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Title of the paper: ***Student and Staff Experience of teaching and learning in a bilingual University - Taking and teaching courses through Irish at the National University of Ireland, Galway, Éire***

Theme: Multilingualism at the Universities in practice
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ABSTRACT

The National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI, Galway), has had a statutory obligation to provide third level courses through the medium of Irish since 1929. This obligation has traditionally been fulfilled by encouraging and facilitating staff members who are competent in Irish to teach their courses through the medium of Irish where sufficient demand exists among the student body¹. As part of a review of its approach to delivering Irish-medium education an extensive study was carried out amongst lecturers/departments and students of the University in 2004. The aim of this research project was to examine the student and staff experience of teaching and learning through the medium of Irish in a bilingual university. A key objective of the study was to identify the type of supports regarded by lecturers as necessary to enable them to teach effectively through the medium of Irish and also to investigate the support needs of students who take courses through the medium of Irish at the University.

This paper will present the findings of this study. It will look at the challenges, as identified by both staff and students, facing the traditional model of the bilingual University as exemplified by NUI, Galway and will consider the need for a new model of Irish-medium University Education. It will present the views of both staff and students on their experience of working and studying in a bilingual University. The paper will conclude with a discussion of the implications of the research findings for the development of best practice models for bilingual and multilingual Universities.

¹ A fuller account of the background and history of bilingual teaching at NUI, Galway, will be given in a paper proposed by my colleague Joe Mac Donnacha.