

QUB BRCD

Making three innovation centres easier to understand, coordinate and take to market.

Queen's University Belfast is leading a £230m programme of innovation through the Belfast Region City Deal, spanning three major centres: AMIC in advanced manufacturing, iREACH Health in clinical research, and Momentum One Zero in secure, connected digital technologies.

For a seven-month strategic assignment alongside my existing Queen's remit, I worked directly with the Deputy Director of Strategic Programmes on a broad question: how should QUB BRCD explain its role, coordinate a complex portfolio, and support three very different innovation centres more effectively?

Portfolio Strategy & Innovation Communications • Strategic assignment within Queen's • March-October 2025

THE PORTFOLIO

AMIC | £100m advanced manufacturing innovation centre • iREACH Health | £62m+ integrated clinical research centre • Momentum One Zero | £70m digital innovation centre

AMIC

Advanced Manufacturing

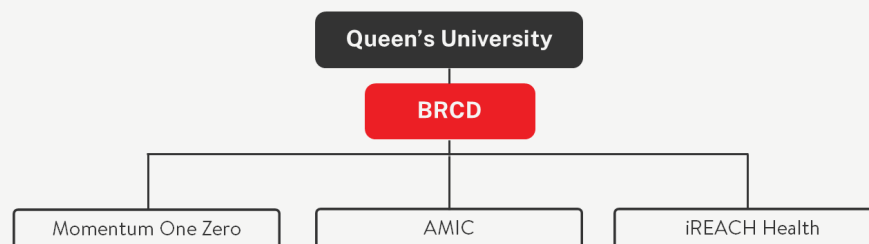
iREACH HEALTH

Clinical Research

MOMENTUM ONE ZERO

Digital Innovation

The Innovation Centres



- Each centre has a clear mission, distinct identity, and defined scope with unique expertise and capabilities.
- They cater to niche, informed audiences who expect nuanced, in-depth communication rather than simplified messaging.
- Increasing visibility, building trust, and engaging stakeholders through expert voices and strategic comms is a key priority.

01 STRATEGIC DIAGNOSIS

The problem wasn't a lack of activity. It was a lack of connective tissue.

Each centre had a clear mission and specialist audience, but the portfolio around them was fragmented. Centre communications operated largely independently; QUB BRCD itself was poorly understood; ownership was unclear; performance information was not centralised; and basic work was repeatedly being recreated instead of flowing through reusable processes.

That created two costs at once: external audiences struggled to see the bigger Queen's BRCD story, while internal teams spent disproportionate time and budget solving routine coordination, content and brand problems.

IDENTITY

People recognised the centres and the government-led City Deal, but QUB BRCD's distinct delivery and coordination role was much less visible.

GOVERNANCE

No single day-to-day structure joined BRCD leadership, centre teams and central communications.

PORTFOLIO VISIBILITY

Websites, social, media and centre storytelling did not consistently ladder back to the wider BRCD programme.

REPEAT WORK

Without shared templates, calendars, asset systems and clearer ownership, teams were spending too much time and money on basic delivery.

02 APPROACH

I treated it as a discovery-to-operating-model exercise.

The brief was deliberately broad, so my first job was to work out where the problem actually sat. I combined stakeholder conversations and meetings with centre directors, website and channel audits, stakeholder feedback, competitor and benchmark research, and existing performance data.

That work became a structured roadmap: understand the current state, identify audience and ownership gaps, define the future communications model, translate it into practical systems, and establish how success should be measured.

1. DISCOVER Audit channels, content, existing data and stakeholder perceptions.	2. MAP Clarify QUB BRCD's role, relationships, audiences and cross-centre dependencies.
3. DIAGNOSE Identify awareness gaps, duplicated effort, ownership gaps and under-used channels.	4. DESIGN Recommend governance, messaging, content themes, channels, roles and shared processes.
5. ENABLE Create reusable assets and support AMIC and iREACH at centre level.	6. MEASURE Define KPIs, reporting expectations and feedback loops for ongoing improvement.

**03 STRATEGIC ROADMAP**

The roadmap moved BRCD from 'who owns this?' towards a repeatable portfolio model.

My recommendation was not simply 'do more communications'. It was to create clearer portfolio governance: an overarching strategy, a single coordination point across leadership, centres and central communications, shared campaign and reporting systems, and a clearer relationship between centre-level stories and BRCD-wide impact.

The roadmap also segmented audiences rather than treating 'stakeholders' as one group. Internal Queen's staff, centre teams, government and funding partners, industry, public audiences and research peers each needed different levels of context, evidence and technical depth.

PROPOSED OPERATING MODEL

Clear ownership • shared communications calendar • cross-centre asset and reporting system • stakeholder updates • reusable explainer materials • case-study-led impact storytelling • centralised KPI tracking

04 AMIC + iREACH HEALTH

Strategy only mattered if it worked inside the centres.

Alongside the BRCD-level work, I supported AMIC and iREACH Health because neither had the same dedicated marketing capacity I had built around Momentum One Zero. That gave me a useful test: could the portfolio principles survive two completely different markets?

AMIC

Advanced manufacturing required an industry-facing proposition that could translate technical R&D capability into clear relevance for manufacturers, partners and wider stakeholders. I supported positioning, audience segmentation, website and social content, campaigns, events, collateral and stakeholder messaging.

iREACH HEALTH

Clinical research brought a different stakeholder environment: healthcare, academia, industry, patients and public-sector partners. I carried out the same research-to-positioning process, translating specialist research and infrastructure into accessible, audience-specific communications and campaign assets.

This was less about becoming the permanent marketing function for either centre and more about giving teams enough structure, assets and strategic direction to stop rebuilding the basics every time a new need appeared.

05 PORTFOLIO DELIVERY

What I delivered in seven months

The figures below are working portfolio estimates based on the relative scale of my Momentum One Zero remit and should be checked before publication.

3 innovation centres assessed	10+* stakeholder / leadership discovery sessions	8+* channels and audience touchpoints audited
12+* strategic recommendations / process improvements	8+* AMIC + iREACH campaigns or event workstreams supported	20+* reusable assets, templates or content outputs

06 IMPACT

The value was operational as much as strategic.

Before this work, teams were frequently solving the same basic problems from scratch: finding information, deciding who owned an output, briefing suppliers, creating new assets, or working out how a centre story connected to the wider BRCD programme.

The roadmap and centre support introduced a more reusable way of working. Responsibilities became clearer, joint planning had a stronger structure, centre activity could be connected to a portfolio narrative, and teams had templates and strategic foundations they could build from rather than repeatedly commissioning or recreating basic work.

That reduced avoidable delivery time and external spend while giving senior leadership a clearer framework for how BRCD should position itself and coordinate the three centres.

~30% estimated reduction in turnaround time for repeat communications tasks	~20% estimated saving on avoidable external creative / setup costs	Clarity portfolio roadmap connecting strategy, delivery and measurement
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THE PROJECT IN ONE LINE

I helped turn a loosely connected set of innovation-centre communications into a clearer portfolio model: research the audiences, expose the gaps, define the operating structure, and give teams reusable systems to deliver it.