COLÁISTE MHUIRE GAN SMÁL
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK

MIC-HEA Performance Compact

2012-16

February 2014

Mission-Based Performance Compact

between

Mary Immaculate College

and

The Higher Education Authority

Date: February 2014

Context

This Compact is an agreement between the Higher Education Authority and Mary Immaculate College (MIC) and is the outcome of a process of strategic dialogue between the two bodies.

The purpose of strategic dialogue is to align the missions, strategies and profiles of individual higher education institutions with national priorities, and to agree strategic objective indicators of success against which institutional performance will be measured and funding allocated.

This Compact demonstrates a shared sense of the balance that is required between institutional autonomy and public accountability and a recognition that a diverse range of strong, autonomous institutions is essential for the overall higher education system to respond effectively to evolving and unpredictable societal needs.

The Compact recognises that MIC is an autonomous institution with a distinctive mission, operating within a regional, national and international higher education environment.

The Compact recognises that there is a tension between providing a transparent framework of public accountability for performance in relation to funding, and risks of unintended behaviours related to measurements. It addresses this tension by requiring higher education institutions themselves to propose the qualitative and quantitative indicators against which their performance should be assessed by the Higher Education Authority.

The purpose of this Compact is to provide a strategic framework for the relationship between the Higher Education Authority and MIC. It sets out how MIC's mission and goals align with national goals for higher education.

By detailing HEA funding commitments and reciprocal MIC commitments, this Compact also contributes to creating a transparent and accountable system of administration of State funding. To support this purpose, the Higher Education Authority and MIC agree that this Compact will be published.

The principles of State funding support

The principles under which State funding for higher education is provided are:

- Institutional autonomy balanced with public accountability for high quality outcomes; and
- Core funding allocations that are predictable, fair and transparent, and that provide reasonable stability from year to year and in which funding follows the student.

Contents

1. Establishment of the Compact

The Higher Education Authority and MIC agree that:

- This Compact consists of this document and the accompanying current and planned profiles
- The term of this Compact is from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2016 unless terminated earlier by agreement.

MIC acknowledges that policy underlying some or all of this Compact is subject to review by the Minister for Education and Skills or by the Higher Education Authority from time to time. The Higher Education Authority and MIC agree that if changes need to be made to the Compact because of such a review, the Higher Education Authority will notify MIC of this in writing and will consult with MIC accordingly.

Some or all of the funding arrangements may be updated from time to time. Either party may propose changes to this Compact at any time.

2. Performance Funding Framework

Higher education Performance Funding will provide incentives for higher education institutions to improve overall performance in accordance with their own strategies and with their place in the overall system.

Performance Funding will be allocated based on performance against agreed targets and indicators of success proposed by the institution across a range of outcome domains. The targets and indicators of success must be agreed in strategic dialogue with the HEA. The intention is both to improve the performance of the institution in key areas and to steer the institution closer to its agreed mission and profile and to its position in the overall higher education system. The degree of challenge and of realism inherent in the targets proposed will be evaluated and discussed in strategic dialogue.

The Higher Education Authority and MIC agree to review annually the effectiveness of implementation of the strategies and goals for achieving the agreed national and institution outcomes.

As a condition of Performance Funding, in accordance with this agreement, MIC must:

- Agree performance targets as outlined in section 5 below
- Supply performance data to the Higher Education Authority for the relevant indicators
- Achieve the relevant targets agreed.

The assessment of progress against the agreed indicators of success and the allocation of Performance Funding against them will be notified annually to MIC.

3   Mission and Strategy Statement

MIC's mission and strategy sets out its values and aspirations, what it does and how it can best serve the interests of its students, staff and key stakeholders. The Higher Education Authority and MIC acknowledge that MIC's mission and strategy may evolve.

MIC and the Higher Education Authority recognise that MIC is an autonomous institution that is responsible for determining its mission, its aspirations and its strategies for their achievement.

However, the Higher Education Authority must ensure that together the missions and profiles of the different institutions will lead to overall coherence of the higher education system as a whole and to completeness, ensuring that national needs are being met and without unnecessary duplication.

MIC Mission Statement:

Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, founded in 1898, is a third-level Catholic College of Education and the Liberal Arts.

The College community promotes excellence in teaching, learning and research at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It seeks to foster the intellectual, spiritual, personal and professional development of students within a supportive and challenging environment that guarantees the intellectual freedom of staff and students.

In particular, the College seeks to foster in its students a spirit of justice and compassion in the service of others, together with an openness to the religious tradition and values of each individual.

The College promotes a sense of identity enriched by an awareness of its Catholic tradition, the cultures, languages and traditions of Ireland and its special commitment to the Irish language.

Mary Immaculate College respects cultural diversity. It strives to promote equity in society and to provide an environment where all have freedom and opportunity to achieve their full potential.

MIC Strategy Statement (Strategic Plan 2012-2016 - Vision Statement):

[In 2016, Mary Immaculate College will be] …*a distinctive and inclusive, university-level, Catholic College of Education & the Liberal Arts, offering higher level learning opportunities and research of outstanding quality, recognised and appreciated for its essential contribution to the continuum of academic provision in effective and productive collaboration with its partners in the higher education sector, that is embodied by a welcoming and diverse learning community, that presents a beautiful and inviting civic space situated at the heart of Limerick City, and that has made a positive and tangible difference to equity and to the creation of a just society through active promotion of educational inclusion and through the contribution of its excellent graduates*.

MIC Strategic Plan 2012-2016

With a prodigious rate of expansion, and a student populace standing at close to 3,200, Mary Immaculate College (MIC) has diversified its academic provision significantly over the last three decades, with the physical campus transformed and now offering state-of-the-art teaching, learning and research facilities to staff, students and members of the wider community. The College mission, coupled with its richly differentiated academic programme, is essential to the continuum of provision within the higher education sector and is of integral strategic

importance to Ireland's education system. MIC graduates represent a significant percentage of the State's primary teacher supply and, concomitantly, the contribution of the College to Ireland's Knowledge Society is immense.

As it sought to chart a course for the second decade of the twenty-first century, the Governing Authority of the College adopted a Strategic Plan (in March 2012) that recognised the current complexity of the external environment, the diversity of contemporary Irish society, and the system-level imperatives that were beginning to crystallise under the strategic dialogue with the HEA. To underpin the plan with objectives that preserved continuity with the founding vision of the College, while bringing its current mission into clear alignment with the aims set out by the HEA for re-configuration of the higher education landscape in Ireland, the Governing Authority chose key performance indicators (KPIs) in the form of the following seven foundational pillars:

1. **Mission and identity of the College as a Catholic Institution of Higher Education;**

2. **Excellence in teaching and learning and in advanced scholarship and research;**

3. **A high quality and holistic learning experience, enabling the flourishing of our students' lives;**

4. **An international dimension to all College activities;**

5. **Commitment to making a positive difference in our community, locally, regionally, nationally, and globally;**

6. **A learning environment and work place of the highest quality;**

7. **Best practice, efficiency and effectiveness in governance, leadership and management.**

These pillars support a series of goal statements and targets, and over the next four years they will support several horizontal and vertical levels of activity, from annualised action planning, to implementation and outcome monitoring. The activity at these levels will be characterised by close coordination and integration between implementation and reporting processes, with a particular emphasis in raising strategic and operational cohesion.

Alignment of MIC Strategic Plan and KPIs to System Imperatives

All objectives identified within Section 5 of this Performance Compact are contained within the MIC Strategic Plan and link directly to institutional KPIs that we believe are entirely commensurate with the domain level goals set out by the HEA. The particular objectives of the College, in turn, are derived from a comprehensive internal consultation process involving College staff and students, and external consultations, in which the views of over 240 community, statutory, public and social partners were sought. A list of these stakeholders is included in Appendix B, alongside a summary list of 31 strategic imperatives distilled from the consultation process, SWOT analysis, and situational analysis undertaken as part of the process leading to adoption of the Strategic Plan.

Throughout the strategic planning process and through the dialogue with the HEA, a strong consensus has remained at MIC in which stakeholders are emphatic that the College should preserve the distinctiveness of its ethos and mission. While our stakeholders are clear that system-level and national policy imperatives should find precise expression in the Strategic Plan, and while our embrace of a regional clustering strategy should build on the good work done through participation in the Shannon Consortium, the College should strive to ensure that students electing to participate in a learning experience at MIC are geared, not simply for

participation in the Smart Economy, but for creation of a Just Economy.

Inter-Institutional Partnership with the University of Limerick

MIC enjoys an excellent inter-institutional partnership with the University of Limerick (UL). This relationship dates to 1992, and the agreement that all MIC programmes would receive UL accreditation. Successive Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between the two institutions have set out the terms of this arrangement, with the most recent iteration having been signed by both Presidents in 2007.

Over the course of the last ten years, the partnership between MIC and UL has widened and deepened, extending far beyond the original scope of the relationship which focused exclusively on accreditation (with concomitant agreements around systems for student registration and records management). The main driver of this intensification of the MIC-UL partnership was the introduction of the Strategic Innovation Fund which was the catalyst for the formation of the Shannon Consortium (see Section 5.1: *Strategy Summary – Regional Clusters*, below).

Today, the bilateral relationship between UL and MIC receives expression in a range of tangible forms, both within the ambit of the Shannon Consortium and outside it. Existing shared service arrangements, such as the collaboration on assistive technology, have knock-on effects such as the consolidation of joint approaches to higher education access and participation. This functionalist dynamic can be seen in the area of continuous quality assurance also – with the basic requirement that MIC links its quality review processes to that of the University. There are superb working relationships and shared thinking on quality processes between personnel working in both institutions.

New shared service agreements towards enhanced registration management, fee payment and ICT collaboration will crystallise within the course of this Performance Compact but have their roots in prior discussions and joint planning.

Some of the most promising instances of coordinated planning, homologation of systems and academic delivery will take place under the terms of the new clustering arrangement which draws the two institutions, together with Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT), close together. Two major initiatives, the co-establishment of a centre of excellence for teacher education – NISE (National Institute for Studies in Education) – and joint development of a new academic programme in the Humanities, will emerge on foot of this process and it is envisaged that these ventures will have a similar 'functionalist' dynamic as seen previously (under the SIF era of the Shannon Consortium) that will bring about higher levels of systems consolidation (such as in the area of ICT support for blended learning methodologies and other forms of the teaching and learning enterprise). These initiatives are described in further detail in the sections below (see Sections 5.1-5.2, in particular) and it should be noted that since submission by MIC and UL of their respective draft Performance Compacts in October 2013, solid foundations have already been formed by the institutions towards these goals, with the agreement of an inter-institutional MoU by the three presidents of the Midwest Regional Cluster (Shannon Consortium), UL-MIC approval of a MoU giving issue to NISE, and with the formation of a joint strategic steering group (MIC-UL) to oversee the process towards development of a new shared offering in the Humanities.

Institutional Profile and Financial Sustainability

In order to achieve financial sustainability, a transparent and robust system of multi-annual funding must be introduced that recognises the cost of providing a world-class education system, that recognises the challenges facing Irish families at a time of falling incomes and higher taxation, and that recognises that a quality education system must be adequately resourced through a combination of State funding, student funding and institution-generated

funding

MIC will continue to ensure its financial sustainability through strategic and financial planning coupled with sound administration and management of financial resources. To this end, the college will work with the HEA and Department of Education and Skills to secure stable and sufficient long-term financial resources and to allocate them in a timely and appropriate manner, in order to maintain and improve the levels of service expected by all of its stakeholders.

Evidence Base:

In general, data outputs will be recorded within the MIC institutional Annual Operating Plan, reports on which will be furnished to the Governing Authority on a quarterly basis.

For segmented evidence bases, the following applies:

Domain 1

- Student Records System (UL data base containing MIC student data)

- Shared data-sets – Mid West Cluster

- MIC Research & Graduate School data base

Domain 2

- Student Records System (UL data base containing MIC student data)

- Shared data-sets – Mid West Cluster

- Targets: National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education

Domain 3

- Student Records System (UL data base containing MIC student data)

- MIC Centre for Teaching & Learning data-base

- Shared data-sets – Mid West Cluster

- Targets: National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education

Domain 4

- Student Records System (UL data base containing MIC student data)

- Shared data-sets – Mid West Cluster

- MIC Research & Graduate School data base

Domain 5

- Shared data-sets – Mid West Cluster

- MIC Centre for Teaching & Learning data-base

Domain 6

- Student Records System (UL data base containing MIC student data)

3.1 Changes to the mission and strategy statement

The Higher Education Authority acknowledges that MIC may adjust its mission and strategy from time to time. MIC agrees that the following will be the subject of strategic dialogue with the Higher Education Authority and may result in a change to the Compact:

■ Any significant change that it proposes to make to its mission during the term of the Compact

■ Any significant change that it intends to make to its activities that could affect either the content or the practical application of its mission.

4. Current and Planned Profile

The following pages contain:

- MIC's current profile 2010/11 (as supplied by the HEA); and
- MIC's planned profile 2016/17 (completed).

For hard copy submissions, please bind the current and planned profile after this page.

For electronic submissions, please submit the current and planned profiles as PDF and Excel attachments respectively.

Please see attached Excel spreadsheets for both profiles [inserted between pages 8 & 9]

Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
Profile 2010/11

STUDENT NUMBERS

Entrants

	No.
New Entrants (Full-time Undergraduate)	661

Graduates

	No.	%
Undergraduate Graduates	674	68%
Postgraduate Graduates	319	32%

Enrolments

		Full-time	Part-time	Total			Full-time	Part-time	Total
Other Enrolments (IoTs only)	No.	0	0	0	**Other Enrolments (IoTs only)**	%	0%	0%	0%
Foundation	No.	0	0	0	Foundation	%	0%	0%	0%
FETAC Cert	No.	0	0	0	FETAC Cert	%	0%	0%	0%
FETAC Advanced Cert	No.	0	0	0	FETAC Advanced Cert	%	0%	0%	0%
of which are apprenticeships	No.	0	0	0	of which are apprenticeships	%	0%	0%	0%
Undergraduate	No.	2,502	9	2,511	**Undergraduate**	%	100%	0%	84%
Diploma/Cert	No.	0	9	9	Diploma/Cert	%	0%	100%	0%
Ordinary Degree (L7)	No.	0	0	0	Ordinary Degree (L7)	%	0%	0%	0%
Honours Degree (L8)	No.	2,502	0	2,502	Honours Degree (L8)	%	100%	0%	100%
Occasional	No.	0	0	0	Occasional	%	0%	0%	0%
Postgraduate	No.	343	126	469	**Postgraduate**	%	73%	27%	16%
Postgrad Diploma/Cert	No.	172	34	206	Postgrad Diploma/Cert	%	83%	17%	44%
Masters Taught (L9)	No.	61	89	150	Masters Taught (L9)	%	41%	59%	32%
Masters Research (L9)	No.	41	2	43	Masters Research (L9)	%	95%	5%	9%
PhD (L10)	No.	69	1	70	PhD (L10)	%	99%	1%	15%
Occasional	No.	0	0	0	Occasional	%	0%	0%	0%
Total Enrolments	No.	2,845	135	2,980	**Total Enrolments**	%	95%	5%	100%
Research & Taught (L9/10)	FTE[1]			217	Research & Taught (L9/10)	% FTE L8 and All PG			7.5%
Research (L9/10)	FTE			112	Research (L9/10)	% FTE L8 and All PG			3.8%
Research (L10)	FTE			70	Research (L10)	% FTE L8 and All PG			2.4%

DISCIPLINARY MIX

Full-time Undergraduate New Entrants

	No.	%
General Programmes[2]	0	0%
Education Science	448	68%
Humanities & Arts	186	28%
Social Science, Business & Law	0	0%
Science	27	4%
Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction	0	0%
Agriculture & Veterinary	0	0%
Health & Welfare	0	0%
Services	0	0%
Combined	0	0%
Total	**661**	**100%**

Full and Part-time PhDs

	No.	%
General Programmes	0	0%
Education Science	19	27%
Humanities & Arts	51	73%
Social Science, Business & Law	0	0%
Science	0	0%
Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction	0	0%
Agriculture & Veterinary	0	0%
Health & Welfare	0	0%
Services	0	0%
Combined	0	0%
Total	**70**	**100%**

STUDENT PROFILE

(% of Enrolments)	No.	%
Flexible Learners (Part-time, Distance, E-Learning)	135	5%
International Students (Full-time)	11	0%
EU	7	64%
Non-EU	4	36%

(% of New Entrants)	No.	%
Mature Entrants (Full-time Undergraduate)	58	9%
Estimate: Entrants with Disability (EAS)[3]	6	1%
Estimate: Entrants from Non-Manual, Semi- and Unskilled Backgrounds (EAS)[4]	121	18%

PROGRESSION

	%			
Non-Progression Rate from 1st to 2nd Year		Level 7		N/A
Level 8	5%	Level 6		N/A

STAFF & FINANCIAL DATA

	No.	%		€ 000[5]	%
Core Staff	**255**	**100%**	**Total Income**	**37,455**	**100%**
Academic Staff	127	50%	State Grants	17,825	48%
Support staff	128	50%	Fees	15,234	41%
Contract Research & Specialist Staff	**8**	**100%**	Research Grants & Contracts	1,873	5%
Academic Staff	0	0%	Other Income	2,522	7%
Support staff	8	100%	**Total Expenditure**	**36,428**	**100%**
Total Staff	**264**	**100%**	Core - Pay	25,685	71%
Total Academic	127	48%	Core - Non-Pay	8,870	24%
Total Support	136	52%	Research Grants & Contracts - Pay	1,392	4%
			Research Grants & Contracts - Non-Pay	481	1%

Academic/Non-Academic Staff Ratio (Core)	1.0	Pay/Non-Pay Expenditure Ratio (incl. Research)[5]	2.9	(74/26)
Student/Academic Staff Ratio (FTE/Core)	22.9	Pay/Non-Pay Expenditure Ratio (excl. Research)[5]	2.9	(74/26)

Staff Qualifications (Proportion of...)	%		m²
Full-time Academic Staff with PhD qualification	N/A	Net Space per FTE Student	6.1
Full-time Academic Staff with PhD or Masters qu.	N/A	Gross Space per FTE Student	9.3
All Academic Staff with PhD qualification	N/A		
All Academic Staff with PhD or Masters qualification	N/A		

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

	No.			No.
Irish Patents Applications[6]	N/A	Licence agreements		for development
Spin offs/Campus Companies	for development	Publications index		for development
Invention Disclosures	for development	Citations index		for development

1) FTE (Full-time equivalents): Total Full-time + 0.5 Part-time
2) General programmes teach basic (e.g. literacy, numeracy) and personal (transferrable) skills.
3) based on proportion of respondents to Equal Access Survey (EAS)
4) based on proportion of respondents to Equal Access Survey (EAS), as for RGAM
5) 2009/10 financial data except DKIT, GMIT, ITC and WIT (2008/09); no data for TI

6) Irish Patents Office 2010

Sources: Student Record System, Equal Access Survey, Quarterly Staff Returns, Funding Statements (Universities), Audited Accounts (Institutes of Technology), Irish Patents Office.

Institution Name
Profile 2016

STUDENT NUMBERS

Entrants			Graduates		
	No.	% Change over current		No.	%
New Entrants (Full-time Undergraduate)	755		Undergraduate Graduates	700	74%
			Postgraduate Graduates	250	26%

Enrolments

		Full-time	Part-time	Remote	Total			Full-time	Part-time	Remote	Total
Other Enrolments (IoTs only)	No.				0	**Other Enrolments (IoTs only)**	%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Foundation	No.				0	Foundation	%	0%	0%	0%	0%
FETAC Cert	No.				0	FETAC Cert	%	0%	0%	0%	0%
FETAC Advanced Cert	No.				0	FETAC Advanced Cert	%	0%	0%	0%	0%
of which are apprenticeships	No.				0	of which are apprenticeships	%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Undergraduate	**No.**	*2,900*			*2,900*	***Undergraduate***	**%**	*100%*	*0%*	*0%*	*85%*
Diploma/Cert	No.				0	Diploma/Cert	%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Ordinary Degree (L7)	No.				0	Ordinary Degree (L7)	%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Honours Degree (L8)	No.	2,900	0		2,900	Honours Degree (L8)	%	100%	0%	0%	100%
Occasional	No.				0	Occasional	%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Postgraduate	**No.**	*390*	*110*		*500*	***Postgraduate***	**%**	*78%*	*22%*	*0%*	*15%*
Postgrad Diploma/Cert	No.	50	40		90	Postgrad Diploma/Cert	%	56%	44%	0%	18%
Masters Taught (L9)	No.	225	70		295	Masters Taught (L9)	%	76%	24%	0%	59%
Masters Research (L9)	No.	40	0		40	Masters Research (L9)	%	100%	0%	0%	8%
PhD (L10)	No.	70	0		70	PhD (L10)	%	100%	0%	0%	14%
Occasional	No.				0	Occasional	%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total UG and PG Enrolments	**No.**	3,290	110		3,400	**Total UG and PG Enrolments**	**%**	97%	3%	0%	100%

DISCIPLINARY MIX

Full-time Undergraduate New Entrants (Projected number of entrants to MIC			PhDs (All modes)		
	No.	%		No.	%
General Programmes		0%	General Programmes		0%
Education Science	475	63%	Education Science	15	25%
Humanities & Arts	250	33%	Humanities & Arts	55	79%
Social Science, Business & Law		0%	Social Science, Business & Law		0%
Science	30	4%	Science		0%
Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction		0%	Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction		0%
Agriculture & Veterinary		0%	Agriculture & Veterinary		0%
Health & Welfare		0%	Health & Welfare		0%
Services		0%	Services		0%
Combined		0%	Combined		0%
Total	**755**	**100%**	**Total**	**70**	**100%**

PARTICIPATION

(% of Total Enrolments incl. Flexible Learning)	No.	%	*(% of New Entrants)*	No.	%
Flexible Learners (PT, Distance, E-Learning, In-Service)	110	%	Mature Entrants (Full-time Undergraduate)	60	8%
Participants in Labour Market Activation (Springboard) *(% of National Participation)*	0		Estimate: Entrants with Disability (EAS)	30	4%
Regional Intake *(% of Full-time Enrolments)*					
from the institution's county			Estimate: Entrants from Non-Manual, Semi- and Unskilled Socio-economic Backgrounds (EAS)	135	18%
from the institution's county and bordering counties					

INTERNATIONALISATION

International Students (Full-time)	No.	%		No.
(% of Full-time Enrolments)	30	1%	Erasmus Students Outgoing (excl. work placements)	50
EU	15			
Non-EU	15			

TEACHING AND LEARNING

STAFF

	No.	%
Core Staff	**263**	
Academic Staff	134	51%
Support staff	129	49%
Contract Research & Specialist Staff	**8**	
Academic Staff	0	0%
Support staff	8	100%
Total Staff	**271**	
Total Academic	134	49%
Total Support	137	51%
Academic/Non-Academic Staff Ratio (Core	1.0	
Student/academic Staff Ratio (FTE/Core)	25.0	

FINANCIAL DATA

	€ 000	%
Total Income	**35,408**	
State Grants	13,620	38%
Fees	17,988	51%
Exchequer	7,250	20%
Non-Exchequer	10,738	30%
Research Grants & Contracts	1,500	4%
Other Income	2,300	6%
Total Expenditure	**35,360**	**100%**
Core - Pay	25,000	71%
Core - Non-Pay	8,860	25%
Research Grants & Contracts - Pay	525	1%
Research Grants & Contracts - Non-Pay	975	3%

5. Development Plans and Objectives

5.1 Regional Clusters

Strategy summary

Please provide a brief summary of Mary Immaculate College's strategy and chosen objectives in relation to its regional cluster.

This should set out:

- Member institutions
- Governance arrangements
- Priority objectives for the cluster.

Please note any external factors or assumptions that might affect institutional progress towards stated development objectives.

Regional clusters: strategy summary

In June 2012, following the HEA invitation to all HEIs to propose their preferred place within the emerging landscape configuration, the MIC Governing Authority agreed the following summary statement as a preface to its submission:

'Mary Immaculate College proposes to position itself as a university-level specialist institution with a distinctive mission, that specialises in Education and the Liberal Arts, that is strategically integrated with partner HEIs on a regional level (through the Shannon Consortium, principally) and on a collegiate level, towards increased opportunities for access, participation and progression (both inter-institutionally and intra-institutionally), towards high quality learning outcomes, an excellent student experience, cross-sectoral collaboration and coordination, and which contributes demonstrably to shared social, cultural and economic objectives.

Mary Immaculate College proposes to remain academically linked with the University of Limerick.'

MIC recognises the dividends for the Exchequer, the student community, our scholars and our administrative infrastructures, of inter-institutional cooperation and coordination. Since the submission of our landscape strategy, the Minister for Education & Skills has identified the Mid West Regional Cluster as the operative space for inter-institutional collaboration, partnership and joint planning between MIC, the University of Limerick (UL) and Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT). This model, which is consistent with the vision articulated by MIC in the strategic dialogue is welcomed by MIC and the College will be an active contributor to the cluster under the following headings.

Shared, coordinated academic planning

The College has agreed with the University of Limerick, that in response to the Minister's request for reconfiguration of Liberal Arts provision in Limerick, a jointly-delivered Liberal Arts programme, with common entry for students, should be provided by both institutions. This builds on significant foundations already laid by both institutions in shared delivery of modules to students on both campuses (using blended learning for synchronous and asynchronous teaching).

MIC and UL have also agreed to jointly develop a National Institute for Studies in Education (NISE), on foot of the *Report of the International Review Panel on the Structure of Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland* (2012). This vehicle will seek to share and disseminate best practice in teaching and learning, as well as policy on teacher education, and will act as a regional hub for other stakeholders with a core interest in teacher education, and will systematise a coordinated approach to school placement for student teachers. It will also provide a framework for joint academic planning and development of modules designed to be offered in common to students at MIC and UL, offering a coordinated approach for the provision of so-called 'foundation' modules that extend across the primary and post-primary continuum (see Objective 1.2, below). MIC and UL have committed to the development of strong structures for governance, leadership and management of this vehicle and agree that the governance structure of the Institute will report directly to the Governing Bodies of both parent institutions.

In the coming years, we will significantly extend the instances of inter-institutional graduate programme delivery involving MIC, building on those that are already in place (e.g. Structured PhD in Education delivered in conjunction with UL, Structured PhD in Philosophy of Art and Culture in conjunction with UL and NUIG).

Regionally coordinated approach to transfer and progression pathways

MIC, UL and LIT have agreed that a federated Limerick Graduate School should be created in order to facilitate closer integration, resource-sharing, and jointly-delivered services for students of each institution's individual Graduate Schools. This will have the effect of increasing the shared critical mass for attraction of high calibre graduate students to the region, research innovation, and funding. The Limerick Graduate School will also enable students and supervisors to enjoy higher levels of synergy and cross-fertilisation of ideas and will provide a vehicle for vertical progression of students between institutions.

Building on the very robust foundations created by the Shannon Consortium partners during SIF 1-2, the Mid West Cluster will integrate access and retention mechanisms through a shared platform. This will enable joint planning, target-setting and outreach, as well as coordinated reporting.

Shared services and facilities, including harmonisation of systems and processes

The Shannon Consortium has been recognised as an exemplar of shared services and system harmonisation. A good example of this is the Shannon Consortium Procurement Network which created an integrated procurement process that has yielded significant savings to the Exchequer. MIC and UL also share a common student registration system and part of the work of the Mid West Cluster will be to enhance institutional ICTs and MIS as shared systems. This will be crucial in the access context where common approaches to the creation of higher education pathways and reciprocity of recognition of pre-university programmes are targets.

Perhaps the most ambitious and significant goal in the area of shared service development and delivery lies in the realm of blended learning as an added value to teaching and learning and pedagogy. This will be designed to complement existing synergies in teaching and learning and the building of a community of practice within the Regional Learning Network established under the Shannon Consortium. The Mid West Cluster partners have a strong track record of cooperation in the area and count amongst their goals the creation of a common e-learning platform, inclusive of facilities, hardware, software and training supports. The partners will seek external funding for this platform through joint applications.

Coordinated regional approach to enterprise and community and to regional development / Shared and coordinated approach to the presentation and promotion of the region internationally

The emergence of the Mid West Cluster is timely, given the current merger of Limerick City and County Councils and the wider regional consolidation of other statutory bodies. The Mid West Cluster will be used to coordinate the interaction between higher education partners and social, economic and civic partners. Several steps have been taken towards this already, with the launch in June 2013 by Limerick Joint Authorities of *Limerick 2030: Economic & Spatial Plan*. The Mid West Cluster partners are core stakeholders and contributors within this shared framework. A key function of this grouping will be to attract regional development (e.g. JESSICA) and EIB funding and substantial strides have been made towards this already with the signing of a charter (based on the Leipzig Charter) to which the Mid West Cluster partners are signatories (this Charter was drafted at MIC at the request of the planning group and is an example of the deliverables emerging in this context). A key goal contained in the economic and spatial plan for the city is to attract international students and to provide them with a city-based living experience (accommodation, retail, services) and the cluster partners are working with the joint authorities and others to achieve this.

1.1	Institution objective	**To provide the highest standard of governance, characterised by commitment to our institutional ethos and mission, enlightened visioning, prudent and ethical leadership, inclusive representation and collective responsibility** [*Pillar 7 / Goal 1*]
	Performance indicator	Adoption and implementation of agreed inter-institutional clustering strategy for compliance with re-configuration of higher education landscape (under the *National Strategy for Education*) that preserves the institutional identity, mission and operational integrity of the College. [*Pillar 7 / Goal 1 / Target 1*]
	Baseline	MIC membership of the Shannon Consortium (dating from 2007).
	Interim target, end 2014	Inter-institutional agreement, in the form of a MIC-UL-LIT MOU on governance and operational structure of Mid West Regional Cluster, adopted by MIC Governing Authority.
	Interim target, end 2015	Mid West Regional Cluster in operation and clear reporting relationship to (i) MIC Governing Authority (as well as to, (ii) partner Governing Bodies), and (iii) to HEA, in place.
	Final target, end 2016	Demonstrable and measurable increase (and continuing growth projections) in range and depth of inter-institutional activities (e.g. shared academic planning and delivery; research; shared service delivery / SLAs; joint procurement; policy development) via Mid West Regional Cluster.

1.2	Institution objective	**To broaden and deepen our commitment to working in partnership with other HEIs and external agencies to further our mission and goals, as well as to contribute to the advancement of national priorities and policy imperatives, particularly in the education sector** [*Pillar 7 / Goal 4*]
	Performance indicator	Commitment to Shannon Consortium maintained as primary clustering arrangement and % increase in shared approaches / joint initiatives / resource optimisation / shared service delivery [*Pillar 7 / Goal 4 / Target 1*]
		% research and knowledge transfer initiatives aimed at enhancing public policy and practice [Pillar 2 (5) / Goal 6 / Target 1]
		Number of collaborative research linkages and research networks created with other HEIs at regional, national, and international levels [Pillar 2 (5) / Goal 1 / Target 3]
	Baseline	MIC membership of the Shannon Consortium (dating from 2007)

		Teaching Council commendations, accompanying accreditation of all ITE programmes, recognising, *inter alia*, that the MIC '*strategic plan emphasises excellence in teaching and learning, as well as in scholarship and research, reflecting values and ideals that derive from a rich tradition*'.
		Report of the International Review Panel on the Structure of Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland (2012)
	Interim target, end 2014	Joint MIC-UL Task Force recommendations on role, structure and governance of National Institute for Studies in Education (NISE) adopted by Governing Bodies of both institutions and critical path for establishment of Institute agreed.
		Independent Chair of NISE appointed
	Interim target, end 2015	NISE launched and operative under leadership of Director appointed by MIC and UL Presidents, with oversight by NISE board appointed by participating institutions.
	Final target, end 2016	Embedding of research in teacher education
		Coordinated academic planning for initial teacher education modules common across the primary and post-primary continuum.
		Systematic interface for school placement
		Leverage critical mass for range of integral research clusters and contribute to national priorities in teaching / teacher education
		Multi-faceted structured doctoral programme drawing from partners' respective areas of expertise
		NISE as 'hub' for teacher professional development
		Pedagogical innovation
		Attract and enable international professional engagement

1.3	**Institution objective**	**To foster closer collaboration with partner institutions towards inter-institutional delivery of academic programmes** [*Pillar 2 /Context 6 / Goal 1*]
	Performance indicator	Joint review of new possibilities for inter-institutional **undergraduate** ... module and programme creation and co-delivery with partner HEIs, with particular emphasis on opportunities involving the University of Limerick within the Shannon Consortium framework [*Pillar 2 / Goal 1 / Target 1*];

	Number of new modules and programmes jointly designed and delivered at all relevant NFQ levels [*Pillar 2 / Goal 1 / Target 2*] Joint development of SIF pre-entry access programmes with LIT and UL via the Shannon Consortium
Baseline	Proposal for MIC to contribute to the delivery of Geography modules to UL BSc in Physical Education programme
	MIC Department of Philosophy contributing teaching on UL Nursing programme
	National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030
Interim target, end 2014	Report and recommendations of joint UL-MIC Task Group to develop jointly-delivered, common entry, Liberal Arts undergraduate degree programme
	100% increase in number of modules co-delivered [incorporating blended learning methodologies] between UL and MIC on existing programmes
Interim target, end 2015	Joint MIC-UL Liberal Arts undergraduate degree programme (with common entry), developed, approved and CAO-listed
Final target, end 2016	MIC delivery of up to 10 modules on UL programmes
	Launch of joint UL-MIC Liberal Arts undergraduate degree programme

1.4	**Institution objective**	**To foster closer collaboration with partner institutions towards inter-institutional delivery of academic programmes** [*Pillar 2 / Context 6 / Goal 1*]
	Performance indicator	Joint review of new possibilities for inter-institutional … **postgraduate** module and programme creation and co-delivery with partner HEIs, with particular emphasis on opportunities involving the University of Limerick within the Shannon Consortium framework [*MIC Strategic Plan: Pillar 2 / Goal 1 / Target 1*]
		Number of new modules and programmes jointly designed and delivered at all relevant NFQ levels [*Pillar 2 / Goal 1 / Target 2*]
	Baseline	Level 9 – Joint Delivery - MIC-UL: 2 (taught)
		Level 10 – Joint Delivery: - MIC-UL: 1 Structured PhD programme
		Level 10 – Joint Development: - MIC-NUIG: 1 Structured PhD programme
	Interim target, end 2014	Level 9 – Joint Development: - MIC-Marino College: 1 (taught)
		Level 9 – Joint Delivery: - MIC-Marino College: 1 (taught)
	Interim target, end 2015	Level 10 – Joint Delivery: - MIC-NUIG: 1 Structured PhD programme
		Level 10 – Joint Development: - MIC-UL: 1 Single Structured PhD programme
	Final target, end 2016	Level 10 – Single Delivery: - MIC-UL: 1 Structured PhD programme

1.5	Institution objective	**To further develop inter-institutional pathways for access to third-level learning opportunities and for progression** [*Pillar 2 (7) / Goal 3*]
	Performance indicator	Joint review of challenges and opportunities in establishing joined-up targeting, outreach and access pathways [*Pillar 2 (7) / Goal 3 / Target 1*]
		Number of new inter-institutional initiatives for outreach and access in place [*Pillar 2(7) / Goal 3 / Target 2*]
		Evidence of increased learner progression between MIC and partner institutions [*Pillar 2(7) / Goal 3 / Target 4*]
	Baseline	Shannon Consortium Downtown Centre (city-based hub offering access support)
		MIC-UL-LIT Access Course (Level 5 Certificate in General Studies)
		MIC participation in Southwest Regional Access Alliance
	Interim target, end 2014	Joint Mid West Cluster review of challenges and opportunities for integrated targeting, outreach and access
		Joint review to generate database that maps access initiatives onto Mid West Cluster institutions, FE partners and community partners
	Interim target, end 2015	New Mid West Cluster platform and protocols for integrated and systematic targeting, outreach and monitoring of access pathways in operation
		Mid West Cluster access platform operating in partnership with community organisations and FE sector
		Agreed mechanism in place for reciprocal recognition of access courses and awards across regional and national FE and HE institutions
	Final target, end 2016	Increase (cumulative) in access across Mid West Cluster (cumulative baselines to be determined pre-2014)
		Increase in overall cross-institutional progression levels (against cumulative baselines to be determined pre-2014)
		Increase in vertical progression linkages and outcomes between community, FE and HE sectors (against cumulative baselines to be determined pre-2014)

1.6	Institution objective	**To broaden and deepen our commitment to working in partnership with other HEIs** [*Pillar 7 / Goal 4*]
	Performance indicator	Commitment to the Shannon Consortium maintained as primary clustering arrangement and % increase in shared approaches / joint initiatives / resource optimisation / shared service delivery [*Pillar 7 / Goal 4 / Target 1*]
		Establishment of Graduate School [*Pillar 2(2) / Goal 2 / Target 3*]
		Evidence of increased learner progression between MIC and partner institutions [*Pillar 2 / Goal 3 / Target 4*]
	Baseline	Participation in the Shannon Consortium Regional Graduate Training Network
		Institutional approval for MIC Graduate School (following review)
	Interim target, end 2014	MIC Graduate School established and Head of School appointed
		Joint Mid West Cluster Task Force appointed to explore feasibility and plan required for establishment of federated Limerick Graduate School
	Interim target, end 2015	Alignment of postgraduate regulations, policies and procedures (MIC / UL / LIT)
	Final target, end 2016	Launch of federated Limerick Graduate School

1.7	Institution objective	**To foster collegiality and collaboration amongst faculty and regional institutional partners towards reflective practice and scholarly dialogue on teaching and learning** [*Pillar 2 (5) / Goal 4*]
	Performance indicator	Continued participation in Shannon Consortium Regional Teaching & Learning Awards initiative as well as participation in national award programmes from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning [*Pillar 2 (5) / Goal 4 / Target 1*]
		Participation in and organisation of regional Teaching & Learning workshops and symposia [*Pillar 2 (5) / Goal 4 / Target 2*]
		Significant contribution to, and participation in the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning [*Pillar 2 (5) / Goal 4 / Target 3*]
	Baseline	3 Regional Teaching & Learning Awards won by MIC Academic staff since 2007
		25% of MIC Academic staff participating in Shannon Consortium integrated teaching & learning events (e.g. *Conversations in the Consortium* reflective practice seminars)
	Interim target, end 2014	Joint Task Force (MIC-UL-LIT) recommendations towards a Mid West Cluster 'Regional Learner Network' incorporating integrated planning, delivery of teaching and learning interventions, and continuation of Regional Teaching & Learning Award
		5% increase in initiatives devised and contributed by MIC to Mid West Cluster teaching and learning events programme
		5% increase in participation by MIC staff in Mid West Cluster teaching and learning training events / workshops
	Interim target, end 2015	Mid West Regional Learner Network operational
		5% increase in initiatives devised and contributed by MIC to Mid West Cluster teaching and learning events programme
		10% increase in participation by MIC staff in Mid West Cluster teaching and learning training events / workshop
	Final target, end 2016	Cumulative 15% increase in initiatives devised and contributed by MIC to Mid West Cluster teaching and learning events programme
		20% increase in participation by MIC staff in Mid West Cluster teaching and learning training events / workshop

5.2 Participation, equal access and lifelong learning

Strategy Summary

Please provide a brief summary of Mary Immaculate College's strategy and chosen objectives in relation to participation, equal access and lifelong learning.

This should reference the benchmarks by which the objectives have been set. Further supporting evidence, with regard to the means of verification, should be provided in the appendices as necessary.

Please note any external factors or assumptions that might affect institutional progress towards stated development objectives.

Participation, equal access and lifelong learning: strategy summary

In harmony with our institutional ethos, MIC maintains a particular focus on extending equity of opportunity to all in society. We hold that education is an essential means toward quality of life and that the university-level institution should be available for participation by all as a shared asset of the wider community. To date, our efforts to widen participation on behalf of all members of the community have resulted in significant examples of innovation and increased levels of entry for non-traditional students through a broad range of access pathways such as our Foundation Certificate for Mature Learners, our development of a methodology for supporting ring-fenced CAO entry by students from backgrounds of socio-economic disadvantage (subsequently incorporated by the HEAR Scheme) and a partnership with the National Institute for Intellectual Disability which has led to a dedicated and accredited academic programme for students with intellectual disabilities.

We have matched such efforts with retention and progression supports such as our Learner Support Service and our Access and Disability Office to ensure that the additional services required by students who have experienced prior marginalisation from educational experience are targeted, tailored and coordinated. More recently, we have worked intensively and productively with our partners in the Shannon Consortium to provide inter-institutional cooperation towards access and progression, and this work will be intensified under the new Mid West Cluster. In this context we will enhance our targeting and outreach strategies within external community contexts and along the life-cycle continuum, in partnership with our fellow Mid West Cluster institutions and other stakeholders working within the domains of social inclusion, community development and local governance.

Our challenges over the next four years derive from the extra demand for education and up-skilling in a rapidly shifting economic context, coupled with the need to expand our focused supports for non-traditional entrants most adversely affected by prevailing economic conditions. While our responses for increased demand for participation have been very successful, the proliferation of non-traditional students and the complexity of services we have introduced have resulted in the need to significantly enhance coordination and integration between the structures and teams working in this area, with the building of more robust linkages between academic and professional staff being a key goal. Critically, we will need to join with other stakeholders, including the private sector, in order to help meet the funding needs of students who want to participate in mainstream higher education but lack the

financial means to do so in a severely depressed economy. While we had experienced a bulge in mature applicants, particularly to the BEd programme, we now see that there has been a sharp drop in such numbers in the last two years and this is something we will address. In general, we foresee that fewer students from backgrounds of socio-economic disadvantage (including mature students) will be in a position to take advantage of access pathways. While more work will need to be done to attract and retain such students, we have set modest wider participations targets that we believe are realistic in current circumstances where many are struggling to remain in third-level education and fewer will have the means to enter.

2.1	Institution objective	**To significantly increase the breadth and diversity of our student community in alignment with national targets for inclusive participation and lifelong learning** [*Pillar 2 (4) / Goal 1*]
	Performance indicator	Agreement on annual and cumulative student intake targets for period of our Strategic Plan with reference to national targets and inter-institutional strategy [*Pillar 2 (4) / Goal 1 / Target 1*]
		Effective targeting and outreach strategies developed and implemented with critical emphasis on partnership with key stakeholders in the community, public and statutory sectors [*Pillar 2 (4) / Goal 1 / Target 2*]
		Targets achieved across all demographic and socio-economic learner categories [*Pillar 2 (4) / Goal 1 / Target 5*]
	Baseline	Segmented wider participation targets in place and linked to current *National Policy for Equity of Access to Education*
		Participation in HEAR scheme
		Mature student FTE enrolment rate of 9%
		Flexible learning enrolment rate 2%
		Student with disability enrolment rate of 1%
	Interim target, end 2014	Review and re-setting of wider participation targets with reference to *National Access Plan 2014*
		New targeting, outreach and access / retention strategy in place and seamlessly integrated with Mid West Cluster access platform (see *Domain 1, Objective 1.5*, above)
		Participation in DARE scheme
		Mature student FTE enrolment rate of 6%[1]
		Flexible learning enrolment rate 2%
		Student with disability enrolment rate of 3%
	Interim target, end 2015	Coordinated Mid West Cluster outreach and targeting activity
		Structured, multi-sectoral partnerships and initiatives in place focused on effective targeting towards wider participation and coordinated approaches
		Mature student FTE enrolment rate of 7%

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[1] See paragraph, above

	Flexible learning enrolment rate 3%
	Student with disability enrolment rate of 3.5%
Final target, end 2016	Mature student FTE (UG) enrolment rate of 8%
	Flexible learning enrolment rate 3%
	Student with disability enrolment rate of 4%

2.2	Institution objective	**To significantly increase the breadth and diversity of our student community in alignment with national targets for inclusive participation and lifelong learning** [*Pillar 2 (4) / Goal 1*]
		To implement a process of programme re-conceptualisation … that promote lifelong learning and that complement the institutional ethos and values of the College [*Pillar 2 / Goal 2 (1)*]
	Performance indicator	Effective targeting and outreach strategies developed and implemented with critical emphasis on partnership with key stakeholders in the community, public and statutory sectors [*Pillar 2 (4) / Goal 1 / Target 2*]
		Number of new offerings developed, approved, and launched, [*Pillar 2 / Goal 2 / Target 3*]
		Targets achieved across all demographic and socio-economic learner categories [*Pillar 2 (4) / Goal 1 / Target 5*]
	Baseline	Identification of need to develop new direct access route to enable mature learners to progress to the BEd and teacher education programmes
		Agreement with DES to develop an entry programme targeted at mature students to counteract emerging decline in applicants
		Partnership with Limerick & Clare Education & Training Board to develop pre-entry programme
	Interim target, end 2014	Design, accreditation and piloting of 1-year Teacher Education Preparatory Programme
		15 students registered on pilot 2013-14 pre-entry programme, with direct access to BEd degree programme upon satisfactory completion
	Interim target, end 2015	6 students progressing from 2014-15 Teacher Education Preparatory Programme to BEd
		15 students registered on 2014-15 Teacher Education Preparatory Programme
	Final target, end 2016	6 students progressing from 2015-16 Teacher Education Preparatory Programme to BEd
		15 students registered on 2015-16 Teacher Education Preparatory Programme

2.3	Institution objective	**To significantly increase the breadth and diversity of our student community in alignment with national targets for inclusive participation and lifelong learning** [*Pillar 2 (4) / Goal 1*]
	Performance indicator	Targets achieved across all demographic and socio-economic categories [*Pillar 2 (4) / Goal 1 / Target 5*]
		Number of innovative and open campus-based learning initiatives specifically designed to introduce all sections of our community to university-level learning experiences, to promote life-long learning and to attract prospective students to access mainstream provision at MIC / partner institutions [*Pillar 2 (4) / Goal / Target 2*]
		Evidence of coordination and complementarity between MIC life-long learning initiatives and partner initiatives
	Baseline	Certificate in Contemporary Living for adults with an intellectual disability introduced in partnership with local statutory and community-sector organisations
		12 students completing programmes
	Interim target, end 2014	Introduction of 2-year, QQI-accredited Level 4 Certificate in General Learning & Personal Development in partnership with Brothers of Charity, Ennis
		10 students registered
	Interim target, end 2015	100% progression to Year 2
		Formal coordination structures in place for initiatives co-delivered with FE and community organisations
	Final target, end 2016	100% completion and graduation rate

5.3 Excellent teaching and learning and quality of the student experience

Strategy Summary

Please provide a brief summary of Mary Immaculate College's strategy and chosen objectives in relation to excellent teaching and learning and quality of the student experience.

This should set out:

1   Vision underpinning the portfolio of undergraduate programmes

2   Approaches being taken to improve overall performance

3   How planned provision is aligned to institutional mission

Further supporting evidence, with regard to the means of verification, should be provided in appendices as necessary.

Please note any external factors or assumptions that might affect progress towards stated objectives.

Excellent teaching and learning and quality of the student experience: strategy summary

MIC has always had a strong commitment to excellence in teaching and learning and its academic programme development proceeds from the concept that a coherent and foundational vision and set of outcomes must be the key underpinning features. The development of a re-conceptualised Bachelor of Education programme is an example of this approach, with its foundations set within the latest research corpus and pedagogy based on the active research of our own staff and their peers, national and international.

We have ensured that our commitment to quality is sustained by a comprehensive programme of peer-led quality reviews for the period 2012–2016 and this will culminate in an objective peer review of the institution as a whole in 2017.

Following establishment of a Centre for Teaching & Learning (CTL) in 2007, we have concentrated our efforts on providing a service for faculty that facilitates student evaluation of teaching. The Student Evaluation of Teaching process (SET) is a key instrument in quality assurance of teaching at MIC and frequent participation by academic staff is seen as part of a cycle of learning that informs better delivery as well as the approach taken by ancillary support services for students such as the Learner Support Unit.

We note that a focus on teaching and learning is core to the *National Strategy for Higher Education,* which advocates joined-up approaches which, it is proposed, will fall within the framework of a new National Academy for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning. Having worked very closely with our partners in the Shannon Consortium to launch coordinated initiatives in teaching and learning under the Strategic Innovation Fund, we welcome further developments towards support for a community of practice in this area and will continue to work in collaboration with or Mid West Cluster partners in pursuing excellence in teaching and

learning.

Internal challenges will be to build on the impetus given to our Centre for Teaching & Learning through SIF by making it part of our mainstream provision and closely integrated with our programme delivery strategies. We also seek to adopt a more cohesive approach to teaching and learning by fostering closer coordination of the broader teaching and learning environment. Teaching and learning demand integration of a number of enabling systems, often set apart in HEIs' organisational structures. These systems include quality assurance, IT and AV, funding for staff development (including Training of Trainers) and research.

The recent review process, focusing on initial teacher education in Ireland, has been seminal to development of the academic programme at MIC, and, of course, planning for the 2014-2016 period and beyond. First of all, the College has successfully responded to the *National Strategy for Literacy and Numeracy Among Children and Young People* (2011), as well as linked recommendations by the Teaching Council, by fully reconceptualising its Bachelor of Education programme within a new, four-year framework. Moreover, following the *Report of the International Review Panel on Initial Teacher Education in Ireland* (2012), the College has joined with the University of Limerick to implement the key recommendation that a centre for excellence in initial teacher education should be established by both institutions, articulated with partner institutions engaged in teacher education, and grounded in the philosophy that teacher education should be rooted firmly in research (i.e. both informed by the research canon and inclusive of the delivery of research skills to student teachers) – a core principle put into relief by the Review of the Structure of Initial Teacher Education in Ireland (2012) by Professor Áine Hyland. These recommendations have crystallised in the form of a partnership agreement between Mary Immaculate College and the University of Limerick to establish the National Institute for Studies in Education (NISE). (See Section 1, above, together with Objective 1.2, for further detail.)

One of the greatest challenges we have faced in recent years has been to expand and raise the standard of our campus infrastructure to the level of quality required, and deserved, by our learning community – students, staff and visitors. We have made significant strides in meeting this challenge with the roll-out of our development plan and achievement of our targets for the first two phases of that plan. We have more than doubled our buildings stock and have provided a world-class teaching and research space. We have also invested heavily in our estate, laying particular emphasis on adding value to the *public* space, with the opening up and transformation of our campus grounds. We have aimed our resources at the fitting out of the *Lime Tree Theatre* as a public auditorium that will act as a key element in local and regional strategies to foster inclusion and civic participation through the performing arts as well as to highlight Limerick City as a place of cultural excellence.

As we proceed with implementation of the next stage of our campus development master plan, refurbishment and extension of our library building will be a priority. The existing library building was completed in 1979 and intended to accommodate 750 students. A library, well-designed, and properly stocked and equipped, is the lifeblood of a university-level institution and it is imperative that the College succeeds in bringing the existing building to twenty first century standards and in equipping it to meet the needs of a large and diverse learning community.

3.1	Institution objective	**To implement a process of programme re-conceptualisation with emphasis on (a) creation of collaborative intra-faculty and inter-faculty offerings and (b) learning outcomes that are focused on the fostering of critical and creative thinking and outstanding communication skills, that are informed by inclusive discourse on changing professional needs, that promote lifelong learning and that complement the institutional ethos and values of the College** [*Pillar 2 / Goal 2*]
	Performance indicator	Unique, innovative and outstanding 4-Year Bachelor of Education programme finalised, approved, resourced[2] and launched by September 2012 [*Pillar 2 / Goal 2 / Target 1*]
	Baseline	In-depth re-conceptualisation exercise completed, resulting in new programme vision for Bachelor of Education degree, module structure and learning outcomes based on Bologna Framework, Teaching Council guidelines, DES policy on literacy and numeracy in ITE, and international best practice rooted in peer-recognised research
		Preparation for re-conceptualisation of Bachelor of Education in Education & Psychology
	Interim target, end 2014	Bachelor of Education degree programmes approved by Teaching Council, launched, and operational
		Four-Year BEd: 812 FTEs (406 per annum)
		Four-Year BEd Education & Psychology: 62 FTEs (31 per annum)
	Interim target, end 2015	Four-Year BEd: 1,218 FTEs (intake TBC by DES)
		Four-Year BEd Education & Psychology: 93 FTEs
	Final target, end 2016	Four-Year BEd: 1,624 FTEs (intake TBC by DES)
		Four-Year BEd Education & Psychology: 125 FTEs

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[2] Adequate resources have not been allocated for this development to date

3.2	Institution objective	**To renew our emphasis on continuous quality assurance and to work as a whole community to situate our work in strategic context, to value and celebrate our endeavours, to actively seek the views of all those whose needs we serve, and to be imaginative in realising the potential for improvement** [*Pillar 6 / Goal 6*]
	Performance indicator	Quality Review Schedule established [*Pillar 6 / Goal 6 / Target 1*]
		Number of Quality Reviews undertaken across academic and professional services departments [*Pillar 6 / Goal 6 / Target 2*]
		Commencement of IUQB (i.e. QQI) institutional review process [*Pillar 6 / Goal 6 / Target 3*]
	Baseline	5 formal Quality Reviews completed
		Quality Review Schedule 2012-2017 approved, following consultation with academic and professional services departments
		First formal Student Exit Survey completed (2011 graduating cohort)
	Interim target, end 2014	7 further Quality Reviews completed / commenced
		3 further Student Exit Surveys completed
		4 First Year cohort Learning Experience surveys completed (including surveys and focus groups designed to capture student experience of re-conceptualised Level 8 & 9 programmes)
	Interim target, end 2015	4 new Quality Reviews completed / commenced
		4 further Learning Experience surveys completed
	Final target, end 2016	3 new Quality Reviews completed / commenced
		4 further Learning Experience surveys completed
		Participation in National Student Survey
		Demonstrable evidence of academic and professional support service delivery modified in response to key Quality Review / Exit Survey findings 2012-2016
		Preparation for commencement of final 3 Quality Reviews scheduled 2012-2017
		Preparation for institution-wide Quality Review by QQI

3.3	**Institution objective**	**To ensure the prominence of a student-centred culture throughout support services that are cohesive and multi-faceted** [*Pillar 3 / Goal 1*]
	Performance indicator	Consultative review of student support services focusing on maintaining the fullest provision for the whole-student approach, effectiveness of service integration and linkage with academic provision, and efficient coordination within management infrastructure [*Pillar 3 / Goal 1 / Target 1*]
		Recommendations implemented, new structures in place [*Pillar 3 / Goal 1 / Target 1*]
	Baseline	Exceptional commitment of all staff to a student-centred teaching and learning culture and the whole-student ethos of the College
		Establishment of informal student support services network for integrated case management / referral
		Sub-optimal coordination and integration of distributed service delivery
		Excellent strategic and operational partnership with MISU (MIC Students' Union)
	Interim target, end 2014	Consultative review of students supports and service infrastructure completed with recommendations arising
		Scheduled Quality Review of student support services completed with recommendations arising
		Director-level appointment incorporating responsibility*, inter alia*, for coordinating services aimed at access, retention and progression (see x, above)
	Interim target, end 2015	Recommendations from both reviews (2014) implemented, new structures in place
	Final target, end 2016	Demonstrable enhancement of cohesion between support-services underpinning the student-centred culture at MIC

3.4	Institution objective	To enhance retention and progression rates [*Pillar 2 (4) / Goal 2*]
	Performance indicator	Effective monitoring and reporting system in place with secure and confidential data flows between relevant support units [*Pillar 2 (4) / Goal 2 / Target 1*]
		Stronger operational linkages between academic staff and professional staff for ensuring student retention and progression [*Pillar 2 (4) / Goal 2 / Target 3*]
		Enhanced system of financial support for students (including students in difficulty) with increase evidence of linkages fostered for contributions under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and more seamless coordination with external agencies providing grants and other aids [*Pillar 2 (4) / Goal 2 / Target 5*]
		Evidence of % increases in retention and progression above current baselines [*Pillar 2 (4) / Goal 2 / Target 6*]
	Baseline	Total student retention rate: 90%
		Total Facilitated External Transfer for non-completing First Year students: 56%
		Learner Support Unit 1:1 meetings providing academic advice and guidance: 891 per academic year
		Year Coordinators appointed for Bachelor of Education programme
		Establishment of informal student support services network for integrated case management / referral
	Interim target, end 2014	Total student retention rate: 92%
		Adoption of policy and protocols for availability of programme exit awards
		Secure intranet-based MIS for tracking access / retention / referral / early warning
		Formalisation of student support services network for integrated case-management
		Learner Support Unit 1:1 meetings providing academic advice and guidance: 950 per academic year
	Interim target, end 2015	Total student retention rate: 93%
		Total facilitated external transfer for non-completing First Year students: 60%
		Learner Support Unit 1:1 meetings providing academic advice and guidance: 975 per academic year

		Coordination of internal and cross-institutional retention and progression through integration with Mid West access platform and systematic partnership with wider community
	Final target, end 2016	Total student retention rate: 93%
		Level 7 awards for students opting to exit 3- or 4-year programmes following completion of Year 2
		Total facilitated external transfer for non-completing First Year students: 70%
		Learner Support Unit 1:1 meetings providing academic advice and guidance: 1000 per academic year
		Quantum of financial support from CSR/non-mainstream donations for students at risk

3.5	**Institution objective**	**To significantly enhance our library infrastructure to fully meet the diversity of needs amongst our learning community and of members of the wider community wishing to share our resources** [*Pillar 6 / Goal 2*]
	Performance indicator	Evidence of substantial progress towards refurbishment and extension of College Library [Pillar 6 / Goal 2 / Target 1]
	Baseline	Long-standing deficits in space and quality of MIC Library Building
	Interim target, end 2014	Plans for new Library Building finalised, with key goal to provide access to learning resources designed to meet wider public needs and promote engagement by public in city-based campus
		Joint application to funding pools (e.g. JESSICA / EIB Funds) via Joint Local Authorities consortium of local stakeholders
	Interim target, end 2015	Finance package in place for commencement of planning and pre-construction processes
	Final target, end 2016	Planning and pre-construction process commenced

3.6	Institution objective	**To significantly enhance student communications** [*Pillar 3 / Goal 3*]
	Performance indicator	Academic feedback culture and mechanisms significantly enhanced
		Student perceptions of academic feedback systems continuously monitored
		Range of new student-centred information delivery protocols in place
		Student enrolment, registration and payments systems significantly enhanced
		Student communications fora established
	Baseline	Student representation (via MISU nominations) across all formal MIC committees and boards
		Exit Survey feedback (2011, 2012) revealing perceived need for improvements in student communications and academic feedback
		Insufficient options for online fee payment and absence of online enrolment system
		Online module registration available
		Text alert service available (critical incidents only)
		Ageing website and intranet facilities for students
	Interim target, end 2014	New student-faculty fora introduced (4 meetings per annum)
		50% academic feedback via VLE (Moodle)
		Establish Corporate Communications Office incorporating responsibility for coordination of student communications
		Significant enhancement of student information pages on MIC website
		New student intranet portal introduced
		Text alert service devolved to faculties and core service units for targeted information dissemination
		100% of all student notifications delivered via combination of e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, and SMS (in addition to existing notification arrangements)
		Dedicated student information smartphone app (iOS and Android) introduced
	Interim target, end 2015	Online student enrolment introduced
		Online fees payment mechanism introduced
3.6	Final target, end 2016	Conduct comprehensive valuation of students' current perceptions of communications effectiveness

		Address any new / remaining deficits in Strategic Plan 2017-21
3.7	**Institution objective**	**To improve the quality of the MIC postgraduate student experience** [*Pillar 2 / Goal 3 (2)*]
	Performance indicator	Consultative review of postgraduate student experience at MIC [*Pillar 2 / Goal 3 (2) / Target 1*]
		Establishment of dedicated, fully equipped, resourced and clustered work-space for postgraduate students [*Pillar 2 / Goal 3 (2) / Target 2*]
		Improved communications, consultation mechanisms and information delivery for postgraduate students [*Pillar 2 / Goal 3 (2) / Target 3*]
	Baseline	Postgraduate student facilities distributed across campus; ageing work spaces
		Postgraduate Office and Research Office located and administered separately
		Approval for creation of MIC Graduate School
	Interim target, end 2014	New MIC Graduate School created and integrated with Research Office
		Acquisition of new building, with centralisation and fit-out of fully equipped, resourced and clustered work space for students in the Graduate School (adjoining Research Office and administrative facilities)
		Qualitative survey of exiting postgraduate students conducted
		Task Force to undertake consultative review of current and future postgraduate needs
	Interim target, end 2015	Cross-fertilisation of graduate scholarship and mentoring via federated Limerick Graduate School and Mid West Cluster Graduate Training Network
	Final target, end 2016	Fully equipped, resourced and clustered work space for visiting scholars within the Limerick Graduate School

3.8	Institution objective	**To support teaching and the scholarship of teaching** [*Pillar 2 / Goal 1 (5)*]
	Performance indicator	Significant enhancement of existing teaching and learning leadership, infrastructure and resourcing [*Pillar 2 / Goal 1 (5) / Target 1*]
	Baseline	Building blocks for a teaching and learning culture in place: - Teaching & Learning Coordinator - Teaching & Learning Steering Committee - MIC Centre for Teaching & Learning established - Shared services within the Shannon Consortium
	Interim target, end 2014	Establishment of Teaching & Learning Directorate
		Appointment of Director of Teaching & Learning
		Appointment of 2 Educational Technologists via contract for service
		Shared service framework within Mid West Cluster based on the Shannon Consortium model
	Interim target, end 2015	Teaching & Learning Officer appointed
		Educational Technologist position mainstreamed
	Final target, end 2016	Teaching & Learning culture fully supported and driven by intra- and inter-institutional leadership, infrastructure and resourcing

3.9	Institution objective	**To advocate for, demonstrate and embed exemplary practices and innovation in teaching and learning** [*Pillar 2 / Goal 2 (5)*]
	Performance indicator	% increase in events and initiatives designed effectively highlight and showcase exemplars of excellence and innovation in teaching & learning [*Pillar 2 / Goal 2 (5) / Target 1*]
		% increase in staff participation [*Pillar 2 / Goal 2 (5) / Target 2*]
	Baseline	Monthly range of intra-institutional events (MIC Centre for Teaching & Learning) and inter-institutional (Shannon Consortium) – e.g. *Conversations in the Consortium* series of seminars for community of practice
		20% academic staff participation
	Interim target, end 2014	20% increase in number of events and initiatives showcasing exemplars of excellence and innovation in teaching & learning

		100% increase in academic staff participation (over 2012)
	Interim target, end 2015	30% increase in teaching and learning events and initiatives (over 2012)
		75% increase in academic staff participation (over 2014)
	Final target, end 2016	10 large group events per semester including Special Interest Groups, seminars, workshops, presentations to Faculty Boards.
		80% academic staff participation (400% increase over 2012)

3.10	**Institution objective**	**To provide teaching enhancement interventions which are supportive, voluntary and confidential** [*Pillar 2 / Goal 3 (5)*]	
	Performance indicator	Number of Peer Observations of Teaching (POTs) undertaken [*Pillar 2 Goal 3 (5) / Target 1*]	
		% increase in rate of participation in SETs [*Pillar 2 Goal 3 (5) Target 3*]	
	Baseline	10 POT pairings, per annum	
		SET participation rate: 31%	
	Interim target, end 2014	15 POT pairings, per annum	
		SET participation rate: 31%	
	Interim target, end 2015	20 POT pairings, per annum	
		SET participation rate: 31%	
	Final target, end 2016	25 POT pairings, per annum	
		SET participation rate: 31%	

3.11	**Institution objective**	**To foster collegiality and collaboration amongst faculty and regional institutional partners towards reflective practice and scholarly dialogue on teaching and learning** [*Pillar 2 / Goal 4 (5)*]
	Performance indicator	Continued participation in Shannon Consortium Regional Teaching & Learning Awards initiative as well as participation in national award programmes from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning [*Pillar 2 Goal 4 (5) / Target 1*]
		Participation in and organisation of regional Teaching & Learning workshops and symposia [*Pillar 2 Goal 3 (5) / Target 2*]

	Significant contribution to, participation in and inclusion with the National Forum [*Pillar 2 Goal 3 (5) / Target 3*]
Baseline	2 short-listed candidates for Shannon Consortium Regional Excellence in Teaching & Learning Award
	2 short-listed candidates for NAIRTL Teaching & Learning Awards
	3 regional Teaching & Learning workshops and symposia per academic year
	25% baseline participation in Regional T & L events
Interim target, end 2014	2 short-listed candidates for Mid West Cluster Regional Excellence in Teaching & Learning Awards
	5% increase in regional Teaching and Learning events offered via MIC
	5% increase in MIC academic staff participation rate in regional Teaching and Learning events
	2 MIC representatives to National Forum
Interim target, end 2015	2 short-listed candidates for Mid West Cluster Regional Excellence in Teaching & Learning Awards
	5% increase in regional Teaching and Learning events offered via MIC
	10% increase in MIC academic staff participation rate in regional Teaching and Learning events
	2 MIC representatives to National Forum (once established)
Final target, end 2016	2 short-listed candidates for Mid West Cluster Regional Excellence in Teaching & Learning Awards and engage in National Forum competitions if/when announced
	15% increase in regional Teaching and Learning events offered via MIC
	15% increase in MIC academic staff participation rate in regional Teaching and Learning events
	2 MIC representatives to National Forum, plus 2 representatives contributing to Forum sub-committees as members (if applicable).

3.12	Institution objective	**To significantly advance and embed incorporation of blended learning strategies and new technologies in the teaching and learning environment and programme design** [*Pillar 2 / Goal 5 (5)*]
	Performance indicator	Number of programmes modified / newly designed to incorporate blended learning and new technologies [*Pillar 2 / Goal 5 (5)*]
		Number of training interventions for design, roll-out and use of blended learning strategies and new technologies for teaching and learning [*Pillar 2 / Goal 5 (5)*]
		Evaluation of integration and effectiveness of blended learning strategies and new technologies for teaching and learning [*Pillar 2 / Goal 5 (5)*]
	Baseline	Commitment to blended learning delivery / use of learning technologies in Strategic Plan with several modules designed and approved with incorporation of same
		Limited usage of Blackboard, and subsequently, Moodle, as preferred institutional VLE
		No course sharing across Shannon Consortium via blended learning technologies
		Limited training for VLE-usage
		Training in usage of IWBs
		90% usage of out-dated Local Area Network server to host course / module information
		> 10% of modules delivered using blended learning / learning technologies
		> 10% multimedia content in online course materials
	Interim target, end 2014	Establishment of Blended Learning Unit, nested within Centre for Teaching & Learning
		Appointment of 2 Educational Technologists for pedagogical support and training
		60% of faculty actively using VLE
		45% of modules hosted on VLE (Level 6-10)
		80 hours training in usage of learning technologies, per annum
		15-20 MIC modules delivered across Mid West Cluster via blended learning
		Interim evaluation of integration and effectiveness of blended learning strategies
	Interim target, end 2015	70% of faculty actively using VLE
		50% of modules hosted on VLE (Level 3, 6-10)

	100 hours training in usage of learning technologies, per annum
	20% increase in MIC modules delivered across Mid West cluster via blended learning
Final target, end 2016	80% of faculty actively using VLE
	65% of modules hosted on VLE (Level 3, 6-10)
	150 hours training in usage of learning technologies, per annum
	20% increase in MIC modules delivered across Mid West cluster via blended learning
	Summative evaluation integration and effectiveness of blended learning strategies 2012-2016

5.4 High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation

Strategy Summary

Please provide a brief summary of Mary Immaculate College's strategy and chosen objectives in relation to high quality, internationally competitive research and innovation.

This should reference the benchmarks against which the objectives have been set. Further supporting evidence, with regard to the means of verification, should be provided in an appendix as necessary.

Please note any external factors or assumptions that might affect progress towards the stated objectives.

High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation: strategy summary

In the coming period, Mary Immaculate College will commit to supporting and resourcing the ongoing development of the research skills base among our staff and students. In recent years the College has invested heavily in building its research skills base, through financial supports, staff upskilling, external collaboration and dedicated administrative structures. This has produced rich dividends, with staff engagement in research now at an all-time high, as evidenced by an almost exponential increase in staff publications and presentations at professional conferences over recent years. By 2016, 90% of academic staff will possess a doctoral-level qualification.

This effort will be maintained and developed further, and the cross-fertilisation of research with teaching and learning (which will be a particular focus for us in the coming years), along with an increased emphasis on research that contributes significantly to public policy. Through research and knowledge transfer, Mary Immaculate College will contribute to the Irish economy as well as to quality of life at local, regional, national and international levels. And, as noted in Sections 1 and 3 (above), the College will respond directly to the *Report of the International Review Panel on Initial Teacher Education* (2012) by joining with the University of Limerick to enhance provision for initial teacher education and increasing the emphasis on research-grounded teaching and learning (through the National Institute for Studies in Education).

Key challenges for us will be to attract higher proportions of prospective graduate students to the College, particularly those from other institutions and from abroad. We will maintain the steady increase in enrolment of doctoral students experienced in recent years and bring about a significant upswing in graduating numbers. We will significantly enhance our support structures for postgraduate students and match outstanding academic provision with high quality and fully coordinated professional supports specifically tailored to individual needs. We will provide improved workspace dedicated to postgraduate students, fully equipped with the range of learning and research tools essential to postgraduate study. Through the development of a new Graduate School, we will invest in the development of our management framework for postgraduate studies and bring about closer integration, complementarity and information-flow within the overall institutional management structure. We will continue to work in close collaboration with other third-level providers, particularly our partners in the

Shannon Consortium with whom we will seek ways to deploy our resources collectively, and with whom will also work to reduce barriers to access by students aspiring to postgraduate study.

Our staff community will benefit from a significantly increased commitment to academic mobility through peer exchange. We will increase our number of linkage agreements with partner universities for mutual hosting of scholars and we will endeavour to maintain academic staff development supports that enable our staff to travel for research, teaching and learning and conference attendance. We will build strong links with intermediary funding organisations towards this aim. And we will complement our internal research activities with efforts to build partnerships within and between international research networks focused on cognate fields and disciplines.

The view of the HEA (also articulated by international peers in the *Report of the International Review Panel on Initial Teacher Education in Ireland* in respect of teacher education particularly) on the importance of generating sufficient critical mass for research to thrive within the institutional setting is shared fully by the College. MIC notes, especially, the recommendation that the research centres embedded at the College should be clustered within a strategic framework such that they display appropriate synergy, substantial engagement with staff researchers (and external peers), and, as far as possible, alignment with institutional strategic goals and national policy objectives. The College will develop and grow its research infrastructure – including its suite of research centres, in harmony with these principles, as well as in balance with the imperative of preserving academic freedom to pursue research programmes worthy of exploration. To achieve critical mass in research, the College will adopt a strategy by which three research institutes will be established (Institute for Catholic Studies; Institute for Education and Social Policy; Institute for Irish Studies) and will form 'hubs' for the alignment and 'inter-locking' of small research centres whose programmes directly connect with, and overlap between, the institutes. It should be noted that the targets set out in Objective 4.4, below, will be met within the context of this particular clustering strategy and will be led by the Research & Graduate School Office in tandem with the oversight provided by the College Research Committee and other College bodies.

4.1	Institution objective	**To grow our postgraduate learning and research community by expanding our range of opportunities for postgraduate study, with particular emphasis on increasing provision at doctoral level** [*Pillar 2 / Goal 1 (2)*]	
	Performance indicator	Number of new postgraduate programmes developed, approved and launched [*Pillar 2 / Goal 1 (2) / Target 1*]	
		% increase in number of postgraduate students [*Pillar 2 / Goal 1 (2) / Target 3*]	
		% increase in number of doctoral students [*Pillar 2 / Goal 1 (2) / Target 5*]	
		Level 8/9 (Grad. Dip. Primary Teaching[3])	125
		Level 9 (other Grad. Diplomas)	**81**
		Level 9 (Taught Masters)	150
		Level 9 (Research Masters)	43
		Level 10 (PhD)	70
	Interim target, end 2014	To identify and leverage new growth areas	
	Interim target, end 2015	To identify and leverage new growth areas	
	Final target, end 2016	Level 8/9 (Graduate Diploma / Cert)	90
		Level 9 (Taught Masters) [4]	295
		Level 9 (Research Masters)	40
		Level 10 (PhD)	70

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[3] Graduate Diploma in Education – Primary Teaching to be phased out, nationally, from 2014 onwards.

[4] See footnote, above

4.2	Institution objective	**To ensure that the College supports effective leadership in the field of research** [*Pillar 2 / Goal 3 (6)*]
		To review and significantly enhance our postgraduate management framework and support structures [*Pillar 2 / Goal 2 (2)*]
	Performance indicator	Enhanced College infrastructure for the support of research and coordinated engagement by staff [*Pillar 2 / Goal 3 (6) / Target 1*]
		Develop and operationalise research engagement and output data capture systems linked to central management information systems [*Pillar 2 / Goal 2 (6) / Target 2*]
		Establishment of a Graduate School [*Pillar 2 / Goal 2 (2) / Target 3*]
	Baseline	Research Office: Associate Vice President and 2 Professional Services staff
		2 Postgraduate Directors; 2 Professional Services staff
		Staff research surveys administered via staff email
		Strategic review and approval for consolidation of existing Postgraduate Directorates and establishment of Graduate School
	Interim target, end 2014	Head of Graduate School appointed
		MIC Graduate School established
		Development of Limerick Graduate School framework agreement with UL and LIT
		Acquisition of new, centralised accommodation for integration of Research Office and Graduate School
		Development of online research survey and database, linked to institutional MIS
	Interim target, end 2015	Consolidation of fully integrated Research & Graduate School Office with AVP Research, Head of Graduate School, 2 academic support staff, 4 professional services staff
		2 Doctoral Programme Coordinators appointed
		High quality, fit-for-purpose, clustered learning space and administrative hub for Research and Graduate School
		PRPs & DRPs introduced Launch of Limerick Graduate School, with enrolments via partner institutions
	Final target, end 2016	MIC Graduate School fully functional and integrated with Limerick Graduate School through federated framework agreement

Benchmarking exercise based on 2015 measures to inform MIC research strategies and compare with international standards

4.3	Institution objective	**To cultivate an increased awareness of the role of research as an integral part of academic endeavour** [*Pillar 2 / Goal 1 (6)*]
	Performance indicator	Number of staff-focused initiatives and information strategies aimed at promotion of research activity [*Pillar 2 / Goal 1 (6) / Target 1*]
		% increase in overall research engagement by staff [*Pillar 2 / Goal 1 (6) / Target 2*]
		% increase in doctoral qualifications held by staff [*Pillar 2 / Goal 1 (6) / Target 3*]
		Number of student-focused initiatives aimed at promotion of research activity [*Pillar 2 / Goal 1 (6) / Target 4*]
		% increase in overall research engagement by students [*Pillar 2 / Goal 1 (6) / Target 5*]
	Baseline	Academic staff with PhD: 66%
		Academic staff with PhD / Masters: 100%
		Research publications (annual survey): 380
		Conference Papers (annual survey): 452
	Interim target, end 2014	Academic staff with PhD: 71%
		Academic staff with PhD / Masters: 100%
		Research publications (annual survey): 400
		Conference Papers (annual survey): 475
	Interim target, end 2015	Academic staff with PhD: 83%
		Academic staff with PhD / Masters: 100%
		Research publications (annual survey): 415
		Conference Papers (annual survey): 490
	Final target, end 2016	Academic staff with PhD: 90%
		Academic staff with PhD / Masters: 100%
		Research publications (annual survey): 430
		Conference Papers (annual survey): 505

4.4	Institution objective	To establish direction and priorities for inter-disciplinary research [*Pillar 2 / Goal 5 (6)*]
	Performance indicator	Review conducted of current supports, challenges and opportunities surrounding inter-disciplinary research engagement by staff, resulting in related recommendations [*Pillar 2 / Goal 5 (6) / Target 1*]
		Number of review recommendations adopted and implemented [*Pillar 2 / Goal 5 (6) / Target 2*]
		% increase in inter-disciplinary research activity involving inter-faculty, inter-institutional collaboration [[*Pillar 2 / Goal 5 (6) / Target 3*]
		Number inter-disciplinary seminars [*Pillar 2 / Goal 5 (6) / Target 5*]
		Number of new centres established for inter-disciplinary research focused on agreed themes [*Pillar 2 / Goal 5 (6) / Target 6*]
	Baseline	Strong inter-disciplinary research activity: 6 centres
		Review and recommendations surrounding current inter-disciplinary supports
	Interim target, end 2014	New research centres / institutes established: ▪ Research Centre for Transnational Studies ▪ Centre for Research in Education & Teacher Education (CREaTE) ▪ Centre for Early Childhood Research at MIC (CERAMIC) ▪ Irish Institute for Catholic Studies
	Interim target, end 2015	New institutes established: ▪ Institute for Irish Studies ▪ Institute for Educational & Social Policy
	Final target, end 2016	Centres and institutes generating: ▪ Research funding income ▪ Inter-disciplinary conferences / seminars ▪ Inter-institutional research collaborations

5.5 Enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange

Strategy Summary

Please provide a brief summary of Mary Immaculate College's strategy and chosen objectives in relation to enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange.

This should reference the benchmarks against which the objectives have been set. Further supporting evidence, with regard to the means of verification, should be provided in the appendices as necessary.

Please note any external factors or assumptions that might affect progress towards the stated objectives.

Enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange: strategy summary

In harmony with its distinctive ethos and founding vision, the College has a very rich history of engagement with all sectors within the wider community. This College is here, first and foremost, to make a difference for the good of our shared community.

While the College has contributed much to the wider community through its mission to promote inclusion through education, its work has long been underpinned by a clear recognition that this enterprise has many stakeholders and that a commitment to partnership is just as essential as the enterprise itself. This is why the most fundamental characteristics of our work to make a difference – our competency in addressing educational marginalisation and our spirit of partnership – can be clearly recognised in each of those endeavours.

Examples include establishment of the Curriculum Development Unit which has leveraged academic expertise and facilitated partnerships with other stakeholders for the pursuit of research and development of resources aimed at the Early Learning environment, classroom management and Special Education, to name a few. The College has engaged with a range of networks within Limerick City and its environs (most recently in concert with its Shannon Consortium partners) and currently has representation on the local Partnership Company (PAUL Partnership), fora established through the Limerick Regeneration Agencies such as the Older Persons' Forum and the Limerick Incredible Years Strategic Steering Group. Our staff members have made very significant research contributions through many of these fora, including the mapping of local availability of services for children and interactions between families and these services (through the Children's Services Committee), as well as evaluation of the impact of the Incredible Years programme in Limerick. The Transforming Education through Dialogue (TED) Project has a long history of facilitating linkages between mainstream primary schools and the community through the PLUS Network of urban disadvantaged schools (as well as rural based networks). College staff members have provided their expertise to local strategic planning by Limerick City Development Board, particularly in socio-economic and demographic mapping for which the College has a major national and international profile, as well as in development of a learning strategy for the city, based on coordinated partnership approaches. At national level, College staff have been working on highly successful projects aimed at Maths Recovery and at Special Education in partnership with the Department of

Education & Skills as well as with DEIS Primary Schools.

Similarly, our expertise in, and many contributions to educational inclusion in the Developing World have most recently been carried out in partnership with Irish Aid, representatives of the higher education sector in Northern Ireland and a host of African countries in projects that have included joint educational research and Teacher Education.

This work will continue and hallmark features of these activities in the coming period will include coordinated community engagement with our Mid West Cluster partners as well as a more concerted contribution to regional economic and spatial development at a critical juncture where the re-structuring of local development and local government is happening in parallel with the emergence of a new higher education landscape (as noted in the preamble to *Domain 1*, above).

5.1	Institution objective	**To advance social inclusion through the medium of education and a strategy of partnership** [*Pillar 5 / Goal 1*]
		To foster a spirit of justice and commitment to the service of others amongst our College community [*Pillar 5 / Goal 2*]
		To broaden and deepen our commitment to working in partnership with other HEIs and external agencies to further our mission and goals as well as to contribute to the advancement of national priorities and policy imperatives, particularly in the education sector [*Pillar 7 / Goal 4*]
	Performance indicator	Membership / leadership of a number of local, regional and national and international networks and partnerships promoting the principle of social inclusion through education [*Pillar 5 / Goal 1 / Target 1*]
		Number of research projects completed focusing on curriculum development, educational inclusion and Continuing Professional [[*Pillar 5 / Goal 1 / Target 2*]
		Development for practitioners addressing social exclusion and poverty issues in their work [*Pillar 5 / Goal 1/ Target 3*]
		Number of collaborative initiatives, including research, involving partners in the Shannon Consortium, as well as other agencies and organisations, aimed at promoting social inclusion through education [*Pillar 5 / Goal 1 / Target 4*]
	Baseline	Membership of multiple local, national and international networks and partnerships engaged in social inclusion with focus on education (see p.43, MIC Strategic Plan, Appendix 1), including Local Development Company (PAUL Partnership), Incredible Years Steering Group.

		MIC Curriculum Development Unit (research and resource development)
		Establishment and coordination of PLUS, *Oscailt*, & *Cur le Chéile* networks of DEIS schools
		Transforming Education through Dialogue (TED) project created for school-community-statutory partnership and action research / knowledge exchange
		Secondment of key staff towards implementation of pilot DES projects (Maths Recovery; mainstreaming for children with autism)
		Centre for Global Development through Education (in partnership with Irish Aid)
	Interim target, end 2014	Research contribution and consultation for Limerick Children's Services Committee
		Participation in Atlantic Philanthropies (Limerick) Programme Innovation Development Fund (PIDF) research initiatives with multiple partners including DES, Limerick Education Centre, NEYAI, LDC, Limerick Office of Regeneration, DEIS Band 1 schools, community organisations
		Level 6 Certificate in Inclusive Care & Education via Start Right Limerick, through blended learning, for community-based childcare practitioners
		MA in International Development Education launched
	Interim target, end 2015	CPD in the development of a balanced literacy programme provided for 90% of teachers in DEIS Band 1 schools in Limerick City via PIDF
		Institute for Educational and Social Policy established
		Introduction of new electives for BEd students in educational inclusion
	Final target, end 2016	Secondment of key staff to pilot the State's first full service extended school campus in Southill, Limerick, in partnership with DES, HSE, Limerick City Council and Atlantic Philanthropies
		Level 9 graduate programme in inclusive practices for schools

5.2	Institution objective	**To increase awareness of the College as integral to the community and part of the shared economic, social, cultural and civic capital** [*Pillar 5 / Goal 3*]
	Performance indicator	Number of outreach and awareness-raising strategies implemented [*Pillar 5 / Goal 3 / Target 1*]
		Evidence of increased usage of campus / College facilities as public space for learning, civic and cultural purposes [*Pillar 5 / Goal 3 / Target 2*]
		Evidence of increased usage of campus / College facilities by Regeneration / RAPID communities [*Pillar 5 / Goal 3 / Target 3*]
		Evidence of greater integration and more visible recognition of MIC within local and regional economic, social, cultural, civic and governance fora [*Pillar 5 / Goal 3 / Target 4*]
	Baseline	12 campus- and community-based learning initiatives, *per annum*, for wider community (including annual Limerick Learning Festival organised by City of Learning Sub-Committee of City Development Board)
		Membership of: ▪ 150+ community-based / statutory networks and partnerships focused on engagement of community in education and life-long learning; ▪ Board of Local Development Company (representing social partners); ▪ City of Learning Sub-Group of City Development Board (via Shannon Consortium nominee)
	Interim target, end 2014	Enhanced engagement with merged Limerick Local Authorities and direct contribution to *Limerick 2030: Economic & Spatial Development Plan*, through formal structures
		Lime Tree Theatre offering a diversity of theatrical programmes for local, regional and national audiences, with 40,000 visitors, per annum
		Direct contribution to coordination of 2014 Limerick City of Culture programme and hosting of range of festivities
		MIC to host 2014 GAA Congress
		New framework agreement in place enabling coordinated Mid West Cluster member engagement with local governance / local development and other life-long learning fora
	Interim target, end 2015	Enhanced and coordinated life-long learning information dissemination mechanisms linking Mid West Cluster activities to visible third party information points

	Formal coordination structures in place for civic and cultural engagement via Mid West Cluster
Final target, end 2016	40% increase in open, MIC-led, life-long learning, civic and cultural initiatives based on campus and in the community

5.6 Enhanced internationalisation

Strategy Summary

Please provide a brief summary of Mary Immaculate College's strategy and chosen objectives in relation to enhanced internationalisation.

This should reference the benchmarks against which the objectives have been set. Further supporting evidence, with regard to the means of verification, should be provided in the appendices as necessary.

Please note any external factors or assumptions that might affect progress towards the stated objectives.

Enhanced internationalisation: strategy summary

Fostering and developing the international dimension of College activities will be a key priority for the next four years. One of our core objectives during the course of our current Strategic Plan is to enrich the culture of the College and the diversity of our campus community. We will achieve this by increasing the number of international students choosing MIC as a learning destination as well as supporting more of our full-time students to choose placements in partner universities abroad.

The creation of a truly world-class campus and the positioning of the College within an important regional gateway in the West of Ireland, makes MIC exceptionally attractive to prospective international students. We plan to intensify our efforts to diversify and re-conceptualise our academic offerings, introducing internationally-themed elements that will add appeal to the existing emphasis on Irish tradition, culture and society. We will couple our efforts to attract international students with greater support for our own students to enjoy the enormous benefits of time spent on a learning-abroad programme. We will enhance and develop our international student support structures as well as our strategic outreach in order to seek out new partners and agree memoranda of understanding for mutual benefit. We will develop new delivery models aimed at distance learning that will include summer and winter school programmes, courses in professional development and online learning opportunities in order to invite a combination of professional practitioners and lifelong learners to avail of flexible options for a unique and high quality international educational experience.

6.1	Institution objective	**To create new high quality infrastructure for the promotion and coordination of international learning experiences and scholar exchange** [*Pillar 4 / Goal 1*]
	Performance indicator	New International Office operational and working cohesively with related College functions [*Pillar 4 / Goal 1 / Target 1*]
		Detailed plan for the promotion and coordination of international learning experiences and scholar exchange prepared, implemented and monitored [*Pillar 4 / Goal 1 / Target 2*]
	Baseline	International strategy approved by MIC Governing Authority
	Interim target, end 2014	International Office established
		International Officer appointed
		Detailed international development operating plan in place
	Interim target, end 2015	Phase 2 review of operations and infrastructure
	Final target, end 2016	Additional staffing commensurate with operational growth

6.2	Institution objective	To significantly increase the number of international students (undergraduate and postgraduate) attending learning programmes at MIC [*Pillar 4 / Goal 3*]
		To significantly increase international mobility for academic staff peer networking, teaching and learning and research opportunities [*Pillar 4 / Goal 3*]
	Performance indicator	Number of new MoUs signed with partner universities [*Pillar 5 / Goal 3 / Target 1*]
		% increase in number of full-time students visiting MIC for study abroad periods / exchange programmes [*Pillar 5 / Goal 3 / Target 4*]
		% increase in number of staff availing of mobility opportunities
	Baseline	Erasmus (out) / Year Abroad (out) undergraduate intake (80:20 ratio): 60
		International Enrolments (UG & PG): 11
	Interim target, end 2014	Erasmus (out): 45
		International Enrolments (UG & PG): 20
	Interim target, end 2015	Erasmus (out): 50
		International Enrolments (UG & PG): 25
	Final target, end 2016	Erasmus (out): 50
		International Enrolments (UG & PG): 30 (15 EU / 15 non-EU)

5.7 Institutional consolidation

Strategy Summary

Please provide a brief summary of Mary Immaculate College's strategy and chosen objectives in relation to institutional consolidation.

This should reference the benchmarks against which the objectives have been set. Further supporting evidence, with regard to the means of verification, should be provided in the appendices as necessary.

Please note any external factors or assumptions that might affect progress towards the stated objectives.

Institutional consolidation: strategy summary

In 2012, a Review of Governance at MIC was undertaken by the College Trustees. This review was occasioned by the reconfiguration of the higher education landscape, as well as an increased emphasis on good governance in the sphere of publicly-funded organisations and agencies. In particular, the advent of the Universities Act, in 1997, represented a significant juncture for higher education institutions and subsequent directives from the Higher Education Authority (HEA) have made it clear that, although the Colleges of Education were not subject to the provisions of this legislation, there is an ongoing expectation that they should adopt the principles contained within the statute. Accordingly, all Colleges of Education are now required to observe the guidelines set out by the HEA and the Irish Universities Association (IUA) for *Governance of Irish Universities* (2007; 2012), which is largely informed by the Universities Act, as well as by other instances of best practice in the realm of organisational governance.

In light of these developments, the Trustees considered it timely that an independent review of MIC governance structures should take place against the backdrop of the important shifts in the external environment, as well as with reference to the key regulatory instruments in place at the College itself, including the *Schedule of Incorporation* and the *Instrument of Government*.

Taken together with the significant academic and physical developments that have taken place at the College in the last decade, the importance of a strategic focus on inter-institutional partnerships and the relationship between the College and the wider community (including new structures for local governance), these patterns provided both context and impetus for a root-and-branch review of MIC governance. Accordingly, the MIC Strategic Plan 2012-16 set the following goal and target under the heading *Best practice, efficiency and effectiveness in governance, leadership and management*:

Goal 1: To provide the highest standard of governance, characterised by commitment to our institutional ethos and mission, enlightened visioning, prudent and ethical leadership, inclusive representation and collective responsibility;

Target 2: Review conducted in support of maintaining the highest standards of ethical, efficient and effective governance.

The Board of Trustees conducted a tendering process for the Review of Governance in November 2012. In January 2013, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) was appointed to conduct the review which commenced immediately and concluded in June 2013.

The scope of the work was to review the role, composition and inter-relationship of the Trustees, *An Bord Rialaithe* and *Coiste Bainistíochta an Choláiste* (CBC), as well as to evaluate the roles of *An Bord Acadúil*, the Faculty Management Committees and *An Bord Agallaimh.*

PWC presented the Corporate Governance Review Report to the Board of Trustees in May 2013 at which stage the report was approved in principle.

The Trustees then instructed that the *Instrument of Government* be revised to incorporate the recommendations of PWC in order for the new governance structure be in place for October 2013.

The revised *Instrument of Government* was approved by the Trustees in June 2013. At this time the Trustees also established a Nominations Sub-Committee with responsibility for identifying appropriate appointees to both the Board of Trustees and *An Bord Rialaithe*.

Review Recommendations & Outcomes

The key finding of PWC was that a clearer demarcation between management and governance required expression and operationalisation through the revision of existing structures. This finding led to the following recommendations around membership and respective roles for the Trustees, *An Bord Rialaithe* and College Management.

Trustees

The role of the Trustees should remain as stated within the Scheme of Incorporation, but with closer alignment with contemporary governance practice, including sectoral governance requirements, insofar as its reserved powers require this. It was also recommended that the current membership of the Trustees be refreshed, on a phased basis, with more frequent turn-over of appointees.

**An Bord Rialaithe*

The PWC report recommended retention, by *An Bord Rialaithe,* of its role as the Governing Authority of the College. PWC saw a need for greater emphasis on matters of governance with management of day-to-day operational matters, and accountability for implementation of strategic goals, devolved to the executive management function. Accordingly, PWC recommended that the membership and roles of the governance and management structures should reflect this demarcation very clearly.

Inter-Institutional Relationships

The nature of the relationship between MIC and the University of Limerick has been extensively documented by both institutions in previous submissions to the HEA and is expanded upon in Section 1, above, in the context of the Midwest Cluster (incorporating both

institutions, together with LIT) above. All institutions within the Midwest Cluster remain autonomous bodies, albeit within a structured partnership framework. The establishment of a new Memorandum of Understanding between the three Midwest Cluster institutions (see Objective 7.1, below) reinvigorates the pre-existing Shannon Consortium model of inter-institutional partnership (whose name will be adopted by the newly reconfigured cluster). A significant development outlined in this MoU is the establishment of a cross-institutional board which will provide an enhanced level of structural consolidation of activities shared between the three institutions and, of course, oversight. This board will sit below the governing authorities of each partner institution but will have a direct reporting relationship with them. It will also provide a direct conduit to the executive of the Higher Education Authority itself, providing a light superstructure for the coordination of funding, policy, governance, accountability, and reporting. In a further instance of good practice around this level of consolidation, the three presidents will nominate an independent chair for the Shannon Consortium Board.

7.1	Institution objective	To provide the highest standard of governance, characterised by commitment to our institutional ethos and mission, enlightened visioning, prudent and ethical leadership, inclusive representation and collective responsibility [*Pillar 7 / Goal 1*]
		To broaden and deepen our commitment to working in partnership with other HEIs and external agencies to further our mission and goals as well as to contribute to the advancement of national priorities and policy imperatives [*Pillar 7 / Goal 4*]
	Performance indicator	Adoption of agreed clustering strategy for compliance with re-configuration of higher education landscape (under the *National Strategy for Education*) that preserves the institutional identity, mission and operational integrity of the College [*Pillar 7 / Goal 1 / Target 1*]
		Review conducted in support of maintaining the highest standards of ethical, efficient and effective governance [*Pillar 7 / Goal 1 / Target 2*]
		Annual business plans based on Strategic Plan approved and monitored, with outputs and outcomes tracked, reported and measured against agreed KPIs [*Pillar 7 / Goal 1 / Target 3*]

	Commitment to Shannon Consortium maintained as primary clustering arrangement and % increase in shared approaches / joint initiatives / resource optimisation / shared service delivery [*Pillar 7 / Goal 4 / Target 1*]
Baseline	Institutional commitment (Governing Authority level) to HEI clustering and shared delivery / provision through Shannon Consortium membership and joint activities
	Objective of sustaining, widening and deepening inter-institutional clustering arrangements in tandem with compliance with HE landscape configuration proposed under *National Strategy for Education* articulated in MIC Strategic Plan 2012-2016
	Annual Operation Plan (AOP) for 2012-13 prepared
Interim target, end 2014	Joint institutional (MIC-UL-LIT) agreement and adoption of governance framework and structures to underpin Mid West Cluster
	External review of MIC governance conducted and recommendations for re-structuring towards enhanced governance adopted
	AOPs 2012-14, aligned to KPIs arising from Strategic Dialogue, completed and targets met
Interim target, end 2015	AOP 2014-15, aligned to KPIs arising from Strategic Dialogue, completed and targets met
Final target, end 2016	AOP 2015-16, aligned to KPIs arising from Strategic Dialogue, completed and targets met
	Strategic Plan 2017-2021 drafted in consultation with internal and external stakeholders and adopted by MIC Governing Authority

6. Annual Compliance Statement

As the strategic dialogue process develops, the HEA will take into account on-going compliance with important foundational requirements such as:

■ Statutory quality assurance processes

■ Providing an annual statement required under their Code of Governance and with all other requirements of that Code

■ Providing details of satisfactory financial outturn, budget and financial plan

■ Employment control framework

■ Data returns to the HEA.

Where significant or urgent compliance issues arise (such as unacceptable financial deficit, weakness in financial plans or major omissions or delays in returns), they will be discussed as part of the strategic dialogue.

7. Performance Funding

Having regard to the performance of Mary Immaculate College in the strategic dialogue process leading to this compact, performance funding of

€ 76,000

has been allocated to the college.

8. Agreement

To be completed following the conclusion of the strategic dialogue process.

Having regard to the agreed minute of the strategic dialogue meeting attached, the HEA and Mary Immaculate College agree that the mission, planned profile and targets, as set out in the foregoing sections of this Compact, are consistent with the objectives set for the higher education system and are appropriate to the college.

Signed: _____

Chief Executive, Higher Education Authority

Date:

Signed: _____

Chief Officer, Mary Immaculate College

Date:

Appendices

We, MIC, include the following appendices with our performance compact.

List the appendices here:

☐	Appendix 1: MIC Strategic Plan 2012-2016

Appendix 1: MIC Strategic Plan 2012-2016

STRATEGIC PLAN
2012-2016

BRÍATHAR DÉ MO LÓCHRANN

COLÁISTE MHUIRE GAN SMÁL
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK

Mary Immaculate College
STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2016

contents

1.0 foreword

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the Governing Body of Mary Immaculate College, I am pleased to introduce the College's Strategic Plan 2012-2016.

Throughout the history of this great College, outstanding teaching scholars have shown commitment to their students and to the quality of their learning experience. The College has continuously looked towards the future, striving to develop as an institution and to bring about positive changes aimed at student welfare, well-being and equality. Building on its Mercy tradition, the College's commitment to *making a difference* has, and will remain, a prominent part of its endeavours and those of its graduates, who have contributed greatly to the Irish economy and quality of life at local, national and international levels.

This Strategic Plan marks a new chapter in the life of the College. It recognises the rapid and complex changes to the policy landscape and the operational environment in Ireland.

The lowering of the front wall of the College is a deliberately symbolic gesture of 'opening up' to opportunities to work in partnership with the wider community in terms of social and educational inclusion. A particular focus of the College's Strategic Plan for the future will be continuing to support the Shannon Consortium in bringing about positive change through research, educational initiatives and networking with other stakeholders. This also indicates that the College looks forward to measurable change that is consistent with the objectives set out in the *National Strategy for Higher Education.*

This Strategic Plan will ensure that Mary Immaculate College will continue to grow and flourish with greater international links, while continuing to play a pivotal role in third level education in a more diverse and inclusive Ireland.

Very Reverend Fr Tony Mullins

Chair, Trustees & *An Bord Rialaithe*

2.0 | President's Introduction

Having taken up the mantle of President of Mary Immaculate College, the ninth person to hold that office in a long tradition of Mercy education in Limerick, I am proud to introduce this Strategic Plan which sets out our agenda for the next five years.

This plan is the product of a very extensive internal and external consultation exercise, undertaken in accordance with the strong spirit of partnership that characterises our endeavours. It strives to meet internally agreed targets as well as responding to national priorities, many of them derived from the *National Strategy for Higher Education.*

Our Strategic Plan involves the active celebration and promotion of the distinctive mission, identity and values of the College as a Catholic institution of Higher Education. We understand the importance of asserting our identity in the current policy context for higher education and within the operational environment we and our partners inhabit. Increasingly we collaborate within strategic clusters where the mission and resources of each provider are integral to joint enterprise and are responsive to the needs of prospective students, served by a menu of provision that is at once coherent and differentiated, and which extends equity of opportunity to all. Our flourishing partnership with the University of Limerick,

Limerick Institute of Technology and IT Tralee, through the Shannon Consortium, is an example of the rich collaboration, enhanced communication and shared delivery practices that such clusters can achieve. In terms of our core mission in teaching, learning and research, we stand at the cusp of a truly remarkable period in our own development, as well as in our collective history. In the current economic environment, third level providers, particularly, are called upon to answer a great challenge and must look beyond current difficulties. As outlined in this Strategic Plan, Mary Immaculate College aims to identify creative solutions that service the increasing demand for third level education and provide for the needs of a socially diverse student populace.

We will be bold in our imagination as we develop programmes, confident as we set about enhancing the quality of our delivery, resolute in the assertion of our distinctive mission and its essential contribution to the continuum of necessary provision and generous in our commitment to partnership so that the best of what we have to offer can be shared and targeted in a strategically coherent way.

In summarising our plan, which has seven pillars, each carrying equal weighting, I offer you a line from the Book of Proverbs: *'Wisdom has built her house, she has set up her seven pillars'* (Proverbs 9:1).

Professor Michael A Hayes

College President

mission, vision & values

3.0

3.1 | # Mission

Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, founded in 1898, is a third level Catholic College of Education and the Liberal Arts.

The College community promotes excellence in teaching, learning and research at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It seeks to foster the intellectual, spiritual, personal and professional development of students within a supportive and challenging environment that guarantees the intellectual freedom of staff and students.

In particular, the College seeks to foster in its students a spirit of justice and compassion in the service of others, together with an openness to the religious tradition and values of each individual.

The College promotes a sense of identity enriched by an awareness of its Catholic tradition, the cultures, languages and traditions of Ireland and its special commitment to the Irish language.

Mary Immaculate College respects cultural diversity. It strives to promote equity in society and to provide an environment where all have freedom and opportunity to achieve their full potential.

3.2 | Vision

Our vision for Mary Immaculate College in 2016 is for:

" ...a distinctive and inclusive, university-level, Catholic College of Education & the Liberal Arts, offering higher level learning opportunities and research of outstanding quality, recognised and appreciated for its essential contribution to the continuum of academic provision in effective and productive collaboration with its partners in the higher education sector, that is embodied by a welcoming and diverse learning community, that presents a beautiful and inviting civic space situated at the heart of Limerick City, and that has made a positive and tangible difference to equity and to the creation of a just society through active promotion of educational inclusion and through the contribution of its excellent graduates."

3.3 | Values

- Academic Freedom
- Community
- Cooperation
- Equality and Diversity
- Ethical conduct
- Excellence
- Fairness
- Fidelity to the Catholic ethos and intellectual tradition
- (The) flourishing life
- Friendliness
- Inclusion

- Integrity
- [The] Irish Language
- Learner-centric
- Partnership
- Pluralism
- Pursuit of Truth
- Quality
- Respect
- Social Justice
- Trust

4.0

the character of our institution

Mary Immaculate College is the oldest third level institution in Limerick City. Since its foundation, the College has sustained its commitment to academic excellence and the fostering of critical thought, educational inclusion and innovation in the face of often difficult fiscal and infrastructural circumstances, all the while offering a distinctive ethos and mission informed by the vision of social justice and the emphasis on educational inclusion advanced by Catherine McAuley. This is encapsulated within an institutional Mission Statement that provides continuity with our founding vision whilst enabling the College to welcome and accommodate growth and diversity as the institution faces its future with confidence in a 21st Century context.

Mary Immaculate has an excellent reputation for the calibre of students it attracts and graduates it produces. The College also highly values its reputation as an educational institution of essential strategic importance to the State, producing, inter alia, the highest quality of third level provision for primary level teachers and a significant proportion of all graduates entering the profession, nationally.

In addition to other innovative Education programmes (the first undergraduate degree programmes to be offered in the State in the areas of Education & Psychology and Early Childhood Care & Education), the College's Liberal Arts programme is widely recognised and celebrated, nationally and internationally, for its academic excellence, offering learners the critical and analytical skills so central to the success of the Twenty First Century economy. Here, there are many examples of synergy with the Humanities programme at the University of Limerick where the best strengths of each set of offerings retain their distinctiveness but, where appropriate and where opportunities have been recognised, have been combined strategically, in inter—institutional delivery strategies that provide additional choice for the learner and greater scope for mobility and progression between campuses.

As a critical measure of the institutional distinctiveness of Mary Immaculate – and the qualities of provision demanded by third level learners – the academic programme at the College is not wholly led by the demands of the economy or current public policy but remains a function of the emphasis put by this institution on imparting to its students that which is necessary for a flourishing life. Educational participation must offer the skills necessary for the labour market but must also extend equity of opportunity to people at all stages within the life-cycle, with the full range of motivations for learning, including for its own sake.

The premise behind an educational experience at Mary Immaculate College is that what is good for the economy is good for society, not just the market. This is based on the firm belief that while our graduates deserve and receive the best possible preparation for participation in the Twenty First Century economy, the very particular institutional ethos that obtains ensures that they are not simply geared for participation in the Smart Economy, but for creation of a Just Economy

5.0

the strategy

5.1 | The Pillars of Our Plan

The MIC Strategic Plan 2012-16 rests on 7 foundational pillars. Each pillar represents a thematic imperative that is fundamental to the College and essential to its strategic development in the coming years.

Pillar 1   Mission and identity of the College as a Catholic Institution of Higher Education

Pillar 2   Excellence in teaching and learning and in advanced scholarship and research

Pillar 3   A high quality and holistic learning experience, enabling the flourishing of our students' lives

Pillar 4   An international dimension to all College activities

Pillar 5   Commitment to making a positive difference in our community, locally, regionally, nationally, and globally

Pillar 6   A learning environment and work place of the highest quality

Pillar 7   Best Practice, efficiency and effectiveness in governance, leadership and management

These pillars support a series of goal statements and targets and over the next five years they will support several horizontal and vertical levels of activity, from annualised action planning, to implementation and outcome monitoring. The activity at these levels will be characterised by close coordination and integration between planning and implementation processes, with a particular emphasis in raising strategic and operational cohesion.

5.2 | Mission and identity of the College as a Catholic Institution of Higher Education

5.2.1 Premise

Strategy-making can have real meaning only through the presence of a vital and continuing conversation about the distinctive identity and values that govern both continuity and endeavour. Our College was established in 1898 and, in the context of that period, its founding represented the physical expression of a unique and innovative vision. From within a Catholic tradition, the Sisters of Mercy, inspired by Catherine McAuley, sought to pursue engagement with all members of the community, particularly the most marginalised in society, to offer the opportunity to reach individual potential through education, which they saw as the key determinant of quality of life.

Inevitably, as we seek to navigate the second decade of the Twenty First Century, we must ask ourselves, and invite others to explore with us, what it now means to be a Catholic College of Education & the Liberal Arts. We strongly believe that the rationale that underpinned the founding of our College has as much resonance in the current context as it did 114 years ago. In the climate of economic renewal that must surely take place in the coming years, higher education will play a critical role in benefitting all members of our society.

While the continued relevance of the Mercy vision crystallises around a very tangible socio-economic *raison d'etre*, the institutional primacy of the Catholic ethos demands to be reconciled intellectually with the tenets of academic freedom, the respect for diversity and the paramountcy of including individuals of all religious faiths and none amongst our learning community, all of which are integral to our set of values.

The theologian Lieven Boeve has proposed a model for the contemporary Catholic university, describing it as that which is at the service of identity formation in a plural context. This model calls for an honest dialogue with all stakeholders within that plural context, where Christianity has a preferential option in the conversation. Rather than allowing obvious questions about institutional identity remain latent, or to intrude in a chaotic manner, what is intended by our plan is to create a framework for an open dialogue and exchange amongst all our stakeholders. This is essential not only to bring about the kind of intellectual reconciliation described above but to ensure that our institutional distinctiveness is enlivened by an understanding and awareness of why our College was founded, what it stands for in 2012, and how its continuing relevance – and importance – is recognised in our connections with our students, our staff, our partners, our peers and our funders.

The National Strategy for Education challenges third level providers to set out the distinctiveness of their respective institutions in order to avert drift and amorphousness within the sector. This further beckons MIC to reassert its unique institutional identity and to bring about greater awareness of its contribution to the continuum of educational provision as well as the role it plays as an active partner and contributor within the wider community. The goals and targets we have set below are designed to achieve this.

5.2.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1   **To enable an ongoing dialogue between all members of the College community that engages perspectives on the Catholic identity of the College itself as well as its connection with the consonant value we place on pluralism, inclusion and social justice**

Targets
- Series of rich discussions, in a variety of formats and fora, where members of the College community are satisfied with the opportunity to engage and advance their own perspectives
- Tangible and accessible model of Catholic higher education agreed, adopted and communicated as the vehicle for describing institutional identify of MIC

Goal 2   **To engage with external stakeholders and partners to raise awareness and understanding of the model of Catholic higher education adopted by the College**

Targets
- Examples of positive, discursive engagement between MIC and students (current and prospective), our staff, our partners, our peers and our funders, leading to effective recognition and understanding of our institutional identity

Goal 3   **To explore and celebrate the Catholic intellectual tradition**

Targets
- % increase in research outputs, particularly across disciplines, engaging with issues central to the Catholic intellectual tradition
- Number of internally-hosted workshops, seminars, lecture series, conferences, networking events

Goal 4   **To lend a strong voice to advocacy for the value of Catholic Education**

Targets
- Number of research outputs
- Contributions to public discourse and policy
- Engagement with sectoral peers, leading to positive recognition of the valuable role played by Catholic Education at all levels of educational provision

Goal 5   **We will seek to develop a vibrant spiritual dimension to College life**

Targets
- Well resourced Chaplaincy and pastoral care service, strongly integrated within coordinated professional support structures
- Number of student-led initiatives aimed at exploration of the spiritual dimension of the student experience

5.3 Excellence in teaching and learning and in advanced scholarship and research

Our second pillar cuts to the core of our mission as a higher education institution. MIC has a rich history of innovation and pioneering activity in teaching and learning as the first College of Education to be established outside Dublin, the first to offer a Liberal Arts programme and the first to produce both a Bachelor of Education degree in Education & Psychology and a Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Care & Education. Today, the College stands at the brink of a new and exciting period for teaching and learning and the pursuit of research, replete with both challenges and opportunities for our core mission. The College will meet these challenges by locating its responses within and across the following inter-linked strategic contexts:

- Undergraduate Studies

- Postgraduate Studies

- Diversity of Participation, Progression & Lifelong Learning

- The Teaching & Learning Culture

- The Research Culture

- Inter-institutional Programme Development & Delivery

5.3.1 Undergraduate Studies

5.3.1.1 Premise

Since mid-2010, the College has been intensively engaged in a process of review aimed at re-conceptualisation of its flagship Bachelor of Education programme and incorporation of the criteria set down by the Teaching Council for a new four-year model for primary Teacher Education. The advent of the four-year model is warmly welcomed by the College as recognition of the extensive and in-depth academic preparation required of the beginning teacher in the Twenty First Century class-room. Following comprehensive internal and external dialogue which took place in 2010-11, delivery of this new programme will commence in September 2012. Managing the significant complexity associated with its roll-out, as well as monitoring its outcomes and maintaining our commitment to continuous reflection and improvement, will be key features of our strategic development over the next four years.

We are confident that we will offer a distinctive programme that bears all the hallmarks of un-matched quality for which MIC has long been recognised. Our academic staff will continue to be regarded amongst their peers as among the very finest within their profession. They will deliver a learning programme that is informed by cutting edge research, partnership with the full spectrum of stakeholders and practitioners, and that encompasses the gamut of knowledge, critical faculties and professional skills we believe are required of teachers. We will exceed the expectations of those charged with regulating the teaching profession and we will ensure that our graduates themselves raise the standard of learning and

achievement of all children in all classrooms, regardless of whatever socio-economic circumstances, faith or ethos that may prevail there. We believe that our nation's children require this by necessity, and deserve this by right. We also believe that this work will represent a major and exponential contribution by MIC to the burgeoning Knowledge Society. That new society will be inherited by a generation of children superbly prepared for harnessing their own potential, by teachers of the highest quality.

We will build on the excellence and reputation of our Liberal Arts programme and draw upon the wide-ranging expertise of our faculty members to develop a multiplicity of programmes that increase the range of choice for our students. Furthermore, we will highlight and champion the value of an education in the Humanities and promote recognition of the highly valuable qualities acquired by outstanding graduates in the Liberal Arts. We will work with schools and our partners in the wider community, especially employers, to assert the particular characteristics of our Humanities graduates, including the essential pre-requisites they bring to a host of professional areas, amongst them rich imagination, creativity, a finely honed capacity for critical analysis and the skills to communicate ideas effectively.

We will foster new ways of imagining our educational offerings by identifying opportunities for cross-fertilisation across our academic departments, our faculties and our disciplines. Development of new programmes based on modular synergies will result from this exploration and we will seek also to identify ways in which we can contribute to a wider and more differentiated continuum of undergraduate provision by optimising the potential of our own professional competencies and resources through inter-institutional collaboration.

Our founding vision will continue to inform our deep commitment to widening educational participation at third level by enhancing our own access, retention and progression strategies. We have been a leading innovator in this area over the course of the last two decades and we must consolidate that work and increase our efforts to meet the special challenges that will be presented as the State undetakes the task of moving from a prolonged period of recession towards economic buoyancy. In this task we will be guided especially by the entreaty to our learning community that is contained in our Mission Statement: to be just and compassionate in the service of others and to strive for equity in society.

We hold that our graduates deserve and receive the best possible preparation for participation in the Twenty First Century economy, and we will ensure also that they are not simply geared for participation in the Knowledge Economy, but for creation of a Just Economy.

5.3.1.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1	**To be recognised, nationally and internationally, as a provider of the highest quality of third level undergraduate education**
Targets	• Increased % share of CAO preferences for all programmes
	• Increased % share of high achieving CAO entrants for all programmes
	• % increase in mature student intake from competitive entry routes
	• Participation in objective, peer-led evaluations of MIC provision leading to clear evidence of the high quality and innovative charactereristics of our academic programmes (and service delivery systems) and benchmarking in a comparative context

Goal 2	**To implement a process of programme re-conceptualisation with emphasis on (a)creation of collaborative intra-faculty and inter-faculty offerings and (b) learning outcomes that are focused on the fostering of critical and creative thinking and outstanding communication skills, that are informed by inclusive discourse on changing professional needs, that promote lifelong learning and that complement the institutional ethos and values of the College.**
Targets	• Unique, innovative and outstanding 4-Year Bachelor of Education programme finalised, approved, resourced and launched by September 2012
	• Comprehensive consultative review of potential opportunities for undergraduate programme development within and between both faculties, leading to implementation of recommendations
	• Number of new offerings developed, approved, resourced and launched, including Single Honours degree options in the Liberal Arts
	• Evidence of increased inter-changeability of academic modules within different programme configurations
	• Structured consultation undertaken with external partners in public and private sectors towards mutual recognition of the educational currency acquired by MIC graduates as well as the key characteristics and essential skills imperative for entry to the Labour Market

5.3.2 Postgraduate Studies

5.3.2.1 Premise

Clearly, it is essential, not just for this institution, but for the development of the high value economy targeted by national policy, that we continue to develop postgraduate provision at MIC. Demand by aspiring students is high and, despite the economic factors which are currently affecting access to postgraduate opportunities, it is likely that over the next four years students will continue to be attracted to postgraduate study by the prospect of adding to their skills-base and their currency in the labour market.

Key challenges for us will be to attract higher proportions of prospective graduate students to the College particularly those from other institutions and from abroad. We will build on the steady increases in enrolment of doctoral students experienced in recent years and bring about a significant upswing in graduating numbers.

We will significantly enhance our support structures for postgraduate students and match outstanding academic provision with high quality and fully coordinated professional supports specifically tailored to individual needs. We will provide improved workspace dedicated to postgraduate students, fully equipped with the range of learning and research tools essential to postgraduate study. Through the development of a new Graduate School, we will invest in the development of our management framework for postgraduate studies and bring about closer integration, complementarity and information-flow within the overall institutional management structure. We will continue to work in close collaboration with other third level providers, particularly our partners in the Shannon Consortium with whom we will seek ways to deploy our resources collectively, and work to reduce barriers to access by students aspiring to postgraduate study.

5.3.2.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1 **To grow our postgraduate learning and research community by expanding our range of opportunities for postgraduate study, with particular emphasis on increasing provision at doctoral level**

Targets
- Number of new postgraduate programmes developed, approved and launched
- Number of new and innovative postgraduate targeting methodologies developed and implemented
- % increase in number of full time postgraduate students, both pursuing taught programmes and research, having (a) progressed from within MIC and (b) enrolled following study at other institutions
- % increase in number of Structured and Professional Doctorate programmes
- % increase in number of doctoral students

Goal 2 **To review and significantly enhance our postgraduate management framework and support structures**

Targets
- Task force established and consultative review conducted
- Review recommendations implemented as appropriate
- Establishment of a Graduate School
- Evidence of greater integration of postgraduate studies administration and support structures within MIC management framework and increased efficiency and effectiveness of information flows

Goal 3 **To improve the quality of the MIC postgraduate student experience**

Targets
- Consultative review of postgraduate student experience at MIC
- Establishment of dedicated, fully equipped, resourced and clustered work-space for postgraduate students
- Improved communications, consultation mechanisms and information delivery for postgraduate students

Goal 4 **To create increased opportunities, through support, advice and guidance, for postgraduate participation in research dissemination and publication opportunities**

Targets
- Postgraduate and Research structures more closely aligned in support of research dissemination by postgraduate students
- Number of postgraduate students availing of advice and guidance for research dissemination
- % increase in research publication and dissemination by postgraduates

5.3.3 Continuing Professional Development

5.3.3.1 Premise

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a major component of our academic provision. MIC is widely recognised by practitioner teachers as a centre of excellence in Teacher Education and a provider of highly relevant and superbly delivered professional development programmes.

We will build on our significant profile in this area by increasing opportunities for in-career education. Our magnificent campus facilities offer professionals an opportunity to up-skill in a learning environment of un-matched quality. We will develop more flexible delivery strategies that incorporate blended learning, use of ICTs (such as the Virtual Learning Environment) and summer school formats to ensure that we maximise opportunities for busy professionals. We will ensure close coordination between our CPD structures and our other student support services so that those pursuing in-career education receive a learning experience that matches that of our full-time students in terms of quality and our commitment.

5.3.3.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1	To broaden our provision for CPD with reference to national policy, international best practice and current professional needs
Targets	• Review of existing provision and assessment of need
	• Number of new CPD programmes introduced
	• % increase in CPD intake

Goal 2	To enhance the quality, diversity and flexibility of our CPD delivery strategies and learning experience
Targets	• Increased evidence of (a) blended learning (b) ICT strategies
	• Expansion of Summer School and Winter School opportunities
	• Seamless coordination between CPD infrastructure and ancillary student support services
	• Evaluation of graduate learning experiences

5.3.4 Diversity of Participation, Progression & Lifelong Learning

5.3.4.1 Premise

In harmony with our institutional ethos, we at MIC have maintained a particular focus on extending equity of opportunity to all in society. The Mercy tradition holds that education is an essential means toward quality of life and that the university-level institution should be available for participation by all as a shared asset of the wider community. We are stewards of that asset and our efforts to widen participation on behalf of all members of the community have resulted in significant examples of innovation and increased levels of entry for non-traditional students through a broad range of access pathways such as our Foundation Certificate for Mature Learners, our development of a methodology for supporting ring-fenced CAO entry by students from backgrounds of socio-economic disadvantage (subsequently incorporated by the HEAR Scheme) and a partnership with the National Institute for Intellectual Disability which has led to a dedicated and accredited academic programme for students with intellectual disabilities.

These are just some examples of the continuous work we have done to locate the third level experience squarely within the context of social inclusion. We have matched such efforts with retention and progression supports such as our Learner Support Service and our Access and Disabilty Office to ensure that the additional services required by students who have experienced prior marginalisation from educational experience are targeted, tailored and coordinated. More recently we have worked intensively

and productively with our partners in the Shannon Consortium to provide inter-institutional cooperation towards access and progression.

Our challenges over the next four years derive from the extra demand for education and up- skilling in a rapidly shifting economic context, coupled with the need to expand our focused supports for non-traditional entrants. While our responses for increased demand for participation have been very successful, the proliferation of non-traditional students and the complexity of services we have introduced has resulted in the need to significantly enhance coordination and integration between the structures and teams working in this area, with the building of more robust linkages between academic and professional staff being a key goal.

We must also enhance our targeting and outreach strategies within external community contexts and along the life-cycle continuum, in partnership with other stakeholders working within the domains of social inclusion, community development and local governance.

We must also remind ourselves that life-long learning is a good of itself and not solely an instrument of the economic milieu. Here it is noted that the National Strategy for Education sets a target for higher education entry by mature students of 25% by 2025 and, with our ageing population, we and our many partners in the education sector are called upon to provide more opportunities both for those who wish to enrich their lives by learning. The learning experience of our entire campus community will, in turn, be equally enriched by diversity of participation and these benefits will accrue to our students, in particular, through the exchange of perspective that follows between a more differentiated learning cohort.

5.3.4.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1	To significantly increase the breadth and diversity of our student community in alignment with national targets for inclusive participation and lifelong learning
Targets	• Agreement on annual and cumulative student intake targets for period of Strategic Plan with reference to national targets and inter-institutional strategy (see below) • Effective targeting and outreach strategies developed and implemented with critical emphasis on partnership with key stakeholders in the community, public and statutory sectors • Effective communication strategies in place for (a) internal information and guidance in relation to strategies for diversity of participation and inclusion (b) for prospective learners along the life-cycle, beginning with early years through to pre-entry • Coordination with MIC research staff and external partners focusing on barriers to educational participation to identify and respond appropriately to barriers to inclusion along the life-cycle (c.f. Pillar 5) • Targets achieved across all demographic and socio-economic learner categories

Goal 2 Significant enhancement of coordination of leadership, infrastructure and resourcing towards diversity of participation and lifelong learning

Targets
- Co-sponsored task force review by An Bord Acadúil (Academic Council) and Coiste Bainistíochta an Choláiste (College Management Committee) to explore existing coordination, infrastructure and resourcing
- Structures re-configured / introduced as appropriate and sufficiency of resourcing in place to meet intake and retention targets

Goal 3 To enhance retention and progression rates

Targets
- Effective monitoring and reporting system in place with secure and confidential data flows between relevant support units
- Multi-skilled, integrated support teams in place
- Stronger operational linkages between academic staff and professional staff for ensuring student retention and progression
- Increased number of flexible programme delivery options in place (e.g. part-time provision student-friendly scheduling, greater use of Virtual Learning Environments, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL))
- Enhanced system of financial support for students (including students in difficulty) with increase evidence of linkages fostered for contributions under Corporate Social coordination with external agencies providing grants and other aids.
- Evidence of % increases in retention and progression above current baselines

Goal 4 To develop enhanced outreach strategies for life-long learning, with emphasis on partnership with education, community, public and statutory sectors

Targets
- Community-based learning initiatives designed to widen diversity of participation in mainstream provision at MIC
- Number of innovative and open campus-based learning initiatives specifically designed to introduce all sections of our community to university-level learning experiences, to promote life-long learning and to attract prospective students to accesss mainstream provision at MIC / partner institutions
- Evidence of coordination and complementarity between MIC life-long learning initiatives and partner initiatives
- Evidence of effective information dissemination in concert with external partners aimed at awareness-raising around learning along the life-cycle and access points available

5.3.5 The Teaching & Learning Culture

5.3.5.1 Premise

Because of our historical focus on Teacher Education, MIC has always had a strong commitment to the principle of professional development. We have applied this principle in outreach to practitioners teaching in the primary school system in numerous examples of provision for Continuing Professional Development (CPD). We have also concentrated much effort in development of our faculty, fostering innovation in teaching and learning, alongside a strong emphaisis on the connection between teaching and research, as part of our ethos.

Following the establishment of a Centre for Teaching & Learning (CTL) in 2007, we have concentrated our efforts on providing a service for faculty that facilitates student evaluation of teaching. The Student Evaluation of Teaching process (SET) is a key instrument in quality assurance of teaching at MIC and frequent participation by academic staff is seen as part of a cycle of learning that informs better delivery as well as the approach taken by ancillary support services for students such as the Learner Support Unit.

We note that a focus on teaching and learning is core to the *National Strategy for Education* which advocates joined-up approaches which, it is proposed, will fall within the framework of a new National Academy for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning. Having worked very closely with our partners in the Shannon Consortium to launch coordinated initiatives in teaching and learning under the Strategic Innovation Fund we welcome further developments towards support for a community of practice in this area.

Challenges that we envisage include the need to ensure that our institution and all other HEIs enjoy equity of participation in the governance of such structures as the National Academy. We will also work collaboratively with our partners to advocate for sustainability of any external initiatives having experienced the draw-backs to finite resourcing under SIF, disseminated through a competitive process that worked against the spirit of partnership and collegiality we believe is essential to teaching and learning.

Internal challenges will be to build on the impetus given to our Centre for Teaching & Learning through SIF by making it part of our mainstream provision and closely integrated with our programme delivery strategies. We also seek to adopt a more cohesive approach to teaching and learning by fostering closer coordination of the broader teaching and learning environment. Teaching & Learning demands intergration of a number of enabling systems, often set apart in HEIs' organisational structures. These systems include quality assurance, IT and AV, funding for staff development (including Training of Trainers) and research. Finally, from a significant baseline, we will continue to build towards a deeply embedded culture of quality teaching and learning by working proactively with our staff and by incentivising and celebrating their excellence in teaching and learning.

5.3.5.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1	**To support teaching and the scholarship of teaching**
Targets	• Significant enhancement of existing teaching and learning leadership, infrastructure and resourcing
	• Demonstrable improvement in systematic coordination between teaching and learning and integral services such as quality assurance, IT/AV, and Research Office
Goal 2	**To advocate for, demonstrate and embed exemplary practices and innovation in teaching and learning**
Targets	• % increase in events and initiatives designed effectively highlight and showcase exemplars of excellence and innovation in teaching & learning
	• % increase in staff participation
	• Evidence of increased incorporation of teaching and learning methodologies into curricula syllabi and practice

Goal 3	**To provide teaching enhancement interventions which are supportive, voluntary and confidential**
Targets	• Number of Peer Observations of Teaching (POTs) undertaken • Number of Teaching Portfolios developed • % increase in rate of participation in SETs

Goal 4	**To foster collegiality and collaboration amongst faculty and regional institutional partners towards reflective practice and scholarly dialogue on teaching and learning**
Targets	• Continued participation in Shannon Consortium Regional Teaching & Learning Awards initiative as well as participation in national award programmes from the National Academy • Participation in and organisation of regional Teaching & Learning workshops and symposia • Significant contribution to, participation in and inclusion with the National Academy for Teaching & Learning

Goal 5	**To significantly advance and embed incorporation of blended learning strategies and new technologies in the teaching and learning environment and programme design**
Targets	• Review of challenges and opportunities for MIC in incorporation of blended learning strategies and new technologies for teaching and learning • Number of programmes modified / newly designed to incorporate blended learning and new technologies • Number of new technologies provided and administered effectively and cohesively in collaboration with teaching and learning structures • Number of training interventions for design, roll-out and use of blended learning strategies and new technologies for teaching and learning • Evaluation of integration and effectiveness of blended learning strategies and new technologies for teaching and learning

5.3.6 The Research Culture

5.3.6.1 Premise

Research is integral to teaching and learning and essential to knowledge growth. It is a fundamental cornerstone of higher education and, accordingly, of the National Strategy. Research underpins the educational process, benefitting students and academic staff by enhancing and enriching the teaching and learning experience. Research makes a difference, sharpening the critical intellect to assess and evaluate, to weigh and to measure, to calculate and to review, and to learn from the experience of the past how best we can proceed into the future. These are the skills of the here and now, and these are the skills most acutely required among the graduates of the Twenty First Century. These are the skills we seek to imbue among students of the College, and these are the skills we aspire to see in our graduates.

In the coming period, Mary Immaculate College will commit to supporting and resourcing the on-going development of the research skills base among our staff and students. In recent years the College has invested heavily in building its research skills base, through financial supports, staff up-skilling, external collaboration and dedicated administrative structures. This has produced rich dividends, with staff engagement in research now at an all-time high, as evidenced by an almost exponential increase in staff publications and presentations at professional conferences over recent years.

This effort will be maintained and developed further, and the cross-fertilisation of research with teaching and learning will be a particular focus for us in the coming years, along with an increased emphasis on research that contributes significantly to public policy. Through research and knowledge transfer, Mary Immaculate College will contribute to the Irish economy as well as to quality of life at local, regional, national and international levels.

5.3.6.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1	To cultivate an increased awareness of the role of research as an integral part of academic endeavour
Targets	• Number of staff-focused initiatives and information strategies aimed at promotion of research activity • % increase in overall research engagement by staff • % increase in doctoral qualifications held by staff • Number of student-focused initiatives aimed at promotion of research activity • % increase in overall research engagement by students

Goal 2	To recognise, support and incentivise excellence and achievement in research
Targets	• Review conducted of current supports, challenges and opportunities surrounding research engagement by staff, resulting in related recommendations • Number of review recommendations adopted and implemented • Number of incentivisation systems aimed at increases in individual staff research outputs • % of staff availing of research supports • % increase in number of externally-funded research appointments

Goal 3	To ensure that the College supports effective leadership in the field of research
Targets	• Enhanced College infrastructure for the support of research and coordinated engagement by staff • Develop and operationalise research engagement and output data capture systems linked to central management information systems • Number of Personal Research Plans (PRPs) and Departmental Research Plans (DRPs) negotiated and agreed • Number of benchmarking exercises aimed at informing MIC research strategies and aligning output with commensurate national and international standards

Goal 4	To increase research support from external sources
Targets	• Number of external funding opportunities accessed • % increase in research income from external sources

Goal 5	To establish direction and priorities for inter-disciplinary research
Targets	• Review conducted of current supports, challenges and opportunities surrounding inter-displinary research engagement by staff, resulting in related recommendations • Number of review recommendations adopted and implemented • % increase in inter-disciplinary research activity involving inter-faculty, inter-institutional collaboration • Number of inter-disciplinary studentships introduced

- Number of inter-discplinary seminars
- Number of new centres established for inter-disciplinary research focused on agreed themes

Goal 6	**To foster research collaborations with HEIs, employers, commercial partners, local development stakeholders and public agencies**
Targets	• % research and knowledge transfer initiatives aimed at enhancing public policy and practice
	• % research and knowledge transfer initiatives through commercial partnership leading to increase in value of the Knowledge Economy
	• Number of collaborative research linkages and research networks created with other HEIs at regional, national and international level
	• Number of inter-institutional applications for research funding opportunities
	• % successful inter-institutional applications for research funding opportunities
	• Review and recommendations leading to increased participation in scholar exchange programmes
	• Number of recommendations implemented
	• Number of and % increase in scholar exchange
Goal 7	**To promote the status and recognition of MIC as a research active College**
Targets	• Increased collaboration with Corporate Communications function to devise and implement awareness-raising strategies for research activities and outputs
	• Demonstrable increase in recognition of MIC research profile

5.3.7 Inter-institutional Programme Development & Delivery

5.3.7.1 Premise

In its recommendations towards increased synergy and resource optimisation between higher education institutions, the National Strategic for Education cites the Shannon Consortium as a pioneering exemplar of the model of clustering envisaged. As a member of the Shannon Consortium, MIC recognises the dividends for the Exchequer, the student community, our scholars and our administrative infrastructures, of inter-institutional cooperation and coordination. Success indicators are distributed across many contexts of the higher education enterprise but it is in programme delivery where many of the most exciting developments have happened already and which, undoubtedly, lie ahead.

In the coming years, we aim to significantly increase the instances of inter-institutional programme delivery involving MIC that are already in place (e.g. Structured PhD in Education delivered in conjunction with UL, Structured PhD in Philosophy of Art and Culture in conjunction with UL and NUIG).

A cardinal feature of our inter-institutional academic strategy will be to build on existing collaboration for widening participation and lifelong learning at third level by further development of and participation in joined-up approaches to targeting and outreach and building effective and appropriate access and progression pathways that provide clear routes within and between institutions for learners.

5.3.7.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1	**To foster closer collaboration with partner institutions towards inter-institutional delivery of academic programmes**
Targets	• Joint review of new possibilities for inter-institutional undergraduate and postgraduate module and programme creation and co-delivery with partner HEIs, with particular emphasis on opportunities involving the University of Limerick within the Shannon Consortium framework
	• Number of new modules and programmes jointly designed and delivered at all relevant NFQ levels
	• Institutional ethos and values embedded in programme design and learning outcomes

Goal 2	**To maintain a high quality student-centred focus in inter-institutional delivery strategies**
Targets	• Effective and coordinated academic monitoring, student support and teaching and learning systems in place
	• Number of shared service agreements in place for academic support

Goal 3	**To further develop inter-institutional pathways for access to third level learning opportunities and for progression**
Targets	• Joint review of challenges and opportunities establishing joined-up targeting, outreach and access pathways
	• Number of new inter-institutional initiatives for outreach and access in place
	• Evidence of effectiveness of inter-institutional outreach, access and retention strategies
	• Evidence of increased learner progression between MIC and partner institutions

5.4 | Commitment to a high quality and holistic learning experience, enabling the flourishing of our students' lives

5.4.1 Premise

If teaching and learning and research, taken together, represent the core mission of the College, the lives of our students are at the heart of our concerns. What makes the student experience at MIC unique is two things, predominantly. First, our institutional ethos demands that we consider the student as a whole person, located not simply within an educational frame for subjective reasons, but within a space that enables them to recognise themselves within the wider world, stirred by the entreaty contained within our Mission Statement to make a difference within that broader context. This ethos keeps continuity with the vision of Catherine McAuley: that the human being is a person of dignity called to flourish.

The second distinctive aspect of student life at MIC is our strenuous emphasis on providing our students with a range of supports and opportunities that correspond to multiple and diverse needs, enabling them to enjoy a richly holistic learning experience. Our academic staff work in close concert with our professional services staff to ensure a coherent system of provision, several examples of which have been replicated elsewhere in the higher education sector as exemplars of best practice. Our model of governance is strongly oriented towards partnership with the student body and students have representation in a host of decision-making fora, including the *An Bord Rialaithe*. We strive to maintain an informal atmosphere on our campus with staff that are highly experienced and professional yet accessible and friendly.

With the enormous growth that we have experienced over the course of the last two decades, with demand for third level places rising, and a student population more widely differentiated than ever, maintaining the exceptional characteristics and quality of our learning experience presents us with new challenges as we look forward to the next five years of our development. The task must be to identify ways of maintaining our reputation for high quality, multi-faceted and student-centred provision by seeking out new ways of working. We will enhance our framework for coordinated and integrated service delivery.

We will explore ways of working with our partners in the Shannon Consortium to expand the range of shared delivery practices. We will continue to work in close partnership with the student body also, with a particular focus on more extensive dialogue aimed at better understanding students' perceptions, hearing their concerns and enhancing communication in order to modify our provision as appropriate.

5.4.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1	To ensure the prominence of a student-centred culture throughout support services that are cohesive and multifaceted	
Targets	•	Consultative review of student support services focusing on maintaining the fullest provision for the whole-student approach, effectiveness of service integration and linkage with academic provision, and efficient coordination within management infrastructure
	•	Recommendations implemented, new structures in place

Goal 2	To provide excellent career advice, guidance and linkage with employers	
Targets	•	Leadership and infrastructure for cross-College career advice and employer linkage service in place
	•	Opportunities for shared delivery of career advice and employer linkage service
	•	Number of students availing of careers service
	•	% increase in linkages built with employers
	•	Graduate employment surveys completed using quantitative and qualitative methodologies
	•	Cross-College student work experience placement programme

Goal 3	To significantly enhance student communications	
Targets	•	Academic feedback culture and mechanisms significantly enhanced
	•	Student perceptions of academic feedback systems continuously monitored
	•	Range of new student-centred information delivery protocols in place
	•	Student enrolment, registration and payments systems significantly enhanced
	•	Student communications fora established

Goal 4	To encourage and maintain participation and representation of students in decision-making	
Targets	•	Student representation on decision-making fora
	•	Evidence of strong culture of partnership and dialogue with students

Goal 5	To recognise and celebrate student achievements and contributions outside the curriculum	
Targets	•	Protocols for incentivising and rewarding student achievment reviewed
	•	Civic and community engagement by students recognised

5.5 An international dimension to all College activities

5.5.1 Premise

Fostering and developing the international dimension of College activities will be a key priority for us over the next five years. One of our core objectives during the course of this Strategic Plan is to enrich the culture of the College and the diversity of our campus community. We will achieve this by significantly increasing the number of international students choosing MIC as a learning destination as well as supporting more of our full-time students to choose placements in partner universities abroad. Broadening our learning community in this fashion will enliven our campus culture.

We have a very proud track record in the area of international student exchange with an average intake of 70 international students per annum for the last number of years. However, until very recently our capacity to welcome larger numbers has been constrained by limited teaching space and accommodation. The desire to achieve growth in this area was an important part of the reasoning behind the design of our three-stage Campus Development Plan and with the first two phases of this completed between 2007 and 2010 we are primed to capitalise on the major increase in teaching space available to us. Indeed, having succeeded in the creation of a truly world-class campus, this, together with our excellent undergraduate and postgraduate academic programmes, and the positioning of the College within an important regional gateway in the West, makes MIC exceptionally attractive to prospective international students.

We will now intensify our efforts to diversify and re-conceptualise our academic offerings towards this end, introducing internationally-themed elements that will add appeal to the existing emphasis on Irish tradition, culture and society that already offers a unique and exciting learning programme to visiting students. The attraction of study in Ireland for learners from Catholic third level institutions will be leveraged also.

We will couple our efforts to attract international students with greater support for our own students to enjoy the enormous benefits of time spent on a learning-abroad programme. We will enhance and develop our international student support structures as well as our strategic outreach in order to seek out new partners and agree memoranda of understanding for mutual benefit. We will develop new delivery models aimed at distance learning that will include summer and winter school programmes, courses in professional development and online learning opportunities in order to invite a combination of professional practitioners and life-long learners to avail of flexible options for a unique and high quality international educational experience.

Our greatest asset, our staff community, will benefit from a significantly increased commitment to academic mobility through peer exchange. We will increase our number of linkage agreements with partner universities for mutual hosting of scholars and we will invest further in academic staff development supports that enable our staff to travel for research, teaching and learning and conference attendance. We will build strong links with intermediary funding organisations towards this aim. And we will complement our internal research activities with efforts to build partnerships within and between international research networks focused on cognate fields and disciplines.

5.5.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1	**To create new high quality infrastructure for the promotion and coordination of international learning experiences and scholar exchange**
Targets	• New International Office operational and working cohesively with related College functions • Detailed plan for the promotion and coordination of international learning experiences and scholar exchange prepared, implemented and monitored

Goal 2	**To significantly increase the number of international students (undergraduate and postgraduate) attending learning programmes at MIC**
Targets	• Number of new Memoranda of Understanding signed with partner universities • Number of new academic programmes designed at undergraduate and postgraduate levels with elements attractive to learners from abroad • Enhanced targeting, outreach and international marketing strategies in place • % increase in number of full-time students visiting MIC for study-abroad periods / exchange programmes.

Goal 3	**To increase international mobility for academic staff peer networking, teaching and learning and research opportunities**
Targets	• Increased investment in staff mobility • % increase in number of staff availing of mobility opportunities

Goal 4	**To provide high quality and flexible opportunities at MIC for Continuing Professional Development and life-long learning**
Targets	• Number of new Continuing Professional Development and life-long learning programmes designed with range of characteristics designed to offer flexible participation options • Enhanced targeting, outreach and international marketing strategies in place • % increase in participation in Continuing Professional Development and life-long learning programmes

5.6 | Making a positive difference in our community, locally, regionally, nationally, and globally

5.6.1 Premise

In harmony with its distinctive ethos and founding vision, the College has a very rich history of engagement with all sectors within the wider community. This College is here, first and foremost, to make a difference for the good of our shared community.

While the College has contributed much to the wider community through its mission to promote inclusion through education, its work has long been underpinned by a clear recognition that this enterprise has many stakeholders and that a commitment to partnership is just as essential as the enterprise itself. This is why the most fundamental characteristics of our work to make a difference – our competency in addressing educational marginalisation and our spirit of partnership – can be clearly recognised in each of those endeavours.

Examples include establishment of the Curriculum Development Unit which has leveraged academic expertise and facilitated partnerships with other stakeholders for the pursuit of research and development of resources aimed at the Early Learning environment, class-room management and Special Education, to name a few. The College has engaged with a range of networks within Limerick City and its environs (most recently in concert with its Shannon Consortium partners) and currently has representation on the local Partnership Company (PAUL Partnership), fora established through the Limerick Regeneration Agencies such as the Older Persons' Forum and the Limerick Incredible Years Strategic Steering Group. Our staff have made very significant research contributions through many of these fora including the mapping of local availability of services for children and interactions between families and these services (through the Children's Services Committee), as well as evaluation of the impact of the Incredible Years programme in Limerick. The Transforming Education through Dialogue (TED) Project has a long history of facilitating linkages between mainstream primary schools and the community through the PLUS Network of urban disadvantaged schools (as well as rural based networks). College staff have provided their expertise to local strategic planning by Limerick City Development Board, particularly in socio-economic and demographic mapping for which the College has a major national and international profile, as well as in development of a learning strategy for the city, based on coordinated partnership approaches. At national level, College staff have been working on highly successful projects aimed at Maths Recovery and at Special Education in partnership with the Department of Education & Skills as well as with DEIS Primary Schools.

Similarly, our expertise in, and many contributions to educational inclusion in the Developing World have most recently been carried out in partnership with Irish Aid, representatives of the higher education sector in Northern Ireland and a host of African countries in projects that have included joint educational research and Teacher Education.

At a macro level, the challenge for our College and for all of our partners, will be to confront the potential expansion and entrenchment of marginalisation of deprived communities in a period of pro-longed economic down-turn. We are also challenged to work more efficiently and effectively within coordinated and integrated settings underpinned by joint commitment and, most importantly, by mutual trust. For MIC itself, a particular obstacle must be surmounted within the coming years.

Notwithstanding our focus on working outside of the walls of our College, our physical campus has remained relatively isolated within its own wider community. We have succeeded only partly in fully conveying that our estate and our resources are at the service of our entire community and that all are welcome here. It is of particularly critical importance to Limerick City, at whose very heart we are situated, that the economic, social, cultural and civic capital that is immanent to MIC is put at the disposal of all members of our shared community. We have begun this process with a very deliberate act: we have demolished the physical boundary walls that have obscured our campus from view for far too long. This is our way of expressing a number of crucially important messages. The lowering of our walls is intended as a statement that "Mary Immaculate College is open for business." It says: "Mary Immaculate College is a beautiful place and we want to reveal this to you." It says: "This place is part of our shared heritage." It says: "We belong to your community and you are part of ours." It says: "Come in. You are welcome here. This is your space." And in the same vein, our investment in our new, state-of-the-art, 500-auditorium, the Lime Tree Theatre, is intended as a major contribution by the College to the life-blood of our city, situating MIC back in the community, where it belongs, after so many years obscured behind high walls.

5.6.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1	To advance social inclusion through the medium of education and a strategy of partnership
Targets	• Membership / leadership of number of local, regional and national and international networks and partnerships promoting the principle of social inclusion through education
	• Number of research projects completed focusing on curriculum development, educational inclusion and Continuing Professional Development for practitioners addressing social exclusion and poverty issues in their work
	• Number of collaborative initiatives, including research, involving partners in the Shannon Consortium as well as other agencies and organisations, aimed at promoting social inclusion through education
	• Number of campus-based learning initiatives aimed at promotion of educational inclusion

Goal 2	To foster a spirit of justice and commitment to the service of others amongst our College community
Targets	• Evidence of increased service contributions by staff
	• Number of academic modules incorporating civic engagement / volunteering as fulfilment requirements
	• Number of initiatives and protocols introduced for staff and students to motivate, recognise and celebrate commitment to the service of the wider community

Goal 3	To increase awareness of the College as integral to the community and part of the shared economic, social, cultural and civic capital
Targets	• Number of outreach and awareness-raising strategies implemented • Evidence of increased usage of campus / College facilities as public space for learning, civic and cultural purposes • Evidence of increased usage of campus / College facilities by Regeneration / RAPID communities • Evidence of greater integration and more visible recognition of MIC within local and regional economic, social, cultural, civic and governance fora

5.7 | Enhancing our learning environment and providing a work place of the highest quality

5.7.1 Premise

Today, our student community stands at 3,200. One of the greatest challenges we have faced in recent years has been to expand and raise the standard of our campus infrastructure to the level of quality required, and deserved, by our learning community – students, staff and visitors. We have made huge strides in meeting this challenge with the implementation of a 3-phase campus development master plan and achieving our targets for the first two phases of that plan. We have more than doubled our buildings stock and have provided the very highest standards of accommodation and integrated technological infrastructure. We have provided world-class teaching and research space in our new TARA Building which also houses the main hub for key student resources, including the administrative centre of the Mary Immaculate Students' Union (MISU). TARA is also the location for our state-of-the art auditorium – the Lime Tree Theatre – which, in the coming years, will be a focal point for our efforts to promote our campus as a public space. Our multi-purpose sports and recreation complex, Tailteann, was voted RIAI Leisure Building of the Year, 2008.

We have been fortunate to have received significant Exchequer funding for a large proportion of these recent developments and are immensely appreciative of this support. The return on this investment has been of significant value to the State, with increased through-put of graduates educated to the highest standard as well as a research culture of outstanding quality, much of it focused strongly on primary system curriculum development, educational disadvantage and the formulation of strategies for inclusion. The contribution of our graduates to the wider education system and to the Knowledge Economy, as well as the economic contribution of the College and the campus community to Limerick City and its environs, ensures that investment in MIC has a long-term effect.

We have also invested heavily in our estate, laying particular emphasis on adding value to the public space, with the opening up and transformation of our magnificent campus grounds. We have aimed our resources at the fitting out of the *Lime Tree Theatre* as a public auditorium that will act as a key element in local and regional strategies to foster inclusion and civic participation through the performing arts as well as to highlight Limerick City as a place of cultural excellence.

While our future challenges include the need to steward and maintain our estate at a world-class level, there is an urgent need to deliver strategically essential capital development. As we proceed with implementation of the final stage of our campus development master plan, refurbishment and extension of our Library Building must take priority. The existing Library Building was completed in 1979 and intended to accommodate 750 students. A library, well-designed, and properly stocked and equipped, is the lifeblood of a university-level institution and it is imperative that the College succeeds in bringing the existing building to Twenty First Century standards and equipping it to meet the needs of a large and diverse learning community. This is a major objective for us and by the end of this strategicplanning period we will have made tangible progress towards its attainment.

The hall-mark of efficient, effective and quality service provision is cohesive interaction between all functional elements within the process. We recognise this and we will strive to bring about significant enhancement of coordination and integration within and between our horizontal and vertical decision-making and implementation processes.

The greatest asset we have in pursuit of our mission is our staff community. We have asked much of our staff during our rapid and significant expansion during the last two decades. More has been asked with the consequences for resourcing and extra pressures on existing staff that have followed under the prevailing economic conditions. At all times our staff community has responded generously and proved equal to the tasks we have faced together. We are fortunate to enjoy the efforts of a staff body with an extraordinarily high level of commitment to academic excellence as well as to the ethos of community, partnership and the high quality whole-student experience that is our most prominent hall-mark.

All members of our staff community deserve the highest levels of support, investment in their development, and well-being at work and we will continue to provide this through effective dialogue, excellent communications and a strong spirit of partnership. We will ensure also, that our recruitment and promotional strategies reflect our institutional values of inclusion, equality and diversity and meet the highest standards of transparency, fairness and compliance.

One of our most highly valued founding principles continues to be the usage of *An Ghaeilge* as a primary spoken language in MIC. We will continue to foster usage of the Irish language amongst our students and our staff and we will strive for excellence in service delivery through the medium of Irish in alignment with national goals.

True to our heavy emphasis on the concept of community, we will strive to maintain and enhance our connections and linkage opportunities with both our alumni and our retired colleagues. Those who have departed from our campus will remain a celebrated part of our extended community.

5.7.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1	**To provide our learning community, our visitors, and the wider community with an estate of the highest standard of quality, accessibility and beauty.**
Targets	• % of remaining stages of MIC campus development masterplan completed • Number of benchmarking exercises undertaken to establish comparative quality of the MIC estate

Goal 2	**To significantly enhance our library infrastructure to fully meet the diversity of needs amongst our learning community and of members of the wider community wishing to share our resources**
Targets	• Evidence of substantial progress towards refurbishment and extension of College Library

Goal 3	**To continue to actively promote the Irish language culture 'in all aspects of College life.**
Targets	• Number of initiatives undertaken to foster the excellent reputation of the College in Irish tradiational music, song and dance • % increase in number of staff up-skilled in usage of Irish • % increase in capacity for service delivery through the medium of Irish

Goal 4	To promote and actively support employee well-being, diversity in the work-place and career development for all staff
Targets	• Implementation of comprehensive HR strategy
	• Number of coordinated initiatives between HR Office, Health Promotion Office and other functional areas to promote employee well-being
	• Review and implementation of Recruitment and Appointment procedures
	• Evidence of resourcing and % increase in uptake and spread of career development opportunities amongst staff
	• Evidence of effective and productive coordination between areas with functional responsibilties and budgets for staff development and training of trainers

Goal 5	To foster relationships between all members of the College community that are governed by mutual respect and a commitment to meaningful consultation and partnership working
Targets	• Appropriate policies in place
	• Review of appropriate opportunities for partnership engagement

Goal 6	To be environmentally accountable by applying the highest and most sustainable standards to energy usage and waste management and to raise awareness of green issues within the College community
Targets	• Energy & Environmental Committee established
	• Compliance and targeting under the National Energy Efficiency Plan
	• Annual Reports publishing progress and energy efficiencies achieved
	• Evidence of increased awareness among College community of sustainable energy usage and waste management and % increase in participation in related initiatives

Goal 7	To renew our emphasis on continuous quality assurance and to work as a whole community to situate our work in strategic context, to value and celebrate our endeavours, to actively seek the views of all those whose needs we serve, and to be imaginative in realising the potential for improvement.
Targets	• Quality Review Schedule approved
	• Number of Quality Reviews undertaken across academic and professional services departments
	• Commencement of IUQA institutional review process

Goal 8	To enhance the management and effectiveness of our external and internal communications, including development of information-sharing systems for prospective learners, current students and alumni, current and former staff, partners, peers and the wider community
Targets	• Corporate Communications Office established, providing cohesive framework for Marketing & PR, branding, corporate publications, school liaison, media relations, events management, web-based communications and internal communications.
	• Number of new initiatives introduced to enhance user-friendliness IT environment

Goal 9	To cherish, strengthen and celebrate our links with our alumni and our retired staff
Targets	• Enhanced communications and information-sharing initiatives
	• Number of social engagement and celebratory events held

5.8 | Best practice, efficiency and effectiveness in governance, leadership and management

5.8.1 Premise

Our governance practice is informed by a robust sense of connection to our institutional values, recognition of the key role played by our governance structures in stewardship of our heritage and status as a Catholic institution of higher education, commitment to the highest standards of ethical behaviour and integrity, the imperative of maintaining mission stability through support for excellent academic provision, our sense of place within the wider community and our promise to make a difference within it, and the importance of engaging both critically and constructively with national policy and aligning with policy goals and statutory imperatives. Our approach is based on partnership, trust and collective responsibility.

In the course of implementing our Strategic Plan we will ensure that our governance structures remain equal to the standards we have set and we will engage in monitoring and review towards this objective. We will also enhance the support we provide to the members of our governance structures so that they are fully informed of their responsibilities and that they enjoy complete assistance in providing their essential contribution to the College.

Our management structures will continue to meet the highest standards of transparency and accountability and we will ensure, through these structures, that an increased emphasis on quality of provision and service delivery is embedded and maintained. Our decision-making processes will continue to be influenced by partnership-working and will also be aided by immediate availability of relevant and comprehensive information about operational implementation, alignment with our institutional strategy, input-output data and visible outcomes. We will measure the progress of our implementation and evaluate our strategic outcomes against robust indicators in alignment with overarching Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) generated under the planned consultative process that is intended to proceed from the *National Strategy for Education.*

In our governance and management we will take special cognisance of the objectives set out under the *National Strategy.* We note the importance of consistency with the national priorities set out by the *Strategy* and our plan is fully responsive to these priorities. We will agree annual action plans and targets which contribute directly towards these objectives and provide robust and comparable data demonstrating progress. We will reconfigure our systems and protocols for information management and compliance, incorporating the gamut of information processing tools now available and ensuring, in particular, due confidentiality, data protection and information security as well as public-facing and accessible procedures for Freedom of Information.

The main objective of our governance, leadership and management structures and procedures is the advancement of the College. This means assuring that the institution is adequately resourced and properly promoted so that financial stability obtains concurrently with adequacy and flexibility of resource investment towards continuous development. It also means advancing the reputation of the College and

ensuring that its status, its objectives and its achievements are visible to the wider community, including peers, funding partners, tax payers, prospective staff and students and, not least, to potential donors.

5.8.2 Goals & Strategies

Goal 1	To provide the highest standard of governance, characterised by commitment to our institutional ethos and mission, enlightened visioning, prudent and ethical leadership, inclusive representation and collective responsibility
Targets	• Adoption of agreed clustering strategy for compliance with re-configuration of higher education landscape (under the *National Strategy for Education*) that preserves the institutional identity, mission and operational integrity of the College
	• Review conducted in support of maintaining the highest standards ofethical, efficient and effective governance
	• Annual business plans based on Strategic Plan approved and monitored, with outputs and outcomes tracked, reported and measured against agreed KPIs
	• Comprehensive induction for members of *An Bord Rialaithe*
	• Review of Standing Committees undertaken
	• Annual Reports approved and published

Goal 2	To ensure efficient, effective and transparent management and decision-making
Targets	• Enhanced protocols for sharing of information, and communication of decisions
	• Enhanced use of IT environment for decision-making efficiency

Goal 3	To ensure the highest standards of compliance
Targets	• Review system of compliance reporting to *An Bord Rialaithe*
	• Office of Information Compliance & Records Management established
	• Significant enhancement of Records Retention protocol and system undertaken and implemented
	• Number of staff training initiatives undertaken and evidence of increased awareness of operational roles and responsibilities

Goal 4	To broaden and deepen our commitment to working in partnership with other HEIs and external agencies to further our mission and goals as well as to contribute to the advancement of national priorities and policy imperatives, particularly in the eduction sector.
Targets	• Commitment to Shannon Consortium maintained as primary clustering arrangement and % increase in shared approaches / joint inititiatives / resource optimisation / shared service delivery
	• Number new collaborative initiatives engaging public, private and community and voluntary sectors for strategic advancement of educational issues

Goal 5	To promote the advancement of the College
Targets	• Continued support for MIC Foundation
	• % increase in funding from outside the Exchequer
	• Corporate Communications Office established

6.0

strategic process & implementation

6.1 | # The Process

The MIC Strategic Plan was formally adopted by *An Bord Rialaithe* on 23 March 2012. This represented the culmination of more than four years of preparation that began with the building of a framework based on situational review and SWOT analysis and included a comprehensive and inclusive process of consultation that took place over an extended period and involved the entire College community, including the student body, as well as external stakeholders (see *Appendix A* for a list of the key issues that emerged during internal consultation and which informed the content and layout of the plan, and *Appendix B* for a list of the external stakeholders that were consulted).

During our strategic planning process a number of very significant developments emerged within the operational environment for the higher level sector, generally, as well as for the Colleges of Education, particularly. These included the issuing of central directives to control recruitment to the public sector (including HEIs) and the publication of the National Strategy for Education to 2030, as well as the introduction by the Teaching Council of a four- year model for Primary Teacher Education and the issuing of guidelines and criteria to be followed in the re-conceptualisation of offerings within this new framework.

At a broader remove, the challenges arising from economic decline and the concomitant demand for re-training and education of the labour force have been felt at MIC, as much as at other insititutions with a larger and more differentiated cohort of prospective students seeking opportunities at third level. Locally, the regeneration process in Limerick City and the parallel process aimed at integration of the local authorities within a single local government framework have also had important implications for the College, particularly in terms of harnessing its potential to assist with educational inclusion as well as its integral role within the civic space.

These strategic issues were thoroughly discussed by *An Bord Rialaithe* during the course of our strategic planning period and although the MIC Strategic Plan was already at an advanced stage, with extensive consultations undertaken, it was decided to extend the planning period so these converging issues could be fully considered (by a sub-group of *An Bord Rialaithe*) and their implications for the College identified prior to completion. It was also agreed that with the commencement of a new College President taking place in October 2011, the final shape of the plan should have input from the new President.

The sequence of stages in the strategic planning process took place as follows:

July-Aug 2008	Review & Analysis
October 2008	Strategic framework presented to *An Bord Rialaithe*
Oct-Jan 2008	Consultation with College community (Phase 1)
March 2009	First draft presented to *An Bord Rialaithe*
April-Sept 2009	Consultation with College community (Phase 2)
Sept-Jan 2010	Sub-Group of *An Bord Rialaithe* refines the plan
March 2010	Second draft approved by *An Bord Rialaithe* for external consultation
Sept-Nov 2010	External consultation
January 2011	Sub-Group of *An Bord Rialaithe* appointed to consider emerging strategic considerations
Oct-Dec 2012	Commencement of new College President and adoption by *An Bord Rialaithe* of the seven underlying pillars of the Strategic Plan
March 2012	Final draft of the Strategic Plan presented to *An Bord Rialaithe* and adopted

6.2 | Implementation

It is intended by *An Bord Rialaithe* that the Strategic Plan, and the goals and targets set out herein, will inform the adoption of annual Action Plans that will be implemented during each of the five consecutive Academic Years during the term of the Strategic Plan (2012-2016).

The annual Action Plans will be more detailed, and will feature delivery strategies, roles and responsibilties, input data, actions to be implemented, output data, and outcomes. Outcomes will be measured against agreed success indicators that will be aligned with universal KPIs expected to be introduced for the higher education sector in 2012.

The implementation process will be overseen by a monitoring group which will submit quarterly reports to *An Bord Rialaithe*.

Our reporting process will be transparent and outputs and outcomes will be published in our institutional Annual Reports as well as forming the basis for reporting to funding bodies.

APPENDIX A KEY ISSUES DISTILLED FROM INTERNAL CONSULTATION PROCESS[1]

Academic programmes – review and revise current provision; relevance to market (and community)

Access / accessibility – compliance imperatives but also internal mainstreaming issues; targeting; pre-entry preparation

Aesthetics – the "look" of the campus / facilities / remove enclosed "feel"

Buildings – dialogue with staff about new buildings, space, student numbers, usage

Career's Office – to be established

Catholic Ethos – requires expression within the body of the strategy grid.

Centres, schools etc – Research / Language / "anchoring" of Social Justice initiatives

Communication – internal and external; trust and respect - reciprocity

Coordination & Integration – horizontal and vertical; 'wider participation'

Decision-making – inclusive, transparent, devolved where possible, efficiency of communication and execution, trust

Delivery (of programmes) – flexibility, ICTs, outreach, community context, enhanced targeting, collaboration with external actors, challenge of working outside normal hours, credits and blended learning Departments identity / clustering / administrative support

Diversity – seeking diversity actively as well as inclusiveness

Environment – work environment (human and physical resources) as well as care of the earth imperatives

External Relations – partnerships / national and international / internationalisation / academic mobility and conferences

Faculties – enhanced interaction and opportunities for collaborative programme delivery

Image – branding and corporate identity

Library – space, resources and ancillary services

Life-long learning

[1]Non-weighted, alphabeticallisting, presented to *An Bord Rialaithe,* March 20, 2009

Management – about giving leadership

Modularisation – *Inter*-institutional synergies

Modularisation / hybridisation / *intra*-**institutional synergies**

Policy (external) – alignment where appropriate but critical engagement and leadership

Policy (internal) – enhance communication and effectiveness of policy development

Postgraduate Studies – target for enhancement, especially development of Graduate School

Resources – funding, initiatives; resources required; staffing

Revenue – facilities etc.

Social Integration – staff / students/ sectional

Social Justice – commitment to social justice and equity needs to be articulated more effectively externally and MIC currency in this area asserted / integration with syllabus / cohesion (anchored)

Staff-Student Ratio

Student-centred – "community of learners and learning" includes staff; range of supports required for students

Teaching & Learning ... cannot be de-coupled from research – and vice versa.

APPENDIX B EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

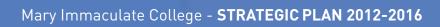|	
Maria Kelly	CEO, Limerick Chamber of Commerce
Laura Ryan	Limerick Coordination Office
Eamon Ryan	CEO, Limerick Enterprise Board
Vincent Cunnane	CEO, Shannon Development
Liam McElligott	Limerick Enterprise Development Park
George Lee	Limerick Enterprise Development Park
Don Barry	President, University of Limerick
Michael Carmody	President, Institute of Technology Tralee
Maria Hinfelaar	President, Limerick Institute of Technology
Rhona McCormack	Manager, Limerick Downtown Centre
Ruth Bourke	Manager Ennis Regional Learning Centre
Jennifer Moroney	Ward Manager, Northside Learning Hub
Michael Cregan	Laurel Hill Secondary School
Padraig O' Broin	Laurel Hill Coláiste
Pat O' Brien	St. Endas Community School
Bríd de Brún	Árdscoil Rís
Bridget O'Connell	Salesian Secondary School
Colette McGrath	Ardscoil Mhuire
Nicholas Cuddihy	Crescent Comprehensive College
Sheila Conneely	Scoil Carmel
Kathryn O'Connor	St. Gabriels School
Charles Irwin	St. Munchin's College
Kay Barry	Catherine McAuley School
Margaret McMahon	St. Nessans Community College
Noel Earlie	CBS Secondary School
Ted O'Mahony	Limerick School for the Deaf
Thomas S. Hardy	Villiers School
Vincent Foley	St. Clement's College
Martin Wallace	Castletroy College
Donnachadh Ó Treasaigh	Gaelcholaiste Luimnigh
Sile Killeen	Sc.Mhuire Banríon na hÉireann (C)
M. O'Kelly	Sc. Chríost Rí, (B)
W. Reidy	Sc. Chuimhneachain JFK
Mary Brick	Sc. Chroí Ró Naofa Iosa
Sarah O'Rourke	Sc. Maria Auxiliatrix Bunscoil
Michael Condon	Sc. Mhainchín Naofa (Boys)
Ms. Linda Scully	Sc. Mhainchin Naofa (Girls)
Ms. Chris Deely	St. Lelias N.S.
Aine Bn Uí Chroimín	Corpus Christi N.S.
Peter Long	Sc. Ide
Rosemary Mangan	Sc. Mhuire (C),
Geraldine Wallace	St. Mary's Junior Boys N.S.
John Tuohy	Sc. Phóil Naofa
Francis Quaid	Our Lady of Lourdes
R. Grogan	Sc. Mhuire Banríon na Siochána
Marian Tobin	Southill Junior School
Kevin Haugh	Galvone N.S.
Bernadette Mee	Sc. Mhóin-a-Lín
Róisín Bn Uí Chúrnáin	Sc. Phádraig Naofa (B)
Donal O'Gorman	Sc. Phádraig Naofa (C)
Betty Farrell	Sc. Bhride
M. O'Gorman	Sc. Eoin Naofa
Seamus Long	St. John the Baptist Boys N.S.
Patrick Hanley	Sc. Iosagáin
Susan Frawley	St. Michael's Infant Sch.
Pat Lyons	Maria King
D. Ó Murchú	An Mhodhscoil
Brian Mangan	Sc. Mháthair Dé
Helen McInerney	Limerick School Project
Thomas Browne	Milford NS
Stiofán Ó Cathail	Scoil Neasán Naofa
C. Crowe	Patrickswell N.S.
D. Leahy	Sc. an Spioraid Naomh
P.J. FitzPatrick	Sc. Seanáin Naofa
M. Mc Niece	Parteen N.S.
Sally O'Neill	St. Senan's N.S.
G. Loughnane	St. Aidan's N.S.
J. Walsh	St. Tola's N.S.
Peter Walsh	St. Conaire's N.S.
G. Stack Ennis	N.S., Kilrush Rd.
P. Hanrahan	Sc. Chríost Rí, Cloughleigh
Betty O'Riordan	Holy Family Junior N.S.
Liam de Róiste	Ennis C.B.S.
Cooney Holy	Family Senior,
Sean O'Confhaola	Ennis Educate Together
Pauline McGrath	O'Callaghan Mills N.S.
Sean Hehir	Kilkishen N.S.
Seamus	Leamy Clarecastle N.S.
Sharon Dilger	Doora N.S.
A. McMahon	Scoil na Maighdine N.S.
M. Kilmartin	Clonmoney N.S.
Jody O'Connor	Cratloe N.S.
D. Ó Gréachan	Sc Mhuire
Ray McInerney	Sixmilebridge N.S.
Kathleen O'Donnell	Donoughmore N.S.
Marian Nestor	Convent P.S.
Michael Gleeson	Killaloe Boys N.S.
M. Drew	O'Briensbridge N.S.
M. O'Sullivan	Ballina N.S.
P. Kennedy	Lisnagry N.S.
Derbhile de Paor	Castleconnell N.S.
M. Lynch	Sc. Naomh Iosaf
A McKenna	Crecora N.S.
Barry O'Riordan	Adare Boys
Mary Lavin	Adare Girls
M O'Brien	tSeantsráid, Adare
Cyril Madigan	St. James School, Cappagh
Nora Naughton	Askeaton Junior N.S.
Liam Hernon	Askeaton Senior N.S.
Liam O'Brien	Christ the Saviour NS.
Mary O'Kelly	Croagh N.S.
Sr. Madeline Ní Dheá	St. Joseph's School
Nora Ryan	St. Joseph's Convent
Rena Cullane	Courtenay N.S.
Marie Hilliard	Sc. Áine Naofa
T. Wrenn	Foynes N.S.
M. Moore	Scoil Naomh Mhuire
M Crowley	Ardagh N.S.

The Principal	Fitzgerald Kildimo N.S.
Máire Uí Cheallacháin	Sc. Náisiúnta
Niamh Ambrose	Knockea N.S.
P. Enright	Oola, N.S.
Sean Hogg	Caherconlish
M. Foley	Convent of Mercy
Eamonn Coffey	Boys Senior N.S.
Sr. Claire Gunning	St. Joseph's School
S. Moloney	Tipperary GNS
Ann Tierney	Tipperary Jnr. B.N.S.
John Martin	St. Mary's Jnr. B.N.S.
Noreen Spain	St. Mary's N.S.
Gerry Ryan	CBS Nenagh Senior School
M. Gleeson	Scoil Mhaithair Dé
Liz Kiely	Ahane N.S.
Joe Ryan	Shanagolden N.S.
Máirín Ní Dhuinneacha	Gaelscoil Mhichil Chiosog
M. Ní Fhathárta	Gaelscoil Raithin
Ríona De Liostúin	Gaelscoil Sairseál
James Murphy	Croom National School
The Principal	Knocklong National School
Tom Bulfin	Bruff National School
The Principal	Scoil Mochealleg
Brendan Moloney	Hospital National School
The Principal	Kilfinnane National School
The Principal	Cappamore BNS.
Breda Deedigan	Manager, St. Enda's Sports Complex
Joe O'Connell	Director of Limerick Education Office
Very Rev. Tony Mullins	Administrator, Limerick Diocese
Most Rev. Dr. Donal Murray	
Cllr Maria Byrne	Mayor of Limerick
Sheila Nunan	INTO
Dipti Pandya	IRCHSS
Anne Looney	NCCA
Mary Coughlin TD	Minister for Education & Science
Aine Lawlor	Teaching Council
VEC	Limerick City
VEC	County Limerick
VEC	County Clare
Tom Boland	HEA
Mary-Liz Trant	HEA
Union of Students in Ireland	
IFUT	
IMPACT	
SIPTU	
Students Union of Ireland	
IGC	
Ann Scully	Chairperson, Doras Lumini
Dara O'Brien	Limerick City Childcare Committee
Juan Carlos Azzopardi	Community Development Network Moyross
Ms Patrica Sheehan	Dept. of Education & Science, Punch's Cross
Sinead Doody	RAPID Coordinator

Pat Dowling	Limerick City Council
Tom Mackey	City Manager
	County Manager
	County Manager
	County Manager
	County Manager
Brendan Lyons	OLOL CSG
Brendan Kenny	CEO Limerick Regeneration
Declan Blackett	Limerick Regeneration
Neil Haran	SIE
City of Learning Group	
PAUL Partnership	
Jimmy Prior	FRC Southill
Joan Keehan	LCEN
Doras Luimni	Mt. St. Alphonsus Redemptorists South Circular Road
Limerick City Childcare Committee	City Hall, Merchants Quay
Limerick Community and Voluntary Forum	c/o PAUL Partnership Unit 25a, Tait Business Centre
Limerick Social Services Centre	Henry Street
Limerick City Sports Partnership	2 Church Street, St Johns Square
Southill Action Centre	Southill House, Roxboro Road
Southill Community Development Project Ltd.	266 Avondale Court, O'Malley Park
Southill Family	267-268 Avondale Court Resource Centre
O'Malley Park, Southill	
St Mary's Community	44 Nicholas Street Action Centre
St Mary's Community	5 Verdent Cresent, Kings Island Development Project
St. Munchin's Community	Kileely Court, Thomondgate Action Centre
St. Munchin's Community	Kileely Court, Thomondgate Development Project
St. Munchin's Family	Clonconnane Road, Ballynanty Resource Centre
Our Lady of Lourdes Community Development Project	49 Clarina Court, Ballinacurra Weston
Catherine McAuley School	Ashbourne Avenue, South Circular Road
Early School Leavers Initiative School Completion Programme	C/O Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School Rosbrien
FOCUS Ireland (www.focusireland.ie)	Parnell Place, Parnell Street
Limerick Community Board Educational Initiative (LCBEI)	Unit 9 Limerick Enterprise Development Park, Roxboro
Moyross Action Centre (www.communitylink.ie)	C/O Moyross Community Enterprise Centre Moyross
The Carers Association	Unit 1 Steamboat QuayDock Road (www.carersireland.com)
St. Gabriel's School	Springfield Road, Dooradoyle

www.mic.ul.ie

COLÁISTE MHUIRE GAN SMÁL
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK

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