Self-Evaluation Report 2025 Template

Template Guidance Note

- All sections of this template should be completed in full.

- The format of the template should not be altered.

- The template has been pre-populated with the agreed Performance Objectives, indicators and targets. Pre-populated elements of the template reflect the Performance Agreement and these entries should not be amended. Queries relating to pre-populated information should be submitted to systemperformance@hea.ie.

- Where word count limits apply, these limits should not be exceeded.

- Appendices are not permitted.

- Reporting should be clear, concise, and evidence based.

- Narrative or bullet point formats may be used, and the use of plain English is encouraged.

- Reporting should be cognisant of the information provided in the System Performance Framework 2023–2028 and System Performance Framework Glossary.

- Where institutional strategies, policies, or other institutional documents are referenced, these should be hyperlinked where possible.

- Data presented in the report should be the most recent data available to the institution (timeframe should be specified).

- It is the responsibility of higher education institutions (HEIs) to ensure that the information provided in the report is accurate.

- Redaction may be agreed with the HEA prior to publication, as appropriate.

- The report must be signed by the head of the institution prior to submission.

- The report should be submitted to systemperformance@hea.ie by the stated deadline.

Data Protection

The HEA as data controller will process personal data received via this form in compliance with GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. We will only process the data received via this form for the purposes of reviewing, evaluating, and reporting on the System Performance Framework 2023–2028 and data will be retained in line with our Records Management Policy only as long as is necessary to meet this purpose. For more information, please see the HEA's Data Privacy Notice.

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Maynooth University Self-Evaluation Report 2025

Introduction

This Self-Evaluation Report will form the basis of the HEA's assessment of the strategic performance of the institution with respect to the objectives and targets set in the Performance Agreement established between the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Maynooth University (MU) in accordance with the System Performance Framework 2023–2028.

In line with the HEA's mandate to measure and assess institutions' strategic performance with a view to strengthening the performance of the higher education system and of designated institutions, and to ensure institutions' accountability, this Self-Evaluation Report will be published on the HEA website. The HEA will engage with institutions regarding any required redactions prior to publication.

It is the responsibility of the institution to ensure that the information presented in the submitted report (including qualitative and quantitative data) is accurate.

Part A: Performance Indicators

Text should be added to the white boxes in each of the tables below. Text in the shaded boxes reflects entries in the Performance Agreement and should not be amended.

The most up-to-date data available should be reported in the **'Benchmark data'** and **'2024/25 result'** columns.

The year or range of years to which the reported data relates should be added after the data source in the **'Data source and timeframe'** column.

Pillar: Teaching & Learning

Performance Objective 1

To give all our undergraduate students the opportunity to acquire future-focused skills, such as data and digital skills, as well as an opportunity to engage in experiential learning opportunities including real-world learning experiences.

Transversal areas of impact: Student Success; Digital Transformation; Flexibility, Upskilling, and Lifelong Learning.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
1.1	**Proportion (%) of departments with data modules**[1]	Registry-extract from academic database 2024/25	2023/24: 0% of 30 departments	Not Available	**N/A**	**17% (5)**	**100% (30)**	33% (10)	67% (20)	67% (20)	**67% (20)**

[1] The number of data modules and the number of digital modules will be disaggregated by Faculty and department for monitoring purposes, but we have not set a target value for each discipline.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
1.2	**Proportion (%) of departments with digital modules**	Registry-extract from academic database 2024/25	2023/24: 0% of 30 departments	Not Available	**N/A**	**17% (5)**	**100% (30)**	33% (10)	67% (20)	67% (20)	**67% (20)**
1.3	**Number of undergraduate student registrations on data modules[2]**	Student registration data 2024/25	2023/24: 0	Not Available	**N/A**	**250**	**55,329[3]**	500	1,000	1,000	**2,750 students over 4 years**
1.4	**Number of undergraduate student registrations on digital modules**	IRO drawn from student registration data 2024/25	2023/24: 0	Not Available	**N/A**	**250**	**52,870**	500	1,000	1,000	**2,750 students over 4 years**
1.5	**Undergraduate students taking accredited work placement (excluding education)**	IRO drawn from student registration data 2024/25	2023/24: 421	Not Available	**N/A**	**500**	**558**	550	600	650	**2,300 students over 4 years**

[2] Note that it is not yet possible to express 1.3 to 1.6 as a % of students, as some students will take more than 1 module. Consequently, the figures may include a student taking more than one data or digital module.

[3] The number of modules with data and digital content, was greater than estimated. As a result the number of student registrations to these modules is greater than expected. Note that the figures in 1.3 and 1.4 are totals of registrations to these modules, not unique students.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
1.6	**Number of students taking an authentic work-related learning experience**	Careers and Employability Service data 2024/25	2022/23: 1,117	Not available	**N/A**	**1,250**	**1,392**	1,425	1,600	1,775	**6,050 students over 4 years**
1.7	**Quantitative Reasoning Indicator in Student Survey[4]**	Student Survey.ie	2023: 20.2	Mean for all universities (22 in 2022)	**Not available**	**N/A**	**N/A**	N/A	21	22	**22**

Technical note on indicator data for PO 1:

StudentSurvey.ie paused its taught student survey in 2024 and 2025 to undertake a Strategic Review. Reporting on indicators that draw on StudentSurvey.ie results will recommence in 2026. Where the relevant survey questions have changed, indicators will be updated accordingly.

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[4] As the Student Survey will not run in 2024 and 2025, and the survey questions and indicators have not yet been finalised, there is a significant uncertainty about the movement of this indicator. Nevertheless, by increasing the data content in our curriculum, we expect to reach the University mean for the quantitative reasoning indicator by the end of the period.

Pillar: Research & Innovation

Performance Objective 2

To enhance the experience, inclusiveness, success, and employability of postgraduate research students and the impact of postgraduate research.

Transversal areas of impact: Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning; Student Success; Enterprise; Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging; Sectoral & Tertiary Cohesion.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
2.1	**Number of students completing induction programme and personal needs analysis in first year (as % of total intake)**	Graduate Research Academy: 2024/25 Intake	2022/23: 0	No comparator data available	**N/A**	**95 (68%)**	**80 (70%)**	112 (75%)	124 (80%)	140 (85%)	**471 students over 4 years (85 p.p. increase on baseline of 0)**
2.2	**Number of new collaborative PhD registrations p.a.**	Graduate Research Academy: 2024/25 Intake	N/A	No comparator data available	**N/A**	**10**	**23**	5	5	10	**30 over 4 years**

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
2.3	**Number of students registered on 'new' mode L10 programmes (Work-based, professional, prior publication, flexible)**	Graduate Research Academy: 2024/25 Intake	2022/23: 0	No comparator data available	N/A	**0**	**0**	10	20	30	**30**
2.4	**Number of postgraduate research (level 10) entrants**	Institutional research office and HEA SRS returns: 2024/25 Intake	2022/23: 118 Provisional 2023/24: 122	No comparator data available	N/A	**135**	**89**	149	155	165	**40% increase on 2022/23 baseline**
2.5	**Number of postgraduate research (level 10) graduations**	Institutional research office: August 2025	2022/23: 63	No comparator data available	N/A	**75**	**104**	80	83	92	**46% increase on baseline**
2.6	**Postgraduate Research Completion rate (%), within 1 year of scheduled time**	Graduate Research Academy: August 2025	2022/23: 48%	No comparator data available	N/A	**55%**	**75%**	60%	65%	70%	**22 p.p. increase on baseline**

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
2.7	**Proportion (%) of academic staff participating in supervision development training and supports**	Graduate Research Academy 2024/25 academic year	No baseline as data not available	N/A	**N/A**	**50%**	**23%**	55%	60%	65%	**65%**
2.8	**Response in PGR student survey to the item: How would you evaluate your entire research experience at this institution? (Good to excellent)**	Student survey.ie (PGR) Data collected March 2025	2023: 83.5% (good to excellent)	National average good to excellent all PGR (72.9% in 2023)	**2025: 76%**	**84%**	**73%**	84.5%	85%	86%	**2.5 p.p. increase on baseline, continue to exceed national average.**

Pillar: Access & Participation

Performance Objective 3

To build on our reputation for authentic, strengths-based education, supporting all students, regardless of background, through improved student success data analytics and research-informed practice, and thereby enabling access to and success in higher education for diverse groups of students.

Transversal areas of impact: Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning, Student Success; Society; Region; Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
3.1	**Proportion (%) of new entrants from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas**	MU SRS, HEA SRS and System Performance (SP) Dashboard, 2023/24 [5]	2020/21: 12%	Match or exceed average, all HEIs (11% in 2020/21)	**10%**	**12% (441/ 3,676)**	**11% (417/ 3784)**	12% (452/ 3,766)	12% (464/ 3,866)	12% (476/ 3,966)	**Maintain baseline of 12%**
3.2	**Proportion (%) of mature new entrants from disadvantaged areas as a % of all disadvantaged new entrants**	MU SRS, HEA SRS and SP Dashboard 2023/24	2020/21: 8%	Maintain % relative to average, all HEIs (10% in 2020/21)	**9%**	**8%**	**6%**	8%	8%	8%	**Maintain baseline of 8%**

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[5] For 3.1 and 3.2, reporting is dependent on accessing HEA Deprivation Data.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
3.3	**Proportion (%) of new entrants with a disability**	SRS data reported on HEA SP Dashboard 2024/25	2022/23: 10.9% (384/ 3,533)	Progress towards average, all HEIs (13.9% in 2022/23). NAP target by 2028 is 16%	**16.6%**	**11% (404/ 3,676)**	**11.9% (450/ 3784)**	11.5% (433/ 3,766)	12% (464/ 3,866)	12.5% (496/ 3,966)	**1.6 p.p. increase on baseline**
3.4	**Number of Irish Traveller new entrants[6]**	EAS reported on HEA SP Dashboard 2024/25	2022/23: ▮	Average, all HEIs (0.1% in 2022/23). NAP target by 2028 is 0.32%	**0.1%**	**+4**	**+2**	Maintain increase	+1	Maintain increase	**+5**
3.5	**Proportion (%) new entrants from FET**	HEA Key Facts and Figures, 2023/24	2022/23: 4.9% (173/ 3,533)	Exceed average, all HEIs (4.5% in 2022/23)	**5.3%**	**5% (184/ 3,676)**	**6.32% (239/ 3784)**	6% (226/ 3,766)	6.5% (251/ 3,866)	7% (278/ 3,966)	**2.1 p.p. increase on baseline**
3.6	**Non-progression rate (%) new entrants from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas**	MU SRS, [7] HEA Progression and Completion Report 2025 on New Entrants 2022/23 [8]	2020/21: 15%	Exceed average, all HEIs SED NP (23% in 2021/22) [9] Maintain MU NP average 15% 21/22	**16%**	**15%**	**13%**	15%	14.5%	14%	**1 p.p. decrease on baseline**

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[6] The level of disaggregation of data disseminated publicly is subject to data protection considerations. Data disaggregated to a level which may allow individuals to be identified (even indirectly) is not disseminated publicly. See the HEA Statistics: Privacy, Data Protection and Disclosure Control.

[7] For 3.6, this is dependent on accessing HEA Deprivation Data.

[8] For 3.7, reporting is dependent on accessing HEA Deprivation Data.

[9] From HEA: An Analysis of Non-Progression Rates in Irish Higher Education Institutions: Key Tables February 2024 Non-Progression-Rates-2016-17-to-2021-22-Key-Tables-1

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
3.7	**Completion rate (%) new entrants from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas**	HEA Statistics New Entrants 2018/19 by 2023 [10]	2017/18: 73%	Exceed average, all HEIs SED Completion (69% of 2018/19 new entrants by 2023)[11]	**69%**	**67%**	**72%**	70%	72%	74%	**2 p.p. increase on baseline**
3.8	**Proportion (%) of students reporting supportive environments**	Student Survey.ie[12]	2022: 51.5%[13]	46.3%[14]	**51.5%**	**52.5%**	**N/A**	53.5%	54.5%	55.5%	**4 p.p. increase on baseline**

Technical note on indicator data for PO 3:

3.3: Benchmark revised in line with All Entrants figure based on SRS data from HEA SPF Dashboard.

StudentSurvey.ie paused the student survey in 2024 and 2025 to undertake a Strategic Review. Reporting on indicators that draw on StudentSurvey.ie results will recommence in 2026. Where the relevant survey questions have changed, indicators will be updated accordingly.

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[12] Baseline and benchmark data is currently not available specifically for Access cohorts in the national Student Survey. We would welcome the ability to analyse student survey data by target group. We note the student survey is in a second fallow year for 2024/2025. MU will seek to track the percentage of students from target groups reporting supportive environments. Targets are marked using the 2022 baseline. If the new Student Survey includes data on Access cohorts, targets can be developed and modified.

[13] MU result in Irish Student Engagement Survey relating to supportive environments (average and "quite a bit" and "very much" across 3 categories: (1) providing support to help students academically (57.2%); (2) providing support for overall wellbeing (50.4%); and (3) being involved socially (46.8%)

[14] The benchmark figure comes from the StudentSurvey.ie trends over time nationally to 2021 under each of the 3 selected questions relating to supportive environment.

Pillar: Engagement

Performance Objective 4

To increase and deepen our engagement with enterprise partners to enable our strategic ambitions, support national policy objectives and enhance our societal impact.

Transversal areas of impact: Climate & Sustainable Development; Student Success; Enterprise; Society; Region; Digital Transformation.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
4.1	**Number of enterprise placement partners[15]**	Careers & Employability Service and other units (partially centralised); 2023-24 (post-engagement mapping project)	2023/24 (pre-project): 211	N/A	**N/A**	**221**	**366**	232	255	280	**280 unique partners** **33% increase on baseline**
4.2	**Number of research and consultancy projects funded/co-funded by enterprise partners[16]**	Research Development Office; 2023–24	2022/23: 116	N/A	**N/A**	**122**	**121**	133	140	147	**542 projects over 4 years** **27% increase on baseline**

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[15] This number refers to partners in industry/social enterprise/NGO etc. but does not include all placements, such as teaching placements in schools. It also refers to individual partners, noting that one partner could host multiple students.

[16] This includes projects funded or co-funded by enterprise, which includes industry (MNC, SMEs), civic and civil society partners, local and national government departments and agencies (excluding funding agencies and the European Commission), and NGOs. It also includes research consultancy to enterprise.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
4.3	**Amount (€M) of research income from industry partners**	Research Development Office; 2022–23	2021/22: €1.8M	N/A	**N/A**	**€2.4M**	**€2.0M**	€2.7M	€3.0M	€3.5M	**€11.6M over 4 years**
4.4	**Number of enterprise co-funded PhDs**	Graduate Research Academy; 2023–24	2022/23: 6	N/A	**N/A**	**8**	**27**	10	15	20	**53 over 4 years**
4.5	**Number of participants in MU Alumni-Student Mentoring Programme**	Development & Alumni Relations Office / Careers & Employability Service; 2024–25	2022/23: 41 2023/24: 53	N/A	**N/A**	**63**	**102**	75	89	105	**332 over 4 years** **98% increase on baseline**
4.6	**Number of Impact Case Studies**	Research Development Office; 2024–25	0	N/A	**N/A**	**3**	**3**	6	9	12	**30 over 4 years**

Part B: Performance Evaluation and Strategic Reflection

Text should be added to the white boxes in each of the tables below. Word count should be recorded as indicated. Guidance on the information required in each table is provided in the shaded boxes. Pre-populated elements of Part B reflect the Performance Agreement and these entries should not be amended.

Section 1: Context

Provide an update on the context for the implementation of the institution's Performance Agreement in academic year 2024/25. This should include information on the following, as relevant:

- Institutional strategy, including stage of development and/or implementation of the Strategic Plan.

- Changes to the organisation's structure and/or senior leadership.

- Changes to the profile of the institution, i.e. significant changes to the number of staff and/or students or to programme delivery.

- Improvement or development of data collection and evaluation systems and processes, e.g. action taken to address data challenges or gaps, or any new challenges or data gaps that have been identified since the development of the Performance Agreement or submission of the previous SER.

- Any modifications (requested or approved) to the Performance Agreement.

Word limit: 500

Institutional strategy

During the academic year 24/25 the university made progress in a number of its strategic aims.

1. Developments in health education. The establishment of a school of nursing, recruitment of key staff, accreditation of the programme and development of the infrastructure. The university made arrangement for placement with a range of hospitals and healthcare settings.
2. Internationalisation. The university invested in expansion of its international function, building capacity for increased recruitment of international students. It also deepened its involvement in the ARQUS European University Alliance.
3. Student accommodation. The university completed a new development of purpose-built student accommodation adjacent to the campus, adding an additional 116 beds.

Changes to the organisation's structure and/or senior leadership

1. The Graduate Research Academy was established and key staff appointed, to provide enhanced rigour and support for research students.
2. An agreement was made with DkIT to provide collaborative PhD programmes in agreed disciplines through a Regional Graduate Academy, launched formally in May 2025.

Profile of the institution

The university continued to grow. Total student headcount in 2024/25 grew to 17,309 (up 1,196). Undergraduates accounted for 712 of the additional students, and the growth here was driven largely by improved progression, as the pattern returned to the pre-COVID norms faster than projected.

Taught postgraduate numbers grew by 355, driven largely by international students on taught master's programmes. PhD student numbers showed a marginal decline of 2.

	2023/24	2024/25	2024 to 2025	% change
Total student headcount	16,113	17,309	1196	7.4
Undergraduate degree students (headcount)	12,555	13,267	712	5.7
Taught postgraduates (HEA headcount)	1,774	2,129	355	20.0
PhD students (headcount)	506	504	-2	-0.4

This growth has resulted in infrastructure challenges. The gross academic area per student of 6.5 is well below the sector norm, and there are shortages of labs, general teaching spaces, student study and social spaces and office spaces.

In addition, student accommodation remains a pressure point and, despite the new development, there is insufficient capacity to meet the demand.

[Word count: 334]

Section 2: Evaluation of Performance

Provide an evaluation of the institution's performance in relation to this Performance Objective, with reference to the indicator data provided in Part A. This should include:

- Analysis of the indicator data for this Performance Objective, e.g.:

  o Trend analysis and benchmarking of performance with reference to baselines, benchmarks, and targets. Graphs or charts to illustrate the analysis provided should be labelled and cross-referenced in the commentary.

- Assessment of implementation, e.g.:

  o Effectiveness of the specific actions related to the Performance Objective as demonstrated by the analysis of the indicator data.

  o Internal or external factors that have supported or impeded the achievement of targets.

  o Any additional evidence of performance, e.g. qualitative evidence of outcomes.

- Strategic reflection, e.g.:

  o Any learning from the analysis of the institution's performance.

  o How learning is being applied to maintain and/or enhance implementation and outcomes in future.

  o How learning is being used to inform decision making, strategy development, policy, and/or strategic planning.

  o New or emerging opportunities, challenges, and risks related to the Performance Objective.

  o Priority(s) in relation to this Performance Objective for the year ahead, with reference to any new actions or initiatives to support implementation.

Word limit: 1,000

Pillar: Teaching & Learning

Performance Objective 1

To give all our undergraduate students the opportunity to acquire future-focused skills, such as data and digital skills, as well as an opportunity to engage in experiential learning opportunities including real-world learning experiences.

Transversal areas of impact:

Student Success; Digital Transformation; Flexibility, Upskilling, and Lifelong Learning.

The data presented for PO1 provide a very positive picture of future focused learning for Maynooth University students. Data collection for these areas is at the early stages; therefore trends cannot be presented, but it can be seen that we have surpassed our agreed targets.

The delivery of future-focused skills is vital to the success of our students and our institutional strategic priorities and is reflected in 1.1–1.4. Our Agreement and Strategic Plan requires us to audit the number of modules flagged as 'data' and/or 'digital' and to count the number of students enrolled on them. Our first challenge, however, was to define what this meant in terms of our academic modules. The was achieved through discussion and sector analysis, with the final definitions approved by Academic Council. The most efficient approach was the examine the module details already approved by Academic Programmes Committee. This data (for 2599 modules) was interrogated by a bespoke AI programme, which was refined following feedback from the VPSL, academic faculties and Heads of Department.

The AI programme flags the data and digital modules using the previously agreed definition and then Heads of Department review the flagged modules to provide a final sign-off. Through this work it was clear that every department offers data and/or digital modules to a greater or lesser degree. This ranges from 16% (digital modules offered by FAH) to 53.3% (data modules offered by FSE). Across the University as a whole, 28.5% (741) of our modules are defined as Data and 27.4% (712) as Digital - although note that some of these modules are dually flagged. The disparity between the KPI and final value reflects the fact that such an extensive institutional module review has never been undertaken before and so the extent of activity was unknown.

A key takeaway from this is that we need to do more to share the practice that is occurring within each department. Following on from this successful approach, we will look to modify module Learning Outcomes to ensure that they clearly note their data and/or digital credentials where appropriate. With definitions approved, we are now able to work with Departments to further embed these future-focused skills in our curriculum.

This approach will now be applied to identify modules that embed sustainability and creativity into our teaching and learning. More broadly, we are now into the second year of our HEA SATLE-

funded project which is developing a new education framework for Maynooth programmes, and to develop the hallmarks of an MU degree. This will include literacies for our students. In addition, we are in the process of rebranding and refocusing our Academic Writing Centre into the Academic Skills Centre, which will focus on wider employability-related skills development and coaching.

We take an intentionally broad and holistic definition to our experiential learning opportunities, recognising that there are disciplinary differences to consider, as well as the variety of non-academic factors that impact our students' ability to engage (see 3.1-3.5). We work collaboratively with academic faculties and departments, as well as the Students' Union, to support a range of initiatives. Our approach is successful and we can see that 1.5 is around 12% over target and 1.6 is ~11% above target.

Qualitative student feedback (not presented here) also underlines the impact of this strategic approach and the positivity in which it has been received. Schemes that are included in the outcome for 1.6 include our Micro-internship initiative and our Skills for Success elective module. Focus over the next couple of years will be placed on increasing the number of international experiential learning opportunities to foster a global outlook in our students, and to provide opportunities that would not otherwise be possible for our disadvantaged student cohorts, and increasing work with our growing alumni network. The process of collating this data has highlighted one issue in that information on students undertaking placement activities is held in multiple locations across the Institution. Going forward, we will seek to better link this together for improved collection and analysis and with a dedicated staff resource.

Finally, a key strategic development for Maynooth University during this academic year has been that of the formation of the Office for Students & Learning. A result of the appointment of the inaugural Vice-President (Students & Learning), this new structure brings together several units concerned with student success and experience – Student Services, Student Skills & Success, Centre for Teaching & Learning, Critical Skills and Sports.

Within these five units are the Careers and Employability Service, Academic Writing Centre, Clubs and Societies, Orientation, Experiential Learning, and so on. The consequence of this new structure has been a more coordinated and coherent approach to student support and experience with greater strategic and operational alignment, improved data sharing, and more effective and expeditious decision-making. Through regular workshops, we have been able to identify good practice within the teams which we are now expanding and embedding in all units.

[Word count: 818]

Pillar: Research & Innovation

Performance Objective 2

To enhance the experience, inclusiveness, success, and employability of postgraduate research students and the impact of postgraduate research.

Transversal areas of impact:

Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning; Student Success; Enterprise; Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging; Sectoral & Tertiary Cohesion.

Analysis of Indicator Data

We have made progress in achieving the aims of Performance Objective 2. Of the eight indicators, three have exceeded targets, two are close to target, and three require further attention:

Indicator 2.1: The number of students completing the redesigned induction and a personalised needs analysis was 80 (of 115), or 70% of the total intake—slightly above the 68% target. This reflects strong engagement with the new model and supports the structured onboarding of PGR students.

Indicator 2.2: The number of new collaborative PhD registrations in 2024/25 is 23, significantly exceeding the target of 10. This is a major success and demonstrates MU's commitment to deepening institutional partnerships across the tertiary system.

Indicator 2.3: As expected, no students were registered on new-mode Level 10 programmes. The first programmes (PhD by Prior Publication, and the Doctorate in Educational Psychology) were approved in 2024/25. This timeline is consistent with the indicator's staged targets.

Indicator 2.4: Postgraduate research (Level 10) entrants in 2024/25 were 89, falling short of the target of 135. This 34% shortfall may reflect national and local challenges such as the cost of living, housing shortages, and funding uncertainties.

Indicator 2.5: Graduation numbers exceeded expectations, with 104 completions against a target of 75. This 39% increase on target suggests strong progression and completion supports.

Indicator 2.6: The postgraduate completion rate within one-year of scheduled time is 75%, exceeding the 55% target. This outcome reflects improved monitoring and stronger supports.

Indicator 2.7: Participation in supervision development training was 23% of eligible staff. This falls short of the 50% target and highlights a key area for development.

Indicator 2.8: The proportion of PGR students rating their research experience as "good to

excellent" was 73%, down from 83.5% in the previous year and below the target of 84%. While still close to the national average of 72.9%, the downward trend requires attention.

Assessment of Implementation

Effectiveness of Actions

Implementation has progressed well across core areas. The establishment of the Graduate Research Academy (GRA) and appointment of its Director (in 2024), and staff (in 2025), have provided a critical structural foundation. The induction programme, now rolled out to all new PGR students, includes tailored personal needs analysis and demonstrates high uptake.

The collaborative PhD pathways have delivered strong results. The DKIT and IADT partnerships showcase effective alignment with national tertiary education goals and demonstrate MU's growing leadership in this space. The DKIT partnership in particular, represented by the launch of the Regional Graduate Academy, has extended MU's robust quality assurance processes and supports across the two institutions, although MU does not benefit from these for RGAM purposes.

Progress on new-mode doctoral programmes is on schedule. Specifically, the PhD by Prior Publication was approved during 2024/25. In addition, the new Doctorate in Educational Psychology run in partnership with and funded by NEPS, has also been approved, with staff currently being recruited and the first intake of 20 students expected in September 2025. The Doctorate of Business Administration has been developed and will have its first intake in 2026/27. Feedback from departments and employers has been positive, with strong early interest in flexible and work-based models.

Internal and External Factors Affecting Progress

Several internal factors have supported implementation:

- Strong executive sponsorship from the Vice President for Research and Innovation.
- Administrative and academic leadership from Professor Lyddy and the Graduate Research Academy.
- Coordinated input from the Academic Council Graduate Education Committee.

Challenges impacting enrolment (Indicator 2.4) include:

- Cost-of-living pressures and student housing constraints.
- Limited external funding, which reduces access for underrepresented groups.
- Greater competition nationally and internationally for doctoral candidates.

Declining student satisfaction (Indicator 2.8) may reflect a combination of increased expectations, and inflation-related pressures, despite improvements to support structures.

Additional Evidence of Impact

Anecdotal and departmental-level feedback suggests that the personalised needs analysis introduced in 2024/25 has already led to better matching of students with appropriate training and supports. Supervisors have also indicated greater clarity on expectations and improved dialogue around student progress. Enhanced student engagement around progression and graduation timelines is reflected in the increased graduation numbers (Indicator 2.5).

Strategic Reflection, Learning and Application

Several key learnings have emerged:

- Collaborative programme development can yield significant benefits when aligned with mutual institutional strengths. This has informed plans for additional partnerships. However, these developments require national recognition, including the ability to 'count' shared (partial) registrations in the HEA returns.
- Early-stage support and engagement, particularly via structured induction and personal needs analysis, is positively associated with better student outcomes.
- Supervisor training needs more robust tracking and resourcing to ensure ongoing delivery across disciplines and staff cohorts. Next year we will enhance the supervisory supports with a community of practice model for research supervisors.

These insights are shaping future planning for the GRA, including better data capture tools, and more comprehensive monitoring of student progression and experience.

Emerging Opportunities and Challenges

The success of the DKIT and IADT collaborations suggests further opportunities with international partners, especially in areas such as sustainability, data, and education. Meanwhile, planned work-based PhD routes may attract new populations of doctoral students working in public service and industry.

Challenges for the year ahead include:

- Sustaining and increasing doctoral enrolment amidst increasing costs of stipends and national cost-of-living pressures.
- Addressing the decline in student satisfaction through targeted interventions.
- Formalising and measuring supervisor training and its impact on student outcomes.

Priorities for the Year Ahead

The following priorities have been identified for 2025/26 to build on our progress:

- Launch the Doctorate in Educational Psychology, prepare the DBA, and begin scoping additional work-based and professional doctoral programmes.

- Consolidate systems to report on completion rates, programme modes, and mobility.
- Roll out targeted interventions to address student satisfaction, including peer mentoring, writing retreats, and discussion of departmental research culture.
- Strengthen external funding application support, including an internal review and mentoring for external PhD Scholarship applications.
- Implement decision to enhance internal financial support for Doctoral Students, including payment for teaching and increased level of stipend.
- Enhance supervisor training and track attendance and impact.

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Pillar: Access & Participation

Performance Objective 3

To build on our reputation for authentic, strengths-based education, supporting all students, regardless of background, through improved student success data analytics and research-informed practice, and thereby enabling access to and success in higher education for diverse groups of students.

Transversal areas of impact:

Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning, Student Success; Society; Region; Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging.

Analysis of the indicator data

Overall, targets have been met or exceeded. Building on progress to date, we are playing a significant role in widening participation nationally with 23.3% of MU new entrants coming via HEAR, DARE, Mature, or QQI routes in 2024–25.

Indicator 3.1: Target 12%, 2024-25 outcome was 11%. Despite being slightly lower than our stretch target, MU still has the highest participation rate among the traditional universities and nationally the average was 10% for all HEIs in 2023-24. Achieving 12% by 2028, against a growing overall student population, reflects both ambition and sustained progress.

Indicator 3.2: The target was 8%, the 2024-25 outcome was 6%. With mature student entry in national decline, this remains a particularly challenging area.

Indicator 3.3: Target 11%, 2024-25 outcome was 11.9%. This is an area of growth with targets on track.

Indicator 3.4: Target ▮, outcome ▮. The figures are likely underreported; however, this remains an area in which MU has shown national leadership. Work is ongoing to encourage greater engagement and disclosure through a new Equal Access Survey system and strengthened policy focus.

Indicator 3.5: Target 5%, outcome 6.3%. The target this year has been exceeded, highlighting FET as a strong and expanding pathway.

Indicator 3.6: Target 15%, data for 2024-25 is not currently available (HEA) but the outcome for 2022/23 was 13%, exceeding expectations of a drop. This improvement is welcome, but reduction of non-progression for disadvantaged and mature students remains a key priority.

Indicator 3.7: Target 67%. Data for 2024-25 is not currently available (HEA) but the outcome for

2018/19 new entrants by 2023 was 72%. This improvement is welcome but an increase in completion rates for disadvantaged students remains a key priority.

Indicator 3.8: Data not yet available.

Assessment of implementation

Impeding and Supporting Factors:

Impeding: Maintaining or improving current levels of participation for the NAP student target groups is challenging in the context of cost-of-living pressures, housing shortages, and strong employment demand. These factors particularly affect mature and socio-economically disadvantaged students. Nationally, participation by HEAR and mature entrants is falling. Retention is also affected by increasingly complex student needs. National data shows **higher** non-progression among disadvantaged and mature students.

Supporting: MU is addressing this through enhanced data analysis, new supports, and a strategic focus on inclusive teaching and learning, key highlights in the last year include:

- *Student Success Data:* MU is strengthening its capacity to analyse and act on progression and completion data, through investment in the Institutional Research and Data Insights Office.
- *Practice Partner Model:* MU is developing more support for Departments to identify at-risk students and develop tailored interventions and supports.
- *One-Stop Shop for Students:* MU is developing a centralised digital and physical hub to streamline student academic, personal, and financial supports, providing an integrated student advisory service with universal supports available for all students and specialised supports for students with additional complex needs.
- *Curriculum and Supports Review:* MU is prioritising support in disciplines with higher non-progression and reviewing the use of digital technology to meet exam reasonable accommodations.
- *Traveller Participation:* MU has recruited a Traveller Outreach Officer funded by MU and HEA PATH 4 funding and introduced new systems/processes to improve survey reporting and embed policy supports for Traveller students.
- *FET Pathways:* Growth has been supported through HEA PATH funded initiatives such as Turn to Teaching and new opportunities in health and education.

Qualitative feedback from students is positive, however a main issue is that demand for services outstrips supply, and a better understanding of the challenges students face is needed. In this regard, the publication of *A Community Needs Analysis with Traveller and Roma Students on Their Experiences of Higher Education* in May 2025 by College Connect was invaluable. This highlighted the persistent and systemic barriers that are still in place, and a key focus for the coming year will be to address these and our work to develop a MU Race Equality Action Plan is an important element of this.

Strategic reflection, challenges and opportunities

This work is a key part of the MU Strategic Plan 2023–2028 and is delivering on national policy frameworks including: the *National Access Plan (NAP) 2022–2028; National Framework for Enhancing Student Success; Traveller and Roma Education Strategy 2024–2030*; *National Disability Inclusion Strategy* and *Roadmap for Social Inclusion*.

Several insights have occurred this year including that wider societal pressures, such as cost of living and housing pressures, are felt significantly more keenly by NAP target groups due to a lack of social and financial capital available to help them navigate these. In this regard, the Student Budgeting Service in place to help students navigate the options available, and the wider financial administrative team who process and administer the 1916 Bursary, Scholarships and Student Assistance Fund to students in need, has been invaluable and investment in these teams will stand to the institution in the years to come.

A further challenge has been the increasing complexity of student needs, including mental health, requiring specialist student advisors with expertise and experience in the intensive support needed. The embedding of NAP student advisors, as part of an integrated student advisory support provision in the university, mitigates the risk of a lack of specialist expertise to address emerging complex needs. Data gathering and analysis continues to be a challenge, and a key opportunity is also for better analysis of the impact of initiatives funded. The *Centre for Inclusive Higher Education* which MU will formally launch in Q4 2025, aims to address this.

Priorities for 2025-26

- Growth in FET pathways to diversify student entry.
- Leveraging MU's strong performance in disability access to support sector-wide learning.
- Strengthening data systems to capture enhanced learning analytics enabling more efficient and personalised student supports.
- Launch MU Race Equality Action Plan.
- Launch of the Centre for Inclusive Higher Education and associated international partnerships.

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Pillar: Engagement

Performance Objective 4

To increase and deepen our engagement with enterprise partners to enable our strategic ambitions, support national policy objectives and enhance our societal impact.

Transversal areas of impact:

Climate & Sustainable Development; Student Success; Enterprise; Society; Region; Digital Transformation.

Analysis of Indicator Data

Progress on enterprise-related and impact-focused indicators demonstrates positive momentum and emerging institutional capacity for strategic engagement.

Indicator 4.1: The number of enterprise placement partners increased to 366, well above the target of 221. A university-wide mapping exercise was completed during this time period with increased attention to this goal.

Indicator 4.2: The number of enterprise research and consultancy projects reporting in 2024/25 is based on the latest data available (2023/24) at 121, on par with the target of 122, with continued growth in activity supported by new systems for mapping and coordination.

Indicator 4.3: Industry research income figures reported from 2023/24 totalled €2M. Figures for 2022/23 were €1.3M. Figures for 2024/25 will be finalized in November 2025.

Indicator 4.4: The number of enterprise co-funded PhDs in 2024/25 is 27. The number is increasing through both formal schemes and bespoke partner agreements. There is evidence of growth and diversification of sectoral partnerships, including in education, ICT, and sustainability-related fields.

Indicator 4.5: The number of students benefiting from the MU Alumni-Mentoring programme grew to 102 in 2024/25, exceeding the target of 63. Success is credited to enhanced outreach, simplified application process and expanded eligibility. Alumni mentors totalled 96.

Indicator 4.6: Three impact case studies were developed and published in 2024/25, achieving the annual target. These case studies span diverse fields and demonstrate clear alignment with national and global societal priorities.

Assessment of Implementation

Effectiveness of Actions

Key actions underpinning these indicators have proven effective. This year the University has a comprehensive, university-wide view of its engagement activity. In the last year, MU has:

- Completed a robust, mixed-method Engagement Mapping Project. This was a pan-university engagement mapping exercise that took an inclusive and broad view of external engagement activities. Following extensive consultation and innovative methodologies that drew on MU's unique resources and international best practice, the project brought together existing data sources while developing new data capture mechanisms.
- Developed an engagement data dashboard with the All-Island Research Observatory at MU, enhancing the University's ability to identify and build meaningful partnerships for impact in a variety of areas (student experience, research, employability, innovation, etc).
- Developed a system for tracking non-funded engagement activities within MU.
- Launched MU Public Engagement Awards.
- Signed three new strategic partnership agreements: Northwell Health, DKIT and Aga Khan University.
- Cross-unit collaboration — particularly between the Research Development Office, the Graduate Research Academy, and academic departments — enhanced internal coordination.
- The research impact toolkit and accompanying training programme provided staff with practical tools to frame and evidence the societal relevance of their work.
- Beyond the student/alumni mentoring programme, MU launched a new career event that brought together arts and humanities graduates and current students to offer career guidance.
- Delivered workshop for academics interested in engaging with policymakers, and a year-long "Research for Policy Seminar Series" convening researchers and policymakers to discuss their experiences of working together.

Together, these efforts laid a foundation to enable more coherent enterprise engagement and the respective benefits for students in future years.

Supporting and Impeding Factors

Supporting: Leadership from senior academic and professional staff, clearer internal guidance, and new roles focused on impact, engagement and partnerships have all supported implementation. In-depth consultation has been critical.

Impediments: Challenges include aligning academic timelines with industry needs, limited internal resourcing for proposal development, and the national context of PhD funding. Some units are developing familiarity with new engagement systems.

Qualitative Evidence

Anecdotal feedback from staff involved in case study development and co-funded PhDs highlights the value of structured supports. Researchers reported increased confidence in articulating impact, and several industry partners noted greater clarity in engagement pathways.

Strategic Reflection

The experience of delivering on engagement and impact-related indicators in 2024/25 has provided several insights. First, case study development is most effective when initiated early in the research lifecycle. Second, institutional supports — including training, toolkits, and peer examples — significantly improve both engagement and quality. Third, the insights gleaned from a centralised mapping exercise offer rich, illuminating information on university-stakeholder touchpoints and provide actionable data.

A key learning was the value of issuing a call for expressions of interest to identify potential case studies. This process attracted a diverse range of submissions from across disciplines, enabling the selection of high-quality examples while building a pipeline of researchers engaged in planning future case studies. This growing interest represents a shift in institutional culture.

Strategic partnerships require ongoing relationship management, not just project-based interaction. There must be clarity as to what constitutes a local vs. strategic partnership; this requires clear frameworks, in-built information gathering, and a recognition of a larger, multi-stakeholder ecosystem.

Flexible models of co-funding for doctoral study broaden participation and offer new routes for impact. These learnings are being used to inform the development of an engagement maturity model and strengthen workflows between departments.

Emerging Opportunities and Challenges

- Increased national and EU emphasis on research impact opens new funding routes that value enterprise collaboration.
- Employer interest in supporting work-based doctorates is growing.
- Student interest in placements and other career-readiness opportunities is high.
- Capturing and evidencing the full scope of impact remains resource-intensive.
- Continued variability in sector readiness for structured co-funding mechanisms (e.g. in SMEs vs multinationals).

Priorities for 25-26 Ahead Include:

- Continue refining methods to capture engagement data, eventually moving to formulaic-based tiering.
- Use mapping insights to create a partnership strategy focused on student learning.
- Hire Director of Strategic Partnerships & Engagement and officially launch Partnership Office – the "Front Door" – to lead partnership development.
- Expansion of the impact case study programme, including wider disciplinary spread and integration of more partner and end-user perspectives.

- Enhanced tracking of enterprise co-funded PhDs, with improved support materials for supervisors and clearer guidance for partners.
- Strengthen data systems to capture consultancy and partnership activity at department level, reducing reliance on manual mapping.
- Targeted support for researchers seeking enterprise collaboration, including pre-award consultation and sample agreements.
- Training and events to continue embedding a culture of engagement and to support disciplines newer to impact documentation.

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Section 3: System Learning and Policy Development

Comment on any learning or insights arising from the institution's self-evaluation of performance in relation to the Performance Agreement that may contribute to system learning and/or national policy development and implementation.

Word limit: 300

Format of the SER

Overall, the format of the self-evaluation report is helpful in providing a clear framework for reporting and aligning the reporting directly with the agreed pillar activities. However, there may also be value in a broader report of the overall progress and status of the university, and a consideration of the strategic outlook. This could perhaps be aligned with the President's report to DFHERIS, to provide a fuller update on progress.

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Section 4: Signature of the Head of the Institution

The SER should be signed by the Head of the Institution prior to submission.

On behalf of **Maynooth University**, I declare that the particulars supplied in this report are true and correct.

Signature:	*[signature]*
Print Name:	Professor Eeva Leinonen, President
Date:	26th September 2025