TUS Policy on Quality Assurance and Enhancement 2026 – 2028

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Contents

1.0 Introduction

The Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (hereafter referred to as TUS or the University) is a regionally focused higher education institution with a national and international outlook. The TUS overarching Value Statement states that "*we operate in an agile manner where integrity and excellence underpin all we do. We are honest, fair and ethical in our focus on doing the right thing through our words and actions.*"[1] The value statement is underpinned by our core values of *Inclusive*, *Supportive, Ambitious, Innovative, Sustainable,* and *Collaborative*.[1] Accordingly, TUS empowers its diverse student body by providing a quality higher education experience, enabling economic, social and cultural development. Students are at the heart of a collaborative learning community which fosters diversity, inclusion, social integration and collaboration.

The approach of TUS to Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE) supports our core purpose, in providing '*leading student-centred higher education that is research-informed, regionally-relevant and accessible to all*'.[1] Quality assurance establishes the foundation that ensures the applicable quality standards are met, while quality enhancement is integral to ensuring that the imperative to meet those standards is continuously reflected upon and improved. In this context, the UNESCO definition for quality assurance in Higher Education cited in the QQI Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines is instructive, namely that of *"an ongoing, continuing process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining, and improving) the quality of an education system, institution or program"* [2].

The TUS approach to Quality Assurance is in line with the *Standards and Guidelines for the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015)*[3] and with national guidelines and criteria for QA procedures, as overseen by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) as the authority. It provides a vital framework that supports our role as an independent Designated Awarding Body and in assuring the quality of our awards and graduates. It also informs our broader engagements with the community we serve, regionally, nationally and internationally and in our partnerships with employers, industry and enterprise.

This *TUS Policy for Quality Assurance and Enhancement* sets out the associated statutory and regulatory context, outlines the overarching principles for QAE adopted by TUS and describes the cross-organisational approach to the implementation of QAE in TUS, in alignment with the National Quality Framework.

2.0 Quality Policy Statement

TUS recognises that robust quality assurance and enhancement plays a vital role in delivering on our aspiration to be a contemporary and engaged university distinguished by outstanding learner experience, international focus and impactful and applied research. The diversity and complexity of the range of University activities and of the contemporary student body in higher education requires TUS to continuously improve and enhance service delivery, in line with best practice nationally and internationally. TUS operates on the overarching principle that Quality Assurance and Enhancement is 'everybody's business' in which the University community works in a collaborative and collegiate manner that fosters a quality culture. TUS recognises that students are key stakeholders in the organisation and, in this quality culture, the importance of the whole student experience and the student voice is prioritised to provide a student-centered, career-focused education, within a professional and supportive environment.

3.0 The Statutory and Regulatory Context

The statutory body with oversight responsibility for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Ireland is *Quality and Qualifications Ireland* (QQI). QQI has noted that the term 'quality assurance' is used to describe the processes that seek to ensure that the learning environment reaches an acceptable threshold of quality. QQI has established the *National Quality Assurance Framework*[4] which identifies the dimensions of the Quality Assurance of Higher Education. The activities identified in the Framework align with two key categories referred to as Internal and External Quality Assurance.

- Internal Quality Assurance refers collectively to the policies, procedures and administrative systems developed by an Institution that enable management control and public assurance of the standards of education, training, research programmes, awards and related services offered.

- External Quality Assurance is concerned with the reporting, engagement, collaboration, and dialogue that takes place with external bodies such as QQI (Annual Quality Review (AQR), Annual Dialogue and Cyclical Review) and the HEA (Ongoing Reporting, Systems Performance Frameworks and Performance Agreement).

TUS complies with statutory and regulatory requirements relating to both internal and external quality assurance and quality enhancement. As an autonomous independent Designated Awarding Body (DAB), TUS operates under the *Technological Universities Act 2018*[5], the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act*

2012[6] and the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Amendment Act 2019*[7].

The quality assurance and enhancement system of TUS is in line with the standards and guidelines for the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015)[3] and with national guidelines and criteria for QA procedures, including the *QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*[8], *Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies*[9], as well as a range of *QQI Topic Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines.*[10] It is the policy of TUS to benchmark its procedures against relevant statutory obligations, the ESG and QQI policies and quality assurance guidelines.

The following statutory and regulatory context is noted:
a) Section 28 (1) of the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act (2012)* puts an obligation on Providers that they "*shall establish procedures in writing for QA for the purposes of establishing ascertaining, maintaining and improving the quality of education, training, research and related services the provider provides*"[6]. It also obliges relevant providers to have regard to the guidelines issued by the QQI in establishing procedures under subsection 1 (as referenced above).

b) the ESG stipulates that *Institutions should have a policy for Quality Assurance that forms a part of strategic management*. Such a policy supports Faculties/Schools/Department and other organisational units (ESG Section 1, Standard 1.1)[3]

c) the *QQI Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)*[2] obliges Providers to have due regard to the *European Standard and Guidelines (2015)*[3].

d) QQI maintains the *National Framework of Qualifications* (NFQ)[4] and it is the policy of TUS that the University's Academic Qualifications adhere to the National Framework.

e) TUS will periodically review its Compliance with Statutory obligations, the ESG and Guidelines issued by QQI.

As part of its commitment as a DAB, TUS signed a "*Joint-Sectoral Protocol between DAB's and QQI for the Inclusion of Qualifications within the National Framework of Qualifications*[11] in April 2022. In signing this protocol, TUS has reaffirmed its commitment to its statutory obligations and aligning with European and National Quality Assurance Guideline (QAG) in the development and implementation of its QAE framework in the context of its role and responsibilities as a DAB.

In accordance with Section 16 of the *Technological Universities Act 2018*[5], TUS has established an Academic Council. The Academic Council of TUS has a broad range of functions, as specified in Section 17 of the Act, and controls its academic affairs including the curriculum and education provided. The functions of Academic Council include, inter alia, designing and developing programmes, supporting the implementation of programmes, making recommendations on research, making recommendations on admission and assessment of students and making recommendations to Governing Body regarding the form and content of regulations.

Furthermore, as outlined in Section 10 (1) (a) of the *Technological Universities Act, 2018*, TUS, in performing its functions, "*shall have the right and responsibility to preserve and promote the traditional principles of academic freedom in the conduct of its internal and external affairs.*" [4]

4.0 Quality Assurance and Enhancement Principles adopted by TUS

TUS is cognisant that the twin purposes of accountability and continuous improvement are at the core of all quality assurance activities, and that taken together, these are fundamental in creating trust and public confidence in the University's performance. As a designated autonomous awarding body, TUS operates a consolidated quality framework that is built on a set of overarching guiding principles. TUS draws on eight guiding quality assurance and enhancement principles established in its *Technological Higher Education Quality Framework* (THEQF)[12] . TUS has adopted and adapted the Principles for its Internal QAE and these are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 TUS Principles of QAE (adapted from THEQF) [12]

1. Academic Excellence and Student-Centred Values

TUS is characterised by an ethos of academic excellence and prioritising the whole-student experience both within and beyond the formal curriculum to develop the whole person. Recognising, valuing, and supporting the diversity of the learner population and the diversity of learner needs informs all activities of TUS. Prioritising the student perspective and keeping the holistic development of learners and researchers to the fore is a central objective.

2. Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom

TUS acknowledges the ownership of responsibility for quality and standards that accompany autonomy, academic freedom, and freedom of enquiry. TUS takes account of the need to be open and transparent to stakeholders about quality policies, regulations, and procedures. The principle recognises the importance of balancing autonomy and assuring public confidence while demonstrating accountability.

3. Fostering a Quality Culture

A quality culture is predicated on the principle of best practice being fostered as the standard practice of the University. TUS recognises the critical and shared role of staff and students working in a positive collegiate environment in contributing to and sustaining a quality culture. The TUS quality policies, regulations, and procedures to be used effectively and support the achievement of the mission, values, and strategic priorities of the University.

4. Informed Practice and Stakeholder Engagement

The sustainable development of the University depends upon the depth, relevance and impact of dialogue and engagements with all internal and external stakeholders. Therefore, TUS engages in responsive dialogue with all relevant partners including students, staff, industry, enterprise, educational and professional bodies, the community, and regional, national and international partners to address their needs and requirements relevant to the respective spheres of activity of TUS.

5. Proportional Implementation

TUS implements a QAE System that is dynamic, flexible, and responsive. The QAE System is implemented in a coherent manner, fit for purpose and proportionate to context and contributes effectively to excellence and the maintenance of high standards. The outputs from quality assurance processes including reviews, reports and evaluations are considered and addressed through formal response reporting with consequential quality improvement plans implemented in a timely manner.

6. Comprehensive, Transparent and Publicly Accountable Procedures

TUS as a public body provides information on: (1) the strategic basis for its activities; (2) its governance, management and operational activities (3) the quality assurance processes, procedures and outputs that underpin its programmes of education and research; and, (4) the awarding of its qualifications. TUS actively seeks to publicise its quality system, evidenced by a commitment to a high standard of transparency, academic integrity, and accountability.

7. Evidence-Based Decision Making

TUS recognises that evidence-based decision making contributes to the achievement of its vision, mission and strategic objectives. This includes benchmarking against national and international standards and reporting against national performance criteria. The overarching quality framework is supported by continuous review of: (1) the quality of inputs (academic leadership, resources, funds, facilities); (2) the quality of processes (teaching and learning, research, and enterprise engagement); and (3) the quality of outputs (academic programmes, graduates, research, innovations; and industry and enterprise engagements.

8. Consistency with Policy and International Effective Practice

TUS takes account of its Statutory obligations and act in accordance with the National and European statutory quality assurance guidelines. TUS periodically seeks independent critique of the effectiveness of its QAE System against national and international benchmarks providing evidence, assurance and accountability to the wider public of its commitment to excellence, quality, transparency and integrity.

5.0 Cross-Organisational Approach

TUS takes a multi-layered approach to the governance of quality management, with fora such as *Governing Body, Academic Council* and their associated *Sub-committees* and *Working Groups*, in addition to the University Management structures. These fora and committees play a lead role in reviewing and designing University-wide strategies and processes to maintain and continuously improve academic quality.

The approach of TUS to the development and implementation of Quality Assurance and Enhancement systems and processes is effective, active, accountable and robust, and meets the Statutory obligations as outlined in Section 3. *The Core Statutory Guidelines*[8] issued by QQI in 2016, stipulate that the Quality Assurance System is embedded and maintained on a cross-organisational basis, including all levels of management, administration, teaching staff and learners. To achieve compliance and have a fit for purpose quality assurance system the overarching components include:

1) developing and implementing a comprehensive suite of University-wide policies and procedures;

2) establishing and conducting a broad range of internal reviews; and,

3) participating in annual monitoring and reporting to QQI (through AQR and Dialogue Meeting), in addition to participating in periodic reviews in the form of Cyclical Review[13].
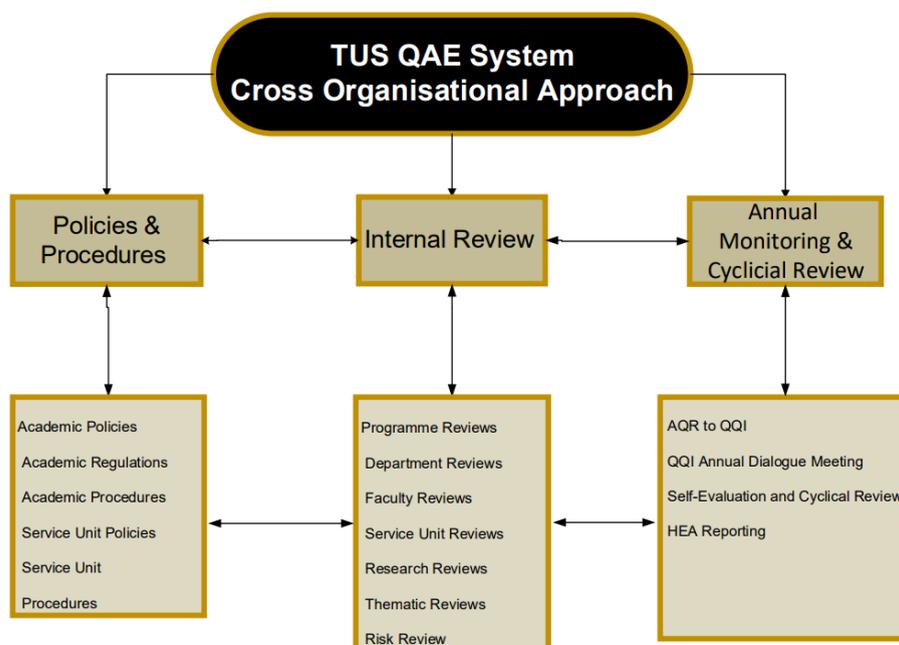

Figure 2. Overview of the Cross-Organisational Approach to QAE

5.1 Policies and Procedures

TUS is an independent autonomous designated awarding body with powers to make awards from Level 6 to Level 10 of the National Framework of Qualifications. The University's Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures provide a systematic approach to promote and enhance quality. The quality assurance processes established set out clear lines of authority showing where responsibility for quality lies. Senior management within the university are responsible for developing and maintaining a quality culture.

TUS's Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures are implemented on all of its campuses and learning centers. These policies and procedures govern the design, delivery and review of its academic programmes on the NFQ framework from Level 6 to Level 10, whilst also assuring quality across its Craft Apprenticeships, and Adult, Life-Long Learning and Flexible Education Programmes. TUS Policies for Collaborative and Linked Provision ensure that learners enrolled on collaborative or transnational programmes (whether at home or overseas), which lead to a TUS Award receive an equivalent learning experience to that of learners studying at TUS.

a) In accordance with the *Technological Universities Act 2018*,[5] the Governing Body and Academic Council and their Sub-Committees oversee the monitoring and review of the academic Quality Assurance Procedures set out in this Policy and in the wider TUS Quality Assurance Handbook. All committees with an input to quality assurance have clearly defined membership and terms of reference. Academic Council and its Sub-committees provide the mechanisms for the management, development and monitoring of academic policy.[14]

b) The Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures of TUS form the basis of a coherent framework for enhancing the quality of education and training and services provided by TUS. To enhance accessibility, the constituent documents have been collated and restructured into a series of clearly themed Volumes, enabling straightforward navigation and ease of reference and published in *the Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook*.[15]

The Handbook contains the Universities strategies including the *University Strategic Plan*,[1] *Putting Learning First, TUS Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy*[16], *TUS Research, Development and Innovation Strategy*,[17] *Transitions & Student Success Strategy*,[18] and the *Apprenticeship Strategic Implementation Plan*.[19] These provide a coherent foundation that guides university priorities, decision-making, and the continuous enhancement of the student experience. TUS academic regulations, policies and procedures form integral elements of the Academic QAE Handbook.[15] Collectively they provide the framework that governs

academic standards, programme development, delivery, assessment practices, and student progression. They ensure consistency, transparency, and fairness in all academic processes, supporting both staff and students in maintaining the high standards expected within the University.

c) New programme validation processes operated by TUS ensure that academic programmes are robustly and successfully validated, thereby achieving adherence respectively to ESG (2025), Standard 1.2, 'Design and Approval of Programme's, and to QQI statutory quality assurance guidelines. Validation requires evidence that the minimum intended programme learning outcomes are consistent with the applicable awards standards and the relevant NFQ award-type descriptor(s) in terms of knowledge, skill and competence. The involvement of key stakeholders, including external specialists and students is a core element and is supported by comprehensive primary and secondary research.

d) TUS operates an examination and assessment system which is fair, consistent and effective in measuring the extent to which learners achieve stated learning outcomes. The assessment procedures are consistent with the *QQI Assessment and Standards (Revised 2022))*[20]*.* TUS places significant emphasis on Academic Integrity and is represented on the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) [21] established by QQI. The sharing and dissemination of information relating to the current issues, initiatives and best practice in relation to academic integrity is an important activity for TUS, particularly given the rapidly evolving landscape of higher education, including the impact, opportunities and challenges of Generative Artificial Intelligence.

e) External Examiners act as independent and impartial advisors providing the University with informed commentary on the standards set and the student achievement in relation to those standards. They play a crucial role in assuring the quality and integrity of assessment processes, offering expert external perspectives on the curriculum, assessment methodologies, marking consistency, and the comparability of awards with those of other higher education institutions. Through their oversight and reporting, External Examiners contribute significantly to continuous improvement, ensuring that academic standards are maintained and that students are treated fairly and equitably across all programmes

f) TUS is committed to developing its research portfolio and profile. TUS facilitates and encourages involvement by its staff in research, consultancy and development work. TUS has developed a comprehensive suite of policies and procedures designed to uphold the highest standards of research practice and integrity. These frameworks collectively provide clear guidance on postgraduate research, doctoral pathways, ethics, authorship, and progression, ensuring consistency, transparency,

and accountability across all research activities. TUS research regulations are in accordance with the *QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Providers of Research Degree Programmes*[22], *Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes*[23], *HEA National Framework for Doctoral Education 2015*[24]. By aligning university regulations with statutory requirements and national and international best practice, TUS fosters a supportive environment for researchers, safeguarding research quality, and strengthening trust with industry, academic partners, and society.

g) TUS is committed to Internationalisation and to is actively embedding global perspectives in all of its activities. This includes the development of an internationalised curriculum, further growing international research, widening our partnership collaborations and extending our transnational education network as we grow mobility for both students and staff. TUS has attained the international education mark known as the TrustEd Ireland Quality Mark, which serves as a nationally and internationally recognised assurance of quality and credibility within Ireland's national qualification and regulatory framework.

h) Membership of the RUN-EU, European university alliance, enables like-minded, regionally focused HEI's committed to societal transformation in their regions, to collaborate in the context of both new and emerging regional and global challenges. RUN-EU focuses on the delivery of collaborative, future and advanced skills-based teaching, learning, research and engagement activities across the network. TUS is involved in the development of a range Micro-credentials and Joint Programmes with RUN EU partners. The *European Approach for the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes*[25] is a central reference point for the TUS Approach to the Quality assurance of its joint programmes.

i) The TUS Value of *Inclusive* states that *"we embrace diversity as a key strength where everyone is included and has an equal opportunity to progress and achieve".* In line with this value, TUS is committed to promoting equitable access to and successful participation in higher education for all members of society and supports a wide variety of access routes. TUS is also committed to the principles of Universal Design for Learning to facilitate the needs of diverse student cohorts and embed Universal Design in quality assurance, teaching, learning and assessment, in accordance with the *Altitude Charter*,[26] adopted by TUS in 2025.

j) The TUS value of Sustainable states that *"we are thought leaders and adopt a whole of institution approach to the challenges of sustainable development".* TUS places a particular focus on deepening the understanding and sharing of expertise and knowledge across the organisation in relation to sustainable development, and the *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's)*[27] in particular. TUS seeks

to creates multiple opportunities to support staff and students to integrate various aspects of SDGs into their programmes and learning across the spectrum of education provision in TUS. Supporting students to become global citizens and to develop transversal and discipline-specific skills is a core ambition and the opportunities to integrate learning in relation to SDGs is a priority for TUS.

k) TUS recognises the importance of the Student Voice and recognises that Students, as key stakeholders in the organisation, require a range of mechanisms to contribute to Quality Assurance and Enhancement and provide feedback to TUS that contributes to enhancing the quality of the learning experience. Students are members of the key decision-making fora of the University, including with representation on Governing Body, Academic Council, Subcommittees of Academic Council and Programme Boards, *inter alia*. Students are also constituent members of New Programme Validation Panels and Programmatic Review Panels. TUS is committed to the National Student Survey (Student Survey.ie) and the *National Programme for Student Engagement (NStEPS)*[28] and actively works to facilitate student participation and engagement.

l) The *Putting Learning First, TUS Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy*[16] and its constituent *TUS Graduate Attributes Framework*, define the TUS Educational Philosophy: *"TUS is a dynamic learning community that co-creates an inclusive learning experience through leadership in teaching, active learning, research, scholarship, industry and civic collaboration"*.[16] TUS supports innovative pedagogy and teaching learning and assessment through a range of measures, including, recognising and promoting best practice. It promotes pedagogies of engagement through active & applied learning. Students become vigorously engaged in exploring, assimilating, and constructing knowledge with active and applied learning a key element where students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. As an outcome, learners are equipped to continuously develop personally and professionally.

m) TUS recognises the centrality of the student experience and of creating an environment that provides an engaging, supportive and enriching educational journey. Promoting learning, engagement, and personal development is vital to contributing to student success. TUS strives to maintain and improve the academic and support services available to students. The necessary resources for effective teaching and learning are continuously reviewed and enhanced to give academic support to students of varied abilities and backgrounds. Students are provided with a range of professional, focused and student-centred support and welfare services. These services are complemented with a comprehensive range of Student Support Policies and Procedures.

n) TUS aims to recruit and retain the high-caliber staff required to ensure the delivery of a quality education service. TUS maintains a comprehensive staff development plan which provides CPD opportunities for staff to further their knowledge and skills. TUS has established the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation and Development (CPID) as a unitary Centre to lead and promote innovation, diversity and excellence in learning, teaching and assessment, including the use of digital technologies, across TUS.

o) TUS is committed to digital literacy and digital transformation as a key enabler of quality enhancement. The digital transformation agenda is recognised as one of the transversal areas of impact that supports the pillars of the HEA Systems Performance Framework. Progressing the digital transformation agenda involves a university-wide approach with a wide range of stakeholders working to build institutional capacity in this domain. A broad range of digital tools are available to support a diverse range of pedagogical practice, including synchronous and asynchronous delivery, classroom engagement, assistive technologies for inclusive practice, collaborative learning and E-portfolios, *inter-alia*, to facilitate the integration of digital literacy skills as part of the student learning experience.

p) TUS aims to generate and collate all necessary data in order to monitor critical quality indicators, such as, entry points, continuous assessment results, examination results, retention and completion rates, student feedback, external examiners reports, programme board reports, external periodic reviews and graduate destination data. Data is monitored by the most appropriate forum, planned interventions are recorded and carried out and the effectiveness of these interventions is evaluated. TUS makes quality data and reports available to stakeholders, as appropriate. The TUS Transitions and Student Succes Strategy[18] is an important underpinning element of this domain of university activity.

q) TUS strives to ensure that its premises, equipment and facilities meet the needs of all stakeholders including Students and Staff. TUS will continue to invest in and develop its learning resources and infrastructure to support high-quality teaching, enhance the learner experience, and ensure that the University remains responsive to evolving educational and technological demands.

r) Fair and transparent mechanisms for processing student complaints and appeals are in place. All decisions of the University affecting students are subject to an Appeals process which includes independent external members.

s) TUS generates, collates and retains all data in compliance with the *General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679*,[29] *Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018*[30], *TUS Data Protection Policy*.[31] and TUS *Data Retention and Records Management Policy*.[32]

5.2 Internal Reviews

TUS's quality assurance policies and procedures are subject to the same rigorous monitoring and review processes as its educational and training programmes. The University is committed to self-study and peer review. These play a pivotal role in monitoring the effectiveness of the quality policy and procedures. The 2012 Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act[4] requires *'periodic evaluation of training, research and related services by the provider'.* As a consequence, TUS operates a programme of Internal Reviews on a cyclical basis. These include reviews of *Programmes of Study*, *Departments, Faculties/Schools*, *Research Reviews*, *Service* and *Thematic Reviews* where appropriate. These peer reviews result in the development and implementation of a range of Quality Improvement Plans (QIP's).

5.2.1 Academic Reviews of Faculties, Departments and Programmes

a) Programme re-validation processes operated by TUS ensure that academic programmes are robustly and successfully re-validated in accordance with ESG1.9 and relevant national statutory and regulatory requirements.

b) Each programme is subject to periodic review, normally on a five to seven yearly cycle as part of a Programmatic Review of a Faculty/School or Department. This provides an opportunity for Programme Boards to fundamentally reappraise programmes and modules and to make modifications where considered appropriate. A critical element of this activity is consultation with relevant stakeholders, including current students, graduates, industry and enterprise and the community sectors as relevant.

c) The involvement of external specialists in the design, monitoring and review of programmes ensures national standards, education sector standards and industry standards of quality within programmes.

d) The involvement of students in the review processes is highly valued by TUS. This includes their contribution to the associated primary and secondary research and their participation as members of external validation panels.

e) As part of ongoing review and continuous improvement programme boards continually monitor the operation and effectiveness of programme structure, content, delivery and teaching and learning methods. TUS regulations allow programme boards to make changes annually to support this improvement through a process of oversight at programme board/department level in addition to Academic Council and its subcommittees.

5.2.2 Review of Support Units and Thematic Reviews

In delivering *Excellence and Quality* to students in accordance with this TUS *value* [1]*,*

the University and its Faculties and Academic Departments are supported by a diverse range of support services providing and supporting core functions across all campuses. Examples of such support units include, inter alia, Student Support Services, Human Resources (HR), Library & Information Services, Computer Services (CSD), Quality, International, and Corporate Services. Research reviews and other thematic reviews may be conducted as appropriate. The effective provision of such services is a key factor in the provision of an overall quality experience and supportive environment for students and the TUS community.

The *TUS Policy on Strategic Review of Technological University Support Units*[32]*,* specifies the process involved. Accordingly, the review includes a range of considerations within the context of the individual Service. These are broadly informed by the management principles specified in the *ISO9001:2015 Quality Management Standard*[33] and the internal review takes due account of these principles. These include: 1. *Customer Focus (TUS Stakeholder Focus);* 2. *Leadership;* 3. *Engagement of People;* 4. *Process Approach;* 5; *Continual Improvement;* 6. *Evidence Based Decision Making; and* 7. *Relationship Management* [33]*.*

An onsite review by a visiting Peer Review Group constitutes a core component of the review process which leads to the production and publication of a Peer Review Group Report. This report comments formatively on the Service and makes any recommendations that support quality enhancement. A post-review phase of the process involves consideration of recommendations and the formulation of a Quality Improvement Plan followed by ongoing implementation review and monitoring.

5.3 Annual Monitoring and Cyclical Review

As outlined in Section 2.0, QQI has statutory responsibility for oversight of Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Ireland. As part of annual monitoring by QQI, TUS as a designated awarding body, prepares and submits an Annual Quality Review (AQR) which details all developments in Quality Assurance and Enhancement in the respective academic years. TUS also engages with QQI in an Annual Dialogue Meeting that complements the AQR process. Annual monitoring leads to Cyclical Review which involves a periodic external quality review of the Technological University. Cyclical Review[11] involves a Technological University wide self-evaluation process leading to the production of an Institutional Self Evaluation Report (ISER). This is followed by a peer review process involving a Main Review Visit by an external panel and the publication of an Institutional Cyclical Review Report. This Report makes recommendations for further enhancement of quality and is followed by the

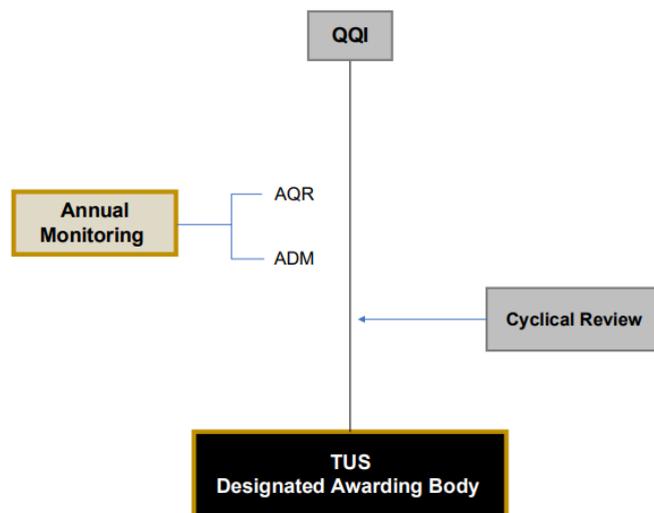development of an Institutional Action Plan and follow-up reporting.

Figure 3. Key Elements of the National Quality Framework for TUS as a Designated Awarding Body

6.0 Fostering a University-wide Quality Culture

TUS is committed to quality assurance and continuous improvement and recognises the vital role it plays in delivering its vision, mission and strategic objectives. As outlined in Section 1.0, TUS has overarching values which states that we operate in an agile manner where integrity and excellence underpin all we do. TUS is committed to the development and implementation of this value across all its activities. This commitment, together with the comprehensive Quality Principles Framework and the robust Cross-Organisational Approach, outlined in Sections 4.0 and 5.0 of this policy, respectively (consistent with statutory obligations) provides the environment for this quality culture to be an integral feature of the activities of the TUS to the benefit of all its stakeholders.

QQI note, as an overarching principle, the importance of the creation of 'the quality culture' and states that such a quality culture *"is the outcome of individual staff and collective organisational commitment to continuous improvement"*[2]. The fostering of a quality culture is an implicit aspect of the cross-organisational approach. This embeds quality assurance and enhancement as an integral component of professional practice in TUS, promoting a culture of best practice as standard practice.

The QQI CINNTE Report, published in October 2024 as part of External Quality Assurance, commended TUS for *"the rapid progress made since TU designation in developing and embedding a quality culture at all levels, including quality assurance structures and processes".*[34] *This recognition of a quality culture at TUS indicates the importance and effectiveness of the multi-layered, cross-organisational approach outlined in this Policy.*

7.0 References

1) TUS Strategic Plan

2) QQI: Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines, April 2016.

3) European Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015)

4) National Framework of Qualifications

5) Technological Universities Act 2018

6) Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012)

7) Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Amendment Act 2019

8) QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)

9) Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies

10) QQI Topic Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines

11) Joint-Sectoral Protocol between DAB's and QQI for the Inclusion of Qualifications within the National Framework of Qualifications

12) Technological Higher Education Quality Framework (THEA, 2017)

13) QQI: The CINNTE Review Cycle for Higher Education, September 2017

14) TUS Academic Council Documentation

15) Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook

16) Putting Learning First, TUS Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

17) TUS Research, Development and Innovation Strategy

18) Transitions & Student Success Strategy

19) Apprenticeship Strategic Implementation Plan

20) QQI Assessment and Standards (Revised 2022)

21) National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN)

22) QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Providers of Research Degree Programmes

23) QQI Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes

24) HEA National Framework for Doctoral Education 2015

25) European Approach for the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes

26) Altitude Charter

27) https://sdgs.un.org/goals

28) https://studentengagement.ie/(NStEP)

29) General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679

30) Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018

31) TUS Data Protection Policy

32) TUS Data Retention and Records Management Policy

33) TUS Policy on Strategic Review of Technological University Support Units

34) ISO 9001:2015

35) QQI TUS CINNTE Report