



Governing Authority Election 2026: Candidate Profile – Professorial



Professor Seán Leen
School of Engineering

Candidate Biographical Details / Sonraí Beathaisnéise an Iarrthóra

Seán is Established Professor of Mechanical Engineering since Jan 2009. He was Head of Discipline of Mechanical Engineering from 2011 to 2019. Seán obtained his BE (1st) in 1989 and MEngSc in 1992 in Mechanical Engineering from University College Galway. He worked in engineering industry in Galway from 1991 to 1995. He obtained his PhD in Mechanical Engineering at University of Nottingham in 1999 and worked as Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Reader and Associate Professor at University of Nottingham till December 2008.

Seán is passionate about university teaching, research excellence, the student experience and industrial collaboration. He has been external examiner at multiple national and international universities both for undergraduate and research degrees. He is a Chartered Engineer with Engineers Ireland. He is active in research for many years with more than 200 journal papers, similar number of international conference presentations, and about €10m in research funding. He serves on numerous journal editorial boards and is Editor-in-Chief of Journal of Strain Analysis for Engineering Design (Sage). His research has won numerous awards for best journal publications and presentations at international conferences. He has co-organised numerous international research conferences and symposia. He has supervised 39 PhDs and 5 research Masters.

Candidate Statement / Ráiteas an Iarrthóra

I have almost 30 years experience of teaching Mechanical Engineering at University of Nottingham and University of Galway, covering a range of topics including Engineering Design, Mechanical Analysis, Mechanics of Materials, Computer Programming, Engineer in Society, Individual and Group Design Projects. I served as Programme Director for BE, ME and MSc in Mechanical Engineering and was founder of the ME and MSc at University of Galway. I have been Head of Discipline of Mechanical (and Biomedical) Engineering for a significant period of time. I have served as Vice-Dean for Research and Graduate Studies in the College of Engineering and Informatics. I believe that I have an excellent understanding of the student experience.

I believe that in a research-led university like Galway, teaching and research go hand in hand. Therefore, I strive to maintain a strong research activity to inform my teaching. I also believe that universities should serve the community and industry. Therefore, I believe that engineering research should engage with industry. I aim to implement this in my own research projects. I



have significant experience in large collaborative research projects, including principal investigator (PI) funding by Research Ireland (Science Foundation Ireland), EPSRC, ESA, IRC, and industry totalling about €10m (€6m as PI), covering themes such as materials modelling with application to structural integrity and design (fatigue, fretting, wear, plasticity...) and manufacturing processes, for a range of applications including offshore, aerospace, power generation and energy.

These developments have contributed to (i) increased reliability, efficiency and sustainability of renewable energy systems for tidal/wind energy, (ii) increased efficiency and flexibility for gas-fired power generation technology for effective penetration of renewable energy with energy security, (iii) improved medical device technology for heart disease treatment (iv) new deepwater riser design technology to increase competitiveness for offshore engineering and (v) digitalisation of advanced manufacturing processes.

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

In addition to my experience in Teaching and Learning and Research and Innovation (see above), I believe that I have developed a strong understanding of university strategy requirements and navigating a pathway to international competitiveness in research and teaching. I have visited universities all around the world, and continue to collaborate with academics in a wide range of countries (UK, Belgium, France, Germany, US, Spain, China, Singapore etc). I am a Visiting Professor at Nanjing Tech University in China, which I have visited a number of times, representing University of Galway. I am currently external assessor for Portuguese Higher Education programmes in a number of universities.

I have previously and currently lead complex multi-partner research projects with academic and industrial partners from numerous countries. I am a team player with a strong sense of collegiality and a strong sense of duty of care to stakeholders, such as our students, local community, industry. My style of engagement is honest and hopefully balanced and dynamic. I consider engagement in meetings to be key to successful outcomes. I hope that my thinking style is creative, strategic and solution-focused, and that I listen to the views of others and engage in debate as appropriate to reach consensus and progress issues. I value evidence-based and analytical approaches and consider such approaches to be key to effective processes in university management. Equally, I consider objective and fair performance assessment to be critical to effective support for career development and support of staff and the university development and national and international competitiveness. I think improving the global recognition of our university is a key target to be addressed going forward and consider this to be a key mission statement that should inform and motivate our processes from the top down and bottom up.