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Policy

Strategic Review of Academic Units

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Version 1

Approved by Academic Council on 18th June 2018

Document Location

Registrar's Office

Revision History

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1.0	June 2018	First Version	N/A

Consultation History

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1.0		CoP No 2 Workgroup	

Approval

This document requires the following approvals:

Name	Title	Date
	Academic Council	18th June 2018
	Governing Body	29th June 2018

1. Strategic Review of Academic Units

1.1 Overview

A review of each Academic Unit (AU) should be scheduled prior to a programmatic review of programmes in that AU. The report on the outcomes of the AU reviews should inform the PR process and could be included in the Programmatic Review – Self Evaluation Report (PR-SER).

1.2 Process

GMIT's provision of high quality educational experiences and awards is operationally structured into Academic Units in the form of Schools and Campuses, namely:

- School of Business
- School of Engineering
- School of Science & Computing
- Galway International Hotel School
- Galway School of Design and Creative Arts
- Mayo Campus

As a pilot, Mountbellew Agricultural College (MAC) will be treated as a Collaborative Unit across the three Academic Units of Business, Science and Engineering.

GMIT will review the effectiveness of each Academic Unit on a cyclical basis in advance of the review of programmes offered by that School/Campus. The main elements of the review will be a self-evaluation and an external peer review process.

The review of Academic Units will focus on the performance of the academic unit since the last review, and will involve an environmental review and a self-evaluation identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the unit, and plans to deal with the opportunities and challenges facing it. The findings from the review of academic units, will feed into the programmatic review process.

STAGE 1: SELF EVALUATION

The self-evaluation will be led by the Head of the Academic Unit and will involve all members of staff in the unit. A template that may be used for the Academic Unit Self-Evaluation Report (SER) is contained in Appendix A. The review should be evidence based, involve consultation with relevant stakeholders, and should focus on enhancement and reflection. Benchmarking should be used as appropriate.

Based on the self-evaluation review, and a review of the environment, the academic unit will propose a strategic plan to guide activities and decisions over the next five years. The AU strategic plan will be aligned to the Institute's strategic plan.

STAGE 2: EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW

External Peer Review involves inviting a panel of external experts to visit GMIT to review the Academic Unit using the Self-Evaluation Report as a basis. The external panel will consist of:

- A Chairperson (senior educationalist);
- Two external experts with experience and knowledge of the disciplines on offer in the Academic Unit;
- A representative of the Academic Unit's Stakeholders;
- A Student Representative (GMIT alumni recommended);
- Secretary to the Panel (Registrar or Registrar's nominee).
- Secretarial support will be provided to the panel by the office of the Registrar

Ideally panels should be gender balanced and every attempt will be made to ensure this is the case. In the event that a panel member is unable to attend at short notice, the Registrar shall decide whether the panel should proceed.

The role of the external peer review panel shall be as follows:

- Visit the Academic Unit to meet with staff, students and other stakeholders, institute management and review facilities.
- Consider the SER as a basis for discussion and address any perceived gaps in the report.
- Comment on the appropriateness of the Academic Unit's strategic plan.
- Verify and report on how well the aims and objectives of the Academic Unit are being met having regard to the available resources.
- Make recommendations having due regard to resource implications.
- Present key findings at the end of the visit and prepare a peer review report.

The External Peer Review Panel (EPRP) Report should address the quality of the provision and make recommendations for improvement, and/or change, based on a combination of the SER and findings during the site visit.

A draft written report of the findings of the EPRP shall be prepared by the Secretary. The draft report will first be approved by the Chairperson before being circulated to other members of the EPRP for their comments and endorsement. The Secretary shall incorporate the feedback received from EPRP members into a revised draft report subject to the agreement of the Chairperson.

A copy of the panel's revised draft report shall be forwarded to the Head of Academic Unit for comment on issues of factual accuracy. Following this, the report shall be finalised by the Secretary subject to the approval of the Chairperson.

The Registrar shall submit the EPRP Report to the Academic Council and Executive Board for approval and then to the Governing Body for noting.

The Head of Academic Unit will submit a response to the report to include an implementation plan within four weeks of the Academic Council meeting that considered the EPRP Report.

The Academic Council has responsibility for ensuring that the recommendations related to quality assurance and enhancement are implemented, while the Executive Board has responsibility for ensuring that the recommendations related to strategy and resources are implemented. The Head of Academic Unit shall agree a timeframe with the Registrar for the implementation of the recommendations.

The SER, EPRP report and the response from the Academic Unit will be published.

A review of the strategic review process should be undertaken.

Appendix A

SER Template (Indicative length: 20-25 pages)

1.   Executive Summary

(Include a very brief overview of the Academic Unit and a summary of the information included in the main sections of the report, including a summary SWOC analysis to a maximum of 1 page.)

1.   Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology: An Overview
- Mission and Strategy
- Governance
- Geography and Demographics
- Learner Profile
- Graduate Profile
- Staff Development
- Research, Development and Innovation (RDI)
- Collaborative Partnerships and Internationalisation
- International Collaborations
- Central Support Services in GMIT
- Quality Introduction

This section should be written centrally, possibly with the aid of an infograph.

2.   Scope of Quality Review

(Mention all aspects of Academic Unit covered by this quality review (and campuses))

3.   Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the review process is outlined below. The review process shall consider the following:

- Organisation and management of the Academic Unit: Resources, roles and reporting structures shall be evaluated to determine whether they are fit for purpose, viable and support the activities and role of the Academic Unit. Standard operating procedures shall be reviewed and evaluated with any gaps identified and addressed. Staff development shall also be evaluated and the importance of quality, quality assurance and enhancement in the Academic Unit culture shall be evaluated.
- Academic Units and services supporting internal and external stakeholders: Each Academic Unit will describe the aims and objectives of the Academic Unit and determine and detail the user experience of the Academic Unit, both internal and external.
- Programmes: Each Academic Units programme portfolio will be considered, in addition to issues surrounding programme development, programme design, programme management (to include programme retirement) and programme information.

- Student Lifecycle: The role of the Academic Unit will be considered in relation to the management of the student throughout the student lifecycle including transition in and out, and student engagement and retention.
- Evidence based decision making: The decision-making process utilised by the Academic Unit shall be evaluated, information gathered and stored shall be reviewed, the information used to make decisions shall be identified and the quality and source of information shall be reviewed.
- Institute wide engagement: The Academic Unit's contribution to the Institute's function shall be reviewed to include items such as participation in GMIT committees, reviews etc. Each Academic Unit shall also detail how it engages with relevant external agencies and its contribution to external bodies.
- Integration of all Academic Unit users: Each Academic Unit shall review how it works with centralised functions e.g. Lifelong Learning, Research Office etc.
- Communication and information systems: Internal communication systems within each Academic Unit and between the Academic Unit and other academic units, departments, management structures and other Functional Unit's shall be reviewed. Information management systems and communication tools shall be reviewed to determine whether they are fit for purpose. Each Academic Unit shall ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant data.
- Quality assurance: Compliance with GMIT's Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) and institute policies shall be determined.
- Strategic plan for the Academic Unit: Each Academic Unit shall develop and detail their strategic plan and evaluate its alignment with the GMIT Strategic Plan 2018-2023 and its implementation targets.

4. Methodology of Review Process

- Consultation and Data Gathering
  (Include who is involved in the review committee, and the methodology they used to consult and gather data. Include dates.)
- Data Analysis
  (Describe how data was analysed and include dates.)
- Report preparation
  (Dates to be included.)
- Panel visit
  (Dates to be included.)

5. Introduction, Aims and Objectives of the Academic Unit

6. Academic Units Organisational Structure and Staffing

- Organisational chart showing Management and Department structure;
- List of Programmes and Awards; identifying any new programmes validated and any programmes discontinued since the last Programmatic Review.
  (Resources, roles and reporting structures - Describe, analyse and reflect on the formal decision-making procedures in the Academic Unit. Sample items to consider in this section:

How are the tasks delegated and responsibilities assigned?   What are the reporting structures?

Are staff consulted on changes and if so which staff are consulted?

Are there regular meetings of staff with agendas circulated in advance and with brief minutes of key decisions and action items? Who attends?

Internal and external communication)

7.   Programme Development

- Programmes developed and validated since the last PR to include experience of the validation process.
- Programmes proposed for the next 5 years to include:
  - rationale for programme choice;
  - postgrad programmes;
  - Minor and Special Purpose Awards;
  - Springboard Programmes
  - Online/Blended Programmes
  - Apprenticeships.
- Programmes proposed to be discontinued over the next 5 years to include rationale for selecting programmes in this category.

8.   Programme Design

Discuss issues influencing programme design within the AU, to include inter alia:

- Work-based learning;
- Learning, teaching and assessment strategies;
- Sustainable development;
- Electives, to include consideration of institute-wide electives;
- Constructive alignment between learning outcomes, learning activities and assessment;
- Transferable skills
- Digitalisation
- Entrepreneurship;
- Employability and Employment Guide for the AU/Discipline Area (Employability Statement);

9.   Programme Management Strategies

Areas to be addressed include current approaches and future plans in relation to:

- Semesterisation/year-long delivery;

- Class contact hours;
- Pedagogical approach to include use of educational technology;
- Flexible delivery;
- Learning resources;
- Addressing and supporting student special needs, including mental health;
- Widening access;
- Management of the Student lifecycle e.g. Transition In (including induction), Student Engagement, Transition Out
- Provision of information to future and current students: Programme profile for marketing on the website, Degree profiles

10.   Programme Statistical Analysis (2013/14 to 2017/18)

Report on data analysis over the past 5 years to identify problems, trends and achievements in relation to:
- Application, withdrawal, retention, examination, completion and graduation statistics;
- Graduate destination information;
- Student profile e.g. FE, international, mature, gender;
- ISSE Analysis.

A high-level review is envisaged, involving trend analysis and reflection. Care is required not to include detail and information more appropriate to the Programmatic Review process.

11.   External Engagement

A review of developments in this area to include national and transnational linkages.
- FE Linkages;
- Industry Engagement;
- Professional Bodies;
- Community and Civic Engagement.

12.   Internal Engagement

This section provides an opportunity to explore and report on cross-disciplinarity initiatives with other Academic Units, specifically the focus should be on:

- Existing initiatives;
- Proposed initiatives going forward;

- Strategies for improving and implementing planned initiatives.

13. Internationalisation

- A review of AU international strategy with Institute's international strategy;
- Analysis and reflection on staff/student mobility.

14. Research, Development and Innovation (RDI)

- Summary report on the AU strategy for RDI;
- Provide information and reflection on:
    - Key statistics for the past 5 years;
    - RDI outcomes / achievements for the past 5 years (innovation vouchers/partnerships, publications, conferences, patents etc).
- Plans for the next 5 years.

15. Quality Assurance

Application of GMIT's QAF by the AU.
- Report and reflection on Quality monitoring to include:
    - Programme Board meetings
    - Issues and outcomes
    - Structures for feedback (students, staff, external examiners, industry, etc.)
- Demonstrate how the AU ensures that the standard of teaching and learning is adequate.
- Demonstrate how the AU ensures that the mechanisms are in place to monitor quality are effective.
- Benchmarking.

16. Staff Development

Profile and CVs of current academic staff in AU.
Report and reflection on:
- SD activities undertaken over the past 5 years;
- Plans and targets for the next 5 years.
- Staff Professional Body and committee membership (local, regional, national, international).

17. Facilities

- A review of the laboratory, studio, workshop, classroom and learning resource facilities.
- A description of developments over the previous 5 years.
- Projected resource and facilities required for the next 5 years.

18.   Self-evaluation Process

(Here we need to ask and answer, based on evidence gathered, whether we are doing what we claim we are doing, how well we are doing it and how we can improve. Determine and detail the user experience of the Academic Unit, both internal and external. Measures and results that indicate the levels of user satisfaction should also be provided. Actual perceptions of the users/customers, which may be obtained through surveys etc., as well as measures and results that will tend to predict trends or influence user satisfaction such as compliance levels, late delivery of service etc. should be indicated. This section should also examine whether the Academic Unit is only looking at its own levels and trends, or whether it compares these with external benchmarks of the performance of comparable organisations?)

- Internal stakeholder perspective
- External Stakeholder perspective
- Staff perspective and satisfaction
- Environmental Analysis
    - How the AU's strategic plan compliments the Institute's strategic plan;
    - The strategic planning process in the AU;
    - A review of the previous 5 years;
    - Strategies to meet the challenges of the following five years (e.g. economic, regulatory, employment);
    - The distinctiveness of the AU compared to similar units in other providers;
    - Summary responses to the AU last Programmatic Review Expert Panel Report.
- Analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges

19.   Academic Unit 5 Year Strategic Plan

Based on the analysis, information gathered, SWOC and PESTLE analysis, detail the strategic plan for the Academic Unit and evaluate its alignment with the GMIT Strategic Plan 2018-2023. Include implementation targets. This could include the following:

A Mission Statement and a description of the Academic Units goals in such areas as the services provided by the Academic Unit, training and development, process documentation and improvement, quality measures, benchmarking and other items arising from the process and SWOC.

Goals should be consistent with the institutional objectives, and should take into account the needs of the stakeholders of the Academic Unit and how these needs are identified, prioritised and translated into objectives.

A Vision for the Academic Unit that describes a desired status, or the achievement of major goals over the next 5 years.

A Physical Resource Analysis - a stocktaking of the existing resources which identifies those which are essential for the future and those which might arise in connection with various strategic options.

A Human Resource Analysis - which should identify the strengths of existing staff and predict skills gaps which may arise.

The Academic Unit Strategic Plan should be aligned with the Institute's Strategic Plan and Performance-Based Compact.