University College Cork
National University of Ireland, Cork

Quality Improvement/Quality Assurance

Peer Review Group Report

Centre for Adult Continuing Education

Academic Year 2005/06

13 June 2006

Members of the Peer Review Group (PRG)

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Dr. Michael Ward, Department of Food Business and Development & Centre for
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Professor Edward Thomas, Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol, UK.

Timetable of the site visit

The timetable for the site visit is attached as Appendix A.

The reviewers found the timetable to be suitable and adequate for the purposes of the review. However the PRG would have liked to meet the three middle managers of the Centre, none of whom were available, and more representatives of the academic teaching staff responsible for delivery of some of the programmes (in addition to the academic coordinators, some of whom also teach).   The PRG was, however, particularly grateful to Professor Máirtín Ó Fathaigh for taking part in a conference call with them while recovering from an operation.

PEER REVIEW

Methodology

The reviewers acted as a group throughout the site visit. All reviewers were present at all meetings and participated in the tour of the facilities. The external reviewers took particular responsibility for leading the discussions on the breadth and scope of the programmes offered, including the scholarly activity and research elements, whilst all reviewers took responsibility for aspects relating to the management and governance of the programmes and the activities of the Centre.

Site Visit

The reviewers visited UCC for two and a half days on 28th to 30th March 2006 to conduct the review of the Centre for Adult Continuing Education (CACE). During the visit the PRG met with staff of the Centre, with programme/course co-ordinators,

with students (present and former), with representatives of senior management of the University, with key external stakeholders and toured the facilities in the Laurels on the Western Road, where the Centre is accommodated. The reviewers were satisfied that the site visit encompassed most elements necessary to ensure an understanding of the conditions and facilities and of the reflections contained in the Self-Assessment Report.

The PRG received a significant amount of information and needed some time to absorb it fully. It expressed its particular gratitude to staff of the Centre who spoke openly and honestly with the reviewers. The PRG consulted additional material during the site visit including all the files gathered in preparation for the review.

Peer Review Group Report

The reviewers agreed their core recommendations and findings during the site visit and the report was finalised using electronic communications following the site visit. All reviewers agreed to the report.

OVERALL ANALYSIS

The PRG noted that the focus of the quality review exercise is the quality assurance and quality improvement of the Centre for Adult Continuing Education and its activities. It found that the courses run by the Centre are well received, well respected and appreciated. The philosophy of work-based learning and flexible learning approaches to programmes as adopted by the Centre, supported by training to ensure consistency, was commended by the PRG. The PRG also noted the excellent retention rates of students registered on adult and continuing education courses.

The PRG welcomed the emphasis on lifelong learning placed in the University's Draft Strategic Framework 2006 – 2011. It noted however that there is an absence of a senior management figure within UCC to play the role of 'champion' for lifelong learning and adult continuing education at the highest level in the University. The Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs, to whom the Centre reports, is tasked with many and varied other onerous duties while the Vice-President who has a

role in integrating the teaching of the CACE into the University does not have a formal mandate from the University.

The PRG was provided with a copy of the excellent Buckley Report (1998) and noted that its recommendations, many of which are similar to those made in this report, have not, despite efforts at University level, been fully or adequately implemented. In the opinion of the PRG this was due, at least in part, to the absence of such a 'champion', as referred to earlier.

Recommendation: that the current structure of CACE be reviewed and adjusted to enable it to deliver the University's adult continuing education and lifelong learning strategy more widely.

This might take the form of a School of Adult Continuing Education attracting and coordinating interested academics from across the University and integrating them with the Centre's part-time lecturers drawn from the community and business sectors.

There is a need to more clearly define the pathways of progression for the Centre's learners from certificate courses through to postgraduate courses. There are a number of barriers at present and some ambiguity in the steps to be followed by learners in the Centre wishing to pursue studies to a higher level. The learners need clear and transparent information on progression mechanisms. A seamless progression and Awards pathway from an undergraduate Certificate to Masters Degree should be established (for example, enabling progression to Bachelors Degrees and Masters programmes in HR Management and Training and Development). It was pointed out that some of UCC's competitors are further ahead in establishing this structure at the moment.

Recommendation: that the pathways of progression for adult learners within UCC be furthered developed to enable them to advance their knowledge, develop their skills, and acquire accredited learning particularly in relation to Continuing Professional Education (CPE) courses.

Recommendation: that the NUI accreditation system be revisited to ensure compatibility with National Qualifications Framework levels of credit so that there is a transparent accreditation system for learners, and for their employers if they are sponsoring the learners on courses.

At the level of CACE, transparent operating guidelines and working procedures were not clearly evident and the reviewers were of the opinion that these need to be agreed formally and written down. The CACE's communication, both internally and with the rest of the University, also needs to be improved.

Notwithstanding the difficulties to do with structure and communications and the obvious problems presented by the long-term absence of three key management personnel, the PRG found the staff to be very resourceful in organising themselves to minimise the impact of these difficulties in the ongoing administration of CACE. The PRG congratulated the staff for this but noted that this situation cannot and should not be expected to continue for any significant length of time. These absences have placed unreasonable pressures on the remaining members of CACE's staff and they are seriously hindering developments within CACE. Whilst the purpose of the review was to focus on QI/QA, the HR problems in CACE could not be ignored. The PRG brought these to the attention of the senior management of the University during the site visit and emphasised their serious and urgent nature.

The staff infrastructural issues are also of concern and the reviewers considered that the structure of CACE, the positions and types of contract held by staff and its relationship with the Colleges and Faculties of the University all need to be reviewed in the light of the current employment legislation and the on-going academic restructuring of the University. Opportunities for career development and progression for all of the staff of CACE need to be reviewed and structures should be put in place to facilitate these.

It is now an opportune time for CACE, while developing and expanding its suite of programmes and activities, to consider its governance. In particular the establishment of an external Advisory Board would build on the partnership approach adopted so successfully by CACE to date. This Board would enhance the involvement of

external stakeholders and ensure that the development of new courses and programmes would have the advice and guidance of the relevant community and voluntary organisations, employers' groups, trade unions and professional bodies. The PRG noted that this approach is much more widely used in the University than heretofore and were of the opinion that considerable benefits would be derived from such an approach. The PRG recommended that, building on the innovative partnership approach of CACE to both community education and CPE, a CACE Advisory Board comprising external stakeholders (from the community and voluntary sectors, industry, employers, trade unions and professional bodies) and representatives nominated by Heads/Deans from each College/Faculty (as appropriate), to be chaired by the CACE 'Champion', should be set up to guide, support and pinpoint development opportunities for the CACE.

Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

The PRG found the SAR to be a comprehensive and reflective document. The SAR and the QI/QA staff consultation documents greatly assisted the PRG in its deliberations.

SWOT Analysis

The reviewers considered the SWOT analysis undertaken by CACE to be incomplete. The PRG felt that all members of CACE should have been asked to complete a questionnaire, in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Quality Promotion Unit. The PRG considered it would have been helpful to their preparations to have had the commentary from the facilitator in the core documentation and not just in the supporting documentation made available to the reviewers during the site visit.

Benchmarking

The PRG noted that CACE did not undertake a benchmarking exercise. The PRG were of the view that this would have been of real assistance to CACE in its planning. Without data it is very difficult to accurately plan for present and future needs and to make appropriate provision. A detailed benchmarking exercise would have enhanced the SAR, and CACE should consider undertaking such an exercise in the immediate future.

FINDINGS OF THE PEER REVIEW GROUP

Current physical accommodation of CACE

CACE is accommodated in facilities located opposite the gates of the main campus in what was a suburban house, physically separate from the Main Campus. There is no hot water available and the staff offices are <u>very</u> overcrowded, often in conditions with restricted natural light and the building is in a dilapidated condition. Ceilings in some places are very low and the building is in a poor state of repair overall, particularly in the main reception area. External stakeholders commented unfavourably on this in their meeting with the reviewers. There is no dedicated meeting room where all the staff can meet. Additionally, and very importantly, CACE has no teaching accommodation available. The PRG considered the present accommodation to be unsuitable for CACE's purpose.

The PRG considered that appropriate accommodation for CACE be sourced as soon as possible bearing in mind that adult and continuing education often takes place outside 'normal office hours', so that facilities need to include teaching space, and either canteen or kitchen facilities, with access in the evenings and at weekends. Provision of a meeting area, which is large enough to accommodate all staff, should enhance internal communications and assist in supporting the 'team ethos,' as well as providing a training space for staff development.

Recommendation: that appropriate and suitable accommodation for CACE and its activities be sourced as soon as possible.

The reviewers were made aware of the difficulties experienced by both teaching staff and students in accessing facilities elsewhere in the University outside normal working hours and also of the lack of appropriate teaching spaces that could be used during normal working days. The students reported other problems with the teaching accommodation, for example that classes are sometimes required to move from one room to another at short notice. When CACE has control of its teaching rooms, these problems should be alleviated (if not removed entirely).

The communication within CACE needs to be improved. Particular care needs to be taken to communicate more effectively with the many part-time teaching staff. The PRG welcomed the willingness of the staff to engage in developing a clear reporting structure and improving lines of communication within CACE. There is a need to ensure that issues brought to the attention of management (at all levels) of UCC are dealt with efficiently and appropriately. The PRG noted that these recommendations would need to be considered further with the relevant staff and University authorities.

Recommendation: that CACE put in place significantly improved internal communication measures as a matter of immediate importance and that a clear and unambiguous reporting structure be developed.

CACE Programmes

The PRG recognised the considerable value of the service provided by the staff of CACE in supporting adult learners in their early stages in UCC. This point was made not only by present and previous students but also by the representatives of professional bodies, local employers and other stakeholders. It has been recognised, for example, that some students need upskilling on IT before entering courses in UCC and adult learners may also need other forms of support such as assistance with essay writing, time management, and preparation for examinations. Systems should be put in place to provide this as the needs arise. CACE plays a very significant role in supporting and facilitating adult learners by opening the doors of the University to all. Development of an educational guidance service in the work of CACE should be encouraged and linked to progression paths for all learners. The PRG considered that this would be very advantageous to learners by guiding them towards an appropriate learning pathway as well as to the marketing of the courses. The very high retention rates of students on CACE's courses have already been mentioned and the PRG commended the excellent student support services currently offered by the tutoring and support staff. In particular the tutor programme, where former students become tutors and mentors to the 'next generation' of learners to a programme, was noted as an example of innovative practice. The support provided for students whose first language is not English was particularly commended. However in order to ensure consistency of teaching quality it was felt that a training course for all tutors should be put in place.

A number of UCC academics with long association with CACE applauded it for maintaining reflective social community studies, including an emphasis on personal development and collective action, despite the pressures in contemporary culture on the individual.   The PRG recommended that the current ethos of CACE be maintained, with the recognition by all concerned that CACE is focusing on adult and continuing learners, and that the wide variety of types of learning on offer should continue. These include experiential learning and learning with a particular focus on the practical applications of the theory presented.

Recommendation: that the current ethos of CACE be maintained, with the recognition by all concerned that CACE is focusing on adult and continuing learners, and that the wide variety of types of learning on offer should continue.

Adult learners, for the most part, require dedicated and specifically designed courses, and this point was strongly advocated by the external stakeholders that the PRG met with during the site visit. The possibility of providing tailor-made teaching courses for those teaching adult learners on CPE courses and for support for the informal tutoring programme should be strongly considered, possibly in association with teaching and learning development within the University. In addition, e-learning strands should be added for some courses, when appropriate. CACE has experience in this area and in distance learning.

Recommendation: that a module on the training of tutors be developed for all those involved in teaching within CACE (whether in CPE, community education, work-based learning, or as mentor/tutors) in order to ensure consistency of approach and an understanding of the issues in the teaching of adults.

Recommendation: that, building on CACE's initial experience, an e-learning strand should be added for some courses, when appropriate, to the wide range of teaching modes already being used by CACE.

Following discussions with the stakeholders the PRG considered that there are significant opportunities for the expansion of the CPE programme in a number of specific areas, including engineering, accounting, HR management, training and

development and law. In many of the professional areas it is now mandatory that CPE is undertaken, otherwise registered/chartered status will be withdrawn from the individual. Medicine, law and accountancy are examples of this. The PRG recognised that CACE is working hard to develop these initiatives but there is much more to do and not all academics and departments elsewhere in the University are currently supporting them sufficiently nor are they 'incentivised' to do so. These developments are also being held back by CACE's present HR difficulties.

A number of opportunities for development are being lost by UCC at the moment and excellent students sometimes have to go elsewhere to continue their studies. This view was reinforced by the industry representatives who met with the reviewers during the site visit, some of whom themselves have become CPE providers by registering with HETAC as accredited training centres. Others have had to source further training in the UK (Sheffield for a Masters in Training and Development and Leeds for a Masters in Human Resource Management). They pointed out that some of UCC's competitors are offering a wider range of courses leading to more relevant qualifications at the moment.

Recommendation: that immediate dialogue between CACE and the Faculties/Colleges be initiated with a view to the development of new and existing diplomas, for example Masters courses in Training and Development and also HR Management, and the development of new areas of CPE in discussion with the relevant UCC departments, professional bodies and industry sectors.

The PRG complimented CACE on the excellent presentation of its prospectus and brochures, which are prepared in house.

CACE Planning and Organisation
It has already been noted that CACE lacks a senior management figure tasked with responsibility to act as a 'champion' for lifelong learning and to support its strategic development at the highest level in the University and that a number of opportunities for development in CACE mentioned in this report, are being lost as a result.

Recommendation: that a champion, at the VP level, should be formally mandated with responsibility to support the strategic development of CACE and its work.

The PRG considered that this review creates, together with the academic restructuring of the University, an opportunity to review the internal organisational structure of CACE. In consideration of its possible restructuring there is a need to move towards management by function rather than by course, as is primarily the situation at the moment. In line with the national objectives and the strategic agenda of the University, there is an opportunity to restructure CACE and its activities. This could perhaps be done by appointing a Research Director or Research Professor, to develop the research on adult continuing education within CACE and the University as a whole. This Research Director would work alongside the Director of CACE, who is charged primarily with responsibility for its day-to-day management and for the integration of its activities and staff into the University. The Director of CACE would then be able to devote more time to work closely with the 'Champion', the 'Advisory Board' and the CACE Academic Board to ensure a closer fit between UCC strategy and the deliverables of the Centre for the future.

Recommendation: that the appointment of a Research Director/Research Professor to lead research on life long learning and adult continuing education within CACE and across the University be considered.

Recommendation: that the current management structure of CACE should be reviewed, and changes agreed and put in place with a view to creating stable conditions of employment for staff of the Centre, to redefining roles, to clarifying reporting relationships, and in so doing streamline the management structures.

The PRG concluded that it was crucial for the further strategic development of adult continuing education within UCC that CACE, while fully integrating with the University, be encouraged to maintain a coordinating and initiating role and status which transcends individual Colleges and Faculties. In doing this it should continue to work extremely closely with existing ACE-type units in Faculties and Colleges, such as the Food Industry Training Unit in the College of Science, Engineering & Food Science. One of the strengths of CACE, mentioned by a number of academic

staff from elsewhere in the University as well as by the external stakeholders, is its flexibility of approach to both faculties and disciplines. This allows it to initiate developments that would often be much more difficult to start in individual Colleges and Faculties with their greater focus on more traditional type students. CACE has worked in partnership with a number of subject departments, with different arrangements being used to suit the needs of the latter. In these, CACE has sometimes been willing to shoulder the risks in initiating a course until the subject department involved has become sufficiently confident that no major problems, either academic or financial, will arise. CACE enjoys rich linkages and networks with a wide variety of communities and organisations, which allow it to identify opportunities for new course development at University level, e.g. Nursing Studies, Credit Union Business, both of which are now successful mainstream University courses.

Recommendation: that CACE, while being a fully integrated part of the University, be encouraged to maintain a coordinating and initiating role and status which transcends individual Colleges and Faculties.

Recommendation: that UCC recognises that CACE can act as a source of innovation for courses on new topics and in new formats for the University as a whole. In order to ensure an optimal fit between the work of CACE and the University's policies and future development for lifelong learning financial and other resources should be made available to CACE to continue and develop this innovative and strategically important work.

In UCC the traditional student cohort is well represented at all levels within the University – Governing Body, Academic Council, Faculty, departmental, etc. It has already been mentioned, however, that CACE, with its distinctive student cohort needs a voice at the most senior level and should be appropriately represented at all levels. CACE and its innovative development strategies are part of UCC's unique selling proposition and can enhance the University's competitive advantage by building on its tradition for the provision of adult and continuing education in Cork City and County and well beyond through its outreach centres. CACE has a very good reputation for responsiveness to an identified need and for putting a programme

in place quickly and efficiently. This flexibility should be commended and supported and further exploited to take advantage of recent developments in the market place such as the 'One-step Up' initiative introduced by the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment.

The PRG considered the title of CACE, particularly with a view to its possible amendment to reflect the broadening of the adult education agenda to encompass lifelong learning. However following discussion and consideration of the views of all stakeholders the PRG felt that retention of the word 'Adult' in the title is probably most appropriate for CACE as it reflects its unique ethos and student cohort. The PRG noted that all Colleges, Faculties, Schools and Departments are charged with furthering lifelong learning within the University under the new Strategic Framework 2006-2011.

After meeting with staff other than those in CACE itself, the PRG considered the question of the recognition of the efforts and contributions of staff in academic and service departments of UCC who contribute to the development and support of lifelong learning and the adult and continuing education agenda. The PRG commended the Library in particular for their willingness to engage with CACE in providing a user-friendly Library service for this cohort of students.

Recommendation: that recognition is given to all the staff of UCC who contribute to the development and support of lifelong learning and the adult and continuing education agenda by, for example, noting this activity for promotion purposes.

CACE Academic Board
The PRG noted that there is an Academic Board, referred to as the Adult Continuing Education Board, whose primary role at the moment is to champion CACE's academic programmes through the University and generally to have an oversight of its academic activities in terms of quality. This should ensure that CACE's quality assurance system meets the standards of the University and, when appropriate, of the relevant external professional bodies. The Board has recently confirmed its terms of reference, and also confirmed that it is at an advanced stage of redefining its role vis-à-vis approval of both internal and external teachers; approval of new programmes;

and major changes to programmes. The intention is to bring greater clarity to the programmes for adult learners and this is to be welcomed as a step towards improving progression pathways for adult learners. There is also a need to ensure closer and more formal links between the CACE Academic Board and the Academic Council of the University. The CACE Academic Board is appointed by Academic Council and reports to it. However it is not a Standing Committee of Academic Council.

Recommendation: that the Chair of the CACE Academic Board be appointed an *ex officio* member of the University Academic Board and Academic Council.

The PRG considered it very important that CACE should establish clear lines of communication and strong links with the Colleges and Faculties of the University. This is particularly necessary to ensure the planning and strategic development of progression pathways from programmes organised by CACE into the mainstream degree programmes of the University. Some strong links do already exist and are of significant benefit. These need to be extended and there is a need to ensure representation of all Faculties/Colleges on the Board.

Recommendation: that CACE, in collaboration with the Colleges and Faculties, should ensure that all appropriate sectors of its activity are represented on the CACE Academic Board.

The PRG considered practice elsewhere and also noted the strategic statements of the University, which highlight the importance of adult education and lifelong learning to the University and the region. The reviewers considered that this strategic importance ought to be reflected in the membership of University committees, for example the Promotions & Establishment Committees, etc. The PRG were of the opinion that there is a need to improve communications across UCC, sharing of information, etc. concerning the promotion of the agenda of adult and continuing education programmes.

Recommendation: that CACE's work should be represented on all major University committees and bodies and that adult and continuing education should be standing items on all appropriate agendas.

Ensuring this visibility and inclusion would be one of the key tasks of the VP/Champion for CACE.

Modularisation, Access, Transfer and Progression

The PRG noted and welcomed the ongoing process of fully integrating all CACE courses into the regular University system. This involves modularisation of all the Centre's courses, in line with University practice. This should enable students to progress through all the levels of programmes and make the pathways of progression more transparent for both students and staff. The PRG noted that the initiatives that had taken place so far were widely welcomed both within the University and beyond and urged that the process should be completed as soon as possible. It has also been mentioned already that some students need upskilling in a variety of ways for example in using IT, before entering courses and programmes in UCC and these systems should be put in place possibly using external sources of funding, for example, HEA Targeted Initiatives funding, as appropriate.

Recommendation: that CACE should be supported by the University to complete the modularisation of all its courses, enabling learners to see how they could progress from a Certificate, to a Diploma, and on to a full Degree, as appropriate to their needs, and in a highly transparent manner. Modularisation of its postgraduate courses should similarly lead from Postgraduate Certificates to Postgraduate Diplomas and Masters Degrees, as appropriate.

The PRG noted that the methods currently used to deliver programmes are varied and commended the flexibility that this gave CACE when developing new courses. The value of this flexibility to UCC as a whole has already been mentioned. It was noted, however, that particular care is needed to ensure the quality of those courses that are taught by less experienced teachers, including graduate students, and courses that take place away from the UCC campus. The PRG noted that a quality assurance and external examining system is now in place. Care should, however, be taken to ensure though that feedback from external examiners and accrediting bodies reaches all the relevant teachers and tutors. Some of CACE's learners also expressed concern that the reporting back of their examination marks was sometimes very slow. In some

cases the marks were received after the closing date for applications for mature student places at UCC for the following academic year.

Research & Scholarly Activity

The PRG noted and welcomed the fact that, despite the heavy workloads of staff of CACE, some research has been undertaken, part of which has been published internationally. The Centre has a Research Assistant, and other staff are also engaged in research and scholarly activity. The PRG noted that the senior management of UCC did not seem to be very aware of the nature of CACE's research activity.

The PRG noted that it is essential for an individual's career development purposes that research is recorded on the University's RIS database system, which is a national database of research currently being undertaken in Irish universities. It is also necessary for senior management of the University to be aware of the efforts being made to develop the academic profile of CACE. The appointment of a senior member of staff who would be in a position to direct the research activity and scope of CACE, in addition to liaising with the VP for Research Policy & Support, would greatly enhance the profile of research and of individuals engaged in research within CACE.

Recommendation: that all of CACE's staff who engage in research should ensure that their research activity is logged into the University's RIS database system. If necessary staff should attend RIS training seminars to develop knowledge of the RIS system and how it works as a resource for the Centre.

The PRG considered that it is essential that CACE should expand its efforts to attract research funding to develop its research activities. The PRG were of the opinion that there are many opportunities internationally for attracting additional research monies and that CACE should also use its existing European links to seek funding to develop research programmes. The PRG considered that the expertise of the Office of the VP for Research Policy & Support would be of assistance to CACE in writing grant proposals and that this should be availed of by CACE.

Recommendation: that CACE should develop a research group or groups, possibly including researchers across the University where appropriate, in adult and continuing

education, and to this end should work more closely with the Office of the VP for Research Policy & Support.

The appointment of a permanent Research Director/Research Professor, as recommended above, would greatly facilitate this endeavour.

Staff Development

The PRG were made aware that some members of CACE's staff are currently employed on short-term contracts and that the lengths and types of these contracts vary from year–to–year. This not only creates uncertainty for these staff members but also reduces the stability of CACE itself. The PRG, while recognising that this may have been necessary in the past during the period when CACE was developing its suite of programmes and building its profile, considered that it is now timely to review this method of appointment. The University should recognise the teaching and research that some of the staff of CACE carry out. Staff need to be helped to develop career tracks and the present contractual arrangements for most of CACE's staff do not facilitate this. The short–term and part-time nature of these contracts and the uncertainty about continuity of employment are stressful for the individuals concerned and are not conducive to forward planning and goal setting. The PRG considered that, in order to develop the work of CACE and to create more stable working conditions for individual members of the staff, their workloads and management structures urgently require review.

Recommendation: that the conditions of employment of all the staff of CACE be reviewed for the purpose of creating stable working conditions for staff and where possible a greater number of permanent posts. Opportunities for career development and progression for staff (including support for appropriate training programmes and development of promotion opportunities) should be part of this review.

CACE Budget

The University Resource Allocation Model should include a reference to and consideration of the contribution to adult education and lifelong learning made by CACE. Such activities need to continue to be funded centrally as well as from fee income. The present system of discrete budgets for CACE and the Faculties does not

facilitate or encourage closer working relationships between CACE and the Faculties/Colleges. The University's strategy cites lifelong learning as one of its key areas for development in the period 2006-2011 and this should be reflected in the funding model for CACE's activities.

Recommendation: that consideration should also be given to all the services required by adult learners such as orientation, learning support and study skills, when financial and physical resources are being allocated to CACE.

The PRG was concerned that little financial information for CACE was available to it during the visit.

Recommendation: that the financial recording and control within CACE and its relationship to the wider University financial system should be strengthened; and that CACE's own financial system should be made transparent.

Library

The PRG met with the Deputy Librarian and some staff of the UCC Library and considered a document submitted by the Library on the resources available to CACE and its students. The PRG were impressed by the commitment of the Library staff to the mission of CACE and their willingness to engage with it in plans for the improvement and enhancement of the services offered.

Recommendation: that a line should be included in the Library's budget for CACE to enable it to be fully integrated into the Library service, i.e. so that books required for CACE courses can be bought under its own budget line.

Support Services

Adult learners have particular needs and require different kinds of support from that of the traditional school leaver as already mentioned. The supports required need to be carefully mapped and monitored so that, for example where appropriate, collaboration on applications for funding support could mutually strengthen the case.

Recommendation: that liaison should be strengthened between CACE and the appropriate support services in UCC, such as the Access Office, the Disability Support Office, the Student Careers Office, etc., to ensure the optimal use of these resources. Information on what is available to students should be shared through regular formal and informal exchanges with meetings taking place on a regular (monthly) basis.

External Relations

The PRG noted the very good relations that the Centre has already established with key external stakeholders. The CACE is already engaged in a number of partnerships and the PRG noted that CACE is doing a good job in creatively initiating new programmes and developing existing programmes. CACE should continue to reach out to communities in a spirit of partnership. The stakeholders endorsed that this as an important role. The PRG also acknowledged that CACE has developed a number of programmes and sub-areas in association with academic departments and relevant community groups and constituencies outside the University in a spirit of partnership. When programmes have reached the level of maturity or when different arrangements are required, CACE has facilitated the transfer of these programmes to a more appropriate setting. It is very much in the interest of UCC that it has a unit that can do this and it should be encouraged. If CACE is to continue to initiate successful courses the University must acknowledge that there is a cost in this, which will need to be met. The CACE Advisory Board, if established as recommended below, should assist in the development of new areas. The PRG considered that CACE is well positioned to identify what is needed.

The PRG considered that a CACE Advisory Board, with specific terms of reference, should be established, which would include external stakeholders such as community and voluntary groups, employers, and representatives of industry, of trade unions and professional bodies, and which would meet at least once a term. The CACE Advisory Board should have a direct relationship with CACE, pinpointing key strategic directions, guiding it and advising it on strategy, new course development, and relationships with accrediting bodies, for example. The Chair of the CACE Academic Board should sit on the CACE Advisory Board.

Recommendation: that a CACE Advisory Board be established comprised of key external stakeholders as well as UCC staff to be chaired by the VP/Champion tasked with responsibility for CACE.

CACE Co-ordinating Committee and the methodology employed in the preparation of the Self-Assessment Report

The PRG commented that CACE prepared well overall for the quality review. However, the PRG were disappointed that staff were not given the opportunity to complete individual staff questionnaires, as recommended in the guidelines approved by the University for preparation for quality review. The PRG would have welcomed receiving these questionnaires. It would also have wished to see the evidence of consultation with external part-time teaching staff, the results of a benchmarking exercise and CACE's annual financial statement. These would all have added further weight to the recommendations of the PRG and would have strengthened this Report.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Recommendations for improvement made by CACE

The PRG noted the recommendations and references to future development made in the SAR, considered these very carefully and have incorporated these, where deemed appropriate, into their own recommendations below.

Recommendations for improvement made by the PRG

The PRG recommended:

1. That a champion, at the VP level, should be formally tasked with responsibility for supporting CACE and the strategic development of lifelong learning and the adult education agenda within the University.

2. That as a matter of immediate importance significantly improved internal communication measures are put in place; that clear and unambiguous reporting relationships are set out; and that contracts of employment for staff be reviewed with a view to creating stable working conditions.

3. That as a matter of urgency appropriate and suitable accommodation for staff in CACE with reference to allocation of work space, light and hygiene facilities, and bearing in mind the high profile of the Centre's activities with external stakeholders, (CPE in particular) be sourced as soon as possible.

4. That immediate dialogue between CACE and the Faculties/Colleges be initiated with a view to encouraging the development of new courses as add-ons to existing Diplomas, (for example Masters courses in Training and Development and also in HR Management,) and the development of new areas of CPE in discussion with the relevant UCC departments, professional bodies and industry sectors.

5. That a CACE Advisory Board, with specific terms of reference, should be established, which would include external stakeholders such as community and voluntary groups, employers, and representatives of industry, of trade unions and professional bodies, and which would meet at least once a term. The CACE Advisory Board should have a direct relationship with CACE, pinpointing key strategic directions, guiding it and advising it on strategy, new course development, and relationships with accrediting bodies, for example. The Chair of the CACE Academic Board should sit on the CACE Advisory Board.

6. That the current structure of the Centre be reviewed and adjusted to enable it to deliver the University's adult continuing education and lifelong learning strategy more widely.

7. That the pathways of progression for adult learners within UCC be developed to enable them to advance their knowledge, develop their skills, and gain accredited learning through access transfer and progression within the University and particularly in relation to Continuing Professional Education (CPE) courses.

8. That the NUI accreditation system be revisited to ensure compatibility with National Qualifications Framework levels of credit so that there is a transparent accreditation system and portability of qualifications for learners, and for their employers, if they are sponsoring the learning.

9. That the current ethos of CACE be maintained, with the recognition by all concerned that CACE is focusing on adult and continuing learners, and that the wide variety of types of learning on offer should continue.

10. That a module on the training of tutors be developed for all those involved in teaching within CACE (whether in CPE, community education, work-based learning, or as mentor/tutors) in order to ensure consistency of approach and an understanding of the issues in the teaching of adults.

11. That, building on CACE's initial experience, an e-learning strand should be added to some courses, when appropriate, extending the wide range of teaching modes already being used by CACE.

12. That the appointment of a Research Director/Research Professor to lead research on life long learning and adult continuing education within CACE and across the University be considered.

13. That the current management structure of CACE should be reviewed, and changes agreed and put in place with a view to streamlining its management.

14. That CACE, while fully integrating with the University, be encouraged to maintain a coordinating and initiating role and status, which transcends individual Colleges and Faculties.

15. That UCC recognises that CACE can act as a source of innovation for courses on new topics and in new formats for the University as a whole.

16. That recognition is given to all the staff of UCC who contribute to the development and support of lifelong learning and the adult and continuing

education agenda by appropriate measures such as noting this as a criterion for promotion.

17. That the Chair of the CACE Academic Board be appointed an *ex officio* member of the University Academic Board and Academic Council.

18. That CACE, in collaboration with the Colleges and Faculties, should ensure that all appropriate sectors of its activity are represented on the CACE Academic Board.

19. That CACE's work should be represented on all major University committees and bodies and that adult and continuing education should be standing items on all appropriate agendas.

20. That CACE should be supported by the University to complete the modularisation of all its courses, enabling learners to understand how they can progress from a Certificate, to a Diploma, and on to a full Degree, as appropriate to their needs and in a highly transparent manner. Modularisation of its postgraduate courses should similarly lead from Postgraduate Certificates to Postgraduate Diplomas and Masters Degrees, as appropriate.

21. That all of CACE's staff who engage in research should ensure that their research activity is logged into the University's RIS database system.

22. That CACE should develop a research group or groups, possibly including researchers across the University where appropriate, in adult and continuing education, and to this end should work more closely with the Office of the VP for Research Policy & Support.

23. That consideration should also be given to all the services required by adult learners such as orientation, learning support and study skills, when financial and physical resources are being allocated to CACE.

24. That the financial recording and control within CACE should be strengthened and that CACE's financial system should be made transparent.

25. That a line should be included in the Library's budget for CACE to enable it to be fully integrated into the Library service.

26. That liaison should be strengthened between CACE and the appropriate support services in UCC, such as the Access Office, the Disability Support Office, the Student Careers Office, etc., to ensure the optimal use of these resources.

Timetable for conduct of Peer Review Visit

Centre for Adult Continuing Education

Tuesday 28th March 2006

17.30   Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group
Briefing by Director of Quality Promotion Unit, Dr. N. Ryan.
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.

19.30   Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group, Head of Unit and Unit Co-ordinating Committee.

Wednesday 29th March 2006

08.30   Convening of Peer Review Group in Muscraí, Student Centre

         Consideration of Self-Assessment Report

09.00   Dr. Stephen O'Brien, Acting Director

09.30   Meeting with all staff of the Centre in Room 2.55, O'Rahilly Building

10.45   Meetings with individual members of staff of ACE.

        10.45 Ms. Regina Sexton *(Course Coordinator of Development Studies, Social Studies and all Short Term Course Programmes)*
        11.00 Dr. Stephen O'Brien *(Research Assistant)*
        11.30 Mr. Willie Weir *(Course Coordinator of all Continuing Education Programmes)*
        11.45 Mr. James Cronin *(Course Coordinator of European Art History)*
        12.00 Ms. Mary O'Grady *(Senior Executive Assistant)*
        12.15 Ms. Noreen Power-Waldron *(Executive Assistant)*
        12.30 Ms. Louise Fleming *(Executive Assistant)*
        12.45 Ms. Marian Elders *(Course Coordinator of Management of Adult Learning Programmes and Services)*

13.00   Working private lunch for members of Peer Review Group

14.00   Visit to core facilities of Department. PRG escorted by Dr. Stephen O'Brien, Acting Director

15.00   Professor Áine Hyland, *Vice-President and member of Cork City Learning Forum*

15.15   Representatives of Students and former Students

        Current Students:
        Nora Cotter *(Dip. in Community Development)*
        Deogratias M. Sango *(Dip. in Development Studies)*
        Adrian O'Riordan *(Dip. in Personnel Management)*
        Helena McSweeney *(Dip. in Safety, Health and Welfare at Work)*
        Martina Walsh *(Dip. in Learning Development and Work Based Training)*

Mary Walsh *(Dip. in Disability Studies)*

Former Students:
Mar Davis *(Dip. in Youth and Community Work)*
Anne Dowling   *(Dip. in Safety, Health and Welfare at Work)*
Tim Hewitt *(Certificate in Non-Formal Guidance and Diploma in Community Based Guidance and Support Studies)*
Margaret McCarthy *(Dip. in Social Studies)*
Pat Moore *(Dip. in Personnel Management)*
Bendicta Oboru *(Diploma in Development Studies)*

16.00   Heads of Colleges/Deans of Faculties

Professor David Cox*,* Acting Head, College of Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences/ Dean of Faculty of Arts
Professor Caroline Fennell, Acting Head, College of Business & Law/Dean of Faculty of Law
Professor Patrick Fitzpatrick, Head, College of Science, Engineering & Food Science
Professor Neil Collins, Dean of Commerce
Professor Yrjö Roos, Dean, Faculty of Food Science & Technology
Dr. Richard Kavanagh, Acting Dean, Faculty of Engineering

17.00   Representatives of employers, professional bodies and other stakeholders

Mr. John McDonald, Dunhill Multi-Education Centre
Ms. Joanne Salmon, Construction Industry Federation
Mr. Douglas Kelleher, Cork Electronics Association/IBEC
Ms. Eva O'Connell, Chairperson, Cork Adult Education Council
Mr. Pat O'Callaghan, Regional Manager, FÁS
Mr. Michael O'Mahoney, Group Training Manager, Thomas Crosbie Holdings Ltd.,
Mr. Vincent Murphy, Managing Director SafePlace Worksystems
Mr. Tom O'Halloran, Marsh Pension Group
Dr. Margaret O'Keeffe, Assistant Lecturer in Community Education and Development, Department of Education & Development, CIT

19.00   Meeting of Peer Review Group to identify remaining aspects to be clarified and to finalise tasks for the following day followed by a working private dinner for members of the Peer Review Group.

Thursday 30th March 2006

08.30   Convening of Peer Review Group in Muscraí, Student Centre

08.45   Professor Paul Giller, Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs

09.15   Professor Peter Kennedy, Vice-President for Research Policy & Support

09.45   Professor John O'Halloran, Chair, Adult Continuing Education Board of Studies

10.05   Mr. Michael O'Sullivan, Vice-President for Planning, Communication & Development

10.40   Professor Eleanor O'Leary, Department of Applied Psychology, UCC

11.00   Ms. Carmel Cotter, Finance Office

11.15   Meeting with individual members of staff of CACE.

Ms. Sheila O'Driscoll, *Course Coordinator of Disability Studies, CACE*

11.30   Representatives of staff of UCC with significant interaction with CACE

Dr. Fidelma Butler, *Department of Zoology, Ecology & Plant Science, UCC*
Ms. Mary McCarthy-Buckley, *Food Industry Training Unit, UCC*
Dr. Shane Kilcommins*, Department of Law, UCC*
Dr. Tony O'Connor, *Department of Philosophy, UCC*
Ms. Angela O'Donovan, *Department of Human Resources, UCC*
Ms. Mary O'Grady, *Disability Support Unit, UCC*
Professor Denis O'Sullivan, *Department of Education, UCC*
Professor William Reville, *Department of Biochemistry and Faculty of Science, UCC*

12.15   Mr. Cathal Kerrigan, Subject Librarian, UCC Library

12.30   Representatives of Part-Time Adult Continuing Education Coordinator Staff

Ms. Carmel Halton, Department of Applied Social Studies, UCC (Course Coordinator of
      Postgraduate Diploma in Advanced Fieldwork Practice and Supervision)
Dr. Sabin Tabirca, Department of Computer Science, UCC (Course Coordinator of Applied
      Multimedia)
Dr. Alan Collins, Department of Food Business and Development, UCC (Course Coordinator of
      Food Retailing)
Ms. Christine Bean Uí Chasaide, (Course Coordinator of Social Studies,Youth and Community
      Work and Community Development)
Mr. David Twomey, Food Industry Training Unit, UCC (Course Coordinator of Corporate
      Direction and Management Practice)

13.15   Mr. Tom O'Leary, Director, Department of Human Resources

13.45   Working private lunch for members of the Peer Review Group and preparation for drafting of
report

15.00   Professor Máirtín Ó Fathaigh, Director

Via Conference Call.

15.30   Dr. Stephen O'Brien, Acting Director

16.00   Preparation of first draft of final report

17.00   Exit presentation made to all staff of the Unit by the Chair of the Peer Review Group,
summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group.

19.00   Working private dinner for members of the Peer Review Group to complete drafting of report and
finalisation of arrangements for speedy completion and submission of final report.

Friday 31st March 2006

Externs depart