



University College Dublin
An Institutional Thematic Analysis of the Third Cycle of Academic School Quality Review Reports 2016-22
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Dublin
An Institutional
Thematic Analysis
of the Third Cycle
of Academic
School Quality
Review Reports
2016-22**

UCD – Who we are

UCD Quality Framework

Purpose of the Project

Methodology

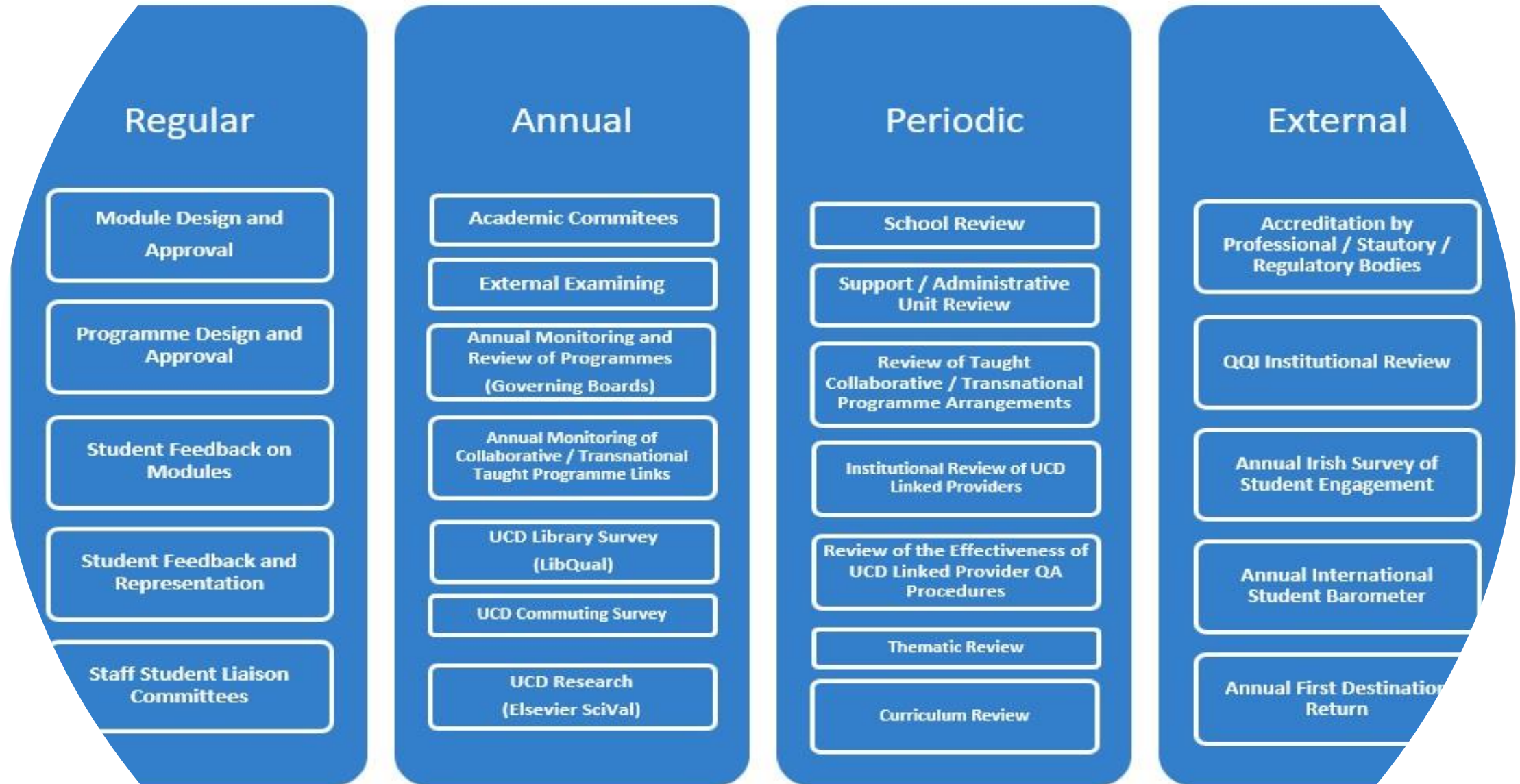
Findings

Conclusions and Next Steps

UCD – Who We Are

- **Founded in 1854**
- **Largest Public University in Ireland with over 37,000 students on our main campus in Dublin and overseas campuses**
- **Designated Awarding Body with own statutory degree awarding powers**
- **Programme offerings levels 6-10 on NFAQ or equivalent levels 5-8 on the EQF**
- **International Student Population of 30% from over 150 countries**
- **11,000 graduate students (19% graduate research)**
- **Leading research-intensive University**
- **Ranked 181 in the 2023 QS Rankings**
- **Networks include Una Europa, Universitas 21, EUA, Unica, CESAER, NoHA**

UCD Quality Review Framework



University places importance and value on student involvement in its processes and seeks to promote student engagement in quality activity wherever appropriate.

Internal Quality Review Process for Academic Schools



Each school is reviewed once every seven years



Evidence based approach with an enhancement focus



Process involves self-assessment, peer review, implementation and monitoring



Local and University oversight via the University, Senior Management and Governing Authority

- Each school prepares a self-assessment report (SAR)
- SAR is reviewed by a four-person review group
- Review group make a set of commendations and recommendations
- School implements in its quality improvement plan (QIP) and incorporates within the annual school planning cycle
- QIP progress monitored by University

Purpose of the Project

- To look at the outputs from the UCD review group reports over third cycle of academic school reviews, 2016-22
- To analyse the findings from these reports using data analytics and identify key themes at a cross-institutional level
- To identify areas of good practice, issues of common concern and how they might be addressed at a college or institutional level

Methodology

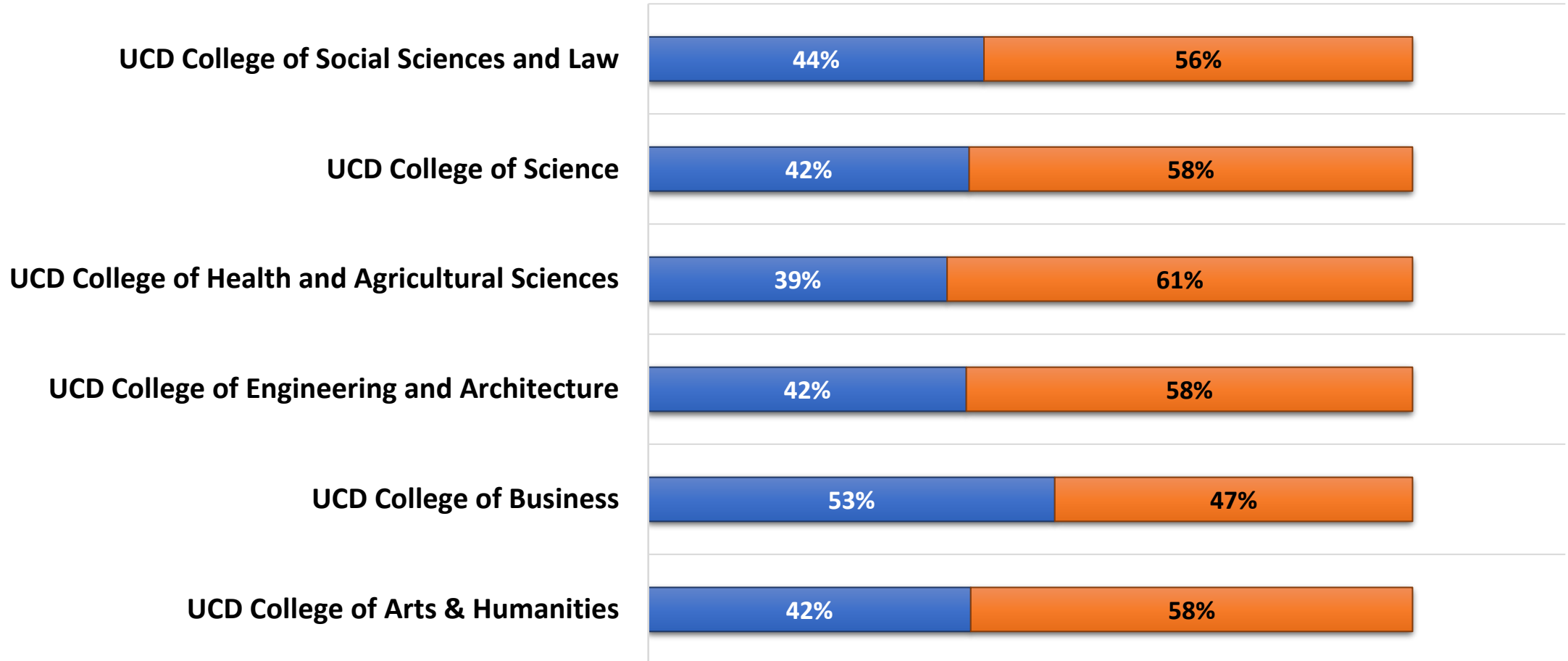
- Based on Academic School Review Group template
 - Nine chapter sections covering teaching, learning and assessment, curriculum development and review, staff and facilities, research activity, organization and management, management of quality and enhancement, external relations, support services, and collaborative education provision
 - Data from 35 schools within six colleges
- Extraction of commendations and recommendations from the review group reports
- Duplications eliminated due to review group report template structure
- Coding of the commendations and recommendations. Prioritized recommendations were tagged
- Approaches used in analysing the data
 - Quantitative Analysis of data using Excel
 - Qualitative Analysis using Nvivo

Quantitative Analysis Findings

- Total of 2,658 findings were identified, 1,126 were commendations (42%) showing good practice, 1,532 were recommendations for enhancement (58%)
- Breaking these down into the report chapter sections, almost half of the findings were raised under three sections of Teaching, Learning and Assessment, Staff and Facilities, Research Activity
- Looking at our review groups the percentage of Female:Male review group members was 50:50, evidencing that review group memberships was compliant with the University's policy on EDI and gender representation on committees
- Percentage of European:Non-European review group extern members was 78:22

% Commendations V's Recommendations across the 6 colleges

■ Commendations ■ Recommendation



Qualitative Analysis Findings

Theme name	What references it can include
Strategy and Planning	Considerations for direction of school in matters of school strategy and planning process, curriculum planning, programme design, finance, internationalisation, recruitment and staffing, research and relationships and partnerships with industry and other partners
Organisational Structure	The structure, management, and organisation of the school. Looks at leadership, management, and committee structures; facilities and resources; culture and environment; communication, accreditation where relevant, quality assurance; outreach and school reputation
Staff	Staffing and human resourcing across all categories of staff; staff development, promotion, and progression; academic workload and workload model, induction, orientation and mentoring for staff; equality, diversity and inclusion
Students	Feedback pertaining to the student population and student experience – perception of teaching, labs etc.; internships and career preparation; student recruitment, engagement, progression; information, guidance and support for students; graduates of the school and reputation; widening participation and access for a diverse cohort of students; general student satisfaction; student supports
Research	Research activity, publication level, output, funding sabbatical and research leave; research support, leadership, organisation and communication on research
Support Services	Comments relating to a range of support services within but predominantly outside the school from across the University
Curriculum	The content and structure of the curriculum; assessment and feedback on assessment; breadth and diversity of course offerings; diversity of delivery, modes of study

Table 2.6: The seven themes used to code the findings raised in the 37 school reviews.

**Percentage breakdown of references by theme which show
where the review group findings relate to**

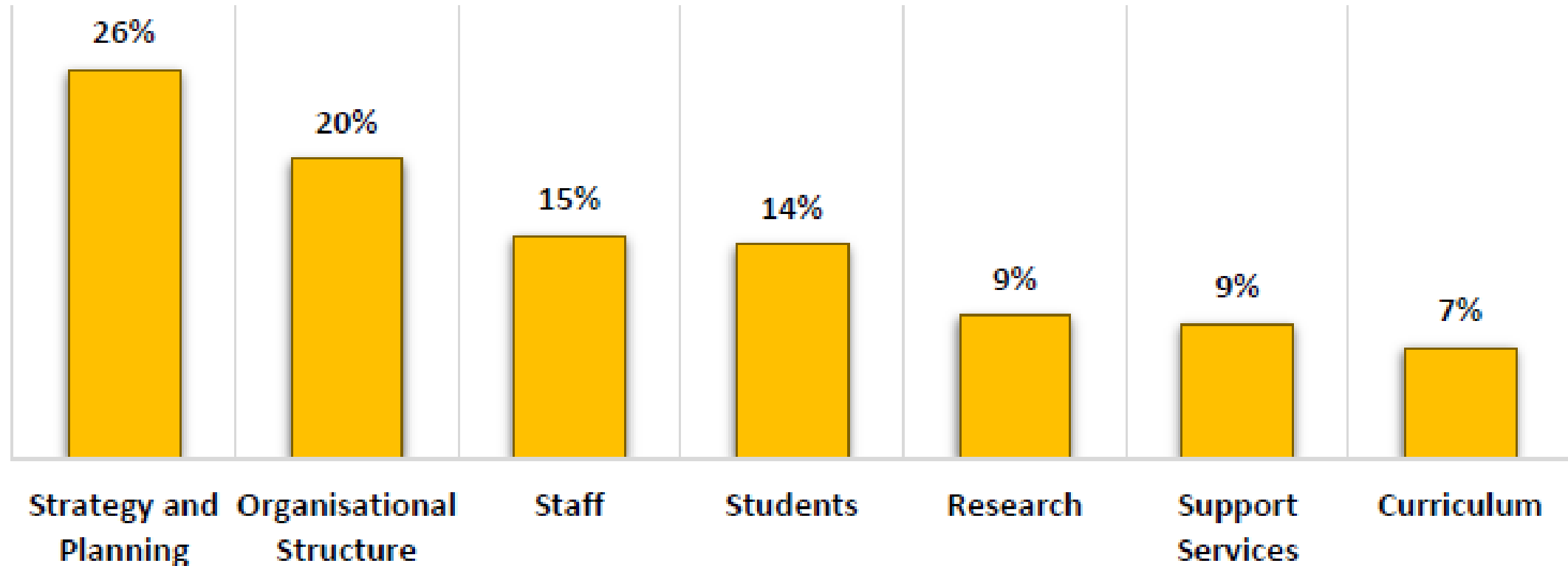
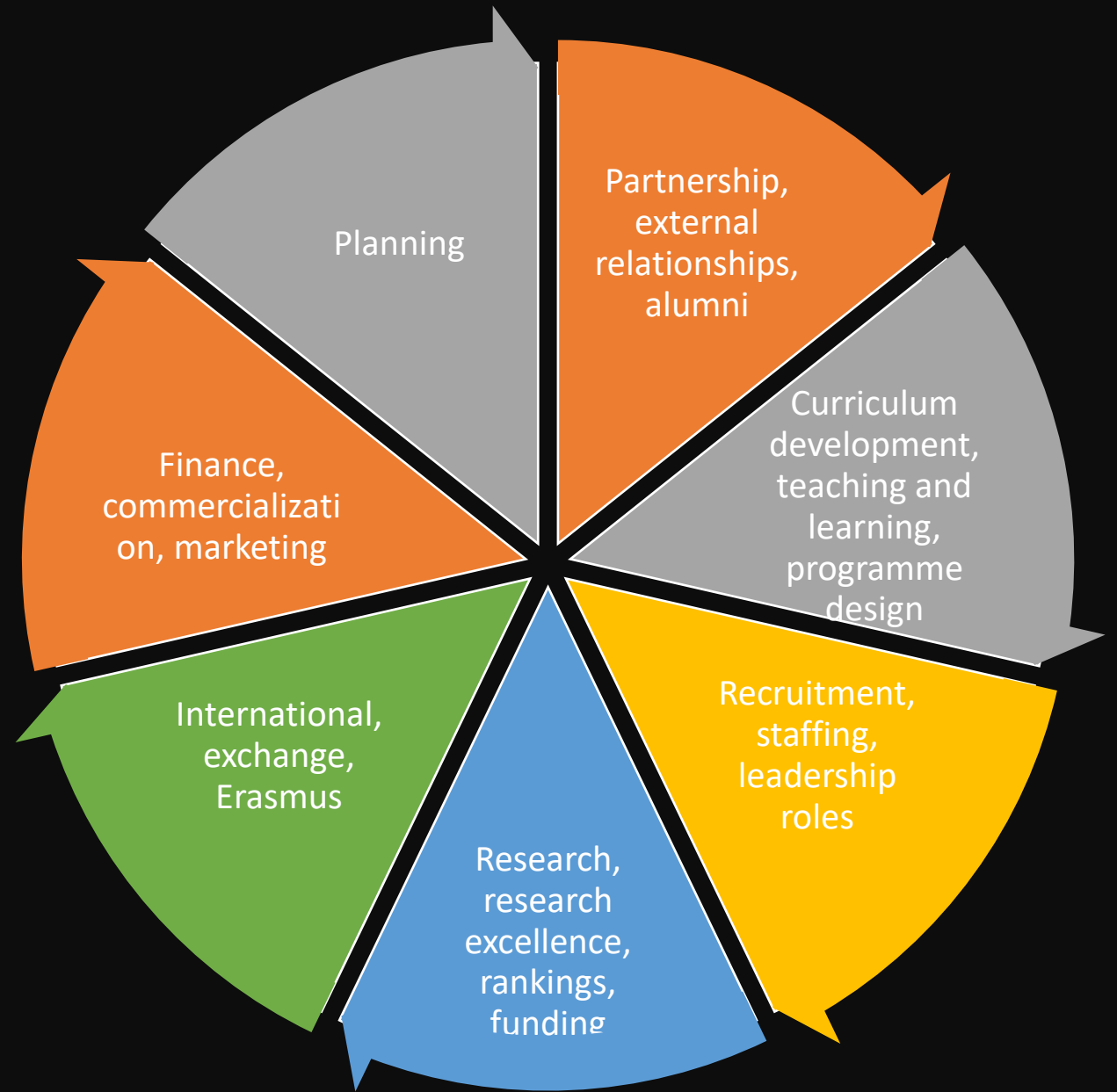


Figure 2.8: Percentage breakdown of references by theme which shows where the review group findings relate to.

Strategy and Planning theme – seven sub-themes



Percentage breakdown of references within commendations and recommendations for the subthemes of Strategy and Planning

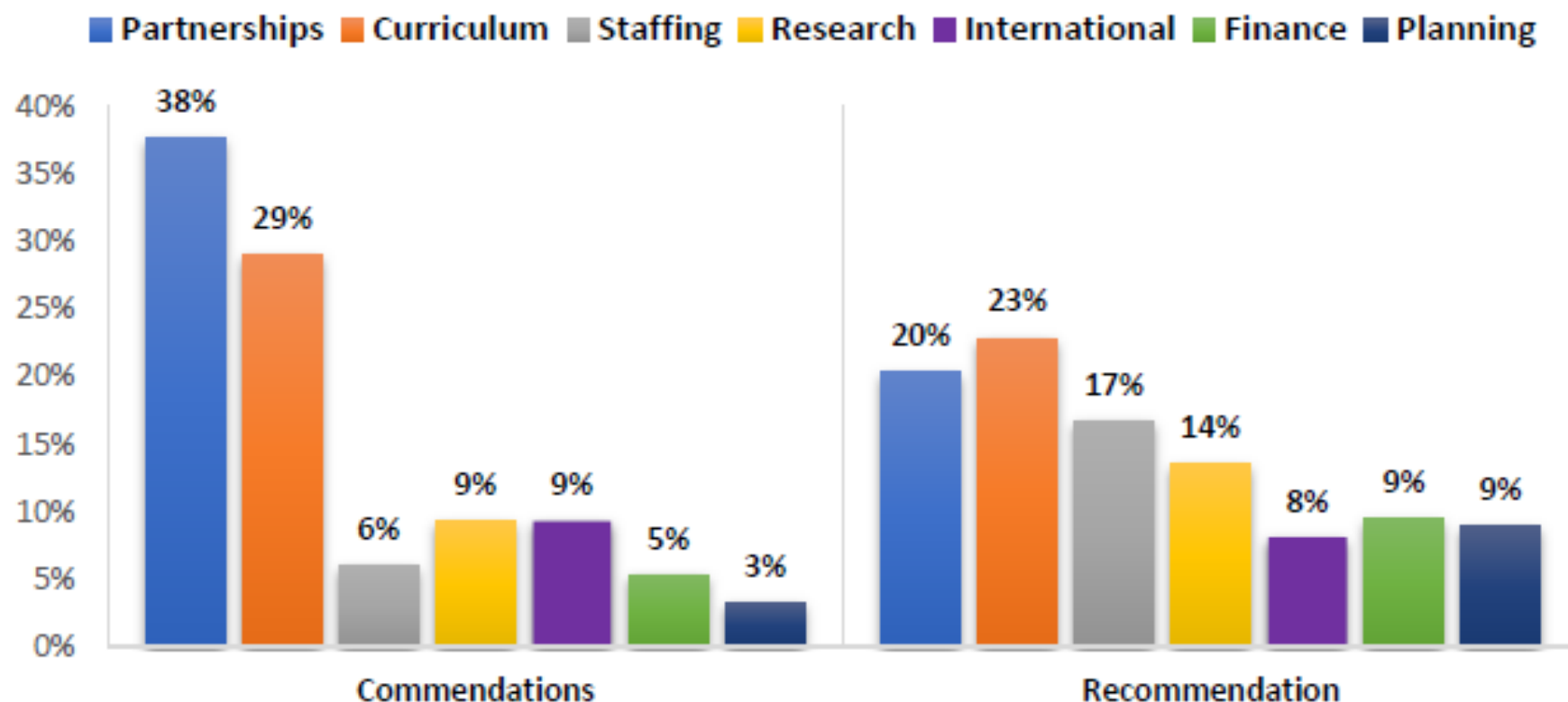


Figure 3.2: Percentage breakdown of references within commendations and recommendations for the sub themes of Strategy and Planning

Sub-theme Examples

- **Commendations**

The School is commended for developing strong partnerships with leading Irish and international education institutions via joint delivery of its degrees, its staff and student exchanges

..the School is commended on mapping all the undergraduate modules' learning outcomes to the programme outcome in order to offer students a fully outcome-based curriculum

- **Recommendations**

The School should ensure that they develop a clear vision and strategy over the next year in order that they can focus their organization and management on a strong base..... This will require engagement with all key stakeholders such as college, school staff, students, external stakeholders.....

Organisational Structures Theme

1. **Resources, facilities, space and equipment** (in graphs labelled as Resources). This includes references on infrastructure, adequate and suitable space for teaching, working, studying and social events, lab and instrument facilities, and building refurbishment.
2. **Leadership & committees** (in graphs labelled as Leadership). This includes references on organisational and management structure, school executive, governance structure and relationship between the schools leadership, and succession planning.
3. **Communication, quality assurance** (in graphs labelled as Communication). This includes references on information dissemination, quality of feedback and response rates, engagement of the school in the quality review process, school website, procedures, and reporting.
4. **School culture, collegiality and environment** (in graphs labelled as school culture). This includes references on inclusion, school culture and environment, sense of community, engagement and collaboration of staff, and commitment to providing a high-quality learning environment for their students.
5. **Outreach** (in graphs labelled as Outreach). This includes references on external engagement and outreach activities, partnerships within the community, and public engagement.
6. **Reputation** (in graphs labelled as Reputation). This includes references on reputation as collated through external stakeholder feedback, accreditations, prizes and awards and the schools' global profile, and brand.

Percentage of commendations and recommendation within each subtheme of Organisational Structure

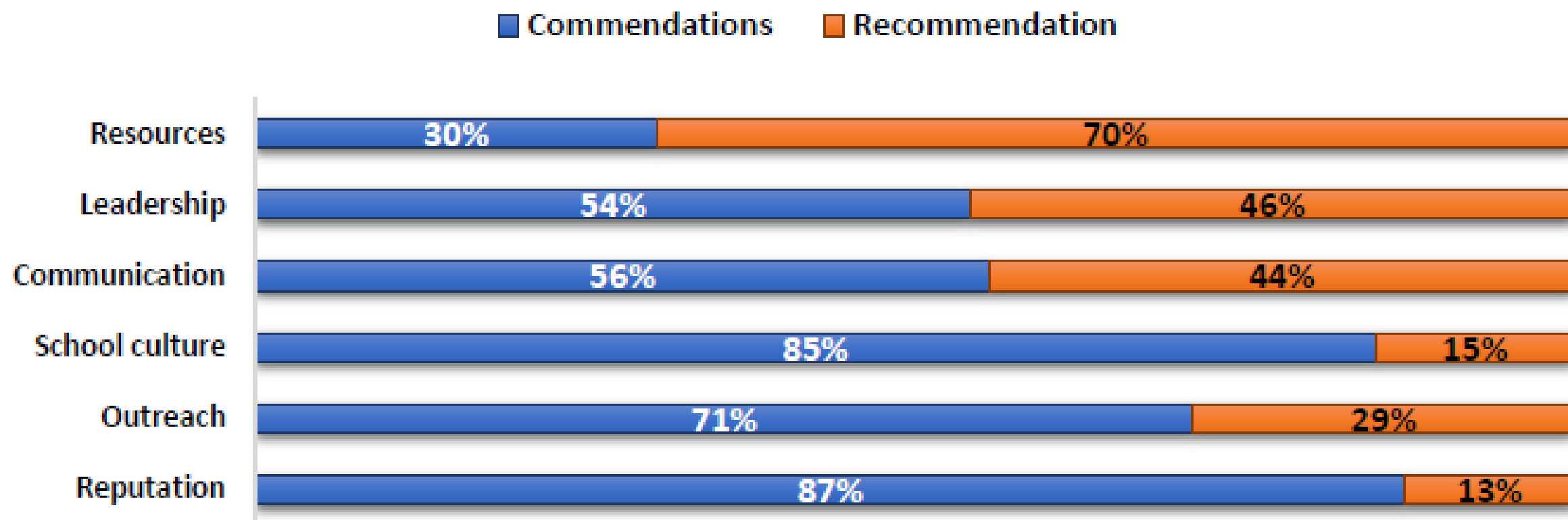


Figure 4.1: Percentage of commendations and recommendations within each sub-theme of Organisational Structure

Research Theme

1. **Research activity, publications, sabbatical, funding** (in graphs labelled as Activity and funding). This includes references on publications in journals, staff engagement in research activities, metrics to benchmark research performance, sabbatical leave, international co-authored papers, research income, and grants.
2. **Support, leadership, communication, organisation** (in graphs labelled as Support and leadership). This includes references on grant management support, seminars, communicating impact of research, measurement and management of research quality, and research supervision.
3. **PhD support, completion, funding** (in graphs labelled as PhD). This includes references on integration of graduate students into the schools research activities, graduate studies and research committees, monitoring progress of PhD students, doctoral study panels, professional development plans, and numbers of PhD and post-doctoral researchers.

Percentage breakdown of references within commendations and recommendations for the subthemes of Research

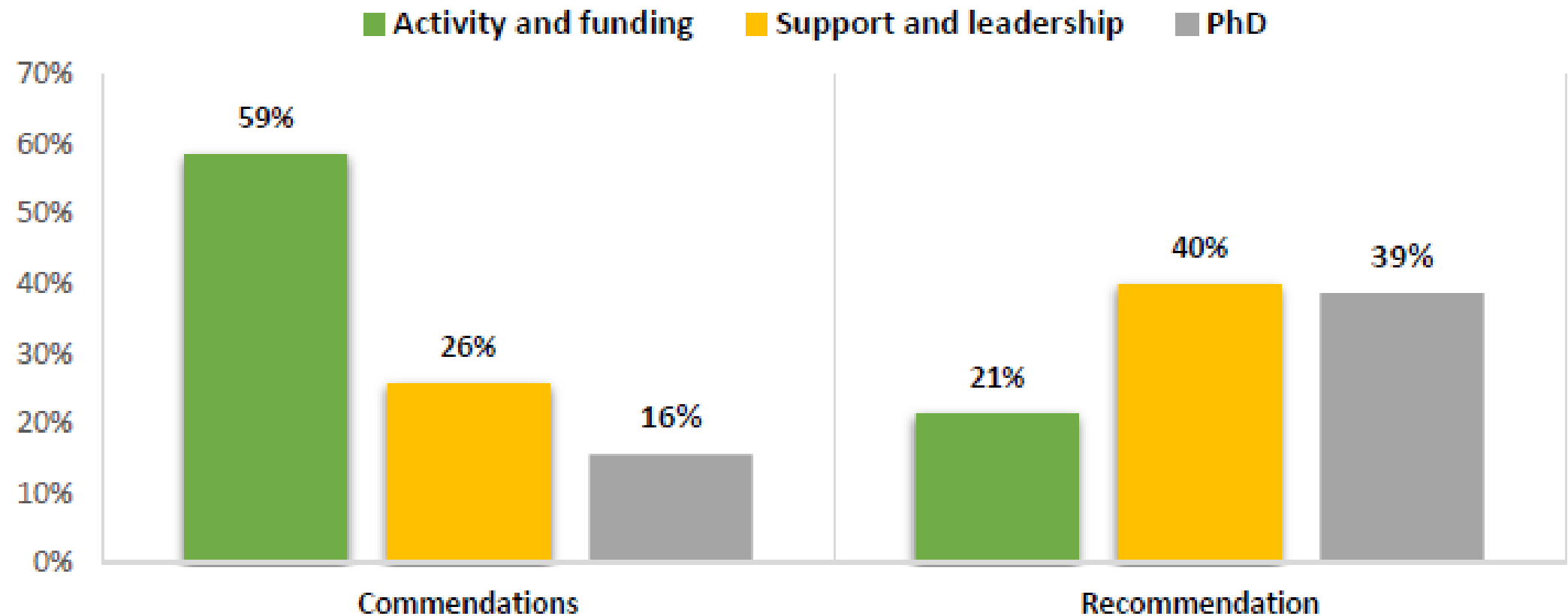


Figure 7.2: Percentage breakdown of references within commendations and recommendations for the sub-themes of Research

**Total number of references in relation to Equality,
Inclusion & Diversity trended over the 7 years of reviews**

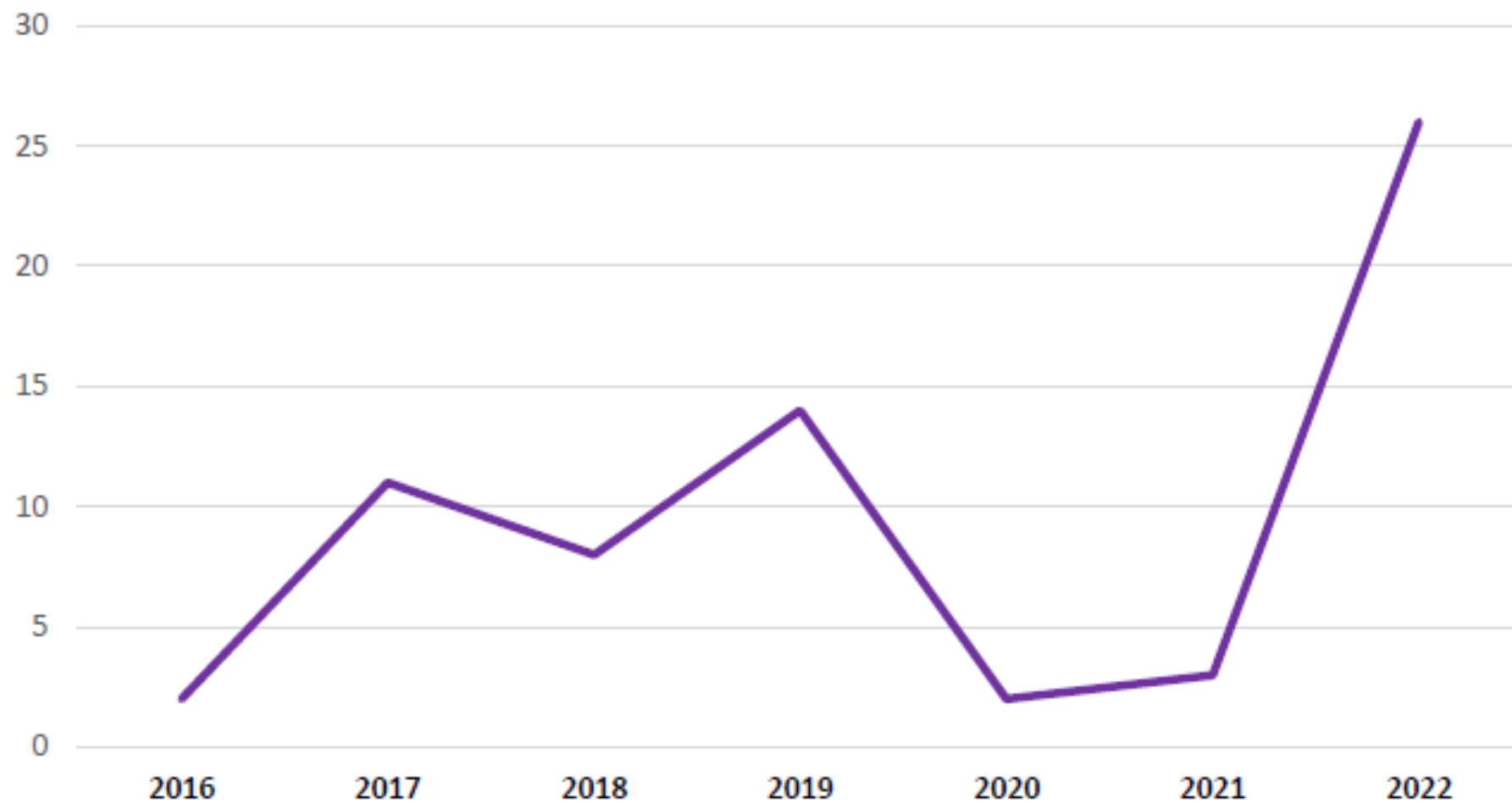


Figure 5.3: Total number of references in relation to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion trended over the 7 years of reviews.

Conclusions

Evidenced approach that the University's internal quality assurance process is embedded within the University and is enhancement focused, and supports the University's Strategic Plan

Ability of the University to adapt within a changing legislative environment at a national and international level during a period of substantial student growth and composition, funding challenges, and the impacts of a global pandemic.

It has driven changes to the University's Quality Framework, its policies and procedures.

Enabled shared learning and provided opportunities to share learnings and identify areas for collaboration across the University

Conclusions

Evidence that the activity of our School's reflects the University's values of Excellence, Creativity, Integrity, Collegiality, Engagement and Diversity

Engagement with learners is strong evidenced in review group reports showing high levels of student satisfaction and reflects the ongoing commitment of staff and the University to our learners through to graduation. Areas for enhancement include communications with students, student representation on committees, and closing the feedback loop

Resourcing and maintaining the quality of our facilities, space and equipment, teaching facilities is an ongoing challenge for the University.

Identifies areas for further work at an institutional level such as how we develop and socialize our University Strategy, the workload model, internal communications, enhancing existing engagement with the student voice and student representation on committees.

Next Steps

- College Thematic Reports
- Area specific reports
- Annual summary thematic report for University Senior Management Team
- Review of University's Internal Quality Review Guidelines

For more detailed information see the [Key Thematic Analysis of the 3rd Cycle of Quality Assurance Review Group Reports, 2016-2022.](#)