

27 July 2021

STARS Steering Committee
Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education
2401 Walnut St., Suite 102
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Dear STARS Steering Committee,

On behalf of the National University of Ireland Galway, I am pleased to endorse our 2021 Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System submission. The National University of Ireland Galway (NUI Galway) believes resolutely in the value of stewardship in a changing world and this is firmly underlined in our Strategic Plan - *Shared Vision Shaped by Values*. Building on the work of our Community and University Sustainability Partnership (CUSP) and its approach to ‘learn, live and lead’ sustainability across the university mission, we have committed to embedding sustainability in our culture, operational policies and governance structures, and empower our communities to be champions of sustainability. The data in this report provides strong evidence of our ongoing commitment to sustainability.

The ‘NUI Galway Strategic Plan 2020-2025 - *Shared Vision Shaped by Values*’ <https://www.nuigalway.ie/strategy2025/> and the ‘NUI Galway Sustainability Strategy 2021-2025’ <http://www.nuigalway.ie/sustainability/strategy/nuigalwaysustainabilitystrategy2021-2025/> commits to providing leadership to inform the transition to a sustainable future through our teaching, research actions and impacts; and to developing a roadmap to move ambitiously towards carbon neutrality by 2030. NUI Galway, as a signatory to the ‘SDG Accord’, commits to align all major efforts with the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), targets and indicators, including through our education, research, leadership, operational and engagement activities. NUI Galway as a public body is required under the ‘Climate Action Plan and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2021’ to lead in the achievement of net zero emissions by 2050.

Our University Sustainability Advisory Board, chaired by Professor Pól Ó Dochartaigh, Deputy President & Registrar of NUI Galway, provides strategic oversight of the University commitment to sustainability as set out in the NUI Galway Sustainability Strategy 2021-25. Our University Sustainability Advisory Board undertakes high-level strategic analysis to inform decision-making in the allocation of resources for the implementation of sustainable operations across NUI Galway. It recommends for approval and drives forward sustainability-related policies, procedures and action plans. The board plays a key role in development of strong governance structures and support the integration of sustainability and climate action into daily business at all levels of the University.

The Community University Sustainability Partnership (CUSP) general board was responsible for developing the University’s Sustainability Strategies 2017-2020 and 2021-2025 based on relevant



Government Policy, EU Directives and Best Practise Guidelines; and for monitoring compliance with the Sustainability Strategies. CUSP informs, advises and makes recommendations to the University Sustainability Advisory Board on all matters relating to Climate Action and Sustainability Policy development and implementation, including governance, resourcing, monitoring and performance. I am very grateful to the CUSP team for their leadership in preparing the STARS report.

We are proud of our achievements to date and are driven to build on these in the coming years. For example, NUI Galway lead by example and 2018/2019 saw us exceed our Public Sector Energy Efficiency target of 33% energy efficiency by 2020, recording a 36.1% reduction in energy consumption since baseline year. This has resulted in a refreshed target of 40% reduction by 2020. This underscores the sustainable path that our students, staff and visitors engage in as plans lead us through carbon neutral targets to net zero greenhouse gas emissions attributable to NUI Galway. Our diverse initiatives such as recent installation of on-site solar arrays, our pioneering Green Labs, our electric vehicle mail service, bike hire scheme, our Pollinator Plan and University of Sanctuary status illustrate the broad, but also deep commitment on campus to sustainability. We see our extensive sustainability work with communities outside of the campus as a significant addition to the sustainability impact we achieve through our students and research.

The completion of our first STARS report is invaluable as an evaluation of past performance, as well as a baseline from which we will measure future sustainability efforts. The STARS report and metrics can now become a part of our sustainability strategy and planning supporting decisions on ambitious set goals and actions to integrate sustainability into the University to 2030. We are grateful to the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education and the STARS Steering Committee for providing this robust framework from which we can measure, validate, and communicate our stewardship efforts throughout implementation of the plan.

I would like to express my gratitude to the students, staff, and faculty members who provided the information needed to complete this enterprise-wide assessment. Thank you also to all of the stewards who work together to create a brighter future. As the Head and Chief Officer of the University, I will continue to provide leadership, commitment and support for the University's climate action and sustainability strategy.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh

BComm (Galway), DipPrAcc (UCD), PhD (Leeds), FCA (Ireland)

Uachtarán, OÉ Gaillimh, President, NUI Galway

c.c. Professor Pól Ó Dochartaigh, Deputy President & Registrar
Professor Jamie Goggins, School of Engineering