

Background to the IRIU Process

Irish universities are required under Section 35 of the Universities Act, 1997 to establish and implement procedures for quality assurance and arrange for a review of the effectiveness of these procedures “from time to time and in any case at least every 15 years.” In 2002, the governing authorities of all seven universities authorised the establishment of the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) and delegated to IUQB the function of arranging regular reviews of the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures, which are institutional in their scope. The IUQB operates an institutional review process every five-six years. The IUQB’s Institutional Review of Irish Universities (IRIU) process is designed to confirm whether Irish universities are (i) compliant with the requirements of Section 35 of The Universities Act, and are (ii) consistent with the Part One requirements of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2005 (ESG). The IRIU process is undertaken by a team of six independent national and international reviewers selected by the IUQB Board.

Background to the University

The National University of Ireland, Maynooth (NUIM) was established in its present form as a Constituent University of the National University of Ireland (NUI) in 1997. It is a liberal arts and science University that has become one of the fastest growing Universities in Ireland. Currently NUIM has a student population of approximately 7,900 distributed over three Faculties: Arts, Celtic Studies and Philosophy; Science and Engineering; and Social Sciences. Approximately one quarter of the students come from non-traditional backgrounds and 10% are regarded as international students. All graduate students account for 21% of the total.

The Review Team

The review was conducted by the following team of six reviewers, trained by the IUQB on Thursday 26 November 2009. The Chair and Co-ordinating Reviewer undertook a Planning Visit to NUIM on Friday 27 November 2009. The Main Review Visit was conducted by the full Team between 7 and 10 December 2009.

Professor Simon van Heyningen,
Honorary Fellow & Emeritus Professor,
University of Edinburgh, Scotland (*Chair*)

Dr Jacques Lanares,
Vice Rector of Teaching and Quality,
University of Lausanne, Switzerland

Professor Roger Downer,
Former President, University of Limerick, Ireland

Dr Christiane Gaehtgens,
Consultant specialising in governance and quality assurance for
universities and research institutes, Germany

Mr Bruno Carapinha,
Doctoral programme in Political Science,
University of Lisbon, Portugal

Ms Tia Loukkola,
Head of Unit, European University Association (EUA),
Belgium (*Co-ordinating Reviewer*)

Review Team Conclusions

Based on the Review Team’s evaluation of the Institutional Self Assessment Report, supporting documentation and meetings conducted during the Main Review Visit, the Team found sufficient evidence to confirm:

CATEGORY	KEY REVIEWER FINDINGS
Statutory Requirements	The Review Team concluded that the University’s activities are compliant with statutory requirements.
European Standards	The Review Team concluded that the University’s activities are consistent with European Standards.
National, European and International best practice	The University is taking account of national, European and international best practice.

Review Team Commendations*

The Team found sufficient evidence to commend the following examples of good practice for further promotion internally, nationally and internationally:

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| 1 | There is a commendable sense of collegiality, a shared sense of commitment to the University and a common vision on how to develop NUIM further. |
| 2 | Preparation of the ISAR engaged an impressively large part of the University community and the resulting report demonstrated a good response to the recommendations of the previous EUA review. |
| 3 | The University has developed effective procedures for compiling and analysing management information data related to performance and introduced procedures for public recognition of excellence in research or teaching. |
| 4 | There has been an impressive increase in research productivity in recent years. |
| 5 | The Team commends the University for the work it is doing with access students. |

Review Team Recommendations*

The Team found sufficient evidence to recommend the following activities to the University for attention and development:

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| 1 | NUIM, in conjunction with the Irish Universities Association (IUA) should lobby the Government to ensure both adequate funding for the sector and equitable distribution of funding within the sector. |
| 2 | NUIM should examine current operating structures with a view to effecting savings that could be used to provide administrative support to Deans and Heads of Academic Departments and other priorities; consolidation of several units should be considered in this regard. |
| 3 | The University should adopt effective and consistent procedures for collecting and responding to feedback from students on teaching and learning, and for taking appropriate action after each quality review. |
| 4 | Creative and innovative approaches should be pursued to address the problems of large classes. |
| 5 | Action must be taken to remedy the gaps and inconsistencies that presently exist in the post-graduate experience and in academic advisory and career services. |

The five key commendations and recommendations of the NUIM Review Team are presented in the Summary Report. A comprehensive list of all the commendations and recommendations made by the Review Team are presented in the Conclusions section of the full review report.

IUQB Board Ratification

The IUQB Board received and considered the Review Team's report on the review of the National University of Ireland, Maynooth at its meeting on 15 March 2010. The Board formally signed off the report for publication, having satisfied itself that the review process was completed in accordance with published criteria.

Further Information

The full National University of Ireland, Maynooth review report alongside the institutional response to the IRIU is published in the Quality Reviews Catalogue on the IUQB Website at: <http://reviews.iuqb.net/>.

Further information on the IRIU review process, the IUQB Board, the outcomes of all internal and external reviews of Irish universities, and the range of quality assurance and enhancement activities undertaken by the IUQB can be found on the IUQB Website www.iuqb.ie



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