Policy for Quality Assurance and Enhancement

November 2017

Ollscoil na hÉireann
National University of Ireland

Policy for Quality Assurance and Enhancement

November 2017

Ollscoil na hÉireann
National University of Ireland

Introduction

The National University of Ireland (NUI) is a federal university now comprising four constituent universities, two recognised colleges and five colleges linked with the constituent universities. These highly active and dynamic institutions have produced large communities of dynamic students, researchers and academic staff that contribute to the high-quality teaching, learning and research within their respective institutions, the outputs of which are frequently acknowledged in published world rankings. NUI is proud to serve and support the interests of its member institutions, by providing services in support of them and their graduates. Related to this, NUI continues to promote the national and international standing of the National University of Ireland as a whole, by fostering a range of activities related to research and scholarship, by engaging with students, graduates and scholars through a range of activities, as well as by promoting the advancement of higher education and the cultural and intellectual life of Ireland.

NUI continues to be responsible for the academic standards of its degrees and other qualifications awarded in the recognised colleges and will seek to ensure that the quality of the learning experience offered in these institutions is comparable to that offered in the constituent universities so that students can attain NUI qualifications.

NUI's approach to quality assurance is to guarantee that the appropriate mechanisms are in place within the University to ensure the standards of its degrees and other qualifications are maintained and to support, where possible, its member institutions.

Background

Since its establishment in 1908, in exercise of the powers given to the university under its Charter, NUI has recognised colleges of higher education and over its history, there have been thirteen NUI recognised colleges. Previously, recognised college status has been granted subject to the university being satisfied *'as to the General character and financial position of the college as a whole, the adequacy in numbers and qualifications of its teaching staff, the University standard of the teaching, the adequate provision of laboratories and other appliances necessary for giving instruction in the subjects in respect of which recognition is contemplated, the conditions as to age and attainments on which students are admitted, the number of students proceeding or likely to proceed to a University Degree, and the relations of the college to any other University'*. Courses of study in recognised colleges have been approved as leading to NUI degrees and other qualifications subject to the university being satisfied with the calibre of the teaching staff and of the comparability of the courses with courses in the university.

Over time, reflecting national developments including notably (i) the quality assurance provisions of the Universities Act 1997 and (ii) the establishment of the National Framework of Qualifications, also the developments at European level with (iii) the establishment in 2000 of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and (iv) the publication in 2005 of the first *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, NUI has sought to develop policies and procedures for quality assurance in recognised colleges consistent with national and European standards and guidelines. In 2009, the Senate adopted *A Framework for Quality in the Recognised Colleges of the National University of Ireland*, which set out NUI policy, procedures and regulations for quality assurance. NUI qualifications are placed in the National Framework of Qualifications and other equivalent international frameworks such as the EHEA quality framework (QF-EHEA) or the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

The enactment of the [Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012](#), under which NUI is a designated awarding body (DAB), has has placed specific new responsibilities on the University to demonstrate the effectiveness of its quality assurance and quality enhancement procedures, while also acknowledging its existing responsibilities in relation to the comparable standards and quality of its awards in the recognised colleges[1].

---

1   Under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, recognised colleges (also known as linked providers) are required to have their quality assurance procedures approved by NUI. However, where a recognised college is also a designated awarding body under the Act the responsibility for approval of its quality assurance procedures lies directly with QQI.

NUI seeks in this document to set out anew its policy for quality assurance, incorporating its traditional policy of ensuring comparability between the quality of qualifications awarded in recognised colleges and other qualifications of the National University of Ireland (awarded by NUI in the constituent colleges up to 1997 and by the constituent universities since then) and more recent considerations informed by national and European quality assurance policy. Following consultation with Qualifications and Quality Assurance Ireland and having regard to the guidelines issued by the Authority, together with the European Standards and Guidelines in the European Higher Education Area NUI will proceed to establish quality assurance procedures in implementation of its policy.

NUI's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy Objectives are as follows:

► to reflect the vision, mission and values of NUI as currently outlined in the NUI Strategic Plan 2014-2017 and enhance the standing of the university through its core activities.

► to confirm the University's commitment to safeguard the standards of its awards in the recognised colleges, both nationally and internationally, and to include collaborative and/or transnational provision.

► to develop a quality culture that takes account of the core functions of the University for the benefit of NUI graduates, academic staff, students, the federal university as a whole and the wider public.

► to ensure that the University's role in quality assurance and improvement in respect of NUI qualifications awarded in the recognised colleges is supported and maintained as part of NUI's strategic planning and development.

► to ensure that appropriate and transparent governance and management structures are in place both within NUI and in the recognised colleges to support the implementation of quality assurance and improvement procedures.

► to implement and maintain procedures relating to the approval, monitoring and review of all programmes leading to NUI qualifications in the recognised colleges, while recognising that NUI recognised colleges have the primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance.

- ▶ to continue a culture of independent peer review where external examiners, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, and external assessors contribute to the internal and external reviews of academic programmes leading to NUI qualifications in the recognised colleges.

- ▶ to be informed of relevant standards, mechanisms and practice in the NUI constituent universities and to engage the support of the constituent universities and other independent external peers and organisations nationally and internationally in carrying out periodic external review of the academic, administrative and support functions of a recognised college.

- ▶ to facilitate quality enhancement in teaching, learning and research based on recommendations arising from reviews and other initiatives, and by highlighting effective practices to be shared with the recognised colleges.

- ▶ to demonstrate alignment with the legislative provisions and compliance with relevant European Standards and Guidelines, and other applicable national and international guidelines.

Appendix 1: Legislation and Regulation

1. NUI Statute LXXXV1 (Chapter LIX) - *'Recognised Colleges'*.

2. Universities Act, 1997

3. Quality & Qualifications (Education & Training) Act 2012

4. NUI (2009), *A Framework for Quality in the Recognised Colleges of the National University of Ireland.*

5. Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines 2016

6. Sector specific quality assurance guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies

7. Sector specific quality assurance guidelines for Independent/Private Providers

8. Code of Practice for provision of programmes of education and training to international learners

9. Topic-Specific QA Guidelines: Statutory Guidelines for the QA of Research Degree Programmes, 2016 *(White Paper – under consultation)*

10. Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training, 2015

11. A Current Overview of Recognition of Prior Learning

12. European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning CEDEFOP 2015

13. European Standards and Guidelines in the European Higher Education Area, 2015

Appendix 2: Chronology of NUI Recognised Colleges

	NUI Recognised Colleges	Location	Disciplines	Duration	Current Status
1	St Patrick's College, Maynooth	Dublin	Humanities & Sciences	1910 – 1997	Maynooth University, a constituent university of NUI since 1997
2	St Patrick's College, Drumcondra	Dublin	Education	1975 – 1990	A constituent college of DCU until 2016. Incorporated into the DCU Institute of Education in September 2016
3	Our Lady of Mercy College of Education, Carysfort, Blackrock	Dublin	Education	1975 – 1988	Dissolved 1988
4	Mary Immaculate College, Limerick	Limerick	Education	1975 – 1991	A constituent college of University of Limerick
5	National Institute for Higher Education (NIHEL)	Limerick	Education	1976 – 1977	University of Limerick, since 1989
6	Thomond College	Limerick	Education	1976 – 1977	Dissolved 1991
7	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI)	Dublin	Medicine & Healthcare	1977 – present	An independent degree awarding body and a recognised college of NUI
8	St. Angela's College, Sligo	Sligo	Education	1978 – 2006	A constituent college of NUI Galway since 2006
9	National College of Art and Design (NCAD)	Dublin	Art & Design	1996 – 2011	A constituent college of UCD since 2011

NUI Recognised Colleges	Location	Disciplines	Duration	Current Status
10 Shannon College of Hotel Management (SCHM)	Clare	Tourism & Hospitality	2000 – 2015	A School in the College of Business, Public Policy and Law at NUI Galway since 2015
11 Institute of Public Administration (IPA)	Dublin	Public Administration	2001 – 2011	A constituent college of UCD since 2011
			Sep 2018 –	IPA will rejoin NUI as a recognised college
12 Milltown Institute	Dublin	Humanities	2005 – 2015	Dissolved 2015
13 Uversity	Dublin	Creative Arts	2013 – 2018	A recognised college of NUI