Mission-based Performance Compact

2018-2021

between

Mary Immaculate College

and

The Higher Education Authority

Date: 01/09/2018

HEA | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

Context

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

The purpose of strategy and performance dialogue is to align the mission, strategies and profile of Mary Immaculate College 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 Mary Immaculate College 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 Mary Immaculate College itself to propose the qualitative and quantitative indicators against which its 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 Mary Immaculate College. It sets out how Mary Immaculate College's mission and goals align with national goals for higher education.

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 Mary Immaculate College 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 Mary Immaculate College agree that:

- This Compact consists of this document and the accompanying data report on the performance
- The term of this Compact is from September 2018 to September 2021 unless terminated earlier by agreement

Mary Immaculate College 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 Mary Immaculate College agree that if changes need to be made to the Compact because of such a review, the Higher Education Authority will notify Mary Immaculate College of this in writing and will consult with Mary Immaculate College accordingly.

2. Performance Funding Framework

Higher education Performance Funding will provide incentives for Mary Immaculate College to improve overall performance in accordance with its own strategies and in line with its place in the overall system.

Performance Funding will be allocated by the HEA based on performance by reference to high level targets set out in the Framework. Targets must be agreed in strategy and performance 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 strategy and performance dialogue.

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

3 Mission and Strategy Statement

Mary Immaculate College'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 Mary Immaculate College acknowledge that Mary Immaculate College's mission and strategy may evolve.

Mary Immaculate College and the Higher Education Authority recognise that Mary Immaculate College 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.

Changes to the mission and strategy statement

The Higher Education Authority acknowledges that Mary Immaculate College may adjust its mission and strategy from time to time. Mary Immaculate College agrees that the following will be the subject of strategy and performance 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.

Enter a short summary of your mission and strategy statement here along with a link to your institution's published strategy.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of Mary Immaculate College is as follows:

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.

Strategic Plan 2018-2023: *A Flourishing Learning Community* **– Summary**

Our vision for 2023 is as follows:

MIC is an ambitious university-level institution, nationally and internationally recognised for providing a unique and high quality learning experience within an ideal ambience for higher education participation. It is active in research that informs its teaching directly, and contributes richly to academe. The College is a resource placed purposefully at the heart of the civic commons and is an active and contributing partner in the economic, social and cultural development of its surrounding environs.

Taken together, these aspects of our vision will come together to express itself a flourishing learning community.

A Flourishing Learning Community will be enabled by the following cross-cutting strategies:

- Focus on the Learner
- Provide Resources Effectively and Sustainably
- Quality Assurance
- Work in Partnership
- Subsidiarity of Decision-Making

These cross-cutting enabling strategies can be superimposed over any of the 7 Strategic Pillars which give the plan its structure. This ensures cohesiveness and consistency of implementation.

The 7 Strategic Pillars are:

1. Catholic Heritage & Values
2. High Quality, Whole-Student Experience
3. Research Culture
4. Community Belonging

5. Global Outlook

6. Professional Infrastructure

7. Ethical Governance & Connected Leadership

Each pillar contains *High-Level Goals*, each with a set of *Priority Objectives* which will be achieved by implementation of *Key Enabling Actions* (not listed below) and corresponding targets that will be set. These, and additional supporting actions will be included in Annual Operating Plans (AOPs) during each year of the implementation of *A Flourishing Learning Community*. Quarterly implementation status reports will be submitted to the MIC Governing Authority with cumulative annual reports provided at the beginning of each Academic Year.

Extract from Introduction to A Flourishing Learning Community:

SETTING THE CONTEXT: GROWTH & DIVERSIFICATION

No Longer a 'Small College'

In the context of the Irish higher education sector, it is no exaggeration to state that MIC has expanded continuously and dramatically within a comparatively brief time-span. It is the case that the College's remarkable period of growth over the last quarter of a century followed a steep decline where it saw its student population dwindle to less than 300. But in the most recent academic year (2017-18), student enrolment levels have expanded to unprecedented numbers of over 5,000.

A 17-fold increase in student numbers is obviously extraordinary, although – quite clearly – the baseline for MIC was also very low. The key consideration, though, is the constant rate of growth that has occurred since the low point seen in 1991. By the year 2000, 2,000 students were registered, with 2,600 in 2007, 3,000 in 2010 and 4,000 by 2015. Moreover, the rapid movement along such a vertical trajectory was given impetus by an ambitious and successful agenda aimed at academic programme development, enhancement of campus infrastructure, and purposeful engagement in external relations focused on the building of civic, governance and sectoral partnerships. In other words, development at MIC has been carefully planned and nurtured during the last 25 years.

There is an even more significant conclusion that must be drawn from the result of this strategic growth: MIC can no longer be described as a 'small college,' as it has been known heretofore. By any measure, this institution takes its place, today, as a substantial entity that has potent agency within the current Irish higher education sector – and, in fact, throughout the wider educational and socio-economic landscapes. As this new Strategic Plan will

demonstrate, these circumstances present the College not only with excellent opportunities but also challenges that must be overcome if MIC is to deliver on its clear potential to maintain and augment its impact under a distinctive and coherent vision for the third decade of the 21st Century.

Ambition Realised: Strategic Plan 2012-2017

MIC launched its first formal strategic plan in 2012, coinciding with the beginning of a transformative era both for the College and higher education in Ireland more broadly.

Externally, the Department of Education & Skills and the Higher Education Authority began a process of 'strategic dialogue' with the sector, culminating in a newly-configured system landscape. The latter was especially significant for MIC given the preference at national level for a merger of the College's academic progammes into the University of Limerick. Given the historical ethos of the College, retention of institutional autonomy remained its fundamental strategic position and, ultimately, MIC was not only successful in achieving this goal, but it was presented with the opportunity to absorb the provision of the former St. Patrick's College in Thurles, County Tipperary. The importance of these outcomes for the College is difficult to overstate. From a position of having to face an existential threat derived from the external environment, MIC was able to assert and safeguard its status as an independent and autonomous university-level institution.   Moreover, it boosted its influence within the Irish higher education system as a multi-campus College; increased its range of Level 8 degrees to a total of 9 and, most notably of all, extended its aptitude for professional teacher education to the post-primary sector. MIC can now provide a full suite of initial teacher preparation programmes, beginning with Early Childhood Education.

The External Environment: Standing Proudly

In fact, the outcome of engagement by MIC with the sectoral strategic dialogue has been resoundingly positive. A re-invigorated culture of partnership and collaboration with the DES and HEA has taken root with the College now heavily and routinely involved in the practical implementation of a number of key national policy areas. These include:

- Direct access to teacher education for mature second-chance learners
- Scaled up regional initiatives in STEM/STEAM (Science, Technology, Education, Arts, Mathematics)
- Irish language immersion (MIC has been selected by the DES as strategic partner to deliver a Level 9 professional programme in Irish-medium and Gaeltacht education)
- Entrepreneurial education in primary and post-primary class-rooms and in the community
- Innovation in higher level teaching and learning through the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning
- A thriving relationship with private industry and local governance actors each sharing a stake in education, inclusion and regional development.

A focus for our growing external presence during the 2012-2017 period has been the Shannon Consortium of MIC, UL and LIT, reconstituted as the Mid-West Cluster of higher education institutions within a new, more optimised architecture for the sectoral landscape emerging because of system reform. Building on its earlier success as a vehicle for inter-institutional strategic cooperation and operational resource-sharing, the Shannon Consortium is regarded nationally as an exemplar of the cluster model. Led by the Presidents of the three institutions, the Consortium is advanced in its delivery of key objectives set out during the 2012-2017 period, including the co-delivery, by UL and MIC, of a common Level 8 Humanities programme and the establishment of a tri-partite Federated Limerick Graduate School (FLGS). FLGS captures the synergies characteristic to a commitment towards collaborative graduate mentoring, professional training and joint programme mapping and development (including structured doctoral programmes).

Rounding out the Consortium's current agenda is the creation, by MIC and UL, of a national Centre of Teaching Excellence, in response to recommendations contained in a review of the structure of teacher education in Ireland by an internal team led by renowned Finnish academic, Pasi Sahlberg. This review formed part of the process of re-conceptualisation of Irish higher education and the strategy pursued by MIC and UL was to embark on the establishment of a National Institute for Studies in Education (NISE). NISE is prompting new innovations in high quality teacher education at both institutions – as well as in LIT's School of Art & Design – and the Institute has appointed an academic director to lead implementation of an ambitious plan for crystallising best practice in teaching, learning and research. In addition to this, NISE has proven to be an effective vehicle for delivering national objectives within a cooperative and well-coordinated space, including the DES Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH).

Expansion & Diversification of Provision

From a singular institutional perspective, the period 2012-2017 was marked by nothing short of exceptional and unprecedented growth and development. Student numbers doubled, as did the number of undergraduate programmes. Alongside the concurrent post-primary teacher education programmes delivered in Thurles, the College developed and launched an innovative and exciting BA in Contemporary & Applied Theatre Studies (CATS). This exciting endeavour capitalises on MIC's strong tradition of excellence in the Performing Arts, academic expertise, and the presence on the Limerick Campus of the Lime Tree Theatre—a professional venue that has gained international recognition as an outstanding contributor to the current vibrancy of the dramatic arts in the region, and the cultural and economic development of Limerick City. The College was also successful in winning the State tender to provide the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) programme, which offers Level 6 Special Purpose Certification for people working with children who have additional needs in early childhood settings across the country. This programme aims to provide training and professional accreditation for up to 3,600 individuals and, given its scale, is largely delivered

by blended methodologies. LINC won the Best Online Teaching Experience Awards in the 2017 Education Awards.

A multiplicity of structured doctoral programmes has been created, for which there is a thriving demand; the number of PhDs earned by students at MIC following the duration of the last strategic planning period exceeded 130. The College became a multi-campus institution, more than doubling its physical infrastructure at its Limerick and Thurles estates, and we invested heavily in the quality of our assets with accommodation for Thurles students and acquisition of state-of-the art postgraduate facilities at our new John Henry Newman Campus (in Limerick City) being foremost priorities.

Inclusive Participation

Several innovative examples of the College's long-standing commitment to inclusive education were introduced in the 2016-17 period. A newly-created Department of Educational Psychology, Inclusive and Special Education drew on the College's exceptional expertise in this area by introducing two important strategic initiatives following its establishment: introduction of a new FETAC Level 4 Certificate in General Living & Personal Development for adults with intellectual disabilities and a Level 9 General Certificate in Autism Studies in partnership with Middletown Centre for Autism in Northern Ireland - providing specialists throughout the island, and elsewhere in the United Kingdom, with an opportunity for professional development (again, in an online setting).

Continuous Quality Assurance

In terms of its academic mission, the College presents itself as a high quality institution and this was recognised in the statutory Cyclical Institutional Review carried out in 2016/17 by an international panel appointed by Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI). This strategic plan itself is a product of the inclusive consultation and thorough situational analysis that was carried out as an element of that review in an internal self-evaluation process. The commendations and recommendations that emerged from the review were formally adopted by the University of Limerick in May 2017 and are incorporated fully within this plan.

Against the Tide: Sustained Excellence During Austerity

From a less favourable perspective, it is essential to note that while growth in student numbers and the pace of academic programme development accelerated during the 2012-2017 period, the continuation of restrictions on public service recruitment meant that there remained a flat-line of approximately 150 full-time Academic Staff at MIC (matched by a similar number of Professional Services Staff). The College was obliged to increase its relatively high degree of dependence on part-time staff to meet its commitment to student contact hours. All told, more than 500 people were employed by the College at the end of this period and there is obviously a preference for higher numbers of full-time academic

personnel. The College would hope that current restrictions will be lifted in the short to medium term, and during the implementation of this current strategic plan, it will retain the objective of reviewing its resourcing requirements accordingly.

Notwithstanding the deficits imposed upon their work, the MIC staff community continued to exemplify the highest levels of commitment to the particular trait for which the College is known: a high quality teaching and learning environment and a collective contribution to a student experience defined by familiarity and accessibility of lecturing and support staff. It has been a genuine challenge to maintain this rich practice but the College's success in doing so is borne out by recognition of our many outstanding exponents of excellence in the art of teaching under regional and national initiatives and we have our staff to thank profusely for this. We have also been successful in nurturing a professional development culture and, side-by-side with this, a concerted effort to introduce blended learning approaches and educational technology methodologies. The MIC Centre for Teaching & Learning (together with its Blended Learning Unit) was singled out in international reviews of achievements reached under our 'Performance Compact' (2014-2016) with the HEA. Our academic community has also remained research-active and the College is swiftly closing in on the strategic goal of sustaining a staff complement whose level of doctoral degree acquisition is in the 90th percentile, which was a target set out in the 2012-2017 plan.

Serving Our Mission Through Targeted External Engagement Initiatives

MIC has a long history of engaging with the wider community in a meaningful, responsive and inclusive way. The institution promotes inclusion and celebrates diversity through a wide variety of initiatives with community groups, the creative industries, schools, children, parents, teachers and with groupings from a diverse range of communities, background and cultures across Limerick City and County, nationally and internationally, in collaboration with a wide variety of stakeholders. We also open our campus and facilities to the public through a wide variety of educational, social, cultural and creative activities and initiatives for example Culture Night; Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival; the League of Legends Soccer Tournament; MIC Community Choir; MIC Children's Choir and; through a variety of conferences and symposia.

All undergraduate programmes incorporate a large variety of elective modules and cooperative placements providing our students with the opportunity to foster ideas and innovations. These modules involve a wide variety of service-learning and civic engagement activities, and many are run collaboratively with public and private sector organisations. This brings students in contact with their surrounding communities as community partners and allies in practices of transformation and social justice. Staff and students work with people from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds to help them to become more effective leaders in society. Students work with community groups, charitable organisations, and

cultural organisations to develop knowledge and connections in order that they become more active and engaged in society and develop a better understanding of how community organisations work.

Examples of Elective Modules include:

- Music Elective: Requires students to work with a local community choirs to develop a programme of work and perform at a choral event
- Drama elective: Requires students to work with a local drama groups
- DEIS elective: Provides students with the opportunity to spend a significant amount of time working on specific educational initiatives within the school context.

Two new strategic directions taken in the conjunction between academic development, research and external engagement during the 2012-2017 period included a focus on STEM/STEAM and internationalisation. MIC is concertedly advancing STEM/STEAM learning by claiming the space for authentic educational interventions in a range of ways. In terms of curriculum, MIC hosts the LEGO Innovation Studio and the College Science Education programmes are informed by collaboration with the Coder Dojo initiative. The College also provides professional development for primary- and post-primary-level teachers and has active partnerships with the private and NGO sectors, including Dell-EMC with which we have partnered in the national VEX Robotics initiative for primary and post-primary children. The MIC campus hosts the RDS Primary Science Fair annually, now accommodating a larger cohort of participating schools than either the Dublin event or the other regional event in Belfast. MIC co-established the inaugural Science Week initiative in County Tipperary with our Shannon Consortium partners, LIT, and on the research front, has raised €500,000 in grant funding for STEM / STEAM projects with children from Science Foundation Ireland and the Irish American Partnership Fund. Building on these strategic outcomes, the College has established a new Department of STEM Education and introduced a new MA in STEM for Academic Year 2017-18.

International engagement, through student and staff mobility, is now core to the College's academic provision and the institution has developed an international strategy and operational framework to capitalise on its attractiveness to learners from other countries. The Erasmus+ programme has been implemented very successfully by MIC which has one of the highest levels of participation in the Irish higher education system and a HEA review of Erasmus+ in 2017 attested to the quality of the College's participation in the programme.

A nascent international programme focusing on scalable opportunities outside the European area is on target to deliver significantly on the objectives held by the College to ensure that all of its 'home-registered' students benefit from at least a single instance of international

academic experience, and to further diversify the learning community by attracting staff and students from other countries. North and South America are key zones of strategic interest to the College and in the past five years, a plethora of exchange agreements have been signed. MIC is registered with the Association of International Educators (NAFSA), and is authorised to enable applicant students from the United States and Canada to enjoy Federal Student Aid (which makes the prospect of study abroad significantly more attainable than otherwise). The College has featured prominently in the International Student Satisfaction Awards and was the proud recipient of the award for Outstanding International Student Satisfaction Award in 2014 and 2016, making a direct contribution to the overall success of Ireland in these benchmark awards recognising the high quality of the international student experience offered here. At the 2016 Education Awards, the College won the International College Achievement Awards and was nominated again in this category in 2017 as well as gaining three separate nominations for Best International Collaboration Award for initiatives that include partnership with Notre Dame University in Indiana, and St John's University, New York.

This strategy has allowed our 'home registered' students to engage in exciting and educationally rewarding academic opportunities abroad and because of the ways in which we are in harmony with our partners, there is a multiplicity of dividends for students, institutions, other educational stakeholders and the broader community. For example, in collaboration with Notre Dame and that university's community outreach service, our teacher education students have the opportunity to teach STEM/STEAM subjects and Visual Arts in American elementary schools. The students also work in community centres working with learners from all age groups and backgrounds while in Notre Dame's home town of South Bend, Indiana. Conversely, students visiting MIC from higher education institutions in the United States are enabled to participate in service- learning opportunities with community groups in our own immediate hinterland. A *Flourishing Learning Community* aims to expand this model by creating a flow of resource to these groups from our institution, based on profit leveraged by us from short-stay visits. In this manner, all within a symbiotic relationship gain from it.

MIC aims to expand its international academic engagement by increasing the opportunities for professional development (through summer and winter schools) and is gearing up to achieve the long-standing goal of establishing new partnerships with prestigious institutions in the United States to produce a joint International Bachelor of Education that would permit graduates to be licensed to teach in multiple jurisdictions.

Capital Development

As noted above, MIC is a multi-campus institution. In addition to St. Patrick's Campus in Thurles, Co. Tipperary, the main Limerick campus has expanded its footprint significantly with the acquisition of adjacent property. The College is targeting acquisition of further adjoining brownfield property with the aim of extending and upgrading its accommodation provision

to the highest standards. Today, the College extends, physically, from Limerick City's main thoroughfare to the primary arterial link, located on the banks of the River Shannon, that connects the eastern and western corridors of the country. The College aims to be integral to the newly-announced Limerick Docklands Framework Strategy and to be part of the Limerick Docklands Economic Park, with the intention of establishing itself as "Ireland's Shannonside Campus."

The campus-centric location of accommodation is in harmony with the strategic objective of creating an open and high quality estate that, while not dispersed spatially, is nevertheless an integral part of the broader community commons. In 2012 the College removed its formidable stone wall boundaries and, following this important symbolic act, revitalised its links with the wider community. A major investment was made in the construction of a fit-for-purpose public auditorium – the Lime Tree Theatre – where seating for 500 theatre-goers is embedded within one of the College's finest teaching buildings. This synchronicity between the immediate learning community and the social and cultural character of broader civic life is a hugely successful example of the College's commitment to meaningful inclusion. Further, the College has extended its reach into Limerick City Centre itself, with the Lime Tree Theatre now operating the venerable Belltable venue on behalf of the municipal authority, Limerick City & County Council. Over 250,000 patrons have been hosted by the College since the Lime Tree Theatre opened its doors to a resoundingly positive critical reception and the theatre is now a fixture on the national Arts scene, with companies such as the Abbey Theatre and Druid Theatre making it their 'home-from-home' for touring productions.

One of the key strategic capital development objectives prioritised by the College during the period of its last strategic plan was to make concrete progress in its goal to construct an all-new Library & Learning Resource Building. Within that plan (2012-2017), the College set itself the target of creating a design that meets the needs of 21st Century users and acquiring planning permission for construction. These goals have been accomplished and the current objective is to complete the project by 2022, following the securing of a sustainable funding package. This work is underway and there is confidence that the objective will be met, providing 500 spaces for readers - in addition to the furnishing of extra teaching rooms and the establishing of state-of-the-art, flexible learning spaces for innovative, creative and collaborative approaches that further empower students as co-drivers of their own educational experiences.

Partnership & Collaboration

While the University of Limerick (UL) is the accrediting body for degrees conferred by MIC (i.e. the University is the Designated Awarding Body, or 'DAB' under the Quality & Qualifications Act, 2012), in practice the inter-institutional partnership with UL extends far beyond the narrow confines of this statutory arrangement. Together with Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT), MIC and UL are positioning the Shannon Consortium as the fulcrum for developing the region as a locus for higher education excellence and research activity—

important drivers in the rising prominence of Limerick City as an economic social and cultural force and a significant factor in the attraction of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

MIC works closely with the Local Authorities that are adjacent within its regional hinterland - Limerick, Clare and Tipperary – both within the context of the Shannon Consortium and bilaterally. The College's strategic objectives form part of the regional development plan, as well as the development plans of the three authorities. Given its location in Limerick City, MIC is particularly focused on and well-embedded within the Local Authority's guiding development document - Limerick 2030: An Economic & Spatial Plan for Limerick. The College is also a signatory to the Charter for Cohesion & Convergence, a framework agreement binding the key statutory, public and private stakeholders together for the rejuvenation of Limerick City and County. The Charter was drafted by the College on behalf of its partners and accompanied the launch of the Limerick 2030 plan in 2014. Similarly, the College is proactively involved in the Regional Skills Forum and leads a number of initiatives contained in the Regional Skills Action Plan while supporting the implementation of many others. The College is engaged in the **Digital Leaders Network** in Limerick contributing to many actions in the Limerick Digital Strategy 2017-2020 and participates in **Innovate Limerick,** established by Limerick City and County Council to help drive innovation and act as the delivery mechanism for the projects outlined in the Limerick 2030 plan and the Limerick Regeneration implementation plans. Innovate Limerick's aim is to develop Limerick's business ecosystem and position Limerick City and County as one of the most attractive locations to start and grow a business and the College sees a key role for itself in this wider aspect of local development and local governance.

MIC is an active partner in measures designed to enhance academic participation, retention and progression and in 2017 deepened its excellent existing partnership with Limerick & Clare Education & Training Board (LCETB) within a new framework designed to provide a well-structured continuum between Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) leading to better access, transition and outcomes for learners. As a next step, the College will build on this relationship by signing a new Memorandum of Understanding with LCETB aimed, in particular, at a more systematic approach to shared objectives based on local needs as well as national strategic priorities, which call for such collaboration.

KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING OUR NEW STRATEGY

A Pivotal Moment

Whereas the College's outgoing Strategic Plan was developed in a context of great uncertainty, with reconfiguration of the higher education landscape, a historically important international review of teacher education and the doubling-down of austerity measures each predominating within the consideration of strategic options, MIC weathered a 'perfect storm' and emerged in 2017 in an unprecedentedly strong position with an abundance of fertile

ground for new growth. MIC is thriving, with its highest ever enrolment levels, a robust presence within the higher education system and the College is exercising significant influence as a contributor to local and regional governance. The richness and quality of its academic provision has been recently endorsed and across a proliferating range of programmes, students currently enjoy retention and progression levels that match the best in the sector.

Estate development targets set in the outgoing strategic plan were fully met and the College's market reach was extended significantly with the development of several new programmes, and absorption of a new campus in Thurles—providing it with the full continuum of options in initial teacher preparation. A burgeoning international strategy was in place and the College's new Research and Graduate School presented a much-improved environment for graduate-level study and research.

All of the successes detailed in the previous sections were achieved within a deliberate step-change strategy designed to augment the reputation and penetration of the College in terms of its core academic mission and also its stakeholding as a key public body with agency in the wider community and governance contexts. Thus, there is now major potential and scope to be leveraged for scaling up to the next level of excellence and impact.

Looking Ahead: Risk & Opportunity

Notwithstanding this, the strategic choices available to the College for the next five-year phase of development are not without genuine challenges and inherent risks. Among these risks—none of them alien to complex organisations attempting to maintain and expand a healthy rate of development—could be over-stretching resources, drifting away from the College mission and the loss of institutional identity.

Pacing our Growth, Consolidating our Presence

The most significant challenge for MIC in 2018 is to eliminate the risk that the quality of student experience will begin to diminish as student numbers and ancillary demands upon our resource base accelerate beyond our capacity to keep pace. By the year 2000, 2,000 students were registered at all levels within the College. That baseline number corresponds to the most active period of strategic development in the history of the College, from which a constant growth rate of 40% has been recorded at each consecutive seven-year interval that has followed. At this rate, the College projects a total student cohort of approximately 6,000 by the middle of the coming decade. While this imminent expansion is contingent (as explained below), there are three important points to note:

1. The volume of the projected student population can no longer be said to be characteristic of a 'small college,' as MIC has been commonly described within the

Irish higher education institution landscape heretofore. This must surely have repercussions for the strategic posture that will be adopted by the College in the medium to long term.

2. Notwithstanding the pace and volume of growth, the College remains strongly committed to the importance of maintaining the intimacy of its 'learning community' that has long been a hallmark of its mission, values and distinctiveness within the continuum of provision. Graduates consistently express their appreciation for this and link it to the quality of their student experience. For these reasons it is currently regarded as unlikely that the College will risk entertaining the possibility of growth beyond the critical threshold of 6,000 due to the adverse effect this would have upon the unique ambience that a comparatively smaller institution can offer over larger HEIs.

3. The College will require resources that are commensurate with its projected size and that are sufficient to ensure that all measures to sustain performance against quality indicators are in place. These include adequate campus infrastructure and well-directed capital development, strong administrative capacity, and above all, academic provision that is robust enough to meet the needs of a diverse learning community and to ensure that academic outcomes (including retention and progression) remain at the same level of excellence as they are today.

Managing the Strategic & Operational Resource Base

There are approximately 150 full-time Academic Staff at MIC (matched by a similar number of Professional Services Staff) with a relatively high degree of dependence on part-time staff. All told, the College employs more than 500 people and although there is obviously a preference for higher numbers of full-time academic personnel, reliance on part-time contracts has been a consequence of the austerity measures put into effect by the Irish Government since 2008. The College would hope that current restrictions will be lifted in the short to medium term, and will continue to review its resourcing requirements accordingly while presenting the serious need for greater scope to augment its existing depth of expert knowledge and talent.

One of the key strategic capital development objectives being prioritised by the College is the construction of a new Library & Learning Resource Building. Within its last strategic plan (2012-2017), the College set the goal of creating a design that meets the needs of 21st Century users and acquiring planning permission for construction. These goals have been accomplished and the current objective is to complete the project by 2022, following the securing of a sustainable funding package. This work is underway and there is confidence that the objective will be met, providing 500 spaces for readers - in addition to the furnishing of extra teaching rooms and the establishing of state-of-the-art, flexible learning spaces for innovative, creative and collaborative approaches that further empower students as co-drivers of their own educational experiences.

It must be stressed, as it was in the previous strategic plan, that a well-resourced, fit -for-purpose Library is the lifeblood of all university colleges. It is essential that the final stages of our plan to secure the new Library and Learning Resource Building at our Limerick City campus is realised. This will depend largely on Exchequer support. We argue that our students are the best investment that can be made by this State.

If the College library project is achieved it will be the most significant accomplishment of *A Flourishing Learning Community.* But it will not be a singular one. Rather, as an embodiment of the loftiness of our vision and as a reflection of our commitment to the highest quality of provision for our learning community, it exemplifies the scale and substance of ambition all our goals and objectives. These follow below.

4.   Development Plans and Key System Objectives

Section summary

Institutions are required to set out a description of their proposed approach to deliver on each of the six key system objectives, with reference to the national targets as set out in the Framework.

- Institutions should detail a maximum of two institutional strategic priorities under each of the six framework headings.

- Each strategic priority should be accompanied by a description of the strategic initiatives, currently being implemented, or to be implemented over the three-year timespan of the compact (academic years 2018–2021).

- These strategic initiatives should be described with reference to the high-level targets as set out in the framework.

Objective 1	Providing a strong talent pipeline combining knowledge, skills & employability which responds effectively to the needs of our enterprise, public service and community sectors, both nationally and regionally, and maintains Irish leadership in Europe for skill availability.
Objective 2	Creating rich opportunities for national and international engagement which enhances the learning environment and delivers a strong bridge to enterprise and the wider community.
Objective 3	Excellent research, development and innovation that has relevance, growing engagement with external partners and impact for the economy and society and strengthens our standing to become an Innovation Leader in Europe.
Objective 4	Significantly improves the equality of opportunity through Education and Training and recruits a student body that reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population.
Objective 5	Demonstrates consistent improvement in the quality of the learning environment with a close eye to international best practice through a strong focus on quality & academic excellence.
Objective 6	Demonstrates consistent improvement in governance, leadership and operational excellence.

4.1   Key System Objective 1

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

High Level Targets:

1. Increase to 10% the number of those aged 25-64 engaged in lifelong learning by 2020 and to 15% by 2025 National Skills Strategy Target; current base line is 6.7%;

2. Increase the numbers of HE entrants studying on a flexible basis by 25% by 2021 (baseline 2016/17 20% or 45,018 of total enrolments are flexible learners);

3. Increase tertiary attainment among 30-34 years olds to 60% by 2020 (52.9% 2016);

4. All students will have the opportunity to undertake a work placement or work-based project as part of their course by 2025 (baseline to be established and tracked);

5. Introduce Employability Statements for all disciplines in all HEIs by 2020 (baseline to be established and tracked);

6. Increase number of available Springboard places by 30% by 2021 in both universities and institutes of technology;

7. Double target to 9,000 annual new apprenticeship registrations by 2020 (over 4,500 in 2017) with 78 separate apprenticeships in place;

8. Increase the proportion of the higher education cohort studying a foreign language, in any capacity, as part of their course to 20% by 2026 (new baseline to be established and tracked);

9. Achievement of the targets in the new ICT Action Plan.

STRATEGY SUMMARY

High Level Strategic Priority

1.1 MIC will advance the national STEM / STEAM agenda by leading authentic pedagogical interventions for early years, primary and post-primary children based on our professional expertise and in harmony with other stakeholders in the broader educational, community and private sectors.

Description of Strategic Priority

Current research and national policy points to the significance of STEM / STEAM in the development of skills that are highly likely to be a requirement of the future labour force. From the vantage point of all individuals along the learning continuum, STEM and STEAM will increase their participation in society, in culture, in the political space (including national and local civic governance) and in the labour market. STEM and STEAM will be key markers of employability. Corresponding skills and qualifications will provide graduates with potential for high degrees of mobility in the national and international labour markets. The prevalence of such skilled graduates in Ireland will also add value to the country's posture as a credible and rewarding place for investment which will further augment capacity of the Knowledge Economy to thrive, in accordance with national policy and targets for economic development.

MIC is responding to this general context with its strategic focus on advancing the STEM / STEAM agenda. The College perceives a particularly important role for itself in terms of the concomitant effect the quality of its teacher education graduates will have on enhancing STEM / STEAM at the earliest stages of the education continuum. This can happen formally (within the mainstream) and also informally (in community settings – particularly where young children face the prospect of educational and economic marginalisation due to lack of access to these key learning opportunities). Indeed, the importance of supplementing formal mainstream learning with opportunities in within the wider social and cultural environments is such that the College is investing significant time and resources in fostering STEAM / STEAM engagement in initiatives that are community-based, that utilise outreach and targeting strategies and that are collaborative through partnerships with other important stakeholders.

Further, the role played by the College in up-skilling practising teachers through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) means that MIC is well-situated to respond to the immediate needs of society and to the developing Irish economic by providing a range of authentic pedagogical interventions in one of the spaces where the STEAM / STEAM agenda is likely to be best served strategically – i.e. within the class-room. By doing this, MIC will also ensure that its own graduates and those searching for Professional Development opportunities at the College, will be recognised as being amongst the most well-qualified members of the national talent pipeline, as well as key influencers within it.

Sub-Level Strategic Initiatives:

1.1.1   Create a new Department of STEM Education within the Faculty of Education that serves to drive STEM/STEAM programme development and research activities including delivery of a new and highly innovative Level 9 professional development programme in STEM practice.

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

✓   Achievement of the targets in the new ICT Action Plan;

✓   Increase to 10% the number of those aged 25-64 engaged in lifelong learning by 2020 and to 15% by 2025;

✓   Innovation 2020 (Actions 3.1-3.2)

✓   Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 1.5, 3.2, 4.3)

✓   ICT Skills Action Plan 2014-18 (Actions 6, 8, 11, 19)

✓   Project Ireland 2040 (National Policy Objective 31)

✓   Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (Objective 1.1, 1.2, 2.3, 3.2)

1.1.2   Develop a new STEAM external engagement initiative - CRAFT (Creative Arts / Future Technologies) – which will involve partnerships with educational, community and industry stakeholders and that will develop and deliver new bespoke science education strategies aimed at providing opportunities for conceptual and practical engagement, by children, with next generation technologies (including digital coding, robotics, IoT, AR and AI) through developmentally and educationally appropriate means, including visual art, music and performance.

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

✓   Achievement of the targets in the new ICT Action Plan;

✓   All students will have the opportunity to undertake a work placement or work-based project as part of their course by 2025

✓   Innovation 2020 (Actions 3.1-3.2)

✓   Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 1.5, 3.2, 4.3, 4.6)

✓   ICT Skills Action Plan 2014-18 (Actions 6, 8, 10, 19)

✓   Project Ireland 2040 (National Policy Objective 31)

✓   Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (Objective 1.1, 1.2, 2.3, 3.2)

1.1.3   Help to augment the profile of STEM and STEAM on the primary and post-primary curricula by promoting and delivering National Science Week initiatives in Limerick and Tipperary and our broader operational hinterland and by working with our RDS partners to increase engagement opportunities for schools outside Dublin through the Regional Primary Science Fair.

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

- ✓ Achievement of the targets in the new ICT Action Plan;

- ✓ Innovation 2020 (Actions 3.1-3.2)

- ✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 1.5, 3.2, 4.3, 4.6)

- ✓ ICT Skills Action Plan 2014-18 (Actions 6, 8, 10, 11, 19)

- ✓ Project Ireland 2040 (National Policy Objective 28, 31)

- ✓ Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (Objective 1.1, 1.2, 2.3, 3.2)

High Level Strategic Priority

1.2   MIC will contribute to the national objective of addressing the current teacher supply challenge at post-primary level by introducing 3 new four-year initial teacher education concurrent programmes at Level 8 (240 credits), specifically targeting STEM subjects.

Description of Strategic Priority

Given the transit of the current population cohort bulge from early years and primary school settings, the DES has identified a risk that provision for post-primary is under-resourced by the availability of teacher supply. MIC will respond to this issue, and to the request by the Minister for Education & Skills for the higher education system to address the risk by providing for increased availability of teacher education graduates, by targeting subject areas suitable for attachment to the concurrent Education programme it offers at its Thurles campus. In particular, the College will target subject combinations that offer its graduates with excellent employment opportunities in areas of high employer demand and, also, which correspond with its broader strategy around the national talent pipeline and the importance of increasing STEM skill-levels within the educational continuum that supplies that pipeline.

Sub-Level Strategic Initiatives:

1.2.1   Develop, and introduce on a phased basis, a total (post 2021) of 50 new places per annum, for post-primary ITE in the following concurrent education programmes that target STEM subject specialisation:

2019   BA in Mathematics & Gaeilge (25 FTEs per annum)

2020   BA in Mathematics & Business Studies (25 FTEs per annum)

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

- ✓ Achievement of the targets in the new ICT Action Plan;

- ✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 1.5, 3.2, 4.3, 4.6)

4.2   Key System Objective 2

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

High Level Targets:

1. Increase the output value of internationalisation to €1.15bn per annum by 2020 (International Education Strategy baseline €819m in 2014/15);

2. International students to represent 15% of full-time students by 2020. (In 2016/17, 11.6% of all fulltime students in HEA-funded institutions were international students);

3. Progress towards Bologna target of at least 20% of those who graduate in 2020 to undertake a study or training period abroad;

4. Number of innovation vouchers project agreements with industry to increase by 12% by 2020 (487 in 2016);

5. Increase number of commercially relevant technologies (licences, options, assignments) by 20% by 2020 (163 in 2017);

6. Increase number of spin-outs established during the year by 40% by 2020 (Innovation 2020 target, 29 in 2014);

7. Improve Employer satisfaction rates with HEI collaboration with enterprise by 25% as tracked in National Employer Survey (companies < 50 employees – 55% rated collaboration as good/very good; companies with 51 – 250 employees – 60% and companies > 251+ employees – 75%);

8. Participation in Erasmus+ in Higher Education and other Study and Work Placements Abroad to reach 4,400 by 2022 (3,135 in 2016) in accordance with international strategy.

High Level Strategic Priority:

2.1   Build on the College's success and reputation in the *Erasmus+* programme and as a recognised provider of a high value international student experience by raising our incoming student participation levels to 6% by 2021 and targeting high value strategic academic partnerships – including shared delivery of programmes - with prestigious overseas institutions, particularly those engaged in teacher education.

Description of Strategic Priority

The College initiated a new international strategy in 2012. This new strategy proceeded from a very low baseline of international engagement, historically, by the College. Some of the reasons for this attach to the nature of the College's programmes, although MIC does provides a high quality off-campus option for Liberal Arts students interested in visiting a partner international university for academic credit. Other reasons for the low baseline in 2012 included lack of infrastructure for international students (teaching space and accommodation options for incoming students as student experience support structures for both incoming and outgoing students).

Between 2012 and 2017 the College met its objective of developing operational infrastructure for international engagement and far exceeded its targets for development of new partnerships with institutions of similar profile towards new momentum in academic mobility for students and staff. A new International Office was established (now with a mix of permanent and specific-purpose FTEs, 7.0 in total) under the leadership of a new Director of International Engagement. As detailed above, the College met with exceptional success in building relationships with international partners, particularly in the United States. MIC is now registered institution under the Federal Aid scheme and has students undertaking full Level 8 programmes as well as short-stay programmes.

The College recognises that an ambitious national target of 15% has been set for enrolment of full-time international students by the middle of the next decade. While MIC has adopted this target as a notional development level, it does so by acknowledging fully that do reach it would mean growing enrolments by several orders. Nevertheless, the College's early success in international engagement has been identified by the HEA as exemplary in the evaluation of *Erasmus+* outcomes. In addition, feedback through international student satisfaction surveys indicates that MIC scores highly in terms of its capacity to provide a very high quality student experience. Together with burgeoning relationships with prestige institutions in the United States whose disciplinary traditions and ethos we share (including Boston College, the University of Notre Dame and Teachers College at Columbia University), these factors provide a robust platform for significant enhancement of our standing as an internationally-engaged HEI.

We believe that development of a new strategy and accompanying business plan is required to capitalise on this potential and this will take priority in identifying next steps. The College wishes to focus on scalable opportunities outside the European area to ensure that all of its 'home-registered' students benefit from at least a single instance of international academic experience, and to further diversify the learning community by attracting staff and students from other countries. North and South America are key zones of strategic interest to the College and in the past five years, a plethora of exchange agreements have been signed. MIC is registered with the Association of International

Educators (NAFSA), and is authorised to enable applicant students from the United States and Canada to enjoy Federal Student Aid (which makes the prospect of study abroad significantly more attainable than otherwise). Accordingly, we will continue to foster our new relationships and to identify appropriate targets together with our partners which will be incorporated into our strategy and business plan. In particular, we will seek to work with other teacher education providers and Liberal Arts institutions, especially those who share our mission and ethos and who are working at the forefront of social inclusion through educational intervention and research – an activity long pursued by MIC. We will seek to share our learning and develop opportunities for addressing educational marginalisation from a trans-national perspective, beginning with nascent links we have created between Boston College's Lynch School of Education and its *City Connects* programme and our own *Transforming Education through Dialogue* (TED) project as well as our Knowledge Transfer Strategy (KiTS), mentioned under Objective 3, below.

As noted, it will be exceptionally difficult in the short term for the College to reach the desired national target of 15% of enrolments. While this is a long term goal for MIC as it seeks to cement its position within the Irish higher education landscape as an internationally-engaged institution, in its journey towards that goal, the College will is more likely to be a contributor to the aggregated effort to reach the national target. A more realistic metric for the College at this stage of its development is 6-8% 'inward' registrations per annum by 2021, of which will be a mix of short-stay engagement types (including Erasmus, Erasmus+, summer/winter school opportunities and CPD) as well as undergraduate FTEs which will grow at a rate of 50% per annum. FTE levels (inward) will remain comparatively small. However, this will be offset by the College's unique potential for attracting 'high-value' CPD agreements with state bodies in North and South America primarily (such as the CAPES programme for Brazilian teachers). It may be worthwhile for the HEA to review its KPI metrics in order to add nuance to Ireland's capacity in this regard, especially given the Authorities own central role in brokering international professional development exchange agreements. Certainly, this would allow institutions such as MIC, with significant potential for demonstrating the credibility of such arrangements on behalf of the State, to provide statistical returns that authentically reflect the comprehensiveness of their internationalisation work in this context.

Sub-Level Strategic Initiatives:

2.1.1   Develop a new cohesive and integrated internationalisation strategy for 2019-2024

> *Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:*
>
> ✓ International students to represent 15% of full-time students by 2020
>
> ✓ Progress towards Bologna target of at least 20% of those who graduate in 2020 to undertake a study or training period abroad
>
> ✓ Participation in Erasmus+ in Higher Education and other Study and Work Placements Abroad to reach 4,400 by 2022
>
> ✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 4.8)
>
> ✓ International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016-2020 (Strategic Action 2.1-2.6, 3.3)
>
> ✓ Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (Objective 6.2)

2.1.2   Explore and create opportunities for high value academic partnerships with international higher education institutions that share our academic mission and institutional ethos.

- ✓ Progress towards Bologna target of at least 20% of those who graduate in 2020 to undertake a study or training period abroad

- ✓ Participation in Erasmus+ in Higher Education and other Study and Work Placements Abroad to reach 4,400 by 2022

- ✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 4.8)

- ✓ Refers to HEI Strategy and Innovation 2020 target- links national and HEI strategy

- ✓ International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016-2020 (Strategic Action 2.2, 2.3)

2.1.3   Engage with higher education institutions and civil society organisations in overseas locations to enable mutual learning about the impact of partnership approaches to educational interventions in areas that feature low rates of educational attainment

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

- ✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 1.4, 2.1, 4.1, 4.2)

- ✓ International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016-2020 (Strategic Action 1.2, 1.3, 1.6)

- ✓ Project Ireland 2040 (National Policy Objective 28)

High Level Strategic Priority

2.2   We will broaden our engagement with industry, as well as our partners in regional governance, towards the building of common platforms for regional social, cultural and economic development, as well as the creation of an environment that enables our graduates to be highly-skilled, career-ready and connected to high quality employment opportunities.

Description of Strategic Priority

A new Enterprise and Community Engagement function was created as a result of the College's last strategic plan and this initiative has been exceptionally successful (as detailed in the preceding narrative).

The College is adamant that a higher education institution specialising in initial teacher education has an essential role to play in building bridges between our sector and the business and employers pillar, as well as with organisations tasked with regional and local governance and development. Already, the College has established itself as a lead in several initiatives occurring within the context of regional and local skills development and over the course of its strategy for 2018-2023, the College will implement these in partnership with other stakeholders in a coordinated framework.

In a similar vein, the College will enhance the substance of its engagement with the broader community of stakeholders in its educational provision by involving external partners, as appropriate, in programme conceptualisation, development and review. One of the objectives set by the College is to augment its graduate employability value by incorporating key 'professional' skills (such as project management, presentation skills etc.) into its student experience by working with local

industry to insert such options into extra-curricular skills development menus.

A key step in the development process will be to create a new 'Enterprise, Community Engagement & Knowledge Transfer Office' in 2019 to enhance the weight of our resourcing and match the scale of our objectives during the duration of our current strategic plan.

Sub-Level Strategic Initiatives:

2.2.1   Develop and lead education initiatives under the *Regional Skills Forum*, the Chamber of Commerce network, Local Enterprise Offices, Local Authority development strategies and other regional initiatives such as Limerick for IT and Limerick for Film.

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

- ✓ Number of innovation vouchers project agreements with industry to increase by 12% by 2020

- ✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 4.3, 4.5, 4.6,)

- ✓ ICT Skills Action Plan 2014-18 (Actions 6, 8, 10, 11)

- ✓ Project Ireland 2040 (National Policy Objective 31)

- ✓ Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (Objective 1.3, 2.1, 2.4, 2.5)

2.2.2   As part of our ADVANCE (Assisted Development of Vision for New Career Entry) and CPD-21 strategies, increase the range of industries open to our students to carry out career-relevant work placements and gain professional / transferable skillsets that will complement and add value to their academic qualifications.

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

- ✓ Improve Employer satisfaction rates with HEI collaboration with enterprise by 25% as tracked in National Employer Survey

- ✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 4.3, 4.5, 4.6,)

- ✓ ICT Skills Action Plan 2014-18 (Action 6)

- ✓ Project Ireland 2040 (National Policy Objective 31)

- ✓ Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (Objective 1.3, 2.1, 2.5)

4.3   Key System Objective 3

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

High Level Targets:

1. Increase of 500 new postgraduate research enrolments in disciplines aligned to enterprise and other national needs by 2020. (baseline 2,235 in 2014/15);

2. Increase by 30% the number of funded postdoctoral positions in disciplines aligned to enterprise and other national needs by 2020. (Innovation 2020 target);

3. Double overall Higher Education research income derived from industry to €48m (Innovation 2020 target - €24m in 2014);

4. Increase research projects between enterprise and the public research system by 20% by 2020 (2014 Baseline is 878);

5. Secure HEI Horizon 2020 target of €550m in funding by 2020 (over €200m secured by end of 2016);

6. Increase applied research in the Institutes of technology.

High Level Strategic Priority:

3.1   We will enhance and extend our essential contribution to the scope, reach and quality of professional teacher education in Ireland by focusing on practically-grounded research that informs the academic framework, pedagogy and professional development.

Description of Strategic Priority

A focus for our external presence during the 2012-2017 period has been the Shannon Consortium of MIC, UL and LIT, reconstituted as the Mid-West Cluster of higher education institutions within a new, more optimised architecture for the sectoral landscape emerging because of system reform. Building on its earlier success as a vehicle for inter-institutional strategic cooperation and operational resource-sharing, the Shannon Consortium is regarded nationally as an exemplar of the cluster model. Led by the Presidents of the three institutions, the Consortium is advanced in its delivery of key objectives set out during the 2012-2017 period, including the co-delivery, by UL and MIC, of a common Level 8 Humanities programme and the establishment of a tri-partite Federated Limerick Graduate School (FLGS). FLGS captures the synergies characteristic to a commitment towards collaborative graduate mentoring, professional training and joint programme mapping and development (including structured doctoral programmes).

Rounding out the Consortium's current agenda is the creation, by MIC and UL, of a national Centre of Teaching Excellence, in response to recommendations contained in a review of the structure of teacher education in Ireland by an internal team led by renowned Finnish academic, Pasi Sahlberg. This review formed part of the process of re-conceptualisation of Irish higher education and the strategy pursued by MIC and UL was to embark on the establishment of a National Institute for Studies in Education (NISE). NISE is prompting new innovations in high quality teacher education at both institutions – as well as in LIT's School of Art & Design – and the Institute has appointed an academic director to lead implementation of an ambitious plan for crystallising best practice in teaching, learning and research. In addition to this, NISE has proven to be an effective vehicle for delivering national objectives within a cooperative and well-coordinated space, including the DES Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH).

Sub-Level Strategic Initiatives:

3.1.1   Launch and implement the next phase of strategic development of the National Institute for Studies in Education (NISE) in partnership with the University of Limerick, establishing NISE as a significant influence on research-informed practice in teacher education nationally and internationally, as well as an agent of planning, development and engagement in (collaborative) professional development in alignment with the National Professional Development Framework.

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

✓   Increase of 500 new postgraduate research enrolments in disciplines aligned to enterprise and other national needs by 2020

✓   Increase by 30% the number of funded postdoctoral positions in disciplines aligned to

enterprise and other national needs by 2020

- ✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 3.2)
- ✓ International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016-2020 (Strategic Action 2.2, 2.4, 2.5)
- ✓ Project Ireland 2040 (National Policy Objective 31)
- ✓ Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (Objective 1.1, 1.2, 2.3)
- ✓ Our Public Service 2020 (Headline Action 9)

3.1.3   Develop a clearly-defined and well-integrated Knowledge Transfer Strategy (KiTS) for teachers and education policy-makers that will enable the College to enhance its contribution to educational inclusion through practically-grounded research in school and community settings.

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

- ✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 3.2, 4.1, 4.2)
- ✓ National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (Objectives 1.4, 3.2, 3.5, 3.7, 3.8)
- ✓ Refers to HEI Strategy and Innovation 2020 target- links national and HEI strategy
- ✓ Refers to HEI Strategy and Innovation 2020 target- links national and HEI strategy

High Level Strategic Priority

3.2   We will develop approaches for attracting, recruiting and retaining postgraduate students with reference to social, cultural and economic needs, regionally, nationally and internationally.

Description of Strategic Priority

During the implementation of the College's last strategic plan the objective of building our resource base towards development of a fit-for-purpose postgraduate research infrastructure was accomplished with the completion of an all-new campus precinct for postgraduate studies: the John Henry Newman Campus. The College invested 7 million euros in the fit-out of a dedicated building to accommodate our research and postgraduate administrative hub and provide our students with state-of-the-art work space and research facilities. In this period, graduate students expanded dramatically in comparative terms with 150 Level 10 awards achieved by our students by Academic Year 2017-18. From a baseline that began with the College's first and only doctoral award in Academic Year 2001-02 this is a significant result and the broader outcome is that MIC has mainstream recognition as a prestigious location for postgraduate study and PhD work in particular.

The strategic priority for the current period (to 2021) is to sustain and grow these outputs. The College is serving a clear national policy need in this regard by offering professional / structured doctoral opportunities for practicing teachers and school leaders who make up a sizeable cohort of overall graduate student numbers.

For the College, a step change in our long-term strategy is to increase the number of externally-funded doctoral opportunities and MIC will seek leverage from its international and enterprise

engagement strategies towards this goal.

Sub-Level Strategic Initiatives:

3.2.1   Develop staff and student mobility exchanges with prestigious and high ranking partner universities

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

✓ Increase of 500 new postgraduate research enrolments in disciplines aligned to enterprise and other national needs by 2020

✓ Increase by 30% the number of funded postdoctoral positions in disciplines aligned to enterprise and other national needs by 2020

✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 4.7, 4.8)

✓ International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016-2020 (Strategic Action 2.2, 2.3, 2.4)

✓ Project Ireland 2040 (National Policy Objective 31)

✓ Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (Objective 6.1)

3.2.2   Optimise student recruitment in new and established subject areas by attracting prestigious fellowships and scholarships from sources such as the Irish Research Council (IRC) and Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions, through Government of Ireland International Education Scholarships and Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility exchanges with prestigious and high ranking partner universities.

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

✓ Increase research projects between enterprise and the public research system by 20% by 2020

✓ Double overall Higher Education research income derived from industry to €48m

✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 4.7, 4.8)

✓ International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016-2020 (Strategic Action 2.4, 2.5)

✓ Project Ireland 2040 (National Policy Objective 31)

✓ Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (Objective 6.1, 6.2)

3.2.3   Increase doctoral enrolments while improving completion times and rates.

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

✓ Increase of 500 new postgraduate research enrolments in disciplines aligned to enterprise and other national needs by 2020

✓ Increase by 30% the number of funded postdoctoral positions in disciplines aligned to enterprise and other national needs by 2020

✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 4.7, 4.8)

✓ Refers to HEI Strategy and Innovation 2020 target- links national and HEI strategy

✓ Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (Objective 1.3, 3.3)

4.4   Key System Objective 4

Significantly improves the equality of opportunity through education and training and recruits a student body that reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population.

High Level Targets:

1. All HEIs will have a Student Success Strategy in place by 2020 which will embed whole-of-HEI approaches to institutional access strategies;

2. Implement new data initiatives and indicators to support the development and implementation of evidenced based National Plans for Equity of Access by 2019;

3. Implement the strands of the Programme for Access to Third Level (PATH) Fund to support the implementation of the National Plan for Equity of Access 2015-2019;

4. Sustain the expansion from underrepresented groups with 2,000 additional enrolments from socioeconomically disadvantaged groups and 1,000 from Further Education access programmes;

5. Increase in enrolments from DEIS schools by ensuring that every such school will be participating in a HEI led access programme;

6. Completion rates for students from disadvantaged cohorts will be specifically targeted for improvement.

High Level Strategic Priority:

4.1   Mirroring the diversity of our society, there will be an increase in relative participation rates by people of all stages along the life-cycle, with special focus on those most distanced from access to higher education opportunities, for reasons linked to age, nationality, ethnicity, socio-economic or cultural attributes. Implementation of efforts to achieve this objective will incorporate implementation of supports provided under the PATH 1-3 objectives of the Shannon Consortium.

Description of Strategic Priority

MIC has several decades of experience working to maximise the quality of the student experience, generally, and more specifically, focusing on broadening participation towards practical up-take of places by prospective learners from backgrounds of marginal opportunity. This takes place in a carefully nurtured context where the emphasis is on equity in opportunity-taking and, equally as critical, in a well-scaffolded student support environment where there is genuine equity of participation towards high rates of successful retention and progression. In our experience it is in such an environment that students flourish and that students who do not progress tend to do so for reasons outside of the College's capacity to make a difference (e.g. significant economic hardship, the prevalence of caring responsibilities, the waxing and waning of the availability of wage-earning opportunities where low-level employment is not well balanced with either the cost of remaining in full-time – or even part-time – education or the necessity to apportion a viable ratio time spent working to time spent participating in course attendance.

One of the most innovative equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) initiatives created by the College is its Teacher Education Access Programme (TEAP). This two-stage programme involves a foundation year that immerses participants in essential preparatory academic modules designed to enable them to progress by direct means (as Mature Students aged 23 or over) into the Level 8 Bachelor of Education Programme. As part of the first stage, students received a grounding in the Irish language enabling them to acquire the matriculation requirements for entry into the degree. An exceptionally high rate of progression from the foundation year has taken place and of those entering the degree programme less than 12% have paused their studies (with the opportunity to recommence remaining) and more than 50% have gained a First or Second Class Honours grade in cumulative assessment outcomes. This model has served to inform development of the Programme for Access to Third Level (PATH) – a funded national strategic initiative introduced by the HEA - and MIC is now leading implementation of one of the PATH projects (PATH I) under the Shannon Consortium and NISE as mentioned above. Implementation of PATH I is set out below as a key target under our Performance Compact.

Our EDI targets, which align with national and system-level KPIs (insofar as local context allows this) are set out below:

MIC Performance Compact Targets 2018 - 2021

Target Group	MIC Base Data 2018	NAP Base Data	Progress Review outcome	MIC Target For 2019	NAP Target for 2019	MIC Target for 2020	MIC Target for 2021	Revised target for 2021
Participation in higher education by people disadvantaged by socio-economic barriers (as a % of 18-20 age cohorts)								
HEAR entrants	6%			6.5%		7%	7.25%	
Non-manual worker group		23%	27%		30%			32%
Semi/unskilled manual worker group		26%	36%		35%			40%
Participation in higher education by "first-time" mature students (as a % of all new entrants):								
Full-time mature entrants to higher education	3.77%	13%	9%	4%	16%	4.5%	5%	16%
Participation in higher education by people with disabilities								
Students with disabilities as a % of all new entrants to higher education	5%	6%	10%	5.5%	8%	5.5%	5.5%	12%
Progression to higher education by holders of further education qualifications								
% of new entrants to higher education whose basis for admission is a further education qualification	0.5%	6.6%	7.3%	1%	10%	1.5%	2.%	10%
Participation in higher education by Irish Travellers:								
Number of Irish Travellers in higher education (full and part-time undergraduate new entrants)	1	35	41	1	80	1	1	80

Sub-Level Strategic Initiatives:

4.1.1   A new wider participation strategy - WELCOME (Widening Entry to Life-Long Learning and Career Opportunities through MIC) - will be developed enabling a community-connected pre-entry targeting strategy linked to our transition / retention support strategies (see 4.2, below).

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

✓ Implement the strands of the Programme for Access to Third Level (PATH) Fund to support the implementation of the National Plan for Equity of Access 2015-2019

✓ All HEIs will have a Student Success Strategy in place by 2020 which will embed whole-of-HEI approaches to institutional access strategies

✓ Implement new data initiatives and indicators to support the development and implementation of evidenced based National Plans for Equity of Access by 2019

✓ Sustain the expansion from underrepresented groups with 2,000 additional enrolments from socioeconomically disadvantaged groups and 1,000 from Further education access programmes

✓ Increase in enrolments from DEIS schools by ensuring that every such school will be participating in a HEI led access programme

✓ Completion rates for students from disadvantaged cohorts will be specifically targeted for improvement

✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 3.4)

✓ National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (Objectives 1.1-1.5, 3.1-3.5, 3.8, 4.3-4.5, 5.1, 5.2)

✓ International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016-2020 (Strategic Action 2.6)

✓ Project Ireland 2040 (National Policy Objective 28, 31)

✓ Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (Objective 1.3, 4.1, 5.1)

✓ Our Public Service 2020 (Headline Action 3)

4.1.2   Building on its successful Teacher Education Access Programme (TEAP), MIC will lead a new initiative for access to teacher education under PATH I (Programme for Access to Third Level), leading to increased participation levels by people traditionally distanced from the profession of teaching.

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

✓ Implement the strands of the Programme for Access to Third Level (PATH) Fund to support the implementation of the National Plan for Equity of Access 2015-2019

✓ Implement new data initiatives and indicators to support the development and implementation of evidenced based National Plans for Equity of Access by 2019

✓ Sustain the expansion from underrepresented groups with 2,000 additional enrolments from socioeconomically disadvantaged groups and 1,000 from Further education access programmes

✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 3.4)

✓ National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (Objectives 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 3.2, 4.1-4.5)

High Level Strategic Priority

4.2   Student retention rates will be constant and amongst the top 5% of overall performance levels reported by institutions in the Irish higher education sector, with rates for all programmes at or above the 90th percentile and our strategic initiatives will incorporate implementation of supports provided under the PATH 1-3 objectives of the Shannon Consortium.

Description of Strategic Priority

It is important to realise that what is meant by a 'Student Success Strategy' is most likely, in its most effective and achievable form, to be a composite of several inter-weaving, well-coordinated strategic initiatives within the student academic and support domains. In the current configuration of higher education institutions, it is common that such elements are operationalised within a range of discrete functions.

For the reasons set out under High Level Strategic Priority 4.1, above, our current strategic plan places an emphasis on integrated and coordinated implementation of several nominally discrete initiatives which, together, drive our retention and progression targets. We have opted to incorporate these initiatives within our Performance Compact because of their logical 'input-output (and *outcome*)' relationship with what is termed a 'student success strategy' (as a system-level KPI) and with our institutional targets. Accordingly, the Sub-Level Strategic Initiatives, below, identify the following elements of what we consider to be our student success strategy in an integrated and coordinated more of implementation:

- WELCOME (Widening Entry to Life-Long Learning and Career Opportunities through MIC), as a foundational pre-entry targeting strategy that leverages community-connected partnerships so as to develop suitable pathways for the most distanced from educational participation;

- Tús Maith, as a mechanism to support transition to higher education and to manage retention levels during the stages of educational participation most vulnerable to learner isolation, disillusion and disengagement;

- A dedicated and well-resourced Student Health and Well-Being Strategy comprising of, *inter alia*, RAPHAEL (Rapid Response Protocol for Students at Risk of Harm or Emotional Vulnerability), a new protocol for coordinated management of student crisis events. Student well-being, generally, and the proactive management of risks to retention caused by sudden crisis, are now well-recognised indicators of the likelihood of retention and progression. Conversely, the absence of higher-level strategies and supports to help students off-set challenges associated with maintaining well-being and coping with crisis is an indicator of the likelihood of failure to progress and, by extension, of any student success strategy that should fail to make them integral. The aim of the College is to provide intervention as a means of short-term support but, more importantly, to help build student resilience as a self-coping mechanism that contributes to the overall formation of the whole person.

The College's new Learner Engagement & Activation Plan (LEAP), as a component of its institutional strategy, encompasses these student success initiatives and is worth noting; LEAP will incorporate other strands that while not identified specifically as part of the Performance Compact, will nevertheless exert an impact and will be referred to in our self-evaluations reports. It is also worth noting in this foundation document that LEAP will also involve student career guidance, career development and career opportunity targeting.

Sub-Level Strategic Initiatives:

4.2.1   A fully integrated Transition Management Programme - *Tús Maith* - will be introduced as a key element of our overall Learner Engagement & Activation Plan (LEAP).

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

✓ Implement the strands of the Programme for Access to Third Level (PATH) Fund to support the implementation of the National Plan for Equity of Access 2015-2019

✓ Completion rates for students from disadvantaged cohorts will be specifically targeted for improvement

✓ Sustain the expansion from underrepresented groups with 2,000 additional enrolments from socioeconomically disadvantaged groups and 1,000 from Further education access programmes

✓ Increase in enrolments from DEIS schools by ensuring that every such school will be participating in a HEI led access programme

✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 3.4)

✓ National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (Objectives 1.1, 1.2, 1.4-1.6, 3.2, 1.6, 3.1-3.5, 3.8, 4.1)

✓ Project Ireland 2040 (National Policy Objective 28, 31)

✓ Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (Objective 4.1, 5.1, 6.1)

4.2.2   A new holistic and tightly coordinated Student Health & Well-Being Strategy that combines development of a support framework and referrals protocol with inculcation of resilience and self-care principles will be developed. This will incorporate RAPHAEL (Rapid Response Protocol for Students at Risk of Harm or Emotional Vulnerability), a new protocol for coordinated management of student crisis events (including events affecting international short-stay students), including sudden bereavement.

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

✓ Implement the strands of the Programme for Access to Third Level (PATH) Fund to support the implementation of the National Plan for Equity of Access 2015-2019

✓ Completion rates for students from disadvantaged cohorts will be specifically targeted for improvement

✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 3.4)

✓ National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (Objectives 1.1, 1.2, 1.4-1.6, 3.2, 1.6, 3.1-3.5, 3.8, 4.1)

✓ Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (Objective 4.1, 5.1)

- ✓ Project Ireland 2040 (National Policy Objective 28, 31)
- ✓ International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016-2020 (Strategic Action 2.4)

4.2.3   The operational capacity of the Academic Learning Centre (ALC) will be enhanced in order to underpin the WELCOME and *Tús Maith* programmes as well as the academic support dimension of the Student Health & Well-Being Strategy and LEAP programme.

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

- ✓ Implement the strands of the Programme for Access to Third Level (PATH) Fund to support the implementation of the National Plan for Equity of Access 2015-2019
- ✓ Completion rates for students from disadvantaged cohorts will be specifically targeted for improvement
- ✓ Sustain the expansion from underrepresented groups with 2,000 additional enrolments from socioeconomically disadvantaged groups and 1,000 from Further education access programmes
- ✓ Increase in enrolments from DEIS schools by ensuring that every such school will be participating in a HEI led access programme
- ✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 3.4)
- ✓ National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (Objectives 1.1, 1.2, 1.4-1.6, 3.2, 1.6, 3.1-3.5, 3.8, 4.1)
- ✓ Project Ireland 2040 (National Policy Objective 28, 31)
- ✓ Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (Objective 4.1, 5.1, 6.1)

4.5   Key System Objective 5

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

High Level Targets:

1. Implement from 2018 Continuous Professional Development Framework for all academic staff in all HEIs;

2. All HEIs to engage in International benchmarking by 2020;

3. Improve problematic non-progression rates by 10% (overall baseline of 15% for 2014/15);

4. Improve non-progression rates in STEM disciplines by 10% (differing discipline baselines);

5. All HEIs to have in place policies for digital teaching and learning by 2019;

6. The HEA will develop guidelines to steer the process of total quality management, in line with best international practice.

High Level Strategic Priority:

5.1   MIC will renew its emphasis on continuous quality assurance and we will achieve this using a systematic, 'whole community' approach.

Description of Strategic Priority

The direction and focus of the College's continuous quality assurance strategy is based on the outcome of the 2017 Institutional Quality Review process which included development of an Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) as well as an external review panel report. An internal working group subsequently developed an Institutional Review Implementation Plan (IRIP) based on the twenty-five recommendations emanating from the Institutional Review. This plan identified the detailed action items associated with each of the recommendations. These action items have been allocated to key personnel within MIC who were tasked in the first instance with ensuring that the action items were the appropriate response to the recommendation and, secondly to set a realistic timeframe for completion of each action item. The finalised IRIP was brought to the MIC Executive Team for approval in March 2018 and subsequently submitted to UL (the Designated Awarding Body). The report was presented to the MIC Academic Council and a copy of the IRIP has been made available via to all personnel via the staff intranet (SharePoint). In order to ensure accurate tracking and efficient progress on each of the recommendations a SharePoint Database (IRIP Tracker) was developed and populated with the recommendations and the associated action items. The database includes the rapporteur, expected completion date, item status, and the reporting path for each recommendation which lists the oversight committee (tasked with overseeing the implementation of a particular recommendation) and the reporting committee (the body charged with reporting on progress of all action items from the various associated committees to the Quality Committee). A standing item in respect of the IRIP has been added to the agenda of each oversight and reporting committee.

This is the starting point for a nascent Quality Assurance Framework which will be embedded into the work of all staff at the College and contribute to the achievement of a well-articulated and highly effective continuous quality assurance 'universe' capable of benchmarking against exemplars of best practice and enabling the College to approach its second cycle of Institutional Review in 2023/24 with a best-in-class system.

Sub-Level Strategic Initiatives:

5.1.1   Design and adopt a new MIC Quality Assurance Framework – QUILLE (Quality Improvement: Leadership & Learning Environment) – that identifies and enables relevant personnel to act cohesively as drivers of a well-led and coordinated quality process that enhances the learning environment through innovation, action initiation, communication and reporting in respect of quality assurance measures.

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

✓   The HEA will develop guidelines to steer the process of total quality management, in line with best international practice

High Level Strategic Priority

5.2   The practice of teaching and learning at MIC will be acknowledged nationally and internationally as exemplary, and recognised as a benchmark of quality that is informed by innovation and research.

Description of Strategic Priority

The activities linked to this Strategic Priority builds on the achievements of a previously funded National Forum for Teaching Learning Project and aims to extend the current model of accredited professional development (PD) provision in the Shannon Consortium through critically evaluating and redesigning (elements of) the current MA in Teaching, Learning and Scholarship with a particular focus on the Graduate Certificate. This will result in the development of an inter-institutional Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice, to be offered through blended delivery. Following the success of the College's strategy to establish an effective Teaching & Learning function over the period between 2010-2018 (acknowledged in previous Performance Compact cycle evaluations) a new Teaching & Learning Strategy is being developed.

This will be informed by both the student experience strategy of the College (described under 4.1 and 4.2, above) as well as the work of the College's Learning Enhancement & Academic Development (LEAD) Centre, which will drive the initiative. Through the new strategy, LEAD will seek to ensure cohesion and partnership vis-à-vis academic roles that are focused upon academic programme development, L&T collaborations and professional development. This approach is grounded in the changing landscape of L&T nationally and internationally as well as the broader diversity of imperatives that inform the College's Mission and Strategic Plan (2018-2023), including the MIC Institutional Review (QQI, 2017) which recommended, *inter alia*, 'including training for all academic staff in: a) principles of curriculum design and alignment of curricula with the NFQ, b) the constructive alignment of curricula and assessments and c) best practice in the design and monitoring of assessments systems to ensure validity, reliability and fairness' (QQI, 2017, p.25).

Given the seminal importance of the latter, together with its linkage to system KPIs and policy objectives that speak to the importance of professional development, MIC will lead a major Shannon Consortium project the National Forum Teaching & Learning Call (2018) to develop a PD framework that has potential for mainstreaming. It is worth noting the key observations and commendations provided by the review panel that recommended awarding funding towards this project in order to appreciate the approach and scope of the initiative:

Commendations:

- Project addresses several key challenges facing HE, builds on successful previous experience and results;
- The institutional mix of the Shannon Consortium will ensure the scalability and hence the national relevance and impact of the project…(on the strength of) … excellent and longstanding cooperation of the consortium partners;

- The project will consolidate and embed previous PD projects. It aims to remove barriers to

PD uptake for all groups in the institutions by developing various and flexible pathways.

Recommendations:

- To maximise national impact and sustainabilty make sure the outcomes are easily accessible;
- Consider impact and sustainability from the beginning;
- This is a very ambitious project, which will need the full strategic support from your leadership, and also from other parts of the institutions. The project team should ensure that they work to build this support;
- Consider focusing the vision around casual staff and building links with research students;
- Develop a strategic approach.

The rationale for this initiative follows strong calls for flexibility in the provision of PD emerge both from the literature (Rientes, 2013; Teras, 2016) and through interviews and focus groups conducted during a progenitor Shannon Consortium project funded under the 2016-2018 Teaching & Learning Enhancement Fund. Both new and experienced HE faculty cite time constraints as a significant barrier to engaging in PD (e.g. Brownell and Tanner, 2012) and faculty from across the Shannon Consortium institutions indicated that flexibility of mode of delivery and pathways to accreditation would significantly enhance the existing programme, which has been successfully running for several years.

A key output of the project will be the development of an accredited online/blended programme which will offer flexible and personalised pathways to accredited PD by developing a suite of core and elective modules which take account of the professional learning needs of faculty across the three institutions. In addition, the project aims to identify additional pathways to doctoral level qualifications in academic practice in HE, thus extending the provision of PD in the Shannon Consortium to Level 10 on the NFQ while simultaneously building capacity in the scholarship of teaching and learning throughout the region. The proposed enhancement of the existing programme (focusing on structure, pedagogical design, delivery and use of RPL) will aim to exemplify and model best practices in terms of flexible and innovative approaches to academic practice. The programme developed will be underpinned and aligned to the National Professional Development Framework and aims to play a crucial role in extending the implementation of the PD Framework across the Shannon Consortium. It is anticipated that the extension of PD provision to offer greater flexibility (both in terms of mode of delivery and pathways to accreditation) will prove of interest to both new and experienced academic staff who frequently cite time constraints as a barrier to the integration of professional development activities into daily work practices.

Further development of a PD framework for faculty will build on the College's particularly successful record of engagement with the Erasmus+ programme and will seek to enable growth of mobility opportunities towards inter-institutional and trans-national approaches to learning and teaching.

Sub-Level Strategic Initiatives:

5.2.1   Development of a new, multi-dimensional Strategy for Teaching & Learning (face-to-face and digital) governing integrated academic provision and professional service support by 2020.

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

✓   All HEIs to have in place policies for digital teaching and learning by 2019

- ✓ Implement from 2018 Continuous Professional Development Framework for all academic staff in all HEIs

- ✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 1.4, 1.5, 3.2, 3.4)

- ✓ ICT Skills Action Plan 2014-18 (Actions 11, 19)

- ✓ National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (Objectives 1.1, 1.2, 1.4-1.6)

- ✓ International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016-2020 (Strategic Action 2.4)

- ✓ Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (Objective 1.1, 1.2, 3.3, 4.1)

5.2.2   Coordinated integration of the Centre for Teaching & Learning (and its integral blended learning service) with the academic programme approval process.

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

- ✓ Implement from 2018 Continuous Professional Development Framework for all academic staff in all HEIs

- ✓ All HEIs to have in place policies for digital teaching and learning by 2019

- ✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 1.5, 3.2, 3.4)

- ✓ ICT Skills Action Plan 2014-18 (Actions 11, 19)

- ✓ Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (Objective 1.1, 1.2, 3.3)

5.2.3   Creation of new opportunities for professional development and accreditation in teaching and learning practice in accordance with national strategy including the goals under the Professional Development Framework as well as our broader international strategy which supports staff to avail of an Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility, for teaching, research or training/CPD.

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

- ✓ Implement from 2018 Continuous Professional Development Framework for all academic staff in all HEIs

- ✓ Action Plan for Education 2016-19 (Objective 1.5, 3.2, 3.4)

- ✓ ICT Skills Action Plan 2014-18 (Actions 11, 19)

- ✓ Refers to HEI Strategy and Innovation 2020 target- links national and HEI strategy

- ✓ International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016-2020 (Strategic Action 2.4)

- ✓ Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (Objective 1.1, 1.2, 3.3, 4.1)

- ✓ Our Public Service 2020 (Headline Action 14)

4.6   Key System Objective 6

Demonstrate consistent improvement in governance, leadership and operational excellence.

High Level Targets:

1. Implementation of the 2018 Higher Education Gender Equality Task Force Action Plan and the 2016 Expert Group recommendations;

2. HEIs to have attained an Athena SWAN bronze institutional award by 2019 (TUs within 3 years of establishment);

3. All HEIs to submit their annual Governance Statements to HEA on time;

4. 100% compliance by HEIs with public procurement rules;

5. Draft annual financial statements to be submitted by HEIs to C&AG within stipulated C&AG guidelines;

6. Full transparency in HEI financial statements about accounting for Trusts and Foundations;

7. 100% compliance by HEIs with public pay policy;

8. 100% compliance by HEIs with public sector numbers controls;

9. Implementation of recommendations from rolling governance reviews;

10. HEA will develop individual compacts with the HEIs which reflect the overall ambitions of the System Performance Framework and local/regional opportunities;

11. Institutional strategic compacts will be assessed by a panel of experts, including international participants, to access their coherence and capacity for delivery.

High Level Strategic Priority:

6.1   Engender equality of opportunity and outcome for Academic and Professional Services employees, enhancing professional and operational excellence through the fostering of an inclusive and diverse staff community.

Description of Strategic Priority

In its previous and current strategic plans, the College has committed to an agenda of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). In the context of the current plan the Institutional Self-Evaluation Exercise (ISER) conducted as part of the Cycle 1 Institutional Review of MIC (2016/17) has been particularly influential.

Key deliverables are set out in *A Flourishing Learning Community* that align with national policy on EDI – especially in the context of gender equity within the higher education sector. The College will design an overarching equality framework (see 6.1.1 below) but, more specifically, and as a vehicle for informing the development of that framework, MIC will submit an application for institution-level Bronze Award status under Athena Swan. This will be followed by structural developments that including the assigning of responsibility for equality and diversity to a senior officer of the College, as well as a range of policies, protocols and systems.

Sub-Level Strategic Initiatives:

6.1.1   Agree and adopt a new Inclusion, Diversity & Equality Awareness Logic Model (IDEAL) – inclusive of appropriate equality-proofing toolkits and structured training programmes - enabling improved objective-setting and achievement of quality outcomes in recruitment and promotions practice, better decision-making, and staff management.

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

✓   Implementation of the 2018 Higher Education Gender Equality Task Force Action Plan and the 2016 Expert Group recommendations

✓   HEIs to have attained an Athena SWAN bronze institutional award by 2019 (TUs within 3 years of establishment

✓   Our Public Service 2020 (Headline Action 14, 16, 17)

✓   Refers to HEI Strategy and Innovation 2020 target- links national and HEI strategy

6.1.2   Development and implementation of an action plan aimed at achievement of the *Athena Swan Bronze Star Award* by November 2019.

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

✓   HEIs to have attained an Athena SWAN bronze institutional award by 2019 (TUs within 3 years of establishment

✓   Our Public Service 2020 (Headline Action 14, 16, 17)

High Level Strategic Priority

6.2   Ensure efficient, effective and transparent management and decision-making that is cohesive and connected.

Description of Strategic Priority

MIC has a well-developed system of tracking and reporting implementation of its strategic objectives under an Annual Operating Plan model. This model includes coordinated integration of risk management actions, quality assurance recommendations and, indeed, Performance Compact goals as set against system-level KPIs. An online intranet solution was developed for this purpose in the 2012-17 period.

The next generation of this system has been reconfigured to adopt the current system level KPIs as well as the new objectives set out under the current strategic plan. The strategic significance of this new generation is to bring about a step change resulting in cascading responsibility for tracking and reporting so that faculty- and function-level units contribute within a well-articulated system of devolved strategic decision-making as well as implementation of institutional objectives and local level. Achieving information oversight to this level of granularity is a challenge for complex organisations but it is essential to inform progress measurement and accountability processes and to ensure that the results of these are fully authentic.

The College notes feedback provided to it by the HEA's international review panel recommending exploration of the means to use data for modelling student success outcomes. This is fully consistent with the College's student success strategies (as described earlier in this document) and with the aims behind development of its second generation analytics 'dashboard' e-OLAS and integration with the College's VLE, SRS and other student data systems. Accordingly, this recommendation will be fully adopted in implementation of 6.2.2, below, and we will report on progress and outcomes in our self-evaluations reports.

Sub-Level Strategic Initiatives:

6.2.1   Annual business plans in operation and coordinated across all levels of the institution that are based on the Strategic Plan (2018-2023), approved and monitored by appropriate bodies, with outputs and outcomes documented, tracked, reported and measured against agreed KPIs and which are fully articulated with parallel risk registers as well as recommendations emanating from internal audits and quality reviews.

   Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

   ✓   Our Public Service 2020 (Headline Action 2, 5, 7, 8, 11, 15)

6.2.2   Establish *e-OLAS (Online Analytics System)* – a real-time securely-segmented data visualisation resource available to the College Executive and Department / Function Heads for informing planning, monitoring and intervention processes, as well as governance-level and external reporting.

Linkage with national policy objectives & HEA High Level Indicators:

- ✓ National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (Objectives 1.1, 3.1-3.5)
- ✓ Our Public Service 2020 (Headline Action 5, 7, 11)

6. Annual Compliance Statement

The HEA will take into account ongoing 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 governance or compliance issues arise, such as unacceptable financial deficit, weakness in financial plans or major omissions or delays in returns, an institution may be deemed not to have met the minimum requirements of strategy and performance dialogue.

7.   Agreement

To be completed following the conclusion of the strategy and performance dialogue process.

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 place of Mary Immaculate College within the system.

Signed: _____

Date: _____26/2/19_____

Chief Executive, Higher Education Authority

Eugene Wall

Signed: _____

Date: _____31 January 2019_____

President, Mary Immaculate College

+ Brendan Leahy

Signed: _____

Date: _____31 January 2019_____

Chair, Governing Body, Mary Immaculate College

Appendices

We (Mary Immaculate College) include the following appendices with our performance compact.

List the appendices here:

☐	Appendix 1: MIC Strategic Plan 2023: A Flourishing Learning Community