

October 2024

Institutional Review Report 2024

Technological University of the Shannon



CINNTE 



Dearbhú Cáilíochta
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
Quality and
Qualifications Ireland

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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 Quality Dialogue Meetings (QDMs). The CINNTE review cycle runs from 2017-2024. During this period, QQI will organise and oversee independent reviews of each of the universities, 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 an 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 the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) 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 the Technological University of the Shannon 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 the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) was conducted by a team of six reviewers selected by QQI. The review team was trained by QQI on 12 February 2024. The Chair, Coordinating Reviewer and a further review team member undertook a planning meeting with TUS on 26 February 2024. The main review visit was conducted by the full team between 14 and 19 April 2024.

CHAIR

Professor Jeremy Bradshaw is currently an independent consultant on higher education, specialising in doctoral studies, internationalisation, and quality and standards. Jeremy was previously Pro Vice-Chancellor (International & Doctoral) of the University of Bath, where he was responsible for leading the international development of the institution and enhancing its reputation for excellent doctoral provision. Prior to this, he was Chair of Molecular Biophysics, Assistant Principal of Researcher Development, International Dean for the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, and Director of Quality at the University of Edinburgh.

Jeremy gained a MA in Zoology from Oxford University in 1981. He has published over a hundred papers in the field of biomedical science. He is a Fellow of the Society of Biology and formerly chaired its Biomedical Sciences Committee. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Chartered Society of Forensic Sciences. He has been a QAA reviewer since 2010 and has conducted numerous reviews across the UK. He has also conducted a number of transnational education reviews for QAA, and has been a reviewer for the University Grants Committee of Hong Kong Quality Assurance Council, the Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities, the Quality Enhancement Framework for Icelandic Higher Education, and the Albanian Accreditation Agency for Higher Education, the Pakistani Higher Education Commission, Dubai Knowledge and Human Development, Saudi National Center for Academic Accreditation and Evaluation, and the Hong Kong Council for the Accreditation of Academic and

Vocational Qualifications. He serves on a number of international advisory panels.

COORDINATING REVIEWER

Elizabeth Noonan has over 30 years' experience of higher education gained in Scotland and Ireland, across the domains of: quality; teaching and learning; academic development; academic registry, including academic policy and programme development and professional development. In 2016 she was appointed Director of Quality Enhancement at University College Cork (UCC), with responsibility for the management and development of the university's quality enhancement processes for education, research and services. She is an active participant in university governance through membership of the University Strategy Implementation Group; Academic Council and its sub-committees, University Student Surveys Board (Chair) Quality Enhancement Committee (Secretary) and as a member of internal advisory boards. During 2022-2023 she acted as Institutional Coordinator for the successful CINNTE Review of UCC.

Previously (2014-16) Elizabeth was seconded from UCD to act as Research Coordinator at the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning where she managed the inaugural Forum Research projects portfolio, Forum PhD scholars, and contributed to a wide range of policy development initiatives including the Digital Roadmap, Strategic Enhancement Theme on Assessment, teaching awards and professional development framework. While at UCD (2004-14) Elizabeth held the roles of Assistant Registrar, Director of Policy and Programme Development

and Director of Academic Development. In the later role she developed, with a peer colleague, the UCD Fellowships in Teaching and Academic Development established in 2007. At Edinburgh Napier University (1992-2004) Elizabeth worked on external teaching quality assessment, institutional review, programme approval and transnational collaborative programmes.

Elizabeth is a graduate of UCC, BA Hons (Geography and English) MA (English) and holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Research (Stirling University). She is a strong advocate of professional and career development through her work as external assessor for the Association of Higher Education Professionals Postgraduate Certificate, as Module Leader on the UCC Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice and Leadership in Higher Education, and as an active mentor.

INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Dr Inger Seiferheld has experience as external reviewer for QAA Scotland, the Danish Government's Accreditation Institution and AAQ Switzerland. She led the University of Edinburgh Business School through three EQUIS reaccreditations and four AMBA reaccreditations. She also led the School's Initial Accreditation to the AACSB and two Continuous Improvement Reviews. She is the school's representative for AACSB International, the Association of MBAs, EFMD Global and the UK and Ireland Accreditation network. Prior to taking on the role as Director of Quality and Accreditations in 2011, Inger was Director of two of the School's Full-time MBA programmes over a period of eight years, and she has been a lecturer in Operations Management, Technology Management, and Design Creativity and Problem-Solving. Inger holds an MSc in Industrial Management and a PhD (European Doctorate) in Production Economics. She is a member of the Danish Society of Engineers (IDA), a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA) and she is accredited by Pædagogisk Udviklingscenter at Aalborg University, Denmark.

LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE

Anna Klampfer is currently pursuing her master's degrees in Material Science as well as Physical Energy and Measurement Engineering at the Technological University of Vienna. She earned her BSc in Technical Physics from the same institution. As a student representative, she gained insight at programme, faculty and university levels throughout diverse commissions and working groups, including the academic senate, study commissions and the working group for diversity management. Her roles have encompassed vice-chair of the senate, chair of the curricula commission for Material Science and officer for quality assurance at the National Union of Students in Austria. Presently, Anna is a member of the Board of AQ Austria, the Austrian Quality Assurance Agency, and contributes to national and international QA reviews for programmes, institutions and QA agencies as a student reviewer. Additionally, she is working at Alstom Transportation Austria as an expert in painting, corrosion protection and material selection.

HIGHER EDUCATION REPRESENTATIVE

Rosalind Pritchard is Emeritus Professor of Education at Ulster University where she was Head of the School of Education and Co-ordinator of Research. She holds an Honours degree in Modern Languages and Literature (German and French from TCD) together with two master's degrees, one in Education and one in General and Applied Linguistics. She established the UU Master's in the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), a degree that combines theory with professional skills and includes a teaching practice in Hungary. Her research interests are in higher education, especially institutional mergers and linkages; gender issues; German education; language teaching). She has extensive experience of editorial work, and recently (09/2023) published a co-edited book (with A. Sahlane) entitled English as an International Language Education: Critical Intercultural Literacy Perspectives. She was the founder of a book series with Brill on Higher Education, and also contributes to it as an author. She is a Senior Distinguished Research Fellow of her university, a member of Royal Irish Academy and of the British Academy of Social Sciences, an

Honorary Member of the British Association for International and Comparative Education, and a Distinguished Member of the European Association for Institutional Research. She has held grants from the Leverhulme Trust, the Economic and Social Research Council, the UK Council for International Education, the German Academic Exchange Service and the Higher Education Innovation Fund. She is especially interested in mergers and linkages which are important in the growth of the technological universities in Ireland. Her interest was sparked because her own institution was subjected to a merger process (New University of Ulster and the Ulster Polytechnic). She has studied complex multi-campus universities such as Wales and London and produced a model of lifecycles. She has conducted both empirical and theoretical work on how people feel during and after a merger. She has addressed the issues of governance and values in HE, taking into account the current neo-liberal framework which can pose challenges for resilience, academic freedom, trust and even truth.

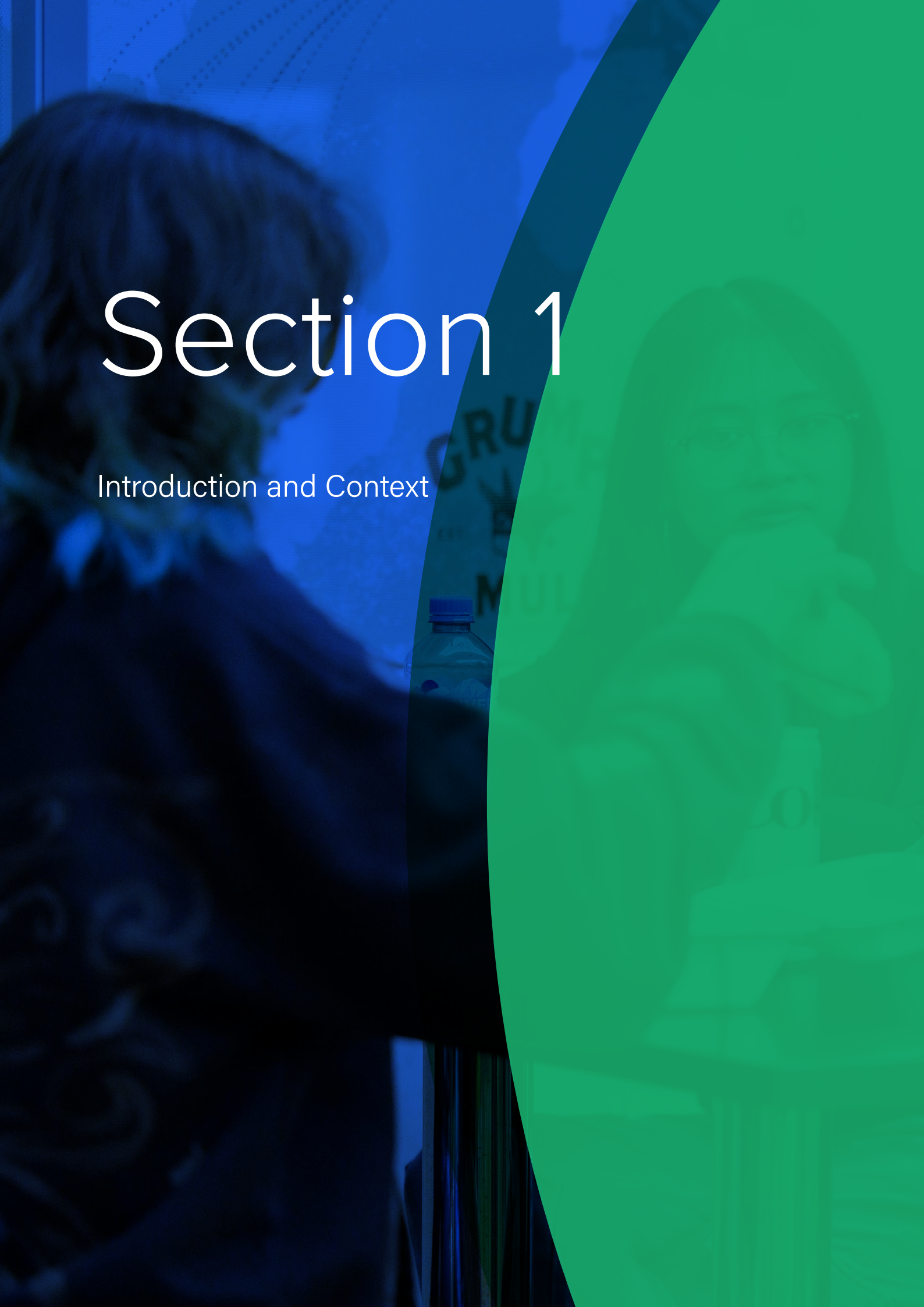
INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVE

Barry O’Sullivan has a B. Eng and a Diploma in Executive and Business Coaching from UCD and is also a Chartered Director (Institute of Directors (IoD)). He has 35 years’ experience in supply chain roles in multinational companies, spending the last 20 years of that at Johnson & Johnson, the world’s largest healthcare company, where he the Vice President of Manufacturing for the Vision Care division. Barry was a member of the IDA Board from 2015 – 2023, where he chaired the Innovation and Sustainable Development subcommittee of that Board and was President of the American Chamber of Commerce in 2018. He chaired the Action Plan for Jobs for the Mid West from 2016- 2019 and the Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce, whose report was launched in 2023.



Section 1

Introduction and Context





Introduction and Context

In November 2020, the Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) – Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT) Consortium submitted a joint application seeking designation as a technological university (TU) by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. Following consideration by an advisory panel, and by the Minister, the application was granted and the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (TUS) was established on 1 October 2021.

The application noted that, over the past decade, AIT and LIT have independently pursued a strategy to develop their capacity towards becoming a technological university. The strategic plans for both institutions were in alignment on the core thematic agendas for: equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI); relevant, contemporary, and high-quality provision; research capacity building; strategic engagement; and student experience. Furthermore, strategic planning analysis by both institutions had shown that there was minimal competition for students, approximately 4%, between the two institutions. Each strategic plan identified priority actions necessary to meet the criteria for technological university designation as set out in the Technological Universities Act (2018). TUS is a university with approximately 15,000 students across six campuses throughout Ireland's Midwest and Midlands region (TUS Institutional Profile, p6). The principal campuses are located at Moylish, Co Limerick and Athlone, Co Westmeath. Following its establishment, a key priority for TUS was the development of a strategic plan that would unite the predecessor institutions towards a shared goal. The inaugural TUS Strategic Plan was developed through a collaborative process and was launched in March 2023. The plan defines the values, purpose and vision of the institution (copied below) while also identifying strategic priorities and enablers.

- **Values:**
 - We operate in a responsive manner where integrity and excellence underpin all we do. We are honest, fair and ethical through our words and actions.
- **Purpose:**
 - The Technological University of the Shannon provides leading student-centred higher education that is research-informed, regionally relevant and accessible to all.
- **TUS Vision for 2030:**
 - To be a catalyst for sustainable change through education and research that transforms lives, our region and the world beyond.

TUS' stated strategic priorities (Strategic Plan 2023-26, p4) relate to:

- Education:
 - Provide a relevant high-quality education offering, focused on interdisciplinarity, delivered in both traditional and flexible ways to cater to a diverse cohort of students, across multi-campus locations.
- Research:
 - Deliver impactful applied research, growing the research community, engaging in next generation thinking and tackling issues at a regional, national and global level.
- People and Organisation:
 - Operate as an integrated organisation, where everyone's potential can be realised, and where all individuals are provided with equal opportunities.
- Connecting Communities:
 - Build and enhance relationships and partnerships to drive the sustainable development of our region and make an impact nationally and internationally.

Embedded in these strategic priorities are the university's international ambitions. From its inception, TUS has been committed to facilitating the inward and outward flow of students and staff between international partner institutions. The university has benefitted from the academic and cultural enrichment which this brings. Membership of networks such as the Regional University Network-European University (RUN-EU) has facilitated internationalisation through enabling student exchanges with institutions in multiple EU countries which has led to numerous international partnerships in education, research, and funded student and staff exchanges. Recognising its particular responsibilities to the local region pertaining to its TU status, through its strategic plan, TUS seeks to balance its regional and international engagement and to build synergies between the two. It was clear from the institutional self-evaluation report (ISER) and the meetings with staff, students, and external stakeholders, that TUS is deeply committed to active collaboration and community engagement, and to the co-creation and sharing of knowledge with a diverse range of stakeholders. Examples of this include engagement with the Technological University Research and Innovation Supporting Enterprise Scheme (TU RISE) that is designed to enhance central research functions in partnership with local and regional enterprises and community stakeholders (ISER p5), and the work of the TUS Access Service to develop initiatives to facilitate entry for under-represented students into, and successful participation in, higher education (Case Study: TUS Access Programme Student Profile, ISER p49). As a result of these initiatives, 32% of the total 2022-23 undergraduate entry to TUS was by alternative access or entry routes.

TUS has multiple campuses arranged, predominantly, across two groups, Midlands and Midwest. Midlands is centrally located on the Athlone campus. Midwest was operating across 5 sites, which expanded to 6 when the Coonagh campus opened at the end of April

2024. There are 10 Faculties and 27 Departments; TUS offers 317 taught programmes ranging from Level 6 to Level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), together with flexible and lifelong learning, apprenticeships, micro-credentials and short advanced programmes (SAPs). TUS provides both full- and part-time education. Entry to these programmes is offered across a range of entry mechanisms including through the Central Applications Office (CAO). Available modes of study include full direct entry, flexible learning, springboard, apprenticeships and access, reflecting the stated purpose of the institution.

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) provides a breakdown of student and staff in TUS for the academic year 2022/2023:

Student Numbers 2022/23¹	
All ²	13,335
New Entrants	2,495
UG Enrolments	11,225
PG Enrolments	2,110
International	960
Full Time	9,360
Part Time	2270
Other	1705
Graduates in 2022	4995
PhD ³	205
Research Masters	150

1 <https://hea.ie/statistics/data-for-download-and-visualisations/>

2 Note: This HEA published metric traditionally does not include "In-service Education and E-Learning Students". Including these additional cohorts, TUS reports a total student number of 14,878 in the TUS Institutional Profile (p6).

3 Note: This HEA published metric overstates the number of PhD students. TUS reports a total student number of 197 in the TUS Institutional Profile (p8).

Staff Numbers (FTE) 2023⁴	
Academic Core Funded	786
Academic Contract Research/ Specialist Exchequer and Non-Exchequer Funded	185
Professional and Support Staff Core Funded	411
Professional and Support Staff Contract Research/Specialist Exchequer and Non-Exchequer Funded	202
Total	1,583

Consistent with its core purpose to provide 'leading student-centred higher education that is research-informed, regionally relevant and accessible to all', TUS employs a quality and enhancement framework that aligns with the Standards and Guidelines for the [European Higher Education Area \(ESG 2015\)](#), and with national guidelines and criteria for QA procedures, as overseen by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The framework describes a cross-institutional approach with three principal pillars as follows:

1. Developing and implementing a comprehensive suite of TU-wide policies and procedures,
2. Establishing and conducting a broad range of internal reviews,
3. Participating in annual monitoring (through QQI's Annual Quality Reporting (AQRs) and Quality Dialogue Meetings (QDMs)) and Cyclical Review.

From the documentation provided and discussions with management, Governing Body members, staff, students and stakeholders during the main review visit, the review team found evidence of a strong and shared commitment to the stated vision of TUS. Considerable work has been undertaken to support a singular approach to management and the operational process. It is apparent to the review team that there is a strong and unified sense of purpose within the management team in TUS which is underpinning the ongoing change process

required to achieve the ambitions of the TU. During meetings with staff, the significant scale of change yet to be completed to achieve operational cohesion as a single university was evident across a range of different areas. These include IT, communications, as well as campus development and service integration across the multiple sites. Although much has been accomplished, the review team believes that the management structure of the university must become a coherent entity as a matter of urgency. This will enable greater effectiveness in overall management and operation of the institution, including the planning and allocation of resources to support the achievement of the ambitious strategic objectives set out.

In addition, the continued pressure on accommodation, equipment for staff and space for students, including social and learning spaces, appeared to present immediate challenges to the objectives of the Strategic Plan for programme growth and international students. The review team paid particular attention to the plans for internationalisation of the university's activities, including planned international recruitment. It appeared to the review team that balancing the regional and international student enrolment plans could be complex and strategically risky. The review team suggests that further planning to address these institutional challenges is needed to ensure an appropriate balance between strategic aspirations and current limitations on resources including accommodation. Steps to address this, such as developing a multi-year, holistic capital programme linked to the key Strategic Plan outcomes, should be considered as a matter of urgency. The review team also noted that the shortage of suitable accommodation for both domestic and international students presented a significant limitation for the institution.

Based on discussions with TUS management and staff during the main review visit, the review team were conscious of factors outside the university's control that, if resolved, would contribute to TUS reaching its potential. These factors are sectoral and require further negotiation, consultation and agreement with government agencies and unions.

4 <https://hea.ie/statistics/data-for-download-and-visualisations/>

While understanding that these lie outside the scope of this review, the review team finds that they are important to the achievement of the TUS vision and organisational development within the higher education landscape. These issues include, as outlined in the TUS Risk Register:

- Financial and staffing resource vulnerabilities because of vertical funding streams which are competitive and often time-limited
- Availability of appropriate accommodation for the student population, particularly international students, as well as adequacy of space on campus for student learning and social interaction
- The absence of a full academic career pathway from Assistant Lecturer (AL) to full Professor with concomitant development and progression opportunities. In anticipation of such a development, careful consideration should be given to the intended focus of a professoriate at TUS to ensure that its configuration and implementation reflect the full scope of TUS activities as expressed in the overall Vision.
- An effective Personal Development Plan process which is fully embedded and widely supported. It should be based on clear objectives; outcomes; and an effective implementation model that is participative and does not rely on a single manager.

Commendation

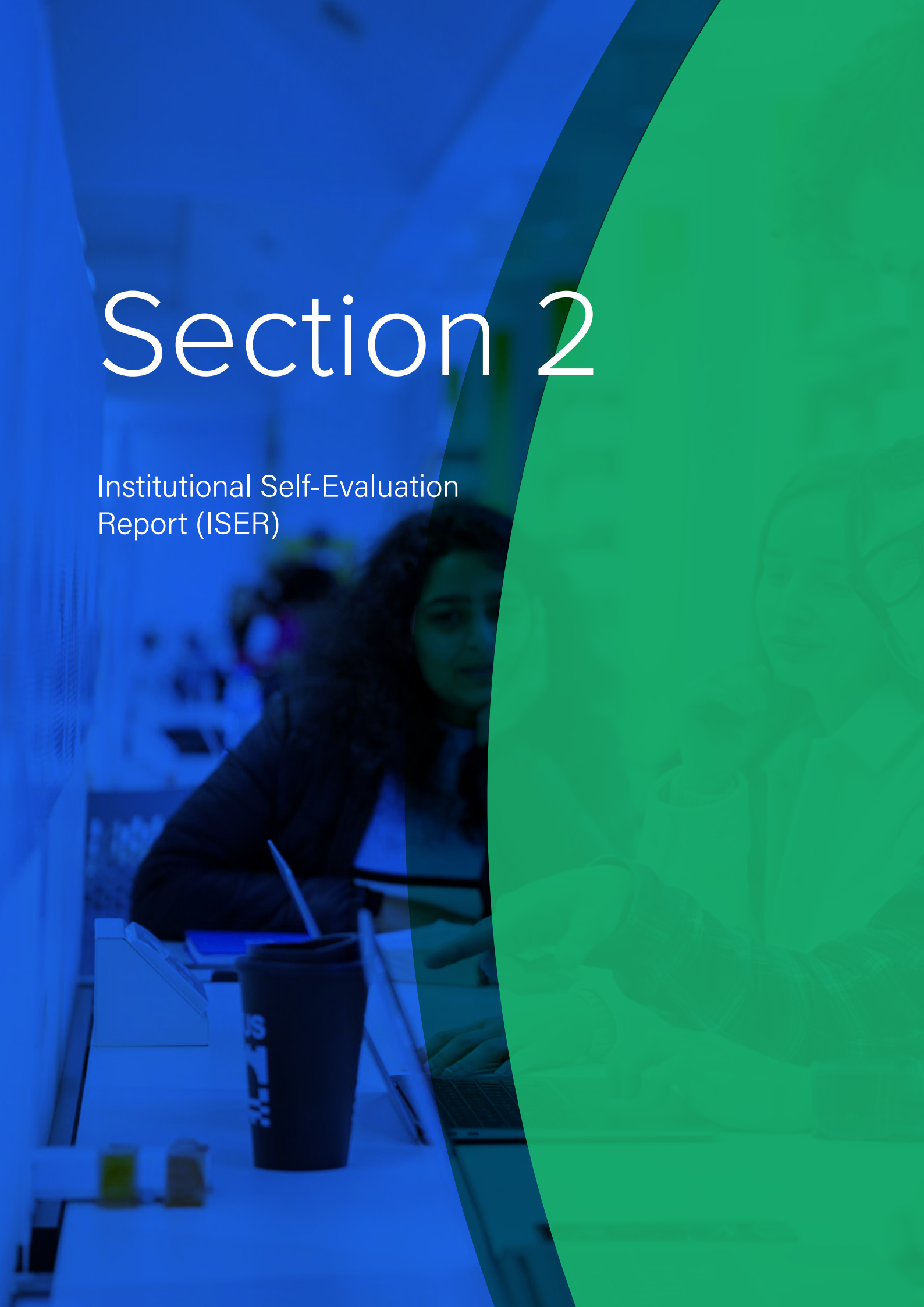
- The review team commends TUS for its ambitious vision that pervades key initiatives and guides its collaboration with students, communities, local government, enterprise and business.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that TUS, notwithstanding the progress made on integration to date, develop a unified operational model across the university. This should align with university objectives and be strongly promoted.

Section 2

Institutional Self-Evaluation
Report (ISER)





Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)

The review team found that the ISER and its supporting documentation presented the identity, values and distinctiveness of TUS and provided a comprehensive insight into the university's journey to becoming a single unified institution (ISER 2.1, p9). The ISER was carefully constructed and provided evidence of TUS' strong university-wide commitment to quality enhancement.

The preparation of the ISER began with the establishment of a Core Planning Group by the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Registrar in April 2022. A Steering Group comprising 16 stakeholders, including students, from across the institution was established in March 2023 (ISER 2.2, p9).

The self-evaluation process included the collection of data using a variety of methods, including document review, focus groups, facilitated dialogue meetings, and questionnaires. A total of 28 focus groups were held with different student groups, alumni, teaching and research staff, professional services staff, external examiners, employers and industry representatives, and collaborative partners (ISER 2.2, p9).

Focus group moderators received dedicated training to prepare them for the task and a series of guiding questions was created for each event. Staff focus groups included an additional, external moderator. The employer and industry meetings included a total of 29 organisations. These meetings focussed on the engagement between the university and employer/industry, views on preferred graduate attributes and the preparation of graduates for employment (ISER 2.3, p11). The focus groups ran over a period of 18 months and the outcomes were considered by the ISER Steering Group. Findings from the data were fed back to the Steering Group, and back to the relevant functional unit to validate the

feedback. A survey was sent to all international students and there were 68 responses in total. This was complemented by dedicated focus groups consisting of undergraduate and postgraduate students drawn from across the TUS campuses, and including international students (ISER 9.3, p66).

The core planning group led the writing of the ISER, working closely with chapter leads. Staff from across the university contributed relevant narrative, evaluation and case studies. The document was reviewed by the full Steering Group, the Academic Council, and the Governing Body (ISER 2.4, p11).

Student Union officers commented that their involvement with preparing the ISER was limited but, they considered, sufficient. The officers had access to a provisional report, but their input into the final document was mostly to confirm what had already been written, during a capstone dialogue. They reported that they would have liked to see greater attention drawn to the shortage of high-quality teaching and learning spaces on some of the smaller campuses, but otherwise the ISER was a true reflection of the student experience. Capstone dialogues were also held with various other groups, such as the Governing Body, the Deans' Council, and Heads of Department, to validate the outcomes of the consultation process and to ensure that the resulting evaluation reflected known issues (ISER 2.2, p9).

Throughout the data gathering process, various working groups were established. Senior staff reported that the networks and relationships built during that process made the evaluation easier to undertake and strengthened the validity of the findings.

The review team considered the approach to preparation of the ISER to be effective, and that the practice of training focus group facilitators and

external facilitators is an example of good practice. The resulting document represents a significant effort to reflect accurately the experience of each of the groups consulted. This is especially clear in the Summary and Reflection sections at the end of each chapter of the ISER, that present an objective overview together with proposed recommendations for further action. The review team commends TUS for the development of its ISER. The ISER is the result of a wide range of carefully designed and well-conducted activities and events which, taken as a synthesis, represent TUS' distinctive identity and values.

However, while the ISER was generally a true reflection of the university, it would have benefitted further from self-critique on the sufficiency of the evidence and whether this was fully representative and supported the assertions made. Fortunately, ample evidence was provided during the main review visit to confirm that the quality assurance and enhancement ethos presented in the ISER was clearly in place in TUS structures, plans and activities. A high degree of connectivity has been achieved between the TUS Vision, Strategic Plan, Institutional Profile (IP) and ISER, in alignment with national and European quality guidelines (ESG). Furthermore, there has been good progress in institutional integration most visibly reflected in a single corporate identity and leadership by the senior management team of the university vision. The Governing Body, senior leadership team and staff at all levels demonstrated a strong commitment to developing the TUS as a single university with a distinctive contribution to: "education and research that transforms lives, the region and the world beyond." (Strategic Plan, p3).



Section 3

Quality Assurance /Accountability



Quality Assurance/ Accountability

OBJECTIVE 1 – CURRENT QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

The Institutional Profile (IP), the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) and the Annual Quality Report (AQR) were each completed largely at the same time and in preparation for the 2023-24 CINNTE review of TUS. The review team is of the opinion that these documents demonstrate only to a limited extent the embeddedness of processes, and progress with actions identified in the ISER and the first AQR. Since there has only been one AQR to date, it was not possible to comment on the effectiveness of closing the quality loop. Considering each document individually, however, the review team finds they are informed by a reflective approach and an evidence-driven overall assessment of the university. For example, the ISER identifies more than 75 Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE)-related actions, ten of which are listed in Section 13.1, p84. While such a number may seem excessive, they represent a collection of major and minor actions and a set of circumstances which are to be expected in a young and newly merged degree awarding body (DAB). As such the documents evidence a commitment to systematic QAE processes. The IP and the AQR are published in full on TUS's website thereby meeting QQI transparency requirements.

TUS states in its QAE Policy that it will “be open, transparent and accountable, and [it] will display integrity in all [its] dealings with staff, students and other stakeholders” (TUS Policy on Quality Assurance and Enhancement 2022 – 2025, p4). The policy affirms the university's commitment to

quality assurance and continuous improvement, and, through the phrase that “Quality Assurance and Enhancement is ‘everybody's business” (TUS Policy on Quality Assurance and Enhancement 2022 – 2025, p4), demonstrates that QAE is a cross-institutional and multi-level responsibility.

Mapping to national and international QAE frameworks, the TUS QAE policy includes clear guidelines for the frequency and scope of internal and external review activity which include Academic Reviews of Faculties, Departments and Programmes, Reviews of Support Units and Thematic Reviews, and Annual Monitoring and Cyclical Reviews. The overall policy is further supported by academic regulations, and policies,⁵ for example, programme validation; collaborative and linked provision; examinations, and research ethics. It is noticeable that all policies and documents refer to quality assurance and enhancement, making enhancement an integral part of helping students to reach their potential. The review team finds this to be conducive to positive action. It also affirms the quality culture that is embedded across the university at all levels, as noted during the main visit when it also observed that representatives from across the university's stakeholders had a clear understanding of their role in the wider QAE system.

The documents exemplifying QAE procedures and processes at TUS are aligned with QQI requirements as well as the ESG and, as such, provide a comprehensive and logically linked QAE framework. The TUS QAE Handbook⁵ is presented as a collection of stand-alone documents, which made it difficult for the review team to quickly obtain an overview. During the staff focus group sessions, established in relation to the

⁵ <https://tus.ie/quality/academic-quality-assurance-enhancement-handbook/>

development of the ISER, TUS asked participants to rate how familiar they were with the suite of documents that comprise the QAE Handbook. While the areas of Assessment Regulations and Programme Validation/Revalidation received a high rating, the overall handbook received a lower score (ISER 4.1, p17). Participants were further asked to assess the effectiveness of existing TUS QAE, and the average rating by participants from across all Faculties/Schools was 3.2/5 (ISER 4.1, p19). These lowish values suggest that more work is needed both in terms of creating awareness of the handbook and in terms of its overall presentation. TUS also notes that “not all systems and processes have integrated fully” (ISER 3.4, pp14-15) and identifies this integration as “a significant enabler over time”.

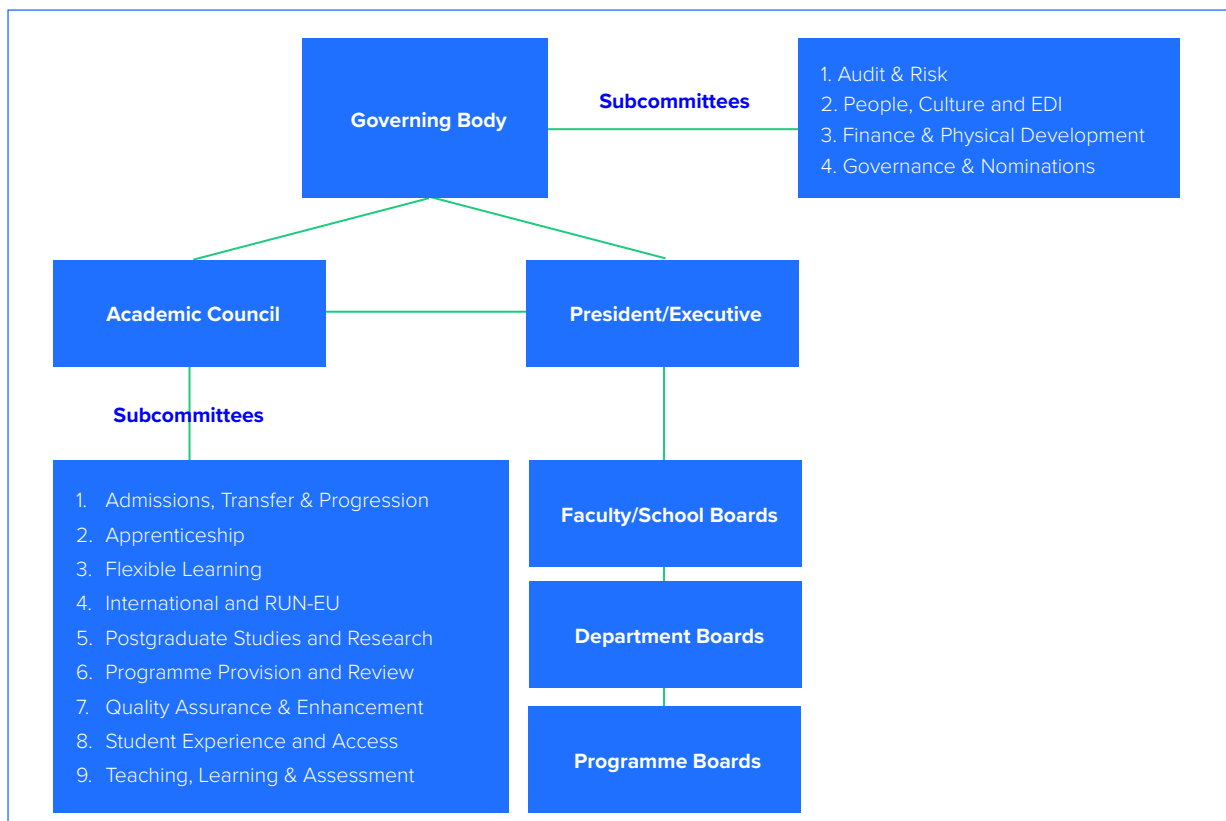
Recommendation

- The review team recommends that TUS develop a single unified QAE handbook, with input from students and staff, to provide an accessible contemporary framework that acts as a single point of reference for quality priorities and processes across the university, and demonstrates openness, transparency, accountability and integrity. This should include a clear definition of the criteria for revalidation of programmes to ensure that the process is efficient and provides the necessary flexibility for programme teams to maintain the continued relevance and currency of curricula, and a robust process for the development and monitoring of assessment matrices.

Commendation

- The review team commends the rapid progress made since TUS designation in developing and embedding a quality culture at all levels, including quality assurance structures and processes

6



6 Figure 3.1. Governance and Management Structures at TUS, ISER, p12

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Adapted from the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA) Code of Governance of Institutes of Technology and illustrated in the ISER (ISER 3.0, p12), TUS operates a system of Governance and Management that includes Governing Body (GB), Academic Council (AC) and President/Executive. This parallel structure is typical within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The review team heard of delays encountered during the establishment of the Governing Body (GB) owing to legislative issues and the Technological University Act (2018). This impeded progress on the final establishment of Academic Council.

The TUS Interim Code of Governance outlines the remit of the subcommittees of Governing Body: Audit & Risk; People, Culture and EDI; Finance & Physical Development, and Governance & Nominations. Transparency of the operation of Governing Body is ensured via the availability of meeting dates and minutes published on the TUS website. The review team found during the main review visit that GB demonstrated a clear vision of TUS as a single institution, rather than as a collection of individual campuses operating under the same name.

TUS Academic Council is charged with establishing and maintaining the academic standards and enhancing the quality of the student experience. An interim Council was appointed upon designation in 2021, with the first fully constituted AC appointed on 30 September 2022. The TUS Academic Council Documentation (2022-2025) specifies the general and particular functions of AC which have been designed to meet the requirements of the Technological University Act (2018). The membership reflects the wider university and includes the TU President, the Vice-President Academic Affairs and Registrar, Vice-President Research, Development and Innovation, Vice-President Student Experience, Deans of Faculties/Schools, Assistant Registrar, Heads of Quality, Academic Heads of Departments, Elected Representatives and Student Representatives. Academic Council documentation lists a total of 63 members.

Overall management responsibility for Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement lies with the VP Academic Affairs and Registrar, working in conjunction with TUS' Head of Quality and Assistant Registrar. The subcommittees of Academic Council consist of nine local governance and management fora (see Fig 3.1 above), including Faculty, Department and Programme Boards, each operating with set terms of references. Thus, TUS has adopted a multi-layered approach with set reporting lines that support the principle of decisions being made at the lowest level.

All collaborative programmes are subject to annual monitoring and periodic review as outlined under QQI Core Section 2.3 and 2.10, and ESG Section 1.9. TUS is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of its policy suite for Collaborative and Linked Provision (AQR 2023). The review team considers that the interim, legacy policies from TUS Midwest and TUS Midlands provide robust support for the creation and review of collaborative provision. The review team notes, however, the need to ensure that these policies are revised as a priority to make certain their alignment with the established mission and strategic priorities of TUS.

TUS has conducted an Academic Council self-evaluation via a questionnaire. Only 22 responses, or 34.9%, were returned. In this sample, a high degree of overall satisfaction was expressed, but according to the ISER, respondents felt that better management of the volume of work is needed. They claimed that the "sheer volume and breadth of activity is difficult to process and rigorously review at subcommittee and overall academic council level". They were also critical of the length of the agenda and requested a greater focus on decision points rather than reviewing the full notes of each subcommittee. It was indicated by staff during the main review visit that a communication process that tracked approval status and reports on approved items would be beneficial to ensure that stakeholders, including staff and students, remain fully informed. In addition, several comments were made on potential improvements to the relationship between AC and its nine subcommittees. The Governing Body meets once a year with the AC. The ISER notes that this pattern merits further discussion. There was some confusion amongst

staff that the review team met with respect to the initiation of projects and whether this was top-down or bottom-up. The review team gained the impression, based on the ISER and discussions during the main review visit, that an open two-way dialogue regarding priorities would be very beneficial to TUS.

Student representation can be found in Governing Body, Academic Council, Academic Subcommittees, Programme Boards and working groups established for short or long-term projects. During their meeting with the review team, Student Union Representatives and Student Representatives confirmed that the student voice is both appreciated and heard in the governance processes. Student Union Representatives, however, commented on their workload and that while accepting staff were good at explaining structures and the context, the importance of their representation was more obvious on some committees than others.

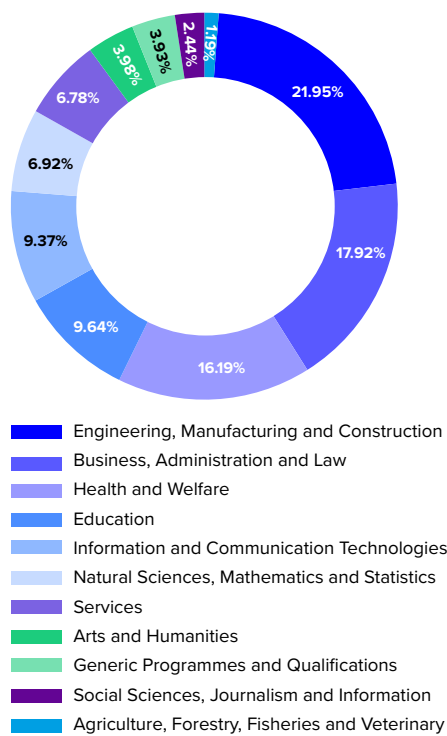
TUS notes that the Interim Senior Management structure created upon designation, which included a Vice-Presidents' Council and a Deans' Council, is currently under review (AQR, 2023). Notwithstanding, the review team is satisfied that excellent progress has been made towards the establishment of robust and appropriate governance structures, based on the principle of subsidiarity, which meet the requirements of statutory bodies. The review team notes however that priorities need to be identified.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that TUS clearly define the role of Student Union representation on the deliberative and decision-making bodies of the university, including the function of Academic Council and its relationship to the other instruments of governance and management.

PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

TUS offers a comprehensive programme portfolio across all International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) categories, ranging from NFQ Level 6 to Level 9 for taught programmes, Apprenticeships and research degrees, including PhDs. The number of programmes is steadily increasing for Levels 7 to 10, though the number of Level 6 programmes shows a decrease. The programme diversity of TUS across the ISCED categories can be seen by the student numbers per category.



7

The provision of programmes includes Full-Time, Part-Time Flexible and Lifelong Learning and an area of Micro-credentials/Short Advanced Programmes (SAPs), with a range of entry mechanisms. Comparing the year 2019/20 to 2022/23 reveals that student numbers are increasing. The number of international students is growing (40%), as is the number of learners choosing flexible delivery modes (300%) and

7 Figure 10.11. All Students by ISCED Broad Area 2022-23, TUS Institutional Profile (IP), p31

learners using alternative entry/access routes. The TUS programme portfolio offers a number of collaborative programmes which are co-delivered by TUS with a partner, be it another university, a college or company.

The review team finds that TUS shows great initiative in offering programmes for flexible learners, as well as for students enrolled in part-time programmes. Online delivery of programmes has also increased.

TUS is working on the development of an international portfolio of programmes featuring SAPs with the RUN-EU Network for Students and Staff, as well as joint programmes, including master's degrees and PhDs, inside the network. The RUN-EU network fosters internationalisation and cooperation between regional universities across Europe. It aims to work towards the sustainable economic, social, cultural and environmental progress of its regions and stakeholders, in close alignment with the TUS profile of "giving back to the community".

TUS has displayed its commitment to craft statutory apprenticeships. Based on the Government Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-2025, TUS Academic Council has approved a Strategic Implementation Plan for Apprenticeship which aims to place the university as a national leader in this field. A €4m facility in Athlone was opened in June 2023, followed by a similar one in Coonagh, Limerick. TUS intends to offer apprenticeship opportunities to 2,300 people during the 2023-24 academic year, across both craft and consortia-led modes.

TUS' strategic priority for education states that TUS wants to "provide a relevant high-quality education offering, focused on interdisciplinarity, delivered in a flexible way to cater to a diverse cohort of students, across multi-campus locations". This is in line with the way the university is currently developing and constitutes an authentic priority to follow.

Programme development follows the principle of constructive alignment. TUS has established seven Graduate Attributes, which together with the TUS

Curriculum Design Approaches and Principles and the Seven Pillars for Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment, guide the programme development teams in mapping the resulting learning outcomes for their programmes. The seven Graduate Attributes include:

- in-depth knowledge base and intellectual breadth,
- creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills,
- intra-, inter- and multi-disciplinary teamwork,
- communication and digital capability,
- professionalism and leadership readiness,
- ethical, social, intercultural, and environmental awareness and responsiveness,
- adaptability, self-awareness, emotional intelligence and commitment to lifelong learning.

These overarching principles are well known and accepted inside TUS and used actively in programme development through mapping of programme content and outcomes against the attributes. The review team considered the number of documents which are needed during programme development to be quite extensive. However, during main review visit discussions, the team heard evidence that these documents are accepted and used meaningfully by the development teams. As the university's approach to programme development evolves there will be opportunities for streamlining in the documentary requirements.

The quality assurance for the development of new programmes lies within the remit of the Programme Provision and Review subcommittee of the Academic Council. Rigorous procedures for the design, approval and validation of programmes are in place. The process convergence from predecessor institutions is not complete, but well underway, with a clear distinction and equivalence list of which processes are applicable on the TUS Midlands and Midwest campuses. Programmes are carefully validated in a multi-stage process, involving Internal and External Review, paying appropriate attention to current scholarship, as

well as to EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) and ISCED (International Standards Classification of Education). The criteria adopted for programme development and approval are in alignment with national Statutory Quality Guidelines and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality (ESG). Each programme has its own individual programme board with responsibility for organising, managing and monitoring, revision of syllabuses and modifications in programme structure. Lecturers from core staff, as well as students, are members of programme boards. The review team was informed that if changes to a programme are potentially 10% or more, a full re-validation is required. However, this may result in rigidity and in programmes too easily becoming out-of-date, due to the time required for re-validation. This may become a problem especially in technological disciplines where agility is important. To ensure innovative and up-to-date programmes, TUS should review the substantial 10% change barrier that triggers a full review and consider reposing greater trust in programme boards to decide on necessary updates. This could be addressed through the unified QAE handbook as recommended in the Overall Assessment of QA section, earlier in this report.

Commendation

- The review team commends TUS for offering programmes in many modalities, making use of stakeholder input and Graduate Attribute concepts to ensure their relevance within the “real world”, as experienced by students and employers.

STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT

Staff Recruitment

According to the ISER, TUS has about 1,800 academic, technical, and professional support staff, in terms of total headcount. Their value is recognised in Priority 3 of the TUS Strategic Plan, “People and Organisation”, which states that TUS will “operate as an integrated organisation where everyone’s potential can be realised and where all individuals are provided with equal opportunities”. There is a Vice-President for People, Culture & EDI with cross-campus responsibility. The TUS

approach to staff, teaching and non-teaching, is consistent with QQI Core Quality Assurance Guidelines (Section 2.4 – Staff Recruitment, Management and Development); ESG 1.5; Teaching Staff and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, National Professional Development Framework for All Staff Who Teach in Higher Education.

The TUS Risk Register includes entries relating to the staffing profile. One concerns the number of academic staff holding a doctoral degree or equivalent. On designation in October 2021, around 45% of academic staff held a doctoral degree or equivalent. Under the Technological Universities Act (2018), this percentage must increase to 65% within 10 years of designation. The Risk Register records this as challenging and offers in mitigation the “RDI Strategic Plan” currently in development, aligned to the TUS Strategic Plan which will include development planning for postgraduate research student growth.

In May 2022, TUS was awarded an Athena Swan Legacy Bronze Award for the promotion of gender equality and has appointed Athena SWAN champions to help embed the Athena SWAN principles of equality, inclusivity and fairness at a departmental and faculty level. TUS has signed the Higher Education Authority Anti-Racism Principles to promote progress and good practice in support of race equality. An action plan regarding racism is being developed.

TUS is committed to equal opportunities within a culture of fair employment, free from discrimination, and in keeping with legislative requirements. The Institutional Profile confirms that, in keeping with many higher education institutions, the gender profile is skewed towards females at lower levels and males at more senior levels. The review team heard during the main review visit that gender equality is important to TUS. There is an Equality Statement that commits TUS to ensuring equal opportunities for all, that links to the TUS Gender Equality Action Plan.

TUS’ QAE Policy states that “TUS aims to recruit and retain the high calibre staff required to ensure the delivery of a quality education service” (p12).

The TUS Recruitment, Selection and Appointment Policy states that “The relevant line manager and Dean of Faculty or Vice President shortlists the applicants...” (p6), which implies that the shortlisting panel consists of only two people. Therefore, questions may arise as to how an accurate assessment of each candidate is made and how unconscious bias is recognised and avoided. Consequently, the review team advocates that further consideration should be given to the shortlisting process and how it can support the recruitment of the high-calibre staff referred to in the QAE policy.

Management of Staff

New members of staff receive an intensive induction programme from HR and a subject-oriented induction within specific faculties or departments. Newly appointed staff expressed high regard for the induction programme. There are policies governing leave and flexible working for staff. The disciplinary and grievance procedures are in keeping with national standards. However, at the time of the review, a unified Staff Development Policy had not yet been developed and policies from predecessor institutions were still in place. For example, during the main review visit, the review team heard varying accounts of the annual review process, depending on whether the member of staff was from Midlands or Midwest. It is expected that a single HR system will be operational by August 2024, following the merger of the two separate HR offices, guided by external consultants. TUS currently provides an Employee Assistance Programme through Spectrum Life but intends to manage this within the university in the near future.

Personal Development Plans (PDPs) are co-created between line managers and staff. In general, the tone is not one of critical performance appraisal but one of constructive dialogue and a review of each year’s work. PDPs are organised around key questions which provide the opportunity to identify training needs or to request any buyout of teaching or conference attendance, possibly with a view to gaining formal qualifications. The agreed PDP form

goes to HR for consideration and development. The review team finds that the PDP process is developmentally oriented, non-confrontational and supportive. It facilitates reflection and records any decisions. It does not constitute an evaluation of performance or suitability for promotion, nor does it reward those who are performing well and who could encourage and support others as positive role models. The review team is of the opinion that the university may need to be more directive, for example in terms of managing staff performance. The review team heard that each Head of Department is responsible for the PDPs of all their staff, typically around 50 individuals. To make this task less onerous, it could be shared and made more effective through structured line management involving Senior Lecturers or other experienced staff.

The review team learnt of several tensions regarding the career progression of staff. Promotion opportunities for technical and professional services staff are very limited. The contractual arrangements for academic staff are not supportive of those with research ambition, providing little time for research activity and limited opportunities for promotion. Heads of Department are appointed without fixed terms of office, without structured succession planning nor career-development opportunities for when they leave the role. While recognising that addressing some of these issues requires a national, sectoral approach, TUS should consider how to provide career pathways for its academic, technical and professional services staff.

Staff Development

The National Professional Development Framework for All Staff Who Teach in Higher Education⁸ includes the aim to “Empower staff to create, discover and engage in meaningful personal and professional development,” and “[Professional development] should emphasise the importance of the self in learning.” Realising these aims is a national issue that may not be achievable by universities working in isolation.

8 <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/our-priorities/professional-development/the-national-professional-development-framework-pdf-for-all-staff-who-teach-in-higher-education/>

TUS encourages continuous professional development (CPD) and supports this through the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation and Development (CPID), which offers programmes that are highly valued by participants, including Academic and Professional Management Services Staff (PMSS). CPID hosted an Academic Integrity Week in October 2022 and displays an Academic Integrity information page on its website. The centre offers a number of accredited programmes, ranging from 90 ECTS master's degrees to 15 ECTS Special Purpose Awards (SPAs) that can be structured into a flexible pathway towards a master's degree. They align with key themes of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (2022-2025) that support innovative pedagogical practice and the strategic imperatives of TUS. A comprehensive programme of development opportunities is a cornerstone of TUS investment in its staff.

The review team considers TUS to be clearly concerned about the wellbeing of its staff. There has been an All-Staff Survey in preparation for its next Athena Swan Award application. When respondents were asked to select words to describe their immediate working environment, the top 5 responses were: supportive, flexible, welcoming, respectful, and collaborative. However, both female staff and professional managerial support staff included "stressful" in their top 5 choice of words. Furthermore, fewer females than males found the atmosphere and culture at TUS "inclusive" and fewer females felt that their views were "welcomed". The TUS All-Staff 2023 Survey also included questions relating to bullying, harassment and victimisation. The results from these questions highlight relatively low levels of knowledge about how to report complaints. For example, nearly half of those who completed the survey did not know how to report incidences of bullying within TUS and only a third would be confident that complaints about bullying would be appropriately managed. It was clear from discussions with senior staff that the university recognises that there is progress to be made in improving staff voice. It has introduced an anonymous reporting tool called Speak Out which can be used by both staff and students to report inappropriate behaviour, and is improving its

mentoring arrangements to strengthen employees' ability to navigate their careers successfully.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that TUS further develop and establish effective structures for staff at all levels to give feedback and have their voice heard. This feedback should contribute to TUS decision-making mechanisms.
- The review team recommends that TUS give serious consideration to supporting the development of Heads of Departments' important role as middle managers who make a significant contribution to the effective functioning of the institution. The avenues of upward mobility are limited for them due to the flat organisational structure and a lack of fixed terms of office or clear role descriptions.
- The review recommends that TUS prioritise overall workforce planning, development and wellbeing in an agile manner to ensure the sustainability of continued high-quality service and academic provision. While a quality culture has become embedded in the university, there is an opportunity to simplify administrative and operational structures as well as lighten bureaucratic requirements. This will enhance the agility of the university, allowing it to respond to emerging opportunities.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

TUS has enshrined its commitment to the student experience in its strategy, policies and provision of programmes. TUS has also identified Seven Pillars Supporting Excellence in Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) which are reflected throughout the university and provide an authentic guideline for all members of TUS. These pillars are reflected by TUS in its:

- commitment to work placements,
- growth and development of research capacity
- evidence of research informed teaching,
- commitment to flexible learning paths,
- support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and
- supports for the academic development of staff.

The Seven Pillars, the TUS Graduate Attributes Framework and the TUS Curriculum Design Approaches form an integrated framework to support mission-driven curriculum development as well as a student-centred approach to teaching and learning. This is reflected in the current framework and planned enhancements to programme design which include the incorporation of graduate attributes and development of transversal and soft skills, the consideration of the totality of assessment at semester, stage and programme levels, guidance to enhance consistency on the incorporation of work-based learning/work placement, and the identification of approaches that enable the alignment of new programme design with the requirements of Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs). Listening to the Student Voice further supports the principles of placing the student at the centre through using student representation in key decision-making bodies and having processes for gathering and responding to student feedback. The prevailing quality culture and the TUS QAE framework provide effective support for the development and review of the learner journey. As part of ongoing review and continuous improvement, programme boards carefully analyse the external examiners' reports to monitor the operation and effectiveness of programme structure, content, delivery and teaching and learning methods.

CPID offers a comprehensive portfolio of courses, events and Special Purpose Awards for teachers and staff across TUS. By completing the Special Purpose Awards, staff can be awarded Postgraduate Certificates, Diplomas or an MA in Academic Practice. During the main review visit, the review team were satisfied that the CPID has an "open ear" to the needs of staff and responds quickly to changes in the teaching environment. The team heard examples of responses to the growth of generative AI and online delivery of courses.

The review team finds that the CPID is focussed and aware of the needs of its learners (the lecturers), supplies courses required by staff and offers an MA in Academic Practice. The review team got the impression that this MA motivates staff to reflect on and be innovative in their teaching

practice while furthering their own education. The review team heard that the CPID is well known and appreciated by staff and provides fit-for-purpose courses for internal teaching staff, as well as some external partners.

The review team noted that students identify strongly with the university and appreciate the involvement of teaching staff and the quality of courses and programmes. The main concerns of the students that impact on their student experience in TUS were the lack of social spaces for students on campus. In addition, students from "satellite campuses" reported feeling under-served, as events and fairs usually take place on the larger campuses and the less populated sites have fewer opportunities to engage in these events. Some students reported that required learning resources, including specialist equipment, were limited, and a few reported that some resources were not up to date. TUS should seek to ensure that learning resources, including software and other technology requirements, are addressed during module and programme design.

Commendation

- The review team commends how TUS Graduate Attributes, Seven Pillars and TUS Curriculum Design Approaches form an integrated framework for teaching and learning activities.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

The TUS Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) Strategy is embedded in the TUS Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes (2023 - 2024) and clearly references processes for the consideration of special and mitigating circumstances in the Reasonable Accommodation Policy. The TLA Strategy stresses that the focus on assessment is of, for, and as, learning and it is a stated priority of the Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Strategy (2022-2025) to design and deploy authentic assessment practices and to ensure they correspond to best practice nationally and internationally. In addition, the ISER (p39) reinforces the university's focus on authentic assessment and academic integrity. Furthermore, in ISER Table 5.1, TUS reflects on student-centred

Learning, Teaching and Assessment and notes specific enhancements including feedback to support learning, access to lecture recordings, embedding soft skills, and support for staff development for innovation.

The VP Academic Affairs & Registrar holds overall responsibility for the conduct of examinations and assessments, with individual assessments being designed and approved as part of the overall module design. Programme Boards are responsible for ensuring that the distribution of assessments is both challenging and manageable for students, and that this is maintained as the programme of study evolves. TUS refers to this as an assessment matrix. Students are informed about the assessment strategy for their programme as part of the wider programme and module documentation. This information is published and available to the public.

The procedures for assessment are stated in the TUS Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes and demonstrate clear and transparent procedures for examination and assessment. The review team heard from students during the main review visit that continuous assessment is being progressively implemented and is very well accepted by the student body. Assessment calendars for

programmes are provided. However, it was reported to the review team that workloads peaked to a certain extent during the year and feedback surveys on assessments was offered at a late stage, thus impacting the students' learning. The review team finds this an area that TUS should continue to work on, as already identified in the ISER.

TUS provides support for staff to develop and deliver innovative methods of assessment which, in turn, enhance learning, academic integrity, inclusivity and authentic performance. TUS is in the early stages of engaging with problem-based learning (PBL), in some cases in collaboration via the RUN-EU partnership. This is demonstrated in case studies provided in the ISER. A particularly interesting example of PBL-related assessment (ISER p38) describes the "Innovative Simulation Learning", developed in collaboration with Mary Immaculate College.¹⁴

TUS maintains a strong focus on assessment as part of the overall learner journey as confirmed in both the TUS Compendium of Active Learning Strategies for Student Engagement and the TUS Compendium of Active Learning and Assessment for Student Engagement. Assessment methods are reviewed and renewed to accommodate



current best practice and new identified needs. During the main review visit, the review team heard that students find it difficult at times to manage the assessment workload and suggested that better communication could be undertaken about late changes. Students also commented that in some cases, necessary software was not readily available and in other cases that it was outdated. The meeting with members of the Academic Programme Committee confirmed that progress with the assessment matrix “is a priority” which the review team supports.

TUS’ planned enhancement to systematically collate student feedback (ISER 4.3.10, p27)” indicates that TUS is already sensitive to these issues and capable of taking constructive action. The review team heard concerns from first-year students enrolled in a Level 8 programme about the rushed pace of the course and the perceived impact on their mental health. As a consequence, the department involved amended its approach to assessment and implemented a more balanced model for continuous and terminal assessment. The review team regards this as an example of good practice.

Commendations

- The review team commends the work of the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation and Development (CPID) for providing extensive professional development opportunities for staff and for its contribution to student engagement, for example through its Compendium.
- The review team commends TUS for its dedication to authentic assessment and its initial engagement with problem-based learning and Challenge Learning and Assessment

SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS

The TUS Strategic Plan recognises the need to “provide opportunities and supports that nurture capabilities, promote wellbeing and inspire the growth, development, training and mobility of our people.” The TUS approach to the quality assurance and enhancement of student support aligns with ESG 1.6 (Student Supports) and QCI

Core QAG Section 2.7 (Supports for Learners). TUS has established an Academic Council Subcommittee on Student Experience and Access which provides governance for a broad range of areas. These include Access Service, Disability Service, Counselling Service, Health Service, Learning Support Service, Pastoral Care, and Careers and Employability Service. A Clubs and Societies Officer has been appointed, working across 80 societies and 6 campuses. TUS values direct the university towards being “inclusive, supportive, ambitious, innovative, sustainable and collaborative” and these are the guiding principles behind Student Support Services.

Student Support Services had conducted a self-evaluation exercise and quality peer review in January 2024 (ISER 4.3.8, p26) The self-evaluation report is part of the ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management Standard. Although the ISO standard provides structure, it does not map neatly to the ISER process.

The review team heard that demands on support service units are steadily increasing. The Counselling Service has seen a 24% increase in users. Engagement from students appears to be strong. However, the review team concluded that not all students are aware of what is available or how to make contact with the service. The increase in demand has impacted on the size of the support units and the availability of space on the campuses. The student health area has recently been refurbished in keeping with developing a one-stop-shop approach to student support. However, support staff reported to the review team that other facilities are no longer fit for purpose. It is currently not possible to maintain a full complement of services consistently across campuses. The review team is of the opinion that TUS should help students to obtain equitable access to support services irrespective of campus. Furthermore, the review team heard differing accounts from students during the main review visit that suggested a wide disparity of knowledge of resources and supports available. Some of this variability appeared to arise from different communication modalities, delays in accessing information and digital accessibility. The review team believes that a review of the various communications channels is required to ensure

timely access to pertinent academic and pastoral information across the full student lifecycle.

Around 20% of students avail of the Learning Support Service (LSS). Learning support is offered in two different models and has progress to make in terms of institutional integration. The review team heard that in TUS Midwest, learning support is delivered online or face-to-face. If appropriate, groups of students sharing a common support need can attend the service together. On the TUS Midlands campus there are a range of tutors who offer year-round learning support in class and online. A Student Retention Service exists only in the Midwest and sits in the Quality Office under the Registrar function.

Staff have a strong sense of vocational commitment and work very cohesively together, offering each other mutual assistance. Yet, there is a need to have more structured, better resourced service delivery. The review team heard that staff have limited time for self-care and, lacking resources, may “backfill” service gaps in their own time. They currently aim to respond to calls for help within two hours, but this is considered by staff to be a demanding standard of service. Many support staff are employed on temporary contracts. While this works for staff employed on fixed-term projects, such as the Access Paths initiatives (1, 2, 3 & 4), this is not ideal for staff providing essential, ongoing support to students. Sustainable core funding is required to maintain supports to vulnerable cohorts. The review team heard that funding consists of short-term financing for long-term needs. The lack of multi-annual funding arrangements leads to instability. However, the review team accepts that this issue is sectoral and cannot be addressed by TUS alone.

TUS conducted a strategic review of its student support units (ISER 4.3.8, p26) as part of the CINNTE self-evaluation process. The review recognised the outstanding commitment of the staff, their student-centric approach and the quality of the support they provide. This was also the impression formed by the review team. However, the report also acknowledges that, for the reasons described above, the quantity and quality of the provision is not sustainable. In recognition of

the importance of the support they provide, the student support units are now represented on the senior leadership team by the Vice-President Student Education and Experience. The strategic review proposes that each campus have a Central Student Support Services Space, in contrast to the reported preference of support unit staff for a 24/7 one-stop-shop. However, these proposals are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and a compromise may be achieved. In any case, TUS should ensure that students have adequate access to a comprehensive range of student supports on each of its campuses, and provide consistent service to all students, irrespective of where they are based.

The International Office (IO) provides assistance and support to incoming international students. Many students find accommodation to be unaffordable unless they work part-time. The difficulty in finding student accommodation is a significant problem, a problem that is beyond the control of TUS. Information made available to the review team indicated that seven major projects are currently under way or are in the final stages of planning with 18,572 square metres of space under development. This ambitious campus development plan unfortunately does not include student housing.

Despite these challenges, the majority of international students encountered by the review team said they would like to stay in Ireland after graduation. They thought that industry exposure for specific functions was a good way of creating better opportunities and advocated that students should keep applying for jobs even if they were getting rejections. As numbers have grown, so have the needs of students who face additional issues such as digital fraud and fragile mental health. Existing students update incoming new students in collaboration with the IO. A strong message was conveyed to the review team that the IO is first point of reference when problems occur. Incoming international students paid tribute to it for its unstinting support.

Commendations

- The review team commends TUS for the enthusiasm and professionalism of all student support services staff who ensure an outstanding commitment to student engagement.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that TUS review current practice for student communication and develop a coordinated strategy that addresses students' needs across all modes of programme delivery, and all stages of the student journey from application to completion of studies, to ensure timely access to pertinent academic and pastoral information.
- The review team recommends that TUS enhance the provision of student support services to ensure that all students have access to support that is consistent across the university, irrespective of level of study, stage of their learning journey, or campus.

Learning Resources

The institutional approach to quality assurance and enhancement of learner resources aligns with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area and QQI Core QAG 2.7 (Supports for Learners). Recently, there have been major capital developments and improvements to upgrade existing facilities in TUS (ISER 5.2, p41) These include:

- a major new, circa €17m, campus, at Coonagh,
- completion of a campus in Limerick,
- a €5m extension to the Applied Polymer Technology building in the Athlone Campus,
- a €15m STEM facility in the Athlone Campus, expected to be operational in 2025,
- the securing of a €20m investment as part of Higher Education PPP scheme for an Applied Science and Information Technology Building at TUS Midwest.

Library

Across the higher-education sector, libraries are regarded as the first point of contact for many students and are an important component of the portfolio of student supports. Interaction at the library information desk can lead to the provision of advice and guidance or result in referral to another student support unit. The library service in TUS has developed a collection of subject specialised guides for academic departments and is committed to ensuring that students possess the necessary core skills to use the library properly. During the main review visit, staff noted that the quality of many online resources provided by the library is superb, with library staff offering an excellent support service to students to access these resources (ISER 5.2, p41).

The library has six branches across TUS and aims to function as a unified structure to maintain equity of access for students. The process of developing into a single service has been challenged by the complexities of merging collections and the high costs arising from the scale, scope and inter-dependencies of Library Management Systems which are linked with other merger activities. The review team heard that students are able to benefit from library holdings in predecessor institutions but are not yet able to benefit from an integrated TUS library. The task of bringing together separate systems is facilitated by a systems integration manager. The two library websites have yet to merge. While this is understandable during the interim, work is underway to enable consistent access for students to all collections. New acquisitions are replicated across campuses, access to the national purchasing consortium and the Irish Research eLibrary (IReL) can be gained through the separate websites. Following a decision to proceed with a manual merge process, it is hoped that a unified catalogue will be established by the 2024-2025 academic year. The current Library Management System contract will end in August 2024, providing an opportunity for a national tender for a new library management system. The intention is to complete library systems integration before the tender process begins.

It was suggested to the review team that some students who started TUS during the Covid-19

pandemic may not have the same awareness of library service compared to those who enrolled in-person and can access information literacy sessions. Consistency across campuses remains a central issue. For example, a library service is provided to Ennis for just one day a week.

Learning technology

The TUS Digital Technologies Working Group, reporting to the Teaching and Learning Subcommittee, oversees the provision of appropriate digital technologies to support and sustain learning, teaching and assessment in keeping with the TUS Teaching and Learning Strategy. In the design phase of new courses and programmes, required learning technologies, including access and availability, are identified. Where relevant, TUS collaborates with local organisations for access to the newest technology to the benefit of students, staff and the organisation. The review team commends this practice as evidence of the university's vision in action and collaboration with students, enterprise and business.

As mentioned earlier in this report, students commented that required software was not always readily available and in other cases was outdated. TUS acknowledges this in its ISER (p44) and references a continuous programme of investment within the budgetary provision. TUS also refers to the national initiative N-TUTORR as a potential avenue to maximise both the development of digital learning resources and associated student and staff capabilities.

Social Space

During the main review visit, staff communicated to the review team their concerns about space availability, given increases in student numbers. Six new classrooms are being constructed at the Moylish Campus⁹ but students reported that they do not just want more teaching space, they want collaborative areas where they can discuss and form networks (ISER 5.2.3, p43).

FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

The rapid rate of change, IT security and software currency remain challenges for TUS, as they do for the entire sector. Computer Services is the second highest spending department in TUS, with security licences for Microsoft costing in excess of €100,000 per year. The review team was informed that the most significant problem faced by the library is the lack of financial resources. The library is trying to maintain services with its current budget, despite growth in student numbers, and tries to negotiate the best possible value for money. Since becoming a technological university (TU), TUS is now able to access the Irish Research eLibrary which provides a wealth of electronic resources. However, in the TUS Library Self-Evaluation Workshop Report, Appendix 4, the potential loss of IReL resources is expressed as a risk because of gaps in library funding. The merging of collections will create a valuable resource, but the budget is not yet fully aligned, so resource differences persist in the Midlands and Midwest. TUS expects that there will be enough data to make informed decisions about service provision in 12 months.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that TUS ensure that the Library is represented at high level strategic, operational and financial decision-making processes.

INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

The TUS Strategic Plan (2023-2026) lists communication, technology and digitisation as one of the enablers that will underpin its strategic priorities. TUS recognises that effective information management collects and analyses relevant information from a diverse range of sources and is, therefore, essential to the support and enhancement of its functions, operations, and decision-making processes (ISER 4.5, p33).

A variety of core business systems are employed for student record management, financial management, staff records, and library records. These are supplemented by specialist systems

⁹ <https://tus.ie/campus-services-capital-development/projects/moylish/library/>

that include a curriculum management system, Academic Module Manager, and an examinations management system (GURU). Data collection and analysis are carried out by the MIS Business Intelligence and Development Unit that provides a single source of data and information to support management activities (ISER 4.5.1, p33 & AQR).

Electronic data is used in all decision-making processes at all levels of the university. Statistical data from the information systems inform educational and financial decisions at executive and middle management levels. Management at all levels use Power BI and Server Reporting Services (SRS) to ensure that reliable and up-to-date data is accessible and used to underpin decision-making.

Student data is submitted to the HEA in November and March each year. Data is used to analyse trends and student numbers by management, faculty, department and programme teams as well as to inform programme portfolio planning, programmatic reviews, student engagement initiatives, student retention activities, student performance reviews and other functions (ISER 4.5.1, p33 & AQR).

The university has identified a need to make key data sets in relation to student statistics more consistent, particularly in light of the integration and standardisation of approaches (ISER 4.5.2, p34). A TUS Definitions and Methodology for Student Statistics Report has been approved by Academic Council, defining the various metrics of student success, including retention, completion, progression, and determining the associated statistical profiles, such as programme, department, and TUS-wide levels.

Student data is used to enable evidence-based decision-making and are evidenced in the TUS Transitions and Student Success Strategy¹⁰ which defines a range of goals for development and implementation under this theme. Evidence-based decision-making is one of the six pillars on which this strategy is constructed, and one of the three selected for inclusion in the first phase of its implementation. The ISER (p33) provides an example of the way in which decisions are

made using information and data, in the form of a case study describing work to improve student participation and success in autumn repeat examinations.

The review team recognises that the development of a university-wide approach to information management is seen to be of vital importance to TUS as it integrates into a single unified institution. The university has initiated extensive work to enable effective integration of its information and data systems to facilitate collation, maintenance and utilisation of data consistently across the institution, and to inform its decision making and operations at all levels (AQR). A pathway to update and integrate all relevant IT systems is underway (ISER 4.5, p33). A Systems Integration Team has responsibility for the development of a new TUS Information and Communication Technology (ICT) environment. The integration project, initiated in 2022, is scheduled to finish in 2025 (ISER 12.2.1, p78).

At meetings during the main review visit, it was clear to the review team that the primary focus of the Integration Project has been to move all data, users and services onto integrated TUS systems. Considerable progress has been achieved with most of the main systems being available from May 2023. Subsequent projects are underway, including integrating two legacy Moodle systems and two timetabling systems. The project is on course to close in 2025. IT staff reported that the rapidly changing nature of information technology digital security and software remain significant challenges.

The university's Risk Register identifies IT systems' security as a major operational and reputational risk, citing a significant threat of cyber-attack resulting in systems or data being compromised in terms of security and service provision. Monitoring and mitigating this risk are the responsibility of the Vice-President Campus Services and Capital Development. Current measures include promoting ongoing awareness and practical training as well as the continuing assessment of threat by the two computer service departments. IT staff confirmed to the review team that security measures were constantly being upgraded. Staff

¹⁰ [4_Transitions-and-Student-Success-Strategy-for-TUS-AC-29-05-2023.pdf](#)

noted that an audit report by Deloitte on cyber-security was completed at the end of August 2023. Following discussion at the Audit and Risk Committee in September, and by Governing Body in October, management is addressing the recommendations of the report. This includes the development of management report platforms and dashboards with access based on need and role. These platforms supplement the standard reports available through SRS extracts (ISER 4.5.2, p34).

As already noted in this report, developing research capacity is one of TUS's Strategic Priorities. TUS has identified deficiencies in its access to high quality information on its own research activity and recognises that a centralised research information management system is required. Acquisition of a current research information management system is considered a priority and funding from the TUTF has been used to appoint a project manager. Elsevier's PURE solution was selected during a tender process¹¹ and identified that access to bibliometric tools would be necessary to support research development. TUS has responded to this by acquiring administrative level subscriptions to both Scopus and SciVal.

Relevant data and information policies are listed in the Annual Quality Report 2023.¹² A review of all policies is underway with interim policies in place until TUS versions are approved.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

The TUS Purpose Statement states that "the Technological University of the Shannon provides leading student-centred higher education that is research-informed, regionally relevant and accessible to all." The review team is of the opinion that effective two-way communication with stakeholders is essential to sustained success. The review team supports TUS' proposed review of communication processes as outlined in the ISER report, section 13.1.2.

Current Students

The review team were greatly encouraged by student feedback on communication with their lecturers and the wider university management. Expectations for coursework, assessments and exams were well communicated at the start of each semester. It was clear that many lecturers knew their students by name and were approachable. Students recruited directly from overseas were complimentary about the support given to them on arrival. A cordial and constructive relationship between the Students' Union and TUS Management was clearly evident. The TUS website, suitable for use on a number of devices, provides a comprehensive amount of information including, for example, exam times and locations. Future enhancement of student communications could benefit from further work to align digital communications, such as Student Hubs on the website as well as improving communication with the smaller campus sites.

The procedures of assessment are stated in the TUS Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes and offer clear and transparent procedures for examination and assessment.

Potential Students

The TUS Strategic Plan declared an ambition to grow student numbers by 12% despite a flat population in recent years. TUS has extensive relationships with second level schools in the region through career guidance teachers and wider initiatives, for example, Explore Engineering. The TUS website provides clear information that is helpful for prospective students to choose a course that is of interest. The review team is of the view that expansion of communication activity using the channels popular with students, such as TikTok, Instagram and App, could prove beneficial in reaching potential students.

Staff

TUS is on a journey of unification and while the review team received positive feedback on progress to date, it is broadly accepted by staff

¹¹ <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2019/12/Report-of-the-TU-Research-Network-2019.pdf>

¹² [Annual Quality Report 2023.pdf](#)

that further change is required. Staff are strongly motivated to contribute positively to institutional development and integration with the goal of making TUS greater than the sum of its parts. The review team believes that the larger university and multi-site campus structure are likely to require more developed communication approaches to facilitate direct two-way communication between senior management and staff that will be mutually beneficial. The establishment of interactive communications approaches, such as a management/staff assembly or Forum may enhance connectivity and communication between the university's senior leadership and the wider classroom and laboratory teaching community.

External Stakeholders

TUS collaborates with an extensive number of local and national organisations. At regional level, these include city, county and town councils, a wide variety of industry and sectoral partners, and a broad range of professional, regulatory and statutory bodies (PRSBs) (ISER, pp69). In 2022, according to the Institutional Profile, more than 150 entrepreneurs and innovators were supported on programmes and initiatives in TUS Enterprise and Incubation centres. As evidenced by TUS' high ranking in Knowledge Transfer Ireland's (KTI's) Annual Survey,¹³ TUS is recognised nationally for its excellence in knowledge transfer. External stakeholders and community representatives that met with the review team underlined that TUS' status as a TU was extremely important, both in terms of standing in the community and in terms of perceived opportunities. Engagement with industry and employers is a vital part of ensuring that programmes are relevant to current and future needs and helps to ensure that programmes align with industry standards and requirements. Employers appreciate and support opportunities to bring students and staff onsite for further industry and sectoral consultation on programme delivery. The success rate of TUS graduates (ISER 7.0, p52) suggests that TUS programmes are relevant to employers and that students make a significant regional impact. The review team found very strong relationships with regional employers who all hold TUS in very high regard. Given the pace of

technological change, that two-way communication needs to continue on both a formal and informal basis, to enhance the quality and employability of graduates.

TUS has a long history of strong community engagement, with a particular focus on engaging with disadvantaged communities. Its relationships with communities and employers on its Access to Apprenticeship programme is an exemplar in this regard. The review team heard from several community partners about the strength of TUS' commitment to the local community through its outreach activities and networks, and the accessibility of relevant educational pathways which have had a deeply transformative effect. The review team commends the excellent range and quality of TUS involvement with communities and stakeholders which is in alignment with its vision and strategic objectives as outlined in the Strategic Plan (2023-2026). The review team notes that there is no formal process for communicating with alumni. This important group of stakeholders represent an untapped resource that could be engaged to advise senior management and solicit support for the university.

OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Further to the TUS vision - to be a catalyst for sustainable change through education that transforms lives, the region and the world beyond - the university already has a significant number of ongoing national and international collaborations in the provision of education and training. Policies and procedures are in place to assure the quality of such provision and appear to be working effectively. The review team was impressed by the significant collaborations with Gurteen and Pallaskenry Colleges in agricultural education, Equal Ireland in social and community development, University of Limerick in art & design education, Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB) in Levels 6 and 7 courses and the aviation industry cluster in aircraft technology education. This range of collaborations provides a strong basis to deepen further partnerships with ETBs, employers and others

¹³ <https://www.knowledgetransferireland.com/Reports-Publications/Annual-Knowledge-Transfer-Survey-2022.pdf>

towards the provision of increased numbers of apprenticeships across existing and new disciplines to meet regional needs. Such partnership development is also an opportunity to support enhancement of a wider range of progression pathways for students in a lifelong learning context.

Internationally, TUS is the coordinator for the Regional University Network in Europe (RUN-EU). Examples of the benefits of collaboration were provided by staff and students, from both education and research perspectives. The RUN-EU collaboration involves a total of more than 100,000 students, 11,000 staff and more than 100 research institutes, centres and groups. It aims to create a European university that focuses on regional development and champions sustainability, multiculturalism and inclusiveness. This aligns closely with the TUS ambition to reflect the educational demands and economic needs of Ireland's Midlands and Midwest regions. The collaboration provides opportunities for staff and student mobility, including the delivery of collaborative European degrees and joint programmes. For example, a Future and Advanced Pedagogy Skills Academy (FAPSA) promotes and develops joint student-centred, work-based flexible learning activities including Short Advanced Programmes (SAPs) and European Degrees. Participation in the Horizon Europe RUN-EU PLUS project supports RUN-EU development goals. RUN-EU has jointly created and delivered almost 30 SAPs, involving over 100 teaching staff. More than 700 students have completed SAPs to date. The availability of short courses and micro-credentials from this network of universities is expected to continue to benefit both staff and students. RUN-EU presents an opportunity for TUS students to access transnational programmes in the EU for some of their undergraduate and postgraduate studies and for network students to do likewise. External funding may be required to ensure sustained success with such an initiative.

Commendation

- The review team commends TUS' creative engagement with the Regional University Network European University (RUN-EU) Initiative for the strategic development of research, education and outreach activities

benefitting the student and staff experience and research activity.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that TUS continue to build strong partnerships with Education and Training Boards (ETBs), employers and other partners in the provision of a greater numbers of apprenticeships across existing and new disciplines to meet regional needs.
- The review team recommends that TUS strengthen progression pathways for students, particularly from a lifelong learning perspective.

SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

The documentation provided to the review team, as well as information gathered during the main review visit, confirms that the TUS QAE framework is aligned with statutory requirements and that it is based on robust practices for self-evaluation and continuous improvement. Moreover, its quality culture is embedded across the university and was evident throughout the visit. TUS recognises the need for further work including an enhancement of communication and reporting between the respective governance, management and academic fora. The ongoing governance review should help clarify these matters.

The TUS quality assurance documentation has been collected and collated into the TUS Quality Assurance Handbook, with a large number of supporting policies and guidelines. A period of consultation using staff focus groups disclosed a varying degree of familiarity with the different parts of the framework. As mentioned earlier in this report, the review team recommends that TUS prioritise completion and implementation of a single QAE handbook to provide a single point of reference for quality priorities and procedures across the institution. In terms of maturity of the system, the review team is of the opinion therefore that it is not possible to comment on the effectiveness of closing the quality loop at this early stage of institutional integration. Nevertheless,

there is evidence of progress towards a coherent single university quality system. As the system matures, it would be beneficial to identify a set of benchmarks reflecting the key performance indicators (KPIs) while noting that these can be both ‘best in industry’ and ‘best practice’.

RESEARCH

Finding the Right Institutional Balance

The Technological Universities Act (2018) gives the technological universities a research mandate. The TUs are to be regional, to offer research-based teaching and to promote excellence (IP 2023, p16). TUS “recognises that research is a defining hallmark of higher education, informing teaching and learning, and adding to the global body of knowledge” (ISER 8.0, p59). The university has a moral, legal and ethical obligation to contribute to society, and research is one of its key areas of activity (ISER 8.0, p59). The Technological Universities Research Network (TURN) Report (2019)¹⁴ promotes a vision of TU education as encompassing programmes ranging from apprenticeships to PhDs. While this objective may be difficult to attain, TURN’s ambition for Ireland’s higher education system is to be a Global Innovation Leader. During the 2020-2023 academic years, the Technological University Transformation Fund (TUTF) provided a total investment of €12.64m to grow research capacity. This included 38.6% of TUS co-funding. TUS has submitted a €12m application to the Technological University Research and Innovation Supporting Enterprise Scheme with the aim of building on progress achieved under TUTF (ISER 10, p68). In the 2022-23 Academic Year, TUS had 351 postgraduate research students including 197 on doctoral programmes. For the first time, the number of doctoral students surpassed those on Research Master’s degrees (ISER 8.1, p59).

Governance and Functioning

Policy and academic regulations align with the relevant statutory guidelines and effective practice reports including the QQI Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Research Degree Programmes (2017), Ireland’s

Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes (2019), the National Framework for Doctoral Education (NFDE), The Salzburg Principles, and the National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland (ISER 8.1, p59). The university identifies research as a key strategic priority and aims to “deliver impactful applied research, growing the research community, engaging in next generation thinking and tackling issues at a regional, national and global level” (ISER 10, p68).

TUS Academic Council presides over all research degree programmes, overseeing the quality assurance of programme provision, award standards and academic content. A Postgraduate Studies and Research Subcommittee assists in this. A Graduate School, located within Research Development and Innovation (RDI), carries responsibility for postgraduate students and works closely with the Research Offices on TUS Midlands and TUS Midwest campuses. A single, unified set of Postgraduate Research Regulations was introduced in 2023 to support postgraduate students from registration to graduation through a ‘life cycle’ approach to define the responsibilities of research students and supervisors and to operationalise effective training and support systems for both (ISER 10, p68). The review team considers this to be a significant step forward in the process of institutional integration. A TUS Research Ethics Committee approves research ethics applications.

The VP Research Development and Innovation carries overall responsibility for research activity and is assisted by the Research Offices. This provides clear separation between the interests of individual students and the management of research projects and contracts (ISER 8.3, pp60-61). The establishment of TUS has increased opportunities for research. Research Offices facilitate the identification of cross-campus synergies for grant funding. Researcher workshops, including those run through RUN-EU collaboration, develop grant-writing skills, and other support, including mentorship, is available.

¹⁴ <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2019/12/Report-of-the-TU-Research-Network-2019.pdf>

The RUN-EU collaboration makes a major contribution to the research and researcher training capacity of TUS. The programme is supported by the European Commission and funded under the European University Network programme. It brings together HEIs committed to societal transformation in their regions and addresses both national and international challenges. The collaboration was established in 2020 with 7 founding members including TUS. In a second funding cycle, the European Commission has approved funding of €14.5m for a further four years from 2024. TUS has become the RUN-EU coordinator for Phase 2, making it the first Irish university to lead and hold the presidency of a European university. This is a great distinction especially for a newly established HEI. The other partners are the Polytechnic of Cávado and Ave in Portugal, the Polytechnic of Leiria in Portugal, the NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands, Széchenyi István University in Hungary, the Fachhochschule Vorarlberg in Austria, Häme University of Applied Sciences in Finland, the University of Burgos in Spain, Howest University of Applied Sciences in Belgium and the O.M Beketov University in Ukraine as an associate partner (IP, p12).

TUS participates in the Horizon Europe 'Professional Research Programmes for Business and Society' known as RUN-EU PLUS. It is currently developing professional practice-based research master's and PhD programmes focusing on the strengthening of regional business and society partnerships in research and innovation across the RUN network. Joint research programmes are based on the themes of sustainability, digitalisation and social innovation. RUN-EU also promotes comparability in terms of governance and QA networking. Staff mobility in visiting partner institutions has been inspiring and offers opportunities to make relevant research connections. The RUN-EU collaboration also offers a Researcher Career Development Programme (AQR 2023) to help researchers meet the challenges of different organisational cultures and company policies and practices.

The field-weighted citation index of TUS research publications had increased from 1.17 to 1.36 by 2022 (ISER 10.4, p70). Increasing

international collaboration in research activity has resulted in an even higher (1.69) field weighted citation impact where scholarly output involves international collaboration. It is anticipated that the impact of RUN-EU PLUS will further enhance this achievement.

There are currently 8 Research Institutes and a number of Nationally Funded Technology Gateways. The Gateways are Applied Polymer Technologies (APT), Shannon Applied Biotechnology Centre (SABC), Connected Media Application Design and Delivery (COMAND) and Smarter Factory. Each is incorporated within an appropriate Research Institute. TUS was successful in securing a Senior Academic Leadership Initiative post to mobilise and foster research development across faculties. The Research Institutes all have a focus on developing niche areas of expertise to attract international researchers and external funding. Technology Gateways in four of the institutes address specific industry problems where researchers are focused primarily on solving industry-specific questions and are often employed by companies.

Research-Led Teaching

All the Institutes, Centres and Groups are multidisciplinary and seek to advance research relevant to the region, the nation, Europe and the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They interlink with faculties to help ensure that the research activity is transferred to taught programmes, resulting in research-informed teaching. The ISER includes hyperlinks to case studies that provided evidence of research-influenced programme development. For example, the B Ed in Technology, Engineering and Graphics (TEG) is jointly offered with Dublin City University (DCU) as training for post-primary teachers. This programme arose from the Technology Education Research Group (TERG) and uses a shared research-informed vision as a means of determining content and treatment, facilitating connectedness with stakeholders and ensuring a contemporary and relevant provision with a future-oriented perspective. The design of these modules is significantly influenced by PhD research projects that focus on spatial ability in teaching practical subjects. TERG has been commissioned by the

National Council for Curriculum and Development to help frame the national technological curricula as part of the current Leaving Certificate. Other case studies of research-led teaching include Polymer and Mechanical Engineering, Social Psychology, Embedding Education for Sustainable Development SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequality), and Tourism Research and the Relationship to TUS PhD Curriculum (also mapped against SDGs).

Major Achievements in TUS Research are summarised in the Institutional Profile, p8:

- 197 PhD Students in 2023 representing a 40% growth (2019-20 to 2022-23).
- €12m Research Expenditure in 2021-22.
- Fourth Among HEIs in Ireland with 198 collaborations, innovation vouchers and consultancy agreements.
- 882 research publications (2017-2022) (Scopus).
- 23% of publications in the top 10% journals by Citescore Percentiles.
- 50.9% of publications involve international collaboration.
- Emerging Growth of Collaborative Transnational RUN-EU PLUS Research Degree Programmes with themes of sustainability, digitalisation and social innovation.
- Since its formation, TUS has had research expenditure of over €10m per annum: €12,408,491.00 in 2021-2022.

Despite these successes, only around 10% of staff are actively engaged in research and research supervision. On designation of TUS as a university in 2021, 45.33% of TUS staff had PhDs. This was slightly above the national requirement of 45% or higher. However, within the next 10 years TUS will be required to demonstrate that 65% of its staff have PhDs. With typical teaching loads of 16-18 hours per week, this is difficult to achieve. There is a President's Doctoral Scholarship Scheme that provides some buyout of between 2 and 6 hours of teaching per week, but this is small in comparison to the support offered by several other universities (ISER 8.3, p60-61). Further teaching buy-out may be available through external research grants.

However, while the primary contractual expectation for academic staff is teaching, it will be challenging to increase the percentage of research-active staff substantially. Contracts and career pathways could be revised to include both research and teaching responsibilities, and the possibility of promotion to reader or professor. While resolution of this issue will require a change in legislation, TUS should develop an institutional strategy to drive its research ambitions, including the possibility of academic progression on research criteria.

Research Supervision Training and Progression of Postgraduate Students

In the academic year 2022-2023, TUS has 351 research students, of whom 197 are studying for a PhD. There is an increasing number of international students registered for master's and PhD degrees by research. There are ambitious plans to increase the number of research students, with a target of around 430 research students by the end of the current Strategic Plan in 2026 (ISER 8.1, p59).

The Graduate School supports postgraduate students from bases in TUS Midlands and Midwest campuses. The student body of TUS is more diverse than those of the predecessor institutions. Despite this, the aim is for students to see themselves as members of TUS, irrespective of their campus or discipline.

At the point of entry, students are provided with a copy of the regulations. They are informed about intellectual property, ethics and the code of practice governing research and the relationship between students and staff. A National Academic Integrity Week was run in 2022 and further information is provided by the CPID Academic Integrity page (AQR 2023). Since September 2023, registered students have to complete 15 credits of research methodology. A wide range of courses and modules is available, covering topics such as research skills, referencing and statistics. Supervisors provide advice, but students are able to make their own choices about which modules to attend. The review team found the training to be accessible and of good quality, a view supported by the students.

PhD students at TUS are generally co-supervised by two or more staff members. Around 58% have two supervisors and 26% have three supervisors. These percentages are much higher than the national average and, therefore, constitute good practice. A training programme has been introduced across campuses for training and developing supervisors of research students. Although a Code of Conduct and Regulations are provided to students, awareness of these documents was low among students met by the review team, especially among the distance learners (ISER 8.4.1, pp61-62).

Each PhD student undergoes an annual review to assess their progress. The review may include an abstract or a Gantt chart of planned progress, together with reports from the supervisor(s). During the Covid-19 pandemic, the review took the form of a progression poster. Of the students that met the review team, there appeared to be an inconsistency in the understanding of progression monitoring across campuses. The review team finds that the Graduate Schools should ensure clarity and consistency in the progression monitoring process. Oral skills are a useful graduate attribute that can be developed by presentations either in TUS or at a conference.

Most postgraduate students spoke positively to the review team about their experience of PG study at TUS, though the team also heard of problems caused by a lack of familiarity with the Code of Practice highlighting the need for better visibility of the Code and improved training in its contents for both students and their supervisors. Some students, including both on-campus and distance learners, reported that they did not feel part of a research culture. Students working from home or at smaller campuses had a greater tendency to feel isolated than those working on-campus. While there seem to be opportunities for students to become embedded in the research structures, groups, postgraduate networks or societies, it appears that these opportunities are not well publicised. Research Week aims to bring everyone together on campus to hear local speakers talking about their research. A communal TUS Postgraduate Newsletter rather than campus-based newsletters may be beneficial in terms of

connecting students and protecting them from isolation. They would also benefit from increased availability of social space on the campuses.

Commendations

- The review team commends TUS for demonstrating areas of excellence in research-informed teaching and course development.
- The review team commends TUS for its number of successful research institutes doing regionally relevant work.
- The review team commends TUS for demonstrating considerable progress in winning research funding and producing scholarly publications.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that a robust university-wide governance structure for research activity be established by TUS to support research activity and engagement. A central database of information about TUS research should also be developed.
- The review team recommends that TUS increase the supports available to TUS staff who are engaged in PhD research so as to reach the target of 65% within the allocated time.
- The review team recommends that TUS, in fulfilment of its ambitions for research development, take steps to ensure that every PhD student is embedded in a research culture, all supervisors can demonstrate and maintain the currency of their expertise to supervise students and projects, a code of practice for research supervision is regularly communicated, monitored and reviewed in line with the Framework for Doctoral Education.

OBJECTIVE 2 QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Whereas quality assurance is about accountability and is largely a top-down process, quality enhancement is about ongoing improvement that needs grass-roots support to thrive. Evidence of TUS's commitment to quality enhancement is evidenced by:

- The detailed focus on self-assessment and evaluation in the ISER,
- The TUS Centre for Pedagogical Innovation and Development (CPID) and included in this consultation with staff on CPD requirements,
- The processes for external examination to ensure and enhance standards and to benchmark against best practice,
- The engagement with communities of practice via National Technological University Transformation for Recovery and Resilience (N-TUTORR) and the HEA Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement (SATLE) initiative.

TUS deploys a number of strategies to cultivate quality. The university has a large and varied range of stakeholders who have contributed to the ISER and been involved at a collaborative, consultative level in the formulation of the Strategic Plan which provides a fulcrum for all TUS' activities (IP, p8). TUS's values are derived from its people through this sustained consultative process, facilitated by the consultants, Mazars. The links between TUS and its community help the university to serve real needs and to remain relevant — a touchstone for quality enhancement.

During the main review visit, the review team met with external stakeholders and personnel involved in community partnerships and placements. The effort made by some participants to attend on behalf of TUS is testament to the university's standing with these stakeholders. The commitment to TUS was obvious. Stakeholders were complimentary about the work done by TUS to generate quality master's graduates and

indicated that further development in research training would be welcomed. TUS graduates are deemed enthusiastic and keen to learn, resulting in more students being engaged each year. Since the establishment of TUS, the acceptance of placement students has greatly increased from a low basepoint. These placements have often followed from educational visits, where employers go into TUS to meet students and to talk to them about their upcoming experience. Such encounters provide opportunities for quality enhancement. For example, there has been a call for longer nursing placements, and a preference has been expressed for whole programmes in Polymer Science rather than as part of a degree in Polymer and Mechanical Engineering. TUS staff go to workplaces to supervise, talk to staff (students' line managers) and students separately, and then generate reports by agreement between TUS and the provider. Such visits can influence course design beneficially. For example, more theory may be necessary, or nursing students may need instruction in modern technology and digital health care records. TUS equipment requirements to update are identified earlier in this report.

TUS makes systematic use of external examiners' reports to enhance the quality of its programmes. The university refers to this as "feedforward" rather than "feedback". For example, "forward" to revalidation. In a document provided to the review team, TUS analysed actions taken in response to reports by its discipline-specific external examiners. The review team saw many examples of TUS programme changes and development in response to recommendations made in External Examiners' Reports. Indicatively these include a range of issues such as: improving access to learning resources, improving referencing skills and improving communication of assessment requirements to students. The willing engagement of TUS with external examiners' recommendations demonstrates its commitment to quality enhancement over a wide range of subjects.

The review team finds that TUS keep in sight the "big picture" and seek to be an integrated university that will serve the local, national and international community efficiently and effectively. To this end, it has provided succinct but informative

documents on the status of its post-designation integration. A unitary approach to quality assurance and enhancement has been implemented since designation in October 2021. The approach has included:

1. The unitary management of the QAE function on a TUS-wide cross-campus basis under the overall management and guidance of the Vice-President of Academic Affairs and Registrar.
2. The approval of a unitary TUS Policy for Quality Assurance and Enhancement and associated QAE Framework in April 2022.
3. The approval of unitary academic regulations for taught and research programmes.
4. The cross organisational implementation and support for the TUS QAE Framework.
5. The approval of approximately 50 individual documents and compilation and publication via the TUS Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. The ongoing integration and upgrading of the Quality page of the new TUS website to enable access to and publication of a range of TUS QAE-related information: TUS Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement.¹⁵

TUS has plans to improve Programme Validation, Management of the Curriculum, Work Placement Policy and Blended and Online Learning/Lecture Recording. It will review the QAE framework on a university-wide basis (this being an integral component of the TUS CINNTE process). A Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) will inform the next phases of development.

THE ALIGNMENT OF THE INSTITUTION'S MISSION AND TARGETS FOR QUALITY

The TUS Strategy includes the TUS Purpose Statement, “The Technological University of the Shannon provides leading student-centred higher education that is research-informed, regionally-relevant and accessible to all,” and the vision, “To be a catalyst for sustainable change through education and research that transforms lives, our region and the world beyond.” The strategy is

framed around four Strategic Priorities covering education, research, people and organisation, and connecting communities. In terms of education, the priority is to “Provide a relevant high-quality education offering, focused on interdisciplinarity, delivered in both traditional and flexible ways to cater to a diverse cohort of students, across multi-campus locations.” Further detail is provided by four objectives that together are intended to produce the outcome that “Our research-informed education will produce work-ready and world-ready graduates that make a notable impact on our region and drive wider societal transformation.” The four objectives are to:

1. Provide greater access pathways through progression options, apprenticeships, online delivery, flexible learning, international and non-traditional routes to education,
2. Enhance student-centred teaching and learning that is research-informed and enables a diverse cohort of learners to achieve successful outcomes,
3. Harness the knowledge and skills necessary to address challenges and deliver impact regionally, nationally and internationally,
4. Foster the development of graduates who can make a tangible difference in society.

Each of these objectives has an associated KPI. Tracking data shows that progress is being made with each of the objectives.

The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy predates the university’s strategy by one year. While not explicitly linked to the university’s strategy, it does echo relevant themes, such as access and progression, flexible learning, student-centred curriculum design, and a set of graduate attributes designed to develop creative problem-solving and other relevant skills for global citizens of a digital world.

During the main review visit, staff and students were able to provide many examples of ways in which the strategic objective to “provide greater access pathways through progression options,

¹⁵ <https://tus.ie/quality/>

apprenticeships, online delivery, flexible learning, international and non-traditional routes to education” were being achieved. Several of these examples stemmed from the close relationship between TUS and local industry and enterprise. Industry engagement has been critical for the establishment of apprenticeship programmes. In addition to these, around three thousand students are currently on flexible work- based learning programmes. TUS staff are working with Limerick and Clare ETB to provide Level 5 learning in Fundamentals of Culinary Arts in a safe environment where potential learners who might not ordinarily access higher education can learn in a supportive environment that might encourage them to apply to study at the university. Higher Certificate programmes are now direct entry, as a result of consultation and feedback from the ETB, companies and students, with the result that learners do not necessarily have to go through the CAO process. TUS provides 10-credit special purpose awards for prisoners, which can be used to enter higher education once they are re-integrated into society. TUS has worked to smooth progression pathways from Higher Certificate to Level 7 and then on to Level 8. Similarly, a special purpose award can lead to a postgraduate diploma and then a master’s degree. Fifty per cent of students at TUS are government funded and 75 per cent of students come from DEIS schools. Many are the first in their family to attend university.

The review team met a number of Access and Widening Participation students who had benefited from initiatives such as these. They praised the wide-ranging support they received from the university that has enabled them to enter and progress through programmes offered by TUS.

Similarly, the second strategic objective “enhance student-centred teaching and learning that is research-informed and enables a diverse cohort of learners to achieve successful outcomes” is being realised through the policy of encouraging teachers to engage in research and engaging with professions and industry to ensure the currency and relevancy of all programmes. This includes areas that traditionally would not have been associated with research, such as the latest

developments in cultivation and composting methods informed by student-driven research projects.

To “harness the knowledge and skills necessary to address challenges and deliver impact regionally, nationally and internationally,” and “foster the development of graduates that can make a tangible difference in society,” a key driver has been the policy of designing programmes in light of regional needs and national policy. As a unified TUS emerges, the programme portfolio is being rationalised and developed. Some programmes have reached the end of their natural lifecycle and new programmes are being developed in partnership with local industry. For example, collaboration with E.G Explore Engineering is a regional network informing programme development, and an apprenticeship model is being developed with IBEC and BioPharma Ireland.

INNOVATIVE AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICES FOR QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

The commitment to student-centred education that is research-informed, regionally relevant and accessible to all, per the TUS Purpose statement, was evident from the review team’s interactions with stakeholders. The review team noted positively initiatives on Pedagogical Innovation and Development, on enabling access to the university from under-represented communities (for example, Access to Apprenticeship), and on the engagement with both industry and schools through Explore Engineering, as particular examples of ensuring the achievement of these objectives.

There is clear evidence of the effectiveness of the governance and quality systems at each level of the organisation. While a quality culture is clearly embedded in the university, there is an opportunity, through the merger of the two institutes, to simplify structures and streamline requirements, taking the best of both and benefitting from external benchmarks. This will enhance the agility of the university, despite its increased size and geography, thus allowing it to respond to current challenges and emerging opportunities.

Examples for consideration include, but are not limited to:

- a simplified organisation structure,
- the deployment of best practice in both management and professional development,
- the further use of modern information technology systems to manage the operation of, and provide an enhanced student experience,
- continued focus on the quality of teaching and on regionally relevant research.

OBJECTIVE 3 – PROCEDURES FOR ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION

TUS offers access to its programmes using a number of routes, such as Leaving Certificate, Direct Entry Route, Further Education Award or Equivalent, Mature Years, Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) and HEAR or Access to Apprenticeship (ATA). Students entering TUS using non-traditional routes are well supported and TUS is highly appreciated for its work in lowering barriers and opening doors for students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.

TUS has implemented the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) System throughout the university, with at least 60 ECTS needed for an awarded degree. The current system is in line with European and Irish guidelines. The norm for progression is a workload of 30 ECTS per semester, but students can register for 5 – 40 ECTS per semester, allowing for student flexibility. The Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes specify the rules for progression for TUS programmes. The review team appreciates the work done in a short period of time to unite the two predecessor institutions with common rules and regulations for programmes.

Flexible learning paths and online learning are areas where the student numbers show significant growth. TUS is open to the needs of the region and responds when areas needing attention are identified. The review team commends these efforts and encourages TUS to include elements of flexible and online provision of courses in its regular on-site programmes.

The review team finds that attention should be devoted to student progression and retention, which are very important issues. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) has calculated non-progression in all Irish HEIs since 2019/20¹⁶ which represents a low point largely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The HEA assesses entrants in each

academic year as non-progressed if they do not re-enrol at the same institution in the following academic year. TUS had the lowest percentage increase in non-progression of all universities: 39%. The positive nature of this TUS achievement is highlighted when it is contrasted with the highest rate of non-progression: one HEI reported 140%.

A closer examination of the statistics reveals that certain weaknesses do exist in progression though they are counterbalanced by strength overall. Engineering, manufacturing and construction had a non-progression rate of 29% in 2021/2022; and for Services the rate was 26%. Dropout rates vary from one NFQ level to another and from year to year; they are influenced by subject choice, gender and socio-economic status. At TUS, in 2021/22 the male versus female disparity in dropout rates for level 8 courses was 23% vs 14%. At almost ten percentage points, this was the third largest disparity in the sector. As a category, internationally domiciled students had a progression rate of 90% which was the highest.

Nevertheless, despite compliance with ECTS and the considerable flexibility with which a number of routes are offered to enable study, the review team encourages TUS to use data analytics to inform efforts to reduce the student drop-out rate (18%) with its significant variation between male (23%) and female (14%) students.

Commendation

- The review team commends TUS for its unwavering commitment to students on Access and Widening Participation pathways. This commitment is in terms of awareness of needs, the quality of support provided and the dedication to creating opportunities for the fulfilment of personal and educational aspirations, especially for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that TUS use insights from data analytics to inform any initiatives for reducing student dropout rates, taking account of the significant variation between male (23%) and female (14%) students.

OBJECTIVE 4 – PROVISION OF PROGRAMMES TO INTERNATIONAL LEARNERS

GOVERNANCE MANAGEMENT

Internationalisation is led by the VP International and the TUS International Office. The aim is to embed global perspectives in all activities. There are currently over 200 global partners and there have been successes in winning funding from the Erasmus+ KA171 International (Non-EU/EEA) mobilities project which has enabled inward and outward movement with key partners. TUS maintains International Student Liaison Offices in New Delhi, India; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Shanghai, China; and Lagos, Nigeria, with International Offices located in TUS Midlands and Midwest campuses. The overseas offices internationally report to Ireland, but in the longer-term TUS sees them as becoming more de-centralised in the name of sustainability. TUS is particularly active in Europe, China, India, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Canada, USA, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, and Brazil. The commitment to developing transnational education is also evidenced by the more than 500 students enrolled on transnational programmes at Yangtze University and Wuxi Institute of Technology, China. In fact, TUS has nine programmes being delivered at Chinese partner universities, and in the final year of the bachelor's degree at TUS, students from China who have studied any of these undergraduate programmes will merit advanced standing. TUS has a Global Skills Opportunity with St Lawrence College, Canada, with a programme entitled "Entrepreneurial Thinking in a Global Context" which brings together 20 students from each institution. In its Graduate Attributes Framework, TUS commits to an internationalised curriculum that is values-driven and focuses on knowledge creation, co-creation and intellectual leadership. The "Pillar" for Excellence in Teaching and Learning is closely related to internationalisation. During the main review visit, the review team was informed by the senior team that internationalisation was at the core of everything that TUS does.

STUDENT EXCHANGES

During the 2022-23 Academic Year, there was a total of 1656 international inbound students. This included International Non-EU (829), International EU (83), Transnational (536), Erasmus Incoming-EU & Non-EU (152) and Other Exchange (56). In the same year, there was a total of 314 outbound students participating in Erasmus Study, Erasmus Placement and RUN-EU Short Advanced Programmes (SAPs). Since the 2019-20 academic year, there has been a 40% growth in international undergraduate and postgraduate students. This is impressive given the impact of Covid-19 and geopolitical issues.

The number of outbound students equates to only 19 percent of the inbound in 2022-23. This imbalance creates a challenge: how can TUS educate its home students for a globalising world particularly since 45% of TUS students receive National Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) grants and may not be able to afford international exchanges. Some courses like the BSc Computing with Internationalisation include an opportunity for study abroad. Others, such as degrees in International Business have mandatory international segments. In a Compendium of Approaches to Internationalisation of the Home Curriculum¹⁷ the TUS President points out that the principles of Internationalisation at Home (IaH) align both with the development of graduate attributes and more widely, with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The development of this Compendium was funded by a National Forum under Strategic Alliance Teaching Learning Enhancement 2022 funding. The President also pays tribute to TUS' membership of RUN-EU in helping to create a regional development-oriented European university that embodies the values of sustainability, multiculturalism and inclusiveness in all its work. He notes that TUS is the first technological university in Ireland to receive designation as a University of Sanctuary in recognition of its efforts to make higher education more welcoming to and inclusive of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. The IaH initiative is regarded as increasingly important for those students who are unable or unwilling to go abroad

¹⁷ Kelly, E & O'Donoghue, C. (Eds.). (2024). *Compendium of Approaches to Internationalisation of the Home Curriculum*. TUS

because it seeks ways of bringing global and international perspectives to the home curriculum.

Incoming International Students

A centralised admissions team deals with international applications and processing is fast, usually about 1-2 weeks. An app called “Going” is used to create a community for prospective students before they depart from home. English language teaching requirements are IELTS 6.5 for postgraduate and 6.0 for undergraduate study. English language teachers are contracted to the International Office (IO) and a Foundation Programme exists to help incoming international students reach a standard which will be adequate for participation in their course. Learning support skills and language courses are also available. Pastoral support for international students is provided by the TUS International Offices, which work together to provide care. International students reported to the review team that they received great support from lecturers in preparation of portfolios, revision, advice, feedback and preparing job applications. Their experience of the IO was excellent. International students who are inbound and arriving in Ireland for the first time are collected from Dublin airport. International students told the review team that, like local students, they had found it exceedingly difficult to obtain accommodation.

The internationalisation efforts of TUS and the IO were recognised on 19 February 2024 when the university was awarded a 5-star rating by Quacquarelli Symonds. TUS is the first Irish university to achieve a 5 Star Arts and Culture rating from QS. It scored exceptionally high in the areas of international diversity and employment, with the scoring system taking into consideration the university’s strong reputation among employers, the graduate employment rate, and career service supports. The review team commends and congratulates TUS on its receipt of a QS 5-star award.

This rating supports the HEA findings that TUS has the highest percentage of honours degree graduates in the country in employment nine months after graduation. Many graduates of TUS will work in global companies and there are significant multicultural benefits to the international cohort which provides much stimulation and enrichment.

Commendation

- The review team commends TUS on the excellent work of the International Office (IO) in supporting international students.



Section 4

Conclusions



Conclusions

OVERALL FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The review team notes that TUS was designated a technological university (TU) on 1 October 2021, and that it was established upon the merger of two well established and prestigious institutes of technology (IoTs), Athlone Institute of Technology and Limerick Institute of Technology. An initial Governing Body was appointed on the designation of TUS while a permanent TUS Governing Body was established in 2024.

As a multicampus university, TUS borders almost half of Ireland's 26 counties and is thus of national importance and of substantial regional significance in the Midlands and Midwest regions of Ireland. At the same time TUS is exploring new international opportunities, most prominently via the Regional University Network – European University (RUN-EU) where the university has now taken on its leadership.

The commitment by TUS to providing student-centred learning, teaching and assessment is signposted by the overarching TUS Purpose as outlined in the TUS Strategic Plan that TUS “provides leading student-centred higher education that is research-informed, regionally-relevant and accessible to all”.

The stated strategic priorities are described in the Institutional Profile (2023) as follows:

- 1. Education:** Provide a relevant high-quality education offering, focused on interdisciplinarity, delivered in both traditional and flexible ways to cater to a diverse cohort of students, across multi-campus locations.
- 2. Research:** Deliver impactful applied research, growing the research community, engaging in next generation thinking and tackling issues at a regional, national and global level.
- 3. People and Organisation:** Operate as an integrated organisation, where everyone's

potential can be realised, and where all individuals are provided with equal opportunities.

- 4. Connecting Communities:** Build and enhance relationships and partnerships to drive the sustainable development of our region and make an impact nationally and internationally

The TUS Vision for 2030 is “to be a catalyst for sustainable change through education and research that transforms lives, our region and the world beyond”. This is compatible with the 2019 vision of the TURN Report (p14) that “Education is the engine powering social mobility, securing economic growth, and addressing embedded socio-economic disadvantage”.

The university offers programmes from NFQ Levels 6 through to 10. The vision for programmes ranging from apprenticeships to doctorates is well on the way to being realised. It may be a “heavier lift” to develop the spectrum of levels at the higher than at the lower academic end. However, if parity of esteem with other technological universities is to be achieved nationally and internationally, this “lift” must be sustained; and it applies to staff as well as to students. Like other technological universities, TUS has new additional functions as a result of designation. This means that the staff profile needs to change over time (TURN Report, 2019:11). It is essential to continue creating and maintaining a research culture: one, moreover, that is genuinely sympathetic and supportive to the creation of knowledge as well as to its efficient transmission.

TUS is committed to student engagement through active and applied learning to enable all students to realise their full potential. The university enjoys great respect and commitment from local and regional stakeholders, among industry, practitioner bodies and other educational institutions.

The TUS Access agenda, fully embedded in the organisation, promotes equitable access to and

successful participation in higher education for all members of society, and targeted strategies and initiatives are implemented to facilitate entry to and successful participation in higher education for underrepresented students.

TUS has achieved a great deal in a short span of time. These achievements are all the greater when considering that the majority of the work has taken place in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. Other factors outside the university's control have impacted progress and need to be addressed if TUS is to attain its full potential. These national issues, transcending the sector, are significant barriers to the achievement of the TUS vision.

A substantial amount of work is still to be completed but the review team is confident that the university will succeed in its endeavours; driven by excellent students, deeply committed staff at all levels and a devoted Governing Body; it is evident that there is a strong and shared commitment to the future success of TUS.

Commendations

1. The review team commends TUS for its ambitious vision that pervades key initiatives and guides its collaboration with students, communities, local government, enterprise and business.
2. The review team commends the rapid progress made since TUS' designation in developing and embedding a quality culture at all levels, including quality assurance structures and processes.
3. The review team commends TUS for offering programmes in many modalities, making use of stakeholder input and graduate attribute concepts to ensure their relevance within the "real world", as experienced by students and employers.
4. The review team commends how TUS Graduate Attributes, Seven Pillars and TUS Curriculum Design Approaches form an integrated framework for teaching and learning activities.
5. The review team commends the work of the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation and Development (CPID) for providing extensive professional development opportunities for staff and for its contribution to student engagement, for example through its Compendium.
6. The review team commends TUS for its dedication to authentic assessment and its initial engagement with problem-based learning and Challenge Learning and Assessment.
7. The review team commends TUS for the enthusiasm and professionalism of all student support services staff who ensure an outstanding commitment to student engagement.
8. The review team commends TUS' creative engagement with the Regional University Network European University (RUN-EU) Initiative for the strategic development of research, education and outreach activities benefitting the student and staff experience and research activity.
9. The review team commends TUS for demonstrating areas of excellence in research-informed teaching and course development.
10. The review team commends TUS for its number of successful research institutes doing regionally relevant work.
11. The review team commends TUS for demonstrating considerable progress in winning research funding and producing scholarly publications.
12. The review team commends TUS for its unwavering commitment to students on Access and Widening Participation pathways. This commitment is in terms of awareness of needs, the quality of support provided and the dedication to creating opportunities for the fulfilment of personal and educational aspirations, especially for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.
13. The review team commends TUS on the excellent work of the International Office (IO) in supporting international students.

Recommendations

1. The review team recommends that TUS, notwithstanding the progress made on integration to date, develop a unified operational model across the university. This should align with university objectives and be strongly promoted.
2. The review team recommends that TUS develop a single unified QAE handbook, with input from students and staff, to provide an accessible contemporary framework that acts as a single point of reference for quality priorities and processes across the university, and demonstrates openness, transparency, accountability and integrity. This should include a clear definition of the criteria for revalidation of programmes to ensure that the process is efficient and provides the necessary flexibility for programme teams to maintain the continued relevance and currency of curricula, and a robust process for the development and monitoring of assessment matrices.
3. The review team recommends that TUS clearly define the role of Student Union representation on the deliberative and decision-making bodies of the university, including the function of Academic Council and its relationship to the other instruments of governance and management.
4. The review team recommends that TUS further develop and establish effective structures for staff at all levels to give feedback and have their voice heard. This feedback should contribute to TUS decision-making mechanisms.
5. The review team recommends that TUS give serious consideration to supporting the development of Heads of Departments' important role as middle managers who make a significant contribution to the effective functioning of the institution. The avenues of upward mobility are limited for them due to the flat organisational structure and a lack of fixed terms of office or clear role descriptions.
6. The review recommends that TUS prioritise overall workforce planning, development and wellbeing in an agile manner to ensure the sustainability of continued high-quality service and academic provision. While a quality culture has become embedded in the university, there is an opportunity to simplify administrative and operational structures as well as lighten bureaucratic requirements. This will enhance the agility of the university, allowing it to respond to emerging opportunities.
7. The review team recommends that TUS review current practice for student communication and develop a coordinated strategy that addresses students' needs across all modes of programme delivery, and all stages of the student journey from application to completion of studies, to ensure timely access to pertinent academic and pastoral information.
8. The review team recommends that TUS enhance the provision of student support services to ensure that all students have access to support that is consistent across the university, irrespective of level of study, stage of their learning journey, or campus.
9. The review team recommends that TUS ensure that the Library is represented at high level strategic, operational and financial decision-making processes.
10. The review team recommends that TUS continue to build strong partnerships with Education and Training Boards (ETBs), employers and other partners in the provision of a greater numbers of apprenticeships across existing and new disciplines to meet regional needs.
11. The review team recommends that TUS strengthen progression pathways for students, particularly from a lifelong learning perspective.

12. The review team recommends that a robust university-wide governance structure for research activity be established by TUS to support research activity and engagement. A central database of information about TUS research should also be developed.
13. The review team recommends that TUS increase the supports available to TUS staff who are engaged in PhD research so as to reach the target of 65% within the allocated time.
14. The review team recommends that TUS, in fulfilment of its ambitions for research development, take steps to ensure that every PhD student is embedded in a research culture, all supervisors can demonstrate and maintain the currency of their expertise to supervise students and projects, a code of practice for research supervision is regularly communicated, monitored and reviewed in line with the Framework for Doctoral Education.
15. The review team recommends that TUS use insights from data analytics to inform any initiatives for reducing student dropout rates, taking account of the significant variation between male (23%) and female (14%) students.



Section 5

Top 5 Commendations and
Recommendations



Top 5 Commendations and Recommendations

Top 5 Commendations

1. The review team commends TUS for its ambitious vision that pervades key initiatives and guides its collaboration with students, communities, local government, enterprise and business.
2. The review team commends TUS for its unwavering commitment to students on Access and Widening Participation pathways. This commitment is in terms of awareness of needs, the quality of support provided and the dedication to creating opportunities for the fulfilment of personal and educational aspirations, especially for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.
3. The review team commends TUS for the enthusiasm and professionalism of all student support services staff who ensure an outstanding commitment to student engagement.
4. The review team commends TUS' creative engagement with the Regional University Network European University (RUN-EU) Initiative for the strategic development of research, education and outreach activities benefitting the student and staff experience and research activity.
5. The review team commends TUS for demonstrating considerable progress in winning research funding and producing scholarly publications.

Top 5 Recommendations

1. The review team recommends that TUS, notwithstanding the progress made on integration to date, develop a unified operational model across the university. This should align with university objectives and be strongly promoted.
2. The review team recommends that TUS give serious consideration to supporting the development of Heads of Departments' important role as middle managers who make a significant contribution to the effective functioning of the institution. The avenues of upward mobility are limited for them due to the flat organisational structure and a lack of fixed terms of office or clear role descriptions.
3. The review team recommends that the university, in fulfilment of its ambitions for research development, take steps to ensure that every PhD student is embedded in a research culture, all supervisors can demonstrate and maintain the currency of their expertise to supervise students and projects, a code of practice for research supervision is regularly communicated, monitored and reviewed in line with the Framework for Doctoral Education
4. The review team recommends that TUS review current practice for student communication and develop a coordinated strategy that addresses students' needs across all modes of programme delivery, and all stages of the student journey from application to completion of studies, to ensure timely access to pertinent academic and pastoral information.
5. The review recommends that TUS prioritise overall workforce planning, development and wellbeing in an agile manner to ensure the sustainability of continued high-quality

service and academic provision. While a quality culture has become embedded in the university, there is an opportunity to simplify administrative and operational structures as well as lighten bureaucratic requirements. This will enhance the agility of the university, allowing it to respond to emerging opportunities.

OVERARCHING STATEMENTS ABOUT QA

OBJECTIVE 1: QUALITY ASSURANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY

Objective 1 of the adapted CINNTE terms of reference for the review of technological universities is to review the effectiveness and implementation of the quality assurance procedures of the new technological university through consideration of its procedures. The review team is satisfied that good progress is being made towards the development of a single quality assurance and enhancement framework supported by a range of policies and procedures. The institutional self-evaluation report (ISER) along with the annual quality report (AQR) provided evidence of the planned activities to develop integrated quality assurance procedures. The AQR demonstrated compliance with national Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines as well as European Standards and Guidelines (2015).

OBJECTIVE 2: QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

The TUS ISER confirmed the outcomes of a significant and coordinated programme of university-wide engagement and reflection through which a range of enhancements for the future were identified. The review team was provided with a range of case studies that illustrated TUS' commitment to quality enhancement. It was noticeable that all policies and documents refer to quality assurance and enhancement, making enhancement an integral part of helping students to reach their potential. This also affirms the quality culture is embedded across the university at all levels. During the main review visit, representatives from across the university's stakeholder groups had a clear understanding of their role in the wider QAE system.

OBJECTIVE 3: ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION

The review team is satisfied that procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression are in place and operating effectively in accordance with published QQI policy. The range of programme provision and available supports is very responsive to prospective learners' needs.

OBJECTIVE 4: PROVISION OF PROGRAMMES TO INTERNATIONAL LEARNERS

TUS' educational provision and educational partnerships are compliant with the QQI Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners (2015). The review team is satisfied that the current quality assurance arrangements ensure monitoring and review of collaborative programmes.

Section 6

Institutional Response



Institutional Response

TUS RESPONSE TO THE QQI CINNTE REPORT

The publication of this CINNTE Cyclical Review Report represents an important milestone for TUS, completing the first external institutional review of the university since designation as a Technological University on October 1st, 2021. TUS embraced the QQI CINNTE process as a valuable and timely opportunity for engagement with our stakeholders and for reflection and critical self-study across the spectrum of our activities.

As President of TUS, I would like to thank QQI for their expert guidance and support throughout all stages of CINNTE and to thank the independent, expert, international review team for the rigorous, detailed and considered approach evident during the Main Review Visit and in this CINNTE Report. I am pleased that the report reflects a collective effort rooted in a deeply held shared vision, and note that this is recognised implicitly throughout the report. This shared vision is reflected in the review team commendations to TUS *“for its ambitious vision that pervades key initiatives and guides its collaboration with students, communities, local government, enterprise and business”* and for the *“excellent range and quality of TUS involvement with communities and stakeholders which is in alignment with its vision and strategic objectives as outlined in the Strategic Plan (2023-2026)”*.

CINNTE provided an important reference point to TUS in evaluating the effectiveness of university-wide quality assurance procedures, underpinned by an enhancement-led approach to quality. The review team have noted that *“the ISER was carefully constructed and provided evidence of TUS’ strong university-wide commitment to quality enhancement”*. The review team note that *“there is clear evidence of the effectiveness of the governance and quality systems at each level of the organisation and that they are satisfied that “excellent progress has been made towards the establishment of robust and appropriate governance structures”*. I welcome the implicit recognition of a quality culture at TUS *“evident throughout the visit”* and recognised in the commendation for *“the rapid progress made since TUS designation in developing and embedding a quality culture at all levels, including quality assurance structures and processes”*. TUS also notes the report’s finding of compliance with relevant European and National statutory quality assurance guidelines and requirements.

The review team have noted that TUS staff are *“strongly motivated to contribute positively to institutional development and integration with the goal of making TUS greater than a sum of its parts”*. This is welcome acknowledgement for the critical role of all staff in the development of TUS in a short period of time. TUS views as important the observation by the review team that *“the university enjoys great respect and commitment from local and regional stakeholders, among the industry, practitioner bodies and other educational institutions”* and is grateful to all its stakeholders for their ongoing engagement. TUS has made considerable progress in developing research capacity and appreciates commendations for *“the number of successful research institutes doing regionally relevant work”* and *“for demonstrating considerable progress in winning research funding and producing scholarly publications”*. TUS welcomes the reports’ recognition of the importance of the Regional University Network-European University (RUN-EU) which *“has advanced internationalisation through numerous partnerships in education, research, and funded student and staff exchanges”*.

TUS places elevated emphasis on our student-centred approaches and this is epitomised in our shared values: inclusive, supportive and collaborative. The review team have noted that *“students identify strongly with the university and appreciate the involvement of teaching staff and the quality of courses and programmes”*. The review team also note that they *“were greatly encouraged by student feedback on communication with their lecturers and the wider university management”* and commend TUS *“for the enthusiasm and professionalism of all Student Support Services staff who ensure an outstanding commitment to Student Engagement”*. I particularly welcome this recognition of staff in placing the

centrality of the student experience to the forefront of the student lifecycle as students are supported throughout their academic journey in TUS. The report notes that *“a comprehensive programme of development opportunities is a cornerstone of the TUS investment in its staff”* and such opportunities support staff to enhance student-centred approaches and innovative pedagogy.

The review team have noted the HEA finding *“that TUS has the highest percentage of honours degree graduates in the country in employment nine months after graduation”*. This aligns with our Education priority ‘to provide a relevant high quality education offering’. In this context, I note the review team commendation for offering *“programmes in many modalities, making use of stakeholder input and Graduate Attribute concepts to ensure their relevance within the “real world”, as experienced by students and employers*. I particularly welcome the review teams’ commendation to TUS for an *“unwavering commitment to students on Access and Widening Participation Pathways”*. The report acknowledges the TUS commitment to Apprenticeship education and finds that *“TUS shows great initiative in offering programmes for flexible learners, as well as students enrolled in part-time programmes”*. The report also highlights the importance of internationalisation and notes that, from its inception, *“TUS has been committed to facilitating the inward and outward flow of students and staff between international partner institutions”*.

In addition to assessing compliance, CINNTE is a valuable enhancement led review process and TUS appreciates the considered and detailed narrative throughout the report that outlines the context for proposed quality enhancements across the spectrum of our activities, complemented by a range of specific developmental recommendations. TUS accepts the report recommendations and recognises the importance of the top five, as specified. These signal the importance of: (1) the development of a unified operational model across the university; (2) supporting the development of Heads of Departments’ important role as middle managers; (3) embedding research students in a research culture and developing research staff supervisory capacity; (4) reviewing current practice for student communication including the development of a coordinated student communication strategy that addresses students’ needs in a holistic manner; and (5) prioritising overall workforce planning, development and wellbeing to ensure the sustainability of continued high-quality service and academic provision. TUS will reflect fully on all recommendations including the detailed narrative underpinning each to inform the development and implementation of a Quality Improvement Plan. It is also noteworthy that the report cites a number of sectoral factors, the impact of which are *“important to the achievement of the TUS vision and organisational development within the higher education landscape”*.

I would like to reiterate my thanks to the review team and to QQI for the opportunity that CINNTE affords. The report provides a valuable roadmap to guide and inform the next phase of our development as a vibrant university and to help position TUS to further realise our ambitions. In this endeavour, we aim to work to the highest standards and to continue to foster a culture of quality, excellence and continuous improvement in all our activities towards the fulfilment of our purpose and vision and for the benefit of our stakeholders. I am heartened by the review teams’ observation that it *“is confident that the university will succeed in its endeavours; driven by excellent students, deeply committed staff at all levels and a devoted Governing Body; it is evident that there is a strong and shared commitment to the future success of TUS”*.

Professor Vincent Cunnane

President, TUS

August 2024



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 PURPOSE

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. This statement may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations in reference to this objective in the context of the newly formed institution. 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 new institution's distinct mission and vision, or the plans and process in place for their development.
- The goals or targets for quality identified by the institution and/or the plans or process in place for their development.
- 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 – TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITIES

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 profile¹⁸.

¹⁸ QQI seeks guidance from the institution on the profile of a specific review team. The institution is consulted in advance, prior to confirming the team.

1. A review chair

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
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

Step	Action	Dates	Outcome
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 <i>In some cases, directions to the institution and a schedule for their implementation</i>
	Preparation of QQI quality profile	2 weeks after decision	Quality profile published
<i>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.</i>			
Follow-up	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

MONDAY 15TH APRIL

GOVERNANCE, QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Time	Group	People	Purpose
9.00 - 9.30	Institutional Coordinator	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator
9.30 - 10.00	Private Meeting of Review Team		
10.00 - 10.30	1. President & Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar	President, TUS VP Academic Affairs and Registrar	Private Meeting with President and VP Academic Affairs and Registrar. To discuss institutional mission, strategic plan and roles and responsibilities for QA and enhancement.
10.30-11.30	2. Executive	President, TUS VP Academic Affairs and Registrar VP Research, Development & Innovation VP Student Education & Experience VP Finance & Corporate Services VP Campus Services & Capital Development VP People, Culture and EDI VP Strategy, Transition & Projects	Discuss institutional mission, strategic plan including roles and responsibilities for QA and QE.
11.30 - 12.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
12.00 - 12.30	3. Governing Body Representatives	Chair of Governing Body President, TUS TUS Students Union President External Governing Body member External Governing Body member External Governing Body member Internal Governing Body member	To discuss mechanisms employed by the Governing Body for monitoring QA & QE and how it ensures effectiveness.

12.30 -1.00	4. Quality & Academic Council	VP Academic Affairs and Registrar Head of Quality Assurance & Enhancement Student Representative Dean of Faculty of Engineering and Informatics Head of Department of Sport & Health Sciences Senior Lecturer, Dept. Of Marketing, Enterprise & Digital Communications, Lecturer, Dept. of Applied Social Sciences Lecturer, Dept of Fine Art & Education Lecturer, Dept of Digital Arts and Media Lecturer, Faculty of Science and Health	To discuss academic governance/strategic management and QA structures, including arrangements for QA at the centre/academic council, faculties/schools and departments
13.00 - 14:00	Lunch		
14.00 - 14.45	5. Faculty Deans	Dean of Graduate Studies Dean of Faculty of Continuing Professional Online and Distance Learning Dean of Flexible & Work-Based Learning Dean of Faculty of Science and Health Dean of Faculty of Engineering and Informatics Dean of Limerick School of Art & Design Dean of Faculty of Engineering & The Built Environment Dean of Faculty of Applied Sciences and Technology Dean of Faculty of Business and Humanities	To discuss the programme portfolio (Undergraduate/Flexible & Life-Long Learning/Apprenticeship) and how the university monitors the effectiveness of its QA/QE processes and structures including how the outcomes are enacted in an appropriate, consistent and timely manner.

14.45 - 15:15	6. Quality Assurance Team / Members of the ISER development group (excluding UE)	VP Academic Affairs and Registrar Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Assistant Registrar & Head of Quality Assistant Registrar Dean of Graduate Studies & Research Head of Transitions and Student Success Regional Tertiary Education Manager/Quality Reviews Quality Enhancement Information & Data Officer	To discuss experience of implementing quality assurance throughout the institution.
15.15 - 15.45	Private Review Team Meeting		
15.45 - 16:30	7. Student Representatives (Undergraduates)	Student Representatives from: Dept. of Lifelong Learning Dept. of Mechanical Polymer Engineering Dept of Social Sciences Dept. of Digital Arts and Media Dept. of Mechanical Engineering Dept. of Fine Art Dept. of Business & Financial Services Dept. of Digital Arts and Media Dept. of Applied Social Sciences Dept. of Applied Social Sciences	To discuss the student experience with students from all Faculties, to include representation from different years, disciplines and service users.
16.30 - 17:15	8. Student Representatives (Taught postgraduates)	Student Representatives from: Faculty of Continuing Professional Online and Distance Learning Faculty of Flexible & Work-Based Learning Faculty of Science and Health Faculty of Business & Hospitality Limerick School of Art & Design Faculty of Applied Sciences and Technology Faculty of Engineering and Informatics Faculty of Business and Humanities	To discuss the student experience with students from all Faculties, to include representation from different years, disciplines and service users.
17.15 - 17.30	Private Review Team Meeting		

TUESDAY 16TH APRIL**QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT/STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

Time	Group	People	Purpose
9.00 - 9.30	Institutional Coordinator	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator
9.30 - 10.15	9. Student Union Officers	SU President Deputy President for the Midlands Deputy President Postgraduate Affairs Deputy President Vice President Education & Welfare Vice President Education & Welfare Vice President Education Vice President Welfare Vice President Education & Welfare	To discuss student engagement and student role in the university in QA, strategic planning and decision-making processes.
10.15 - 11.00	10. Members of Academic Programme Committee	Assistant Registrar Dean of Faculty of Science & Health Head of Dept of Marketing, Enterprise and Digital Communication Head of Dept. of Hospitality, Tourism & Leisure Dean flexible/work-Based Learning/Director Industry Engagement Head of Dept. Fine Art & Education Lecturer, Dept. of Applied Social Sciences Lecturer, Dept. of Mechanical & Automobile Engineering Student Representative	To discuss role of committee in governance of QA procedures for approval of new programmes and modifications to current programmes
11.00 - 11.30	Private Review Team Meeting		
11:30 - 12.15	11. Members of Research Committee	VP Research Development & Innovation Dean of Graduate Studies Head of Dept of Nursing & Healthcare Head of Dept. of Design Lecturer, Dept. of Built Environment Research Ethics Committee Chair Lecturer, Dept. of Nursing and Healthcare & Research Ethics Committee Chair Lecturer, Dept of Applied Social Sciences Lecturer Dept. of Technology Education Project Lead, Research Integration Project Manager (RIMS) Postgraduate Research Student Representative	To discuss role of committee in governance of QA procedures for research and innovation

12.15 - 1.00	12. Members of the Teaching & Learning Committee	VP Student Education & Experience Head of the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation and Development (CPID) Senior Lecturer, CPID Student Representative Lecturer, CPID Lecturer, Dept of Built Environment Lecturer, Dept of Electrical & Electronic Engineering Lecturer, Dept of Mechanical & Automobile Limerick Lecturer, Dept of Sport and Health Sciences	To discuss role of committee in governance of QA procedures for Teaching and Learning
13.00 - 14.00	Lunch		
14.00 - 14.45	13. Heads of Departments	Faculty of Business & Hospitality/Dept of Business & Management Studies Faculty of Flexible & Work-Based Learning/ Dept of Flexible Learning Faculty of Science and Health/Dept of Pharmaceutical Sciences & Biotechnology Faculty of Engineering and Informatics/Dept of Polymer, Mechanical and Design Faculty of Business & Hospitality/Dept of Accounting & Business Computing Limerick School of Art & Design/Dept of Digital Arts & Media Faculty of Engineering & The Built Environment/Dept of Electrical & Electronic Engineering Faculty of Business and Humanities/Dept of Hospitality, Tourism & Wellness	To discuss Quality Management Processes at the Department Level (including addressing skills needs/portfolio/employability/ programme development & management), implementation & how their effectiveness is ensured.
14.45 -15.30	14. Access and Widening participations staff	Dean of Faculty of Applied Sciences & Technology/Director of Progression Pathways Assistant Registrar and Head of Quality Access Officer Access Officer Admissions Officer & CAO Correspondent TUS Apprenticeship Coordinator Regional Tertiary Education Manager Marketing/Schools Liaison Officer Head of Dept. of Life Long Learning	To discuss Quality Management Processes at the Department Level (including addressing skills needs/portfolio/employability/ programme development & management), implementation & how their effectiveness is ensured.
15.30 - 16.00	Private Review Team Meeting		

16.00 - 16.45	15. Staff supporting implementation of undergraduate curriculum/ systems & administration	Faculty Administrator Faculty Administrator Head of Careers & Employability Service Curriculum Office Academic Administration & Student Affairs Manager Senior Technical Officer (Student Record System) Registry Manager Management Information System Senior Technical Officer (LSAD & Studio) Technical Officer (Built Environment)	To discuss involvement in QA and enhancement and in supporting the student lifecycle
16:45- 17:30	16. Staff from Student Support Services & Student Experience	Student Resource Manager Academic Administration & Student Affairs Manager Nurse Manager Disability Officer Pastoral Care TUS Societies Officer Head of Counselling Learning Support Midwest Sports Officer Learning Support Centre Tutor	To discuss involvement in QA and enhancement and in supporting the student lifecycle

WEDNESDAY 17TH APRIL RESEARCH, INTERNATIONAL, STAFF, STUDENT & EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Time	Group	People	Purpose
9.00 - 9.30	Institutional Coordinator	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator
9.30 - 10.15	17. Directors: Research Institutes & Development/ Innovation:	Head of Research & Technology Transfer (Research Manager) Research Director PRISM Director of Social Science Connexions Research Director, IDEAM Research Director of LSAD Research Institute Head of Innovation & Enterprise Director of Knowledge Transfer & Commercialisation Director of Research Support Services	To discuss the implementation of QA and QE procedures for research.
10.15 - 11.00	18. Academic Staff and post-doctoral researchers	RUN-EU PLUS (Research Manager and PhD Supervisor) Faculty of Business & Hospitality - Director of Research Development Lecturer, Dept of Sport & Health Science Lecturer, Dept. of Applied Social Sciences Post-doctoral Researcher Post-doctoral Researcher Post-doctoral Researcher Post-doctoral Researcher	To discuss staff experience of research management and supervision, the relationship between teaching, research and innovation, QA and enhancements and the impacts on the research student experience.
11.00-11.30	Private Review Team Meeting		
11.30 - 12.1	19. Graduate Students	Research Student Representatives: MA (Applied Social Sciences) PhD (Science) PhD (Design Tec. Ed.) PhD (Tourism) MSc (Computing by Research) PhD (Nursing) MSc (Life & Physical Research) MA (Applied Social Sciences) PhD (Arts) PhD (Science/IT) PhD (Applied Social Sciences)	To discuss QA & QE procedures with research postgraduates.

12.15 - 13.00 (Parallel Session)	20. (a) External Stakeholders including Placement Providers/Internships	Director, Circana, Athlone Director of Catalyst Centre, Analog Devices, Limerick Director of Nursing, Practice Development Coordinator, Midland Regional Hospital Tullamore IT Consultant, ChannelAdvisor, Dublin Operations Manager, St Hildas Services, Athlone Company Director, Piquant, Limerick Laboratory Manager, BHP Laboratories Ltd, Limerick Principal Manufacturing Engineer Boston Scientific, Galway.	To discuss engagement of external stakeholders in strategic management and QA structures
12.15-13.00 (Parallel Session)	20. (b) External Stakeholders including Community Representatives	Director of Regeneration, Limerick City and County Council President, Athlone Chamber of Commerce Family Learning Co-ordinator with Tipperary Rural Traveller Project (TRTP) Project Director of Engage in Education, Limerick School Principal, Corpus Christi, Moyross, Limerick Tipperary ETB Representative CEO Bioeconomy Foundation TUSLA, Governance and Knowledge General Manager (Child & Family Agency)	To discuss engagement of external stakeholders in strategic management and QA structures
13.00 - 14.00	Lunch		
14.00 - 14.45	21. Academic Staff from Various Faculties	Representative from: Faculty of Continuing Professional Online and Distance Learning Faculty of Flexible & Work-Based Learning Faculty of Science and Health Faculty of Business & Hospitality Limerick School of Art & Design Faculty of Engineering & The Built Environment - Faculty of Applied Sciences and Technology Faculty of Business and Humanities Limerick School of Art & Design	To discuss involvement in QA and enhancement

14.45 – 15.15	22. International Office: Staff/Internationalisation & International Provision	Dean of Faculty Business & Humanities/VP International Director International Acting Director International Deputy Director International (International Markets) Manager International Administration International Student Experience Erasmus Coordinator, (Inward and outward Erasmus mobilities) Lecturer (Internationalisation of the curriculum project) Head of Department of Computer and Software Engineering Head of Department of Built Environment	To discuss involvement in QA and enhancement in international education.
15.15-15.45	Private Review Team Meeting		
15.45 - 16.30	23. International Students - incoming & outgoing	Ten International Student Representatives.	To discuss international student engagement in the university, particularly the student learning experience
16.30 - 17.15	24. Access and Widening Participation: Students	Representative students from: Transitions to Higher Education Programme 1916 Bursary Award Holder Mature Student/Transitions to Higher Ed Tertiary Education, LCETB Mature Student Via Access Programme Y3 Community and Addiction Studies (Transitions Programme) Y2 Social Care (Transitions Programme) Access to Apprenticeship Programme	To discuss quality of student experience for those admitted via Access routes
17.15 - 17.30	Private Review Team Meeting		

THURSDAY 18TH APRIL**NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION, HR, FINANCE AND CAMPUS SERVICES**

Time	Group	People	Purpose
9.00 - 9.30	Institutional Coordinator	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator
9.30 -10.15	25. Staff from collaborative Providers, Partners and PRSBs	Executive Director Equal Ireland Principal, Gurteen College Head of Quality, Limerick Clare ETB Training and Business Development Specialist, Atlantic Aviation, Shannon Principal, Pallaskenry Agricultural College Director of Education, Accounting Technicians Ireland (ATI) Education Relationships Lead, Association of Chartered Certified Accountants Representative Membership Director, Engineers Ireland Director of Education, Policy and Standards Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland Director of Education and CPD, Society Chartered Surveyors Ireland (SCSI)	To discuss arrangements re QA with collaborative providers and PRSB's
10.15 -11.00	26. Staff from Human Resources incl. Staff Development	VP People, Culture & EDI HR Manager HR Manager EDI Manager HR Integration Project Lead Head of CPID TUS N-TUTOR Institute Lead	To discuss HR procedures that support QA & QE among all staff including staff CPD
11.00 - 11.45	27. Staff from Finance and Campus Infrastructure	VP Finance & Corporate Services VP Campus Services and Capital Development Finance Manager TUS Head of Capital Unit Estates Manager Facilities Estates Manager Campus Development Planning	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 - 1.00	28. Staff from IT, Library Services, Timetabling, Systems Support	IT Manager IT Manager Data Analytics & Contracts Manager ICT Systems Integration Manager Deputy Librarian Deputy Librarian Project Co-Ordinator - Student Record Management System (Banner) Project Co-Ordinator - Student Record Management System (Banner) TUS Online Content Officer	To discuss involvement in quality assurance and enhancement and supporting the student lifecycle
13.00 - 14.00	Review Team Lunch/ Break		
14.00 - 14.45	29. RUN-EU Representatives (Hybrid Session)	Vice President, Research, Development & Innovation: TUS RUN EU Lead Coordinator EU RUN EU 2.0 & EU RUN EU PLUS Coordinator RUN-EU PLUS CEO RUN-EU Lecturer, Dept. Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Senior University Lecturer (N-TUTORR), Researcher and Educational Developer (CPID), VP Internationalisation and Co-operation, University of Burgos, Spain Instituto Politecnico De Leiria, Portugal Director of Research, HAMK, Finland Pro-president for Research and Innovation, IPCA, Portugal	To discuss the RUN-EU initiative.
15.00 - 17.00	Private Review Team Meeting		

FRIDAY 19TH APRIL - FEEDBACK

Time	Group	People	Purpose
9.00 - 10.30	Private Review Team Meeting		
10.30 -11.00	QQI Meets with Institutional Coordinator	Institutional Coordinator QQI Representatives	To gather feedback
11.00 - 11.30	QI Meets with Review Team	Review Team QQI Representatives	To discuss review team's key findings
11.30 - 12.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
12.00 - 12.30	Meeting with President	Review Team President, TUS	Oral report to President
12.30 - 13.00	Oral Report	President, TUS VP Academic Affairs and Registrar VP Student Education and Experience VP Research, Development and Innovation Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Assistant Registrar & Head of Quality	To receive an oral report
13.00 - 14.00	Lunch		
14.00-17.00	Private Review Team Meetin	Review Team	Report drafting

Glossary

Acronym/Term	Definition/meaning
AC	Academic Council
AIT & LIT	Athlone Institute of Technology & Limerick Institute of Technology (TUS was formed from the joining of these two IT's)
AQR	Annual Quality Report
ATA	Access to Apprenticeship
Athena SWAN	An equality charter mark framework and accreditation scheme
CAO	Central Application Office (which processes applications for undergraduate courses in Irish HEIs)
CINNTE	Name/branding for QQI's first external HEI review cycle
CPID	Centre for Pedagogical Innovation and Development
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DAB	Designated Awarding Body
DARE	Disability Access Route to Education
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Erasmus+	An EU programme supporting education, training, youth and sport throughout Europe
ESG (2015)	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
ETBs	Education and Training Boards
FAPSA	Future and Advanced Pedagogy Skills Academy
FTE	Full time equivalent
GB	Governing Body
Generative AI	Artificial intelligence capable of generating text, images, videos, or other data using generative models, often in response to prompts
GURU	An examinations management system
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEAR	Higher Education Access Route
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HR	Human Resources
IaH	Internationalisation at Home
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IO	International Office
IReL	Irish Research eLibrary
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISER	Institutional Self-Evaluation Report
ISO9001	A globally recognized standard for quality management

KPI's	Key Performance Indicators
KTI's	Knowledge Transfer Ireland's (Annual Survey)
LSS	Learning Support Service
MA	Master of Arts
MIS	Management Information Systems
NFDE	National Framework for Doctoral Education
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
N-TUTOR	The National Technological University Transformation for Recovery and Resilience
PDPs	Personal Development Plans
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PMSS	Professional Management and Services Staff
PRSBs	Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies
QAG	(QQI Statutory) Quality Assurance Guidelines
QAE	Quality Assurance & Enhancement
QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Quacquarelli Symonds / QS	World's largest global higher education network, connecting universities, business schools & students
RDI	Research Development and Innovation
RUN-EU	the Regional University Network-European University
SAPs	Short Advanced Programmes
SATLE	Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement (HEA initiative)
SciVal	Enables visualisation of research performance
Scopus	An abstract and citation database
SDGs	(United Nation's) Sustainable Development Goals
SPA	Special Purpose Award
SRS	Server Reporting Services
TEG	Technology, Engineering and Graphics
TERG	Technology Education Research Group
THEA	Technological Higher Education Association
TLA	Teaching, Learning and Assessment
TU	Technological University
TU RISE	TU Research and Innovation Supporting Enterprise Scheme
TURN	The Technological Universities Research Network
TUS	Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest
TUTF	The Technological University Transformation Fund

