

Mary Immaculate College (MIC)

Strategic Dialogue Cycle 3: reflections on performance

Overview

Mary Immaculate College (MIC) has provided a clear self-evaluation report with an update on all interim 2015 targets, as requested. The self-evaluation report is completed in full and colour-coded. The College has achieved most of its interim targets and provides context on areas where performance is behind trajectory.

There are some issues arising from the report that the HEA would like to explore further with the institution. These include:

- MIC has successfully integrated St Patrick's College Thurles – it would be helpful to understand how integration is working in practice.
- The successful cooperation with the University of Limerick in respect of the cooperation around the Arts degree is welcomed.
- Plans for the National Institute for Studies in Education (NISE) do not seem to be moving forward. This has been a long-standing objective of the College and its partners, and is an important part of the implementation of the national initial teacher education strategy. It is important that this progresses and the HEA would be interested to discuss the College's plans to do so.
- Not all the achievements listed are supported by sufficient evidence (for example, in relation to regional clusters and access). There is mention of a draft strategic plan but no copy is provided.
- There are suggestions on increasing targets but these are unspecified; and, as such, appear more as aspirational observations than as new targets or new actions.
- There has been a slight drop in the number of mature student numbers, which MIC cited as reflecting a national trend.
- It could be useful if the College were to consider assigning responsibility for specific key performance indicators to specific officers.

Self-evaluation report – domain level review

1. Regional clusters

MIC sets out seven objectives for its performance within regional cluster settings. This broadly revolves around the Shannon Consortium. Joint structured PhD programmes with UL and NUIG are highlighted and to be commended. Six of these objectives are coded green and one amber.

There is a delay in the operationalisation of NISE's governance structures around the recruitment of the Director. In its self-evaluation, MIC notes the MIC/ HEA/ DES dialogue that is under way. Progress has been achieved in the other two components of this objective, CPD development and TUS interface.

The report points to a 300 per cent increase in teaching and learning initiatives developed and delivered at MIC. More detail on the outcomes of these initiatives would be useful.

2. Participation, equal access and lifelong learning

MIC has three objectives under this heading, two coded green and one amber. The college points out that its total undergraduate enrolments rose by 20 per cent between 2013/14 and 2014/15, but flags that the proportion of mature students fell 2.5 per cent to 5.7 per cent of the student population.

It suggests that the national decline in mature student numbers should be addressed in the context of the new national plan of equity of access to higher education. It could be useful if the College were to outline any local programmes that it is undertaking to increase mature student participation.

MIC had a 100 per cent progression rate on its Certificate in Contemporary Living for adults with an intellectual disability.

3. Excellent teaching and learning and quality of student experience

There are 12 objectives in this section, all of which MIC has coded green in its Cycle 3 self-evaluation.

The College notes the incorporation of St Patrick's College, Thurles into the College and that this will result in an additional 240 students at the Thurles campus, rising to 360 by 2021.

It also outlines significant progress in the area of continuous quality assurance; and because it has exceeded its targets, MIC will now reclassify how it measures progress in this area.

The student support reviews are to be incorporated into the new MIC Strategic Plan 2017–2021. It would be useful to see these.

4. High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation

MIC has four objectives in this section of its performance compact. In its Cycle 3 self-evaluation, it has coded progress against all four of the objectives as green.

It has developed a number of structured PhD programmes and the Research and Graduate School is in full operation. MIC sets out clear metrics as to how its research performance has been measured.

5. Enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange

MIC has two objectives in this section, both coded green. There are very strong and clearly outlined measures of engagement in the College's report.

6. Enhanced internationalisation

MIC has set itself two objectives under this section, both coded green. A comprehensive list of progress under these headings points to the College clearly achieving its targets.

7. Institutional consolidation

MIC has set itself one objectives for this section, and this is coded green.

A draft Strategic Plan for 2017–2021 is currently in preparation; and it will be useful to see how aligned this document is with the objectives set out in the compact.

Additional notes

MIC reported an accumulated surplus position of €2,105,000 for 2014/15 and for 2016 is projecting a deficit budget of €282,000 to be met from reserves.