



Ollscoil na hÉireann
National University of Ireland



A Review and Evaluation of the NUI Uiversity collaborative model of higher education provision through the MA in Creative Process

September 2018

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Martin Brown and Gerry McNamara

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Foreword

Uversity was an ambitious, imaginative and innovative project which it was my privilege, as Registrar of the National University of Ireland, to be involved with from the earliest development stage right up to the final graduation of the class of 2017.

For the transformation of Uversity from an idea into an institution and for that institution to become a Recognised College of NUI, required considerable commitment, engagement and expertise from the higher education institutions participating in the project, the members of staff contributing to the design of the programme and the small core of people in Uversity managing its delivery. Happily there was a sufficient number of enthusiastic partners for the project to get off the ground.

The foundation was laid in the report of the UCD Governing Body to the NUI Senate. This set out the necessary conditions that would have to be met, in terms of governance, leadership and academic structures, for Uversity to be a credible higher education institution that could be recognised by NUI. The Master of Arts in Creative Process was approved in principle, subject to full review by NUI.

NUI appointed an expert review panel that carried out an intensive review of the programme returning a year later to evaluate progress. Early concerns were to ensure the academic coherence of the programme, given the range of contributing institutions and the large number of modules on offer. Also of concern was the potential isolation of the small group of students scattered across the country. The measures Uversity put in place to address these concerns included the development of the core module, the identification of academic pathways through the programme and the mentor system. Early scepticism of peer reviewers was converted into a conviction that this new model was a worthwhile one, would work and could possibly be imitated elsewhere.

NUI is pleased to publish this Report by DCU of a Review and Evaluation of the Uversity collaborative model of higher education provision. While the decision to discontinue the MA Creative Process in 2017 following three intakes was disappointing, overall for NUI the experience was worthwhile. We learned a lot from it about the challenges of inter-institutional collaboration and how it can be successful. NUI will continue to act as a focus for collaboration in higher education and bring the Uversity experience with us as we engage with new partners in different ventures.

I am pleased to pay tribute to all those who contributed to the academic success of Uversity and to wish its graduates success in their careers. I also wish to acknowledge the work of the DCU team in the Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection (EQI), particularly Dr Bernadette Sweetman and Professor Joe O'Hara, who led the work on this report and to thank them for undertaking this valuable independent review of the project.

Dr Attracta Halpin

Registrar of NUI

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Executive Summary

This report presents the results of case study research into the Uversity collaborative model of higher education provision through the MA in Creative Process.

Uversity is a unique, privately funded Higher Education organisation that established and managed a collaborative MA degree programme in Creative Process for international students for a period of three academic years from 2014-2015 to 2016-17. The vision behind Uversity's establishment was to use Ireland's collective higher education strength to further develop Ireland's international reputation as a centre of excellence in the creative and performing arts.

This evaluation is based on the feedback received from internal and external stakeholders who were drawn from administration, alumni, mentors and University staff from the National University of Ireland Galway, University College Dublin, Dublin City University and the University of Limerick. Data from these groups came from interviews and/or questionnaires during the time period of May to August 2018.

A number of valuable insights emerged from this study. Firstly, inter-institutional collaboration which is rare in the Irish education sector at present, is achievable. In a short timeframe, Uversity managed to produce three cycles of graduates and secure collaborative education provision amongst institutions that ordinarily would not have worked together. The overall consensus was that much learning and development had taken place in the programme in a short space of time, and that the continued delivery of the programme to even more students would no doubt have led to greater insights for the wider Irish educational community.

Collaborative education provision in the arts sector utilised the attractive reputation held by Ireland globally in the education and arts fields. The mutual development for students of both their academic skills and artistic practice, as well as the development of good networking communities within and across disciplines, as facilitated especially by the mentors of the programme, was a notable result of the endeavour.

The practical challenges that can obstruct inter-institutional collaboration and student mobility in Ireland were raised and recommendations emerged.

This study provides an account of the experience of the Uversity model through the MA in Creative Process, summarising the key conclusions to be drawn from the project. These focused on the areas of administration and programme structure, student experience and practical considerations. Consequently, recommendations in these areas were offered for any future replication of such model in the Irish educational context.

Chapter 1

Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

This report was compiled by the research team at EQI (The Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection) at the Institute of Education, Dublin City University. Having successfully secured the tender for the evaluation for the NUI (The National University of Ireland), the review process itself took place from May to September 2018. The aim of the report was to review and evaluate the collaborative education model that Uversity established and to capture lessons learned that may have wider applicability for Irish Higher Education. In particular, EQI were tasked with reviewing and evaluating:

- the unique pedagogical framework within which the collaborative Masters programme was delivered to students including
 - Approaches to teaching and learning and assessment;
 - Administration;
 - Support structures for the Uversity student experience;
- the academic governance and management model adopted by Uversity, and how it facilitated and promoted Higher Education Institution (HEI) collaboration, while ensuring academic quality and student welfare and progression;
- the Uversity strategy for student recruitment, and the experience gained internationally in promoting and marketing the programme;
- the transferability of the Uversity governance and pedagogic model to other contexts, for example, other academic disciplines or other areas of the education sector in Ireland.

The EQI team also sought to make recommendations, where relevant and appropriate, to the Irish higher education sector more broadly, in the context of the current national policy framework for increased collaboration between HEIs.

All research conducted for this report complied with the standard DCU Research Ethics regulations.

This report was submitted to the NUI Senate in October 2018 and remains the intellectual property of the NUI.

1.2 Research Team

EQI is a research centre specialising in the evaluation of educational policies, programmes and personnel. Evaluation involves research to make data informed judgments about organisational and professional performance. Its work encompasses schools, other learning centres and the wider public service. It is primarily concerned with governance and accountability mechanisms including quality assurance processes, school inspection and organisational self-evaluation. EQI researchers also undertake evaluations of educational programmes and projects.

EQI is a multidisciplinary research group with a diverse membership drawn from within DCU, from schools and other educational institutions within Ireland and abroad, and from a range of other organisations. The Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection is a designated Research Centre of Dublin City University, and is the leading national research agency for teacher professional development in the areas of culturally responsive school evaluation, quality assurance and inspection. Established in 2006, EQI aims for excellence in a number of core areas:

- Leading national and international research in school evaluation, theory development and best practice.
- Forging strong and productive links with key national stakeholders in education across both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland including the Professional Development Service for Teachers, the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) and the Inspectorates in both jurisdictions. Through such collaboration, EQI will continue to contribute to and develop vital capacity building interventions in key areas such as self-evaluation, cultural responsiveness and whole school policy development.
- Developing expertise in educational evaluation through contribution to and provision for undergraduate, postgraduate and post-doctoral engagement at a national and international level.
- Providing research and consultancy services for organisations that are interested in examining the quality of programmes or processes.

EQI have both led and worked in a collaborative capacity in a number of high level evaluation studies. For more details, please visit <http://www.dcu.ie/eqi>

1.3 Background to Uversity MA in Creative Process¹

Uversity has been a recognised college of the National University of Ireland (NUI) since 2013. At the centre of the federal university, the NUI provides value-added services to its member institutions and undertakes a range of activities to promote higher education in Ireland generally and specifically, to promote academic distinction and scholarship across its member institutions. Under its 1908 Charter, the NUI is empowered to recognise colleges of higher education and award degrees and other qualifications in those colleges. Recent legislation (Qualifications and Quality Assurance Education and Training Act 2012) further embeds this responsibility: the NUI is a Designated Awarding Body (DAB) with the authority to accredit taught and research programmes leading to NUI qualifications in the Recognised Colleges.

Uversity is a unique, privately funded Higher Education organisation that established and managed a collaborative MA degree programme in Creative Process for a period of three academic years from 2014-2015 to 2016-17. The vision behind Uversity's establishment was to use Ireland's collective higher education strength to further develop Ireland's international reputation as a centre of excellence in the creative and performing arts. The MA degree offering was unique in terms of the volume and range of HEIs involved in providing modules taught by internationally respected scholars in the creative arts. It consisted of one core module conducted at University of Limerick (UL) and elective modules offered by a range of other Universities and Institute of Technology (IoTs). It was also unique in providing a dedicated personal mentoring service to students, both academically and in terms of their own creative practices. The offering was particularly attractive internationally.

The MA in Creative Process was not offered for the 2017-18 academic session. This followed a decision by the principal financial donor in Spring 2017 not to extend funding beyond the contractually agreed timeframe, and a subsequent decision by participating HEIs not to collaboratively fund the continuation of the programme from their own resources. All students have now graduated.

The NUI sought to sponsor a review and evaluation of the Uversity collaborative model. Through this review and evaluation, the NUI wished to ensure that the Uversity experience of developing and supporting collaborative Higher Education be captured and assessed, so that the HE sector in Ireland, and further afield can benefit from the learning gained by all involved over the past four to five years.

¹ Information taken from NUI tender specification March 2018.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This literature review seeks to contextualise the collaborative model of higher education provision that was developed by Uversity through its offering of the MA in Creative Process in contemporary educational research. Few initiatives of a comparable nature have been attempted in the Irish education sector and one of the significant contributions to the scarce literature has been the regular reviews and reports conducted by the NUI during the lifespan of Uversity. A summary of the key points and issues in these reports is included in this chapter.

Examples of inter-institutional and/or transdisciplinary collaboration are explored in this review. These range across international settings and focus on most recent instances where possible. Attention is also given to literature reporting on the impact of the mentoring process in educational settings. While there is overlap across the identified themes, broadly speaking they can be categorised as follows:

- 2.1. International, Inter-institutional and/or transdisciplinary collaboration
- 2.2. Communities of Practice
- 2.3. Mentoring in higher educational settings
- 2.4. Summary of the NUI reviews and reports

2.1 International, Inter-institutional and/or transdisciplinary collaboration

The Uversity model of collaborative higher education provision as offered through the MA in Creative Process brings to light the current drive for increased internationalisation in the sector. The vision in the *International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016-2020* is 'to support Ireland to become internationally recognised for the development of global citizens through our internationalised education system and a market leader in attracting international student talent' (p. 7). To contextualise, this report stated that the financial contribution of international students to HEA-funded Universities, Institutes of Technology (IOTs) and privately-funded HEIs was approximately €217m in 2014/2015. Indeed, in HEA institutions, non-EU students make up 94% of the total international student income (p. 56). The challenges facing Irish higher education providers in the area of internationalisation are made clear. The document identifies student recruitment, future funding of the sector, student accommodation and the mobility for students, academics and staff as opportunities or threats.

At the outset it should be noted that inter-institutional collaboration in Ireland is relatively rare and undertakings in this regard are still in their infancy. One of the more significant initiatives in this area was the launch of the Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance (DRHEA) in 2009. This brought together four universities and four IOTs with the aim of improving professional development and training of their staff as well as supporting the enhancement of programmes across the institutions. Other initiatives include the DCU-Maynooth University-RCSI 3U partnership.

The Uversity model sought to develop new approaches to collaboration at a national level seeking not only to link institutions but also finding new ways to integrate disciplinary areas across the country with a view, ultimately, to attracting international students to Irish HEIs.

It is arguable that the Uversity collaborative model of higher education provision through the MA in Creative Process featured both inter-institutional and transdisciplinary dimensions. While there are limited international comparators it is, however, worth exploring those that do exist. In 2015 the South Dakota State University developed The Harvey Dunn Feminine Images Cross-Disciplinary Artistic and Academic Collaborative Project, a collaborative project that was conducted across faculties in the area of the arts. The goals of this collaborative project included fostering opportunities for students to work with faculty mentors and develop a stronger sense of lifelong education. It aimed to assist collaborating faculty to enhance their research and opportunities for professional development by facilitating creativity and artistic excellence among participants (both faculty members and students). The project was followed

and investigated as a case study by two researchers at the university who sought, using grounded theory, to identify a conceptual model of academic and artistic collaboration and to build upon this research to contribute further to the related concepts of collaborative partnership and new 'communities of practice' for cross-disciplinary collaboration (Dailey, R., Hauschild-Mork, M. 2017). A key issue that emerged from this study was the significance of mentoring to its success. This was of benefit to both the mentor who engaged in reflective praxis, and felt more appreciated by students, and to the student who had more 'hands-on' experience and guidance than would traditionally have been the case. Additionally, faculty members appreciated the opportunity of working beyond their own discipline. A challenge to collaboration that was highlighted in the case study specifically related to those involved in the creative disciplines. This was that collaboration requires additional communication and an openness to the expressions of others that at times can seem to be 'in a different language' (p. 75).

Hughes and Thomas (2017) outline the need for formalisation of collaborative approaches as part of a quality assurance process. Recognising the importance of sustainable collaborative partnerships across universities, their report on the development of a specific department in the Southampton Solent University affirms the benefit of having a department dedicated to collaboration.

In a general sense it can be argued that quality assurance is important in collaborative provision. This was noted by Grove (2013) who reported upon findings of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education following their audit of Loughborough University. The QAA recommended that the university develop a full action plan to strengthen institutional oversight of collaborative provision in order to secure academic standards. The report was largely based on the concerns of external examiners regarding inconsistencies in assessment and clarity of module content.

Inter-institutional collaboration is more evident in the literature in the realm of Health education. Here institutes with specific expertise and medical facilities with educational capacities are identified and used in the context of training placements for students. King et al (2013) emphasise how such a practice can develop interprofessional learning experiences for participants. Similarly, Dorner et al (2011), argue that the relationship between industry or business with education providers is one to be developed and encouraged as, when done efficiently, it can lead to a more innovative and entrepreneurial learning environment, both at initial education phases and lifelong professional development.

2.2 Communities of practice

The term 'community of practice' was first proposed by cognitive anthropologist Jean Lave and educational theorist Etienne Wenger.

'Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly' (Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015).

According to these researchers, three characteristics are crucial in a community of practice i.e. i) the domain; which has an identity by a shared domain of interest, ii) the community; they build relationships where members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, share information and learn from each other and iii) the practice; where they develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems – in short a shared practice. In education, communities of practice are increasingly used for professional development, but they also offer a fresh perspective on learning and education more generally (Wenger, 2012). A case study (Huijser et al 2016) examined the implementation of the Lave and Wenger 1998 model of 'communities of practice' in a joint venture between Xi'an Jiaotong University in China and the University of Liverpool (XJTLU) in the UK. The provision of modules across degrees in the English language as well as through Chinese was the central locus of the collaboration. The study analysed how the communities of practice model impacted upon perceived status of educational developers in both institutes and their abilities to drive teaching and learning strategies. The XJTLU does not use the term 'faculties', but instead uses the term 'Cluster' to designate discipline-based departments. A key finding of the study was the need for a 'Cluster Lead' appointed by the Cluster Head.

In other words, for successful implementation of the model, this study highlighted the significance of designated points of contact with clear portfolios of responsibility and lines of command. The amount of support needed for this person and the importance of maintaining a community approach (as opposed to 'top-down initiative') proved to be important. The lack of reward and recognition for investing effort and time was highlighted as a significant challenge to the implementation of the collaboration-focussed 'communities of practice' model.

2.3 Mentoring in higher educational settings

Bistany and Read (2006) reported on an action research project entitled *The Mentoring Development Project: An Action Research Project towards a Best Practice Model of Arts Mentoring in an All-Ireland Context*. The project investigated a pilot study which saw mid-career artists across five art forms (dance, theatre, music, literature and visual arts) take part in a pilot mentoring programme. Given the acknowledged dearth of research on arts mentoring at the time, the aim of the project was to identify elements of best practice. Key findings included the importance for a clear structure and clarity of the role of the mentors, both for their benefit and for the mentee. Having a good match, with aligned interests, was also seen as being significant. This issue has been noted in the general literature on mentoring for some time. Gladwell et al (1995) referred to the importance of matching mentors and protégés in enhancing the academic experience:

'When matching mentors and protégés, research suggests that people with similar attitudes who have ready access to each other tend to make the best match (Huling-Austin et al, 1985; Tanner & Ebers, 1985). Even though personality characteristics are important in matching mentors and protégés, mentor behaviours appear to be even more significant... What the mentor does for and with the protégé' determines how receptive the protégé is to the mentor's help' (Alleman, 1982, p. 62)

Similarly, the selection process of mentors is deemed significant as discussed by Redmond (1990) in a report on the Hayward Program in California State University:

'Hayward program, student and mentors are required to complete formal applications which result in personal and professional profiles which are used in the match process. Several variables have been found to be important when matching, and ultimately the success of mentoring relationships. These variables include gender, major area of interest, personality traits, and sometimes race or ethnicity (Erkut & Mokrus, 1985; Gibert, 1985; Knox, 1998). Results from the Hayward experience indicate that giving students and faculty the opportunity to express their preferences increases the probability of success' (p. 196).

2.4 Summary of NUI Reviews and Reports

In the course of the Uversity initiative, the NUI conducted three reviews at programme level. These reviews were:

- NUI Programme Review Report (October 2014)
- Uversity's Response and Compliance with the Expert Panel Report 2014/2015 (December 2014)
- Follow up report of NUI Programme Review Panel (October 2015)

An overview of these reports is presented in tabular form in the appendices (see Appendix III). Some of the key points emerging from the reviews are summarised below:

Programme Structure and Roles

There was a recognition of the importance of the need for a clear organisational structure. As part of this the identification of key roles such as Director of Mentoring, Disciplinary Mentors, and Programme Manager was highlighted. Uversity responded to this by both clarifying the overall structure and identifying qualified and committed individuals to take on those roles.

Inter-institutional Collaboration

There was a strong desire to see Uversity develop and maintain solid inter-institutional linkages. It was recognised that these were at the heart of the model and that any development of the programme offerings would need a robust set of linkages to other HEIs as well as the broader stake-holding community (including the artistic community). These linkages were developed and greatly enhanced in the course of the period of Uversity programme activity and remain a significant legacy of the programme.

Ongoing Reviews

It was recognised that the ongoing reviews undertaken by the NUI regarding the Uversity experience provided a valuable record of the process from an action research perspective – and thus made a significant contribution to the general corpus of literature on HEI cross-collaboration.

Student profile

It was understood that the Uversity student profile was in many ways quite distinct from the traditional Irish student profile and it was suggested that the primary target market for the programme should be independent, postgraduate students. Uversity recognised this and strove to target its communications, marketing and programme structures to appeal to this student cohort. They also sought to articulate the distinctive attributes of graduates as a unique selling point of the programme.

Building a brand

The necessity to build the 'Uversity' brand was highlighted as being an important element of the development of the programme. Uversity at all times sought to foreground the brand both nationally and internationally and created a distinct educational offering over the lifetime of the MA programme.

Conclusion

The literature indicates a number of areas of relevance to the evaluation of the Uversity model of collaborative higher education provision through the MA in Creative Process, namely the key areas of organisational issues concerning inter-institutional collaboration, the development of 'communities of practice' and the role of mentors. It is also noteworthy that the paucity of literature from an Irish context confirms the innovative nature of the Uversity model and points to the significant contribution to Irish higher education of any insights gleaned from the overall experience.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this evaluation was to review the collaborative model of higher education provision carried out by Uversity through its MA in Creative Process and to highlight key learning and insights that might assist in transferring this model to other educational contexts. The methodology used in the research was a case study strategy. During the life cycle of the MA in Creative Process, regular reviews were conducted by NUI and these reports were made available as secondary data for the purposes of this evaluation. Primary data was collected between May and August 2018.

3.2 Data Collection

Three modes of data collection were employed for this evaluation. Firstly, four face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted by EQI researchers. Secondly, two telephone interviews were carried out. Thirdly, open-response questionnaires were distributed to the remaining thirteen participants. The draft interview schedule and questionnaires can be found in Appendix I of this report. Interviews were transcribed by the EQI researchers and the questionnaires were completed digitally and returned to the EQI team by email. All data were stored on a shared EQI Google Drive accessible only to the EQI team and under encryption. Participants were provided with a plain language statement at the outset and given the option to review their contributions, as well as being notified of their right to withdraw from the evaluation at any time. Given the small number of people involved in the MA in Creative Process, participants were made aware that confidentiality and anonymity could not be fully guaranteed but that the EQI team would not use participants' names in the final report. It was acknowledged, however, that it would be necessary to indicate the role carried out by the participant. In addition, participants were notified that the final report would be the intellectual property of the NUI.

3.3 Selection of participants

The NUI provided EQI with a contact list of names and email addresses of internal and external stakeholders who had provided the NUI with their consent to be contacted for the purposes of this evaluation. All contacts were emailed by EQI with an introduction, acknowledgement that their contact details had been provided by the NUI and a plain language overview of the proposed evaluation. All contacts were given the option of a face-to-face or telephone interview or questionnaire as the means of data collection, as well as an indication of the timeframe for data collection. The participants who provided data were:

- CEO of Uversity
- Member of Governing Board of Uversity
- Programme Manager, MA in Creative Process
- Director of Mentoring
- Academic Advisor
- Two University points of contact
- One module provider
- Five mentors
- Five alumni

3.4 Ethical considerations

This evaluation was conducted in full compliance with the standard requirements and regulations as set out by the DCU Research Ethics Committee. Approval for the project was granted by this committee on 24th May 2018 (reference DCUREC/2018/099).

For the purposes of providing quotes from respondents to add to the richness of the report, whilst preserving confidentiality and anonymity as far as is possible, the next chapter which outlines the key findings will include excerpts from data of the participants but will be categorised as follows:

- 'Admin' i.e. CEO of Uiversity/Member of Governing Board of Uiversity/Programme Manager, MA in Creative Process/Director of Mentoring/Academic Advisor
- 'Institutional contacts' i.e. Two University points of contact/One module provider
- 'Mentor'
- 'Alumni'

Chapter 4

Key Findings

Following the completion of the data collection and analysis process the research team sought to summarise the key findings of the research. These findings fell into three general categories:

- Administration and programme structure
- Student experience
- Practical considerations

These categories form the structure of this chapter and will be addressed individually in the coming pages.

4.1 Administration and programme structure

4.1.1 Strong leadership by key personnel contributed to the development of the MA in Creative Process within a short period of time

The strong track record of key personnel in the area of executive management, academic governance (especially curriculum development) and the pastoral care of students (especially international students) were key influences in the growth of the MA in the short time period of its existence. It was argued that the regular reviews and in-house evaluations carried out by Uversity contributed to a clear sense of accountability and responsibility amongst stakeholders.

A number of respondents felt that the MA in Creative Process was developing positively and beginning to reach a position of attracting fee-paying students. This was recognised by some as a notable achievement despite the short time frame and the counter-cultural nature of the model (as inter-institutional cross-collaboration in the Irish higher education sector is rare). Respondents highlighted the role of key personnel who were seen as being particularly experienced and committed, with the result that the successes of the Uversity model was largely down to their skill sets and talents.

'We were so lucky with the quality of people that became involved... They were dealing with some institutions that were massively helpful, some institutions that were massively unhelpful. You have to have someone who has been in senior management somewhere. It's not going to build itself. And somebody who understands what it is as well... It's always going to be a lot of work. Any collaboration! Because all you need is one person to leave, and for the person who takes over not to understand it, to like it, or to have any interest in it. And you have to love it'.

(quote from admin)

4.1.2 Replication of the collaborative model of higher education provision is possible yet challenging

No respondent indicated that the replication of this model would be impossible, however, a number of key issues were raised:

- The number of institutions who initially agreed to participate was not reflected in patterns of long-term engagement. Respondents felt that whilst several institutions indicated they would be involved, the actual number of institutions who maintained this involvement was much lower. Some felt that having a smaller number of institutions would be easier to manage and would also give potential students a truer indication of possible locations of study.
- The number of modules initially on offer was too broad and did not truly reflect the actual teaching and learning experience. Whilst students were drawn to the possibility of selecting from a wide range of modules, labour-intensive support was required to ensure academic coherence across module selection and also for the quality assurance of a post-graduate qualification.

- A replication of this model would benefit from a smaller number of modules being offered. It was also suggested that consideration be given to the development of academically coherent modular ‘groupings’.

‘Some strategic streamlining of offerings, perhaps concentrating particular areas on one campus ... would allow some level of choice to be retained but result in a more coherent programme’
(quote from admin)

‘A more clearly structured programme with a limited number of clearly designated module options within semesters and institutions’
(quote from admin)
- Most respondents emphasised the ‘work-in-progress’ nature of the Uversity MA in Creative Process experience. Those involved in the development of the curricula and the pastoral care of students especially noted the stress incurred as a result of the very tight timeframe given to create a robust, academically coherent and quality structure when the students had already been enrolled. A future replication would necessitate a period before student recruitment dedicated to conducting market research, curriculum development and administrative procedures.
- Respondents noted that within the Irish higher education sector a culture has developed that sees Universities, IoTs and other institutions reluctant to commit to collaboration because of the requirement for a high level of input with a perceived low level of return.

‘No University or Institution is going to do it out of altruism... they’re going to do it because it gives them something ... you’re basically slicing the cake transparently and you’re slicing it evenly and its cake somebody likes’
(quote from admin)

The positive feedback of respondents to the Uversity MA experience indicates that collaboration across institutions can be beneficial to institutions in terms of fee generation, student numbers and overall student experience. However, the negative feedback shows a lingering reluctance amongst administration to commit in the long-term.

- The cost of running such a bespoke programme in the current economic circumstances in Irish education was raised as a potential barrier to the future replication of this model in the absence of private funding.

4.1.3 Effective inter-institutional collaboration requires designated and committed points of contact within each institution

Given the differing procedures in place across institutions, particularly in relation to registration, finance and assessment, respondents indicated that having a designated point of contact within each participating institution was necessary in order to contribute to a smoother collaboration. From the alumni perspective, given the small number of students attending individual institutions, it was felt that having a dedicated ‘go-to-person’ to assist them settle in in each institution was important.

4.2 Student experience

4.2.1 Alumni had a strong sense of identity as Uversity students

Alumni stressed the importance of the core module as well as the immersive practical examples provided during the programme as contributing factors to a strong sense of identity as Uversity students, rather than short-term students of institutions. The name ‘Uversity’ caused difficulty for some and they suggested that the term be revisited and rebranded in future. It was evident that students had a greater sense of Uversity as an entity than those involved in the various institutions who offered modules on the MA.

4.2.2 The MA in Creative Process offered by Uversity was a positive student experience for alumni

'The idea of a programme that would let me design a course for myself seemed too good to be true, let alone one that would let me apply all that assorted knowledge to a creative project of my choosing'
(quote from an alumnus)

Respondents were drawn to the programme because of its highly individualised nature, seeing the opportunity for them to come to Ireland – which particularly resonated with creative arts students – and benefit from a specifically-selected group of modules that tailored to their personal interests and needs.

'The individualised framework allowed by Uversity meant I could put together a course of study that fit my needs and interests precisely'
(quote from an alumnus)

They also appreciated the hands-on assistance and guidance given by the mentors, and the benefit of developing a good network of contacts in their discipline.

'The year at Uversity informed my thoughts on what higher education can, and should, look like, if only there are people who are sufficiently invested in developing student-driven potential to make it happen'
(quote from an alumnus)

The majority of the student body were in receipt of scholarships, and many cited this as the only means through which they could have participated in the programme. Whilst there was general consensus that the programme could be equally beneficial to domestic students, the cost of living in Ireland, as well as limited transport options between institutions, difficulties acquiring affordable and suitable accommodation were all issues that respondents cited as in need of attention for any future student body, be that domestic or international.

Alumni were very positive in their feedback on the comprehensive range of educational experiences given to them by Uversity staff, mentors and host institutions.

'The sheer range of experiences I had with Uversity – the traveling we did, our incredible speakers, the cultural exchange, the exposure to other professions in the arts – have left a profound mark on me'
(quote from an alumnus)

'The meetings organised for us with artists of some trajectory were very enlightening and inspiring, hearing them talk about their path and their creative process opened new windows into the possibilities of how to proceed'
(quote from an alumnus)

Equally, module providers and Uversity staff commended the quality of the student body. Administration recognised that the positive student experience was mainly achieved as a result of the highly committed and labour-intensive input by those involved in the programme. The small numbers enrolled on the MA allowed for greater individualisation, and intensive resourcing. Administration suggested that greater numbers in any future replication might grant Uversity more leverage in terms of accommodating students in modules across institutions. However, the flip side of greater student numbers would be the increased cost and time requirements to maintain such a high level of student resourcing.

4.2.3 The role of mentor was significant for both student and mentor

Mentors were recruited on a voluntary basis through a publicly-advertised open recruitment process. Stated reasons for participation varied but the majority indicated a personal interest in either the collaborative model of education provision, or the challenge of reflective praxis that accompanied the role. All mentors were Irish with a variety of international educational experience. The number of students assigned, and length of time for which the mentors were involved in the MA varied amongst respondents. Mentors appreciated the guidance provided by the Director of Mentoring, however, the

input and time given by different mentors varied, generally as a result of what at times was characterised as a misalignment between the interests of mentor and student. This resulted in some students perceiving others to be in receipt of greater attention from other mentors and an awareness, at times, of interpersonal challenges in the mentor – student relationship.

Mentors overall appreciated the experience, finding it rewarding. They also saw it as a means to refine their own skills, and think about their discipline in new and creative ways. Many indicated that they felt a sense of achievement from positive student feedback.

‘Unlike other academic roles, I found the administrative component relatively light, which was refreshing, allowing me to focus more on prioritising the student’s progress’

(quote from mentor)

During the process, the main benefit of the mentor/mentee relationship was for the mentor to act as a guide, a ‘sounding board’, and a friend.

‘She was keen to talk not only about her novel-in-progress, but her other writings, her accommodation issues, her friendships and her wishes for how her life would turn out after finishing her degree’

(quote from mentor)

The latter was particularly significant for those international students who may have had few other contacts while in Ireland, or who had difficulties adjusting to the culture and practical issues of studying in Ireland.

‘She was living very far away from her home ..., and while not wanting to rush home ... she felt isolated and disconnected. Our relationship meant that she felt less alone, and the feedback I gave her on her writing helped to boost her confidence’

(quote from mentor)

A key long-term benefit of the mentor was to provide good networking connections for the student into the practitioner community of his/her discipline.

The development of a panel of mentors with whom students could be matched was seen as a positive development by administrative staff and mentors. They envisaged this becoming an important part of planning for a better student experience had the programme continued.

4.2.4 Collaborative provision of higher education is particularly beneficial to students in the Creative Arts but could also be transferred to other disciplines.

Respondents widely commended the provision of modules for students that enabled them to access expertise across institutions that would not ordinarily be available through traditional modes of provision. Again, the small student population of the MA over the three years enabled this flexibility and provided a structure to accommodate students in different programmes. The blend of academic and creative provision evident in the MA was especially beneficial to students in the creative arts, however a number of respondents indicated that, if done well, the model could be transferrable to other disciplines.

‘Like computer science or engineering which are areas that have clear career benefits and tapping into international markets such as China and India, which would give Universities what they want i.e. more high-quality students’

(quote from admin)

This would be most appropriate where small numbers of institutions with expertise could collaborate in disciplines that had both academic and practical dimensions, particularly involving work placements or immersion in business or industry.

4.2.5 The collaborative model of higher education provision as offered by Uversity through the MA in Creative Process is best suited to high-achieving and independent postgraduate students

The demands placed upon Uversity students to be flexible, accommodating and open to changes in module provisions at short notice, necessitated a high level of independence, initiative and academic prowess. A module leader indicated that similar creative capacity could also feature more pronouncedly in the student selection process.

'In selecting the students, it is obvious that a high value was placed on academic excellence. However, often, there is just not a strong enough body of work to engage with. An emphasis on artistic maturity and excellence, as well as academic prowess, would be very valuable'

(quote from admin)

The particular employment prospects for students in the creative arts was also raised as a concern. Having already acquired student debts, the incurring of further debts in the absence of scholarships was mooted as a possible challenge to further uptake of the programme should the model be replicated with the creative arts. However, replication of the model in an area where efficient market research was previously conducted could encourage the development of a model with good student uptake in other disciplines.

4.3 Practical considerations

4.3.1 Ireland's current infrastructure, cost of living, and some institutional practices challenge the facilitation of student mobility

The prior University experiences of the international alumni may have in some cases ill-prepared them for the different expectations of Irish HEIs. Scarcity of quality student accommodation and different administrative procedures across the sector, particularly in terms of registration and assessment, are obstacles to a smooth collaborative model of higher education provision. In addition, the physical infrastructure of Ireland's transport facilities proved to be a barrier to students availing of modules in some institutions purely due to geographical distance, scarcity of accommodation and high cost of living in general.

Operationally it was not always easy to ascertain how modules were being delivered and assessed.

'Despite the fact that all institutions are meant to be the same, are all meant to be subscribing to the Bologna process, all kind of have their learning modules out in the public domain when you get underneath the bonnet, the engines are not the same'

(quote from admin)

Student mobility was also hampered by the discrepancies across different academic calendars which resulted in exams and semesters overlapping across different institutions. The confirmation of availability of some modules was unacceptably late, resulting in students already arriving in the country to face the reality of changing their planned programme if modules had been unexpectedly removed from the programme.

4.3.2 A clear student recruitment/marketing strategy is necessary

Some administrative respondents highlighted a lack of comprehensive market research underpinning the Uversity MA in Creative Process.

'There are hundreds of North American students willing to pay vast amounts of money to do creative courses and it was never tested'

(quote from admin)

'There was no one who put their hand in their own pocket for it'

(quote from admin)

It should be noted that, notwithstanding this perception, market research was undertaken following the initial set-up phase and the subsequent recruitment of the second CEO of Uiversity. Having said that, the employability factor associated with the graduate qualification is an influence on the ability of the programme to attract high fee-paying students. The precarious nature of employment in the arts sector was noted by respondents.

'The employability factor, that is another complication because if somebody's going to go quite pure in to art they are not going to have the kind of employment that you could put into a survey of graduates'

(quote from admin)

'Just because you think you have a fantastic product, the reality is you need to sell it, you need to sell it well. You need to differentiate it in an international market'

(quote from admin)

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

Uversity's collaborative model of higher education provision through the MA in Creative Process was an innovative undertaking not without its challenges and difficulties but one that proved the possibility of inter-institutional collaboration in the Irish higher education sector. Emergent at a time of economic austerity which especially impacted upon education, the Uversity model was particularly focused on optimising the attractiveness of Ireland and its reputation in the arts to draw in high-achieving international students.

There were differential levels of expectation for the MA in Creative Process. For some, they were not very high. For many individuals involved, including the principal donor, they were indeed set at a high level. However, despite its short life span, three cycles of graduates were produced with the outlook for the future looking promising. It was a disappointment to all involved that the programme was not able to continue beyond the first three student cohorts. The Uversity experience brings to light the difficulties facing the Irish higher education system in sourcing adequate funding to facilitate such a student-centred postgraduate programme.

Based on the analysis of feedback from the stakeholders who participated in this evaluation, the following conclusions are presented:

- Successes of the Uversity collaborative model of higher education provision as offered through the MA in Creative Process were largely due to the commitment, support, previous experience and high skill set of key personnel.
- Regular reviews and evaluations conducted by NUI during the lifespan of Uversity contributed greatly to the improvements made to the programme and its provision in such a short time.
- The name Uversity, as a brand, posed some struggles for alumni, however, they did develop a sense of identity with Uversity, particularly due to the core module and the provision of immersive events.
- Students were attracted to Uversity's MA in Creative process as an educational model which allowed them to personalise their academic and creative journey whilst giving them the opportunity to meet people who were luminaries in their disciplines, reflecting the global reputation of Ireland in the creative arts.
- The majority of alumni were on scholarships. This imbalance creates a challenge in evaluating how this model would translate to fee-paying students.
- The Uversity model could potentially benefit domestic students and not just an international student body.
- Alumni of the programme were described by administration, institutional contacts, mentors and a module leader as being highly motivated and committed.
- The mentor programme utilised by Uversity in the MA in Creative Process was highly effective. The identification of good matches between mentor and student whereby interests are aligned and the maintenance of a good working relationship needed a significant input and high level of pastoral care.
- The Uversity model of higher education provision has the potential to be transferred to other disciplines.
- The Uversity MA in Creative Process was best suited to independent postgraduate students.
- The Uversity MA in Creative Process brought to light the number of challenges common to international students entering the Irish higher education system.

Based on the analysis of feedback from the stakeholders who participated in this evaluation, the following recommendations form a summary of insights that may inform the replication and transferability of the Uversity model of collaboration in higher education provision for other educational contexts in Ireland:

1. Market research should be conducted prior to student recruitment into potential markets and sustainable 'buy-in' from Irish higher education providers.
2. The Uversity name could be rebranded.
3. Small numbers of Irish Higher Education Institutions with expertise in complementary areas should be aware of the modules and teaching methods in place in each other's contexts.
4. Commitment from institutional partners to collaboration is needed at all levels i.e. senior university management, teaching staff, administrative personnel.
5. Designated points of contact in each institution and formal agreements to commit to specified student numbers are recommended.
6. Academic calendars and confirmation of module provision across different institutions is needed in a timely manner.
7. Module offerings should be streamlined with a clearly defined structure across institutions.
8. Allotted semester-only accommodation facilities should be identified to allow for greater student mobility.
9. Mentors should be recruited on a 'show-of-interest' basis whereby they see their role as rewarding and worthwhile. This allows for a greater student experience. A broad panel of mentors with transdisciplinary experience is recommended.
10. A programme that involves students attending different HEIs during the course of the academic year is better suited to postgraduate level where students are accustomed to some degree with institutional expectations and practices.
11. The executive management of any such replicated model should carry out regular internal reviews of all aspects of the process.

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Appendix I

Research Instruments

1. Questionnaire offered to alumni of Uiversity MA in Creative Process

1. Demographic information. E.g. country of origin, level of education, academic interests etc.
2. How did you find out about Uiversity's MA in Creative Process?
3. Why did you decide to participate in this programme?
4. Did you consider leaving the programme at any time? If so, why?
5. What do you consider to be the strengths of this programme?
6. What do you consider to be the weaknesses of this programme?
7. What have you gained most from this experience?
8. What, if any, improvements might you suggest, should this MA be offered again?
9. If you have any other comments relevant to this evaluation, please include them hereunder.

2. Questionnaire offered to mentors on Uversity's MA in Creative Process

1. Demographic information. E.g. country of origin, level of education, academic interests etc.
2. How did you find out about Uversity's MA in Creative Process?
3. Why did you decide to act as a mentor on this programme? Please also indicate the length of time for which you were a mentor and how many students you mentored.
4. Please describe your main duties and responsibilities as a mentor?
5. What do you consider to be the benefits of the mentor system at Uversity?
6. What do you consider to be the challenges of the mentor system at Uversity?
7. What have you gained most from this experience?
8. What, if any, improvements might you suggest, should this MA be offered again?
9. If you have any other comments relevant to this evaluation, please include them hereunder.

3. Questionnaire offered to module leader on Uversity's MA in Creative Process

1. Demographic information. E.g. country of origin, level of education, academic interests etc.
2. How did you find out about Uversity's MA in Creative Process?
3. Why did you decide to become involved in this programme?
4. Please indicate the length of time that you were involved with the MA in Creative process programme?
5. How many MA in Creative Process students did you work with?
6. Please describe your main duties and responsibilities for the MA in Creative Process
7. As the lecturer on module taken by a Uversity student, please comment on any issues that arose in accommodating the students into the module e.g. student numbers, attendance, assessment etc.
8. What do you consider to be the benefits of the Uversity collaborative model of higher education provision as seen through the MA in Creative Process?
9. What do you consider to be the challenges of the Uversity collaborative model of higher education provision as seen through the MA in Creative Process?
10. What have you gained most from this experience?
11. What, if any, improvements might you suggest, should this MA be offered again?
12. If you have any other comments relevant to this evaluation, please include them hereunder.

4. Questionnaire offered to University points of contact for Uversity's MA in Creative Process

1. Demographic information. E.g. country of origin, level of education, academic interests etc.
2. How did you find out about Uversity's MA in Creative Process?
3. Why did you decide to act as your University's contact point for this programme?
4. Please indicate the length of time that you were involved with the MA in Creative process programme?
5. How many MA in Creative Process students did you work with?
6. Please describe your main duties and responsibilities as your University's contact point?
7. If you were the lecturer on any module taken by a Uversity student, please comment on any issues that arose in accommodating the student (s) into the module e.g. student numbers, attendance, assessment etc.
8. What do you consider to be the benefits of the Uversity collaborative model of higher education provision as seen through the MA in Creative Process?
9. What do you consider to be the challenges of the Uversity collaborative model of higher education provision as seen through the MA in Creative Process?
10. What have you gained most from this experience?
11. What, if any, improvements might you suggest, should this MA be offered again?
12. If you have any other comments relevant to this evaluation, please include them hereunder.

Draft interview schedule

The interviewee

- Please provide an **overview of your role** in Uversity, in particular in relation to the MA in Creative Arts
- What were your **main duties** and responsibilities?
- How would you describe the experience:
 - **Workload**
 - **Strengths**
 - and **challenges** of the role

Leadership

- If another group were to replicate the Uversity model (MA in Creative Arts) perhaps in a different context or discipline, what would you identify as being:
 - The key roles
 - The most significant learning arising from your experience
 - Key issues to address

Mentors

- Please describe your understanding of the role of the disciplinary mentors in the programme:
 - How would these be **recruited**
 - How would their **work of equal impact** across the programme
 - Benefits/challenges of having mentors

Student population

- Please provide an **overview of the student population**:
 - Who, from where, and to where have they gone?
- Please provide your understanding of the **benefits/challenges of the Uversity model** from the perspective of the student?

Communication

- Inter-institutional collaboration benefits/challenges:
 - Role of communication

Practicalities

- Can you envisage the Uversity model being applied to other disciplines – if so, which?
- Cost and time commitment
- Successes of Uversity
- Challenges of Uversity

Any other issues

Appendix II

Research Team profiles

Key EQI personnel involved in this evaluation include:

Professor Joe O’Hara

Joe O’Hara (PI) is the Inaugural Professor of Education and a member of the School of Policy and Practice in the DCU Institute of Education. Since September 2018, he is the President of the European Educational Research Association (EERA). Joe is Director of EQI – The Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection and a member of the Centre for Culturally Responsive Evaluation and Assessment at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. He is a Past President of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland and was a member of The Teaching Council of Ireland from 2012-2016. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Association for Personal Services Overseas (APSO) from 2002-2004 and represented Ireland on the Council of the European Educational Research Association from 2008 to 2013. Joe O’Hara was Head of the School of Education Studies, DCU from 2010 to 2016. He is a Director and Founding Member of the Irish Evaluation Network and is a member of the Board of the Centre for Talented Youth, Ireland. He has acted as a programme evaluator for the Department of Education and Skills, the Professional Development Service for Teachers, Educate Together, The Fighting Words Project, The European Union, Irish Aid and the UNDP.

Dr Bernadette Sweetman

Bernadette Sweetman is a Research Assistant in the Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection (EQI) at DCU. She is currently researching peer mentoring at post-primary schools in intercultural education with the aim of tackling the problem of early school leaving amongst migrant second-level students. She is also a part-time Lecturer and Tutor in the Institute of Education, DCU on the B. Rel.Ed and PME programmes, specialising in Psychology and Human Development, Advanced Education Theory, ICT, Curriculum Development and Evaluation. Her doctoral qualification specialised in Religious Education and she continues to be involved in a large-scale national Irish research study on Young People and Religious Diversity (13-15 year olds) which was a collaborative project with the Warwick Religions and Education Unit, University of Warwick. She has also written several Teacher Manuals for High School Catechetical Programmes in the USA and parish-based catechetical programmes in Ireland. Bernadette is an approved RE expert for the Irish Episcopal Conference whereby she has been invited to review and evaluate prospective post-primary school programmes in advance of publication for use nationwide.

Ms Denise Freir

Denise Freir is currently employed as a Research Administrator in the Institute of Education. Prior to this role, she worked in a number of programme support positions throughout the University, as well as in Registry as Assistant Enrolment Officer.

She has a Bachelor of Business Studies and an MA in International Relations from DCU. Following completion of her MA, she worked part-time for the Irish-African institutional linkage project in DCU which focused on strengthening the capacity for development-related research across a spectrum of disciplines. During her time in the Business School, she was involved in an EU funded project which focused on the strategies of social partners to address precarious work in Central Eastern European countries and Greece. More recently she was commissioned by Dochas (The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations) to undertake research to analyse the types of jobs being advertised by the Irish NGO sector.

Professor Gerry McNamara

Gerry McNamara is Professor of Educational Evaluation at the School of Policy and Practice, DCU Institute of Education and Co-Director of the Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection (EQI). From 1997-2007 he was Head of the School of Education Studies, DCU. He is course director of the Doctorate in Education, a taught doctoral programme in the field of educational leadership and evaluation. Gerry is a specialist in educational evaluation and has planned and led many major evaluations at home and abroad, working for, among others, the Dept. of Education and Science, the National Centre for Guidance in Education, Leargas, the Equality Authority of Ireland, the European Commission, and the United Nations Development Programme. Gerry was a member of the Teaching Council of Ireland (2001/2002, 2004-2006), a co-founder of the Irish Evaluation Network (2000), and was a member of the Council of the British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society (BELMAS) from 2008-2012. He has acted as a programme evaluator for the Department of Education and Skills, The Centre for Guidance and Counselling, the Professional Development Service for Teachers, Educate Together, The Fighting Words Project, The European Union, Irish Aid and the UNDP.

Dr Martin Brown

Dr Martin Brown is a lecturer at the School of Policy and Practice and a Senior Researcher at the Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection (EQI) DCU Institute of Education. Martin is a specialist in educational evaluation and assessment and has planned and led evaluations in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Europe and the Middle East; working for, among others, the Dept. of Education and Skills, the National Learning Network and the United Arab Emirates government. Martin has a B.Sc and H.Ed from NUI Maynooth and an M.Sc and PhD from Dublin City University. Research interests include: Assessment, Comparative Education, School Inspection, School Self-Evaluation, Programme Evaluation, Policy Influences in Education, Inclusion in Education. Martin also has a research interest in teaching and learning in digital environments having designed and developed online Teacher CPD programmes for the PDST and PDST Technology in Education on priority government initiatives such as School Self Evaluation and ePortfolios for Teaching, Learning and Assessment. Martin is the project co-ordinator for the Erasmus+ projects Aiding Culturally Responsive Assessment in Schools (ACRAS), Distributed Evaluation and Planning in Schools (DEAPS) and the co-PI on the Erasmus+ Project Polycentric inspection of Networked Schools (PINS).

Appendix III

Summary of NUI reports and reviews

NUI Programme Review Report (October 2014)	Uversity's Response and Compliance with the Expert Panel Report 2014/2015 (1/12/2014)	Follow up report of NUI Programme Review Panel (30/10/2015)
<p>Recommendations in respect of the 2014/15 cohort of students</p> <p>Clarified statement of general aims and objectives particularly in relation to graduate output and attributes.</p>	<p>The presentation of five clarified programme aims and objectives were set out with greater specificity with regard to graduate outputs and attributes which are also distinct from the objectives set out for the core module.</p>	<p>Recommendation</p> <p>Articulate the distinctive attributes of graduates as a unique selling point of the programme.</p>
<p>Findings A</p> <p>Objectives of programme merged with those of the core module and panel recommended that these are separately expressed.</p> <p>The Director of Mentoring – needs to be complemented by the appointment of a disciplinary specialist.</p>	<p>Appointment in Oct. 2014 of Disciplinary Mentor to the 2014/2015 cohort.</p>	<p>See below under appointment of a specialist disciplinary mentor.</p>
<p>Findings B</p> <p>As the programme grows it will be essential to employ a team of disciplinary mentors.</p> <p>Uversity will require greater ownership of the programme particularly in relation to the supervision of the project which will be supported by the mentoring process.</p> <p>Increased level of student support – excessive isolation.</p>		
<p>Findings C</p> <p>There is need to develop a sense of identity – the importance of having a central base was emphasised.</p> <p>Operational and logistical difficulties easily resolved through improved communications between Uversity, Mentors and Partner Universities.</p> <p>Caution not to oversell the extent of choice available – disappointment by students over unavailability of certain optional modules.</p> <p>Appointment of External Examiner.</p>	<p>Appointment in Oct. 2014 of a full-time Programme Manager for admin and practical support, as well, as regular contact with students provided by the Director of Mentoring.</p> <p>Students in contact with each other through the core module, dedicated online student discussion forum, Uversity Travel Bursary.</p> <p>Appointment of an external examiner in 2014/2015.</p>	<p>Panel noted that the final results of the 2014/15 cohort were excellent – there was consistency of results across partner institutions.</p>

NUI Programme Review Report (October 2014)	Uversity's Response and Compliance with the Expert Panel Report 2014/2015 (1/12/2014)	Follow up report of NUI Programme Review Panel (30/10/2015)
<p>Recommendations to Participating Institutions</p> <p>Participating institutions should raise awareness internally of the Uversity project.</p>		<p>Recommendations</p> <p>Refine and continue to advance inter-institutional collaboration through the development of strategic and bi-lateral partnerships in core areas.</p>
<p>Findings</p> <p>Effective communications & clear guidelines between Uversity, Mentors and participating institutions will be key – particularly in relation to supervision of the project. As numbers grow Uversity advised to take greater ownership of this process.</p> <p>Students want more practice based modules.</p>		<p>Findings</p> <p>The panel considered the success of inter-institutional collaboration as a considerable achievement and noted that it provides a valuable model to be further developed in the future.</p> <p>Panel strongly supported a proposal to further links with the artistic community and to incorporate placement periods.</p>
<p>Recommendation to NUI</p> <p>NUI should continue to monitor the programme and that panel be consulted again before the next intake 2015/2016.</p>		<p>The review panel reconvened on 30 October 2015 to review progress following completion by the first cohort.</p>
<p>Recommendation in respect of the student intake of 2015/2016</p> <p>Essential structure of programme being retained with core module as an integral element.</p>		
<p>Findings</p> <p>As well as the core module, discipline-based mentoring and appropriate supervision of the project were viewed by the panel as essential to the successful integration of the programme.</p> <p>Students also endorsed the core module and the value of its collective learning experience – students would welcome greater credit value.</p> <p>Caution against giving too much choice as could lead to fragmented or unbalanced programme, also students might not realise possibility of programme. Suggested clustering modules and a strong mentoring process will support students in making choices.</p> <p>Appointment of a specialist disciplinary mentor.</p> <p>Continued academic and admin support.</p> <p>Reports provided to NUI by 1 Sept 2015 on progress of report in current year.</p> <p>Appointment of full-time leader.</p>		<p>Recommendation</p> <p>The role of the mentor has greatly enhanced the programme this needs to be continually highlighted as a distinctive feature of the programme.</p> <p>Findings</p> <p>Mentoring programme extended in 2015/2016 through the recruitment of a number of well-established and highly regarded professionals from different creative fields.</p>

NUI Programme Review Report (October 2014)	University's Response and Compliance with the Expert Panel Report 2014/2015 (1/12/2014)	Follow up report of NUI Programme Review Panel (30/10/2015)
<p>Findings</p> <p>Unsuccessful in fulfilling Academic Director role due to the uncertain future of the programme. A three-person Academic Directorate lead the programme in 2014/15.</p> <p>Care that programme is not driven purely by commercial considerations.</p> <p>Findings</p> <p>Plans to broaden the Board of Directors to include representative from the commercial arts sector.</p> <p>Acquisition of a central base.</p> <p>Findings</p> <p>Central base is essential if the project is to achieve visibility and to give students a sense of identity.</p>		<p>The review panel reconvened on 30 October 2015 to review progress following completion by the first cohort.</p> <p>Ms. Colleen Dube appointed as CEO in June 2015. Panel complimented the leadership provided for the programme both academically and administratively.</p>
<p>Recommendation and Findings: Student recruitment, marketing and learner protection</p> <p>Marketing has predominately been targeted at the US – targeting Asian markets would require significant resources.</p> <p>Panel advised against module offerings.</p> <p>Recruitment targets for 2015/2016 were very ambitious – prudent to envisage a slower rate of growth in the early years of the programme.</p>		<p>Recommendation</p> <p>Major challenge for the continuation of the programme will be to recruitment of viable student numbers – critical to the success will be marketing of the programme.</p> <p>Recommendation – Continuation of approval of the MA programme</p> <p>Panel recommends that the programme be approved for 5 years (2016/2017 to 2020/21).</p>



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