UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND, CORK

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT/QUALITY ASSURANCE

PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT

OFFICE OF VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
……………

ACADEMIC YEAR 2012/13

Confidential

30 May 2013

PEER REVIEW GROUP MEMBERS

Name	Affiliation	Role
1. Mr John FitzGerald	University College Cork	
2. Mr Seamus McEvoy	University College Cork	Rapporteur
3. Professor Elizabeth Treasure	Cardiff University, UK	Chair
4. Professor James Siedow	Duke University, USA	
5. Professor Caroline Whitacre	Ohio State University, USA	

TIMETABLE OF THE SITE VISIT

- The site visit timetable appears as Appendix 1 to this document.
- Comment on suitability and adequacy of the timetable.

The timetable was well designed and further refined during the review to enable the PRG to meet all of the relevant stakeholders and representatives, and to form a consensus first draft report with priority recommendations.

PEER REVIEW

- Methodology
  - List areas of primary responsibility of each member of the Peer Review Group:
    Chair: Professor Elizabeth Treasure, Cardiff University, UK
    Rapporteur: Mr Seamus McEvoy, University College Cork
- Site Visit
  - Comment on any aspects of the site visit as appropriate.

  It was useful to see the locations of the Office; and the site visits were informative for the PRG in its deliberations.

- Peer Review Group Report
- How was the Peer Review Group Report put together?

  The following points describe the drafting process employed:
  - Initial meeting and agreement of responsibilities by members of the PRG
  - Discussions to clarify, for the external reviewers, the local, national and European contexts to priorities and funding arrangements for research in the higher education sector in Ireland
  - Meetings conducted with staff from the unit and with a range of internal and external stakeholders
  - On-going discussions amongst PRG and exchange of individual reviewers' recorded notes throughout the review process
  - At the end of each day the PRG conducted a review of the information received, meetings with stakeholders and other relevant items that arose during that day
  - Priority recommendations were compiled and collated during the final afternoon in preparation for the presentation to staff of the OVPRI
  - The outline and structure of the report was agreed by the PRG and a first draft report was compiled at that point
  - Draft recommendations were discussed in detail and incorporated into the second draft report compiled during the evening following the presentation
  - Each reviewer adopted one or more headings to prepare detailed text which was then read, commented on and edited collectively via email
  - Final draft of report emailed to reviewers for final editing, corrections additions etc.

The PRG would like to thank the staff of the OVPRI and the wider University for engaging fully in the review process. Contributions were informative, reflective and contributed significantly to the identification of the overall recommendations. It became apparent to the PRG that members of the University and external stakeholders are strongly supportive of the mission and work of the OVPRI. There was universal recognition of the professionalism and dedication of all staff within the Office and the value of the services which they provide to the UCC community. The commitment of the current Vice President was widely acknowledged and many individual staff were lauded for their particular contributions.

The PRG concluded that the Office had moved from a reactive approach to research support to a proactive approach and noted that this view was shared by University staff. A further very positive finding was that the Office had moved from concentrating mainly on Science, Technology, Engineering and Medicine research activities to also embracing the Humanities and Social Sciences to a significantly greater degree.

The PRG noted the prior Research Quality Review (RQR) at UCC and commends the University for undertaking this exercise. It was further noted that the OVPRI has incorporated the findings of this review into its strategic and operational development planning.

OVERALL ANALYSIS

Self-Assessment Report

- *Comment on the Self-Assessment Report. In particular refer to any relevant issue that was not addressed in the Report. Include a comment on the completeness of the Report and the accuracy of the contents*

The PRG agreed that the SAR was a thorough document with a significant amount of supporting materials. The PRG acknowledge the significant amounts of time and effort that went into producing the document.

The layout and structure of the SAR was complex, which made it difficult for the PRG to identify the key findings of the self-assessment exercise and the full context in which the recommendations of the unit were made. The absence of an executive summary was noted, and the layout and sequencing of the SAR recommendations in the body of the report were confusing.

The external reviewers in particular would have benefitted greatly from inclusion in the SAR of the context and nature of the current financial crisis affecting the university.

It would also have been useful if the ordering of the recommendations was made according to priority and if they could have been divided into those recommendations that were actionable by the unit and those which required the input and/or the agreement of other individuals or units.

The following issues could have been outlined more clearly in the SAR:

- The role of the OVPRI in research governance and regulation
- Management and governance of ethical matters in the research context
- The reporting and communication relationships among the OVPRI, the research centres and units, and the four colleges

A significant omission from the SAR was the role of OPVRI in the area of research governance covering areas such as ethics, research misconduct, clinical trials and other compliance areas. The PRG probed this area extensively during their interviews.

The supplementary information, including figures and tables were very useful to the PRG. The organisational charts that were provided to the PRG at the commencement of the visit were valuable.

SWOT Analysis
- Comment on the overall analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) of the unit, both as addressed in the Self-Assessment Report and from the perspective of the Peer Review Group.

The completion of the SWOT exercise was clearly of benefit to the unit in the self-assessment process. The outcomes of the SWOT analysis were realistic and pragmatic, and were presented in a clear and concise manner. The recommendations and plans contained in the SAR and the OVPRI strategic plan were reflective of the outcomes of the SWOT process.

Benchmarking
- Comment on the benchmarking exercise carried out by the unit.

The selection of institutions for benchmarking included a good balance of national and international comparators and exemplars. The methodology used was sound and yielded valuable information. The outcomes of the exercise were reported in a clear and concise manner.

The PRG noted that the main element of comparison across institutions was resourcing levels, with a particular focus on staffing. In the other Irish institutions, it was reported that there was more than double the numbers of staff, despite the fact that all other indicators such as research income, number of academic staff, etc. were broadly similar. It would have been useful if this difference had been analysed in greater detail to identify the reasons for the discrepancy. As a consequence, the PRG was not confident in assessing the requests made elsewhere in the report for additional operational resources and staffing. Nevertheless, the benchmarking exercise clearly highlighted the very high levels of efficiency and effectiveness of this unit in relation to its peers in other institutions.

The PRG believes that the benchmarking exercise could have been used to more effect to benchmark processes, systems and metrics used to measure effectiveness; and to examine comparatively policies and other areas of best practice.

In general, the benchmarking exercise was not sufficiently detailed and robust and some of the recommendations therefore prompted greater scrutiny. The PRG explored these issues in interviews with staff and stakeholders.

Findings of the Peer Review Group
Comment, as appropriate, on any of the details in the Self-Assessment Report. The headings that the department were specifically asked to address were:

- Unit Details – This was sufficient for the purposes of the PRG
- Unit Planning and Organisation –The PRG would have liked more detailed job specifications of posts
- List of Client/User Groups for the Unit – This was sufficient for the purposes of the PRG
- Service Standards – The PRG felt it would be useful to see examples of standard operating procedures (SOPs)
- Staff Development – This was covered in some detail, however there was insufficient emphasis in the report on the role of performance management in the context of staff development
- Unit Budget – This was not provided in the SAR, but information was provided at the start of the visit. A five-year trend analysis and future projections would have been useful
- Unit Co-ordinating Committee & Methodology employed in the preparation of the Self-Assessment Report – This was sufficient for the purposes of the PRG

Peer Review Report on Quality Promotion Review of Office of Vice President for Research and Innovation.

PLEASE NOTE; Structure of the Peer Review report

This section of the report has been divided into two sections

Section 1

The PRG agreed at the outset of its deliberations that we would follow the headings as outlined in the template provided by the QPU. These headings are outlined below:

The Peer Review Group are asked to comment specifically on the unit under the following headings:

- *Governance*
- *Services*
- *Staffing*
- *Accommodation*
- *Financing*
- *Communications*
- *Implementation of recommendations for improvement made in Peer Review Group Report arising from last quality review*

Accordingly, the PRG have made detailed comments and findings under each of the above headings with a list of recommendations relevant to that heading at the end of the comments.

Section 2(a)

PRG comment on the recommendations made in the self-assessment report

In section 2 (a) of this report, the PRG outlines each of the unit recommendations listed in the self-assessment report and comments on each one individually.

Section 2(b)

Summary of PRG recommendations

For the purposes of clarity, all of the PRG recommendations outlined in section 1 of this report are repeated in tabular format at the end of this report in section 2(b). This is to facilitate the unit's response to the recommendations and the UCC Quality Promotion Committee's deliberations on the final report.

SECTION 1: PRG comments, findings and recommendations

This section includes the following subsections

1.1 *Governance*
1.2 Services
1.3 Staffing
1.4 Accommodation
1.5 Financing
1.6 Communications
1.7 Implementation of recommendations for improvement made in Peer Review Group Report arising from last quality review

1.1 Governance

Relationship of OVPRI to Colleges and Centres

Research occupies a critical position in the future direction of University College Cork (UCC). In the PRG report from the last quality review, the recommendation was made that the …"future role of the VP for Research should be that of a leadership role in developing research policies and strategies for all the areas of the University." Thus, in the strategic plan for UCC, *Sustaining Excellence (2013-2017)*, one of the five strategic goals is "Being a premier European university for research, discovery, innovation and commercialization". In recognition of that goal and in response to the last quality review, the VPRI is now a full time position, reports to the President and has a seat on the University Management Team (UMT). This reporting line had previously been to the Registrar, but changed to the President when the current VPRI assumed her position. The change in effort, reporting structure and the involvement in university management emphasize the importance of research and the OVPRI in the administrative structure of the university. In academic matters, the VPRI reports through the Academic Council Research and Innovation Committee (ACRIC) to the Academic Council. In the relatively newly designed college structure, each of the 4 colleges has a College Research Committee, the head of which is represented on the ACRIC. It is critical that the chair of ACRIC and the VPRI maintain a close working relationship, and it is clear from the meetings of the PRG that these two individuals are indeed closely aligned.

In the organizational chart for the university, the VPRI is represented as connected via a solid horizontal line to the UMT and ACRIC but not directly to the colleges or research institutes and centres. It was noted in the Self-Assessment document and from comments made by the leadership of UCC that clarifying the governance relationship between these entities is a matter of utmost importance. To provide a more fluid linkage, it is desirable for the OVPRI to connect in a more direct and formal fashion to the research missions of the Colleges and Institutes.

Dynamics of Interactions between Research Support Services (RSS) and Research Staff

The Self-Assessment Report makes a strong case that the research stature of UCC has grown considerably in the past decade as measured by number of publications, citations and external funding awards. The recent example of the Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Centres awards in which UCC leads 4 centres, co-leads a fifth and is a partner on two more centres strongly supports this case. The current OVPRI has played a major role in the increase in research stature and particularly in the SFI applications. The PRG heard many laudatory stories about the engagement by the staff in the OVPRI, particularly in the RSS, with regard to proposal preparation. The RSS staff appear to be engaging with faculty primarily on a 1:1 level, which has proven fruitful. As the research enterprise grows at UCC, it is important to keep the personal touch between the RSS and the researchers, but the time may come when the level of engagement needs to shift to RSS staff engaging more with groups of researchers.

Policies on Research Compliance

The issue of research compliance came up in discussions of the PRG and it was apparent that there was some confusion about where authority resides. After discussion with the President and the Corporate Secretary, it was clarified that policy matters reside with the VPRI whereas implementation, investigation and disciplinary matters reside with the Corporate Secretary. It was noted that these matters, i.e., conflict of interest, human subjects research, animal subjects research, general compliance, research misconduct, need to be clarified to the larger university community. As UCC increases its industrial engagement as part of the SFI Centres programme, it will be important to have these policies clearly identified as to who is responsible for implementation.

<u>We recommend that:</u>

- The Chair of each College Research Committee and the Directors in the major research institutes and centres should have a dotted line reporting relationship to the OVPRI. This will enable maximal communication between all of the research entities at UCC.

- The OVPRI has achieved success in engagement with research staff through personal interactions. Going forward as the UCC research enterprise grows, it will be important to continue to introduce more formal group interactions in order to meet the demand of increased proposal submissions.

- Matters of research compliance (conflict of interest, human subjects research, animal subjects research, general compliance, research misconduct, etc.) need to be clarified to the greater university community with regard to what office bears responsibility for oversight and action. The procedures need to clearly identify how violations of these policies should be treated.

- On the UCC Research website, there are 20 policies pertaining to various aspects of research from Code of Conduct to Third Party Contracting. Every effort should be made to bring these policies up to date and in line with current practices.

1.2 Services

The PRG found there to be strong support for the present VP and the staff within her office. Many compliments were paid to the services provided and the PRG is impressed with the examples given of truly excellent service. There were frequent references by those interviewed to the way in which the office had moved from a reactive to a proactive mode of working. The office was cited as the most efficient and effective office in Ireland with respect to its strategic interaction with government and funding bodies as well as within UCC, and also in its day-to-day operational working. There were many compliments directed at the staff with many named individually.

Strategic development and implementation of research policy

The VP was acknowledged and thanked for having played a key role in developing national research strategy. However, the office was very concerned as to its ability to influence the nature of the research being undertaken within UCC in academic units. The PRG believes that research strategy is best developed by the college research committees feeding into ACRIC and then to AC. The PRG feels that, provided the recommendations above on Governance are implemented, this is the appropriate method to use at this time in UCC.

The PRG recognized the outstanding success of UCC in SFI's recent research centres programme and the office is to be congratulated on its part in achieving this. UCC's success in the SFI PI round was less successful. Much was made of the upcoming Horizon 2020 and applications to the ERC. To date UCC's applications to ERC have been unsuccessful. There is need to review the support given to develop PI type applications if success of the ERC type is to be achieved.

Research support office

There is very strong appreciation throughout the University for the support given to researchers in the identification of funding opportunities and for advice in the preparation of proposals. The PRG were given examples of the detailed feedback given to researchers that was appropriate to their level of career. It was noted that areas of the university which had previously felt ignored now felt included in the development of research proposals. One college had their own research support post and this person was identified as interacting well with the central office. The PRG notes that requests for presentations and training are responded to rapidly.

Office of Technology Transfer

The OTT provides a number of functions to UCC staff and students as well as to businesses broadly within the Cork region. The office provides support in a number of directions, including case managers working with researchers to identify and develop IP opportunities. However, the researchers whom the PRG met with had not experienced the case managers working with them. This could mean that IP opportunities are not being identified across the whole university. The university may wish to consider expanding the number of case managers when finances allow. The incubation unit was reported to be approximately 66% full with a variety of styles of unit available. There was strong support for UCC from the stakeholder group, but they wanted faster turnaround on paperwork.

Relationships with Colleges, institutes and research centres

It was noted that the University does not yet have formal organizational and governance arrangements in place for research institutes and research centres, leading to confusion in relation to these issues.

Relationships with central services

The OVPRI is relatively self-sufficient in most of its administrative and operational needs. It was noted that some functions, primarily financial and legal are performed by their 'home' offices.

The dedicated research support unit in the Finance Office appears to be working well. There is scope to ensure that the costing process is optimized to ensure all possible areas are charged through grants. This is of particular importance when applying for EU funding.

One key issue raised by all stakeholders was the time taken to obtain legal approval for contracts for research and for subsequent licensing agreements. This was a consistent and repeated finding. However, it was explained to the PRG that the current system of legal advice and assessment of risk was relatively new to UCC. Previously, there was very little control over who signed off these agreements exposing UCC to two key risks: unknown liabilities and loss of IP and ensuing income. It was noted that OVPRI would wish to have delegated levels of authority to undertake straightforward issues. Researchers expressed the view that two to three weeks was an acceptable turnaround time. The PRG felt that this was unrealistic but that one month should be the norm with all but rare exceptions being completed in six weeks.

The PRG commends the practice of holding a weekly meeting (known locally as the 'Monday Committee') which reviews the progress of all of these matters on each application in progress.

We recommend that:
- The 'Monday Committee' should produce minutes and actions which are available to all involved, including support offices and the appropriate researchers, so that it can be seen where in the process these matters lie.
- SOPs be developed to ensure efficient and effective working between departments.

- Meetings of the UCC Finance Committee should be scheduled frequently enough to ensure that disposal of university property (including intellectual property) can be handled expediently.
- UCC should review its costing of grants to ensure that all services and facilities that may be charged as direct costs relevant to the grant should be included in applications.
- The coverage of the university by the case managers should be reviewed to ensure that the institution does not miss IP opportunities.
- UCC should undertake a strategic review of its ability to compete for PI type funding.
- Formal organizational and governance arrangements should be put in place for research institutes and research centres.

1.3 Staffing

Research Support Services: Staffing is an issue that was raised repeatedly in the Self-Assessment Report, most frequently in the context of benchmarking the size of the UCC office of Research Support Services (RSS) and the Office of Technology Transfer (OTT) against the research offices at two other prominent Irish universities, University College Dublin (UCD) and Trinity College Dublin (TCD), among others. The primary comparison involved the total number of staff members in the research offices relative to the total annual research expenditures; the latter value being roughly comparable among the three Irish universities. Based on these comparisons, research office staffing at both TCD and UCD is roughly twice that at UCC, a case used repeatedly in the Self-Assessment Report to drive home the point that UCC RSS is understaffed. Faced with these numbers, there is no question that UCC RSS is understaffed relative to the two Dublin universities, although the PRG did have a concern that the headcounts used for each university does not always reflect comparable functions within each institution.

During the course of PRG interviews with a large number of staff, faculty, and administrators, the PRG heard uniformly high levels of praise for the RSS staff members, which speaks to the very high quality of the workforce currently resident in RSS.

However, when interviewing members of RSS and others, the fact of their being stretched by their workloads was frequently mentioned. There were also reports of the office being overwhelmed by proposal submissions almost to the point of missing deadlines. Indeed, we frequently heard of the amount of time RSS staff members spent with faculty and others to provide detailed reading and critiquing of their proposals. This was true not only of large center proposals but also more simple single-investigator proposals. Such detailed work on research proposals is generally seen by the PRG as not only very time consuming but also more of a "research development" function, which is not a service commonly associated with the budget review and proposal submission functions of most research support offices.

It would therefore appear to the PRG that some of the heavy workloads currently seen in RSS reflect, to some extent, the VPRI's goal of allowing proposal development to become more heavily embedded in the activities of RSS. In that regard, it appears to the PRG that two of the new FTEs requested in the Self-Assessment Report (Recommendation #5) involve the addition of research development staff and not research administration managers *per se.*

Despite concerns about the extent of current RSS understaffing, PRG did recognize that the anticipated appearance of significant additional research monies associated with the funding of seven SFI Centre proposals involving UCC investigators will represent a significant increase in the amount of money running through the UCC research enterprise. This will certainly increase demands on the RSS staff and for that reason the PRG recommends that as the overall UCC research enterprise increases in the future, some of the increased indirect costs associated with the research growth should be earmarked for RSS staff expansion, to the extent possible. This approach is seen by the PRG as being particularly applicable to the two requested RSS positions and the legal/finance person.

Office of Technology Transfer: Before considering OTT staffing, it is worth pointing out that the PRG was impressed with the space currently occupied by OTT adjacent to active incubator space in the Western Gateway Building (WGB). Not only are the offices and meeting rooms relatively new and well-appointed, but being located in WGB places OTT in the middle of the highest density of new start-ups in the Cork area. The PRG sees this as an excellent juxtaposition of technology transfer development (OTT) and operation (the start-ups).

The level of staffing associated with OTT is presently 8.5 FTEs and this staff not only carries out the work associated with technology transfer functions and material transfer agreements but also helps RSS with negotiating contract-related research agreements and material transfer agreements. OTT staffers were included in the headcounts used to benchmark UCC against the other Irish universities. However, the PRG did not come away with a sense that the OTT staff is currently stretched as thin as the other staff appears to be.

Overall Unit Staffing: The PRG notes that the Self-Assessment Report calls for the addition of six new staff members with varying responsibilities in research administration some within RSS and OTT, some not. The six positions requested in the SAR include:

> Two new research support staffers in RSS
>
> A new staff member to provide support for the UCC/Teagasc Initiative
>
> One new post with skills in both legal and finance
>
> A permanent Research Information Officer
>
> One new post dedicated to tracking and facilitating funding opportunities within the EU.

We recommend that:

As the overall UCC research enterprise increases in the future, some of the increased indirect costs associated with the research growth should be earmarked for RSS staff expansion, to the extent possible. This approach is seen by the PRG as being particularly applicable to the two requested RSS staffers and the legal/finance person.

- The PRG is supportive of hiring a liaison person to work EU funding opportunities. The PRG understands that this person will pay for him/herself over time by being able to be written into the direct costs on EU-funded projects and the PRG agrees that this is appropriate.
- The PRG is supportive of hiring a dedicated Research Information Officer. We note that in the absence of an identified source of funding, several current RSS staffers have been and can continue to carry out this role on an *ad hoc* basis.
- The justification for hiring an individual to work on the joint UCC-Teagasc Initiative was not well developed in the Self-Assessment Report making it difficult for the PRG to strongly support this post unless the post is self-funding.
- Researchers need to adhere to deadlines and grants that have not been through basic checks should not be submitted.

1.4 Accommodation

The OVPRI is currently divided into two operational units, Research Support Services (RSS) and the Office of Technology Transfer (OTT).   The RSS is accommodated in the centre of campus as part of the Food Sciences complex. The OTT is located in the Western Gateway Building, adjacent to space for start-up companies and with assignable conference room space in the meeting room. It was felt by the PRG that there is considerable advantage to having the OTT staff located close to the entrepreneurs. A recommendation was made in the past quality report to review the location of office space and in the

current Self-Assessment document to relocate the RSS and OTT offices to a single central accessible location for ease of communication. However, there are considerable advantages to both locations and it is recommended that the individual units should remain where they are. The PRG recognizes that additional staffing may be required in the short term and in the longer term and there may be a need to grow the footprint of both facilities. Plans should be made to expand in the current two locations. Communication is improving between the two units, with regular meetings of the staff members and leaders. Overall, camaraderie amongst the staff members in the office seems to be excellent.

<u>We recommend that:</u>

- There should be no change in the location of the RSS and OTT office sites as there are considerable advantages to where they are located presently. Plans should be made for increasing space allocations within the existing two locations.

- The meeting room in the WGB should be maintained as flexible space with priority booking afforded to the OTT.

1.5 Finance

The PRG noted the extremely challenging economic conditions currently affecting HE funding in Ireland. However, UCC's impressive performance in consistently maintaining high levels of funding for research was also noted – both as a proportion of university non-Exchequer income and compared to other Irish HE institutions.

The recent success in attracting significant funding (in the order of €200M) through the SFI Research Centres Programme will serve to further consolidate UCC's position nationally and represents a significant opportunity for investment in the university research infrastructure. The PRG strongly recommends that great care be taken in deploying judiciously the overhead associated with these programme grants.

In particular, some of the general overhead-funded Strategic Research Fund should be assigned for a three-year period to support the introduction of the following posts on the basis that the proportion for equipment etc. (non-staff) would increase in due course from increased research performance:

> Research Support Staff x 2
> Research Information Officer
> EU Support Staff x 1

These posts should become self-funding in due course.

The OVPRI should be centrally involved in all decisions in this regard and particular attention should be placed on maximising the value of sharing resources, facilities and equipment across multiple centres where feasible.

The current university policy of not allowing the OVPRI to carry overhead and other non-Exchequer funding forward to the next financial year should be changed. This does not encourage strategic investment and longer-term programmatic planning for infrastructure development. In particular, income generated by the OTT from licence and incubation activities should be retained and carried forward by the OVPRI at end of year.

The PRG was informed that the average level of overhead return by UCC is 17%. This is lower than it should be for an institution of UCC's profile, and immediate steps need to be taken to improve on this in order to ensure the viability of research at UCC. In addition, and to assist in this regard, the PRG

recommends that in the grant application process, where possible, costs should be included as direct costs in all research grant applications.

Consideration should be given to developing the UCC Data Warehouse or the Agresso financial management system so as to provide improved timely financial information on projects and Centres and on overall research funding at UCC.

Funding from Enterprise Ireland for the Case Managers appears to be uncertain after the end of the current phase in 2015. The university needs to determine its preferred model for this type of support, taking into account the IUA-led model being developed in parallel at sectorial level. Whatever the preferred approach, it would appear that a more sustainable basis for providing the service is required in order to retain high-quality staff and ensure high and consistent levels of service.

The scale of UCC's Strategic Research Fund limits the degree of influence which the OVPRI can exert over research strategy and activity across the institution. While it is acknowledged that there is little scope at present for movement of monies from another budget area, the UMTO should recognise that this is the most influential means of strategically priming and supporting specific research activities in UCC.

We recommend that:

- Some of the overhead-funded Strategic Research Fund should be assigned for a three-year period to support the introduction of the above posts on the basis that the proportion for equipment etc. (non-staff) would increase in due course from increased research performance
- The average rate of overhead achieved is too low and needs to be improved over time. This should be a KPI of the unit and of the colleges
- Consideration should be given to developing the UCC Data Warehouse or the Agresso financial management system so as to provide improved timely financial information on projects and Centres and on overall research funding at UCC.
- Income generated by the OTT from licence and incubation activities should be retained and carried forward at end of year
- Funding from Enterprise Ireland for the Case Managers appears to be uncertain after the end of the current phase in 2015. The University needs to determine its preferred model for this type of support, taking into account the IUA-led model being developed in parallel at sectorial level.
- Where possible, research support and administrative costs should be included as direct costs in all research grant applications.

1.6 Communications

Effective communication is critical to the success of all aspects of the work of the OVPRI. For this to happen, communication must operate well at the level of the VP with the President and individual UMT members; with relevant other officers and committees; internally among all staff of the Office; between the Office and the entire university community; with external funding and awarding agencies; and with the diverse range of other external stakeholders.

In general terms, all of these relationships appear to enjoy effective regular communication, and seem to benefit in particular from the strong level of personal affinity and familiarity amongst key individuals.

Within the OVPRI, communication is also aided by a clear structure and reporting lines, including with the Biological Services Unit (BSU). Communication between the OVPRI, the Colleges and Research Centres is vulnerable to a relatively informal and as yet unresolved governance framework. This places considerable challenges on all parties to achieve agreement on important institutional strategic research issues, largely on the basis of personal contacts and predispositions. Steps should be taken to formalise the connections between these bodies, and to determine effective Centre Governance model/s to better

support strategy development. This issue is addressed in more detail elsewhere in this report under 'Governance'.

Where formal reporting or decision-making lines do not exist, such as between the OVPRI and the Colleges, their Research Committees and the ACRIC, there nevertheless appears to be a strong culture of effective regular communication, consultation and cross-involvement in routine business. It is noted that this translucent culture enables communications to flow in both directions: both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down'. This serves the formulation of policies and strategies through a consensus approach and to assist in top-level executive decision-making where this may be needed.

Internal communication within UCC is aided greatly by a highly effective and informative regular *UCC Research News* newsletter.

The work of the OVPRI requires a high degree of cooperation between the Office and other internal service and support units at UCC. Accordingly, communication between these units is critical. The PRG found that communication between the Office and OCLA and the Finance Office in particular to be very effective.

The PRG found strong evidence of effective links to national and international bodies, programmes and initiatives (including also professional associations) in the research domain. This is highly important in bringing information into the University from external sources but also in ensuring UCC's prominence in influencing national and international programmes, policies, etc. Links between individual research groups and researchers and European and international bodies were less strong and consideration needs to be given to improving communication in this regard.

We recommend that:

- There is a perception amongst some research staff that there is an inordinate delay in processing issues arising in the contracts approval process, particularly issues requiring legal attention. The OVPRI and OCLA should communicate clearly to the research community their expectations regarding timely submission of applications and contacts and also outline the expected standard turnaround time. In addition, proposers should be able to check readily - online if possible - on the progress of their proposal/contract while it is under review.

- Communication within the OVPRI and OCLA about the status of contract negotiations would be aided by ensuring that the weekly monitoring group meeting is minuted and actions are recorded and tracked by the group. The group should also consider inviting other staff to participate as may be useful to them.

- Steps should be taken to formalise or otherwise the connections between the OVPRI, Colleges and Research Centres, and to determine effective Centre Governance model/s to better support strategy development.

- The biannual meetings of Directors of Research Institutes, Centres and Units provide an important forum for communication and agenda-setting. It is of concern that attendance at this forum is variable and some means should be found to ensure that all Directors or their deputies can attend.

- To ensure consistent dissemination of research successes, the OVPRI should consider issuing quarterly reports to the UCC community detailing recent research funding awards.

- Information about overhead rates does not appear to be universally known. All UCC staff should be circulated with the latest rates and these should be placed on the OVPRI website.

- Revision and upgrading of the OVPRI website, as the primary channel of information communication and dissemination, should be treated as an urgent priority.

- The University should provide opportunities for the OVPRI to present the real benefits of University-based research to the public *via* news and social media, and to government.

- Development of researchers' knowledge and skills in applying and accessing European and international funding needs to be undertaken.

1.7 Implementation of recommendations for improvement made in Peer Review Group Report arising from last quality review

The last quality review of the unit was in 2004. In 2010, a review of the Office was conducted which built on the 2004 review and took account of the significant national developments occurring in the intervening period. A review of the actions arising from the 2010 review was conducted in early 2013. At this point most of the recommendations of both reviews have now been fully implemented. The PRG is of the view that some further work is required on: the commercialisation of research activities in the University; the unit website; and communication structures between the OTT and RSS. These are also addressed through recommendations in this PRG report.

SECTION 2(a) Comment from PRG on the recommendations for improvement made by the Office in the Self-Assessment Report.

Abbreviations

PRG: Peer Review Group

QPC: Quality Promotion Committee

OVPRI: Office of Vice-President Research & Innovation

QIP: Quality Improvement Plan

	Recommendations for improvement made by OVPRI	PRG Finding/Recommendation
	Process	
1	The ***agility*** of the university in terms of contract agreement is a cause for concern; enabling the OVPRI to take decision in relation to risk rather than the current consensus approach across diverse stakeholders would be more efficient. Further monitoring and reduction of the period of contract negotiations is strategically important to UCC. We recommend:	The process of review all contracts on a weekly basis is supported and this information should be made readily available to all relevant people.
1.1	Building in continuous improvement to the current processes involving the internal office group.	PRG agrees with this recommendation.
1.2	Empowering the OVPRI to lead on decision making within defined limits would substantially enhance UCC's agility and competitiveness in research.	The PRG strongly supports the OVPRI in its initiative to develop a suite of standard templates to speed up the contract review process. We believe that OCLA should continue to lead in this process and that the review process should be subject to agreed turnaround target times.
1.3	Further empowering the OVPRI to undertake timely decision-making in relation to external engagements and contracts through the embedding of legal and financial expertise within the office.	We refer to the PRG recommendations regarding services including those recommendations that relate to SOPs and the circulation of minutes for the Monday committee meeting this will allow researchers to have access to up to date information on the status of their proposals. The PRG acknowledge that it may be necessary to increase resources as the number of research contracts increases.

2.	Much effort has been invested in the past two years in developing effective working relationships at the University management level – cascading the partnership approach down through the teams to ensure the partnership model and trust are embedded to deliver sufficient agility throughout the organisation is recommended.	The PRG endorses the need for strong and effective working relationships between the units involved.
3	On-going review and development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that ensure delivery of enhanced and seamless research support service to the University community is recommended.	PRG agrees with this recommendation.
	Staffing	
4	In line with national and international benchmarks, appointment of a dedicated Research Information Officer is recommended to maximise the impact of research metrics in strategic planning and to fulfil the University's obligations in terms of reporting.	This should be looked at in the context of the overall university data management activities. The PRG recommends that discussions are held with central IT services regarding what central supports are available in this regard.
5	Benchmarking has clearly demonstrated that the resourcing of the OVPRI is inadequate to provide dynamic proactive research support to match the ambition of the University as a research led institution. We recommend the expanded resourcing of a research support function office as detailed in the UMT approved RSS re-structuring plan to align more closely with the scale of research activity in the institution based on national and international benchmarks. This will position the institution to take full advantage of the untapped potential of the UCC research community and ensure our continued competitiveness.	We are sympathetic to the results of the benchmarking study however we recommend further investigation into the optimum staffing required for the office to perform its role within the university.
6	Stabilising the Technology Transfer function through appropriate internal staffing to complement the Enterprise Ireland investment is vital and recommended.	The function of the OTT is essential to the economic downstream effects of the university and its international reputation. While we support the all-Ireland funding of a 'hub and spoke' model, we consider that there remains a risk that the funding may not be renewed beyond its current contract. This uncertainty creates insecurity amongst staff and the university needs to have contingency plans should the funding cease to protect this

		essential funding.
7	Servicing the UCC-CIT-Teagasc OTT consortium will require additional staffing and streamlining of decision-making and approval processes.	PRG has insufficient evidence to support this recommendation and recommends that this addition only be undertaken when a clear line of funding can be identified.
8	Implementation of structured professional development and career progression for Research Administrators and investigation into the development of an accredited, formal qualification is recommended. We envisage taking a leadership role, at a national level, in the development of this agenda.	PRG supports this in principle however given the current high demands on the office, any decision to allocate resources to this should be carefully considered.
9	Introduction of career development opportunities that allow OVPRI staff to remain within the research administration function is recommended, where the specialist experience that they have earned will be utilised and developed thus ensuring maximum benefit for the institution and its research community.	Consideration should be given to providing career development opportunities for staff within the offices.
	Research Support Initiatives	
10	Additional steps need to be taken to improve UCC's ERC performance. These need to be informed by a detailed analysis of the outcomes of recent call activity, in conjunction with implementing lessons learnt from the recent benchmarking visit to a major FP7/ERC beneficiary (KU Leuven).	PRG agrees with this recommendation. Consideration also needs to be given to prioritising PI type grant support – an area in which UCC has been less successful.
11	Development of clear governance models for RICUs, which define the relationships with the formal academic structures, is recommended.	PRG agrees with this recommendation.
12	We recommend that the scale of the Strategic Research Fund is expanded and its implementation in terms of scope and range continues to be guided by strategic principles with OVPRI oversight in order to focus the allocation of resources on support of the research mission of the University and on delivery of the Research and Innovation Strategy.	PRG supports the current top slicing and, as university increases its research income, then the amount will increase proportionately.
13	Specific targeted investment in PhD studentships is strongly recommended as a strategic mechanism to expand research activity.	PRG supports an increase in PhD numbers to help the university to reach its PhD target.

	Environment		
14	Relocation of the RSS and OTT offices to a single central accessible location is recommended. The layout and centrality of the offices should be conducive to the effective provision of a high quality integrated service and reflect the strategic importance of the research function within the university.	Following the discussion with staff, the PRG believes that this is not necessary and possibly counterproductive. The PRG were impressed with the close proximity of the OTT to the incubation and Ignite units.
	Strategic decision making	
15	An enhanced role of the OVPRI in strategic decision making around resource allocation to align with the university's objectives as internationally competitive research led institutions.	We have made alternative recommendations regarding this proposal in the PRG recommendations under the governance heading. See also recommendation 12 above.
	Communication	
16	The OVPRI is a critical conduit for communication between diverse internal and external stakeholders in relation to funding opportunities, partnerships and innovation. Constant upgrading of communication mechanisms is essential given the complexity, central focus and importance of this communication mission.	PRG agrees with this recommendation.
17	Continuous adjustment of communication mechanisms is required to assure effective interaction between the two offices in order to *ensure* that the research community sees OVPRI services adding value in a seamless and integrated manner.	PRG agrees with this recommendation.
18	Introduction of 'Away Days' for all OVPRI staff on a biannual basis focussed on strategic and operational issues is recommended.	PRG agrees with this recommendation.
	Metrics	
19	Develop a national leadership position in establishment, implementation and interpretation of Research and Innovation metrics.	This is a laudable aspiration, however given current resource and other priorities of the office, it may be difficult to achieve at this point.

Section 2(b). Summary of PRG recommendations

For the purposes of clarity, all of the PRG recommendations outlined in section 1 of this report are repeated in tabular format below. This is to facilitate the unit's response to the recommendations and the UCC Quality Promotion Committee's deliberations on the final report.

- *Recommendations for improvement that the Peer Review Group would like to make in addition to those made by the unit*

Recommendations of the PRG in respect of governance
• The Chair of each College Research Committee and the Directors in the major research institutes and centres should have a dotted line reporting relationship to the OVPRI. This will enable maximal communication between all of the research entities at UCC.
• The OVPRI has achieved success in engagement with research staff through personal interactions. Going forward as the UCC research enterprise grows, it will be important to continue to introduce more formal group interactions in order to meet the demand of increased proposal submissions.
• Matters of research compliance (conflict of interest, human subjects research, animal subjects research, general compliance, research misconduct, etc.) need to be clarified to the greater university community with regard to what office bears responsibility for oversight and action. The procedures need to clearly identify how violations of these policies should be treated.
• On the UCC Research website, there are 20 policies pertaining to various aspects of research from Code of Conduct to Third Party Contracting. Every effort should be made to bring these policies up to date and in line with current practices.

Recommendations of the PRG in respect of services
• The 'Monday Committee' should produce minutes and actions which are available to all involved, including support offices and the appropriate researchers, so that it can be seen where in the process these matters lie.
• SOPs be developed to ensure efficient and effective working between departments.
• Meetings of the UCC Finance Committee should be scheduled to ensure that disposal of university property (including intellectual property) can be handled expediently.
• UCC should review its costing of grants to ensure that all services and facilities that may be charged as direct costs relevant to the grant should be included in applications.
• The coverage of the university by the case managers should be reviewed to ensure that the institution does not miss IP opportunities. UCC should undertake a strategic review of its ability to compete for PI type funding.

Recommendations of PRG in respect of staffing
• As the overall UCC research enterprise increases in the future, some of the increased indirect costs associated with the research growth should be earmarked for RSS staff expansion, to the extent possible. This approach is seen by the PRG as being particularly applicable to the two requested RSS staffers and the legal/finance person.
• The PRG is supportive of hiring a liaison person to work EU funding opportunities. The PRG understands that this person will pay for him/herself over time by being able to be written into the direct costs on EU-funded projects and the PRG agrees that this is appropriate.
• The PRG is supportive of hiring a dedicated Research Information Officer. We note that in the absence of an identified source of funding, several current RSS staffers have been and can continue to carry out this role on an *ad hoc* basis.
• The justification for hiring an individual to work on the joint UCC-Teagasc Initiative was not

well developed in the Self-Assessment Report making it difficult for the PRG to strongly support this post unless the post is self-funding.
• Researchers need to adhere to deadlines and grants that have not been through basic checks should not be submitted.

Recommendations of the PRG in respect of accommodation

• There should be no change in the location of the RSS and OTT office sites as there are considerable advantages to where they are located presently. Plans should be made for increasing space allocations within the existing two locations.
• The meeting room in the WGB should be maintained as flexible space with priority booking afforded to the OTT
.

Recommendations of the PRG in respect of finances

• Some of the overhead-funded Strategic Research Fund should be assigned for a three-year period to support the introduction of the above posts on the basis that the proportion for equipment etc. (non-staff) would increase in due course from increased research performance
• The average rate of overhead achieved is too low and needs to be improved over time. This should be a KPI of the unit and of the colleges
• Consideration should be given to developing the UCC Data Warehouse or the Agresso financial management system so as to provide improved timely financial information on projects and Centres and on overall research funding at UCC.
• Funding from Enterprise Ireland for the Case Managers appears to be uncertain after the end of the current phase in 2015. The University needs to determine its preferred model for this type of support, taking into account the IUA-led model being developed in parallel at sectorial level.
• Where possible, research support and administration costs should be included as direct costs in all research grant applications.
• Income generated by the OTT from licence and incubation activities should be retained and carried forward by the OVPRI at end of year.

Recommendations of the PRG in respect of communication

• There is a perception amongst some research staff that there is an inordinate delay in processing issues arising in the contracts approval process, particularly issues requiring legal attention. The OVPRI and OCLA should communicate clearly to the research community their expectations regarding timely submission of applications and contacts and also outline the expected standard turnaround time. In addition, proposers should be able to check readily - online if possible - on the progress of their proposal/contract while it is under review.
• Communication within the OVPRI and OCLA about the status of contract negotiations would be aided by ensuring that the weekly monitoring group meeting is minuted and actions are recorded and tracked by the group. The group should also consider inviting other staff to participate as may be useful to them.
• Steps should be taken to formalise or otherwise the connections between the OVPRI, Colleges and Research Centres, and to determine effective Centre Governance model/s to better support strategy development.
• The biannual meetings of Directors of Research Institutes, Centres and Units provide an important forum for communication and agenda-setting. It is of concern that attendance at this forum is variable and some means should be found to ensure that all Directors or their deputies can attend.
• To ensure consistent dissemination of research successes, the OVPRI should consider issuing quarterly reports to the UCC community detailing recent research funding awards.
• Information about overhead rates does not appear to be universally known. All UCC staff should be circulated with the latest rates and these should be placed on the OVPRI website.

• Revision and upgrading of the OVPRI website, as the primary channel of information communication and dissemination, should be treated as an urgent priority.
• The University should provide opportunities for the OVPRI to present the real benefits of University-based research to the public *via* news and social media, and to government.
• Development of researchers' knowledge and skills in applying and accessing European and international funding needs to be undertaken.

APPENDIX 1

OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH & INNOVATION

PEER REVIEW GROUP SITE VISIT
TIMETABLE

In Summary

Monday 29 April:	The Peer Review Group (PRG) arrives at the River Lee Hotel for a briefing, followed by an informal dinner with staff members.
Tuesday 30 April:	The PRG considers the Self-Assessment Report and meets with staff, student and stakeholder representatives. A working private dinner is held that evening for the PRG.
Wednesday 1 May:	The PRG meets with relevant officers of UCC. An exit presentation is given by the PRG to all staff members. A working private dinner is held that evening for the PRG in order to finalise the report. This is the final evening of the review.
Thursday 2 May:	External PRG members depart.

Monday 29 April 2013	
16.00 – 18.00	Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group. Briefing by: Ms. Fiona Crozier, Director of Quality Group agrees final work schedule and assignment of tasks for the following 2 days. Views are exchanged and areas to be clarified or explored are identified. **Venue: Tower Room, River Lee Hotel, Western Road**
19.00	Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group, the Vice President for Research and Innovation and members of the Co-ordinating Committee Dr. David Corkery, Operations Manager; Dr. David O'Connell, Director of Research Support Services. Dr. Tim Roche, Director of the Office of Technology; Professor Anita Maguire, Vice President for Research and Innovation **Venue: Jacobs on the Mall**

Tuesday 30 April 2013	
	Venue: Tower Room 1, North Wing, Main Quadrangle UCC *(unless otherwise specified)*
08.30 – 08.45	Convening of Peer Review Group
08.45 – 09.30	Professor Anita Maguire, Vice President for Research and Innovation
09.30 – 10.30	Group meeting with all staff **Venue: Council Room, North Wing, Main Quadrangle.**
10.30 – 11.00	Tea/coffee

11.00 – 13.00	**Private meetings with individual staff members** Group 1 11.00: Anthony Morrissey 11.15: David O'Connell (need 30mins) 11.30: 11.45: David Corkery 12.00: Siobhán Cusack 12.15: Fiona O'Shea 12.30: Deirdre Kearney 12.45: Terri Deane **Venue: Tower Room 1**	**Private meetings with individual staff members** Group 2 11.00: Patrick Morrissey 11.15: Tim Roche (need 30 mins) 11.30: 11.45: Sonia Monteiro 12.00: Kevin Dalton 12.15: Mairéad Mooney 12.30: Lucy Wallis 12.45: Myriam Cronin **Venue: Tower Room 2**

13.00 – 13.50	Working lunch
13.55 – 14.40	Visit to core facilities, escorted by Professor Anita Maguire and Dr. David O'Connell (Research Support Services), and followed by Dr. Tim Roche (Office of Technology Transfer and Incubation Facility) Western Gateway Building.
14.55 – 15.10	Dr. Seán McCarthy - Hyperion
15.15 - 15.30	Dr. Bettie Higgs, Deputising for the Vice-President for Teaching and Learning
15.30 – 16.15	Heads of Colleges *or their nominees* -Professor Frédéric Adam, Head of Graduate School, College of Business & Law and Financial Services Innovation Centre -Professor Patrick Fitzpatrick, Head, College of Science, Engineering & Food Science and Centre for Global Development/Boole Centre for Research in Informatics -Professor Paddy O'Donovan, Vice-Head (Research), College of Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences -Professor Helen Whelton, Vice Head College of Medicine & Health and Oral Health Services Research Centre
16.15 – 16.45	Representatives of Researchers *(senior)* Professor Finbarr Allen, Dean of Cork University Dental School & Hospital

	Professor Claire Connolly, Head, School of English Dr. Paul Galvin, Head of Life Sciences Interface Group, Tyndall National Institute Professor Alan Kelly, School of Food & Nutritional Sciences & Dean of Graduate Studies Professor Cian O'Mathuna, Senior PI in Tyndall National Institute Professor Paul O'Toole, Dept of Microbiology and Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre Professor Ivan Perry, Dept Epidemiology & Public Health and HRB Centre for Health & Diet Research Professor Nabeel Riza, Dept of Electrical & Electronic Engineering and Tyndall National Institute
17.00 - 17.15	Dr. Conor O'Carroll, Director (Research), Irish Universities Association Teleconference call to: 087-7978425
17.15 – 18.00	Representatives of stakeholders Mr. Diarmuid Cahalan, Co-Director, Open Innovation Partners Mr. Martin Corkery, Senior Development Advisor, Enterprise Ireland Mr. Michael Delaney, Vice-President for Development, Cork Institute of Technology Ms. Siobhan Finn, Cork Innovates Mr. Declan Fox, Magellan Partners Mr. Michael Loftus, CEO MitaMed Mr. Neil Gordon, Cork Business Innovation Centre Mr. Ray O'Connor, Regional Director South, Enterprise Ireland Dr. Jennifer Roper, Alimentary Health Dr. Niall Smith, Head of Research, Cork Institute of Technology **Venue: Staff Common Room, North Wing, UCC**
19.00	Meeting of Peer Review Group to identify remaining aspects to be clarified and to finalise tasks for the following day, a followed by a working private dinner. **Venue: Tower Room, River Lee Hotel**

Wednesday 1 May 2013
                                 Venue: Tower Room 1, North Wing, Main Quadrangle UCC
                                                      (unless otherwise specified)	

08.15 – 08.45	Professor Paul Giller, Registrar and Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs
08.45 – 09.30	Dr Michael Murphy, President
09.30 – 09.50	Private review team meeting
10.00 – 10.15	Ms. Mary Cusack, Research Assistant, Finance Office
10.15 – 10.45	Mr. Michael Farrell, Corporate Secretary
10.45 – 11.15	Tea/coffee
11.15 – 11.45	UCC staff members Mr. Ger Culley – Director of IT Services (*will be a few mins late arriving*) Professor Brendan Dooley – Geography

	Ms. Nora Geary – Deputy Corporate Secretary, OCLA Ms. Breeda Herlihy – Manager Institutional Repository, Boole Library Ms. Colette McKenna - Director of Library Services Mr. Niall McAuliffe – Capital Projects, Buildings & Estates Mr. Kieran McManamon – Biological Services Unit Dr. Tanya Mulcahy – College Manager, SEFS Mr. Mark Poland – Director Buildings & Estates
11.45 – 12.15	Representatives of Researchers (early & mid-career) Dr. Andy Wheeler – School of Biological, Earth & Environmental Sciences Environmental Research Institute Dr. John O'Donoghue - Business Information Systems Health Information Systems Research Centre Dr. Patricia Kearney – Epidemiology & Public Health Dr. Marcus Claesson, Microbiology Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre Dr. Caitríona Ní Laoire – Applied Social Studies Institute for Social Sciences in the 21st Century (ISS-21) Dr. Andreas Ruschhaupt – Physics
12.15 – 12.45	Representatives of Academic Council Research and Innovation Committee (ACRIC) and Students (including post-graduates) Prof. Graham Allen – Chair of ACRIC Dr. Patrick Crowley - French Prof. Fred Powell, Applied Social Studies and Institute for Social Sciences in the 21st Century (ISS-21) Mr. PJ O'Brien, Student Union Education Officer Dr. Carrie Griffin – School of English
12.45 – 14.00	Working lunch
14.00 – 16.15	Preparation of first draft of final report
16.15 – 16.45	Professor Anita Maguire, Vice President for Research and Innovation
17.00 – 17.30	Exit presentation to all staff, to be made by the Chair of the Peer Review Group or other member of Peer Review Group as agreed, summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group. This presentation is not for discussion at this time. **Venue: Council Room, North Wing, Main Quadrangle.**
19.00	Working private dinner for members of the Peer Review Group to complete drafting of report and finalisation of arrangements for completion and submission of final report. **Venue: Tower Room, River Lee Hotel**