Maynooth University

Aerial & Drone Oversight Committee

Terms of Reference

Version: 1
Effective Date: June 2023
Reviewed: University Executive
Next Review Date: June 2028

Aerial & Drone Oversight Committee (ADOC)

1 Introduction

Maynooth University (MU) is involved in overseeing a range Aerial and Drone operations as part of its Teaching and Research activities. Some of these operations are undertaken by licensed, experienced external 3rd party entities whilst others are carried out by fully trained, certified MU staff. The majority of Aerial Drone activity at MU is research orientated, carried out by external 3rd party aerial/drone companies, capturing various sensor data-streams, using a range of Optical, LiDAR, Radar and navigation sensors. Teaching activities usually revolve around demonstrating drone mapping capabilities with small classes (Geography) in safe, low-risk, off-site environments. There are various aspects that need to be addressed when engaging in Aerial and Drone activities – mostly dealing with regulatory compliance but also best practice. It is against this background, that the formation of this committee was first proposed by VPRI Prof. Msetfi (Meeting 15th June 2023) and this document sets out the Rationale, Membership, Scope, Implementation etc of same.

2 Aim

To ensure that all MU related Aerial and Drone activities – whether carried out by MU staff or external 3rd Party entities - are run in a safe, secure, responsible and cost-effective manner – with full regulatory compliance and adoption of best practice in all aspects.

3 Scope

Oversee the responsible, safe, efficient, cost-effective operation of Aerial & Drone Ops for MU Teaching & RTDI Activities.

- Aerial Activities: Light aircraft (Abbeyshrule Airfield) Mapping/Ops.
- Drone Activities: Various VTOL, Hybrid, Heavy-lift Mapping/Ops.
- Sensors: Optical (RGB, Multispectral, Hyperspectral, Thermal), LiDAR, Radar, Navigation.
- Majority of MU's Aerial/Drone Ops (Research Projects/Activities) are outsourced.
- Tender Competition for Aerial/Drone Services (ca. 100k pa) completed June 2023.
- Key Oversight elements oversight of;
  - Regulatory compliance (Safety, Risk, GDPR, Nuisance)
  - Quality of Service (Fit for purpose mapping services)
  - Value for Money

4   Terms of Reference

Regulatory Compliance
- Check Training, Qualifications & Experience.
- Check adequate Insurance.
- Check Flight Planning covering Management and reporting structure, Work Methodology, Safety, Security, Risk Assessment, Emergency Event handling, Privacy, Nuisance, Advising/Alerting, etc.
- Data Protection (MU responsible – Data Controller)
  - Privacy.
- Check Safety Management System (Sortie logging, Event logging, Managing events – reporting line).
- Check procedure for handling events (from GDPR breach to Injury, damage to property etc).

Quality of Service
- Independent Review of Data & Ops e.g., Platform/Sensor/Comms Tests.

Value for Money
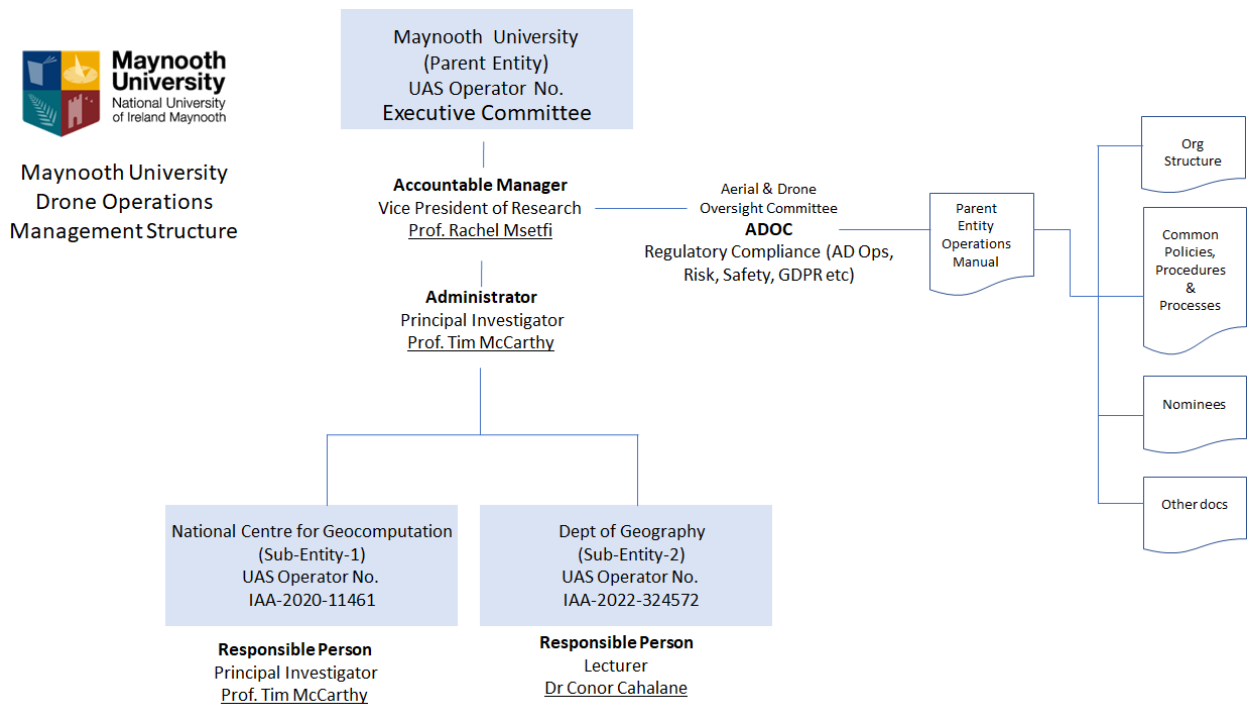- Check Tender, on-going costings.

5   Implementation

Membership:

Vice President for Research and Innovation (Chair)	Professor Rachel Msetfi
National Centre for Geocomputation (NCG)	Ann Marie Burke
National Centre for Geocomputation (NCG)	Stephanie Keogh
Data Protection Officer and Freedom of Information	Cecily Giles
Health & Safety	Daniel McDermott
Lecturer, Department of Geography	Dr Conor Cahalane
Principal Investigator, NCG & Department of Computer Science	Professor Tim McCarthy

Meetings, Reporting Structure & Actions

- Every six months with the VPRI.
- Review all Aerial/Drone Activities – check regulatory compliance and best practice.
- Produce Annual Report – sent to GA Audit.
- Alert VPRI to any issues either when they happen (within 24-hr) or at 6-monthly meeting - depending on nature/importance etc.
- VPRI to escalate any relevant ADOC events directly to President/Executive.

Draft structure of Management & Oversight of MU's Aerial & Drone Activities

6 Outputs
- Pro-active oversight of Aerial and Drone Activity (6-monthly meetings and updated reports).
- Annual Report.
- Maintenance of a Best Practice 'Blue book.'