

Higher Education Institution Self-Evaluation Report

1st September 2019 – 31st August 2020

Institution Name	University of Limerick
Overview of institutional progress	<p><i>Overarching Statement (maximum 400 words) The institution should set out its view of the original aims set at the commencement of the compact process, and its view on how the institution as a whole has met those aims. This is not intended to be a simple aggregation of context from the 6 objectives, but rather to describe how the institution as a whole has sought to enhance its performance, and how, using appropriate data and evidence, the institution considers that it has progressed in this regard.</i></p> <p>The institutional Strategic Plan UL@50 was launched in November 2019. During AY 2019/2020, we made significant progress to deliver on our ambitious reform programme across the main areas of Transforming Education, Research Excellence, Internationalisation, City and Region and Operating Model. These included establishing a new Executive Committee sub-structure to enable more effective working, structurally realigning Student Affairs, the International Education Division and Graduate and Professional Studies to drive access, PG and international student growth and launching the Centre for Transformative Learning to drive the strategic goal of ‘Transforming Education’ (n.b. this takes over the functions outlined in the Compact under Learning Innovation Centre).</p> <p>During 2019/20, the Healthy UL Framework implemented key actions across six areas: Healthy Environments, Addictive Behaviours, Sexual Health and Wellbeing, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Healthy Eating, Physical Activity. The Equality and Human Rights Strategy was launched in November 2019 and UL has made good progress across the 13 target areas. UL renewed the institutional Bronze award in 2019 under the extended Athena Swan Charter. The Faculty of AHSS and 11 Schools/Departments had attained Bronze awards by the end of 2019/20 and UL won 2 SALI awards in round 1.</p> <p>In 2019/20, UL sharpened its focus on environmental sustainability. Progress is evidenced by our international university Impact Rankings (101-200) and UI Green Metrics (20th/780), and being as one of two European (K4C) Knowledge for Change hubs.</p> <p>In 2019/20, the Framework for Physical Development was completed, outlining the guiding principles for the campus development including the City Campus.</p> <p>UL continues to work with enterprise partners developing industry-led programmes, expanding Springboard+ and working towards the establishment of Academies of Learning through collaboration with the HSE via the Health Sciences Academy and with the IAA.</p>

The SITS Stabilisation project completed phase 2, underpinned by a review of Academic Registry and substantial enhancement of its capacity and capabilities to support student growth. More generally, the UL IT strategy 2018-20 has delivered an enhanced digital infrastructure, which has supported UL in the transition to online learning and research as well as remote working since March 2020.

In response to Covid-19, UL led a virtual contact tracing hub, staffed by academic, support staff and students until August 2020. UL also hosted a 68 bed HSE Intermediate Care Facility on campus from June-October 2020. Students from the Faculty of EHS supported the multidisciplinary team, benefitting from excellent practice-based education and inter-professional collaboration. Five UL research projects were funded under the national, coordinated research and innovation response to the COVID-19 pandemic by September 2020. The academic delivery model pivoted online. A student and a staff survey were conducted in May 2020 to apply the learning for AY2020/21.

The review period coincided with the resignation of President, Dr. Des Fitzgerald, and work towards an interim leadership appointment, which commenced on 1 September 2020.

Please note: Each numbered heading below refers to the Key System Objectives, as provided in the *System Performance Framework 2018 – 2020*.

1. Providing a strong talent pipeline combining knowledge, skills & employability which responds effectively to the needs of our enterprise, public service and community sectors, both nationally and regionally, and maintains Irish leadership in Europe for skill availability;

Overarching Statement (maximum of 250 words) The institution should set out its view of progress on the key system objective as a whole, prior to considering sub-elements. While the focus is on the specified domain, the HEA would welcome evidence of synergies with other domains, either planned or otherwise, that have been identified by the institution. Please also provide details of any change in strategic focus since submitting your Compacts.

The UL@50 strategic plan has three broad objectives in terms of knowledge, skills and employability. These are underpinned by research, civil and civic engagement and strong industry partnerships:

Delivering an excellent student experience:

Particular attention was paid to growing and promoting flexible learning through the design and delivery of bespoke professional development and executive education programmes. We progressed opportunities for student engagement, student exchanges and placement opportunities, particularly in the pre Covid-19 period.

Transforming learning:

We expanded our flexible learning spaces in support of student-centred, technology-enhanced/enabled learning approaches. In addition, we developed new curricula, challenge-driven modules, experiential and collaborative learning modes, and are growing cross-disciplinary sharing and exchange.

An increasing number of our programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels benefitted from embedding entrepreneurship approaches, which we are conceptually expanding towards a 'self-determined learner'/heutagogical model. That approach has been prototyped in challenge-based LivingLabs and Practicums amongst others.

The advancement of our progression and awards strategy provides increased flexibility for students and supports lifelong learning as evidenced in innovative new Masters degrees and the development of micro-credentials. Educational technology stimulates access to active and personalised learning.

Creating an international university in the Mid-West:

We grew international partnerships including through virtual mobility, and embedded global perspectives into the curriculum to foster cross-cultural competencies. We worked towards addressing national skills needs by offering postgraduate degrees and apprenticeship programmes that build on our expertise in areas such as artificial intelligence, aircraft leasing, school leadership, digital health transformation and data analytics. Developing innovative learning in partnership with academic and industry partners enabled us to address rapidly changing skills needs.

A key opportunity for UL moving forward is to integrate the cutting-edge research from the Bernal Institute, Lero, Confirm, MACSI with our expertise in developing collaborative educational programmes with industry.

The University made good progress in meeting these objectives in the first half of 2019/20. However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the national lockdown starting in March 2020 meant that there were unavoidable delays in the construction of new facilities. Some Coop placements and international exchanges were adversely impacted.

Strategic Priority 1.1: Addressing the needs of students and employers to sustain and grow employability

i. Institution Strategic Initiatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will combine the UL Graduate School and CPE under the Dean of Graduate and Professional Studies. 2. We will develop Executive Education and Continuous Professional Development offerings – aligned to national skills strategy targets with companies. 3. We will work towards ensuring that our postgraduate students experience a work-based project/research experience. 4. Entrepreneurship will be included in UG and PG level – embedded in curriculum. 5. We will grow our flexible learning offer, in particular for mature and work-based learners. 6. We will expand the Educational Assistive Technology Centre. 7. We will establish a Learning Innovation Centre. 8. UL will consolidate mature student activities to support the tertiary attainment amongst 30-34 year olds. 9. All programmes will contain an employability statement. 10. We will increase the number of Springboard students in line with increased funding. 11. In collaboration with industry, we will establish seven new apprenticeship programmes. 12. We will continue to work closely key skills development bodies: Skillnets; Mid-West Skills Forum Limerick for Engineering and Limerick for IT. 			
ii. Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline	Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress	September 2020 Interim Target	September 2020 Actual
Increased level 9/10 enrolments	3,033 (21%)	3,410 (22%)	22.5%	3,765 (23.9%)
Growth in number of flexible, part-time, blended, distance and work-based learning offerings	2,164 (16%)	2,559 (16.9%)	17.5%	2,426 (15.4%)
Non-standard entrants to undergraduate programmes	27%	3,256 (29%)	3,440 (30%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrants from disadvantaged areas (Most recent Deprivation Index Score 2017-18) - 8% • Enrolments with a disability (most recent EAS 2017-18) – 8% • Mature entrants (SRS 19-20) - 4.3% • Undergraduate flexible enrolments (SRS 2019-20) - 8.5% • FE to HE transitions (SRS 2019-20) - 1.5% • Springboard Enrolments - 323 • Traveller Enrolments (most recent EAS 2017-18) – 1

Number of PG students with work placements or work – based projects	No baseline provided	900	1,000	1,699
Doubling of scholarship funding available under new institution wide UG and PG scholarship programmes	€273,545	€396,291	No interim target provided	€373,470
Graduate employment rate ≥10% above national university average	22%	8%	No interim target provided	Last survey 2018, next survey 2021, published early 2022
1,600+ Co-op placements annually	1,605	2,017	No interim target provided	1,473* *Covid-19 Impact
Co-op annual placement rate of 90%+ with 20% of all placements being international	98%; International 20.6%	97%; 16% International	No interim target provided	75%*; 13%* International *Covid-19 Impact
Visits by employers to UL campus annually; visits by UL to employer sites	763; 850	756; 851	No interim target provided	342*; 268* *Covid-19 Impact
iii. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)	<p><i>Please provide commentary on your Institution's achievement and progress towards the above Interim target, as published in your Compact, in connection to the above Key System Objective as at September 2020. In the event your Institution has diverged from the strategic initiatives agreed in your Compact, please provide a rationale for same. The colour code, detailed above, should be referenced.</i></p> <p><u>2019-20 Update</u></p> <p>The 10% increase in Level 9/10 students is welcomed by the University. This increases our postgraduate enrolments to almost 24% of all student enrolments, which is a considerable achievement given the growth in undergraduate numbers that was experienced in 2019/20.</p> <p>Growth in number of flexible, part-time, blended, distance and work-based learning offerings is lower than expected and due to the categories used to report on student numbers. Following the HCI Pillar 3 award for our UL@Work project, these numbers are expected to increase over the coming years.</p> <p><u>2019-20 Update on Strategic Initiatives</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The project to combine all postgraduate (EU and NEU) admissions into one team using a redesigned lean, paperless process has been delayed due to Covid-19 and the increased volume of applications due to July Stimulus and other programmes. This 			

project is now recommencing with the development of a CRM to manage the conversion of all postgraduate applications. The postgraduate admissions team moved to remote working and have transitioned to a paperless process.

2. During 2019/20 we developed our range of executive and professional education programmes for launch in September 2020: MSc in Public Health, MSc Infection Prevention and Control Leadership, MSc Advanced Nurse Practitioner and Graduate Diplomas in Data Science for Finance, Agile Business Analysis, DevOps and Continuous Software Engineering, and Multilingual Software Development Translational Technology.
3. In 2019/20, we have also developed a number of new fulltime programmes that address industry needs. These include: MSc in Machine Learning for Finance, MSc in Bioprocessing, and MSc Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning (all launched in September 2020).
4. Many of UL's PhD students have work experience built into their programmes; e.g. all SSPC PhDs and all PhDs in the CRT in Data Science. We continue to explore the inclusion of work placements, work-based theses or projects on taught postgraduate programmes. For all our new Masters programmes developed under the HCI initiative, we plan to include transdisciplinary work-based projects in place of traditional theses.
5. The development of an entrepreneurship education model is under way and has broadened to a heutagogical approach. To date, one briefing and consultation session for Course Leaders and Heads of Department have been held and one workshop undertaken with 30 staff as early adopters. The BA programme will pilot embedding entrepreneurship education. Other pilot projects like the LivingLabs have been successfully developed alongside an entrepreneurship competition for students.
6. Our earlier investment in resources for flexible/blended/online programmes proved to be invaluable in supporting the rapid switch on online learning when all learning went online due to Covid-19. Critical to the University's ability to continue delivering learning to students was the presence of Educational Technologists in every faculty. During 2019/20 the number of Learning Technologists grew to eight Faculty-based staff and an additional six linked to projects in the Centre for Transformative Learning and Graduate & Professional Studies. The establishment of a Learning Technologists Forum and an Enhanced Programme Offering working group enabled effective and consistent use of resources across the university. Our new Masters programmes in AI and Digital Health Transformation, Masters Educational Leadership, and the Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership, which are delivered online/blended, continue to be very popular with students. The Covid-19 pandemic has necessitated moving all our postgraduate programmes online. Our experience in delivering these and other online/blended programmes has facilitated this move.
7. A Learning Technologists Forum was established to bring together members of the Assistive Technology Centre (EATC) and Faculty-based Educational Developers to ensure best practice across all developments of technology enabled/assisted learning. It played a significant role in supporting Covid-19 staff development for online learning and teaching from March 2020 onwards.

8. The Centre for Transformative Learning (CTL) leads on programmes for students and staff and has played a vital role in 2019/20 in sharing best practice and providing professional development to allow staff to make the pivot to online education after March 2020. CTL has also attracted external funding to run conferences and workshops to support the development of blended learning and online pedagogies.
9. The Mature Student Access Certificate (MSAC) continues to play an important role in supporting adult learners to progress to undergraduate programmes, with MSAC students making up approx. 18% of the mature student intake to first year in 2019/20. This includes adult learners who are seeking asylum in Ireland under the University of Sanctuary initiative.
10. Employability is at the heart of UL's educational offer. During 2019/20, the Cooperative Education and Careers Division (CECD) achieved a high rate of student placement, despite the national lockdown in March 2020. Many placements continued virtually with students working remotely from home. A large-scale survey of regional, national and global employers/ placement providers was undertaken of the employers' experiences during 2019/20. The purpose of the survey was to gain an understanding of Coop students' work-based resilience and competence development during the disruption of the pandemic. Industry partners reported very high levels of agility, resilience and responsiveness to change amongst Coop students, as well as significant levels of professional competency development across communications, teamwork, ability to work remotely, and the ability to learn. In 2019/20 CECD partnered with Northern Trust on the launch of the MidWest Disability Forum to bring together employers and higher education professionals to support the recruitment lifecycle and on-boarding opportunities for students with disabilities, and to share best practices in attracting diverse graduate talent. The forum has a focus on tangible, pragmatic outcomes, with over 150 participants across all sectors.
11. We have applied successfully to the HEA Human Capital Initiative (HCI) with UL@Work and the July Stimulus Programme.
12. Please see SP 4.2.

Strategic Priority 1.2: Building on its strengths in Modern Foreign Languages and in response to Languages Connect

<p>i. Institution Strategic Initiatives</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will implement our Language Strategy which provides for opportunities for students to study a foreign language as part of their course (Applied Languages, Business), as an elective 'broadening offer' (elective) and as a co-curricular course. 2. We will expand the portfolio of languages on offer, in particular to include Mandarin, and will support local schools as they develop their Leaving Certificate courses in addition to non-curricular community languages through the President's Volunteer Award (PVA) scheme. 3. The UL Languages Strategy will be extended to support the development of programmes of study that combine a discipline and a second language (Sciences, Health, joint BA degree with Mary Immaculate College (MIC)). 			
<p>ii. Key Performance Indicators</p>	<p>Pre-compact Baseline</p>	<p>Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress</p>	<p>September 2020 Interim Target</p>	<p>September 2020 Actual</p>

Increase in percentage of undergraduate students spending at least one semester abroad (EU Bologna 2020 target)	30%	35%	36%	29%* *Covid-19 Impact
Number of staff undertaking Irish language training annually	No baseline provided	31	32	28
Foreign languages indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> graduates from programmes with significant modern language components Registrations on modern languages modules Number of unique students taking a language module 	139 1,953 797	175 2,436 1,058	No interim targets provided	180 2,400 1,026
Strategy and Action Plan for the implementation of Languages Connect.	Being developed	Being developed	No interim target provided	
iii. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)	<p><i>Please provide commentary on your Institution's achievement and progress towards the above Interim target, as published in your Compact, in connection to the above Key System Objective as at September 2020. In the event your Institution has diverged from the strategic initiatives agreed in your Compact, please provide a rationale for same. The colour code, detailed above, should be referenced.</i></p> <p><u>2019-20 Update</u></p> <p>Opportunities for joint and dual degrees are being continually explored, currently two full joint degree programmes: Erasmus Mundus funding for European Masters in Global Minds (Psychology) has been delivered (University of Lisbon, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Warsaw, Koç University Istanbul); The MA European Studies with Europa University Flensburg has been developed in 2019/20 and is ready for recruitment in 2021.</p> <p><u>2019-20 Update on Strategic Initiatives</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Languages offered as 'broadening' modules on the BA Arts and as part of the Alternative to Erasmus+ programmes to promote internationalisation at home. Advanced Spanish has been reintroduced on the Bachelor of Business Studies degree. Establishment of a BA in Languages with Teacher Education (French, Gaeilge, German and Spanish) in AY 20/21 to address the 			

Government's request to increase supply of Gaeilge and modern foreign language teachers. We are recalibrating our language strategy as a part of the review of the Strategic Plan UL@50.

2. Chinese was introduced on the Language Opportunities Programme. Once Covid-19 crisis is over, we will be exploring the expansion of volunteering to cover support for languages in local schools.
3. Broadening modules in languages made available to students in Science and Engineering as part of the Alternative to Cooperative Education programme.

1. Creating rich opportunities for national and international engagement which enhances the learning environment and delivers a strong bridge to enterprise and the wider community.

Overarching Statement (maximum of 200 words) The institution should use the overview to set out its view of progress on the key system objective as a whole, prior to considering sub-elements. While the focus is on the specified domain, the HEA would welcome evidence of synergies with other domains, either planned or otherwise, that have been identified by the institution. Please also provide details of any change in strategic focus since submitting your Compacts.

UL@50 sets out a number of objectives for national and international engagement, and progressed on these:

1. Diversifying our UL community:

- UL has continued to target international student recruitment in India, China and South Asia.
- We have advanced recruitment of international academic leaders with varying perspectives so that we can enhance our research capabilities and enrich the student experience.
- UL supports the initiative by the Algerian government to move from French to English as the official language of teaching and learning in third level through a specially designed International Structured PhD programme offered that has seen the first intake of 147 Algerian student in AY2019/20. The programme is scalable over the next four years to an intake of 400 PhD students and expandable across a range of disciplines at UL including business, education and science and engineering.

2. Offering a high-quality experience for international students:

- For the third time UL was awarded best Erasmus+ programme in Ireland in 2020 and attracted 24% of the national funding allocation for International Credit Mobility (ICM).

3. Building international partnerships that enhance our global ranking:

- Over the reporting period we have increased our participation and success in Horizon 2020 and the ERC (please see 3). We participated in the European University Initiative round 2, albeit unsuccessful.
- We have continued to foster research with impact that addresses global challenges particularly in the areas of health, energy, the environment, sustainable Cities and Communities; quality education through participation in and building of inter/national research consortia.
- We have systematically mapped our engagement with the UN SDGs across the organisation with the aim to integrate them in the Strategic Plan UL@50.

i. Institution Strategic Initiative				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. International - Our target is to double international student numbers between 2015- 2020. 2. Our Study Aboard Programme - The growth has been in line with Broadening Horizons targets, with a more rapid growth predicted in the coming years, from a current headcount of 413 (220 FTE) to a headcount of 1000 by 2024. 3. Erasmus+ and Non-EU exchange - Our target is to grow the programme by 40% over period 2015-2020 with the ultimate goal of 50% of students engaged on the programme as part of the European University initiative. 				
ii. Key Performance Indicators				
	Pre-compact Baseline	Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress	September 2020 Interim Target	September 2020 Actual
Increase in Non-EU International Students as a % of all student registrations (FTEs)	No baseline provided	7%	9.4%	8.4% (all fulltime students ex Exchange)
Study Abroad Student FTEs	No baseline provided	203	200	216 FTEs (405 students from nine countries)
60% increase in international full degree student numbers by 2019	331	611 (+85%)	No interim target provided	739 (baseline excludes SoM and Research)
12% increase in US Study Abroad student numbers by 2019	198	187 (-5.5%)	No interim target provided	161 FTEs (322 students)
Staff mobility Erasmus Exchange Numbers	40	79	84	40*(81 additional cancelled due to Covid-19) *Covid-19 Impact

Benchmarking exercise re. international external examiners, research co-supervisors and adjuncts conducted for all programmes	Benchmarking exercise re. international external examiners, research co-supervisors and adjuncts conducted for all programmes	n/a	No interim target provided	
20% increase in international external examiners	187	201 (+7.5%)	215	221
20% increase in the number of international research co-supervisors	4	27	13	29
KBS Accreditations	2	3	No interim target provided	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) 2. AMBA (Association of MBAs) 3. PMI GAC (Project Management Institute, Global Accreditation Centre) 4. CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) 5. PSI (The Psychological Society of Ireland) 6. Athena SWAN
iii. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)	<p><i>Please provide commentary on your Institution's achievement and progress towards the above Interim target, as published in your Compact, in connection to the above Key System Objective as at September 2020. In the event your Institution has diverged from the strategic initiatives agreed in your Compact, please provide a rationale for same. The colour code, detailed above, should be referenced.</i></p> <p><u>2019-20 Update</u></p> <p>The University appointed an Associate Vice President Global Engagement (AVPGE) to lead internationalisation, who took up the new post in April 2020. The Global Engagement Strategic Committee, which is a sub-committee of the Executive Committee, began regular meetings in 2020 and developed a Global Engagement Action Plan to achieve Goal 3: Internationalisation of the UL@50 Strategic Plan. This plan focused on repositioning internationalisation as a primary means of achieving teaching excellence and research with impact. It builds on UL's impressive track record in international student mobility, mostly through Erasmus+ and Study Abroad, to build meaningful international partnerships that provide sustainable pathways to UL for international students and establish transnational partnerships that support dual degrees and joint research. From the start of 2020/21, the International Education Division was rebranded as UL Global, to signal its broader role in driving global engagement across learning, teaching and research.</p> <p>The Covid-19 pandemic overshadowed the second half of 2019/20. After posting significant growth in non-EU recruitment in September 2019, the crisis led to some Erasmus+ and Study Abroad students returning home in March and April and the decision was made in April 2020 to suspend all outbound mobility for the first semester of 2020/21. Nonetheless, 2019/20 continued the strong</p>			

positive trend towards broader, more comprehensive internationalisation seen since 2015. In 2019/20, UL submitted a formal application for the membership for the Young European Research Universities Network (YERUN) to provide a platform for consortium-based research projects and joint degree programmes going forward. (We succeeded and are a member as of 2021.)

Capitalising on the pivot to online research and learning UL is striving to further enhance the number of international external examiners and research co-supervisors.

2019-20 Update on Strategic Initiatives

1. The target of International doubling international student numbers between 2015- 2020 was achieved. The number of non-EU full degree enrolments increased from 587 in 2014/15 to 1,165 in 2019/20.
2. The Study Aboard Programme has witnessed slower growth, with enrolments (excluding the four-year Science Without Borders numbers, which has now ended) growing from 198 in 2014/15 to 216 in 2019/20. Most of the growth is coming from other EU countries, rather than the traditional US market.
3. Erasmus+ and Non-EU exchange has grown by 25% over the last five years, from 1,049 in 2014/15 to 1,302 in 2019/20.

Strategic Priority 2.2: Building partnerships with industry

i. Institution Strategic Initiatives

1. We will continue to grow our collaborations with industry regionally, nationally and internationally.
2. We are developing new models for industry engagement building on the success of Limerick for Engineering and Limerick for IT as well as the co-location of industry on the UL campus.
3. We will expand our engagement with SMEs on the development of a Centre for Entrepreneurship to create a stream of entrepreneurship in the UL curriculum.

ii. Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline	Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress	September 2020 Interim Target	September 2020 Actual
750 visits by employers to UL campus	763	756	No interim target provided	342* *Covid-19 Impact
850 visits by UL to employer sites	850	851	No interim target provided	268* *Covid-19 Impact
Licences, options and assignments per €10m investment per annum	5	2.3	5	2.6
Invention disclosures per €10m investment per annum	15	9.73	No interim target provided	9.45
Patent applications per €10m investment per annum	3	5.1	No interim target provided	5.6

Increase in the number of active Spinouts by 33% by the end of 2021	8	14	14 (+16.5%)	13
20% increase in research income from industry	€1.97m	€2.55m	No interim target provided	€2.78m
Enterprise training (Nexus) 100+ employees from 2016 (BH 2.2.3)	0	91	No interim target provided	96
Entrepreneur events	0	19	No interim target provided	12* *Covid-19 Impact
Outward mobility	451	879	No interim target provided	783* *Covid-19 Impact
iii. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)	<p><i>Please provide commentary on your Institution's achievement and progress towards the above Interim target, as published in your Compact, in connection to the above Key System Objective as at September 2020. In the event your Institution has diverged from the strategic initiatives agreed in your Compact, please provide a rationale for same. The colour code, detailed above, should be referenced.</i></p> <p><u>2019-20 Update on Strategic Initiatives</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> UL's industrial collaborations have continued to grow during the 2019/20 period. The Dairy Processing Technology Centre (DPTC), a research collaboration between the Irish dairy processing companies and Irish research organisations hosted by UL, commenced its 2nd 5-year phase of funding in August 2020. Lero, the Irish Software Research Centre, established a very significant research partnership with Huawei to examine new approaches to developing trustworthy software. Researchers at the Bernal Institute embarked on numerous collaborations with industry partners, including a significant project with Molecule RnD Ltd to develop new materials for water capture. At the same time, UL's other research Centres have continued to strengthen and develop their industrial partnerships during this period, including the Centre for Pharmaceuticals (SSPC), the Confirm Smart Manufacturing Centre, the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Technology Centre (PMTC), and the Centre for Research Training in the Foundations of Data Science. The development of new programmes to address industry needs has resulted in a number of new offerings for 2020 including Graduate Diplomas in Data Science for Finance, Agile Business Analytics, Global Trade Compliance, DevOps and Multilingual Software Development. UL works closely with the Regional Skills Forum and continues to be agile and innovative in responding to upskilling initiatives such as Springboard+, Apprenticeships, the Human Capital Initiative and July Stimulus. An Academy of Learning is being established with the Irish Aviation Authority as part of the setup of a Centre of Excellence across education, research and knowledge exchange. A respective MoU was signed in summer 2020. The Management Development Unit, part of UL's Kemmy Business School, delivered a series of four online modules developed to utilise research skills to upskill SMEs how to gather the knowledge they require to implement and exploit new business opportunities. This initiative was funded through the Erasmus+ Reinnovate project, aimed to develop workplace research 			

skills in SME learners through the development and delivery of an online inquiry-based learning programme: Smart Research as a 21st Century Skill for Business.

KBS Entrepreneurship faculty developed two certificate programmes; “Certificate in Managing and Leading the Social Enterprise”, and “Certificate in Essentials of Entrepreneurship”. These programmes were developed through proactively and seeking the contributions of multiple industry stakeholders.

3. Excellent research, development and innovation that has relevance, growing engagement with external partners and impact for the economy and society and strengthens our standing to become an Innovation Leader in Europe.

Overarching Statement (maximum of 200 words) The institution should use the overview to set out its view of progress on the key system objective as a whole, prior to considering sub-elements. While the focus is on the specified domain, the HEA would welcome evidence of synergies with other domains, either planned or otherwise, that have been identified by the institution. Please also provide details of any change in strategic focus since submitting your Compacts.

In the period, UL has maintained its performance in research excellence in spite of the challenges of the global pandemic. UL staff have mobilised to address Covid-19 challenges with success many rapid innovation calls e.g. SFI, HRB. Under Horizon 2020 UL was set a very ambitious target of €40 million by Government and has reached €36.6 million with many submissions still under review.

Advancement in UL's research excellence is demonstrated in the awarding of 2 ERC Advanced Grants in 2020, the first such awards in UL's history. UL was also awarded 5 MSCA Individual Fellowships in 2020, the highest number in its history. The quality of UL's research outputs has also continued to improve during this period. The citation impact of UL's publications, as measured through Web of Science over a 5-year window, has increased to 7.4 in 2019, representing a 48% increase on the same measure in 2015.

The University continues to progress health research with the establishment of Limerick Cancer Research Centre focusing on digital approaches to diagnosis and treatment for cancer patients. In addition, a Clinical Research Facility application to the HRB has been developed in collaboration between UL and the UL Hospitals Group to support the growth of UL/UHL's clinical trials portfolio.

The SFI Confirm Centre was developed through 2019/20 and its bespoke Digital Manufacturing facility in the UL Digital District were officially opened in February 2020. In addition, the University was successful in the SFI Centres for Research Training Programme, hosting the CRT in Data Science and a partner in the CRT for Artificial Intelligence.

Strategic Priority 3.1: Developing new areas of research

i. Institution Strategic Initiative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will develop an Academic Medical Centre in partnership with the University Limerick Hospital Group and the Community Health Organisation in the region. 2. We will develop research programmes that bring together academics, healthcare providers and industry to accelerate the translation of medical sciences, novel technologies and processes to healthcare settings. 3. We will expand our research programmes in biomedical sciences in particular by leveraging the expertise in the physical sciences (data analytics, imaging, gene sequencing, bioengineering and biotechnology) in UL. 4. The second area of research that UL will develop is Digital Sciences. We will establish a Digital Strategy at UL to explore the development and application of digital technologies and technology-enhanced intelligence. The Digital Strategy will support education and research programmes focused on digital transformation across a range of sectors including health, advanced manufacturing, financial services, energy and agriculture. 			
ii. Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline	Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress	September 2020 Interim Target	September 2020 Actual

40% increase in number of tenured academics supervising doctorates	282	328	No interim target provided	331
Research Impact programmes (Baseline 4)	4	15	18	19
20% increase in the no. of Int'l research co-supervisors	4	27	13	29

iii. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)

Please provide commentary on your Institution's achievement and progress towards the above Interim target, as published in your Compact, in connection to the above Key System Objective as at September 2020. In the event your Institution has diverged from the strategic initiatives agreed in your Compact, please provide a rationale for same. The colour code, detailed above, should be referenced.

2019-20 Update

UL is now involved in several externally funded doctoral training programmes, including:

- New International PhD Programme: UL welcomed 117 doctoral students across art, humanities and social sciences through a partnership with the Algerian Ministry of National Education.
- Reflow - European Training Network: an interdisciplinary cross-sectoral European Training Network involving scientists and key stakeholders in diary processing, fertilizer production and phosphorous recycling with doctoral students to address challenges associated with the recovery of phosphorous from diary processing wastewater and recycling.

UL continues to champion the demonstration of excellent research with impact. The case study programme was updated on foot of a benchmarking exercise in 2020 which examined updates from REF2021, recommendations from the Stern Report^{[11](#)} and examples of international best practice. In response to this, UL implemented a number of improvement actions including embedding the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a framework for addressing grand challenges, supporting collaboration and internationalisation through international co-authors and country impact measures, broadly defined research outputs criteria to ensure no perceived barriers for any disciplines. UL is part of the national working group on research impact as funded through the HEA and works closely with the engaged research agenda.

2019-20 Update on Strategic Initiatives

1. UL has developed and launched the Health Sciences Academy (Dec 2019), which represents its partnership with the UL Hospitals Group and the Mid-West Community Health Organisation, and together with the HSE has appointed a Chief Academic Officer to lead this initiative, as well as approved Joint HSE/UL Consultant Appointments. The Academy is an important pre-cursor to the Academic Health Sciences Centre.

	<p>2. The development of the UL Cancer Research Centre expands our biomedical research into the interdisciplinary space by leveraging our digital strengths in LERO and our strengths in Smart Manufacturing in CONFIRM, as well as in translation to clinical practice via the Health Research Institute.</p> <p>3. Further capacity in biomedical sciences will be developed via a suite of UG and PG programmes, with the first cohort starting in Sept. 2021.</p> <p>4. SFI Centres for Research Training (CRT): UL host the CRT in Foundations in Data Science and partners in the CRT in Artificial Intelligence. As of February 2021, there are now 61 doctoral students enrolled on the CRT in Data Science across its partners, UL, MU, UCD. The CRT in AI is hosted by UCC and involves UL, DCU, NUIG, TCD.</p>
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Strategic Priority 3.2: Diversifying the research-funding base

i. Institution Strategic Initiatives	1. We will grow our EU funding and will further enhance the recognition and reputation of the university through the established UL EU Research Office with the aim of developing our EU partnerships and funding.			
ii. Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline	Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress	September 2020 Interim Target	September 2020 Actual
Doubling of income from EU funding sources relative to that achieved under FP7	No baseline provided	€10,674,000 (Cumulative)	No interim target provided	€15,199,000 (Cumulative)
30% increase in Research funding over life-time of new UL strategic plan (*Research funding is measured based on three-year average research awards.)	2017-18: €41,857,000*	€52,100,000*	€43,500,000	€53,167,000*
Increase total research awards from Horizon 2020 to over €30,000,000	2018: €20,000,000	€22,015,404	€27,000,000	€33,117,102 (Cumulative)

iii. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)

Please provide commentary on your Institution's achievement and progress towards the above Interim target, as published in your Compact, in connection to the above Key System Objective as at September 2020. In the event your Institution has diverged from the strategic initiatives agreed in your Compact, please provide a rationale for same. The colour code, detailed above, should be referenced.

2019-20 Update

UL has made significant progress in increasing its funding secured from Horizon 2020. It's total awards from Horizon 2020 as of September 2020 were over €33 million, and as of February 2021 are at €36.6 million. This includes 2 ERC Advanced Grants, 2 ERC Starting Grants, and over €10.6 million from the MSCA programme including 14 prestigious MSCA Individual Fellowships, which were supported through travel bursaries, MSCA Masterclasses, and a programme of career supports for researchers. Several projects are still under evaluation, so the final total funding from Horizon 2020 is not yet known.

The focus of attention for European funding now shifts to the new Horizon Europe programme. During 2019-20, UL sought membership of YERUN, the Young European Research Universities Network, to strengthen our strategic partnerships with other European Universities. UL's participation in this Network will be actively championed at the most senior levels within the University. UL is also a member of a number of European technology platforms and associations, which are transitioning into European Partnerships, aimed at increasing its influence over Horizon Europe work programmes in areas of strategic importance to UL. These include: EFFRA (manufacturing); EARPA, CCAM & ERTRAC (transport); Spire (process industries); BBI-JU (bio-based industries); and BEPA (batteries). Increased success in European funding continues to be a strategic priority for the University.

While the Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted research activities, for example due to challenges in accessing research facilities, illness, caring responsibilities, and changes in funding opportunities, UL's research community has responded strongly to these challenges. Researchers have engaged new or alternative approaches to progressing their research activities; research facilities on campus have been kept operational since the summer of 2020, albeit at a reduced capacity; and researchers have undertaken Covid-19 research supported by special Covid-19 response funding from SFI, HRB and the EU.

2. Significantly improves the equality of opportunity through Education and Training and recruits a student body that reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population;

Overarching Statement (maximum of 200 words) The institution should use the overview to set out its view of progress on the key system objective as a whole, prior to considering sub-elements. While the focus is on the specified domain, the HEA would welcome evidence of synergies with other domains, either planned or otherwise, that have been identified by the institution. Please also provide details of any change in strategic focus since submitting your Compacts.

Goal 4 of the UL@50 Strategic Plan is to promote closer engagement with the city and region that enriches communities and enhances opportunities for all who live there. This includes a number of measures to promote equality of opportunity through education and ensure:

- Greater access for non-traditional students and disadvantaged groups from the city and region, including asylum seekers and members of the Traveller community.
- Further development of access programmes across UL, Limerick Institute of Technology and Mary Immaculate College (the Mid-West Regional Consortium).
- Greater student and staff engagement in voluntary programmes through UL Engage and community networks.

UL has a longstanding commitment to widening access to third level education and supporting students to success. There are extensive student supports within Student Affairs and the five Learning Centres which have been integrated in the Centre for Transformative Learning to provide English for academic purposes, remedial mathematics, bespoke support for disabled students, etc. The First Seven Weeks programme was reviewed to further strengthen academic orientation and support for all new first year students and is designed to reduce withdrawal rates and improve progression. It is supported by a team of trained student mentors of incoming students. Across the Midwest Regional Cluster and in particular through the National Institute for Studies in Education (NISE) and the PATH initiatives we seek to enhance the quality of teacher education, increase access to teacher education for underrepresented groups, and access more generally. As a University of Sanctuary, UL has supported 28 refugees and asylum seekers in 2019/20 to study with tuition fee waivers and other tailored support measures at Bachelor and Masters level.

We have intensified our efforts to bring together in a mutually beneficial way community engagement and access initiatives through the establishment of the UL Community Engagement Hub, the MEITHAL and the K4C projects. A sub-group of our Equality and Human Rights Committee - Academic Structures for Inclusive Learning also works to identify relevant initiatives to support UL in engaging further with Inclusive Learning.

The expanded Charter, which UL was awarded in 2019, focuses on inclusivity and intersectionality ensuring we address how various forms of inequalities are interconnected for minority women and other under-represented groups. The student voice is represented on all Athena SWAN Self-Assessment teams (18 in total) across the institution.

Strategic Priority 4.1: Access Limerick

<p>i. Institution Strategic Initiatives</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. UL in partnership with Limerick City and Limerick County Councils will work to enhance outreach in DEIS schools to grow opportunities for those in communities marred by disadvantage and social exclusion. 2. Part of an enhanced outreach offer will be the establishment of DEIS summer camps at UL to provide first-hand experience of the University. 3. UL is also expanding its students volunteering programme to enhance DEIS engagement. 			
<p>ii. Key Performance Indicators</p>	<p>Pre-compact Baseline</p>	<p>Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress</p>	<p>September 2020 Interim Target</p>	<p>September 2020 Actual</p>

50% increase in student participation in the PVA programme	217	470 (+116%)	500	536
Non-standard entrants to undergraduate programmes	27%	29% (3,256)	3,440	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrants from disadvantaged areas (Most recent Deprivation Index Score 2017-18) - 8% • Enrolments with a disability (most recent EAS 2017-18) – 8% • Mature entrants (SRS 19-20) - 4.3% • Undergraduate flexible enrolments (SRS 2019-20) - 8.5% • FE to HE transitions (SRS 2019-20) - 1.5% • Springboard Enrolments - 323 • Traveller Enrolments (most recent EAS 2017-18) – 1
<p>iii. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)</p>	<p><i>Please provide commentary on your Institution’s achievement and progress towards the above Interim target, as published in your Compact, in connection to the above Key System Objective as at September 2020. In the event your Institution has diverged from the strategic initiatives agreed in your Compact, please provide a rationale for same. The colour code, detailed above, should be referenced.</i></p> <p><u>2019-20 Update</u></p> <p>A Head of UL Community Engagement was appointed and the support infrastructure enhanced. Supported by the HEA MEITHEAL project funding a primary school access coordinator was put in place in Student Affairs to grow connectivity between community engagement and access efforts. A Interprofessional Practice Tutor was appointed to lead on community efforts in health.</p> <p>Community envoys were put in place to underpin the Specialist CWELL Diploma programme (18 students graduated in 2019/20 and 10 students, recruited in 2019, moved into their second year. Work on the CWELL programme also supports our access initiatives in strategic way by closing the gap between community engagement and efforts to widen participation in higher education. The MA Community Engaged Research was implemented in 09/2019. A p/t CPD Specialist Diploma in Community Engagement was designed with TUSLA as initial partner. Its implementation was impacted by C19 and has been postponed to 2021.</p> <p>Participation in the UNESCO Knowledge for Change (K4C) programme continued, providing an international benchmark for our activities and a global network for collaboration. The K4C hub design, which is integral to the HEA funded UL Meitheal programme, contributes to capacity building internally and externally in terms of wider institutional change and provision of relevant training and supports – both within the University and the community. Four more staff were trained as Community Engagement Mentors through K4C.</p>			

The pilot community-university impact framework has been transitioned into a regularised annual community consultation process, in collaboration with Limerick City and County Council. Impact data collection is aided by collaboration with Junior Achievement Ireland and e-Townz.

The University of Sanctuary initiative was moved under the portfolio of the Vice President Academic Affairs and Student Engagement to foster a whole university approach. The C19 pandemic has thrown into sharp focus the needs of Sanctuary students and led to a review of the sanctuary support approach. Integrated into its access initiatives, UL offered specific support to Sanctuary Students during the pandemic including the provision of dongles and mobile phones to Sanctuary Students.

2019-20 Update on Strategic Initiatives

1. UL continues to make good progress in widening access to third level education for its communities, with further growth in non-standard entrants to undergraduate programmes in 2019/20. Recognising the challenges that first-in-family and mature entrants face, Student Affairs and the Centre for Transformative Learning have in place a range of supports to promote retention and progression.
2. Planned DEIS summer camps had to be suspended in 2019/20 to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, in collaboration with the ETB, we plan to host an on-line Junior Health Sciences Academy in March 2021 which provided information, role models, and examples of health sciences careers for all TY students in the region.
3. The PVA programme continued to expand with student participation rates well ahead of target. It introduced a Covid-19 award to recognise those volunteers who support the fight against the pandemic in the community.

Strategic Priority 4.2 Progression and Retention

<p>i. Institution Strategic Initiatives</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Personal Advisory Support System (PASS) will be redeveloped and made compulsory from September 2019. 2. A data driven Learning Analytics tool will be established to monitor and evaluate students' learning progress. Linking this tool to the revised PASS, it will support early intervention to foster student success (retention, progression, completion). It will also provide a meaningful instrument for the review and revision of existing programmes as well as the development of transformative learning approaches and methods. 			
<p>ii. Key Performance Indicators</p>	<p>Pre-compact Baseline</p>	<p>Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress</p>	<p>September 2020 Interim Target</p>	<p>September 2020 Actual</p>
<p>First-year retention rate (%)</p>	<p>87%</p>	<p>91%</p>	<p>91.5%</p>	<p>92%</p>
<p>Number of entrants to Springboard / Apprenticeship and Skillnet programmes</p>	<p>No baseline provided</p>	<p>1,020</p>	<p>1,270</p>	<p>1,268</p>

iii. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)

Please provide commentary on your Institution's achievement and progress towards the above Interim target, as published in your Compact, in connection to the above Key System Objective as at September 2020. In the event your Institution has diverged from the strategic initiatives agreed in your Compact, please provide a rationale for same. The colour code, detailed above, should be referenced.

2019-20 Update

First-year retention rates continue to improve, reflecting the range of supports available for new undergraduates. In relation to the number of entrants to Springboard / Apprenticeship and Skillnet programmes:

- UL was awarded more than €1.6M to deliver 362 Springboard+ places, 410 places were filled.
- UL has been approved to develop seven new Apprenticeship Programmes; six are validated. All six validated programmes will be enrolling in 2021.
- We have 825 students on a range of Skillnet funded programmes, including the MSc in AI with more than 150 students. In addition, UL has taken on the Chair of Limerick for Engineering and is playing a key role in rebranding the network to 'Explore Engineering' supporting an extension of the network beyond Limerick. The REAP project, funded through a HEA Innovation & Transformation Call, aims to build Regional Enterprise-Academic Partnerships. Progress on REAP includes the analysis of existing processes and development of recommendations in the engagement of practitioners, development of a best practice framework for practitioner engagement, and development of upskilling short courses for practitioners. Work packages relating to the automation of student assessments and Students as Partners for feedback are also in progress.

2019-20 Update on Strategic Initiatives

1. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic post-March and to mitigate against learner disadvantage, we put in place a wide range of measures incl. A shift from time-based examination to continuous assessment, Covid-I grade to take into account difficulties in home learning environment, broadband access and other caring responsibilities. These measures have helped to further improve our first-year retention rates. In addition, we have also improved our student services by moving functions online and supporting the integration of an integrated virtual student hub. We have introduced a student leadership programme in partnership with CTL. This involves training second year students as peer advisors for first year students on the BA Arts. We support a PhD student to coordinate the programme. Along with our scaffolding / transition modules, this is a key part of our strategy to improve retention.
2. Regarding the use of learning analytics in support of retention and progression, please see SP 5.1/iii/3.

5. Demonstrates consistent improvement in the quality of the learning environment with a close eye to international best practice through a strong focus on quality & academic excellence;

Overarching Statement (maximum of 200 words) The institution should use the overview to set out its view of progress on the key system objective as a whole, prior to considering sub-elements. While the focus is on the specified domain, the HEA would welcome evidence of synergies with other domains, either planned or otherwise, that have been identified by the institution. Please also provide details of any change in strategic focus since submitting your Compacts.

UL was subject to a CINNTE Institutional Review in 2019/20, which was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic and took place online in August 2020. The international peer review team made a number of commendations in their final report on the University's commitment to continuous improvement, which included:

"4. The review team commends the University on the way it has connected the different quality teams and how it fosters good practice exchange on various levels, so that others can benefit from creative solutions and that the overall discourse on QA is kept alive.

5. Managers were evidently united in their focus on the students' learning experience at UL and on the importance to accommodate students' needs. The review team commends UL's vibrant, inclusive community, in which staff and students feel very much at home, and at the same time feel challenged to reach their potential.

6. The annual monitoring process has clear scope and leadership, and the Associate Vice President Academic Affairs is unambiguously responsible. As an instrument to detect flaws and areas for improvement, the annual review process is considered to be effective. The review team commends UL for implementing the annual review process relatively recently, in 2017/18 after an initial pilot."

UL's continuous commitment to international best practice in learning and teaching quality is further evidenced by successfully securing EUA, IUA and NFTL consortia projects.

Strategic Priority 5.1 Improving progression and completion

i. Institution Strategic Initiative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Building on the work of the Centre for Transformative Learning, targeted measures to support learners in areas with problematic non-progression rates will be developed and implemented through specific learner groups. 2. Programme/module review, the development of blended learning components as well as academic staff development in the area of transformative pedagogies shall focus on areas of problematic non-progression. 3. The development and implementation of Learning Analytics will provide additional intelligence and aid the development of targeted measures to tackle non-progression. 4. A comprehensive Digital Learning Policy including lecture recording shall be implemented by 2019/20. 5. See Objective 1, Strategic Priority 1 re. Learning Innovation Centre. 			
ii. Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline	Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress	September 2020 Interim Target	September 2020 Actual
First-year retention rate	87%	91%	91.5%	92%
Numbers of students attending new Life Skills Module	n/a	n/a	n/a	All first-year undergraduates took part in the First Seven Weeks programme

2 Leadership training programmes annually	No baseline provided	0	No interim target provided	A decision was made not to proceed with this due to budget and timing issues.
<p>iii. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)</p>	<p><i>Please provide commentary on your Institution's achievement and progress towards the above Interim target, as published in your Compact, in connection to the above Key System Objective as at September 2020. In the event your Institution has diverged from the strategic initiatives agreed in your Compact, please provide a rationale for same. The colour code, detailed above, should be referenced.</i></p>			
	<p><u>2019-20 Update on Strategic Initiatives</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Centre for Transformative Learning provides supports for students in problem areas like mathematics, ICT, Science, peer support (science) and academic writing. Taken together with the comprehensive range of supports offered by Student Affairs, these are designed to improve first-year retention rates. Support measures through our five Learning Centres moved online building on last year's pilot. 2. Following the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, a weekly Academic Planning Group was set up to monitor the impact of the crisis and the move to online learning on student engagement and performance. This group includes the presidents and vice-presidents of the undergraduate and postgraduate students' unions. The data show that withdrawal and failure rates were lower in 2019/20 than in the previous year. Covid-19 led to a rapid shift to online and blended learning, which was supported by major investment in software and hardware and significant professional development through the Centre for Transformative Learning for academic and support staff to adjust to the new learning environment. 3. The Business Intelligence Unit developed diagnostic reporting tools to allow lecturers to continuously monitor the engagement of their students with the Virtual Learning Environment, providing early warning of student Disengagement. 4. In the second semester of 2019/20 post Covid-19, all lecturers were delivered virtually, either synchronously or asynchronously. UL adopted Panopto has its standard video streaming and recording tool. The First Seven programme was reviewed and prepared for online delivery over an extended period for AY 2020/21. It incorporated the Student Life Module content. 5. See 4.2 			
<p>Strategic Priority 5.2 Common entry into undergraduate programmes</p>				
<p>i. Institution Strategic Initiative</p>	<p>We plan to consolidate and further enhance the BA in the coming years in the following ways:</p>			

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase opportunities for interdisciplinary exchange and collaboration including opportunities for cross-fertilisation between STEM and arts-based subjects to foster creativity and interdisciplinary teamwork. 2. Expanding the number of transition modules offered to students to promote academic success and inclusivity. Specifically, this will involve delivering targeted additional student support modules at crucial points in programmes (preparing for academic success; preparing for cooperative education and Erasmus+). 3. Revising the final year project, which all students undertake. Specifically, we will introduce a range of alternative multi-modal and individually tailored formats that will match better with student talent and enhance employability. 4. Expanding choice on the programme by offering more vocational/professional skills; specifically, we will introduce Journalism as a subject on the BA programme offering (based on our existing BA in Journalism with New Media). 			
ii. Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline	Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress	September 2020 Interim Target	September 2020 Actual
Number of departmental quality reviews	No baseline provided	3	3	3 + full QQI Institutional Review
20% increase in No. of staff undertaking training and development opportunities	1,772	2,130 (+20%)	2,215 (+4%)	2,446
Student advisor system implementation	No baseline provided	In place	No interim target provided	Action Complete
Student representation on all course boards	No baseline provided	In place	No interim target provided	Action Complete
iii. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)	<p><i>Please provide commentary on your Institution's achievement and progress towards the above Interim target, as published in your Compact, in connection to the above Key System Objective as at September 2020. In the event your Institution has diverged from the strategic initiatives agreed in your Compact, please provide a rationale for same. The colour code, detailed above, should be referenced.</i></p> <p><u>2019-20 Update</u></p> <p>All stated targets under this strategic priority have been met in full. In addition to the normal cycle of internal quality reviews undertaken in this year, UL also completed its full Institutional Review in 2020, which was conducted by a team of six independent/international reviewers selected by QQI. The outcomes of the review and the published recommendations will inform many of our strategic initiatives in the short/medium term future and will also inform the recalibration of the current strategic plan which is currently underway.</p> <p>The number of staff participating in Learning and Development activities rose to 2,446 for the year to September 2020. Each year, input is gathered from staff across the University. This is combined with input from members of Executive; other</p>			

stakeholders; scoping of opportunities from external to the University; and feedback from previous courses. Together, this information is used as a basis for our Learning and Development Schedule. Last year, the key areas of Learning and Development focus can be summarised in the following order: Management Training, Compliance Related Training, Research Related Training, Wellness, and Personal Effectiveness.

Staff training moved successfully online in March 2020 and, indeed, this presented some opportunities including enhanced accessibility. Online training post-March increased to support staff in adopting new online pedagogies and mastering new software packages like Panopto. Feedback on effectiveness of these interventions was very positive and comprehensive programmes for certain cohorts (such as managers) are now in place, expanding the range of CPD programmes on offer.

2019-20 Update on Strategic Initiatives

1. The move to online delivery, much of it available asynchronously, after March 2020 has made more flexible combinations of modules across Faculties possible, allowing students to use their choice of electives to design new study pathways. This flexibility will be developed further in the years ahead.
2. Two new core scaffolding / transition modules introduced on BA Arts year 1 in AY 19/20 to help with transition to college and address vocational uncertainty: Introduction to Academic Success in Semester 1 (includes academic, study and life skills for first year students adjusting to university e.g. sexual consent training) Preparing for International and Professional Success in Semester 2 (includes skills in digital etiquette, careers advice and planning for Arts students, preparation for Erasmus+ and for Cooperative Education work placement).
3. A revised Final Year Project was developed in 2019/20 and introduced in AY 20/21. Students can select alternatives to the traditional dissertation, e.g. group projects, practicum type projects, multi-media projects etc.
4. Journalism has not been integrated into the joint BA. However, we have introduced a new module *Working in the 21st Century* in AY 20/21, which specifically includes digital skills as key component and the acquisition of high-level practical skills in digital communication (media and marketing) as a core learning outcome.

6. Demonstrates consistent improvement in governance, leadership and operational excellence.

Overarching Statement (maximum of 200 words) The institution should use the overview to set out its view of progress on the key system objective as a whole, prior to considering sub-elements. While the focus is on the specified domain, the HEA would welcome evidence of synergies with other domains, either planned or otherwise, that have been identified by the institution. Please also provide details of any change in strategic focus since submitting your Compacts.

UL takes a proactive approach to governance and is committed to continuous improvement in this area through the positive engagement of its Governing Authority and senior management. In terms of governance and leadership, 2019/20 has been a challenge both in terms of the global Covid-19 pandemic and also the transfer of leadership following the retirement of President Fitzgerald in Summer 2020. Significant challenges were addressed in terms of shifting academic and services delivery models throughout the Covid-19 pandemic through a range of specifically convened crisis operations committees and structures. These proved effective at mobilising and engaging staff throughout as well as supporting the Executive Decision-making processes throughout the Covid-19 pandemic; and these will remain in place until normal service delivery is restored. The change in leadership has also offered an opportunity to recalibrate UL@50, which is now underway. Executive Committee structures and portfolios are also in the process of being re-aligned and this will continue into 2021.

UL has been dealing with a number of reviews and recommendations in relation to enhancing governance across the organisation over the past 4-5 years. These are reported on specifically below and all recommendations are now near full completion. Additional new developments include:

- A complete overhaul of UL's Policy Management Framework (Feb 2020) ensuring consistent policy development and approval processes in line with best practice. The Framework establishes the [University of Limerick Policy Hub](#) as the single authoritative source for all University policies and statutes and includes guidance/ templates for the development/revision of policies in a one-stop shop portal hosted by UL Corporate Secretary's Office.
- The Institute of Public Administration (IPA) completed an external evaluation of the Governing Authority in 2020 with draft report issued in early 2021. Recommendations arising from the Report and action plans to ensure their implementation are to be considered by the Governing Authority Governance Committee who will in turn report to Governing Authority.
- Annual Governance Statement and Statement of Internal Control –specific training has now been provided in 2019 and 2020 to all senior managers (academic and administrative) by external experts (PWC).
- A new Internal Audit structure has been put in place through the appointment of an in-house Internal Auditor at a senior level. The Internal Audit Annual Programme is agreed by the Governing Authority Audit & Risk Committee. A total of 11 reviews were undertaken in 2019 in a diverse range of areas. 12 reviews commenced in 2020 of which 2 have been completed through the necessary approval and notification processes.
- Risk Management - the Audit & Risk Committee now invite owners of local risk registers (and administrative unit heads) as a standing item. Risk Management will also be a standing agenda item on Governing Authority.

The structures and arrangements required to enable compliance with GDPR have been fully rolled out.

Strategic Priority 6.1 Equality & Diversity Strategy 2018-2021

i. Institution Strategic Initiative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will implement our UL Equality and Diversity Strategy 2018-2021. 2. The new Equality and Diversity Strategic Plan will strengthen and align existing and new projects around Athena SWAN, University of Sanctuary, UL Engage, Access Office, Disability Office, Social Inclusion, Mature Students Office and the campus community.
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	Our baseline is being assessed as part of the preparation of our data return to the HEA in September 2018 and also in planning for our new Strategic Plan.			
li. Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline	Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress	September 2020 Interim Target	September 2020 Actual
Non-standard entrants to undergraduate programmes	27%	29%	No interim target provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrants from disadvantaged areas (Most recent Deprivation Index Score 2017-18) - 8% • Enrolments with a disability (most recent EAS 2017-18) – 8% • Mature entrants (SRS 19-20) - 4.3% • Undergraduate flexible enrolments (SRS 2019-20) - 8.5% • FE to HE transitions (SRS 2019-20) - 1.5% • Springboard Enrolments - 323 • Traveller Enrolments (most recent EAS 2017-18) – 1
Cumulative number of Departments/Faculties attaining Athena SWAN accreditation leading to Institutional Silver Award	No baseline provided	8 Bronze (expanded charter)	11 Bronze	On-target 11 Bronze School/Department awards
Percentage of female Academic Professorial Staff	31%	30%	No interim target provided	29%
1. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)	<p><i>Please provide commentary on your Institution’s achievement and progress towards the above Interim target, as published in your Compact, in connection to the above Key System Objective as at September 2020. In the event your Institution has diverged from the strategic initiatives agreed in your Compact, please provide a rationale for same. The colour code, detailed above, should be referenced.</i></p> <p><u>2019-20 Update</u></p> <p>UL@50 (page 38) has committed to maintaining access of non-standard entrants to undergraduate programmes at 30% of student registrations annually from AY 19/20 -23/24. It is important to note also UL’s leading performance in the recently HEA published report on Spatial and Socio-Economic profile of the Higher Education Population. The report identifies UL as having the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lowest score (with NUIG) of the Irish Universities on the Mean deprivation index; UL Score is also below the National Mean for Universities and IoTs combined 			

- highest number of students (42%) from the lowest 2 of the 4 socio-economic bands ('Disadvantaged' and 'below average' bands) as well as the lowest rate of 12% from the highest band ('Affluent') when compared with the other universities
- highest ratio of Disadvantaged Students to Every 10 Affluent Students in any of the Irish Universities
- joint lowest student household income of the Irish Universities

The report highlights the persistent and pervasive scale of socio-economic deprivation in Limerick and UL catchments and also counters perceptions that some of the other universities in Ireland lead the way in terms of access provision, particularly socio-economic disadvantage.

2019-20 Update on Strategic Initiatives

1. UL has launched its [Equality and Human Rights Strategy 2019-22](#) in Nov 2019. Setting out core objectives and actions up to 2022, the strategy consolidates our commitment to equality, diversity, inclusion and human rights at the highest levels of UL activity, with key recommendations across the following areas: *governance; leadership; staff experience; education; research; campus development; events/clubs/societies; PR/Marketing/communications; technology; and procurement/finance.*
2. Commitment to Equality and Human Rights is reaffirmed in [UL@50](#) (pp 40-42) including an ambitious new target for female professorial appointments of ≥40% at full professorial level by 2023/24 (P. 42). Unfortunately, the University's representation of women at Professorial level was lower this year due to several female professors retiring in 19/20 as well as a freeze on academic promotions in 2019. However, UL secured 2 further female Professorships in 2020 (SALI) that have not been factored into the 2020 data (appointments/acceptances now completed) and academic promotions were concluded in November 2020. This will bring the female professorial representation to well over 30% for 2020/21. UL has also fully achieved the interim target of 11 Athena SWAN Bronze Awards, the highest in the sector. The institution is also on target to apply for a Silver Institution Award in November 2022.

Strategic Priority 6.2 Implementation of Recommendations of Reviews 2016-2018

i. Institution Strategic Initiatives	1. Implementation of Recommendations of Reviews 2016-2018			
ii. Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline	Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress	September 2020 Interim Target	September 2020 Actual
Mazars: 15 recommendations were made, all are implemented.	No baseline provided	15 recommendations were made, all are implemented.	No interim target provided	All implemented
Deloitte Internal Audit Review: 42 recommendations / 39 implemented / 3 in progress.	No baseline provided	42 recommendations / 39 implemented / 3 in progress.	No interim target provided	All implemented

Thorn Report: The first Report contained 10 recommendations / 10 implemented.	No baseline provided	The first Report contained 10 recommendations / 10 implemented.	No interim target provided	All implemented
Crowe Horwath Report Part 1: 7 Recommendations in Total / 7 Implemented	No baseline provided	7 Recommendations in Total / 7 Implemented	No interim target provided	All implemented
Crowe Horwath Report Part 2: 27 Recommendations in Total / 21 Implemented / 6 In progress	No baseline provided	27 Recommendations in Total / 21 Implemented / 6 In progress	No interim target provided	27 Recommendations in total / 23 implemented / 4 in progress

iii. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)

Please provide commentary on your Institution’s achievement and progress towards the above Interim target, as published in your Compact, in connection to the above Key System Objective as at September 2020. In the event your Institution has diverged from the strategic initiatives agreed in your Compact, please provide a rationale for same. The colour code, detailed above, should be referenced.

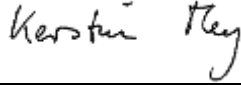
2019-20 Update

The recommendations in the Mazars, Deloitte Internal Audit Review, Thorn Report and Crowe Horwath Report Part 1 have been implemented and reported at each stage of implementation to the Governing Authority through its Audit & Risk Committee. Work continues on the completion of the remaining 4 recommendations (status outlined below) from the Crowe Horwath Part 2 Report. It is envisaged this will be fully completed by mid-2021. Status of outstanding actions as follows:

Recommendation	Action/ Deadline for Completion and Status
Core Principles of Governance: University craft a tailored set of “Core Principles of Governance” which contain inter alia a description of the relationship between the GA and the Executive in adhering to these principles, whilst taking cognisance of the requirements of the 1997 Act.	Recommendation accepted - Agreed by GA core principles of governance should be summarised and included in the Executive Summary of the 2019 UL Code of Governance. The revised Code of Governance is near completion and will commence the University’s approval process in Feb/March 2021
Scheme of Delegation: GA to develop and adopt a comprehensive Scheme of Delegation based upon the good practice elements identified by CH in their report, and specifically tailored to the unique circumstances of UL.	Recommendation accepted - EC Structural work completed via establishment of sub-committees. Work underway regarding UL Committees. Signing Authority in place for employees and Schedule of Matters Reserved to GA also in place.
Provision of Information to Governing Authority: GA to develop strategic five-year work plans and structured annual work programmes for each of its Committees, covering anticipated areas of activity, planned meeting dates and proposed reporting to the Authority for the	Recommendation accepted - Agreed by GA that this will be finalised after the revision of UL Strategic Plan. Consultation process ongoing at present.

	<p>year ahead. Further recommended that the Schedule of Matters Reserved to the GA be amended to include this requirement. It is expected that Committee Chairs would have lead responsibility for developing these work programmes, drawing on input from the Executive where required.</p>	
	<p>Other Committees at the University of Limerick: UL should maintain a central register of all such bodies operating within the University.</p>	<p>Recommendation is accepted - To be completed when all committees and related reporting structures identified under revised EC structures and portfolios (2021).</p>

7. Signature: *Of the President or on behalf of the President (please sign in space below)*

Signature:	<p>Professor Kerstin Mey</p> 
Date:	12 March 2021