

# Policy and Procedures for updating NUI on Graduate Name Changes in the NUI Constituent Universities and Recognised Colleges

November 2020



**Ollscoil na hÉireann**  
National University of Ireland

the 1990s, the number of people with a mental health problem has increased in the UK. The prevalence of mental health problems has risen from 10% in 1986 to 15% in 1999 (Mental Health Act 2003). The prevalence of mental health problems has also increased in the USA, with 18% of the population having a mental health problem in 1999 (Mental Health Act 2003).

There is a growing awareness of the need to improve the lives of people with mental health problems. The UK government has set a target of reducing the number of people with a mental health problem by 20% by 2010 (Mental Health Act 2003). The USA government has set a target of reducing the number of people with a mental health problem by 10% by 2010 (Mental Health Act 2003).

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# 1. Background

The National University of Ireland (NUI) has a statutory duty to maintain, in perpetuity, a register of graduates with NUI qualifications. While the statutory name of this Register is the Convocation Register, it is referred to here as the NUI Graduate Register. NUI also has a constitutional duty to maintain a Seanad Éireann Electoral Register, which is a register of all those graduates holding NUI degrees who have “opted in” to claim their constitutional right to vote in the NUI constituency of Seanad Éireann.

NUI’s goal is to maintain accurate registers and as part of this, we work to minimise multiple records for individual graduates. Our objective is to hold a single, unique record for each graduate, irrespective of the number of qualifications held by that individual from across one or more than one NUI institution. In this context, good record maintenance requires clear rules about updating changes to graduate data, such as changes to graduates’ legal names.

In line with the provisions of the Irish Gender Recognition Act (2015), and also recognising their statutory responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty<sup>1</sup>, NUI’s member institutions<sup>2</sup> have introduced policies and procedures to support students who may have changed, or are in the process of transitioning gender. NUI wishes to support its member institutions in their efforts in this area while taking care to ensure the legality of all qualification documents that are issued to graduates, and to maintain accurate registers.

# 2. Purpose

This document sets out NUI policy and procedures to be followed in the specific circumstances where a current student in an NUI institution changes name (first name(s) or surname(s)), and that student is already a graduate of the same or another NUI institution, having been conferred with or awarded a qualification under the original name.

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1 “The Duty” is set out in Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014.

2 An updated list of NUI member institutions is available at: [http://www.nui.ie/college/admissions.asp#const\\_Unis](http://www.nui.ie/college/admissions.asp#const_Unis)

This graduate is already included in the NUI Graduate Register by virtue of the previous qualification, and may also have opted in to become part of the Seanad Éireann Electoral Register under the original name. In this context, a formal and legal change of first name and/or surname is a significant change which requires NUI to review and reconcile changes in the graduate's record and to ensure that the Seanad Éireann electoral register is correct.

### 3. NUI Policy

Regardless of the scenario, as outlined in section 4 below, NUI's policy is to produce degree, diploma or certificate parchments in the student's legal name.<sup>3</sup> NUI policy is to assume that upon receipt of final graduate data files for Conferring purposes, relevant legal documentation has been produced and verified locally in the member institutions. See the Worked Examples provided in Appendix 1 for details.

## 4. Relevant Name Change Scenarios in the NUI Constituent Universities and Recognised Colleges

Student Record/equivalent offices in the NUI constituent universities and recognised colleges can make changes to a *current student's* record in the context of any of the scenarios outlined below:

- i) Change of surname following marriage;
- ii) Change of first name or surname for any other reason than marriage, except for reasons of Gender transitioning/change;
- iii) Change of first name or surname under Gender Expression and Identity policies in place in the university or college.

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<sup>3</sup> This is in line with the Gender Recognition Act, 2015.

In terms of iii) Gender Expression and Identity cases, some university or college policies permit changes to the student record without relevant legal documentation having been produced by the student at the time of application to the Student Record/equivalent office. This is a matter of individual university or college policy and NUI understands that the student formally declares consent to the change of record following discussion with relevant university or college officers, in line with published policy and procedures.

## 5. Procedures for updating NUI with Graduate name changes

### 5.1 Direct applications from graduates to NUI

NUI operates a service whereby a graduate can apply directly to NUI to amend personal details on the permanent NUI Graduate Register and may also request a re-issued parchment or certificate in a changed name. A valid form of proof of identity is required, and, where a new parchment is issued, a fee is charged for this additional service. Regulations and the required "Update personal details/re-issue parchment" form are available on the Document Services section of the NUI website<sup>4</sup>.

Following a successful application, NUI will confirm the name change to the graduate and the relevant Student Record/equivalent office.

### 5.2 Annual report to NUI from the Constituent Universities and Recognised Colleges

NUI should be notified in circumstances where the university or college has amended a current student's name on their record, and that name change is retrospectively applied to previous NUI qualifications belonging to that student. NUI does not need to be notified about legal name changes for current students who are studying towards their first qualification since NUI will always assume that Conferings data files contain legally correct data.

Student Record/equivalent offices should submit an annual report in March/April to [records@nui.ie](mailto:records@nui.ie). It has been agreed that March/April is the optimal time to provide this report to NUI Records as it coincides with the timing of the annual student registration returns to the Higher Education Authority (HEA), when annual student registrations are relatively stable.

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4 [www.nui.ie](http://www.nui.ie)

### 5.3 What is the scope of the annual report to NUI?

This report should contain details of all current registered students who:

- i) are also existing graduates of that university or college, and;
- ii) who have requested and been granted a formal change of name in line with local policy and procedures in that university or college and;
- iii) where this change is now reflected in the student's entire (past and present) record.

Where the information is available, the report should also contain details of any students who have graduated from another NUI institution under a different name.

This report should not contain details of students who have only changed their preferred name while at university or college as this does not constitute a formal change to the student record.

This report can be sent to NUI in MS Excel format, password-protected.

The data fields to be included are:

- ▶ First name(s) under which student was first registered for study on current academic programme
- ▶ Surname(s) under which student was first registered for study on current academic programme
- ▶ Student CAO number
- ▶ Date of Birth
- ▶ Changed first and middle name(s), where relevant
- ▶ Changed surname(s), where relevant
- ▶ Previous qualification(s) conferred or awarded by that institution (Award title and subjects), or another NUI member institution, where this information is available in the student record
- ▶ Year of conferring/awarding of previous qualification(s).

The NUI contact email for this report is: *records@nui.ie*. NUI will issue an acknowledgement email.

#### 5.4 What will NUI do next?

When the student(s) identified in the annual report on name changes graduate(s), NUI Conferings Unit will receive the data file in the normal fashion. As per NUI policy, NUI will assume that the data is legally correct and will proceed to produce parchments or certificates for the graduates. Subsequently, the NUI Graduate Register will be updated with the new additions.

At this point, NUI will cross-check the information contained in the annual report.

- ▶ Where a report from an institution flags that a student's record was changed prior to graduation, with legal documentation in place, NUI will be in a position to update the (new) graduate's unique record to ensure that all previous NUI qualifications are reconciled against the new legal name(s).
- ▶ Where the report flags that a student's record was changed prior to graduation, without legal documentation being in place at that point, NUI will note this information as a comment on the graduate's qualification record(s).

#### 5.5 Graduate requests for Parchments or Certificates in a different name

Student Records offices/equivalents are asked to direct any student who wishes to have their original parchment or certificate re-issued under their new legal name to NUI, where this service will be provided for a fee (email: [certs@nui.ie](mailto:certs@nui.ie)).

## Appendix I: Worked Examples of Name Changes and Record Changes under Gender Expression and Identity policies.

### **Worked Example 1: Legal documentation in place at the time of the student's request.**

The NUI Graduate Register contains a record stating that Patrick Smyth holds a BA (Hons) from UCC. This graduate is now registered to complete an MA in UCC. Under the terms of the UCC Gender Identity and Expression Policy, the graduate has supplied a Gender Recognition Certificate to UCC Registry and changed her recorded name with UCC to Patricia Smyth.

Patricia has requested that her entire student record at UCC be amended, changing to Patricia throughout, including her original BA (Hons) degree. UCC Registry directs Patricia to contact NUI directly with this request, highlighting the "Changing a Degree Parchment" section on the NUI website: <http://www.nui.ie/services/document-services.asp>. NUI will update the NUI Graduate Register accordingly.

UCC will include Patricia's details in its annual Name Change Report to NUI in March, and UCC will confer Patricia with her MA in due course.

### **Worked Example 2: No legal documentation in place at the time of the student's request.**

The NUI Graduate Register contains a record stating that Sarah Donovan holds a BSc (Hons) from NUI Galway. This graduate is now registered to complete an MSc in NUI Galway.

Under the terms of the NUI Galway Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy, the graduate wants their chosen name David to be used both socially by the university **and** reflected in their past and present student record. The graduate is transitioning gender and does not yet have official or legal documentation in place.

NUI Galway's Student Academic Administration refers the student to the Office of the VP Equality and Diversity. Following discussion with the student, the VP's office approves the changing of the details on the student record system. The official student record, past and present, is duly updated.

Under the terms of NUI's Policy on graduate name changes, NUI Galway will include David's details in its annual Name Change Report to NUI in March/April, and will follow up with the student to verify legal documentation is in place before graduation and conferring. If the legal documentation is not in place before graduation, the NUI Galway file sent to NUI should include the name Sarah Donovan since this remains the only legal name on record. The name used during the NUI Galway Conferring Ceremony is a matter for NUI Galway to decide on.

Once the necessary documentation is in place, the graduate may wish to follow up directly with NUI to amend personal details on the permanent NUI Graduate Register and may also wish to pay for a re-issued parchment in the changed name.





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