulations, are working well as they await the new Academic Delivery Framework (ADF) and underpinning principles of the design and delivery of learning. SETU's stated aim is to create a unified framework incorporating the best practice of the former institutions, and the university is adopting a systematic and collaborative approach in doing so. This approach has been praised by staff, but there is also an awareness that the new ADF may radically change assessment at module and programme level once credit structures and examinations are harmonised.

A new Student Academic Misconduct Policy and Disciplinary Procedure was approved by the Governing Body in February 2024 and is referenced in the regulations. Examination boards meet following the assessment period to confirm module marks, student progression and achievement. The examination board ensures students have been appropriately graded and classified. Exam results from Examination Boards are subject to Academic Council ratification.

Ongoing monitoring is governed through framework-specific regulations and policies and utilise programme boards and external examiners. The remit of programme boards includes an obligation to develop an assessment strategy, manage the assessment process and ensure students are suitably informed of the assessment process. Programme boards meet once each semester and must submit an Annual Programme Board Report to Academic Council. Annual programme board reports address student feedback in a formal manner. All staff, students and examiners involved with a programme contribute to the ongoing monitoring of programmes.

External Examining Regulations are as per the antecedent institutions. They are based on similar principles, in that independent suitably qualified external examiners validate the quality of all assessment activity and work with university staff on the ongoing development of programmes, providing feedback on assessment briefs and examination papers. External examiners report on an annual basis and these reports are also used to evaluate appropriateness of assessments and compliance for the purpose of quality assurance and quality enhancement.

Academic staff confirmed a need to prioritise a singular unified system for external examiners, as currently one is based on modules while the other is based on programmes. The Academic Delivery Framework Working Group is currently examining the best approach for the future development of external examining. An analysis of more than 300 reports from external examiners, together with a review of international best practise, has been undertaken. Arising from this exercise, recommendations have been made as reported in

the ISER, particularly as regards the necessity for external examiners to providing constructive criticism and feedback, but not yet implemented.

Regulations relating to SETU research programmes and research students are set out separately as part of the SETU Research Degree Regulations – Graduate Studies Operational Procedures for research degrees in SETU.

SETU's teaching and learning philosophy explicitly encourages students to be more involved in the assessment and feedback processes. Students are provided with a range of active learning and collaborative methodologies which reflect national and international developments in pedagogical practices. Methodologies include challenge-based learning, team-based learning and experiential learning (ISER, page 51). The student charter is publicly available and sets out the expectations of behaviour and engagement of students in learner assessment.

SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS

SETU is committed to providing a student-centred education, rooted in principles of accessibility, equality, and inclusion, as reflected in both the ISER and feedback from students and staff. The university offers a wide range of academic supports, including small class sizes, dedicated lecturing staff, and guidance from programme leaders and tutors. Additional services include the Disability Support Service, Counselling Services, the Student Assistance Fund, library access, and IT support which collectively enhance the student experience. For students needing help with specific academic challenges, the Computing and Maths Learning Centre and academic writing support provide targeted assistance. Career-focused resources, such as CV workshops and boot camps, support students in preparing for placement and post-graduation career opportunities. Students can also engage in diverse community-building initiatives like clubs, societies, peer mentoring, and the University of Sanctuary, fostering a strong sense of connection and support within the SETU community.

The review team observed the enthusiasm and the commitment of SETU's staff to the success and well-being of SETU students. Staff members demonstrate a clear dedication to ensuring students receive the support they need. Key attention is given to students from disadvantaged backgrounds (including support to members of the Traveller and Roma communities to access educational opportunities). SETU exceeds the national HEI average in all four targets set out in the National Access Plan (2022-2028)[11].

The university's counselling services provide professional support for students facing mental health, academic or personal challenges. However, meeting the increasing demand for these services, especially with the rise in mental health issues among young people, remains a challenge. To address this, the review team noted that SETU has introduced the 'Togetherall' peer support and mental health platform, along with group counselling interventions such as mental health awareness, active consent training, and international student self-care sessions. These initiatives were viewed by the review team as a positive step in supporting student well-being.

The transition to a multi-campus institution has presented challenges for SETU in terms of student support, particularly in library services. Students still face difficulties accessing books across different campuses as the merger of library catalogues and database subscriptions is not yet fully complete. Currently, access to databases remains separate, with the institution subscribing to multiple suppliers, but the review team learned that efforts are underway to streamline these subscriptions for better pricing across all campuses. The development of a unified open-access repository is progressing, with funding secured and a tender awarded to a company ready to commence service.

The review team noted that SETU places a high importance on listening and responding to the student voice as a cornerstone of student support. Mechanisms such as the monthly Class Representatives' Council meetings, which feed directly into the Student's Union, and the open-door policy with senior management foster engagement

and transparency across the institution. However, the review team noted from interaction with students that there are gaps in feedback mechanisms with delays in responses from staff and limited clarity on how feedback is addressed. For instance, in disability support, although learning support is available, response times for essential physical facilities like elevator repairs were seen as slow. Students also indicated that communication regarding the location and availability of disability support services could be improved for both students and staff.

Both staff and students spoke of the need for more and better social spaces for students to gather, although the team saw some evidence of recently modernised spaces on one campus. Students also expressed a desire to have access to the campus during summer months and improved library opening times. There is a university-wide commitment to delivering student spaces, some of which are self-funded, but accessing additional external finance to fund these projects is a challenge. There are detailed plans of capital projects across all campuses which can progress when funding is secured. A new site has been secured for the proposed new Wexford campus.

Postgraduate students reported positive experiences with departmental facilities, research collaborations, and supervisory support. However, they raised concerns about the lack of a formal induction for new research students, and inconsistencies in how services and support structures are communicated throughout their studies. Some postgraduate students also reported not having a handbook, and that accessing forms and information is problematic causing them to rely on other postgraduate students or their supervisor as a source of information. Experience appeared to vary across campus locations. Many postgraduate students, particularly in research programmes, felt isolated from the broader SETU community, with no clear structure to integrate them academically and socially. The review team observed that SETU lacks a centralised role, such as a Dean of Graduate Studies, to oversee the postgraduate experience and ensure consistent support across all subject areas and campuses. The review team, therefore, found the student

[11] https://hea.ie/policy/access-policy/national-access-plan-2022-2028/

experience for post-graduate students to be inconsistent overall.

Some PhD students also reported challenges with a lack of infrastructure, including insufficient lab equipment, insufficient space for lab work, 'messy' labs and a shortage of desks. There was general satisfaction with supervisors and their academic experience, although inter-disciplinary and collaborative research opportunities were being led by the supervisor rather than the university. A new coherent research governance structure and strategy are in the early stages of implementation and are welcomed by students and staff. The review team also heard of the development of a post-graduate portal, with all forms now aligned and accessible online.

During the review visit, the review team found that staff providing student support at SETU are deeply committed to the university's mission of widening access to education. In particular, the review team appreciated staff's clear dedication to ensuring students from disadvantaged backgrounds receive the support they need to succeed, despite challenges such as resource limitations.

Commendation:

- The review team commends the enthusiasm and commitment of SETU's staff to the success and well-being of their students. Staff members demonstrate a clear dedication to ensuring students receive the support they need, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Recommendations:

- The review team recommends that SETU give due consideration to providing a consistency of experience for all SETU students across all campuses – including the international student population, outgoing mobility students, research students, part-time and remote learners.
- The review team recommends that SETU give specific consideration to developing clearer structures for integrating postgraduate students, including formal induction programmes and a centralised role to oversee their experience.
- The review team recommends that SETU implement a comprehensive, centralised communication strategy to ensure that all students, including undergraduates and postgraduates, are fully aware of the support services available.
- The review team recommends that SETU invest in facilities to keep pace with its strategic goals and ambition levels. These investments would encompass teaching spaces, equipment, licences, and associated supports such as laboratory technicians.

INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

SETU's strategic plan identifies the development of a 'Digital Campus Strategy' and the 'transition to single university IT systems' as two key enablers in effectively delivering its strategic objectives. The strategy document highlights the importance of data in planning and monitoring progress, including enhancing engagement with partner ETBs, tracking non-traditional learner groups, workforce development planning, tracking performance in respect of EDI goals, and measuring research performance.

The ISER and the main review visit provided the review team with concrete examples of progress made regarding the two strategic enablers mentioned above. This includes the establishment of CORDA, the implementation of the PURE research information system, the launch of a single SETU website, and the move to a single finance system and library catalogue. However, given the stage of SETU's establishment, colleagues across SETU also identified several significant areas of work still to be undertaken such as implementing SETU email domain names for staff. The Computer Services Department is at the forefront of many of the activities associated with merging antecedent systems and processes. During the main review visit, there were many accounts of IT professionals successfully managing significant systems-related projects, while also maintaining the day-to-day services required by students and staff.

During the main review visit, the review team learned about several system developments at the university. A new SETU library website has been launched, and the library catalogues have been merged. Although the library is still operating two separate database subscriptions for electronic resources, the new website has consolidated the links to these resources on a single home page. Additionally, SETU has introduced PURE, a research information system that collects a range of information about the university's research activities. This system records, monitors, and reports all research-related activity, including grants, publications, and projects.

The university has also migrated to a single HR system, but it was acknowledged during the main review visit that different legacy HR processes are still in use across campuses. Work is underway to align these processes, with a view to adopting best practices from across the antecedent institutions. There is also an acknowledged gap in HR data measurement, with a heavy reliance on local, off-system databases and varying data collection and interpretation methods. Steps have been taken to establish consistent definitions and data collection methods. The review team suggests that engaging with CORDA could significantly benefit the HR department in this work.

The ISER acknowledges the challenge of ensuring 'the flow of data is appropriate to its decision-making needs, and this is all the more challenging within the context of merging'. CORDA, a new unit established under the President's Office, has been tasked with the collection and analysis of both university and sectoral data. During the main review visit, many SETU colleagues identified the establishment of CORDA as a strategically significant development in advancing the university's approach to evidence-informed decision-making and quality assurance. The review team observed that CORDA will play a critical role in monitoring and reporting on the student life cycle and suggests that its impact will be most significant once a single student record system is established at SETU. The review team heard examples of CORDA's early impact, such as identifying modules with high failure rates in Semester 1 and reporting on retention and progression to Academic Council.

The review team suggests that CORDA's impact will be significantly enhanced if SETU adopts a considered and consistent approach to the identification and tagging of specific student cohorts within the student record system. This will facilitate the effective tracking of student retention and performance across SETU's diverse student body. Several SETU colleagues underscored CORDA's critical role in activities related to student engagement and success. However, it was apparent during the review visit that the tracking of specific cohorts is happening at the programme or unit level, using a mix of data sources, including local files. One example provided was the monitoring of at-risk students in the widening participation cohorts. The information available on non-progression and retention rates, as detailed in the ISER, would significantly support the efforts of SETU colleagues if the data could be tracked and analysed at a more granular level.

The review team agrees with the recommendation in the ISER that CORDA needs sufficient resources to effectively undertake its work. Efforts will also require buy-in and close collaboration with other university teams and committees, including Computer Services, Academic Administration, Student Support, the Joint Quality Committee, and Academic Council. The work of CORDA is also dependent on solid data governance, particularly data security and storage, necessitating appropriate human and technical resources being in place in the Computer Services Department. The review team found that, while the establishment of CORDA is a significant development, it has not yet been matched by a commitment to a suitably staffed data management/security team and an overarching data governance framework.

Commendation:

- The review team commends SETU on the establishment of CORDA, which provides the university with a single source of information to inform decision-making and quality assurance activities.

Recommendation:

- The review team recommends that SETU continue its efforts to embed evidence-informed decision-making in its structures and processes. This should include the development of robust data governance structures to ensure reliable, secure, and effective data management.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

SETU demonstrates a strong commitment to transparent and accessible public communication, ensuring that all stakeholders—including prospective and current students, alumni, partners, and the general public—can easily access relevant information about the university's activities, standards, and achievements. For example, during the main review visit, SETU's effective communication and collaboration practices were evident in discussions with various collaborative partners. These partners praised SETU's clear, multi-level communication, which facilitates smooth cooperation across a range of support areas, such as the library and registry, enhancing support for both staff and students.

The newly redeveloped SETU website is a key platform for sharing information with diverse audiences, including staff, students, prospective students, and external partners. To date, however, the website has been underutilised for publishing quality data and analysis related to university activities, as pointed out in the ISER.

As stated in the ISER and confirmed during the main review visit, SETU's dedication to transparency is further evidenced by its commitment to sharing quality data. Examples of quality data published by the university on its website include the Annual Quality Report (AQR) and evaluation reports on validated programmes. Through initiatives such as the recent establishment of CORDA, SETU aims to identify additional data sources that can be communicated effectively to the public and its stakeholders, ensuring an ongoing commitment to transparency and continuous improvement.

The main challenge SETU faces in enhancing transparency through data-driven communication is the limited use of its website for publishing quality data and analyses. Currently, while the new SETU website provides a primary platform for public information, it has not yet been fully utilised for sharing comprehensive quality data on university activities as stated in the ISER. The review team observed that expanding the scope of data published on the website is recognised as an important goal for SETU, and its resolution is considered a high priority by university teams, including marketing and IT.

The review team noted from the interaction with staff that SETU faces communication challenges, particularly in supporting managers who have shifted from small departments to large, complex teams. This expansion has heightened the need for communication expertise to help manage the increased volume and complexity of information flow. Staff report feeling "drowned" by communications spread across various platforms, making it difficult to stay organised and efficient.

Commendation:

- The review team commends SETU's commitment to transparent and accessible public communication, as demonstrated through effective collaboration and multi-level communication practices. This was evident during the main review visit, where collaborative partners praised SETU for its clear and effective communication, which facilitates smooth cooperation across various support areas.

Recommendation:

- The review team recommends that the SETU website be used as a centralised platform for publishing comprehensive quality data and improving transparency. This can be achieved by expanding the scope of information available on the website, including detailed evaluation reports, performance metrics, and data from initiatives.

OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

SETU's vision sets out its ambition to be a 'leading global Technological University with transformational impact on our community, the South East of Ireland and beyond.' SETU sees engagement and collaboration with regional and international stakeholders as key to achieving this ambition. The review team was able to appreciate how the university works successfully and strategically with education, industry, and community partners to maximise regional cohesion, drive regional productivity and growth, enhance the global reputation of the South East, and contribute to making it an outward-looking region.

The ISER provides a comprehensive overview of the range of SETU's regional and global engagement activities, including its engagement with employers and industry, public outreach and community engagement, and engagement with educational providers for collaborative provision. During the review visit the review team was able to meet with a wide range of representatives of these stakeholder communities and observe how SETU engages with other parties in delivering education and training. These stakeholders were very positive about their engagement with SETU.

Employers and industry partners reported that SETU, through its legacy institutions initially, and now as a new unified university, is very good at listening and working with the community to meet local industry needs and flexible to any changes. Employers expressed unanimous satisfaction with the quality of SETU graduates. Many of these employers rely heavily on these graduates and cooperate strategically with SETU to secure a continued pipeline for a skilled and competent workforce.

Employers and industry partners with whom SETU has established strategic collaboration are typically consulted with and involved in the development and approval of training programmes, ensuring that the curriculum and learning outcomes continue to respond to regional industry and employers' needs. Industry representatives are involved as external examiners, contribute to programme delivery as associate or guest lecturers, support PhD

supervision, and also provide input into the design of the research portfolio. Work placements and work-integrated learning are also well supported by regional employers. The review team is of the view that this close and strategic engagement with industry partners and employers that creates workplace-ready graduates with industry-relevant knowledge and skills is commendable.

Currently, over 70% of SETU programmes incorporate work placement options. However, conversations with students and alumni gave the review team the impression that SETU was not always in a position to offer suitable work placement opportunities. As SETU works to achieve the target set out in its strategic plan to have placements on all programmes by 2028, and as it aims to expand its programme portfolio, it is important that it broaden its network of employers to ensure all students are offered a suitable range of work placement options, and that their expectations are fully met. In this context, SETU might find it helpful to reach out to a broader range of industries across the region, including small and medium enterprises, which are currently underrepresented in the range of industry stakeholders the university engages with. Collaboration through thematic clusters, such as the engineering cluster for the South East that SETU already hosts, could provide such opportunities for broader industry and employer engagement.

Industry stakeholders have observed positively that since its establishment SETU has increased its engagement activity and it is being even more proactive in that regard. They have also stressed the importance of having a university in the region and a partner to expand opportunities for talent recruitment and international collaboration. However, they have expressed concerns about systemic constraints, such as those related to technological universities' borrowing limits and inability to appoint to professorship grade, which are seen as hindering the full realisation of SETU's potential as a driver of regional development and innovation.

Academic delivery partners expressed similar positive views of their engagement with SETU, confirming clear lines of communication, and

a clear understanding of respective roles and responsibilities with regard to academic delivery, and quality assurance. The review team is of the opinion that SETU provides adequate support to ensure students achieve expected learning outcomes and standards. Teaching staff at partner institutions are provided with the required training in teaching and learning methods, regularly updating them on best practice in delivery and assessment, including recently in the use of AI. SETU holds programme development meetings with collaborative partners annually to discuss developments and changes to programmes. SETU's standard quality assurance procedures apply, with the same practices for programme boards and external examiners as for other programmes offered at SETU. SETU's policies for student complaints and appeals also apply. SETU further undertakes periodic quality assurance visits, gathering feedback from students and observing classes, providing a feedback report to partners. The review team is encouraged by SETU's sound quality assurance arrangement for collaborative academic partnerships.

SETU is currently carrying out a strategic review of all partners involved in collaborative provision to ensure that its portfolio of academic partnerships continues to align with the university's strategic objectives and trajectory and with regional and national skills requirements. Such a review will also inform the development of a new policy framework for the approval and regular monitoring of its collaborative partnerships. Until the new framework is developed the policies and procedures of its legacy institutions will apply. The review team considers this review a priority for SETU, with a particular view to ensuring the smooth transition of existing partnerships from the legacy institutions to the multi-campus university, and that the opportunities associated with these partnerships be shared across campuses.

Commendation:

- The review team commends SETU on its close and strategic engagement with industry and employers to ensure that its academic and training offer and research portfolio continue to remain relevant to the skills needs of the region, and for its commitment to incorporate work placement across its programmes to support the development of workplace-ready graduates.

Recommendation:

- The review team recommends that SETU widen its network of partnerships with industry and employers to ensure all students have suitable work placement opportunities, in particular as it works towards the goals of having placements on all programmes by 2028 and expanding its programme portfolio. In this context, SETU should consider proactively engaging with small and medium enterprises in the region to a larger extent than occurred previously through its legacy institutions.

RESEARCH

SETU's strategic plan outlines the strategic framework for the operation of research and research-based innovation. SETU aims to increase capacity and volume of research, focus on regional impact, and connect quality research and knowledge to education programmes and teaching. SETU will ensure international recognition and enhance high-quality research activity to levels consistent with other comparable international universities.

A new research strategy is being developed, focusing on research structure, building of critical mass, and developing research centres and institutes within priority thematic areas. This includes scaling up external research funding and research outputs, establishing a new graduate school structure, increasing the number of students studying programmes at NQF Level 10, focusing on innovation and knowledge transfer, strengthening the research culture, supervision capacity, and research infrastructure.

To achieve its high ambitions for research and innovation, SETU has established an appropriate governance structure. This includes the Vice-President for Research, Innovation and Impact, the

Research and Research Programmes Committee (R&RP), and the Postgraduate Studies Committee, supported by the Research Programme Boards and Research Examination Boards. The Research Ethics Committee scrutinises all research involving humans and animals. SETU has appointed a Data Compliance Officer and a Research Integrity and Compliance officer to promote a data protection culture and ensure compliance in research ethics and data management.

Quality assurance encompassing research, innovation, entrepreneurship, and graduate studies are led by the Office for Research, Innovation and Impact. To support researchers, SETU has established a Research Support Unit and Technology Transfers Offices. Research-active academic staff express great satisfaction with research support across the university, from preparation of applications for funding to research communication. A common approach to research data management (PURE) has been introduced and will be operational across the university by December 2024. The PURE portal will be the gateway to finding researchers, research units, and their various research outputs, impacts, and projects. PURE gives researchers and research postgraduate students a public profile and will become the sole data source for research funding and expenditure reporting.

The research infrastructure at SETU is divided into three distinct entities: Institutes, which represent the largest research units within SETU; Centres, serving as intermediate-sized research units; and Groups, representing smaller-scale research unites. The research bodies are required to report on an annual basis to the Office for Research, Innovation and Impact, which itself reports on activity to Governing Body and Academic Council. In addition, all SETU research bodies are subject to periodic review.

SETU's research holds a central position within the regional ecosystem for innovation and value creation. Expectations from industry and public sector are driving the research agenda. The university has brought in co-supervisors for postgraduate students from industry. Benchmarked against peer institutions, SETU has been very

successful in attracting external national and international funding for research activities and knowledge transfer. Many of the core funding sources for the Centres and the leading Walton Institute for Information & Communication Systems Science have been confirmed for the next 5 to 7 years. Several representatives during the main review visit expressed the view that the establishment of SETU has opened-up more cross-campus and interdisciplinary activities, developing further opportunities for the university. It was also emphasised that university status has strengthened the research environment's visibility and position regionally, nationally and internationally.

The review team noted that SETU, through comprehensive and rigorous processes, has developed a number of research regulations, policies, frameworks, guidance and code of practice documents, and a well-functioning support system. They provide a good system with identified key stakeholders for goal achievement and policies and procedures regulating data management, open access, ethical research conduct and research integrity, knowledge transfer, quality assurance and quality enhancement across the university. Through the main review visit meetings, the review team was able to confirm that the system is well-known and rooted at both management and operational levels.

The university has implemented a process to change the SETU curriculum to a research-informed curriculum, connecting quality research and knowledge to education programmes and teaching, and ensuring that the curriculum embeds research skills, problem solving skills, and transversal skills. Academics involved in research activities are also involved in teaching. Having PhD supervisors supervising final-year undergraduate students would be a way to inform and possibly motivate students to pursue research degrees.

In its strategic plan, the university emphasises the need to scale up research activity across SETU in areas of identified strength and impact. To target this, the university will increase the number of research students. The aim is to increase the number of doctoral students to 400, which implies almost doubling the current figures. This

increase will be achieved through promotion of PhDs, investment in PhD scholarship schemes from SETU's own resources, co-funded PhD schemes with industry, engagement with cotutelle PhD models and recruitment of students via the European university alliance EU-CONEXUS[12], and introducing a new TU-RISE[13] supported academia-enterprise PhD scholarship scheme to support development of a professional doctorate design.

The Graduate Studies office has doubled its staff to ensure a presence across the university to offer training for supervisors, staff, and the post graduate community. Academic staff have a heavy teaching load – 16 hours for lecturers, 18 hours for assistant lecturers. In order to expand the research activities, the review team recommends finding a better balance between teaching and research among employees with a doctorate by reducing the teaching load of research active staff (perhaps aided by the academic portfolio review to free up resources), and supporting a research career structure with a particular focus on post-doctoral transition to create additional supervisory capacity and attract, develop, engage and retain research talent across the university.

SETU wishes to recruit a diverse and talented research student body that reflects a firm commitment to EDI. An action plan to increase the number of international students, including postgraduate students, is outlined in the strategic plan. The university is committed to fostering an excellent learning environment for research students.

Throughout the main review visit, the review team noted that representatives from the executive management team, directors, research academic staff and support services recognise the importance of broad recruitment practices and ensuring that the academic and pastoral needs of students are met during their postgraduate journey.

Enhancing support for research training and mentoring schemes is on the university's agenda. Leaders and members of the research community expressed commitment to having multidisciplinary supervision teams. A leading experienced supervisor working together with more junior supervisors allows for a mentoring approach, building experience and capacity.

During the main review visit meeting, students declared satisfaction with the individual supervision they receive. At the same time, both domestic and international postgraduate student representatives pointed to the lack of academic and social physical spaces and revealed a lack of information and communication from the university about the academic programmes they were affiliated with, or activities at the university more broadly. They also pointed out that their research work was largely a solitary journey.

There is an urgent need, therefore, to integrate postgraduate students into the university's research communities and research groups. The university's initiative to model its graduate school structure to strengthen support and inclusion of research students can be an important tool in this context and should be prioritised.

In Section 1 of this report, the review team commended SETU on its multi-campus ethos as a newly merged technological university and its efforts to establish that ethos across the entire university community, resulting in a genuine commitment, buy-in and sense of pride in SETU as the new identity. This should include efforts to establish a research community across the institution.

Earlier in this report under Support for Learners, the review team recommended that SETU review the postgraduate research student experience across the institution for consistency. This includes how supports and development opportunities are advanced, coordinated, and communicated. In this context, the review team has suggested that SETU consider establishing a centralised role, such as a Dean of Graduate Studies, to oversee the postgraduate experience and ensure consistent support across campuses. The review team also recommends that this role is used to ensure that research students are integrated into the SETU research community.

Commendations:

- The review team commends SETU on the research strength of its research entities and their ability to attract funding.
- The review team commends SETU on its clear pathway for building supervisory capacity.

Recommendations:

- The review team recommends that SETU identify mechanisms to reduce the teaching load of research-active staff to increase opportunities for research involvement, create additional supervisory capacity and increase opportunities to engage in research funding applications.
- The review team recommends that SETU ensure the availability of physical space on campus and access to campus out of hours and throughout the year for research students.
- The review team recommends that SETU consider measures to better integrate research students into the SETU research community.

OBJECTIVE 2: QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

SETU has established a structured approach to post-merger institutional building and quality enhancement, including the development of a strategy and a broad university-wide ownership of the strategic plan, its dissemination, and the ambitions for quality enhancement.

SETU is addressing the enhancement of quality while also addressing the university's mission, its strategic plan, as well as governance, policy, actions, and procedures. The review team is of the view that there is a strong alignment between the HEA Performance Agreement and SETU's strategic plan. The academic quality assurance cycles and the AQR identify areas for quality improvement. The CORDA unit, as part of the President's Office, assists with the collection and analysis of relevant data to generate and support enhancements. The Joint Quality Committee is responsible for the quality assurance of data flows and ensuring that the appropriate data gathering, reporting and

actioning is incorporated into the university's policy environment. The committee structure, working groups reporting to the Academic Council (AC), and the vice-president structure ensure clear focus on specific areas. The review team has recommended that SETU ensure that CORDA is provided with the necessary resources to undertake work required in the areas of data generation, analysis, reporting, and review to drive evidence-informed enhancement across university activities.

The review team has commended SETU on establishing strong quality and governance structures and the significant progress the university has made in aligning key policy, regulatory frameworks, and operational initiatives to enhance quality. The review team noted, however, that the role of Heads of Faculty and Heads of Department in strategic development and quality enhancement should be strengthened. Accordingly, in this report (Governance and Management) the review team has recommended that SETU strengthen the academic strategic governance line (horizontally and vertically) between President, senior Vice-Presidents, Heads of Faculty and Heads of Departments.

The review team finds that SETU has a strong enhancement culture focused on the quality of governance and management, education programmes, teaching and student experience, research, and external engagement. The review team identified a number of innovative and effective initiatives which have been implemented or are in progress for quality enhancement in these areas. In governance and management, the review team highlights a strategic plan outlining a wide range of priority objectives and actions for quality enhancement, and organisational structures underpinning change management. The Policy Management Framework mandates periodic review of policies and procedures and a change management process and toolkit has been developed. The university is developing a new Academic Delivery Framework, which is evidence-informed and draws upon international experiences.

The Centre for Technology-Enhanced Learning (CTE), and the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC)

provide staff training and development to enhance the quality of SETU's teaching, research, student support, administration, and other activities. The university is committed to meeting the highest quality standards in research, innovation and impact. The new AC Research Committee has been introduced to ensure clear focus on the enhancement of research and innovation, and graduate studies. SETU's participation in the International Student Barometer provides a benchmark for its engagement with and support of international students and will facilitate the identification of areas for enhancement. A strategic plan for international engagement is being developed, which will enhance the university's approach to partnering with international collaborators and the experience of SETU's international students.

Throughout the main review visit, the review team was able to confirm that the strategies, action plans, procedures and prescribed or recommended practices are well embedded at both management and operational level. The review team notes that the university has a systemic and university-wide approach to quality enhancement, securing compliance with regulatory standards and requirements, and alignment with national and European standards. Meetings with staff and students confirmed broad engagement and commitment to enhancement processes. There are many governing documents, but even if there is a good connection between the documents that govern quality development, it is not always easy to find documents that are relevant in a specific context.

The review team emphasises that governance policies and procedures should regularly be evaluated and revised. Further improvements in quality enhancement are continually required to meet new demands and expectations. A priority area should be to strengthen within the university the voice and perspectives of SETU students — especially international students and postgraduate students — and enhance the provision of social spaces and student accommodation across SETU campuses. The university recognises that progression rates for SETU students are low in a national context. Increasing these rates especially

in the context of student belonging and wellbeing, should be prioritised (cf. section 3.3). The new Academic Delivery Framework will be an important tool to coordinate cross-university policies, procedures, programmes and practices.

OBJECTIVE 3: PROCEDURES FOR ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION

SETU's strategic plan reflects a strong commitment to fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for students, ensuring equity of access to educational opportunities. SETU has exceeded national targets for the National Access Plan (2022-2028), having successfully recruited students from priority groups and creating a student body that mirrors Ireland's diverse population. The review team considers this a very good development.

SETU has implemented various initiatives to support equitable access to education, including pre-access programmes, targeted orientation, and outreach activities like College Awareness Week, school visits, and tailored workshops on bursaries. The Leaving Certificate revision programme for DEIS schools, attended by 256 students in 2022/2023, and Primary School Taster Days, demonstrate SETU's proactive engagement with marginalised communities. Collaborative projects with DEIS schools and initiatives like the Sanctuary Scholarship Programme for asylum seekers, QQI-FE workshops, and tailored support for part-time learners reflect SETU's commitment to inclusivity and reducing financial barriers. SETU also participates in national quality assurance for access initiatives, such as the HEAR and DARE programmes, and delivers the first year of some tertiary honours bachelor's degree programmes in further education settings to widen participation.

The review team received highly positive feedback from staff and students, particularly regarding initiatives for the Traveller community and asylum seekers. Peer mentoring, small class sizes, and targeted financial, academic, and mental health support services were highlighted for fostering a supportive environment, especially for students with disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The person-to-person support

provided by access teams was especially appreciated for offering crucial guidance and assistance with bursaries. Retention initiatives such as the Brighter Futures Programme have significantly improved retention rates and increased engagement among Traveller students. However, the precarious nature of funding for some of these initiatives poses a risk to their sustainability.

SETU uses the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) as the core mechanism for recognising and transferring learners between programmes and providers. The curriculum is designed to facilitate seamless progression across NFQ levels, with Level 8 awards often embedding Level 6 and Level 7 awards, allowing students to move easily between them. SETU collaborates closely with further education and training (FET) providers to admit students into first-year programmes and through advanced entry routes, particularly via tertiary programmes. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is also used as an entry pathway across the university, with approximately one-fifth of the full-time annual student intake comprising non-traditional learners. Beyond progression through NFQ levels, SETU has developed several initiatives to support students who find themselves in unsuitable programmes. These initiatives include the CAO First Year Transfer scheme, Cross-Campus Transfer scheme, and Internal Advanced Entry process. The review team viewed this as a positive development.

Commendation:

- The review team commends SETU's dedication to fostering an inclusive educational environment, especially in surpassing the national targets of the National Access Plan (2022-2028). Their proactive outreach efforts demonstrate a strong commitment to equity and inclusivity.

OBJECTIVE 4: PROVISION OF PROGRAMMES TO INTERNATIONAL LEARNERS

The ISER reiterates the commitment made in the strategic plan 'to foster a multi-cultural environment by welcoming an increasingly diverse student population' and 'build upon international collaborations, including extensive exchange programmes and participation in transnational education initiatives.' The ISER also confirms the university's plan to develop an international strategy that will support 'significant growth in international student enrolment and expanding international strategic partnerships' as well as 'extending international mobility options, including expanded Erasmus+ activity, across all programmes and to all students.'

In conversations with staff from the International Office the review team confirmed that about 80% of international students are currently recruited through agents. The International Office confirmed that since the establishment of SETU as a new university, the due diligence processes of the legacy institutions have been mainstreamed under a single procurement process, aligned with requirements for QQI's International Education mark ('TrustEd'), which makes use of an e-tenders portal and is currently being rolled out. Recruitment agents are being trained and reviewed, including through questions in the International Student Barometer, an independent world-wide annual survey to provide benchmarks for the international student experience. Students who had made use of recruiting agents to join SETU stated their satisfaction with the way they were supported and the information they received during the application process.

SETU has developed a dedicated section on its website (SETU Global) for prospective international applicants which contains helpful information, including international student fees and cost of living, the student experience across the SETU campuses, and accommodation options. It also includes information about the orientation programmes on campus, as well as options for a virtual orientation and pre-arrival orientation. The review team commends SETU on the comprehensive information it provides international

students through SETU Global and the range of orientation activities it offers them.

However, from speaking with students, the review team formed the impression that there is still some disparity in services provided to international students across its different campuses, such as with transport from the airport upon arrival and orientation during the first week. SETU is advised to streamline its support services across its locations and to ensure international student expectations are managed from the start.

SETU has demonstrated a commitment to ensuring that staff is provided with intercultural competence training and support, including through the Irish Council for International Students (ICOS) and developing a module as part of the Level 9 Teaching and Learning Award for staff. Making sure that all staff, including teaching and administrative staff, are well equipped with the competencies to support students from a broad range of cultural backgrounds will be important as SETU sets out to increase the number and diversity of international students. International students have been consulted as part of the development of the new internationalisation strategy.

With regard to TNE partnerships, just as for academic partnerships and linked provision in Ireland, due diligence and quality assurance are still conducted as per the policies of the legacy institutions. Both legacy policies require final sign-off by the Governing Body, and regular monitoring of the quality and standards of TNE delivery. Regular updates on risk and financial matters associated with academic partnership agreements are also reported to the Governing Body. The review team is confident that legacy processes are sufficiently sound to continue to underpin confidence in the university's oversight of its TNE operation whilst it develops new regulations and policies in alignment with SETU's singular quality assurance and regulatory framework.

The review team, however, observes that SETU's legacy experience with TNE operations is primarily limited to joint colleges and programmes in China. As the university progresses with its strategic ambition to expand the number and range of TNE

operations, it will be important to regularly review its quality assurance approach to make sure it remains fit for purpose for different contexts of delivery and invest in the expertise to inform the required due diligence for partners operating in different locations.

The review team acknowledges and commends SETU's commitment to the European University for Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability (EU-CONEXUS) as a priority in expanding its engagement in Europe through research and staff and student mobility, and its leadership role in the alliance.

From speaking with SETU students who had an international study experience, the review team noted that the existing support system is not always consistently applied. As SETU makes progress towards its strategic objective of increasing outbound mobility opportunities for its students across the academic portfolio, it is recommended that SETU establish robust mechanisms for supporting students undertaking periods of study or internships abroad and for monitoring that mechanisms are consistently applied.

The review team also acknowledges SETU's commitment to developing an Internationalisation at Home (IAH) strategy to bring global perspectives and intercultural experiences directly into the university campus environment for the benefit of the many students who will not travel abroad as part of their learning experience.

Commendation

- The review team commends SETU's commitment to EU-CONEXUS as a priority in expanding its engagement in Europe through research and staff and student mobility, and its leadership role in the alliance.

Recommendation:

- The review team recommends that SETU establish robust mechanisms for supporting students undertaking periods of study or internships abroad, and for monitoring that these mechanisms are consistently applied.

Section 4

Conclusions

Conclusions

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

The review team wishes to express its gratitude to the many colleagues at South East Technological University (SETU), led by President Professor Veronica Campbell, for the effective and constructive manner in which they engaged with the CINNTE review process. This was evident in the preparation phases when documentation was submitted to QQI and the review team, as well as during the main review visit in October 2024. The review team was able to develop a deep insight into the progress made by SETU to date as a newly established university, and to properly examine its future goals and ambitions within the scope of the cyclical CINNTE review. The team was also in a position to triangulate its findings, through various meetings with governors and senior management, staff, students and stakeholders. All meetings were conducted in a spirit of openness.

The review team was impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment demonstrated by everyone involved with regard to SETU's mission, vision and strategy and its role in the South East of Ireland. It is clear that SETU is determined to deliver on the objectives set by the Technological University Act (2018) and has lost no time in developing a track record under its strategic plan (2023-2028), Connecting for Impact. This builds on the solid foundations and reputation of its antecedent institutions, which already played a significant role in the region. However, it was also clear to the review team that SETU is now raising its ambitions across teaching, research and engagement, in order to fulfil its role as a true anchor university for the economic, social and cultural success of the South East of Ireland on the global stage.

A key area of focus for the review team, and for the ISER itself, was the governance of quality assurance. The team was able to verify that the SETU Quality Framework, which set out a number of principles, has been adopted, along with an implementation path for the new academic regulations for all taught programmes. The review team found the associated documentation to be comprehensive and clearly articulated. Whilst it could be argued that such unitary frameworks and regulations are a threshold requirement for every higher education institution, SETU stands out for having created two vehicles which will embed the governance of quality assurance and enhancement in a far more innovative way. Firstly, a Joint Quality Committee (JQC) has been set up with a core membership drawn from the Governing Body and Academic Council, which will be responsible for the reviews cycle on a thematic basis. Secondly, the establishment of the Centre for Organisational Research, Data and Analysis (CORDA), positioned within the President's Office, is intended to support evidence-based decision making and appropriate scrutiny of data at all levels of the organisation, to better understand student retention and completion issues, for example. It must be acknowledged that both the JQC and CORDA are at early stages of implementation, so the review team was unable to assess their impact at this stage, but the team was impressed by the quality culture and level of ambition evident from these new initiatives.

The review team found that the full integration of SETU's academic portfolio has not yet been achieved, but this project was about to get underway and would take place in tandem with the adoption of a coherent academic delivery framework addressing residual differences in modular structures, learning outcomes and assessment. The review team concluded that the completion of the academic portfolio integration project will be critical to SETU's future potential and clarity of purpose, as well as providing equitable opportunities to students across all campuses, study levels and delivery modes. Similarly, there is still significant work to be done to ensure consistency of the wider student experience. The review team was impressed with the passion and enthusiasm with which staff and students have embraced the new SETU brand and identity, but it will take significantly more time and effort

for that to be translated into a coherent student experience across the entire organisation at a more granular, local level. This may be partly due to systems, processes or the availability of facilities and services progressing at different stages, and partly due to a communications gap whereby some stakeholders are simply not aware of the resources and supports on offer.

Research is an area where the bar is set very high under the Technological Universities Act (2018). The review team found that SETU is well-placed to respond to this challenge, with a powerful base in terms of research centres and external grants from national and international bodies at a far higher level than many of its peers. Research, development and innovation links with industry are also well-established as part of SETU's external engagement practices. However, the agreed target to double the number of PhD students in the coming years will require additional supervisory capacity and funding. SETU has plans in place to achieve these targets, which will to some extent also depend on external funds and policies. In the context of such a step change, again the review team wishes to emphasise that the quality and consistency of the postgraduate student experience is paramount.

The review team is confident that a strong ethos of widening participation and learner support has been adopted by the new university, originating from the values and track record of its predecessor institutions. The review team heard several first-hand accounts from graduates, current students and educational partners that proved SETU's commitment to inclusivity and seamless transfer and progression paths, offered to a diverse student base. Increasingly, such approaches will also be crucial for the recruitment, enrolment, retention and satisfaction of international students.

Finally, the review team would like to express its expectation that this report, along with its commendations and recommendations set out below, will assist SETU with its further development as the university of and for the South East of Ireland. The university, along with the rest of the sector, is undertaking a major transformation and change programme. This review therefore came

at an exceptionally busy and challenging time, but SETU certainly rose to the occasion. The President, her Executive Team, the Institutional Coordinator and all the staff deserve thanks, and the review team wish them well on the journey ahead. The review team is also grateful for the extensive support provided by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) who ensured that the review process ran smoothly.

Section 5

Commendations and Recommendations

COMMENDATIONS

Governance and Structure

- The review team commends the SETU Executive on its structured approach post-merger, including the development of the Strategic Plan which has resulted in clear prioritisation and target-setting, the Executive ownership of the plan and its dissemination. This strategic focus is also reflected in the ISER and the Performance Agreement with the HEA.

- The review team commends the ethos of openness and transparency adopted by senior leadership in its approach to the development of the new Strategic Plan, the establishment of new management and governance structures and in the development of the ISER.

- The review team commends SETU on the strong relationship between the Students' Union and the SETU Executive, and the proactive way in which the SU has set up one cohesive structure.

- The review team commends SETU on the significant initial progress made in establishing a unitary quality assurance and governance framework and appropriate and effective quality structures, policies, regulations and procedures.

- The review team commends the establishment of the Joint Quality Committee of Governing Body and Academic Council. Placing responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement with SETU senior leadership demonstrates a strong commitment to upholding the highest of standards and fostering a culture of continuous improvement across the institution.

- The review team commends SETU on the establishment of CORDA, which provides the university with a single source of information to inform decision-making and quality assurance activities.

Strategy

- The review team commends SETU on its multi-campus ethos as a newly merged technological university (TU) and its efforts to establish that ethos across the entire university community. This has resulted in in a genuine commitment, buy-in and sense of pride in SETU as the new identity.

- The review team commends SETU on the regional support it enjoys as an anchor institution, and its commitment to driving the success of the South East of Ireland as a global leader in specific areas of the economy.

- The review team commends the university on the constructive approach it adopted in engaging with the ISER. This illustrates its intention and commitment to use the CINNTE review process as an opportunity for collective self-reflection and to inform continuous improvement.

Student Experience

- The review team commends the enthusiasm and commitment of SETU's staff to the success and well-being of their students. Staff members demonstrate a clear dedication to ensuring students receive the support they need, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- The review team commends SETU on the peer-to-peer mentor programme, for the overall positive impact of the scheme and the planned expansion to cater for all new students.

- The review team commends SETU's dedication to fostering an inclusive educational environment, especially in surpassing the national targets of the National Access Plan (2022-2028). Their proactive outreach efforts demonstrate a strong commitment to equity and inclusivity.

Research

- The review team commends SETU on the research strength of its research entities and their ability to attract funding.
- The review team commends SETU on its clear pathway for building supervisory capacity.

External Engagement and Internationalisation

- The review team commends SETU's commitment to transparent and accessible public communication, as demonstrated through effective collaboration and multi-level communication practices. This was evident during the main review visit, where collaborative partners praised SETU for its clear and effective communication, which facilitates smooth cooperation across various support areas.
- The review team commends SETU on its close and strategic engagement with industry and employers to ensure that its academic and training offer and research portfolio continue to remain relevant to the skills needs of the region, and for its commitment to incorporate work placement across its programmes to support the development of workplace-ready graduates.
- The review team commends SETU's commitment to EU-CONEXUS as a priority in expanding its engagement in Europe through research and staff and student mobility, and its leadership role in the alliance.

People and Resources

- The review team commends SETU on its post-merger organisational design, involving the creation of a new senior vice-president layer. The review team understands that the implementation of this organisational design is pending, subject to government approval.
- The review team commends SETU on the recent appointment of a Vice-President for People, Culture and EDI. The elevation of these themes to VP status demonstrates the university's commitment to fostering an inclusive, equitable and supportive environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Governance and Structure

- The review team recommends that SETU continue its efforts to embed evidence-informed decision-making in its structures and processes. This should include the development of robust data governance structures to ensure reliable, secure, and effective data management.

- The review team recommends that SETU further promote the single location for accessing policy and regulatory documents and consider the most appropriate, accessible and effective channels for communicating policy developments to staff, students and other SETU stakeholders.

- The review team recommends that SETU establish structures to strengthen the academic governance lines (horizontally and vertically) from senior leadership to Heads of Department, thus empowering Heads of Department as strategic, operational and governance agents.

Strategy

- The review team recommends that work on the academic portfolio integration project and the academic delivery framework progress as a matter of urgency, with appropriate support and resources.

- The review team recommends that SETU implement a comprehensive, centralised communication strategy to ensure that all students, including undergraduates and postgraduates, are fully aware of the support services available.

- The review team recommends that SETU invest in facilities to keep pace with its strategic goals and ambition levels. These investments would encompass teaching spaces, equipment, licences, and associated supports such as laboratory technicians.

Student Experience

- The review team recommends that SETU establish structured and routine mechanisms for gathering and responding to student feedback at the institution, programme and module levels, adopting a 'we asked, you said, we did' approach.

- The review team recommends that SETU fast track the establishment of a dedicated group, drawing from those with knowledge and expertise from across the organisation to address student retention issues. Further data should be gathered to inform the work of this group, such as breakdowns by student cohorts and demographics.

- The review team recommends that SETU give due consideration to providing a consistency of experience for all SETU students across all campuses — including the international student population, outgoing mobility students, research students, part-time and remote learners.

Research

- The review team recommends that SETU give specific consideration to developing clearer structures for integrating postgraduate students, including formal induction programmes and a centralised role to oversee their experience.

- The review team recommends that SETU consider measures to better integrate research students into the SETU research community.

- The review team recommends that SETU identify mechanisms to reduce the teaching load of research-active staff to increase opportunities for research involvement, create additional supervisory capacity and increase opportunities to engage in research funding applications.

- The review team recommends that SETU ensure the availability of physical space on campus and accessibility to campus out of hours and throughout the year for research students.

External Engagement and Internationalisation

- The review team recommends that the SETU website be used as a centralised platform for publishing comprehensive quality data and improving transparency. This can be achieved by expanding the scope of information available on the website, including detailed evaluation reports, performance metrics, and data from initiatives

- The review team recommends that SETU widen its network of partnerships with industry and employers to ensure all students have suitable work placement opportunities, in particular as it works towards the goals of having placements on all programmes by 2028 and expanding its programme portfolio. In this context, SETU should consider proactively engaging with small and medium enterprises in the region to a larger extent than it has done so far through its legacy institutions.

- The review team recommends that SETU establish robust mechanisms for supporting students undertaking periods of study or internships abroad, and for monitoring that these mechanisms are consistently applied.

People and Resources

- The review team recommends that SETU develop a medium to long-term workforce strategy, to determine and enable adequate resourcing of the university and deliver the ambitions of the strategic plan.

- The review team recommends that SETU appropriately resource the HR digital transformation and fully integrate the HR systems to enhance the employee experience and enable collection and tracking of staff data in a consistent format. Such information is necessary to identify areas which may require additional support and resources, measure performance, provide insights and guide decision making. Collaboration with the CORDA unit should gain specialist knowledge in establishing a comprehensive reporting approach.

- The review team recommends that SETU prioritise and expedite the planned establishment of a centralised Learning and Development Unit, and Professional Development Framework.

- The review team recommends that SETU develop a mechanism for monitoring and supporting workload and employee wellbeing, particularly during the transition period and change agenda.

Top 5 Commendations and Recommendations

TOP 5 COMMENDATIONS

1. The review team commends SETU on its multi-campus ethos as a newly merged technological university and its efforts to establish that ethos across the entire university community, resulting in a genuine commitment, buy-in and sense of pride in SETU as the new identity.

2. The review team commends SETU on the regional support it enjoys as an anchor institution, and its commitment to driving the success of the South East of Ireland as a global leader in specific areas of the economy.

3. The review team commends SETU on the significant initial progress made in establishing a unitary quality assurance and governance framework and appropriate and effective quality structures, policies, regulations and procedures.

4. The review team commends SETU on the establishment of CORDA, which provides the university with a single source of information to inform decision-making and quality assurance activities.

5. The review team commends the enthusiasm and commitment of SETU's staff to the success and well-being of their students. Staff members demonstrate a clear dedication to ensuring students receive the support they need, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

TOP 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The review team recommends that work on the academic portfolio integration project and the academic delivery framework progress as a matter of urgency, with appropriate support and resources.

2. The review team recommends that SETU fast track the establishment of a dedicated group, drawing from those with knowledge and expertise from across the organisation to address student retention issues. Further data should be gathered to inform the work of this group, such as breakdowns by student cohorts and demographics.

3. The review team recommends that SETU give specific consideration to developing clearer structures for integrating postgraduate students, including formal induction programmes and a centralised role to oversee their experience.

4. The review team recommends that SETU further promote the single location for accessing policy and regulatory documents and consider the most appropriate, accessible and effective channels for communicating policy developments to staff, students and other SETU stakeholders.

5. The review team recommends that SETU develop a mechanism for monitoring and supporting workload and employee wellbeing, particularly during the transition period and change agenda.

OVERARCHING STATEMENTS ABOUT QA

Following careful consideration of key documentation provided by SETU, i.e. the ISER, the AQR, the strategic plan and underpinning materials, and extensive engagement with the SETU community during the review team visit, the review team is satisfied in respect of the four CINNTE objectives that:

- Objective 1: SETU as a new technological university has demonstrated the effectiveness of its quality assurance procedures and their implementation across all taught programmes, research programmes and collaborative programmes, in line with the QQI Core Quality Assurance Guidelines and other sector-specific guidelines, and in compliance with the European Standards and Guidance 2015;

- Objective 2: SETU has demonstrated the enhancement of quality through governance, policy, and procedures, through the clarity of its institutional mission, vision and targets and commitment to shared best practices;

- Objective 3: SETU has implemented policies and procedures for access, transfer and progression in keeping with QQI policy and criteria, through an ethos and practices which continue to be well-embedded post establishment;

- Objective 4: in parallel with the introduction of the statutory international education quality mark in the Irish tertiary sector (Trust-Ed), SETU has demonstrated that its processes and supports provided to international students are informed by and have regard to the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners.

Therefore, the review team formed the unanimous view that all CINNTE objectives are deemed to have been met by SETU.

Section 6

Institutional Response

Institutional Response

RESPONSE TO THE QQI CINNTE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT 2025 OF SOUTH EAST TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

Since its establishment in May 2022, South East Technological University (SETU) has aimed to 'be a leading global university with transformative impact on our community, the South East of Ireland and beyond'. This CINNTE Review report represents SETU's first external quality review since formation. We are greatly encouraged by the Review Panel's strong endorsement of our shared vision for our university's future development.

Since May 2022, the University has initiated a multitude of developmental activities, vital to the formation of the University's identity and operation. This review, while still early in our developmental process, offered an excellent opportunity for evaluation of new structures and the trajectory to achieve our longer-term ambitions. The University therefore welcomes the panel's commendation to 'the SETU Executive on its structured approach post-merger, including the development of the strategic plan 2023-2028 Connecting for Impact which has resulted in clear prioritisation and target-setting, the Executive ownership of the plan and its dissemination'.

The CINNTE Review process began nationally in 2017 for the entire Irish HE sector and will complete this year, 2025. The process employed robust and objective methodologies, fostering deep and reflective evaluation of our university and it is highly encouraging to complete the review's evaluation stage with this balanced and comprehensive report. The University would like to thank the panel for the valuable perspectives, experiences, and insights offered here. While the commendations are welcome and affirming of our strategy, the recommendations will inform the University's ongoing development, academic policies, and quality assurance and enhancement strategies.

The University has a commitment to quality assured education and is welcoming of opportunities to continue to improve. It is therefore quite affirming to read that we have 'made significant initial progress in establishing a unitary quality assurance and governance framework and associated structures since establishment'. Similarly, the endorsement of the new Joint Quality Committee of Governing Body: 'Placing responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement with SETU senior leadership demonstrates a strong commitment to upholding the highest of standards and fostering a culture of continuous improvement across the university'.

A key ambition for SETU has been to unite as a multi-campus university, with a single mission, vision and values and a strategic plan for the University and the south-east region. I would like to thank the panel for recognising our commitment in so many ways in the report but also for agreeing to split the review venue evenly between two of the SETU campuses, a first for the CINNTE Review process.

The University is proud of its very open nature and the multiple pathways to entry, but that it equally recognises the importance of retaining students over the lifetime of their chosen programme. Therefore, it accepts the merit in the 'establishment of a dedicated group drawing from those with expertise from across SETU to address student retention'. We are determined to complement our openness with an understanding of the requirements to sustain an enjoyable learning experience.

The Review Team commended SETU for 'the establishment of CORDA, which provides the university with a single source of information to inform decision-making and quality assurance activities'. However, we also recognise the need to follow through on this establishment, 'to embed evidence-informed decision-making into its structures and processes. This should include the development of robust data governance structures

to ensure reliable, secure, and effective data management'.

SETU will engage in a consultative process to develop its quality improvement plan on the basis of this report's recommendations and our Self Evaluation Report. The quality improvement plan will capture realistic timelines, engage key stakeholders across our university community and assign appropriate leadership to each of the plan's components.

I would like to thank the panel for recognising key highlights in their commendations and recognise the need to implement completely their recommendations. The University found the CINNTE review process to be objective and thorough. We welcome this balanced and comprehensive report, valuing the external expert perspectives and opinions. The recommendations from this report will help the university further develop its structure, policies, and quality

assurance and reinforce the pursuit of our strategies.

In conclusion I wish to sincerely thank all involved in the review process, SETU staff, students and external stakeholders, who met the panel and also those who contributed to the process over the 18 months from launch to panel visit; the review team; and the QQI Tertiary Education Monitoring and Review Unit of Marie Gould, Orlaith O'Loughlin, and Stephen Kelly, who supported us throughout the review process. The review provided a timely snapshot of where we are and a confirmation that our ambitions are both worthy and attainable.

Professor Veronica Campbell
President, SETU

February 2025

Appendices

Appendix A: Terms of Reference for the Review of Technological Universities

The Terms of Reference for the review of the Technological Universities are an adaptation of the CINNTE review Terms of Reference for Designated Awarding Bodies. These Terms of Reference provide an enabling framework to facilitate and further enhance the institutional review process of the new institutions.

Section 1: Background and Context of the Review

1.1 CONTEXT AND LEGISLATIVE UNDERPINNING

In 2016 QQI adopted a Policy for Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions, which sets out the scope, purposes, criteria, model and procedures for the review process. These are detailed in this handbook.

The Technological Universities Act 2018 provides for the establishment of technological universities, as well as setting out their functions and governance structure. These Terms of Reference provide supplemental information for the quality review of new technological universities within the CINNTE Review Cycle Schedule 2017-2024.

The CINNTE schedule of cyclical reviews has been revised to reflect the planned establishment of technological universities; the institutional review of each new technological university is planned to commence 18 months from the date of establishment of that technological university with submission to QQI of the institutional self-evaluation report (ISER).

1.2 PURPOSES

The Policy for the Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions highlights four purposes for individual institutional reviews, as set out in the CINNTE handbook. These are consistent in these Terms of Reference, with some amendments to the measures as highlighted below:

Purpose	Achieved and measured through:
1. To encourage a QA culture and the enhancement of the student learning environment and experience within institutions	– emphasising the student and the student learning experience in reviews – providing a source of evidence of areas for improvement and areas for revision of policy and change and basing follow-up upon them – exploring innovative and effective practices and procedures – exploring quality as well as quality assurance with a focus on the development of an integrated quality system within the new institution
2. To provide feedback to institutions about institution-wide quality and the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality and the overall effectiveness of their quality assurance	– emphasising the governance of quality and quality assurance at the level of the institution – pitching the review at a comprehensive institution-wide level – evaluating compliance with legislation, policy and standards – evaluating how the institution intends to identify and measure itself against its own benchmarks and metrics to support quality assurance governance and procedures – emphasising the improvement of quality assurance procedures
3. To contribute to public confidence in the quality of institutions by promoting transparency and public awareness	– adhering to purposes, criteria and outcomes that are clear and transparent – publishing the reports and outcomes of reviews in accessible locations and formats for different audiences – evaluating, as part of the review, institutional reporting on quality and quality assurance, to ensure that it is transparent and accessible
4. To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice	– Using the expertise of international, national and student peer reviewers who are independent of the institution; – ensuring that findings are based on stated evidence – facilitating the institution to identify measurement, comparison and analytic techniques, based on quantitative data relevant to its evolving mission and context, to support quality assurance – promoting the identification and dissemination of examples of good practice and innovation

Section 2 Objectives and Criteria

The overarching theme for the institutional review of a newly formed technological university is: ensuring a forward-looking perspective.

2. 1 REVIEW OBJECTIVES

Enhancing academic quality and excellence should be a key goal of each newly formed technological university. It is recognised that these new institutions will need to move from an implicit strategy based on the sum of the dissolved institutions, to a common global mission, strategy and goals, and that it will take time to mainstream an institution-wide quality assurance system, and to implement institution-wide procedural change.

The objectives for the CINNTE Review are framed within this context. Whilst the review process will be forward-looking, it must also ensure trust through transparency and commitment to a culture of quality assurance.

Objective 1

To review the effectiveness and implementation of the QA procedures of the new technological university through consideration of the procedures set out in the annual quality report submitted by the university.

The scope of information in respect of quality assurance contained in the annual quality report (AQR), or otherwise reported, includes reporting procedures, governance and publication. It is recognised that the procedures that governed quality assurance in the dissolved institutions may not be unified in one single document at the time of submission of the AQR and/or review process. There may, therefore, be a number of individual procedures set out in the AQR that reflect former institutional approaches, and supplementary information may be requested by the review team in the form of documentation or interviews in advance of, or during, the review process.

The relevant outcomes of the last review of the former institutions should be addressed and resolved, and the development of the new unified quality assurance system in place since the establishment of the new institution, evaluated. The review team will also consider the effectiveness of the AQR and institutional self-evaluation report (ISER) processes implemented across the new technological university.

The scope of this objective also extends to the technological university's overarching approach to assuring itself of the quality of its research degree programmes and research activities in the context of its establishment as a new institution, and to the effectiveness of the procedures for the quality assurance of its collaborations, partnerships and overseas provision.

Objective 2

To review the enhancement of quality by the technological university through governance, policy and procedures.

In the new technological university, institution-wide governance, policy, procedures, mission, goals and targets for quality may not be fully established at the time of the review. In this context, the process – and progress – towards developing these elements will be evaluated, and the methodology and design of quality assurance, as well as transitional governance approaches, will be considered.

Objective 3

To review the effectiveness and implementation of procedures for access, transfer and progression.

2. 2 REVIEW CRITERIA

Criteria for Objective 1

The review report will include a specific qualitative statement on the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of the new institution and/or the extent of their development and/or implementation. The report will also include a specific statement on the extent to which the quality assurance procedures can be considered as compliant with the European Standards & Guidelines (ESG) and as having regard to QQI's statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (QAG).

The criteria to be used by the review team in reaching conclusions for this objective are:

– Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015);
– QQI Core Quality Assurance Guidelines;
– QQI Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Universities and Other Designated Awarding Bodies;
– The technological university's own objectives and goals for quality assurance, where these have been determined.

Where appropriate and actioned by the institution, additional QQI guidelines may be incorporated:

– Topic Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes
– Topic Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Providers of Research Degree Programmes
– National Framework for Doctoral Education

Criteria for Objective 2

The Review Report will include a specific qualitative statement on the enhancement of quality by the institution through governance, policy, and procedures.

The statements may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations in reference to this objective. If identified, innovative and effective practices for quality enhancement will be highlighted in the report.

The criteria to be used by the team in reaching conclusions for this objective are:

- The institution's own mission and vision
- The goals or targets for quality identified by the institution
- Additional sources of reference identified by the institution.

Criteria for Objective 3

The report will include a qualitative statement on the extent to which the current procedures being implemented in the new institution are in keeping with QQI Policy for Access, Transfer and Progression.

Key questions to be addressed by the review for each objective in the context of the new institution:

- How is a new unified quality assurance system being planned for and developed?
- How are quality assurance procedures and reviews being implemented in the new institution?
- What transitional quality assurance arrangements have been put in place? What reflections would the institution make on these?
- Who takes responsibility for quality and governance of quality assurance in the newly established, multi-campus, geographically spread institution?
- How effective are the current internal quality assurance procedures of the institution?
- How transparent, accessible and comprehensive is reporting on quality and quality assurance across the institution? What documentation and supporting information is available?
- How is quality promoted and enhanced?
- Are there effective innovations in quality enhancement and assurance?
- How is the new university developing a common mission, strategy and goals for quality?
- How has information on transitional arrangements been communicated?

Section 3 The Review Process

3. 1 PROCESS
The primary basis for the review process is this handbook.

3. 2 REVIEW TEAM PROFILE
QQI will appoint an external review team to conduct an institutional review of each new technological university. The size of the team and the duration of their visit will depend on the size and complexity of the institution but in general the review team for a technological university will consist of 6 persons. Each review team includes a chair and coordinating reviewer, and may be supported by a rapporteur, who is not a member of the team, to take and collate notes of meetings. A single team may undertake the review of two different institutions.

Reviewers are not QQI employees, but rather peers of the institution. The institution will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed composition of their review team to ensure there are no conflicts of interest, and QQI will ensure an appropriate and entirely independent team of reviewers is selected for each institution. QQI has final approval over the composition of each review team.

There will be appropriate gender representation on the review team. The team will consist of carefully selected and trained and briefed reviewers who have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their tasks. The team will operate under the leadership of the review chair.

The review team for the institution-wide review of the newly formed technological universities will be appointed in keeping with the following profile:

1. A Review Chairperson

   The role of the Chairperson is to act as leader of the review team. This will be an international reviewer who is a (serving or recently former) senior third-level institution leader – usually a head of Institution or deputy head of Institution or a senior policy advisor who:

   - Possesses a wide range of higher education experience, with specific experience of creating a new university and/or of merging higher education institutional contexts.
   - Demonstrates a deep understanding of the complexities of the higher education system and of establishing a new higher education institution.
   - Understands often unique QA governance arrangements; and
   - Has proven experience in the management of innovation and change.

2. A Coordinating Reviewer

The role of the coordinating reviewer is to act as secretary to the team as well as to be a full review team member. This is usually a person with expertise in the higher education system and prior experience in participating in external reviews. As the coordinating reviewer is responsible for drafting the report, he or she will possess proven excellent writing abilities.

3. A Student Reviewer

The role of the student reviewer is to represent the student voice in the review team. The student reviewer will, typically, be an Irish or international student with significant experience of higher education or an undergraduate student who has completed a quality assurance training programme and/or has had a role in institutional self-evaluation and/or review.

4. An External Representative

The role of the external representative is to bring the "third mission" perspective to the review team, specifically in the context of the establishment of a new technological university. By way of example, they may have specialist knowledge in some or all of the following areas:

- External expectations of graduate skills and competencies,
- Issues and trends in industry and/or the wider community,
- The external perception of the new institution and its activities,
- Quality assurance practices in other sectors,
- Knowledge of the area identified in the specific institutional reviewer profile.

In addition to the specific roles above, the full review team complement will include a range of experts with the following knowledge and experience:

- experience of higher education quality assurance processes within a newly established institution and/or merging institutional context,
- experience of postgraduate research programmes,
- experience and proven ability in the advancement of teaching and learning,
- experience of a higher education institution with similar profile and/or mission.

All elements of the CINNTE cyclical review process, and guidance on conducting the institutional self-evaluation process are detailed in this handbook.

3. 3 PROCEDURE AND TIMELINES

The outline set out in the policy (below) will be elaborated further and timelines will be set out to accompany it, through discussion and consultation.

Step	Action	Dates	Outcome
Terms of Reference (ToR)	Completion of an institutional information profile by QQI Confirmation of ToR with institution and HEA	9 months before the Main review visit (MRV)	Published Terms of Reference
Institutional Profile	Forwarding to QQI of the institutional profile	6-9 months before the MRV	Published Institutional Profile
Preparation	Appointment of an expert review team Consultation with the institution on any possible conflicts of interest	6-9 months before the MRV	Review team appointed
Self-evaluation	Forwarding to QQI of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)	12 weeks before the MRV	Published ISER (optional)
Desk Review	Desk review of the ISER by the team	At least 1 week before the initial meeting	ISER initial response provided
Initial Meeting	An initial meeting of the review team, including reviewer training and briefing	5 weeks after the ISER, 7 weeks before the MRV	Team training and briefing is complete. Team identifies key themes and additional documents required
Planning Visit	A visit to the institution by the Chair and Coordinating Reviewer to receive information about the ISER process, discuss the schedule for the main review visit and discuss additional documentation requests	5 weeks after the ISER, 7 weeks before the MRV	An agreed note of the planning visit
Table continues overleaf.			

Step	Action	Dates	Outcome
Main review visit	To receive and consider evidence on the ways in which the institution has performed in respect of the objectives and criteria set out in the Terms of Reference	12 weeks after the receipt of ISER	A short preliminary oral report to the institution
Report	Preparation of a draft report by the team – 1st draft submitted to QQI	6-8 weeks after the MRV	QQI Review Report
	Draft report sent to the institution for a check of factual accuracy	12 weeks after the MRV	
	Institution responds with any factual accuracy corrections	14 weeks after MRV	
	Preparation of a final report	16 weeks after MRV	
	Preparation of an institutional response	18 weeks after MRV	Institutional response
Outcomes	Consideration of the Review Report and findings by QQI together with the institutional response and the plan for implementation	Next available meeting of QQI committee	Formal decision about the effectiveness of QA procedures *In some cases, directions to the institution and a schedule for their implementation*
	Preparation of QQI quality profile	2 weeks after decision	Quality profile published
Table continues overleaf.			

Step	Action	Dates	Outcome
Follow-up	*The form of follow-up will be determined by whether 'directions' are issued to the institution. In general, where directions are issued, the follow-up period will be sooner and more specific actions may be required as part of the direction.*		
	Preparation of an institutional implementation plan	1 month after decision	Publication of the implementation plan by the institution
	One-year follow-up report to QQI for noting. This and subsequent follow-up may be integrated into annual reports to QQI	1 year after the MRV	Publication of the follow-up report by QQI and the institution
	Continuous reporting and dialogue on follow-up through the annual institutional reporting and dialogue process	Continuous	Annual quality report Dialogue meeting notes

Note: The total period from start to finish is approximately 15 months but will depend on QQI committee meeting dates.

Appendix B: Main Review Visit Schedule

Day 1: 7 October 2024   Governance, Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement

Time	Group	Name of Attendee	Role	Purpose
09.00 - 09.30	Institutional Coordinator			Meeting with the Institutional Coordinator
10.00 - 10.30	1. President & VPAA	Prof Veronica Campbell Dr Derek O'Byrne	SETU President VP Academic Affairs, Teaching & Learning	Private Meeting with President and Registrar. To discuss institutional mission, strategic plan. Roles and responsibilities for QA and enhancement.
10.30 - 11.30	2. University Executive	Dr. Derek O'Byrne Mr. David Denieffe Mr. Cormac O'Toole Dr. Patricia Mulcahy Dr Richard Hayes Ms. Kathryn Kiely Dr. Ken Thomas Prof. Marie Claire Van Hout	VP Academic Affairs, Teaching & Learning Vice President Student Experience Vice President Finance/Financial Controller Vice President Global Partnerships Vice President for Strategy Vice President for External Affairs Head of Faculty of Engineering & Built Environment Vice President Research, Innovation & Impact	Discuss institutional mission, strategic plan. Roles and responsibilities for QA and Enhancement.
11.30 - 12.00	Private Review team Meeting. Tea/Coffee			
Table continues overleaf.				

12.00 - 12.25	3. Governing Authority Representatives	Prof. Patrick Prendergast Ms. Pauline Oakes Prof Veronica Campbell Mr David Dempsey Ms. Elaine Sheridan	Chair of Governing Body Governing Body SETU President Governing Body Governing Body Secretary / SETU VP Corporate Affairs	
12.30 – 12.55	4. Academic Council	Dr. Hazel Farrell Dr. Janette Davies Dr. Cathal Nolan Mr. Aubrey Storey Dr. Pauline Flanagan Dr. Kathleen Moore-Walsh Mr. John Tully Ms. Claire Fitzpatrick	Lecturer in Faculty of Arts & Humanities Deputy Head of the Wexford Campus Head of Department of Aerospace, Mechanical and Electronic Eng Lecturer in Health Sciences Lecturer in Faculty of Arts & Humanities Lecturer in Faculty of Arts & Humanities Lecturer in Faculty of Arts & Humanities Faculty Administrator	Discuss how the institution monitors the effectiveness of its quality management processes and structures and it ensures the outcomes of QA processes are enacted in an appropriate, consistent and timely manner.
13.00 - 14.00	Review team Lunch/Break			
14.00 - 14.40	5. Faculty Deans	Dr. Frances Hardiman Dr. Suzanne Denieffe Dr. Eileen Doyle Dr. Helen Murphy Prof. Peter McLoughlin Prof. Michael Harrison Dr. Karen Hennessy	Head of Faculty of Engineering & Built Environment Head of Faculty of Arts & Humanities Head of Faculty of Business; Head of Faculty of Arts & Humanities Head of Faculty of Education & Lifelong Learning Head of Faculty of Science & Computing Head of Faculty of Health Sciences (Acting) Head of Faculty of Arts & Humanities	Discuss how the University monitors the effectiveness of its QA/QE processes and structures, including arrangements for QA at the centre of faculties & schools/ departments, and how it ensures the outcomes are enacted in an appropriate, consistent and timely manner.
Table continues overleaf.				

Time	Meeting with			Purpose
14.45 - 15.15	6. Student Union Officers	Mr. Mark Dunne Ms. Lucy Bosch Ms. Ellie O'Neill Mr. Brian Power Mr. Corey Shanahan Ms. Wiktoria Szeremeta	SU President SU VP Welfare & Equality (Waterford) SU VP Welfare & Equality (Carlow/Wexford) SU VP Education (Carlow/Wexford) SU VP Education (Waterford) SU VP Events & Engagement (Carlow/Wexford)	
15.15 - 15.45	Private Review team Meeting			
15.45 - 16.30	7. Student Representatives: Undergraduates	Ms. Seraigha Ni Bhriain Mr. Ihor Melashchenko Mr. Dmitry O'Grady Mr. Daniel Fagan Mr. Eyong Agbor Ms. Andrea Sofia Zukh	Year 2 Bachelor of Arts Year 3 BSc(Hons) in Software Development Year 2 Bachelor of Arts Year 4 International Business Year 3 Social Science Year 3 Pharmaceutical Science	
16.30 - 17.15	8. Student Representatives: Postgraduates	Mr. Adam Stead Ms. Elisa Hableetzel Esposito Ms. Alejandra Vieyra Ramirez Dr. Anusha Pulavarty Mr. Adam Power	Cross-disciplinary PhD research between Art & Agriculture PhD Researcher in Sport & Exercise Science PhD Researcher in enviroCORE PhD Researcher in Plant Physiology & Molecular Biology PhD Researcher in Strength & Conditioning	Discussion with postgraduate students from all Faculties, to include representation from across the university, different years, disciplines and service users.
17.15 - 17.30	Private Review Team Meeting			

Time	Group	Name of attendee	Role	Purpose
09.00 - 09.30	Institutional Coordinator			Meeting with Institutional Coordinator to clarify issues from previous day and review today.
09.30 - 10.15	9. Quality Assurance Team / Joint Quality Committee / Members of the ISER development group excluding UE members	Ms. Mairead Boland Dr. Chris O'Riordan Dr. Fintan Bracken Dr. Colette Moloney Dr. David Ryan Ms. Muirghin Brophy Mr. Richard Lacey	Assistant Registrar Capacity Building Lead: Academic Quality & Governance Centre for Organisational Research, Data & Analysis Assistant Registrar Associate VP for Sustainability Student Support Integration Lead Lecturer in Computer Science; Member of Governing Body	Discussion on experience of implementing quality assurance throughout the institution. Discuss governance of QA procedures for approval of new programmes and modifications to current programmes.
10.15 - 10.20	5-minute team preparation			
10.20 - 11.05	10. Members of the Student Experience Committee	Mr. David Denieffe Dr. Pauline Flanagan Dr. Cara Daly Ms. Amanda Freeman-Gater Dr. Katherine Cagney Dr. Danielle Douglas Mr. Conor Phelan Ms. Aishling O'Toole Dr. Séamus Dillon Dr. Maeve Doyle	Vice President Student Experience Programme Director and Lecturer in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities Programme Leader in the Faculty of Science & Computing Programme Leader on an international programme in the Faculty of Science & Computing Lecturer in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities Programme Leader in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities Student Experience Co-Ordinator Academic Administration and Student Affairs Manager Lecturer in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities Lecturer in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities	Discuss role of committee in governance of QA procedures for approval of new programmes and modifications to current programmes
11.05 - 11.30	Private Review team Meeting			
Table continues overleaf.				

Time	Group	Name of attendee	Role	Purpose
11.30 - 12.15	11. Members of Research Community and Research Programmes Committee	Prof. Marie Claire van Hout Dr. Brian Jackson Dr. Lawrence Siry Dr. Sharon Harris Byrne Dr. Yvonne Kavanagh Dr. Geraldine Canny Dr. Kim Murphy Dr. Sinéad O'Halloran	Vice President Research, Innovation & Impact Head of Postgraduate Studies Assistant Head of Department for Graduate Studies Senior Lecturer Faculty of Business Director of Engineering Research & Innovation Head of Research Research Integrity & Compliance Officer Assistant Head of Department for Graduate Studies	Discuss role of committee in governance of QA procedures for research and innovation
12.15 - 12.20	5-minute team preparation			
12.20 - 13.05	12. Members of the Taught Programmes, Teaching & Learning Committee (TPTLC)	Dr. Derek O'Byrne Dr. Helen Murphy Ms. Eleanor Kent Dr. David Scanlon Mr. Michael Tobin Ms. Yvonne Scully Mr. Martin Walshe	VP Academic Affairs, Teaching & Learning Head of Faculty of Education & Lifelong Learning Head of Department of Land Sciences Lecturer in the Faculty of Science & Computing Lecturer in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities Senior Administrator Faculty of Business Lecturer in the Faculty of Engineering & Built Environment	Discuss role of committee in governance of QA procedures for Teaching and Learning
13.05 - 13.55	Review Team Lunch/Break			
13.55 -14.40	13. Heads of Departments	Ms. Paula Mulroe Ms. Patricia Bowe Dr. Paula Rankin Dr. Alan Davy Dr. Brian Casey Dr. Sara Kennedy Dr. TJ McDonald Dr. Orla O'Donovan	Head of Department Sport, Media & Marketing Head of Department of Management & Organisation Head of Department of Health and Sport Sciences Head of Department of Computing & Mathematics Head of Department of Humanities Head of Department of Nursing Assistant Head of Computing & Mathematics Department Head of Department of Science	To discuss Quality Management Processes at the Department Level, implementation & how their effectiveness is ensured.
14.40 -14.45	5-minute team preparation			

14.45 - 15.30	14. Academic staff from various Faculties	Dr. David Allen Dr. Geraldine Cleere Ms. Una Grant Dr. Padraig Kirwan Dr. Claire O'Gorman Dr. Eleanor Neff Dr. Arthur Kearney Ms. Antoinette Jordan Ms. Ailish O'Brien	Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment & Built Environment Faculty of Arts and Humanities Faculty of Business Faculty of Science and Computing Faculty of Health Sciences Faculty of Education & Lifelong Learning Faculty of Business Faculty of Business Faculty of Business	Discuss QA as experienced by Academic Staff and their own involvement in QA and enhancement
15.30 - 16.00	Private Review Team Meeting			
16.00 - 16.45	15. Staff supporting implementation of undergraduate curriculum	Dr. Gina Noonan Mr. Peter Windle Mr. Ken McCarthy Dr. Deanna Santoro Mr. Thomas Aherne Mr. Neil Wyllie	Teaching and Learning Integration Lead Head of Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning N-TUTORR SETU Institutional Lead Lecturer, Teaching and Learning Acting Head of the Teaching and Learning Centre Learning Technologist	Discuss QA as experienced by Curriculum Support Staff and their own involvement in QA and enhancement
16.45 - 16.50	5-minute team preparation			
16:50 - 17:35	16. Staff from Student Support Services	Dr. Laura Keane Ms. Helena Fitzgerald Ms. Yvonne Hoare Mr. Thomas Grinsell Ms. Mary Boylan Ms. Katie Haughney Mr. Michael Mullan Ms. Jess Lawton Ms. Laura Hartrey Ms. Ann-Marie Quigley	Head of Student Services Waterford Campus Head of Learner Support and Student Services Deputy Head of Learner Support and Student Services Student Engagement and Peer Engagement Coordinator Peer Support Officer Lifelong Learning Co-Ordinator Student Recruitment and Admissions Manager Marketing & Outreach Officer Disability Officer / Coordinator Head of Student Counselling Service	Discuss QA as experienced by Student Support Staff and their own involvement in QA and enhancement

Time	Group	Name of atendee	Role	Purpose
09.00 - 09.30	Institutional Coordinator			Meeting with Institutional Coordinator
09.30 - 10.15	17. Directors: Research Institutes & Centres	Dr James O'Sullivan Mr Kevin Doolin Dr Dean Callaghan Dr Ramesh Raghavendra Dr Pat Lynch Dr Niall O'Reilly Dr Thomae Kakouli-Duarte	Head of Innovation & Commercialisation Executive Director (Walton Institute) Director of engCORE and Mechanical Engineering Lecturer Centre Director SEAM Director of RIKON Manager, Pharmaceutical and Molecular Biotechnology Research Centre Director of Envirocore	To discuss the development of Research and Innovation in SETU and the implementation of QA procedures for research
10.15 - 10.20	5-minute team preparation			
10.20 - 11.05	18. Research Active Academic Staff	Dr Larry Fitzhenry Prof Felicity Kelliher Prof Gillian Gardiner Dr Brona Kehoe Dr Damien Brady	Principal Investigator Ocular Therapeutics Research Group Professor of Management Practice, Chair RIKON research group Principal Investigator in Sustainable Agriculture & Food Research Group Lecturer in the Department of Sport & Exercise Science Lecturer in Microbiology	To discuss the development of Research and Innovation in SETU and the implementation of QA procedures for research
11.05 - 11.30	Private Review team Meeting			
11.30 - 12.15	19. Graduate Students	Mr. Adam Kane Mr. Liam Hughes Ms. Abeer Abouhajar Ms. Aneta Kuczynska Mr. Conor Flood Mr. Abdulsalam Ahmed	Graduate of the Department of Computing Graduate of Department of Science and Health Graduate of Computing Graduate from the Department of Science and Health Graduate of the BSc Hons in TV and Media Production programme Graduate of Engineering	To discuss the experience of selecting, studying at and graduating from SETU.

12.15 - 12.20	5-minute team preparation			
12.20 - 13.05	20. External Stakeholders	Mr. Padraig O'Neill Mr. Paul Nolan Dr Moira Sweeney Ms. Elizabeth White Ms. Lily Holmes	Unum, Computer Science Industry Advisory board Dawn Meats, Chair of Department of Land Sciences Industry Board Nemeton Filmmaker (Collaborative provision on Television and Media Production) Wexford Arts Centre and Collaborative Provision PB Machine Tech (Engineering the SouthEast)	To discuss engagement of external stakeholders in relationship management, strategic management and QA structures
13.05 - 13.55	Review Team Lunch/Break			
13.55 - 14.40	21. Access and Widening Participation: Staff	Dr Allison Kenneally Mr. Colm Bonnar Ms. Aisling McHugh Dr. Sarah Sartori Mr. Paul Bennett Dr. Fionnuala Brennan Ms. Samantha O'Connor	Vice President for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Head of Student Services Student Services Administrator Higher Education Strategic Project Lead Traveller Education Worker Lecturer on the Irish Prison Service programme Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Support Officer	To discuss QA aspects of student recruitment, admission, progression with particular reference to entrants via Access routes
14.40 - 14.45	5-minute team preparation			
14.45 - 15.30	22. Access and Widening Participation: Students	Mr Frederick Mburu Mr. B. Flynn Mr Abdelmoumen Merabet Ms. Dima Atyeh Mr Ezana Weldetensae Mr Ned Fleming Ms. L. McGowan Ms Jade Stanley	BSc (Hons) in Cybercrime and IT Security (Y3) Bachelor of Laws Year 2 BSc (Hons) in Cybercrime and IT Security (Y2) BSc (Hons) in Computer Games Development (Y2) BSc Information Technology Management (Y1) BBus (Hons) Business with law (Y2) BSc (Hons) in Sports Rehabilitation and Athletic Therapy Research Postgrad	To discuss quality of student experience for those admitted via Access routes
Table continues overleaf.				

Time	Group	Name of attendee	Role	Purpose
15.30 - 16.00	Private Review Team Meeting			
16.00 - 16.30	23. International Office: Staff	Dr. Patricia Mulcahy Dr. Alan Davy Dr. Yvonne Kavanagh Dr. Colm Walsh Mr. Donal McAlister Ms. Sinead Day Dr. Don O'Neill Dr. Veronica Kelly	Vice President for Global Partnerships Head of Department of Computing and Mathematics Director of Engineering Research & Innovation SETU Global Business Development Manager International Affairs Manager International Affairs Manager Head of Department of Humanities Lecturer, Researcher in Internationalisation	To discuss involvement in QA and enhancement in International Education.
16.35 - 16.40	5-minute team preparation			
16.40-17.20	24. International Students - incoming & outgoing	Ms. Nidhi Piplani Kapur Ms. Denise McAllister-Wylie Ms. Alejandra Vieyra-Ramírez Ms. Farwa Ahmed Mr. Ihor Melashchenko	IRC PhD Scholar and recently elected to the General Council of the European Association for International Education (EAIE) SETU President's PhD Scholar PG International student PG Student Year 3 BSc(Hons) in Software Development	To discuss international student engagement in the University, particularly the overall quality of student experience.
17.20 - 17.30	Private Review Team Meeting			

Time	Group	Name of atendee	Role	Purpose
09.00 - 09.30	Institutional Coordinator			Meeting with Institutional Coordinator
09.30 - 10.15	25. Staff from collaborative providers and/ or partners	Gary O'Heaire Mr. Shane Kitson Lt Col Colin Lawlor Ms. Anne Channon Ms. Martha Bolger Mr. James Maher	COO, Tiglin Assistant Governor, Irish Prisons College (IPS) Registrar Defence Forces of Ireland Education Development Manager, Irish National Stud Director of Further Education and Training, Kilkenny Carlow Education & Training Board Education Resource Specialist, Teagasc	To discuss arrangements re QA with collaborative providers
10.15 - 10.20	5-minute team preparation			
10.20 - 10.55	26. Staff from Human Resources incl. staff development	Dr Larry Fitzhenry Prof Felicity Kelliher Prof Gillian Gardiner Dr Brona Kehoe Dr Damien Brady	Principal Investigator Ocular Therapeutics Research Group Professor of Management Practice, Chair RIKON research group Principal Investigator in Sustainable Agriculture & Food Research Group Lecturer in the Department of Sport & Exercise Science Lecturer in Microbiology	To discuss the development of Research and Innovation in SETU and the implementation of QA procedures for research
11.05 - 11.30	Private Review team Meeting			
11.30 - 12.15	19. Graduate Students	Dr Allison Kenneally Ms. Shauna Whyte Mr. Darren Fitzpatrick Ms. Corina Power Ms. Patricia Rochford Ms. Lynne Whelan Ms. Eimear Fitzpatrick Dr. Eileen Doyle Professor Denis Harrington	Vice President for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Vice President for People, Culture and EDI Human Resources Manager N-TUTORR SETU Teaching & Learning Coordinator Human Resources SETU Design Strategist HR Business Partner for Research Head of Faculty of Business; Head of Faculty of Arts & Humanities Head of Graduate Business	To discuss HR procedures that support QA & QE among all staff. Discuss staffing issues and constraints; and policies and procedures for staff promotion, diversity, recruitment and appraisal, enhancement of teaching & learning

Time	Group	Name of atendee	Role	Purpose
10.55 - 11.00	5-minute team preparation			
11.00 - 11.45	27. Staff from Finance and Campus Infrastructure	Mr. Cormac O'Toole Mr. Keith Williams Mr. Paul Quirke Ms. Eleanor Rea Ms. Cristíona Innseadúin Mr. Brian Stenson	Vice-President for Corporate Affairs Capital Projects Capital Projects SETU Finance Manager SETU Finance Manager Senior Staff Officer	To consider funding prospects and opportunities to further develop the campus facilities to support teaching, research and the wider student experience.
11.45 - 12.15	Private Review Team Meeting			
12.15 - 13.00	28. Staff from IT, Library Services, Recruitment, etc.	Mr. Tony Miller Mr. Colm O'Connor Mr. David Kane Mr. Conor O'Neill Ms. Breda Connell Ms. Geraldine Molloy Mr. Matt Givens Ms. Grace Cahill	SETU Director of Computing Services Head of Computing Services Systems Librarian eLearning Technical Officer Assistant Librarian Senior Technical Officer Audio Visual Technical Officer Senior Library Assistant	To discuss involvement in QA and enhancement
13.00 - 14.00	Review Team Lunch/Break			
14.00 - 14.45	29. Staff who lead PRSB recognition / accreditation	Ms. Eileen Farrell Dr. Sara Kennedy Mr. Ivan Sheeran Mr. Paul Treacy Ms. Tracy Byrne Dr. Eoin Homan Ms. Catherine Earle	Social Care: Corú accreditation NMBI accreditation LLB recognition Accountancy recognition Accountancy recognition Various Built Environment Accreditation Bodies Teaching Council of Ireland	To discuss arrangements re QA with PRSBs
14.45 - 17.00	Private Review Team Meeting			

Time	Group	Name of atendee	Role	Purpose
09.00 - 11.00	Private Review Team Meeting			Meeting with Institutional Coordinator
10.30 - 11.00	QQI Meets with Institutional Coordinator	Review Team not in attendance		To gather feedback
11.00 - 11.30	QQI meets with Review Team			To discuss Review Team's key findings
11.30 - 12.00	Private Review Team Meeting			
12.00 - 12.30	Meeting with (VPAA)	Dr Derek O'Byrne Dr Paul O'Leary Ms Mairéad Boland	VP Academic Affairs, Teaching & Learning Head of Quality Promotion Assistant Registrar	
12.30 - 13.00	Oral Report	Open Invitation to SETU community - Live Streamed also		

Glossary

ACRONYM/TERM	DEFINITION
AC	Academic Council
ADF	Academic Delivery Framework
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AQR	Annual Quality Report
ATP	Access, Transfer and Progression
CAO	Central Application Office (processes applications for undergraduate courses in Irish HEIs)
CINNTE	Name/branding for QQI's first external HEI review cycle
CORDA	Centre for Organisational Research, Data and Analysis
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CTEL	Centre for Technology Enhance Learning
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DARE	Disability Access Route to Education
DEIS	Schools with additional supports
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
enviroCORE	Researches innovative environmental technologies and biotechnologies
Erasmus+	EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Eu-rope
ESG (2015)	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
ETBs	Education and Training Boards
EU-CONEXUS	European University for Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability
EURAXESS	The largest pan-European initiative to foster researchers' mobility and career development
FET	Further Education and Training
GenAI	Generative AI (capable of generating text, images, videos, or other data using generative models, in response to prompts)
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEAR	Higher Education Access Route
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HR	Human Resources
IAH	Internationalisation at Home
ICOS	Irish Council for International Students
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IP	Institutional Profile
ISER	Institutional Self-Evaluation Report
JQC	Joint Quality Committee
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MA	Master of Arts
MBA	Master of Business Administration
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
N-TUTOR	The National Technological University Transformation for Recovery and Resilience

ACRONYM/TERM	DEFINITION
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PURE	A research information system that collects a range of information about the university's research activities
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
R&RP	Research and Research Programme Committee
R&S	Recruitment & Selection
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAM	Semesterisation and Modularisation
SATLE	Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement (HEA initiative)
SETU	South East Technological University
SU	Students' Union
TLC	Teaching and Learning Centre
TNE	Transnational Education
TrustEd	Name given to QQI's statutory international education quality mark
TU	Technological University
TU-RISETU	Research and Innovation Supporting Enterprise Scheme
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
VP	Vice President