

## Note re specific issues for Strategic Dialogue

Submission from Maynooth University in relation to three matters mentioned in letter from CEO of HEA to the University President dated 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2016.

- 1. Implementation of the Transitions Agenda:** Maynooth University is leading the Transitions agenda for higher education in Ireland. The University is committed to broadening the range of entry routes. Already in 2015 the number of entry routes was reduced from 50 in 2014 to 44 in 2015 and to 34 for 2016/17. In addition to broadening the entry routes the University has completed a comprehensive revision of the undergraduate curriculum that will from September 2016 provide a more flexible first year structure allowing varying levels of specialisation, include specially designed modules on critical skills in first year, an enhanced induction and advisory service for all new entrants, an expansion of the *Student +* initiative designed by Maynooth Access Office to support students in the transition to University, and greater flexibility in progression pathways after first year. In addition, the MEND regional cluster partners have developed a collaborative network with FE providers, and a portal to promote greater awareness of opportunities in Further Education and Higher Education in the region and to support transfers and progression between FE and HE.
- 2. Efforts to improve retention rates:** Maynooth University attaches a high priority to enabling all students to achieve their academic potential. It has for many years been a national leader in supporting students to avoid the risk of non-progression. This is particularly important given the distinctive socio-economic background and age profile of our students – Maynooth has the highest percentage of students from the targeted socio-economic groups and also the highest percentage of new entrants that are classified as mature students. The University has an internationally acclaimed Mathematics Support Centre that caters for almost 1,000 students, and a Writing Centre that is used by 430 students: each of these have been expanded. The advisory and curriculum guidance for students has been strengthened with the establishment of a Programme Advisory office, and a revised orientation structure. In addition, the new Maynooth Curriculum will provide first year students an opportunity to take a 15 credit module on Critical Skills and the new flexibility in relation to progression pathways will enable students to make choices that will build on their academic strengths and preferences. Furthermore, the University has revised its academic rules with a continued emphasis on high standards accompanied by more flexibility in relation to progression.
- 3. Systems and workload management:** In October 2014 Maynooth University developed an approach to academic workload management that is based on key principles that are shared by the staff and the University Executive, Appendix A. Implementation and adherence to the principles is monitored by the Faculty Deans. In addition, the University has introduced an internal Resource Allocation Model that is designed to drive efficient use of resources. A wide range of Human Resources policies have been developed to support decisions and processes in relation to staffing for a growing university and in particular to support the new Curriculum with greater clarity and consistency on the employment of staff on an Occasional basis. An extensive and integrated updating and reconfiguration of the IT systems in HR, Finance and the Registry is underway which will result in greater efficiency within and across the different services.

## **Appendix A: Maynooth University Academic Workload Mode Management: Guiding Principles**

It is good practice to ensure that workloads within academic departments / schools/ institutes are managed in a transparent and fair manner, so that all staff have opportunities to achieve their full potential, while also ensuring that the staff of each department collectively support the university to achieve its strategic goals in relation to education, research and contribution to society. Maynooth University has, therefore, established principles to support the management of workloads within academic Departments / Schools /Institutes.

### **The Maynooth University approach to academic workload management**

The approach to managing academic workload allocations in Maynooth University is based on a set of principles agreed at university level, and within the framework of these principles the delegation of responsibility to Heads of Departments / Schools / Institutes for implementation of an appropriate workload model. The overall objective is to provide both a process and a tool to support and enable Heads of academic units to manage and allocate academic workloads in a manner consistent with the university priorities and the needs of students.

The NUI Maynooth *Strategic Plan 2012-2017* firmly places the focus of the university on “*people, ideas and culture*”. The strategic intent of academic workload management is guided by three major goals in the Strategic Plan: (i) “to offer students an outstanding university education, the best available in Ireland”; (ii) “to be recognised by 2017 as playing a leading international role and being the clear national leader in a number of thematic areas of research that address the major societal challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century”; and (iii) “to be an excellent place to work, known for a collegial ethos which empowers all staff to contribute fully to the development of the university”.

In order to achieve these goals, the university supports an approach to academic workload management that is holistic in scope and directed by a commitment to the pursuit of balanced excellence across education, research and scholarship, and service within and beyond the university.

### **Guiding Principles**

The workload management process is guided by the following high level principles:

- The implementation of the university workload management process will be localised to Departments / Schools /Institutes and will be sufficiently flexible to cater for the diversity of activities, and differing national and international norms and practices for the disciplines provided by the University;
- Workload allocation models implemented by Departments / Schools /Institutes will seek to achieve a reasonable balance in total workloads (including teaching, research and service contributions) among staff, including the Head of the academic unit; equalisation over a fixed period (e.g., three years) may be more achievable in practice than annually;
- The allocation process will be consultative, reasonable and fair and will take into account the individual development needs of staff, and be commensurate with agreed duties and roles, as well as the overall needs of the department; for transparency the agreed distribution of

workloads within each Department / School / Institute will be made available annually to all academic staff in the Department/ School / Institute;

- Workload allocations will be supportive of career development;
- All full-time academic staff, regardless of grade, will normally contribute to undergraduate and postgraduate teaching;
- Workload allocations will provide appropriate time for research and scholarship, unless otherwise agreed with the Head of Department / School / Institute;
- All staff will contribute to the administrative tasks in the Department/ School / Institute and make service contributions within and/or beyond the university,

The University is committed to ensuring that the allocation of work is reasonable and fair across and within academic units. It is also required to exercise oversight of the implementation of academic workload management. In support of this, the Head of Department / School / Institute will monitor and record workload allocations and will provide to the university, via the Faculty Dean, an annual report on the procedure and model used to allocate workloads, and also an anonymised summary of the average and range of workload distributions between teaching, research and service among all academic staff in the Department/ School / Institute.

The design and implementation of workload allocation models will be undertaken by Departments / Schools / Institutes in accordance with the general principles outlined above.

October, 2014