

# IRIU

## Follow-Up Report



The document entitled *IRIU Report: Institutional Review of the National University of Ireland Maynooth*, was published in March 2010 and was considered by the three Faculties, the Academic Council and the Governing Authority at meetings in March, April and May 2010. General satisfaction was expressed with the key findings of the review, namely, that NUI Maynooth had been compliant with statutory requirements, its activities were consistent with European Standards and it had taken into account national, European and International best practice.

At the meeting of the Academic Council on 22 March 2010, the Deputy President, Professor Walsh, noted the commendations and recommendations in the report for the University that certain activities should be attended to and developed. The Deputy President reported that the specific areas for improvement had been noted as follows:

1. adoption of effective and consistent procedures for collecting and responding to feedback from students;
2. pursuit of new approaches to address the issues raised by large classes;
3. better consolidation of administrative support;
4. lobbying by the President and the Chairman of the Governing Authority for adequate and equitable distribution of funding for the University sector in Ireland;
5. improvement in Student Services, noting that the gap had been worst at the time of the Review last Autumn and some rectification had occurred since;
6. remedying gaps and inconsistencies in the postgraduate experience, which again had been improved since the Autumn through the adoption of a Postgraduate Strategy and the development of structured PhD programmes.

(A full report may be found in the Minutes of that meeting, readable at [http://academiccouncil.nuim.ie/documents/Academic\\_Council\\_Minutes22-03-10.pdf](http://academiccouncil.nuim.ie/documents/Academic_Council_Minutes22-03-10.pdf))

At its meeting on 21 April 2010 the Governing Authority considered the Report, and requested that an action plan be prepared to implement its recommendations. Accordingly, the Quality Promotion Sub-Committee (QPSC) considered each of the recommendations in Section 6 of the Institutional Report, assigned responsibility for action in each case, sought responses from the responsible bodies, and collated the results in the appended table. This table outlines the actions undertaken or proposed in response to the recommendations. In some cases, the responsible bodies submitted detailed descriptions of actions, and these have been summarised below. In the case of ongoing actions, it is intended to review progress before the end of the academic year 2010-11.

<b>INSTITUTIONAL ACTION PLAN</b>			
	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Responsible bodies</b>	<b>Actions proposed or taken</b>
6.12	The President and Chair of the governing authority should make vigorous representations to the highest levels of government in an attempt to tackle the current funding impediments;	President and Chair of Governing Authority	The President and Chairman will continue to make appropriate representations at every opportunity.
6.13	The Irish Universities Association (IUA) is advised to lobby the Government to ensure the Irish Universities receive the funds required to enable international competitiveness both in teaching and research;	President as Chair of IUA	The IUA will continue to vigorously lobby the government to increase significantly the funding for higher education.
6.14	NUIM must demonstrate innovative strategies and capacity for management with limited resources;	Deputy President	The Deputy President and Senior Officers have prepared an Adjustment Strategy with proposals in relation to filling posts in the context of the government's Employment Control Framework, and in accordance with key strategic objectives of the University. This was considered by various bodies and approved by the Governing Authority on 21 April 2010. There will be ongoing monitoring and review of the Strategy in the light of changing circumstances.
6.15	NUIM should address as a matter of urgency the lack of adequate administrative support for Deans and Heads of Departments;	Human resources	The issue of administrative support for Deans and Heads of Departments will be considered within a wider context of workload management models.
6.16	NUIM is encouraged to think fundamentally about its organisational and committee structures with an aim to prioritise and focus;	Deputy President in consultation with Senior Officers	A review of the organisational and committee structures will be initiated before the end of 2010. Action has been deferred pending the appointment of the next President.
6.17	The University's response to the self-assessment process demonstrates an institutional capability to address real or potential problems and the Team encourages NUIM to continue the development of a quality culture;	QPSC	Many members of the Quality Promotion Sub-Committee are on the key bodies for consultation and decision making in the University, such as the Faculties, Academic Council and Governing Authority. They should ensure that concern about quality matters remains to the fore in the deliberations of all these bodies.
6.18	Although the University has started to integrate the strategic planning and quality assurance processes, more work is required and the review Team encourages the university to continue to consolidate this integration further;	QPSC	The integration of strategic planning and quality assurance processes will be consolidated mainly by ensuring that the quality processes are completely aligned with the strategic planning as set out in <i>NUI Maynooth Strategic Plan, Addendum for period 2009-2014</i> . Quality review processes are subject to ongoing modifications, based on various factors such as the experience of the units under review; as a result, the document <i>Quality Review Guidelines</i> was revised in 2007, and again in 2009. The next major revision will take place after completion of the second round of quality reviews, and will take full account of the strategic plan agreed for 2009-2014.

6.19	The University should establish effective institution-wide communication and follow-up procedures to be implemented after each quality review;	Director of Quality	The procedures for follow up provided in section 1.3 of <i>Quality Review Guidelines (Revised September 2009)</i> have been clarified in the document <i>Procedures for follow up</i> approved by the QPSC on 4 June 2010. The aim is to ensure that Quality Implementation Plans are published on the web along with Peer Review Reports as the recorded outcomes of each quality review. In addition, the Quality Promotion Office is to make improvements in the presentation of these outcomes on its web site.
6.20	The University should adjust the aims and scope of the reviews to address only those issues that can realistically be achieved;	Director of Quality and QPSC	Heads of Department should try to moderate the expectations of staff regarding possible outcomes of quality reviews, particularly during the preparation of Self Assessment Reports. The recommendation of the previous institutional review, that external reviewers make a clear distinction between those recommendations that can be implemented without additional resources and those which require investment, is included in section 4.4 of <i>Quality Review Guidelines</i> . The document <i>Procedures for follow up</i> and the newly introduced template for a Quality Implementation Plan place emphasis on the distinction, and inclusion of the document and template with material sent to prospective reviewers should underline the importance of realism in Peer Review Reports. Finally, the Internal Reviewers can play an important role in impressing on the External Reviewers the importance of taking account of the various constraints that would prevent the implementation of unrealistic proposals.
6.21	The University should adopt a consistent approach to collecting feedback from students on teaching and learning and to report on appropriate follow-up actions;	Dean of Teaching and Learning	Following discussions at the Teaching and Learning Committee a working group was established (October 2009) with a remit to prepare a draft policy for a formalised and uniform system of student feedback and follow-up. A final decision will be made on how to proceed by January 2011.
6.22	The University is encouraged also to develop processes for systematic tracking of graduates;	The Career Development Centre and the Alumni Office	A working group will be established, consisting of Senior Officers, representatives of the Career Development Centre, the Alumni Office and the Institutional Research Office, to prepare a plan before the end of 2010 which will enable the University to track graduates in a systematic way.
6.23	NUIM should consider exploring benchmarking at the levels of disciplines, which in many cases may even be more fruitful and result in more concrete benefits;	Institutional Research Officer, Vice President for Research, QPSC	Outline proposals have been prepared by the Institutional Research Officer and the Vice President for Research. A working group will be established to advance this project, initially at the level of institutional benchmarking. Consideration will be given to the inclusion of a benchmarking requirement in the next cycle of quality reviews.

6.24	The university should address the problems of large classes through adoption of more creative and innovative approaches;	Dean of Teaching and Learning	The Centre for Teaching and Learning initiated a large group teaching research project in June 2009, and some of the outcomes are reported in a publication entitled <i>Large group teaching-the local context: reflections on practice in the National University of Ireland, Maynooth</i> (January 2011). The Teaching and Learning Committee has established a working group which will investigate ways in which class sizes in First Year may be reduced. The working group has made recommendations to Academic Council in December 2010, and these are under consideration.
6.25	There is a need for stronger links between evaluation activities (Quality Assurance) and Quality Enhancement activities in order to develop a Quality Culture;	QPSC	A template for a Quality Implementation Plan has been agreed by the QPSC in June 2010. The intention is to ensure that the evaluation activities in the quality reviews, by those being reviewed in producing a SAR and by reviewers in producing the Peer Review Report, should lead directly to quality enhancement activities, by those reviewed, other related departments or units, and the University as a whole. A process map outlining the procedures for closing off on reviews has also been prepared.
6.26	Action must be taken to correct the deficiencies that presently exist in the academic advisory and career services;	Deputy President	First stage responses have been provided within the context of the University Adjustment Strategy. Further resources will be prioritised at the earliest opportunity.
6.27	The university should incorporate the strategic goal of internationalisation visibly into the quality management assurance processes.	QPSC	The revision of the document <i>Quality Review Guidelines</i> should require each unit under review specifically to address, in the Self Assessment Report, the question of how the unit contributes to the strategic goal of internationalisation; and the Peer Review Group should consider, in the Peer Review Report, how successful the unit is in making a contribution.

It should be clear from the above that the University is addressing the review outcomes in an effective manner, by placing an emphasis on actions rather than velleities, and by requiring that the actions be undertaken by the individuals and bodies best placed to do so. In some cases, the strategic and logistical developments and decisions suggested by the reviewers had begun even before the review took place, as for example with the work on large classes; but in some of these and in other cases, it is clear that some of the actions are ongoing, as for example the exploration of benchmarking, and will require ongoing scrutiny by the Academic Council, the Governing Authority and the various standing committees of both bodies. Finally, it should be evident from the intense activity that has occurred before and since the publication of the report that there is a willingness throughout the University to ensure that the recommendations of the Institutional Review will be fully implemented.