



Quality Review
Peer Review Report

Roinn na Gaeilge

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Introduction

Quality at MIC

MIC's quality review process, as applied to both academic departments and professional services, was developed and continues to evolve in order to satisfy the College's Quality Policy and meet legislative QA requirements. MIC complies with the [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012](#), which places a legal responsibility on the provider and linked provider to establish procedures in writing for quality assurance for the purposes of establishing, ascertaining, maintaining and improving the quality of education, training, research and related services. (Part 3, Section 28). These QA procedures must take due account of relevant quality guidelines issued by [Quality and Qualifications Ireland](#) (QQI) and/or predecessor organisations. QQI is the statutory body responsible for reviewing and monitoring the effectiveness of QA procedures adopted and implemented by higher (and further) educational institutions within Ireland. The periodic quality review of functional areas (academic and professional service) within the College represents a cornerstone institutional QA/QE mechanism.

MIC Quality Review Process

The purpose of the quality review process is:

- To provide a structured opportunity for the department to engage in periodic and strategic evidence-based self-reflection and assessment in the context of the quality of its activities and processes, and to identify opportunities for quality improvement
- To provide a framework by which external peers, in an evidence-based manner, can independently review, evaluate, report upon and suggest improvements to the quality of the department's activities and processes
- To provide a framework by which the department implements quality improvements in a verifiable manner
- To provide MIC, its students, its prospective students and other stakeholders with independent evidence of the quality of the department's activities
- To ensure that all MIC departments are evaluated in a systematic and standardised manner in accordance with good international practice and in support of the objectives of the College's Quality Policy
- To satisfy good international practice in the context of quality assurance in higher education and to meet statutory QA requirements as enshrined in national law

Overview of the Quality Review Process for Academic Departments

The MIC Quality Review process consists of three phases:

1. Self-Assessment

The department under review conducts a self-evaluation exercise and writes a self-assessment report (SAR).

2. Peer Review

A Peer Review Group (PRG) comprising external experts, review the SAR, meet with Department members and stakeholders and produce a report (this report), which is made publicly available on the MIC Quality Office webpage.

3. Quality Improvement

The department considers the recommendations of the PRG, devises a quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to implement them and reports implementation progress to Quality Committee.

Irish Department

The Irish Department provides various undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, giving students the opportunity to enhance their knowledge of the Irish language, community and literature. Irish is the language of the Department and students are given the opportunity to build on the communication skills through both verbal and written Irish as an integral part of each module. The department has about 350 undergraduate students, as well as students undertaking master's and doctoral degrees.

Peer Review Group Observations

As a Peer Review Group, it was clear to us that there was a high level of engagement among all members of the Department – both Limerick Campus and Thurles Campus staff – in preparing the Self-Assessment Report. The desire of the members of the Department to participate in the pre-planning and writing process was evident, and that the material they presented to the Group of Peer Assessors was honest and open without bias.

Members of the Department treated us openly and honestly in our dealings with them during the visit. They praised their own practices of which they were proud and frankly stated those things which they were not entirely satisfied with or about which they had doubts. The Peer Review Group felt that they showed a high understanding of the operations of the School as a whole.

The Self-Assessment Report was a very comprehensive document and its contents greatly assisted the Peer Review Group as they prepared to visit the College to undertake the discussion meetings. The information on all aspects of the Department's operations was of great assistance and the quality of the report's content made it easy to direct discussions with staff during the visit.

I liked the enthusiastic engagement shown by the stakeholders who met with the Peer Review Group regarding the operations of the Irish Department. The meetings with these individuals showed the same integrity and openness as those with the staff themselves. The stakeholders praised the strengths of the Department but identified some of the shortcomings of the Self-Assessment Report itself, and of course some additional matters. Despite the fact that things were mentioned that are areas for improvement, it was clear to the members of the Peer Review Group that there was no false suggestion or false criticism by the interested parties, which showed us that the Irish department as a whole is diligently meeting the needs of the various stakeholders.

Chapter 1: Vision, Mission, Strategy and Governance

Commendations

1.1.1	All aspects of the Irish language are central to the culture of the Department and we are clear about the commitment of staff to promoting a high standard of excellence in teaching, learning and research.
1.1.2	Particular attention is paid to the students of the Department and their academic, professional and intellectual development is faithfully catered for.
1.1.3	From a governance perspective, it is clear that the Department's operations as a whole practice a culture of democracy and co-operation.

Recommendations

Not applicable

Chapter 2: Staff Organisation, Management and Procurement

Commendations

2.1.1	It is clear to us that there is a high level of communication between the Head of Department and members of the college's senior management (e.g. Dean of Arts and Head of School of Education in Thurles).
2.1.2	We noted the department itself is high spirited, between staff and students on both campuses.
2.1.3	The Peer Review Process was well received by the staff, which is evident in the Self-Assessment Report and is because of the multiple meetings between the staff and students.

Recommendations

	Recommendation	Short Justification
2.2.1	Appoint additional staff with specific skills in the development and design of teaching and learning resources.	In light of what we have heard from lecturers in the Department and the students themselves, specialist support is needed for the Department, particularly in relation to addressing the language challenges currently exist.
2.2.2	Thurles Campus: there is a significant lack of administrative and technical support that needs to be addressed.	Despite the fact that there are Irish speaking staff on campus, there is no one at the administrative level to deal with the needs of the Irish department. Also, a technician is only available one day a week.
2.2.3	Administrative responsibilities and tasks of staff.	The responsibilities associated with the role of Head of School vis-à-vis the tasks of a Head of Year, i.e. the chain of command should be clearly defined.
2.2.4	Department Administrator - we recommend that she deals with the Irish Department only.	She has a heavy burden and responsibilities of three departments to handle on top of other duties.

Chapter 3: Curriculum Design, Content and Review

Commendations

3.1.1	It is clear that the team is conducting research-based teaching with expertise in a wide range of Irish language entertainment and that this is provided to the students.
3.1.2	Staff are very aware of the challenges associated with the teaching of Irish and the shortcomings to be resolved, and are making great efforts to address these.

Recommendations

	Recommendation	Short Justification
3.2.1	Teaching syllabus	Carry out an on-going review to ensure that the needs of over and under achieving students are met. As suggested in §2.2.1 above, the appointment of a person with the appropriate expertise would greatly contribute to this particular goal.
3.2.2	Modern Literature Module	Undergraduate students would like to see current, contemporary Irish texts only used in the modules, i.e. works relating to their own life cycle.
3.2.3	Structure and syllabus of language workshops	It should be ensured that the same approach is being practiced in the language workshops on both campuses and that the grading progress is clear to the students.

Chapter 4: Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Feedback

Commendations

4.1.1	The students are very appreciative of the enthusiasm of the lecturers in the modules as a whole who are highly commended by students for being available outside of teaching hours.
4.1.2	Students say that there is very good feedback available from lecturers about essays/tasks and oral exams.
4.1.3	It is recommended that workshops are presented to small groups of students, giving lecturers the opportunity to better meet their language needs.

Recommendations

	Recommendation	Short Justification
4.2.1	Structured feedback	We recommend that feedback be collected from students on a formal basis at the end of each module (e.g. questionnaire), which would assist in the ongoing review of teaching and learning. A simple standard document could be developed for use in each module.
4.2.2	Compensation system (Pass/Fail Threshold)	The Thurles Campus Programme Board has agreed that a compensated pass can no longer be obtained at level D2 in Irish and we believe that this recommendation should be implemented. In addition, the compensation should be limited to the subject itself.
4.2.3	Spoken Irish in assessment	It would be worthwhile for the Department to consider various ways for students to practice their oral skills (e.g. podcasts, short recordings). In relation to the grade indicators used for the marking of the oral examinations, it would be worthwhile for the Department to review these – particularly at a Fail/Pass threshold.
4.2.4	Specific language module	We strongly encourage the Department to consider introducing a language module in each academic year.

Chapter 5: Student Experience

Commendations

5.1.1	The undergraduate and postgraduate students hold the departments team in high regard.
5.1.2	Postgraduate students: fully satisfied with the direction they are provided with, their experience of the teaching opportunities, their workspace and the conference allowance (€500) per annum.
5.1.3	They regularly attend the weekly research seminar organised by the Office of Postgraduate Studies.

Suggestions (Submit a short justification for the Recommendation)

	Recommendation	Short Justification
5.2.1	Undergraduate student partnership	Despite the fact that we recognize that the distance between the two campuses causes a complication, we feel it is worthwhile for the Department to consider various ways in which Students of Irish could be brought together from time to time (e.g. during Seachtain na Gaeilge)
5.2.2	Irish Language Events	The students from them currently rely on the Irish Language Officer when they want to organise/complete Irish language events.
5.2.3	Degree students (final year)	It is important to ensure that students are continuously provided with information during the graduation year about the various opportunities they have in relation to the Irish language: e.g. the MA programme, Fulbright, ICUF, etc.
5.2.4	Postgraduate students and the Department's Conference	It is important to invite one of the postgraduates to participate in the Conference Committee in order to gain experience in planning and organising a conference.
5.2.5	Postgraduate students and their research	It is important for the Department to organise a series of Research Seminars (possibly one or two per semester) or a Research Day and to give postgraduate students the opportunity to make a presentation on their research, and encourage them to attend research events elsewhere.
5.2.6	Timetable of part-time staff	To assist postgraduate students who manage part-time tuition effectively, could the Department require the College to issue the timetable earlier than it does?

Chapter 6: Research and Community Outreach Activity

Commendations

6.1.1	We commend staff for regularly presenting their research as part of national and international conferences in English and Irish. They are very active in publishing in books, essay collections, conference events, scholarly journals, as well as applying for research grants.
6.1.2	It is clear to the Peer Review Group that the various research events undertaken by staff have the full support of the Dean of Arts and the College's Director of Research.
6.1.3	The staff of the Department recognise the importance of promoting the study of Irish – particularly through the medium of Irish.
6.1.4	We strongly commend the Annual Conference which is organised within the Department.

Recommendations

	Recommendation	Short Justification
6.2.1	Improve the profile of staff on the Department's website	We understand that there will soon be new software in place in the College which will allow staff to create a more prominent research profile.
6.2.2	Staff research achievements: need to be made public	The Department should more effectively publicise the research achievements of staff and make use of resources such as MIRIS & ORCID.
6.2.3	Information on the College's internal structures	It would be a significant boost to the Department's operations if staff became aware of the support structures in place in relation to applying for large grants (e.g. IRC and ERC) and organise a conference internally.
6.2.4	The Library	Staff in the Department should ensure that research works are purchased in the library and make full use of their approved budget. One member of staff may be nominated to take care of that business.

Appendix 1: Peer Review Group

Professor Ciarán Mac Murchaidh (Chairman)	Professor of Irish Fiontar & Scoil na Gaeilge Dublin City University
Dr. Síle Ní Mhurchú	Head of Department, Department of Modern Irish University College Cork
Professor Brian Ó Conchubhair	Associate Professor of Irish University of Notre Dame
Dr. Moira Sweeney	Course Leader, Higher Diploma in Television and Media Production Portalis Film Supervisor South East Technological University

Appendix 2: Stakeholder Meetings

Staff of the Irish Department

Head of the Department of Irish

Staff of the Irish Department in Thurles

Staff of the Irish Department in Limerick

Other MIG Staff

Head of School of Education in Thurles

Dean of Arts

Director of Research

Head of Department, Language & Literacy Education, Faculty of Education

Administrator of the Irish Department

College Librarian

Head of Department of Media & Communications Studies

Students of the Irish Department

Students in Thurles

Undergraduate Students in Limerick

Postgraduate Students in Limerick