

Governing Authority Election 2026: Candidate Profile – Professorial



Professor Paul O'Connor
School of Medicine

Candidate Biographical Details / Sonraí Beathaisnéise an Iarrthóra

I am a human factors psychologist and member of the discipline of primary care, and Personal Professor in the School of Medicine. I am the Research Director of the Irish Centre for Applied Patient Safety and Simulation, and Director of the Diploma and Masters in Healthcare Simulation and Patient Safety.

My research, and teaching, are concerned with improving human performance and safety in high-risk work environments. I have carried out research in a wide range of high-risk industries (e.g. healthcare, offshore oil production), and the military (e.g. naval aviation, special forces), and taught students from many different backgrounds. I have worked in academic institutes in the UK, USA, and Ireland. I have received more than nine million euro of funding as a Principal/Co-Principal investigator and authored more than 200 publications.

Candidate Statement / Ráiteas an Iarrthóra

Over my career, I have worked in, and studied, high-performing teams across academia, industry, the military, and healthcare. These experiences has shaped my belief that good leadership is about removing barriers that prevent people from being successful in their job.

My decision to stand comes from my own experience, and many candid conversations with colleagues, about processes and working practices at the University of Galway that make work harder for all of us. I want to help address these issues. In my research I have seen how effective processes that reflect 'work as done', rather than 'work as imagined', positively impact individual and team performance.

I care deeply about this University and its staff and students, and I am ready to represent those voices. I will take a practical, evidence-informed, solutions-focused approach. I will advocate for clear, achievable improvements that reduce barriers, strengthen support, and improves how we all work every day.



Candidate Outline of Relevant Competencies / Cur síos an Iarrthóra ar Inniúlachtaí Ábhartha

I bring extensive experience that closely aligns with the competencies outlined for membership of Údarás na hOllscoile. My career demonstrates a sustained contribution across governance, strategy, research and leadership within higher education- both nationally and internationally.

I have considerable board and committee experience, including membership of Academic Council, School of Medicine Executive, and multiple national and international boards. I have contributed to ethics oversight, chaired postgraduate committees, and participated in strategic decision-making processes. I have led major institutional initiatives. I have written strategic reviews, led implementation planning, and engaged extensively with stakeholders across healthcare, academia, and policy sectors.

My executive leadership experience is evidenced through directing research centres, managing multidisciplinary teams, and leading postgraduate programmes with large student cohorts and revenue streams. I have extensive international experience- having worked in both the US and UK.

I have managed substantial research projects, with responsibility for budget oversight, funding allocation, and evaluation. In teaching, research, and innovation, I have demonstrated leadership through programme development, supervision of doctoral researchers, and written many grant applications and journal publications.

I believe that my experience reflects a strategic, evidence-based, and collaborative approach, aligning strongly with the governance, leadership, and expertise required to contribute effectively to the University's Governing Authority.