Preparation for Quality Review

SWOT Exercises

Identification of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

An important step in the process of preparation of a Self-Evaluation Report for a unit in UCC is to conduct a 'SWOT' analysis whereby the unit considers its *internal* environment in terms of strengths and weaknesses and its *external* environment in terms of opportunities and threats.

The unit and the process of planning for its future will benefit most if it prepares well for the SWOT. Thus, it is strongly recommended that all staff in the unit give consideration to areas of strength, weakness, opportunity and threat/challenge for the unit, and, while also considering, the context of its contribution to the University's mission and goals, in advance of using the template below.

The Self-Evaluation Committee should liaise with the Facilitator to decide when to collect the feedback from individual staff members. The Facilitator can either ask everyone to fill it in for their own use at the SWOT session itself or can ask them to fill it in and send it to the facilitator who will use it to structure the SWOT.

Please therefore, complete the attached template and:

- Consider the unit as a whole and make the analysis full and frank.

- Consider the unit's contribution to the University's strategic goals, mission, vision and core policies.

- In each of the sections (**Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats**) consider the full range of relevant factors (Vision, Mission and Positioning, Teaching and Learning, The Student Experience, Organisation and Staffing, Research, External Engagement, Resources).

- Use as many pages for each section as seems appropriate.

- In advance of the session, please send a copy of the completed template to …………………., by e-mail to ………… to arrive by ………….

- Bring the completed template with you to the session on ………. where your findings will be used in small group discussions.

It is very important that the unit gets your input in advance if you cannot attend the session on ……….. If you are unable to attend, please complete the template and send a copy either by e-mail or share link with the SWOT session facilitator.

1. **Strengths**

A strength is something the unit is particularly good at (e.g. student focus, research output, external engagement, governance structures etc.).

A strength relates to the *internal environment* of the unit. It may help to consider strengths in the areas of strategy, structure, systems, staff, skills, style (culture and management style) and shared values.

- What do you consider to be the strengths of the unit?

- On what evidence do you base these judgements? If you don't have evidence how would you get it?

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2. Weaknesses

A weakness is something the unit is not good at (e.g. this could be attracting postgraduates, gaining research funding, communication channel etc.).

A weakness relates to the *internal environment* of the unit. It may help to consider weaknesses in the areas of strategy, structure, systems, staff, skills, style (culture and management style) and shared values.

- What do you consider to be the weaknesses of the unit?

- What seems not to work so well, and therefore needs improvement, rethinking or development?

- What is the evidence for these judgements? If you don't have evidence how would you get it?

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3.   **Opportunities**

An opportunity is some feature of the *external environment* the unit could take advantage of.

It may help to include in our consideration opportunities in terms of the political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal external environment. The external environment also includes any other unit within UCC.

- What do you consider to be the major external opportunities (institutional, local, regional, national and international) available to the unit now and in the future?

- What is your evidence?

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4.   **Threats**

A threat or challenge is some feature in the *external* environment that could damage the unit (e.g. a cut in funding).

It may help to consider threats in terms of the political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal external environment.

- What do you consider to be the external threats/challenges that confront the unit and the barriers to seizing the opportunities?

- What is your evidence?

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5.   **Preliminary recommendations for improvement**

In light of the foregoing, what then are the major objectives that you would recommend the unit sets to make necessary improvements? Be as full in your answer as possible.

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Staff Name (optional): _____