

Performance Agreement 2024–2028 between the HEA and Mary Immaculate College

Preamble

This Performance Agreement is established between the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Mary Immaculate College in accordance with the System Performance Framework 2023–28. The agreement identifies Mary Immaculate College’s performance objectives and the associated implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting processes.

This Performance Agreement will be used by the HEA to measure and assess the strategic performance of the institution via an annual cycle of reporting against the agreement and Strategy and Performance Dialogue. Mary Immaculate College should notify the HEA in writing of any proposed modifications to the Performance Agreement with a supporting rationale when submitting the annual report. Any agreed amendments to the Performance Agreement will be recorded by the HEA with the supporting rationale. This information may inform future monitoring and review processes and inform HEA reporting at a system level.

The HEA and Mary Immaculate College acknowledge that policy underlying some or all of this Performance Agreement is subject to review from time to time by the HEA or Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The HEA and Mary Immaculate College agree that if changes need to be made to the Performance Agreement because of such a review, the HEA will notify the institution in writing.

This Performance Agreement will be published on the HEA website in line with the HEA mandate to measure and assess institutions’ strategic performance with a view to strengthening the performance of the higher education and research system and of Higher Education Institutions, and to ensure institutions’ accountability. It is the responsibility of the institution to ensure that the information presented in the Performance Agreement (including qualitative and quantitative data) is accurate.

The term of this Performance Agreement is from September 2024 to August 2028 unless terminated earlier by agreement.

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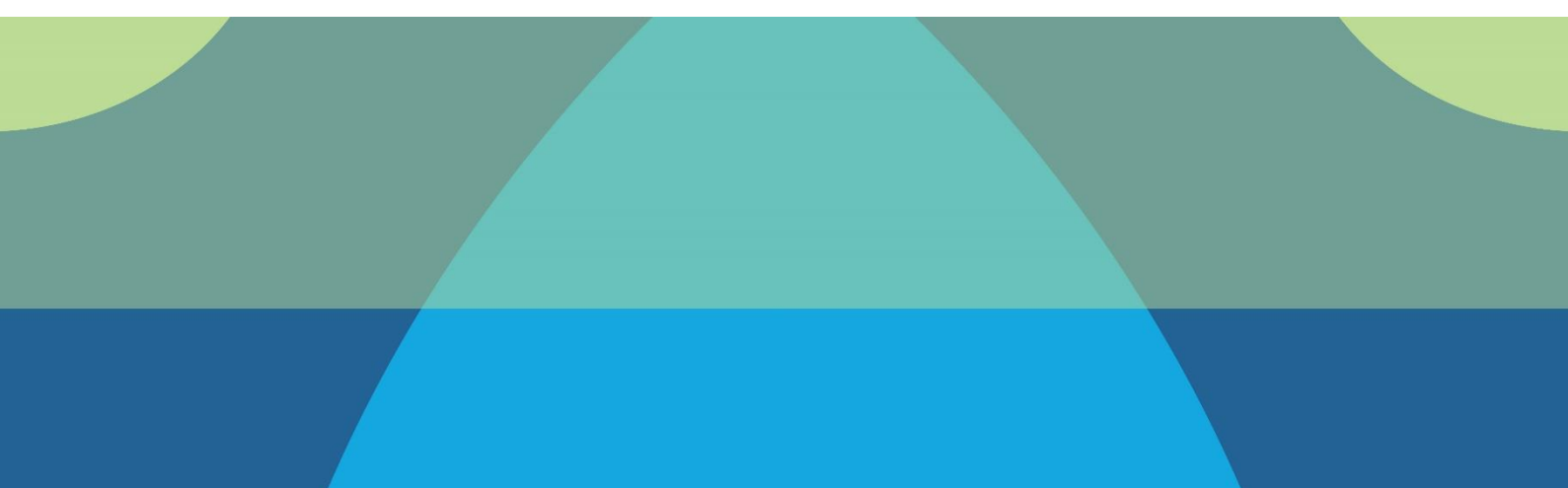
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Performance Agreement 2024–2028

Section 1: Context

Overview of the institution and its context

Mary Immaculate College (MIC) was established in 1898 and is the oldest academic institution in the Mid-West region. Initially a locus for teacher education, MIC is now a thriving university-level College of Liberal Arts and Education, with a multiplicity of programmes ranging from Level 8 to Level 10, based across three distinct campuses (two in Limerick City, adjacent to each other, and another based in Thurles, County Tipperary). The College has a well-embedded research culture and maintains a historically strong linkage to the wider community as a central dimension of its social justice ethos.

The mission statement of the College, its current strategic vision, and its strategic objectives may be found in the [MIC Strategic Plan 2018–2023: A Flourishing Learning Community](#).

MIC seeks to build a new strategic plan that gives expression to its identity as an autonomous institution with a distinctive mission within the higher education domain. The plan will enable it to continue its unique and vital contribution as a dynamic and innovative provider of higher learning opportunities (including professional teacher preparation programmes), its provision for a broad variety of graduate options, its original research, and its traditional orientation towards the wider community and fostering social inclusion through educational initiatives. There will be continuity with similar categories of activity to those contained within the ‘pillars’ of its current plan, *A Flourishing Learning Community*:

- Pillar 1: Catholic Heritage & Values
- Pillar 2: High Quality, Whole-Student Experience
- Pillar 3: Global Outlook
- Pillar 4: Research Culture
- Pillar 5: Professional Infrastructure
- Pillar 6: Community Belonging
- Pillar 7: Ethical Governance & Connected Leadership.

MIC has seen remarkable growth over a 30-year period, with the rate of development at its highest during the latter half of this exceptionally dynamic period. Analysis of performance against the baseline at the outset of the College’s current strategic plan shows that enrolment numbers increased by over 4.5% to 5,046 in Academic Year (AY) 2022/23. Although this is a slower rate of expansion than in preceding periods, it is notable that previous growth occurred on an extraordinarily steep trajectory

curve. More recent rates of increase have been steady, following breach of the symbolic threshold of 5,000 full-time equivalents (FTEs) in 2018/19, but, significantly, exceeding this threshold represents a doubling of the numbers that had been reached at the mid-point of the previous decade (2,500 in 2005) and an increase of 40% over the baseline of 3,089 FTEs enrolled at the outset of the original Strategic Dialogue in 2012/13.

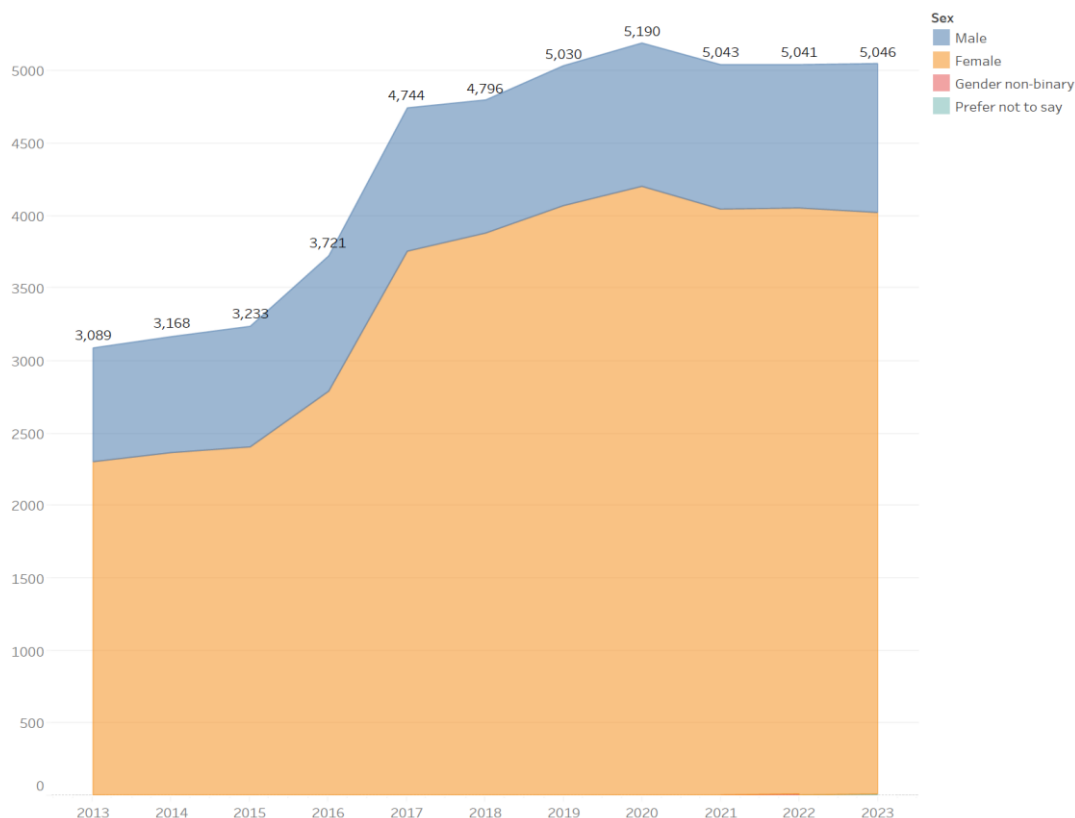


Figure 1: 10-year enrolment trend, AY 2012/13 to 2022/23 [Source: MIC SRS]

The increase in overall numbers and the decreasing rate of expansion are each of note for different reasons, consistent with the strategic objectives set by the College in terms of growth. First of all, the College aims to limit its total FTE enrolment cohort to 6,000 until at least the final part of the current decade. This is to maintain the quality of staff–student engagement for which MIC is known. The strategy is also based on a realistic assessment of institutional capacity to absorb such numbers, as well as the limited availability of accommodation options for students who would need to access the rental market in order to attend MIC in Limerick or Thurles.

Notwithstanding the flattening of the enrolment growth curve, the College has identified opportunities for realising the potential of high-value niche areas within its suite of offerings for steady expansion at scale. These include postgraduate opportunities, international mobility, and professional development programmes. It should also be pointed out that most of the undergraduate growth since AY 2016/17 has occurred at the College’s Thurles campus (where the baseline enrolment figure at the point of incorporation of St. Patrick’s College has more than doubled).

Postgraduate student numbers have increased by an impressive 55% since Academic Year 2016/17

(see Figure 2 below), with real numbers of Level 9 FTEs standing at 655 in AY 2022/23 (a relative increase of 58% over the same period) and Level 10 FTEs — a stand-out story of success for the performance of the College — rising to 174 (an increase of over 46%). It is important to emphasise the fact that these outcomes follow on foot of investment of €7 million from the College's own reserves for fit-out of a dedicated, high-quality precinct and building for research and graduate studies.

Acad Yr	6	7	8	9	10	99	Grand Total
2012/2013	66		2,522	379	77	45	3,089
2013/2014	87		2,511	391	87	92	3,168
2014/2015	39	22	2,557	462	94	81	3,255
2015/2016	46	39	3,007	475	103	90	3,760
2016/2017	902	15	3,212	414	119	97	4,759
2017/2018	925	39	3,274	403	108	86	4,835
2018/2019	954	39	3,407	434	155	80	5,069
2019/2020	962		3,501	491	152	84	5,190
2020/2021	662		3,627	599	155		5,043
2021/2022	636	1	3,595	559	181	70	5,042
2022/2023	670		3,479	655	174	68	5,046

Figure 2: Enrolment by NFQ level, AY 2012/13 to 2022/23¹ [Source: MIC SRS]

MIC prioritises inclusiveness and diversity in its student targeting and enrolment objectives. The College has an excellent reputation for underpinning these objectives with strategies that are designed to reach those most distanced from educational opportunities and also to ensure that the College's graduates share these values and form part of a multiplier effect by giving expression to them in their own post-College careers. An example of this is the Special Purpose Foundation Certificate initiative for aspiring entrants to the College's Level 8 degrees (as mature students who may not have completed the Leaving Certificate or may not have gained the points for access through the CAO route as school leavers). During the last System Performance Framework cycle, the College developed a Foundation Certificate for mature students who wished to become teachers — not just to provide access to individuals but to create a set of conditions by which teachers from backgrounds of relative disadvantage might choose to return to schools there and, as relatable peers, help to champion the value of higher education and the prospects that all young people should be enabled to recognise as open to them. The success of this initiative has led to its mainstreaming through the HEA PATH programme.

The College acknowledges that its mature student participation rate has decreased very significantly over the course of the last decade. The current proportion of all enrolments is 1.88% — a measure that had reached 16% in the previous decade. There are structural reasons for this. Employment levels are high. Higher education participation is expensive (and accommodation and travel costs continue to rise). Nevertheless, the College will aim towards an increase in its mature student participation level. Furthermore, it will work in partnership with Further Education and Training (FET) in order to create routes between higher and further education opportunities that are more responsive to student needs and desired career trajectories. This partnership strategy was a feature of the College's previous Foundation Certificate initiatives and proved to be highly effective in terms of integrated working and

¹ Please note that table heading '99' is used to record participation outside of NFQ levels 6-10.

well-targeted sharing of respective expertise and resources.

Drawing from its Q1 2023 quarterly staff deployment report to the HEA, MIC had 440.6 FTEs employed on permanent, Core Grant-funded contracts. Of these, 224.8 FTEs were members of Academic Staff while 215.8 FTEs were employed as part of the Professional Services complement. The ratio of Academic Staff to Professional Services Staff was 51:49.

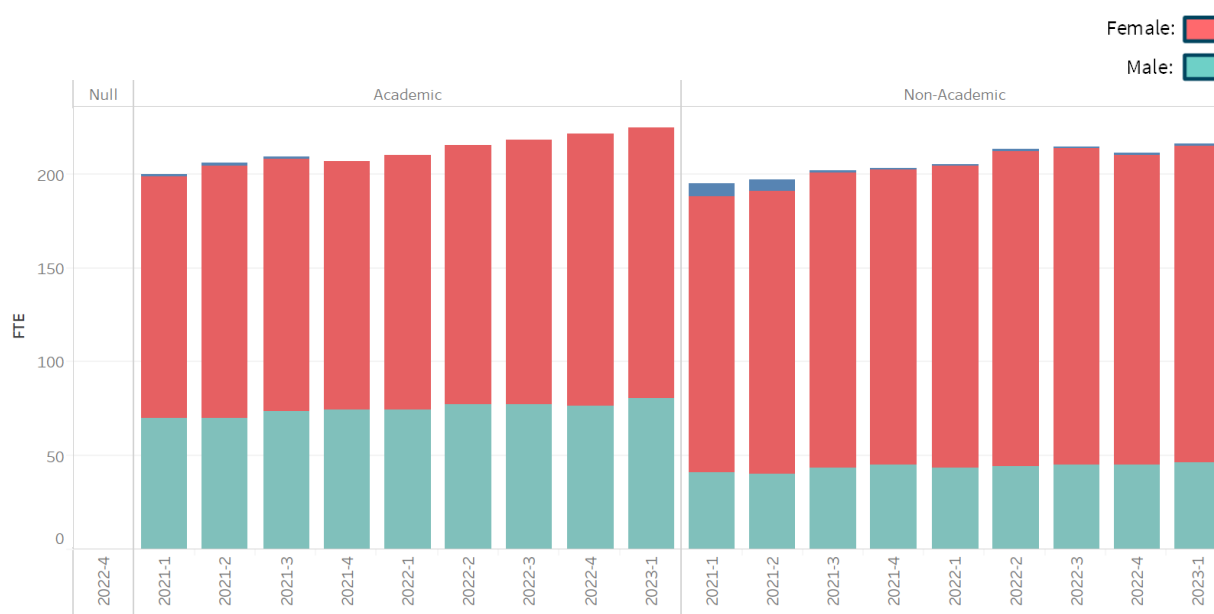


Figure 3: Ratio of Academic Staff to Non-Academic Staff 2021–2023 [Source: e-OLAS]

Approach to the development of the Performance Agreement

This Performance Agreement derives from the same process as its predecessors. It has been developed in the following manner (typical of the strategy development process at the College):

- The Governing Authority has been informed about the Performance Agreement process, inclusive of the System Performance Framework and the iterative cycle of drafting.
- The College Executive Team (ET), led by the MIC President, has implemented and overseen the drafting process, with all proposed content, interim drafts, and HEA feedback copied to ET in real time. ET has approved submission of all interim drafts to the HEA as well as the final (this) draft.
- Once approved by the HEA, the final submission will be adopted by the Governing Authority and interim implementation reports will issue to the Governors on a quarterly basis for noting.
- Members of ET with overall line responsibility for the areas chosen for inclusion in the Performance Agreement have drafted the sections relevant to them, in coordination and consultation with their respective teams.

- The College community has been informed about the process through the President’s quarterly reports.
- The drafting process has referred directly to the following documents, primarily:
 - Current MIC Strategic Plan (developed in consultation with the College community)
 - Athena Swan Action Plan (institution-level; developed in consultation with the College community)
 - Gender Action Plan (developed in consultation with the College community)
 - Climate Action Roadmap (developed in 2023 in consultation with the College community)
 - Institutional review process (including 2023 Institutional Self-Evaluation Survey / ISER and the draft report of the Peer Review Group, 2024)
 - Strategic Dialogue process (including external evaluators’ report on MIC performance during the 2018–2023 process)

Once College strategy has been agreed by the executive leadership of the institution, it is adopted by the Governing Authority and implementation becomes subject to the formation of a series of consecutive Annual Operating Plans (AOPs) and assignment of discrete deliverables to action ‘owners’ who act as rapporteurs at quarterly meetings of a ‘Strategy Implementation Group’ (SIG). The SIG is convened by the President and composed of the College Executive Team members, all directors of function (Senior Lecturer and Assistant Principal Officer levels), and nominees of the MIC Students’ Union (whose membership is premised on the partnership approach taken to College strategy and, more importantly, the traditional importance of inclusion of the student voice in College deliberations at a multiplicity of levels).

Structures in place for evaluation

Internal monitoring and evaluation of strategy implementation is managed within an integrated and bespoke management information system that includes a central database for the Strategic Plan. This database can be filtered by AOP, by correlation with sub-corporate action plans (such as the Athena Swan Plan), internal audit recommendations, quality improvement plans, the internal control framework, risk mitigation actions linked to the corporate risk register, the Climate Roadmap, and, of course, the Performance Agreement, all of which are connected to each other and provide the means for multiple kinds of filtered or thematic reports.

This database dovetails with the College’s centralised online analytics system (e-OLAS), which bundles dashboards and visual analytics deriving from several key auto-integrated data sets, including SRS data, HR data, programme development data, VLE data, survey data (internal surveys plus MIC data from national surveys such as the ISSE), and estate management MIS systems (including SEAI reporting tools for GHG emission reduction monitoring), as well as periodically constructed data sets produced for major evaluative projects (such as self-evaluation for institutional-level cyclical quality reviews, Teaching Council accreditation cycles, etc.), financial out-turn data, and relevant

national data set against scaled-up comparator KPIs (including the HEA System Performance Dashboard).

The College maintains an extremely comprehensive set of KPIs, many of which are bespoke to the distinctiveness of the College mission, identity and strategy, with others mirroring national performance metrics. The College has succeeded in building a thriving culture of data collection and reporting against KPIs that provides a logical basis for assessing performance and measuring the impact of intended outcomes, although it is true to say that this work is ongoing and will continue to be subject to improvement and enhancement.

Monitoring and evaluation of the System Performance cycles integrate seamlessly within the strategic implementation and strategy governance system described (and this Agreement will proceed on that basis, subject to the bilateral and iterative submission process that will be led by the HEA). And while both corporate strategy and the Performance Agreement are subject to internal systems and protocols for implementation progress tracking and impact monitoring, independent external evaluation is also performed. For example, as the current term of the College's Governing Authority draws to a close, an independent review of its effectiveness has been carried out (with delivery of strategic objectives contained within the scope of review).

Section 2: Performance Objectives

Performance Objective 1

To use technologies and contemporary principles of inclusion to enrich student learning, success and experience.

Pillar: Teaching & Learning

Transversals: Student Success; Digital Transformation; Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging.

Rationale for Performance Objective 1

Teaching and learning has been a successful zone of activity at MIC across the last two System Performance Framework cycles. The College invested heavily in an ambitious teaching and learning strategy which aims to position the College as an exemplar of innovation and best practice within the sector. The 2023 National Student Survey evidences our progress. In 2020, the quality of interaction was given an indicator score of 36.5. This has since improved, with the indicator score in 2023 rising to 41.4. Similarly, the indicator scores for Reflective and Integrative Learning (32.2 in 2020; 33.5 in 2023), Quantitative Reasoning (15.6 in 2020; 17 in 2023), Learning Strategies (30.7 in 2020; 32.7 in 2023), Student–Faculty Interaction (10.8 in 2020; 13.4 in 2023) and Supportive Environment (24.4 in 2020; 26.8 in 2023) have all risen.

Despite this progress, 37% of students felt that only some support was provided to help students succeed academically and 8.5% of students felt that very little support was given. Furthermore, when assessing the effectiveness of our teaching practices, while the majority of students felt that the goals and expectations for modules were clear and that the teaching was organised (highlighting the success of our programme and module development process), 35.5% of students still felt that more examples and illustrations could have been used when teaching difficult material, 63.7% of students indicated a greater need for feedback on work in progress, and 58.2% of students felt that feedback was not prompt enough and that it didn't contain enough detail.

Based on this analysis, this performance objective seeks to:

- Increase student satisfaction with the academic support they receive
- Increase student satisfaction with the examples, illustrations and supports given when learning about difficult ideas or content
- Increase student satisfaction with feedback
- Increase student confidence in their learning, creative and social skills.

The strategy for this cycle of the System Performance Framework seeks to further enrich student learning experiences by bringing together best practice pedagogy around assessment, feedback and inclusive teaching with digital technologies. Aligning with *Future FET: Transforming Learning*,

DigCompEdu and the *European Strategy for Universities*, we will seek to mirror the goals of the FET strategy to ‘facilitate easier access, ensure a more consistent learner experience and build a more powerful identity within communities and potential learners’ (Future FET: 8). This strategy will be driven by LEAD, the College’s Learning Enhancement & Academic Development unit, and will aim to deliver:

- An increased number of module/programme submissions aligning with best practice principles and sector trends
- Different routes and means for students to engage in knowledge acquisition
- A more consistent experience of academic support within the College
- Initiatives, toolkits, guidance sessions, information documents and dialogue in response to sectoral changes and development
- A culture of support and inclusion around teaching practices and upskilling.

The improvement of staff’s technological skills is one part of this journey. The development and support of staff around the use of technology in the classroom can be seen through the supports and services provided by LEAD. For example, the LEAD team support the configuration, operation and delivery of teaching and support content using the College’s virtual learning environment platform, Moodle. The chart below outlines the number of Moodle pages that have been set up and are currently being supported by the department.

Semester	Academic Year		Notes
	2023/24	2022/23	
- Semester 1	397	372	
- Semester 2	406	409	
- Year/Non-Semester	111	80	
Total	914	861	
Comprising			
- Undergraduate	648	633	
- Postgraduate	181	206	
- Special or Other Programmes	85	22	
By Faculty			
- Arts	451	446	
- Education	427	404	
- Not Associated	36	11	
By Language Request			
- Gaeilge	181	—	19.8% total in AY 23/24
- English	733	—	80.2% total in AY 23/24

Figure 4: Moodle usage by department

The LEAD team also provides email-based support, guidance and problem resolution to the MIC staff community on the use of the suite of digital tools supported by the College, as well as around pedagogical questions on assessment and module and programme development. There has been a rolling monthly average of 242 queries assisted with and responded to (over 33 months from Aug 2021 to Mar 2024*).

Academic Year	2023/24		2022/23		2021/22	
Semester	S2*	S1	S2	S1	S2	S1
Queries Supported	659*	1,308	922	1,831	1,173	1,626

*Statistics for the 2023/24 academic year available up to 12 March only.

Figure 5: Moodle queries supported

To support staff with their queries and provide round-the-clock access to support materials related to digital tools for teaching and learning, the LEAD team maintains a publicly accessible Knowledge Base (KB). This has been in place since 2021 and has been growing organically in response to identified needs from the Support Inbox, as well as in support of new or upgraded technologies for teaching, learning and assessment.

At time of writing, the Knowledge Base serves 260 topic-specific support articles.

Academic Year	2023/24		2022/23		2021/22	
Semester	S2*	S1	S2	S1	S2	S1
KB Consultations	2,525	2,719	1,397	627	1,819	1,191

*Statistics available for the 2023/24 academic year are up to 12 March only.

Figure 6: Moodle Knowledge Base consultations

As the above statistics suggest, staff are engaging with the Knowledge Base in greater numbers. The use of this resource demonstrates staff’s growing use of technology in their teaching as well as the perceived value of these resources to staff looking to use digital technologies or to apply new pedagogical approaches in their practice.

In addition to our on-demand services, our professional development (PD) services also highlight the level of engagement with technology in the College. Survey feedback indicates that colleagues are aware of the PD schedule created by LEAD, while a large proportion have attended our workshops and seminars:

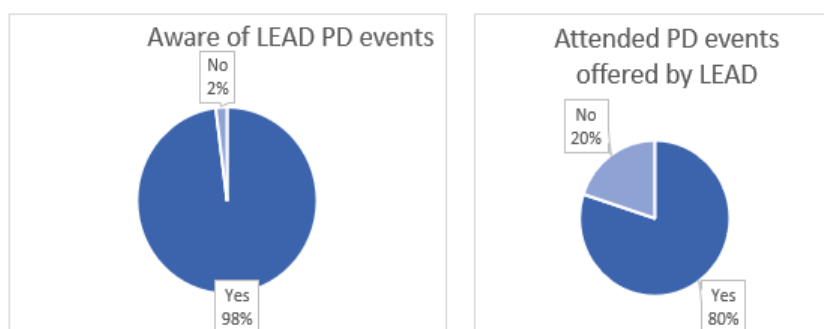


Figure 7: Awareness of & attendance at LEAD PD events

Levels of satisfaction are extremely high, as indicated by the quantitative feedback (91% very satisfied or satisfied) and the qualitative feedback, which highlights the responsiveness of the LEAD team, the range of workshops offered, and the high quality and relevance of workshops and seminars. Feedback received also highlighted some challenges associated with the provision of PD workshops and seminars: some colleagues cited time as a barrier to engagement, while others looked for more variety and for more advanced topics to be introduced.

This highlights the need for LEAD to continue to diversify offerings and to extend the existing capabilities of colleagues through a focus on more advanced topics, particularly in the area of digital technologies. LEAD is currently working to expand PD supports around digital technologies both internally and through our regional partnerships. Below is a summary of the support provided by the team in this academic year:

Professional Development and Training	Activity	# Events Participants	
	Moodle 4.1 Introductions (Sep)	2	8 + 7
Start of Year Walk-up Support (Sep)	5		
Arts Department SmARTS Programme (Sep)	2	2	
UDL at MIC – Introduction (Oct)	1	20	
UDL Badge Support	4	20	
Mahara (Faculty of Education) (Oct)	2	2	
Authentic Assessment (AI Week)	1	15	
Arts Department Support (Nov)	2	8	
Faculty of Education (Jan)	1	50	
Faculty of Arts (Jan)	1	40	
Articulate Training (Jan)	1	2	
YuJa Fundamentals	2	31 + 29	
Moodle Fundamentals – Jan	1	2	
UDL COP September	1	6	
UDL COP October	1	5	
UDL COP November	1	1	
UDL COP December	1	1	
UDL COP February	1	11	
UDL COP March	1	6	
Programme Specific Work	15	25	

Figure 8: LEAD PD support events 2023/24

Academic Year/Period	Year 2018-19	Year 2019-20	Year 2020-21	Year 2021-22	Year 2022-23	Year 2023-24
PD Workshops Provided	26	28	51*	35	43	46**

*Peak COVID-19 Support – some sessions having 100+ staff in attendance

**As of 12 March 2024

Figure 9: Number of PD workshops delivered annually by LEAD, 2018–2024



Figure 10: Annual LEAD PD workshop delivery, 2018–2024

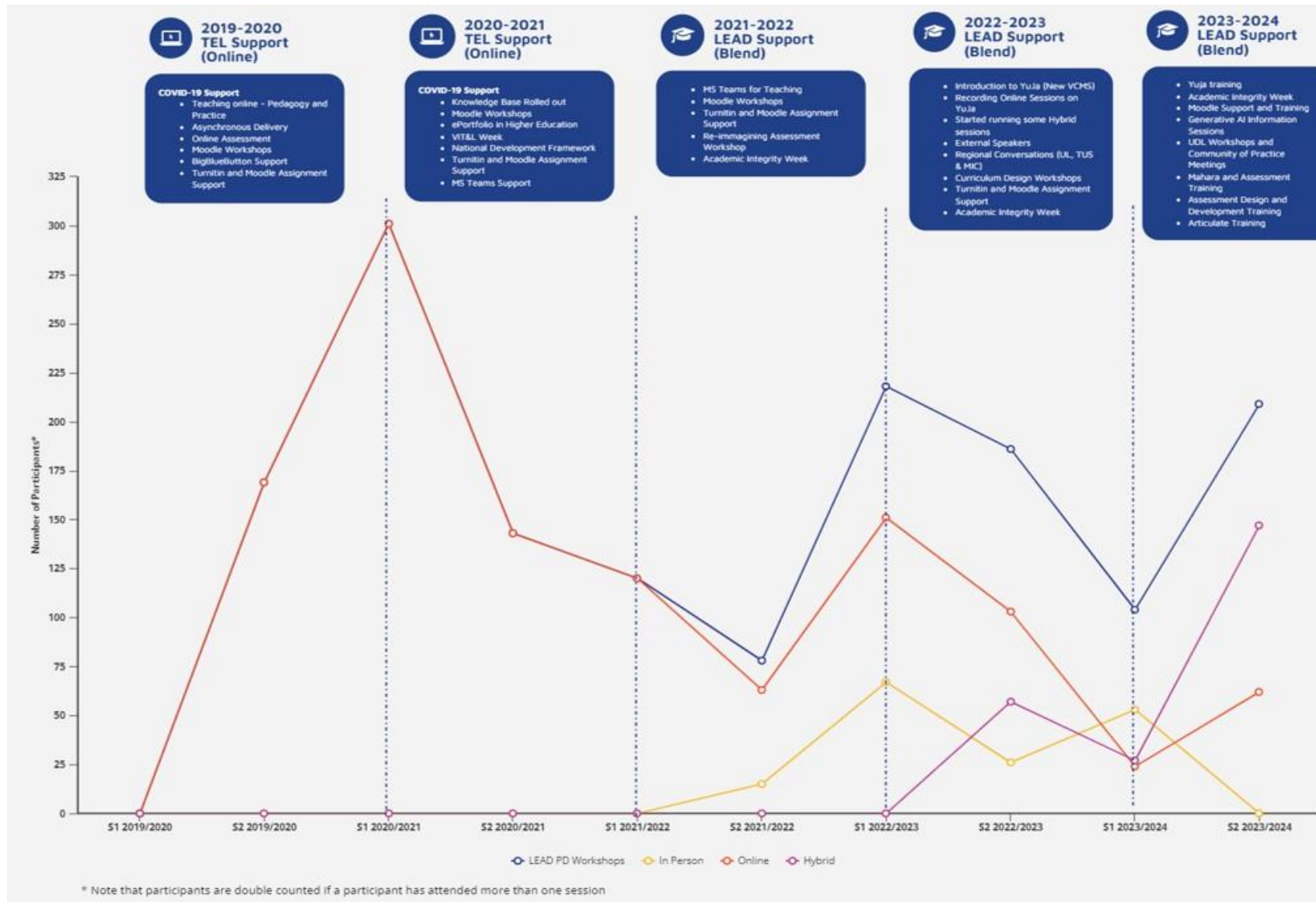


Figure 11: Attendance at LEAD PD offerings, 2019–2024

A second focus will be on inclusive learning techniques. The promotion of inclusive teaching practices through practice principles like Universal Design (UD) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) will align MIC with the *National Access Plan: A Strategic Action Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education 2022–2028*. Staff have already been engaging in UD and UDL training. The table below summarises badge completion rates:

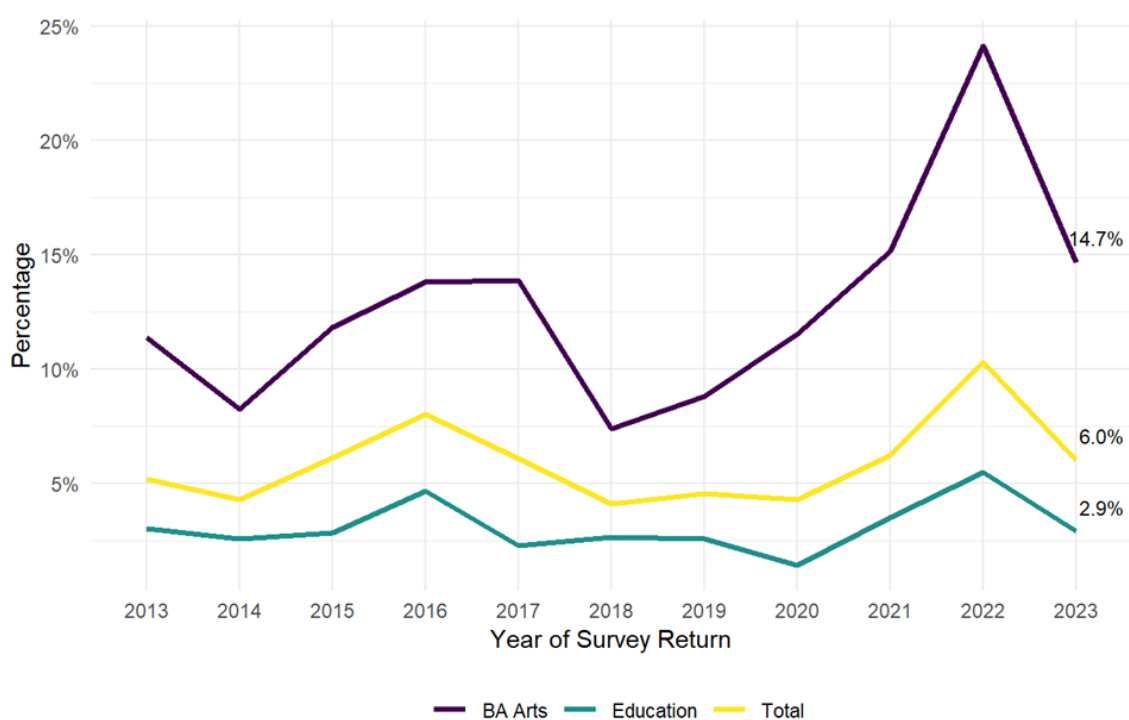
Year	No. of recipients
2021/22	47
2022/23	21
2023/24	21

Figure 12: LEAD UD and UDL badge completion rates

In addition to these UDL completion rates, this year (2023/24), we also had one member of staff complete the UDL Facilitators badge and four members of staff complete the UD Beyond the Classroom badge.

A growing understanding of UDL and UD within the college will enable us to give better supports both to those students who are feeling under-supported (as outlined above) and those who lack confidence in their learning, creative and social skills. By implementing inclusive approaches like UD/UDL, we will create more consistency in support for students across the college.

It is our hope that in focusing on these areas for improvement, we will help to improve the progression and retention rates at the College. While MIC has historically had high progression and completion rates, as the below data illustrates, in the last three years our non-progression rates have increased. Similarly, we have seen a recent dip in our completion rates (see data below). We believe that enhancing our use of technologies and contemporary principles of inclusion will contribute to improving our progression and retention rates.



cohort: Level 8 full time new entrants

Figure 13: Non-progression rates (%) of full-time Level 8 new entrants

Non-progression rates for Level 8 full-time new entrants			
Academic Year	Education	BA Arts	Total
2012/2013	3.0% (15)	11.4% (20)	5.2% (35)
2013/2014	2.6% (13)	8.2% (18)	4.3% (31)
2014/2015	2.8% (14)	11.8% (34)	6.1% (48)
2015/2016	4.7% (24)	13.8% (41)	8.0% (65)
2016/2017	2.3% (13)	13.9% (39)	6.1% (52)
2017/2018	2.6% (16)	7.4% (20)	4.1% (36)
2018/2019	2.6% (16)	8.8% (25)	4.5% (41)
2019/2020	1.4% (9)	11.5% (29)	4.3% (38)
2020/2021	3.5% (25)	15.1% (33)	6.2% (58)
2021/2022	5.5% (36)	24.1% (55)	10.3% (91)
2022/2023	2.9% (18)	14.7% (33)	6.0% (51)

Figure 14: Non-progression rates of full-time Level 8 new entrants (raw data)

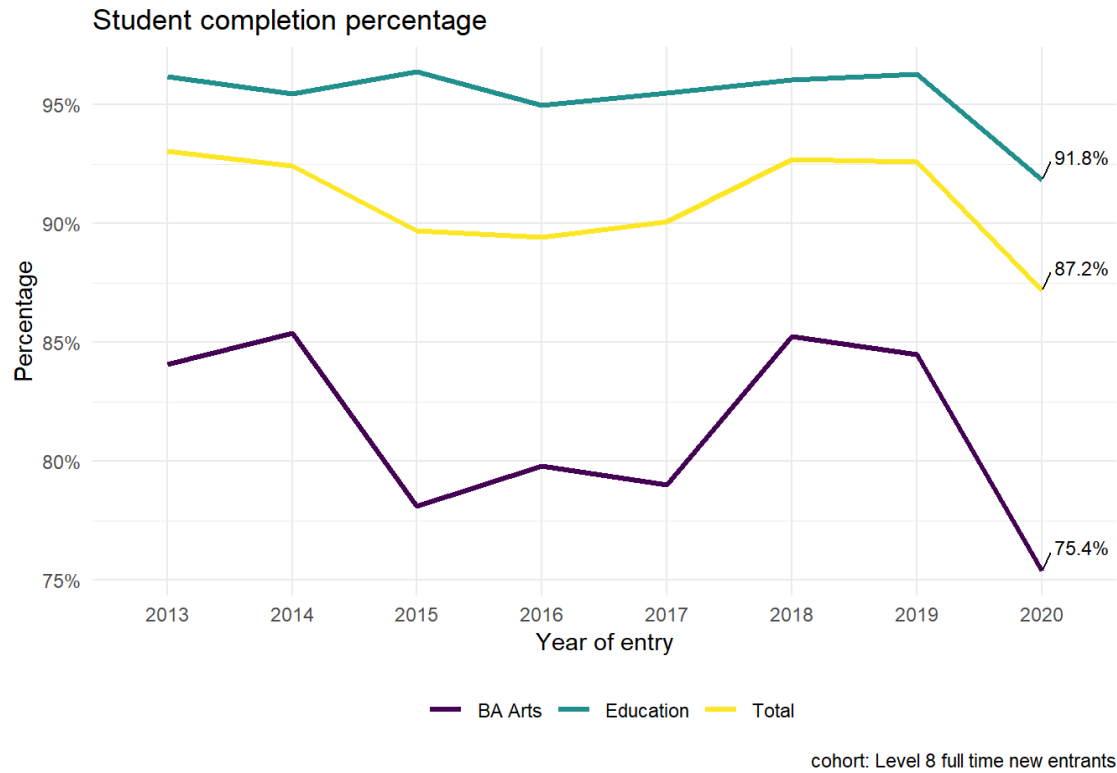


Figure 15: Completion rates (%) of full-time Level 8 new entrants

Completion rates for Level 8 full-time new entrants			
Academic Year	Education	BA Arts	Total
2012/2013	96.2%	84.1%	93.0%
2013/2014	95.4%	85.4%	92.4%
2014/2015	96.4%	78.1%	89.7%
2015/2016	95.0%	79.8%	89.4%
2016/2017	95.5%	79.0%	90.1%
2017/2018	96.0%	85.2%	92.7%
2018/2019	96.3%	84.5%	92.6%
2019/2020	91.8%	75.4%	87.2%

Figure 16: Completion rates of full-time Level 8 new entrants (raw data)

Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 1

The College is nearing accomplishment of its operational objective — which aligns with a national objective — to create a fully new curriculum management system that will interface with programme and module development processes and, ultimately, will host learning objectives and associated data in accordance with the Bologna Framework. This management system will replace existing systems, including the MIC ‘Book of Modules,’ which are at end-of-life and offer poor levels of integration. This system will connect with the College’s new SRS, which has been successfully put into operation, streamlining data management and reporting protocols.

Another instrument for delivery of the teaching and learning objectives is the College’s new, parallel track, programme approval process. Each track reports to the corresponding principal College body — Track A, the Academic Programme Appraisal Committee (APAC), reports to Academic Council and Track B, the Business Case for Academic Development Programme Approval Committee (BPAC), reports to the Executive Team — this ensures continuity by cascading information about strategic priorities from these key committees into Faculty Management Committees, Faculty Boards, and programme design teams.

This new practice brings greater cohesiveness to the programme approval process and ensures more widespread and timely inclusion by key function-holders so that programme development is better scheduled and informed by the full gamut of considerations, including the input of divisions such as LEAD (the MIC teaching and learning unit) and ICT Services (which supports the digital infrastructure).

Despite these opportunities, there are clear challenges for the delivery of this teaching and learning performance objective. The most obvious challenge is getting time-poor staff to engage with LEAD training. When internally surveyed, staff indicated that time was the central reason for not attending LEAD training sessions. By working LEAD training into other processes, such as the programme approval process, LEAD will better align their training with the needs and flows of the academic year and academic staff.

Another challenge faced is the technical upskilling of staff. The rapid evolution of technology often makes it difficult to put policy and processes in place to support education around the technology and see it rolled out before the technology has evolved. Of course, it can also be a challenge to champion the use value of technology in teaching with busy faculty members who possess expertise in their disciplines.

The new programme approval process offers an opportunity for LEAD to develop a host of Professional Development workshops, guides, and supports around programme/module development, learning technologies, and teaching enhancements that will serve to support staff in the development of their academic offerings and approaches.

Activities leading to impact will include:

- A package of supports for IT adoption
- Use of VLE (Moodle) and a diversity of tools to engage students

- Preparation of staff for E-learning technology and the linking of virtual and in-person classroom spaces
- Engagement with module/programme development workshops, with focus on assessment design, content delivery, UDL and feedback.

The purposeful, targeted nature of this PD supports time-poor staff where they need it most during the curriculum design phase and into delivery. LEAD will actively monitor patterns of staff engagement with new initiatives and methodologies.

LEAD's information sessions, workshops and one-to-one supports will see technological upskilling supported by normalising the use of technology in the classroom and by showcasing best practice. Furthermore, LEAD is in the process of developing an interactive toolkit that will both allow staff to learn about new teaching technologies and prompt them to reflect on how technology might be used in their classroom. This toolkit will be a living resource, allowing us to update its content as technology evolves.

LEAD's initiatives around UD/UDL, including their in-person and online training, UD/UDL badging and the current development of an interactive inclusivity toolkit, will see staff supported to be inclusive practitioners.

In pursuit of this, LEAD will:

- Increase training around inclusive practices in teaching, learning and feedback, using modules like UDL as an example
- Encourage the increase in MIC UD/UDL badging
- Increase accessible VLE pages and teaching, learning, assessment and feedback documents
- Showcase inclusive practices.

Finally, at institutional level, monitoring and reporting occur in the overall context of strategic planning – inclusive of academic plans and implementation reporting through the formation of linked Annual Operating Plans that allow for iterative achievement of milestones and reporting – through the College's Strategy Implementation Group, chaired by the College President, to the Executive Team and onwards to the Governing Authority. Data-rich outputs are tracked within the complementary e-OLAS tool, which generates both standard and bespoke reporting interfaces in the form of analytic visualisations.

The College will lean heavily on these processes and reporting tools to generate self-evaluation and summative reports within the Strategy and Performance Dialogue process.

In the external context, the College will assess its success by referring to instances of external recognition of the quality of teaching and learning performance, specifically by assessing outputs such as knowledge dissemination through academic publications and presentations, teaching excellence awards, and external (grant or competitive) funding for innovative teaching and learning projects. Centrally, we will continue to monitor students' self-assessment of their experience and learning through the National Student Survey. All these measures are commonly used KPIs that the College uses for internal monitoring of quality and impact.

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 1

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
1.1	Proportion (%) of students reporting that they feel supported academically	Student Survey.ie	Quantitative	2023: 54.4%	Match University sector mean	N/A	56%	58%	60%	5.6 p.p. increase on baseline
1.2	Proportion (%) of students reporting greater confidence in learning, creative and social skills	Student Survey.ie	Quantitative	2023: 60.9%	Match University sector mean	N/A	62%	64%	66%	5.1 p.p. increase on baseline
1.3	Proportion (%) of students reporting a high-quality engagement with academic staff	Student Survey.ie	Quantitative	2023: 73.4% of students rating between 5 and 7 on the seven-point scale	Match University sector mean	N/A	75%	75%	75%	1.6 p.p. increase on baseline with goal to maintain this high level
1.4	Proportion (%) of students reporting the use of varied examples and illustrations to explain difficult ideas/concepts/content	Student Survey.ie	Quantitative	2023: 64.6% of students reporting “very much” or “quite a bit”	Match University sector mean	N/A	65%	68%	70%	5.4 p.p. increase on baseline
1.5	Proportion (%) of students reporting satisfaction with	Student Survey.ie	Quantitative	2023: 41.8% of students reporting	Match University	N/A	45%	50%	52%	10.2 p.p. increase on

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
	feedback on assignments			“very much” or “quite a bit”	sector mean					baseline
1.6	Proportion (%) of students reporting satisfaction with feedback on work in progress	Student Survey.ie	Quantitative	2023: 36% of students reporting “very much” or “quite a bit”	Match University sector mean	N/A	38%	40%	42%	6 p.p. increase on baseline
1.7	Non-progression rate (%) new entrants	MIC Internal Data	Quantitative	2022/23: 6%	Match University sector mean	5.5%	5%	4.5%	4%	2 p.p. decrease on baseline
1.8	Completion rate (%)	MIC Internal Data and HEA SRS and Non-Progression and Completion Dashboard	Quantitative	2023/24: 87.2% for students entering in 2020	Match University sector mean	90%	90.5%	91%	91.5%	4.3 p.p. increase on baseline

Performance Objective 2

To develop high-quality doctoral level programmes and provide an outstanding research support structure for graduate-level students, optimising their potential for completion and career progression.

Pillar: Research & Innovation

Transversals: Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning.

Rationale for Performance Objective 2

MIC has made a significant investment in a continuing strategy to ingrain a robust and sustainable research culture amongst staff and to build an excellent reputation for the quality of graduate research opportunities. During its current strategic plan (which coincided with the previous Performance Agreement), the College created a dedicated Research and Graduate School (RGS) on its own campus precinct (the John Henry Newman Campus), adjacent to its main Limerick City campus. The RGS is housed in a stand-alone building, refurbished to the highest standard at a cost to the College of more than €6 million. The main secretariat and RGS support function are located at a central hub within this building that accommodates both staff and a thriving graduate research community.

The graduate research dimension of the College’s strategy has been exceptionally successful. The first doctoral award at MIC was presented in 2003 and, since that time, the Level 10 offering has flourished. The conferring of awards for Academic Year 2022/23 saw the presentation of 26 PhD parchments to graduates who were evenly dispersed between the College’s Faculty of Education and its Faculty of Arts. During Academic Year 2022/23, 174 graduate students were enrolled in doctoral studies, inclusive of structured professional programmes, and the completion rate remains high for the cohort year-on-year.

A key measure of performance impact and of the significance that research-intensive graduate studies at MIC have for national policy priorities is seen in the context of professional career development and, concomitantly, the multiplier effect that the College is able to exert in professional services that meet such national priorities in external settings. A prime example is the development of the College’s unique and highly innovative Professional Doctorate in Educational & Child Psychology (known by the abbreviation ‘DECPsy’). The College has succeeded in working with stakeholders in the practitioner sector, including the HSE and the National Educational Psychological Service, or NEPS (situated within the DES), to ensure that these stakeholders are closely involved in the design of programme objectives, the flow of participating students into placement settings provided by them, and, significantly, the strategically sustainable distribution of qualified graduates into the various services.

This ensures that MIC graduates have a very robust career trajectory in the professional services sector (which is a key measure of performance impact) and also helps to create a ‘knock-on’ effect for schools and health services that urgently require a throughput of qualified professionals to meet demands in social, educational and clinical settings. Other examples of Level 10 programmes serving such broader

requirements synergistically exist already and are planned for the near future. The ongoing sustainable growth potential of these models of graduate research provision is a central pillar of the College's academic development strategy.

Graduate students receive very similar types of support to academic staff, with career preparation, methodology and research integrity training, support for funding applications, and peer network-building supports provided (in addition to the allocation of high-quality individual study spaces and refreshment and relaxation facilities, as well as spaces designed for peer-to-peer and interdisciplinary collaboration and seminars). A special focus of the next strategic plan (coinciding with the period of this Agreement) will be the holistic welfare of graduate students. The College has identified the need to combine curricular/academic and professional development contributions to the MIC graduate experience with care for mental health and personal well-being in an integrated support framework for graduate students. This is, of course, in keeping with the College's ethos of holistic care for the person and its formative mission. However, it is increasingly clear (especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the recent rise in the cost of living) that the decision to undertake graduate study is replete with challenges, amongst which student health and well-being are now to the fore.

Another significant element of the College's research engagement strategy for graduate work is the development of excellent synergies for combined benefit that have brought together professionals active in the areas of research governance, leadership and support from the College itself and a variety of partner institutions. Indeed, these synergies have become regularised in graduate student support conducted within a framework for collaboration with the University of Limerick. In concrete terms, this has helped to enhance the work of the College (and its partners) to meet best practice standards in areas of dynamic change such as research integrity and ethics, as well as in techniques and methodologies for graduate research assessment, mentoring and supervision.

As described in the previous sections, MIC has robust internal tracking, monitoring and reporting structures and systems, from the role of SIG in setting AOPs based on the College's institutional strategy (and reporting to the Governing Authority and external funders and accrediting partners alike) to its centralised e-OLAS management information system.

Research and graduate student support activities are fully embedded in these processes. It was noted in the previous Performance Agreement cycle that the College should seek to enhance its research performance impact analytics and, on foot of this, MIC has invested in a new, modular research data information system which it has called MIRIS (MIC Research Information System). This resource, which will be fully integrated with the centralised e-OLAS data hub, as well as the front-facing web pages published on the Faculty research profile pages of the MIC website (and the pages setting out the objectives and outputs associated with research and graduate studies as a whole), is close to its launch as a fully operational Content Management System (CMS). It will allow the College to contextualise its research impact in terms of research outputs, research supervision work and other indicators of the impact brought to bear by an ever more encompassing research culture.

Local (Research & Graduate School) data pools track such activities as the number of Personal Research Plans (PRPs) completed, as well as Departmental Research Plans developed and implemented (and the RGS supports the creation of these). The RGS also provides professional

development opportunities for research-active staff (including early-career and late-career researchers) and captures data that measures both the quantum and impact associated with such engagement (which includes grant applications and grant income successfully won). The College, of course, captures graduate researcher engagement through both its local support structures and its SRS (which will be used extensively to evidence impact related to the performance objectives set out here). A new feature of research activity and performance measurement is the tracking of open research engagement, as well as research impact assessment through the DORA and CoARA frameworks, and this is locally monitored by the RGS.

Apart from the opportunities for enhancement of the high level of performance that is outlined above, a degree of risk and challenge is apparent and is highlighted in the College's most recent institutional review, which commended the College for its research culture and outcomes but recommended that, to further enhance research and graduate studies at MIC, the College should now develop a new strategic vision for research.

Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 2

The MIC Research & Graduate School employs a robust system to monitor and report on the various supports provided to postgraduate researchers (PGRs), ensuring that these supports have a demonstrable impact on performance. The administration of research supports and funding schemes, such as the Research Seed Funding Scheme, General Staff Conference Fund, and the Doctoral Fees Reimbursement Scheme, is meticulously tracked. This tracking allows the School to assess the effectiveness of these schemes in enabling MIC researchers and PGRs to engage in meaningful research activities.

The system of 'cohort' meetings, which includes both in-person and online sessions, serves as a platform for PGRs to discuss issues specific to their research and academic journey. These meetings are not only a means of providing support but also a way to gather feedback and monitor the progress of PGRs. Collaborative efforts with the Students' Union and College support services further ensure that PGR concerns are addressed promptly and individual casework issues are resolved efficiently.

Leadership and practical support measures are also monitored through the incorporation of staff research engagement into an institutional workloads model. This model recognises research as a part of the academic workload profile, ensuring that research activities are given due importance. Continuous reflective planning and evaluation of research are facilitated through annual Personal Research Plans and Departmental Research Plans. These plans are reviewed regularly to assess the progress and impact of research activities, thereby extending the recognition, reach, and impact of new knowledge formation by the MIC research community.

Furthermore, the implementation of a risk mitigation and contingency plan underscores the School's commitment to maintaining a safe and conducive environment for research activities. This plan outlines the processes and procedures that apply to PGRs, ensuring adherence to public health guidance while maintaining an excellent learning experience. The effectiveness of this plan is monitored continuously, and adjustments are made, as necessary, to address any emerging issues. This proactive approach ensures that the supports provided are effective and have a positive impact on the academic and research endeavours of the postgraduate community.

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 2

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
2.1	Number of Postgraduate Research (Level 10) new entrants (FTE)	MIC SRS and HEA SRS	Quantitative	2022/23: 35 FTEs	Align with University sector average on pro rata basis	40	40	45	45	29 % increase on baseline
2.2	Number of Postgraduate Research (Level 10) enrolments (FTE)	MIC SRS and HEA SRS	Quantitative	2022/23: 174 FTEs	Align with University sector average on pro rata basis	190	205	225	240	38% increase on baseline
2.3	Number of Level 10 Awards	MIC SRS and HEA SRS	Quantitative	2022/23: 26	Align with University sector average on pro rata basis	25	25	25	30	15.4% increase on baseline

Performance Objective 3

To draw on our considerable expertise to improve access and to increase participation rates amongst the ‘hardest to reach’ cohorts, identified in the NAP, with a particular focus on ITE programmes.

Pillar: Access & Participation

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

Rationale for Performance Objective 3

Achieving equity of access continues to be a salient strategic objective for MIC. Related aims to increase and widen participation are enshrined in MIC’s mission as well as in successive strategic plans. While MIC has achieved consistent progress towards greater equity of access (see Figure 17, below), the advent of the National Access Plan 2022–2028 presents further challenges in increasing participation rates for existing and new target groups.

In this Performance Agreement (2024–2028), MIC outlines new access and participation targets for HEAR and DARE entrants and Irish Travellers. Two subgroups, mature students from SED (socioeconomically disadvantaged) backgrounds and students entering via FET/access programmes, will receive targeted and dedicated attention. In addition, MIC will focus its efforts on further increasing diversity in ITE (Initial Teacher Education) programmes. MIC will also continue its work in the area of access for students with disabilities through the DARE entry route and the dedicated work of the disability support services. Furthermore, in collaboration with colleagues working on the PATH 4 Phase 2 Programme, MIC will strive to improve access to higher education for students with intellectual disabilities. The table below summarises MIC’s key access participation data, benchmarked against national data for the university sector published on the [HEA website](#).

% of new entrants, 2020/2021		
Target Group	MIC	University sector average
HEAR	5.8%	4.9%
DARE	5.1%	5.2%
Mature students from SED backgrounds	0%	10%
Ethnic minority (Irish Travellers)	0.1%	0.1%
Access / foundation course	0.3%	1.1%
Further Education Award or equivalent (e.g. BTEC)	2.5%	5%

Note: Academic Year 2020/21 selected as baseline year prior to publication of new NAP (2022–2028).

Figure 17: MIC key access participation data

Data for benchmarking taken from the HEA Access Dashboard with university-sector HEIs selected. Data on mature students from SED backgrounds and ethnic minority is sourced from the HEA SPF dashboard, and benchmarking data relates to the national average.

MIC’s access function has benefited from the support of the PATH 1 programme. Its impact is evidenced by the increase in access students registering on ITE courses. Furthermore, PATH 5 resourcing has afforded MIC the opportunity for renewed focus on Irish Traveller entrants.

Nonetheless, as the figures above illustrate, there remains significant work in this area in order to achieve a critical mass of students, more reflective of the demographic profile in society. The figure below shows that although the DARE and HEAR entry routes are performing reasonably well, there is an opportunity to specifically target SED mature students and FET/access entrants in this Performance Agreement, as well as continuing to commit significant resources to access initiatives focused on Irish Travellers. Efforts to embed the more successful interventions are ongoing and, where possible, these initiatives have been added on to existing functions or complement existing work. For example, PATH 1 pre-entry *Go Gaeilge* (language support for Leaving Certificate Oral) is currently delivered by third-year Education students who are in a unique position to work with underrepresented groups in higher education.

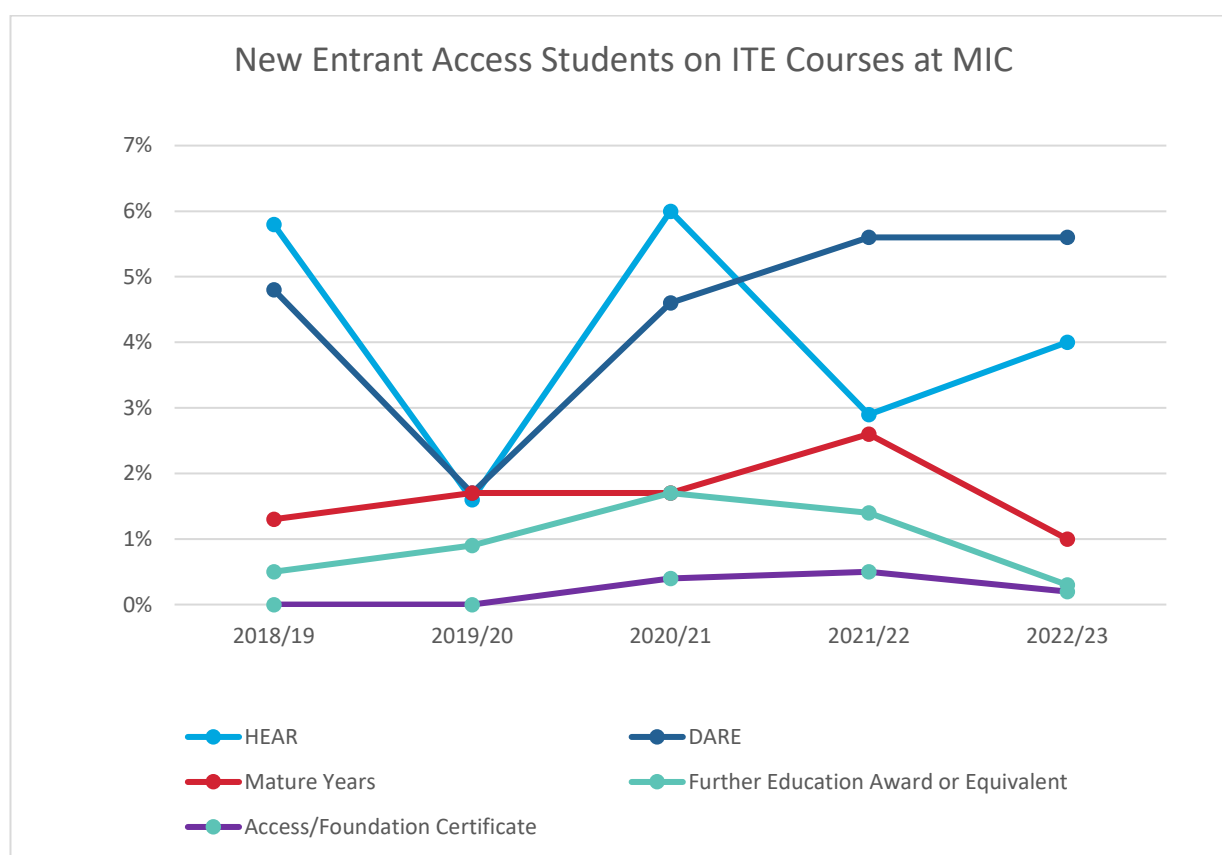


Figure 18: MIC ITE access participation data (AY 2018/19 to 2022/23). Source: [HEA Access Dashboard](#)

Mature student participation at MIC has decreased significantly over the past decade from a high of 16% to current levels of 1.7% in the academic year 2020/21. MIC aims to increase the rate of mature student participation over the timeframe of the Performance Agreement, with the overarching objective of diversifying the student body. More specifically, the College intends to focus on increasing access and successful participation by mature students from SED backgrounds, consistent with objectives articulated in the NAP.

MIC's focus on FE progression routes is aligned with Key Performance Indicator 2 of the NAP and also links closely with the landmark document, *Progressing A Unified Tertiary System for Learning, Skills and Knowledge* (DFHERIS, 2022). In this policy document, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science outlines a vision for a more integrated tertiary education system. DFHERIS (2022: 9) highlights the need for collaborative partnership-based and cross-sectoral approaches in order to create '*more diverse and accessible opportunities for learning and development and to ensure that these opportunities are well joined up so as to facilitate progression and specialisation across the system.*' The Irish Universities Association (IUA) Access Policy FET/HE Sub-Group shares similar aspirations, together with the HEA National Forum.

Consequently, in alignment with the transversal area of impact — sectoral and tertiary cohesion — MIC aims to deepen engagement with its FET and HE education partners in collaborative programme development, planning and delivery, and through sharing infrastructure. MIC will continue to develop and foster regional partnerships with the overarching aim of advancing the needs of local communities and promoting social inclusion and economic development (all objectives set out under *Project Ireland 2040*, as well as in the NAP). In conclusion, it is envisaged that this approach will facilitate targeting of students from cohorts considered 'hardest-to-reach' across the sector.

Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 3

MIC will draw on its considerable expertise to continuously improve access to higher education and to increase the participation rates of the 'hardest-to-reach' cohorts, as identified in the NAP, with a particular focus on ITE programmes.

This performance objective will be achieved by implementing an access and participation strategy that is centred around the concept of working in partnership intra-, inter-institutionally and externally. The following actions will be central to the achievement of this strategy and the overarching performance objective:

1. Working intensely with the Community sector and FET by engaging with all existing partners and forming new relationships.
2. Reconceptualising existing access programme offerings, including FE progression routes, to ensure that such courses and access routes contribute to achieving our performance objective.

3. Identifying ambitious targets for the following: students from SED backgrounds, students with disabilities, mature SED students, and Travellers.
4. Creating greater awareness of the range of entry route opportunities, including FE entry routes, that exist in the College and across the Mid-West Cluster.
5. Continuing to work collaboratively within the Mid-West Cluster and local area partnerships including FET.
6. Building on existing partnership with MIC Students' Union to investigate and respond to access and participation imperatives.
7. Developing peer support structures and engaging current ITE students to act as ambassadors/role models for access students at pre-entry and in the transition to first year.
8. Ensuring that the entire College community is aware of the above strategy by tabling it as an agenda item at the appropriate decision-making bodies and committees, such as the Equality Committee, Faculty Boards, Academic Council, Executive Team and Governing Authority.

Despite MIC's strengths, there are clear risks and challenges for the delivery of this access performance objective. The most obvious challenge is ensuring adequate human resourcing. Access work is primarily local and is, by its nature, labour intensive. MIC has benefited from the resourcing and opportunities afforded by the PATH programme to date, although there have been challenges in retaining contract staff. Staff working in precarious employment contracts seek full-time positions and, therefore, staff turnover has been an issue throughout the PATH programme.

Additionally, another challenge faced is the nature of funding schemes. If access work in a community draws to a close because of lack of finance, communities can feel let down and 'used' by the HEI. It is important to be mindful and respectful of communities and to plan initiatives that can in part be mainstreamed, if impactful, without the need for additional finance. This can be challenging.

Finally, accurate data collection for the hard-to-reach students can be challenging. Access data does not capture the intersectionality of the entrants from priority groups, resulting in an incomplete measure. Each year, several mature students have a registered disability and/or are from very socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Many undergraduate (UG) ITE entrants coming from school or FE also intersect demographically across the priority groups. In addition, reporting on certain high-priority groups is reliant on students self-declaring, but there is still a reluctance to declare in some cohorts. This is very relevant for students from a Traveller background, lone parents, and those with experience of the care system.

Furthermore, the educational landscape in the Mid-West — and Limerick, in particular — is unique. The regeneration programme has caused population movement and has subsequently resulted in the dispersal of areas of significant disadvantage across the city and Mid-West region. Therefore, encouraging entry of SED mature students to MIC presents a unique challenge, and accurately capturing students from these cohorts in our data based on SED background is a further challenge.

Students — and mature students, in particular — who would have previously been from a significantly disadvantaged area may not now be recognised as such, due to the dispersal of SED areas.

At institutional level, monitoring and reporting of the Performance Agreement occurs in the overall context of strategic planning, inclusive of academic plans and implementation reporting through the formation of linked Annual Operating Plans that allow for iterative achievement of milestones and reporting. The critical pathway for this reporting is through the College’s Strategy Implementation Group, chaired by the College President, to the Executive Team and onwards to the Governing Authority. Data-rich outputs are tracked within the complementary e-OLAS tool which generates both standard and bespoke reporting interfaces in the form of analytic visualisations. Data sources for this performance objective also include the SRS and Equal Access Survey. In addition, student records are also maintained by the Access Office and by staff working on the PATH Programme. At local level, this performance objective will be managed by the Student Life/Access and Participation function. Annual reviews based on the actions planned and the indicators outlined will be undertaken to consider any necessary risk mitigation and to identify additional actions or amendments required. These reviews will feed into MIC’s annual System Performance Framework self-evaluation and the aforementioned SIG process. The dialogue with, and feedback from, the HEA on these self-evaluations will inform further reflection and corrective actions to achieve the access targets and overarching performance objective.

In the external context, the College will assess its success by referring to instances of external recognition of the quality of access performance, specifically by assessing outputs such as knowledge dissemination through academic publications and presentations, networks, and external (grant or competitive) funding for innovative projects. All these measures are commonly used KPIs that the College uses for internal monitoring of quality and impact. The College will note and respond to external feedback from key stakeholders, such as the HEA and Department of Education.

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 3

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
3.1	Proportion (%) of new entrants from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds via HEAR scheme	HEA SRS and HEA Key Facts & Figures Dashboard	Quantitative	2022/23: 2.9%	Work towards achieving University sector average by 2030 (4.5% in 2022/23)	3%	3.1%	3.2%	3.4%	0.5 p.p. increase
3.2	Proportion (%) of new entrants with disabilities via DARE scheme	HEA SRS and HEA Key Facts & Figures Dashboard	Quantitative	2022/23: 6.2%	Achieve University sector average by 2027/28 (6.6% in 2022/23)	6.3%	6.4%	6.5%	6.6%	0.4 p.p. increase
3.3	Proportion (%) of mature new entrants from disadvantaged areas as a % of all disadvantaged new entrants	HEA SRS and System Performance Dashboard	Quantitative	2022/23: 0%	Work towards national average (10% in 2022/23)	1.2%	1.6%	2.5%	3%	3 p.p. increase
3.4	Number of new entrants from the Irish Traveller community²	Equal Access Survey reported on HEA System Performance Dashboard	Quantitative	2022/23: ■	Maintain national average proportion (0.1% of all new entrants in 2022/23)	Maintain baseline	Maintain baseline	Maintain baseline	Maintain baseline	Maintain baseline over 4 years

² The level of disaggregation of data disseminated publicly is subject to data protection considerations. Data disaggregated to a level which may allow individuals to be identified (even indirectly) is not disseminated publicly'. See the HEA Statistics: [Privacy, Data Protection and Disclosure Control](#).

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
3.5	Proportion (%) of new entrants from access/foundation Course	HEA SRS and HEA Key Facts & Figures Dashboard	Quantitative	2022/23: 0.2%	Achieve University sector average by 2027/28 (0.7% in 2022/23)	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	1%	0.8 p.p. increase
3.6	Proportion (%) of new entrants from FET	HEA SRS and HEA Key Facts & Figures Dashboard	Quantitative	2022/23: 1.1%	Work towards achieving University sector average (3.8% in 2022/23)	1.2%	1.4%	1.8%	2%	0.9 p.p. increase³

³ Based on all UG programmes except BEd

Performance Objective 4

To contribute to the implementation of the Climate Action Plan and the National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals, and to the achievement of the national SDG targets, by lowering our Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHGs) and by embedding SDG themes within our programmes at a modular level, with a special focus on achieving engagement through the multiplier effect by targeting teacher education.

Pillar: Engagement

Transversals: Climate & Sustainable Development; Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning; Society.

Rationale for Performance Objective 4

MIC is committed to sustainability and, in response to the Public Sector Climate Mandate, published its first Climate Roadmap in 2023. The College's 'glide path' to 2030 is in line with the national target to reduce Ireland's emissions by 51% by 2030, relative to the 2018 baseline (1,913,671.5 kg CO₂ GHG).

Achievement to date

As shown in its recent Annual Reports, from 2009 to 2021, MIC's Energy Performance Indicator (EnPI) reflected a gradual decline in energy consumption, though with some fluctuations over the years, and reduced significantly before introduction of a new metric in 2021 (see below). The EnPI started at just over 300 units in 2009 and reduced to approximately 230–240 units by 2021, representing a 20–25% reduction over the 12-year period.

The College's EnPI has been tracked and reported upon annually (Figure 19). Between 2009 and 2015, it fluctuated but generally trended downwards, falling from just above 300 units in 2009 to around 260–270 units by 2015 — a reduction of about 10–15%, indicating consistent, though modest, progress in reducing energy consumption. The subsequent years, from 2016 to 2021, continued this trend (with further fluctuations, particularly noticeable dips in 2016 and 2020), with the average EnPI at around 250 units. By 2019, the College had achieved an approximate reduction of 15–20% from the 2009 baseline.

The 2021 data shows a 20–25% reduction from the 2009 baseline, reflecting the College's ability to maintain some of the energy-saving practices introduced during the pandemic. It should be noted that this data has been produced using a different metric to the calculation more recently introduced by the SEAI (which measures Greenhouse Gas Emissions, or GHGs, instead of the energy performance indicators previously used by the College).

Targets

The targets set in this performance objective required the setting of a converted baseline for performance post 2021. This has been done by 're-setting' the baseline to 2016 using the new metric. This establishes a new starting point of 1,913,671.5 kg CO₂ GHG (with a corresponding 'non-electricity'

measure also, as shown in the section setting out the College’s targets, below). But it is clear that, even using the new GHG-based metrics to further advance along the ‘glide path’ trajectory required to meet targets by 2030, MIC will have to be ambitious, innovative and decisive in implementing the measures required to continue along that trajectory.



Figure 19: MIC EnPI performance 2009–2022⁴

Turning to the impact MIC will make as a higher education institution with a role in content delivery to students and knowledge creation through research, our institution is committed to fostering sustainable development and global citizenship through its academic programmes. Embedding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as themes within university-level modules aligns with MIC’s mission to promote education for sustainable development and to prepare students to address global challenges. This rationale outlines the importance of integrating SDGs into the curriculum. The methodology for creating a baseline and performing a gap analysis using the STARS framework, and the strategic plan to achieve significant SDG engagement by 2029, are outlined under Implementation, below.

The SDGs, established by the United Nations, provide a comprehensive framework for addressing global challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, and environmental degradation. By embedding SDGs into academic modules, MIC can:

- Enhance students' understanding of global issues and their interconnectedness
- Foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills related to sustainable development
- Promote a culture of sustainability and social responsibility within the college community
- Align MIC's educational practices with national and international sustainability goals.

In turn, the College can make an important contribution to the Government’s objectives around SDGs as outlined in the Climate Action Plan (‘CAP23’) and the Second National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals (2022–2024), as well as the National Strategy on Education for

⁴ A new metric based on GHG emissions has been introduced by the Government for 2023 onwards, hence the absence of EnPI data — and projections — for subsequent years.

Sustainable Development in Ireland. This contribution will include knowledge transfer by the College, as a major locus for teacher education, in terms of research and national curriculum development policy and, of course, in terms of the multiplier effect that occurs when professional graduates enter the school system with enhanced SDG awareness. The College's contribution will also include graduate opportunities and continuing professional development for teachers already in practice.

The MIC Climate Roadmap aims to achieve by 2029 a process of programme development that increases the integration of SDGs to 6–8% of all modules per semester, reflecting the current sectoral benchmark reported by University College Cork (UCC), which is already recognised as a leader within the higher education system. Additionally, the plan seeks to achieve SDG engagement in the curricula developed by more than 60% of all academic departments (once again, using the UCC benchmark).

Furthermore, given the prominence of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) themes within the SDGs, the College's Athena Swan Strategy, as well as its equality and gender-focused action plans, will help to drive progress towards this objective and will combine with other measures of SDG integration as a rich source of data that can, itself, be disaggregated to show EDI incorporation.

Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 4

MIC has established a new, cross-College Environment & Sustainability Committee to provide advice and expert input to the College's sustainability and climate action strategies, as well as day-to-day management of the estates and infrastructure attached to its campuses.

MIC continues to implement measures aimed at reducing the College's carbon footprint. These measures include the installation of energy-efficient lighting and heating systems, the promotion of recycling and waste reduction initiatives, and the expansion of green spaces on campus. MIC's Masterplan 2042 includes a strong focus on sustainability, with plans for new buildings and renovations to be designed with energy efficiency in mind. The College is also exploring the use of renewable energy sources, such as solar panels, to further reduce its environmental impact. These efforts are part of MIC's broader commitment to environmental stewardship and its goal of becoming a leader in sustainable higher education.

To effectively integrate SDGs into the curriculum, MIC will utilise the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) methodology. This framework provides a comprehensive approach to assessing and improving sustainability performance in higher education institutions. The STARS methodology involves the following steps:

1. **Creating a Baseline:** Conduct an audit of SDGs currently integrated into modules during the Academic Year 2024/25. This will involve reviewing course syllabi, learning outcomes, and teaching materials to identify existing SDG-related content.
2. **Performing a Gap Analysis:** Compare the baseline data with the desired level of SDG integration. Identify gaps where SDGs are underrepresented or missing in the curriculum. This analysis will help prioritise areas for improvement and guide the development of new modules

or the revision of existing ones.

The key components of the plan to integrate SDGs into the curriculum include:

1. **Curriculum Development:** Collaborate with academic departments to revise existing modules and develop new ones that incorporate SDG themes. Provide faculty with resources and training on integrating SDGs into their teaching practices.
2. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish a system for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of SDG integration. Use the STARS framework to track progress and make data-driven decisions. Regularly update the baseline and gap analysis to reflect changes in the curriculum.
3. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engage students, faculty, and external stakeholders in the process of SDG integration. Create opportunities for collaboration and feedback to ensure that the curriculum remains relevant and impactful.
4. **Reporting and Communication:** Communicate progress and achievements related to SDG integration to the College community and external stakeholders, using the Climate Roadmap process of reporting under the Climate Action Mandate, as well as institutional annual reports, presidents' reports to Governing Authority, AOP reports demonstrating progress on implementation of the institutional strategic plan, committee system reports to the wider College community and, of course, self-evaluation reports to the HEA under the System Performance Framework.

It will be important to map and track a robust risk management framework against the institutional objectives set out here and, accordingly, a specific risk register, inclusive of risk mitigation actions and relevant internal controls, will be developed. Key risks envisaged include failure to ensure resource identification and deployment, failure to ensure data availability and integrity, failure to mobilise stakeholder 'buy-in,' and failure to maintain consistency in respect of planning and delivery of modules with relevant and appropriate SDG characteristics.

Both the STARS system and the metrics used to deliver GHG reductions within the SEAI reporting dashboard for public bodies ensure that the College has a data collection and management framework. However, this data will be combined (automatically through workflow) with the curriculum management and programme development modules of academic information systems (including the College's SRS) to create a bespoke data analytics module within its own Online Analytics System, e-OLAS.

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 4

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
4.1	Proportion (%) reduction in GHG / carbon emissions (kg CO₂) p.a. on 2016–2018 baseline	SEAI Monitoring & Reporting System; e-OLAS	Quantitative	2018 average annual emission for MIC was 1,913,671.5 kg CO ₂ GHGs (sectoral ‘glidepath’ is 2018-2030). By the beginning of 2023/24 this had reduced to 1,560,751 kg CO ₂ GHGs	National target is 51% reduction on 2018 baseline by 2030. MIC target is 679,458.8 kg CO ₂ by 2030, with a reduction of 881,293 kg CO ₂ required (56% from 2023/24 baseline). MIC aims to reduce by 40-45% from the 2023/24 baseline by 2028	<= 160,000 kg CO₂ GHGs	<= 160,000 kg CO₂ GHGs	<= 160,000 kg CO₂ GHGs	<= 160,000 kg CO₂ GHGs	40-43% decrease in kg CO₂ from 2023/24 (624,300 – 671,122 kg CO₂ GHGs, inclusive of electricity), leaving a remainder of 210,000-257,000 kg CO₂ to be eliminated by 2030
4.2	Proportion (%) academic modules (all levels) with SDGs embedded	STARS toolkit; HEA SRS reporting module for curriculum management	Quantitative	2023/24: < 6% of 591 modules, on a per semester basis, with SDG Learning Outcomes embedded (circa 35 modules) ⁵	University sector best practice benchmark in SDG Learning Outcome integration via STARS (Boston College)	8% circa 50 modules	10% circa 60 modules	13% circa 75 modules	15% circa 88 modules	9 p.p. increase on baseline

⁵ MIC is currently using the module quota for the 2024-25 Autumn Semester module as the basis for this indicator.

Section 3: Matrix and Signatures

Framework Matrix

Transversal areas of impact	Pillars				
		Teaching & Learning	Research & Innovation	Access & Participation	Engagement
	Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning		PO 2	PO 3	PO 4
	Climate & Sustainable Development				PO 4
	Student Success	PO 1		PO 3	
	Enterprise				
	Society				PO 4
	Region				
	International				
	Digital Transformation	PO 1			
	Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging	PO 1		PO 3	
	Institutional Leadership & Culture				
Sectoral & Tertiary Cohesion			PO 3		

Signatures

On behalf of Mary Immaculate College



Professor Dermot Nestor

President

Wednesday, 20 November 2024



Bishop Brendan Leahy

Chair of the Governing Body

Wednesday, 20 November 2024

On behalf of the Higher Education Authority



Dr Alan Wall

Chief Executive Officer

Wednesday, 20 November 2024



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