



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

Framework for Board Reporting

September 2026

University
ofGalway.ie



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This guidance provides a standard framework for preparing and submitting papers to Údarás na hOllscoile and its Committees. It outlines the principles of effective board reporting; the responsibilities of the executive in relation to accurate, timely and transparent reporting to Údarás na hOllscoile and its Committees; defines the categories and structure of papers, and sets expectations for clarity, accountability, and strategic alignment. The document also details submission protocols, approval pathways, and presentation standards to ensure that all papers support informed decision-making and good governance. Consistent application of these standards will enhance transparency, efficiency, and the overall quality of Údarás na hOllscoile deliberations.

2. PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF ÚDARÁS NA HOLLSCOILE AND COMMITTEE PAPERS

- 2.1 Údarás na hOllscoile and Committee papers are the primary mechanism through which Údarás na hOllscoile and its Committees receive information, make decisions, and exercise oversight.

Papers must be:

- (a) clear, concise, and relevant
 - (b) structured to support strategic decision-making and oversight
 - (c) written for a non-executive, non-academic audience and
 - (d) aligned with the University's strategic objectives
- 2.2 Údarás na hOllscoile and Committee papers must be self-contained (in that their purpose is readily understood without the need to read other documentation), evidence-based, and suitable for scrutiny by external stakeholders, including by regulators and auditors.

3. TYPES AND PURPOSES OF PAPERS

3.1 Each paper must clearly state its purpose on the cover sheet and in the executive summary. The three recognised categories are:

- (a) **Papers for Information / Noting:** These papers provide updates or background on matters relevant to the oversight role of Údarás na hOllscoile and its' Committees. They do not require action but may inform future decisions.
- (b) **Papers for Discussion:** These papers facilitate strategic dialogue or exploratory consideration of complex or emerging issues. They may precede a formal decision or seek Údarás na hOllscoile or Committee input on a developing matter.
- (c) **Papers for Decision / Approval:** These papers seek formal approval or endorsement. They must be precise, well-structured, and supported by robust analysis, with the matters requiring approval explicitly set out in the paper.

An indicative summary of the types of papers is set out below.

Paper Type	Examples	Characteristics
Information / Noting	• A periodic performance report • Updates on regulatory matters • Summaries of audits or reviews	• Marked clearly “For Information / Noting” • Should explain why the paper is being provided (e.g. compliance requirement) • Neutral and factual • No decision or resolution is required
Discussion	• Early-stage proposals • Strategic planning inputs • Deep-dive topics • Policy reviews	• Marked clearly “For Discussion” • Should explain why the paper is being provided (e.g. workplan, brought at request of Executive Committee) • Clearly framed discussion; questions and/or issues highlighted • Preliminary recommendations or hypothesis
Decision / Approval	• Approval of budgets • Approval of capital projects or acquisitions • Ratification of sub-committee recommendations	• Marked clearly “for Approval” • Recommendations clearly stated • Supporting rationale and analysis • Presentation of options, including the preferred option, with a clear articulation of respective merits, limitations, and associated risks; Confirmation of adherence to relevant University policies, regulations, or applicable State Body circulars or codes. • Risk assessment and mitigation included

4. STRUCTURE AND FORMAT

- 4.1 All Údarás na hOllscoile and Committee papers should include a cover sheet summarising the purpose of the paper and the recommendations/ request of the reporting Committee. The template Cover Sheet is included in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 All Údarás na hOllscoile and Committee papers should follow the approved template. The standard template for Údarás na hOllscoile and Committee papers is included in Appendix 2. Where the purpose of the paper is to provide a progress update on the status of an approved Capital Works project (managed by the Buildings Office¹) or other non-works Capital projects (e.g. projects managed by the Organisational Transformation Office) please use the Capital Projects template in Appendix 3.
- 4.3 The following sections should be included in Údarás na hOllscoile papers:
- (A) Cover Sheet (included in Appendix 1)
 - (B) Executive Summary

¹ Please note that the Buildings and Estates Office have had a Capital Works Management processes, which align with the Capital Works Framework and Infrastructure Guidelines, as well as with University governance requirements, since 2022.

- (C) Introduction and Context (sets out purpose, rationale and background, affording the author some flexibility to frame the issue in their own words)
- (D) Discussion and Analysis (optional: for exploration of options, implications or scenarios; to present evidence, reasoning, and judgment to support decision-making or strategic discussion)
- (E) Recommendation (clearly stated)
- (F) Strategic Alignment (how will the proposal help to deliver the University's strategy)
- (G) Financial Impact
- (H) Risk and Mitigation
- (I) Governance and Compliance (what is the governance structure for the project? How is compliance to be managed?)
- (J) Accountability and Oversight (who is the University Management Team (UMT) owner? How is the proposal to be overseen if approved?)
- (K) EDI Considerations (if applicable/ mandatory check)
- (L) Legal impact
- (M) Insurance implications
- (N) Procurement implications
- (O) Sign-Off (has the proposal been approved by UMT/Academic Council (where relevant)?)

4.4 Attachments/Appendices should be used judiciously and referenced clearly. They should be used to provide supplementary detail only and must not be relied upon to convey core information required for decision-making.

4.5 Papers should normally be no longer **5 pages** (excluding appendices and cover sheet). The use of appendices is discouraged unless necessary. Appendices should not be relied upon to convey key information. It is recognised that the format of some papers, such as the annual Financial Statements, will be longer and requires some flexibility. However, adherence to the page limit should otherwise remain the standard.

5. WRITING STYLE AND TONE

5.1 Údarás na hOllscoile and Committee papers should be written in a formal, factual and dispassionate style. Use plain English, short sentences, and avoid acronyms unless defined. Distinguish clearly between facts, analysis, and opinion.

5.2 Where judgment is exercised, explain the rationale and assumptions. Avoid excessive detail and focus on what the Údarás na hOllscoile or Committees need to know to make a decision or provide oversight.

6. QUALITY STANDARDS FOR PAPERS

6.1 All Údarás na hOllscoile papers must meet **six essential quality attributes** to ensure they support effective governance:

- i. **Relevance:** Papers must relate directly to the governance functions and strategic objectives of Údarás na hOllscoile and its Committees.
- ii. **Accuracy and Completeness:** Papers must be free from errors or omissions and provide a reliable basis for decision-making.

- iii. **Structure:** Papers must follow a logical format with executive summary, background, analysis, risks, and recommendations.
- iv. **Argumentation:** Recommendations must be clearly reasoned and supported by data and analysis.
- v. **Balanced Analysis:** Papers must consider both positive and negative implications, strengths and weaknesses of the proposal, including financial, reputational, and strategic impacts.
- vi. **Timelines:** Papers must be submitted at least 8 working days in advance of a meeting to allow members to give appropriate consideration to proposals/ updates.

6.2 Papers that do not meet the appropriate quality standards may be rejected.

7. APPROVAL PATHWAY AND TIMELINES

7.1 Papers submitted to Údarás na hOllscoile and its Committees should follow a structured approval pathway. The standard process is as follows:

- i. **Firstly**, the paper should be reviewed by the UMT sponsor prior to review and approval by the UMT, ensuring it meets the required standards and is aligned with institutional priorities. In circumstances where the matter requires academic oversight, the paper should also be reviewed by Academic Council.
- ii. **Subsequently**, where the matter falls within the remit of a sub-committee of Údarás na hOllscoile, and that committee has been assigned a role by Údarás na hOllscoile, the paper should be considered and endorsed by that committee.
- iii. **Finally**, the paper may then be submitted to Údarás na hOllscoile for final consideration and decision.

7.2 This process requires careful planning and time management, as it may take several weeks for a paper to progress through the necessary stages depending on meeting schedules. Authors should factor this into their timelines and liaise with the President's Office (for UMT schedule) and the Office of the Secretary for Governance & Academic Affairs (for Údarás na hOllscoile, sub-committee and Academic Council schedules) to ensure timely submission. The deadlines for submission of papers to Údarás na hOllscoile and Academic Council are available to view [here](#). Further information regarding Údarás na hOllscoile sub-committees is available [here](#).

7.3 Documentation is circulated to UMT members 5 working days before a meeting; to Údarás na hOllscoile and sub-Committee members one week before a meeting, and to Academic Council one week before a meeting. Accordingly, the timelines for submission of documentation to the Secretariat are as follows:

- **UMT:** Papers must be submitted 5 working days before the meeting
- **Údarás na hOllscoile Sub-Committees:** Papers must be submitted 8 working days before the meeting
- **Údarás na hOllscoile:** Papers must be submitted 8 working days before the meeting
- **Academic Council:** Papers must be submitted 8 working days before the meeting

7.4 Late papers will not be accepted. Exceptions may only be granted by the Chairperson of Údarás na hOllscoile or by the relevant Committee Chair, but justification must be provided and recorded. Capital expenditure / acquisition papers must follow the prescribed approvals process and late submissions will not be accepted.

- 7.5 Paper will be reviewed by the Secretariat and lead UMT member for the committee prior to circulation to members to ensure they meet the requirements set out above, with revisions requested where necessary.

8. RETENTION, SECURITY, AND ACCESS

- 8.1 Údarás na hOllscoile and Committee papers are part of the University's official records. They must be stored securely and retained in accordance with the [University's Record Retention Policy](#).
- 8.2 Access to papers must be controlled to protect confidentiality and members' privilege, so papers prepared for Údarás na hOllscoile and its Committee must never be released other than through the Office of the Secretary for Governance & Academic Affairs, acting with the approval of Údarás na hOllscoile.
- 8.3 Highly sensitive, confidential or commercially sensitive documents will follow additional secure protocols, including password protection, locked pdfs and access controls.
- 8.4 The Secretariat uses SharePoint as the approved meetings management platform, with two-factor authentication required as part of the University's cyber security response measures.

9. TRAINING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- 9.1 Training on Údarás na hOllscoile and Committee paper preparation will be provided annually to UMT and/or to staff involved in drafting papers. Feedback from members will be collected regularly via the Annual Effectiveness Review to improve quality and relevance.
- 9.2 Guidelines and templates will be reviewed at least once per Údarás na hOllscoile term to reflect changes in governance practice, legislation, and information requirements.
- 9.3 Feedback regarding the quality and utility of papers submitted will be collated from Údarás na hOllscoile and its sub-committees via the Annual Effectiveness Review.

10. MEETING PLANNING, TRACKING ACTIONS, NEXT STEPS

- 10.1 The Secretariat will support Údarás na hOllscoile and its Committees in the running of meetings by:
- **Agenda planning:** Meetings with the Chairperson or Committee Chairs and the Secretariat will take place at least 10 working days in advance of a meeting to plan the agenda
 - **Paper circulation:** Meeting packs distributed 5 working days before meetings
 - **Action tracking:** Action logs will be maintained by the Secretariat for sub-committee and Údarás na hOllscoile meetings and status updates provided at the next meeting
 - **Minute-taking:** Draft minutes will be circulated to the Chairperson within 15 working days
 - **Follow up:** Follow-up actions will be circulated to relevant UMT members/ colleagues within 7 working days of the meeting
 - **Workplans:** Each Committee must maintain a workplan to be reviewed at least once a year
- 10.2 These timelines and responsibilities must be respected by all paper authors and contributors.

11. SUMMARY OF GOOD PRACTICE:

- Be clear on the paper's purpose: information, discussion, or decision
- Use the approved templates: consistency aids comprehension
- Write for a strategic audience: avoid operational detail
- Support recommendations with evidence: include rationale, risks, and alignment
- Respect governance protocols: review, sign-off, and secure distribution
- Seek feedback and improvement: governance is a dynamic process

12. PROTOCOL FOR PRESENTERS

12.1 To ensure efficient use of meeting time, the following presentation protocol applies:

- Briefly, introduce yourself and any colleagues co-presenting
- Papers are to be taken as read, unless otherwise directed by the Chair.
- Presenters should use no more than 5 slides (excluding cover slides) to supplement the content of their paper. The slides should follow your paper and not be used to introduce new information
- Of the time allocated, one-third should be used for presenting and two-thirds left over for discussion and Q&A.
- It is at the discretion of the meeting Chairperson to determine whether presentations will be heard or taken as read.

13. CONCLUSION

13.1 This guidance is intended to support high-quality, consistent, and accountable reporting to Údarás na hOllscoile and its Committees. All contributors are encouraged to apply these standards rigorously and to seek support from the [Office of the Secretary for Governance & Academic Affairs](#) where needed.




ÚDARÁS NA HOLLSCOILE/ COMMITTEE PAPER COVER SHEET

Title:			
Author:			
Date of submission:			
Meeting:	☐ Údarás na hOllscoile	☐ Committee: Choose an item.	
Paper Type:	☐ For information / Noting	☐ For Discussion	☐ For Decision / Approval
Purpose of the Paper:	Describe the paper's purpose and outcome sought.		
UMT Owner:	Name, Title.		
Description of link to Strategic Plan 2025 -2030 (if relevant)	e.g. relevant flagship action or objective		
Approval Pathway:	Outline prior review and endorsement, e.g. UMT → GA sub-Committee → Údarás na hOllscoile		
Requirement	Confirmation	Comments/Notes	
UMT approval / recommendation	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	Include date of approval/ recommendation	
Reviewed by relevant GA Committee	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	Provide Committee name and outcome	
Aligned with University Strategy / policies	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	Reference specific strategies or policies	
Financial impact identified	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	Summarise cost and funding source	
Risk Assessment completed	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	Note briefly key risks and mitigations	
Legal impact considered	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	Summarise legal advice/ key considerations	
Insurance implications considered	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	Note briefly key insurance implications	
Procurement implications considered	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	Note briefly key procurement implications	
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion impact considered	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	Note any EDI implications	
Recommendation clearly stated	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	Summarise the recommendation briefly	

Submission meets timeline requirements	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	Confirm deadline met
Prepared by:	Name, Title.	Date:
Approved by:	Name, Title.	Date:
NOTE TO AUTHORS		
• This cover sheet ensures that all Údarás na hOllscoile and Committee papers meet compliance and governance requirements before submission. • Authors must complete all relevant fields and obtain the necessary signoffs before submission to the relevant Secretariat. • For capital projects, provide summary of the following: ○ actual spend to date V budget; ○ estimated spend to completion V budget; ○ curve showing actual and anticipated cumulative spend to completion vs budget (e.g. s-curve of project spend). ○ key issues/risks that have materialised or are emerging ○ contingency utilisation ○ timeline vs plan ○ next steps		



ÚDARÁS NA HOLLSCOILE/ COMMITTEE PAPER TEMPLATE

Paper Title:	
Author:	
NOTE TO AUTHORS	
- The content of the paper may be structured flexibly – authors should for the most part adopt the following structure: (1) Executive Summary (2) Introduction and Context (3) Discussion and analysis (4) UMT Recommendation (5) Governance and Compliance (6) Accountability and Oversight - The <i>Introduction and Context</i> and <i>Discussion and Analysis</i> sections should frame and then develop the issue(s), provide rationale, and present recommendations in the author's own professional 'voice'. - Papers should remain concise (max. 5 pages excluding cover page and appendices) and focus on enabling informed decision-making. - Appendices should be used judiciously to provide supplementary detail only and must not be relied upon to convey core information required for decision-making. - Papers should be submitted in PDF with the cover sheet incorporated (i.e. as a single document).	

ÚDARÁS NA HOLLSCOILE/ COMMITTEE PAPER TEMPLATE FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS

Project	[Project title]	Sponsor	[Name & Title]	Report Period	[Insert date]	RAG Status	[Insert Status]
		PM	[Name & Title]				

Budget Report	Approved budget (FRC minute)	Committed to date	Spend to date	Available balance	Notes

Complete activities this period
Task 1 Area (e.g. historic data): Description of task completed

Planned activities in the next planning period
Task 1 Area (e.g. configuration): Description of task to be completed

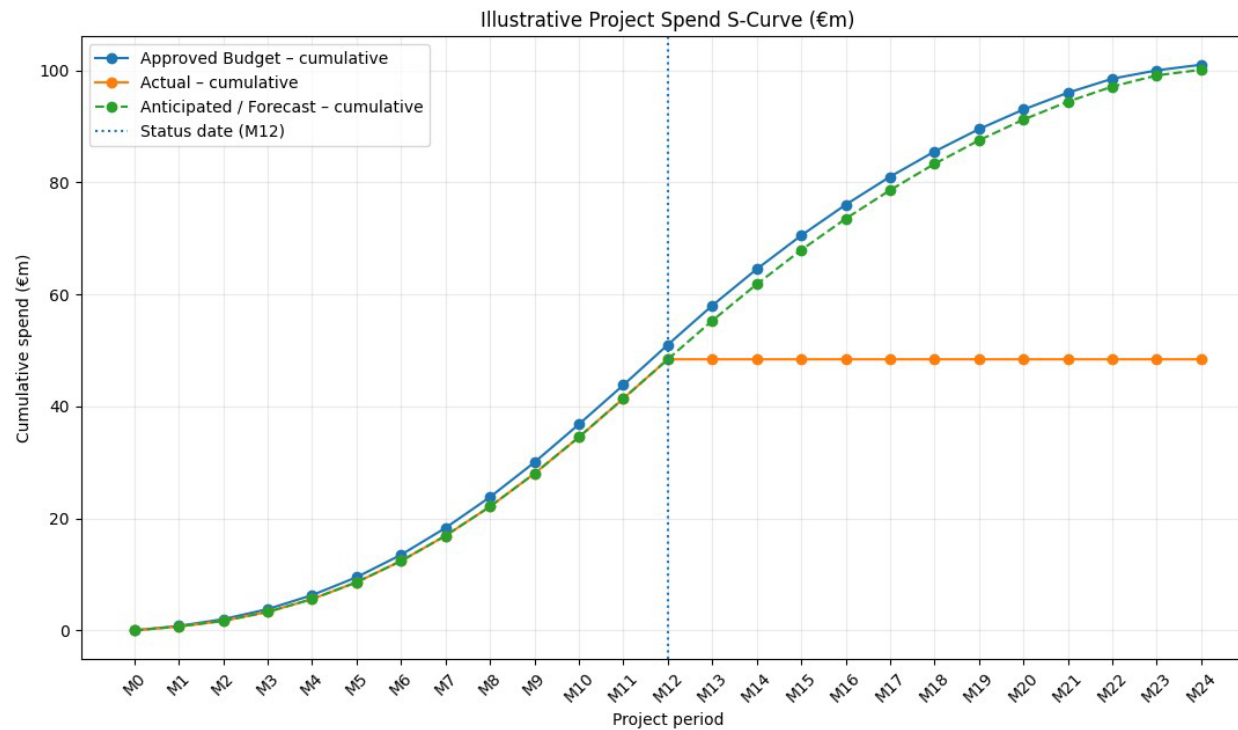
Risks/ Issues/ Blockers	Migration	Owner
Risk # (from RAID Log): Risk/ issue description	Migration plan: Outline of tasks	[Name & title]

Sponsor/ PM commentary (Key issues, RAG status escalation etc.)
[Insert text]

Key Milestones				
	On Track	At Risk	Off Plan	Complete
Task	Start	Finish	Status	
Recruitment	24/03/26	21/07/26	In Progress	
Project External Hires	24/03/26	26/09/26	In Progress	
Process Preparation	24/03/26	09/06/26	In Progress	
Design Principles	27/05/26	21/07/26	In Progress	
Vendor Assessment	18/06/26	18/06/26	In Progress	
Contract Design/Build			In Progress	
Contract Management			In Progress	
Allocation			In Progress	
Live Migration			In Progress	
Consultant Integration	05/05/26	03/08/26	Not Started	
Form/Screen Design	16/12/26	02/03/27	In Progress	
Data Indexing Principles	17/04/26	02/07/26	In Progress	
Analysis of Akari Data	19/06/26	20/08/26	In Progress	
Archival Concept Validation	10/06/26	15/09/26	In Progress	

S-curve of project spend

[Insert s-curve of project spend i.e. curve showing actual and anticipated cumulative spend to completion vs budget– see illustrative example and notes below]



Illustrative sample s-curve explained

The illustrative example assumes a **€100m approved project budget**, with the reporting/status date at **Month 12**. In this example, actual expenditure is €48.8m at the status date and the forecast final cost is approximately €99.9m (see table for underlying data).

Provide an updated cumulative project spend S-curve showing:

- **Approved Budget** – the cumulative expenditure profile based on the approved project budget/baseline.
- **Actual Spend** – cumulative actual expenditure incurred to the reporting/status date.
- **Forecast Spend** – anticipated cumulative expenditure from the status date through to project completion, based on the latest cost forecast.
- Clearly identify the **reporting/status date** on the graph.
- The forecast should extend through **project completion**, allowing the reader to assess the anticipated final cost against the approved budget.
- Where the forecast final cost differs from the approved budget, provide the **€ and % variance** and briefly explain the principal drivers.

Important:

The actual line should stop at the reporting date; it should not be artificially extended. The forecast line should then continue from that point to completion. This makes the distinction between **what has been spent** and **what is anticipated to be spent** immediately clear.

Period	Budget monthly spend (€m)	Actual monthly spend (€m)	Forecast monthly spend (€m)	Budget cumulative (€m)	Actual cumulative (€m)	Forecast cumulative (€m)
M0	0	0	0	0	0	0
M1	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.7
M2	1.2	1	1	2	1.7	1.7
M3	1.8	1.6	1.6	3.8	3.3	3.3
M4	2.5	2.3	2.3	6.3	5.6	5.6
M5	3.2	3	3	9.5	8.6	8.6
M6	4	3.8	3.8	13.5	12.4	12.4
M7	4.8	4.5	4.5	18.3	16.9	16.9
M8	5.5	5.2	5.2	23.8	22.1	22.1
M9	6.2	5.9	5.9	30	28	28
M10	6.8	6.5	6.5	36.8	34.5	34.5
M11	7	6.9	6.9	43.8	41.4	41.4
M12	7.2	7	7	51	48.4	48.4
M13	7		6.9	58	48.4	55.3
M14	6.5		6.5	64.5	48.4	61.8
M15	6		6.1	70.5	48.4	67.9
M16	5.5		5.6	76	48.4	73.5
M17	5		5.1	81	48.4	78.6
M18	4.5		4.7	85.5	48.4	83.3
M19	4		4.2	89.5	48.4	87.5
M20	3.5		3.7	93	48.4	91.2
M21	3		3.2	96	48.4	94.4
M22	2.5		2.7	98.5	48.4	97.1
M23	1.5		2	100	48.4	99.1
M24	1		1	101	48.4	100.1