University College Cork
National University of Ireland, Cork

Quality Improvement/Quality Assurance

Academic Year 2005/2006

Peer Review Group Report

Disability Support Service

3rd March 2006

1. Introduction

The UCC Disability Support Service (DSS) provides a range of services to existing and prospective students with a disability. These students come from a wide spectrum ranging from students who are vision impaired, deaf/hard of hearing, students with physical disabilities, student with specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia, students with hidden disabilities such as mental health difficulties and those with significant on-going illnesses. The service, in collaboration with academic and administrative units, provides an individualised customised response to each student's needs, which focuses on the individual and not on the disability.

The office has four permanent and seven contract staff and is located at two centres on campus, the South Lodge and a room on the first floor in the O'Rahilly building.

PEER REVIEW

2. Members of the Peer Review Group (PRG)

Dr. Anne Mills, Admissions Officer, UCC *(Chair)*

Professor Fred Powell, Head, Department of Applied Social Studies, UCC

Dr. Ger Craddock, Manager, Central Remedial Clinic, Dublin

Professor Alan Hurst, Department of Education & Social Science, University of
    Central Lancashire, UK

3. Timetable of the site visit

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

4. Methodology

The PRG commenced their three-day visit on Tuesday 7th February 2006. The PRG acted as a team throughout and drafted the report collectively. The report was initially drafted during the afternoon and evening of the second day of the site visit and was subsequently finalised by email communications following the site visit.

5. Site Visit

The provisional timetable was altered during the course of the site visit at the request of the PRG to allow for the inclusion of additional members of UCC staff. While the timetable was very full, the combination of group and individual meetings worked well. The PRG were particularly delighted to be able to view the facilities available to the unit, on the scheduled tour, as these facilities are such a core component of the service of the unit. The final timetable for the site visit is attached as *Appendix A*.

Peer Review Group Report

6. Self-Assessment Report

At the outset the PRG would like to acknowledge the considerable amount of work undertaken by the DSS (Disability Support Service) in preparing their Self-Assessment Report. It was both comprehensive and objective.

(a) SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis was inclusive of all members of the service and the panel concluded it provided an honest view of the service. The PRG congratulated the DSS in taking the initiative in bringing in an external facilitator. This provided a comprehensive analysis and gave the PRG valuable information and insight in conducting their review of the unit.

A number of issues that emerged in the SWOT were dealt with immediately following the analysis. In particular, the unit, with the support of an external facilitator, was able to address some of the issues regarding communication in the unit. The seven facilitated sessions, undertaken in 2005, enhanced internal staff communication competencies and a team spirit.

Overall, the conclusions of the SWOT analysis, that the unit has dedicated members of staff that support their students in a sensitive and professional way, were confirmed by the PRG.

(b) Benchmarking

The choice of benchmarking comparisons was interesting and appropriate considering the concerns of the DSS. The benchmarking was impressive and confirmed that the DSS compares well with similar centres in other Universities in Ireland and the UK. The service standards of DSS, well documented in the report, indicate a service that is parallel to those researched in the benchmarking exercise. Where evidence of good practice was found in other services it was embraced by the DSS.

The benchmarking exercise highlighted the relative dependency of the UCC DSS on external funding and on contract staff.

(c) Stakeholder analysis

Though the responses rates to the surveys were disappointing they were useful in that they highlighted positive perception of the support work and the need to increase awareness of the service among staff and students.

7. Findings of the Peer Review Group

The PRG found that the DSS is professional, caring and sensitive, and bases its support on a sound knowledge of individual students and is very highly regarded both by colleagues and students. The PRG found that the functions of the unit were rooted soundly in the social model of disability, which is represented in their mission statement and their key objectives, as follows:

The Disability Support Service is committed in as far as is reasonably possible, to empowering students with disabilities to achieve their educational and vocational goals in an inclusive learning environment.

This is achieved through the key objectives of:
- *Pre-entry support*
- *Empowering registered students through educational and personal supports*
- *Raising awareness of disability*
- *Providing a training function*
- *Assisting students in the transition to employment*

(a) Unit Details

The DSS has a permanent staff of four, of which three are full-time posts and one is a part-time post. In addition, at present seven staff are in contracts posts in the unit, of which four are full-time posts and three are part-time posts. The funding for all of the contract posts has been secured through competitive external funding.

At present, the DSS is located at two centres on campus, the South Lodge and room 1.81 in the O'Rahilly building. The DSS expects to secure additional dedicated space for the unit in 2007, with the completion of new Postgraduate Research library.

(b) Unit Planning and Organisation

At the beginning of the self-assessment exercise the unit described itself as having 'a very linear structure with all staff reporting to the Disability Support Officer, as head of service, who in turn reports to the Registrar. Since completion of the self-assessment exercise the DSS has formed three teams within the unit i.e. a disability team, an administrative team and a finance team.

Having considered the present organisation of the DSS, the PRG would recommend to the unit that they consider the designation of a Deputy Head of Service to ensure continuity and to free some time for the Head to pursue the strategic interests of the unit, which appears to be particularly important at this time. In addition it is also recommended that the DSS consider other team models for organising their work. Currently DSS team work is focused on 'type of impairment' (medical model) and this does not appear to sit comfortably with the social model of disability, which is more consistent with the ethos of the unit. Teams organised on the social model would provide greater opportunity for staff to become familiar with the spectrum of impairments, while still allowing particular staff members to maintain expertise in particular areas. An example of other ways of organising teams, which might be considered, would be based around the student's level in their academic programme e.g. first, year, final year etc.

(c) List of Client Groups for the Unit

From the Self-Assessment Report the DSS identified and sought feedback from their major client groups. However, in practice the DSS may have underestimated the totality of their client groups as currently a number of external agencies from the Colleges of Further Education, Institutes of Technology and secondary schools sector are heavily dependent on the DSS for support.

(d) Service Standards

The unit has articulated very well all of the standard operating procedures for its core activities and the level of commitment of staff currently allow these service standards to be delivered. The unit needs to be able to factor time into its schedules to continue to keep up with national, legal, and best practice requirements, such as those regularly up-dated by the National Disability Authority.

To continue to deliver services to the highest standards the PRG recommends that the DSS will need to develop its boundaries, with clear lines of responsibility in relation to where the responsibility for particular students begins and ends. For example, the unit may wish to consider boundaries in relation to some of the following areas:

- Students with academic difficulties
- Students with a mental health issue
- Support for external agencies

(e) Staff Development

At present the DSS has a dedicated and professional team within the unit. The PRG recommends that if the current level of professional service is to continue then dedicated time needs to be available to staff to constantly update their knowledge and skills. Given the nature of the service, this time needs to be available on a monthly basis if staff is to keep abreast of new developments from both a technological and legislative point of view.

In addition, the PRG recommends that time also needs to be available for staff to continue to network with other disability support services to keep abreast of best practice and to allow the DSS in UCC to find ways to disseminate their excellent work.

(g) Unit Budget

At present over 80% of the budget available to the DSS comes from external funding HEA (Strategic Initiative Fund) and the ESF (fund for student with disabilities). Whilst the external funding has allowed the DSS to develop a variety of support programmes, it does pose questions over their ability to continue to preserve the level of support that is currently presumed or to develop it further. The PRG concurs with the unit's analysis that the over dependency on external funding makes any strategic plans for future years difficult and leaves staff uncertain of their future and recommends that this issue needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

(i) Governance

At present, the line management reporting relationship for the DSS is to the Registrar and Vice President for Academic Affairs, who also has responsibility for a number of other student services such as Mature Student Programme, the Access Programme for students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, Student Health, Student Counselling and the Careers Service. In addition, there is a university committee, the Disability Support Committee, through which policy issues in the area of disability are discussed and routed to Academic Council for the approval of the University. The effectiveness of the Disability Support Committee is heavily dependant on the willingness of the Chair of the Committee to forward issues to Academic Board.

At present, there are developments on a number of levels which may affect the governance of the DSS. At a national level there is review of the whole perspective regarding disability and disability awareness, in UCC there is a major review of internal structures and reporting relationships and in parallel there is a review by the HEA of funding mechanisms to the University sector. In this time of major change the DSS needs to reflect on where it could best be situated in order to achieve the best outcomes for its service and its client groups. The unit needs to seek to maximise its relationships with other relevant units within the university and to participate in internal discussions regarding the value to the DSS of proposed new posts such as the Dean of Student Affairs or a Director of Access. Whatever model of governance is adopted for DSS the PRG recommends that it avoids duplication of services and allows for maximum inclusion of students with a disability.

(j) Services

The DSS receives excellent service from a number of UCC units including the Finance Office and the Registrar's Office. There is also a genuine willingness among most academic departments to support the work of the DSS. In other cases, while individual working relationships are good, the understanding of the full spectrum of disabilities is somewhat limited in areas. For example, it was a disappointment to the PRG to learn from an informed source that the newest building in UCC, the Brookfield Health Complex, is not disability friendly. In addition, material available to students through the Blackboard virtual learning system, which is supported by the Learning Technology Unit, is not always supportive to students with a disability.

(k) Staffing

Whilst the level of staffing in DSS was found to be adequate and appropriate this was only made possible by competitively secured external funding. If proposed new developments in finance and structures progress then it will provide an opportunity for the DSS to make a case for a revision of current staffing arrangements in the unit. The PRG recommends that in making a case for review staffing levels and terms of employment that the DSS needs to distinguish posts that are essential to the service and posts that are desirable.

(l) Accommodation

The PRG found that the unit which is accommodated in a space that is inadequate and inappropriate for the expected levels of service to students with a disability. Having the service housed in a two storey building with full access only available to the ground floor sets a bad example within the university. Whilst the proposals to accommodate sections of the service in the new Postgraduate library are welcome the PRG recommends that it would be far more satisfactory if the unit could be housed in a single disability friendly location on the main campus. In addition, the current space does not provide all members of staff with the necessary space for private consultations about sensitive individual matters.

(m) Financing

Currently the DSS receives over 80% of its funding from external sources. The PRG welcomes indications that this maybe about to change and that a sizable portion of funding will be transferred to the core funding of the University. In the move to a different budgetary structure in the University the PRG recommends that sufficient funds are made available

- to transfer core posts from contract to permanent positions
- to maintain and further develop the level of service of the unit
- to ensure that such funds are both ring-fenced and audited and achieving the intended purpose of improving the DSS

(n) Communications

The DSS have developed a high quality web-site, handbooks and brochures aimed at dedicated users of the service. While progress has been made it was clear from the self-assessment report that general disability awareness issues still need to be tackled. This disability awareness needs to be developed from the highest level down and would be greatly enhanced by the UMG undertaking disability training.

The current UCC position of units who support students working very independently is not maximising the opportunity for communication of concerns. For example, the availability in other units of a mutually beneficial policies and procedures, such as the 'lone worker policy', of which DSS was not aware, would have been extremely beneficial to them. The PRG recommends that every opportunity for synergy between units who are providing student support should be exploited.

(o) Opportunities to promote and embed inclusion in a holistic approach

The PRG recommends that if the University is genuinely serious about the student experience for students with disabilities then a number of strategies need to be developed and maintained such as:

- Providing disability awareness as part of the induction training for all new staff, which might include also include a programme such as participation in the *Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.*

- Developing a clear relationship between staff promotion opportunities and contribution towards meeting the needs of diverse learners.

- Maintaining in research awards and awards for innovative teaching schemes the importance of contribution to a diverse learning environment as criteria for the award.

- Inclusion in all new course proposals a section on 'meeting the needs of diverse students' and having a section that requires contact with the Disability Support Officer.

- Continuing participation by UCC in national initiatives in universal access to learning opportunities such as 'National initiative to a digital repository of text books'.

- Working with the UCC Library on the DAISY standard (Digital Accessible Information System) as best practice in developing a universal accessible centre of information.

8. Unit Co-ordinating Committee & Methodology employed in preparation of the Self-Assessment Report

The Unit established the following for their co-ordinating committee and it appeared to work very effectively:

Siobhan Colclough

Linda Doran, *Chair*

Lisa Egan

Sheila Horgan

Mary O'Grady

Mairead O'Sullivan

Janet Thomas

9. Summary of Recommendations for Improvement

The following table incorporated all the detailed recommendations for improvement made by the DSS. The PRG considered each recommendation in detail and has commented on each one below, noting and welcoming that in many instances, where possible, action has already commenced on many of the recommendations.

(a) Recommendations for improvement made by the unit

Recommendation	Comment from PRG
Dependency on External Funding for development of the Disability Support Service **Recommendations:** - The funding issue is clearly one which is very important and if the University wishes to continue to provide the best possible disability services in the future, it needs to make funding from core budget available to meet this objective. - It is clearly recommended in the initial review of the HEA Strategic Initiatives report of October 2004, 'Towards a National Strategy', that colleges need to mainstream baseline posts - There needs to be a policy to introduce premium funding to reward universities that are proactive in the recruitment of under represented groups. Such ring fenced funds would ensure a baseline service for students with disabilities and would give security to staff positions within the service	The PRG endorses these proposals and recommends that over-dependency on external funding should be addressed as a matter of urgency, particularly as opportunities are now presenting for restructuring of budgets.
ESF Fund for Students with Disabilities **Recommendations:** - Earlier allocation of funding from NAO[1] for first time applicants - Set a cost on assessment of needs for funding application as this is a time consuming process. In UK a cost of 450 euro is allocated from DSA[2] for each assessment undertaken by disability staff - NAO to facilitate more "Group Funding Applications" e.g. Tutor Support, Note taking and transport support - Integrate financial management of fund to new ITS database which should streamline administration for reporting requirements	The PRG endorses this proposal, although the situation regarding use of the DSA is not accurate, but notes that these recommendations need to be addressed at a national rather than at university level.

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[1] NAO: National Access Office
[2] DSA: Disabled Student's Allowance

Recommendation	Comment from PRG
- Report on expenditure under group headings rather than on individual basis	
Communication with all Stakeholders **Recommendations:** The Disability Support Service acknowledges that communication needs to be improved, thus a full programme is being developed to address this issue at all levels: *Internal Communication* - Setting agenda for Staff Meetings - More use of shared area on all staff Pc's - Use of teams to share work at operational level within the service - Adherence to policies and procedures in dealing with students - Organisation of social evenings for staff to build relationships *External Communication* - A Comprehensive Website has been updated and further developed to include a number of new links with information for prospective students, current students, academic staff, and wider educational community - Guidelines for Academic Staff Teaching Students with Disabilities were disseminated to all lecturing staff across campus in September - A Briefing session was delivered as part of HR - Training and Development in October - A Seminar Series was organized to raise awareness of Disability in First term 2005/06 - A new Information Booklet was developed for all incoming students - A Newsletter on current developments within the DSS will be disseminated to all	The PRG endorses this proposal and acknowledges the fact that a lot of this work on communication is already in progress.

Recommendation	Comment from PRG
stakeholders each term - A Booklet outlining policies and procedures for all Educational Support Workers was developed in Summer 2005 and is given to all Support Workers on taking up employment with the DSS	
Physical Space for staff to work at the DSS **Recommendations:** That the Space Allocation Committee (SAC) allocate further space urgently for staff to meet students for assessments and organization of supports	The PRG endorses this proposal
Policies and Procedures **Recommendations:** - All key policies and procedures used by the DSS were reviewed and clarified by internal staff at planning days. These included DSS policies on student registration, student assessment, confidentiality of disability, admission policy and examination policy. - A code of practice for the DSS was developed and outlined to all students at registration. This explained the student's rights and responsibilities as a user of the service.	The PRG endorses these proposals and noted the actions already taken by DSS.
Organisational/Operational Structure of the DSS **Recommendations:** That staff at DSS work in teams in the delivery of their duties and responsibilities. In this way the team learns from one another, develops competencies and makes informed decisions at a collective level. This methodology also allows the Disability Officer as Head of Service more time for strategic planning and development of the service regionally and nationally. Suggested Teams could operate as follows: *Disability Team:* Responsible for assessment and organization of support structures for students with disabilities.	The PRG endorses these proposals, but in the case of the disability team recommends a review of the focus on an impairment classification to a more social model delivery.

Recommendation	Comment from PRG
Financial Administration Team: Responsible for administration of three budget allocations that fund services at the Disability Support Service, i.e. (a) Fund for students with Disabilities, (b) HEA Strategic Initiative Funding and (c) UCC Core Budget. *Clerical/Data Administration Team*: Responsible for inputting data on all students registered with service, filing hardcopy information, compilation of statistics, report writing, letter writing, ESW administration.	
Data Administration **Recommendations:** - Have new integrated data system in place for academic year 2006/07 - Ensure that this system is fully aligned to central administration ITS system - Ensure that staff at the DSS are trained in the operation of this new system before next academic year	The PRG endorses these proposals
Public Relations and Raising Awareness of Disability **Recommendations:** It is important to raise the profile of DSS within UCC and heighten awareness of the service and supports offered to students with disabilities. A marketing strategy needs to be developed for the service. Examples of how we can do this include: - Embedding disability information into all college literature and material that is produced - Disability Input to induction of all newly recruited staff at UCC - Liaise with Student Union (SU) to raise awareness of disability amongst wider student body - Host a Disability Awareness Day on Campus	The PRG endorses these proposals

Recommendation	Comment from PRG
- Develop a comprehensive website - Carry out relevant research in partnership with academic areas; this would lead to increased credibility and recognition	
Supporting Staff working in DSS **Recommendations:** There is a need to identify and set up effective support mechanisms including outside supervision to protect staff from the complex issues they deal with when working with students with disabilities. It is recommended: - That staff at DSS work closely with Student Counselling and Development Service and have a holistic approach to supporting students - That this issue be addressed by the Student Services Management Group (SSMG) as most front line services dealing with students in crisis situations face similar difficulties - It is also suggested that the DSS invites a representative from the Law Dept in the University to speak with senior management on the obligations of the University on grounds of disability	The PRG endorses these proposals
Teaching and Learning **Recommendations:** - That academic staff provide copies of notes on Black Board System at beginning of module delivery. This would enable students with disabilities to access notes in advance rather than wait for note takers to take notes for them in class - That teaching staff audit their courses to explore the extent to which they are currently inclusive to the needs of students with disabilities - That academic staff that are pro active in supporting students with disabilities and all non traditional students are rewarded for their effort	The PRG endorses this proposals and recommends that guidelines be developed for academic staff on best practice for presentation of information in an accessible formats e.g. DAISY format The PRG endorses this proposals and further recommends that all new course proposals are audited for inclusive learning, teaching, and assessment. The PRG endorses these proposals

Recommendation	Comment from PRG
financially by the university through the Resource Allocation Model	and particularly the sentiment that units are rewarded for their contribution to support of students with disabilities. However, it is recommended that this should not be at the level of the individual staff member.
Support Services for students with specific learning difficulties **Recommendations:** - That the University would set up a Learning Support Centre to encompass the needs of all students from other minority groups: mature students, access students, international students etc. In theory this would address the increasing need for learning support across campus - Dyslexia Support is a specialised support and the individual needs of the SLD students must be considered and supported	The PRG were unable to interpret the intention of this proposal and therefore are not in a position to comment. However any opportunities that could be availed of to free the DSS from students with academic problems that are not related to identified specific learning difficulties should be explored.
Support for Students with Mental Health difficulties **Recommendations:** - That the DSS and Student Counselling and Development Service work collaboratively and use a holistic multi disciplinary approach to support students with mental health difficulties - That the University sets up a working group which would include head of counselling, representative from an academic department, representative from the students union, a student with mental health difficulties and the Disability Support Officer - That working group would investigate best practice in inclusion, integration and support of students with mental health difficulties in higher education - That working group would liaise with FAS on enabling graduates with mental health difficulties make a successful transition to employment	The PRG endorses these proposals

Recommendation	Comment from PRG
Development of Regional Resource Centre in Assistive Technology **Recommendations:** The Disability Support Service has a lot of expertise and resources in the field of Assistive Technology so building on the success of this programme it is proposed to: - Market the capability of the Resource Centre to provide AT assessment for other Colleges at a cost similar to the system in the UK where each Assessment costs 450 euro - Look at the feasibility of expanding and developing the supports already being given to the Institutes of Technology and College of Further Education in Munster. It is not possible to reproduce all services in all Colleges so we welcome the idea of Regional Centres as defined by the National Office for Equity of Access - There is a need within the wider Educational Sector in Munster for training and consultancy in best practice in Assistive Technology which we as a service can deliver. However we need to look at the feasibility of this service becoming income generating - Extend these supports to Primary and second level providing much needed support to pupils, staff and parents in this sector - Increase liaison with Dept of Education and Science in the Cork/Kerry Region.	PRG recommends that a feasibility study would be essential before this proposal should be considered. The feasibility study should take account the strategic priorities of the DSS and where this proposal would support those strategic priorities.
Employment of Graduates with Disabilities **Recommendations:** - Build on existing working relationships with Guidance Counsellors to improve access to third level so that students with disabilities are making informed choices on degree options - Encourage all graduates to develop IT competencies and transferable skills for the workplace by participation in career	PRG endorses these proposals and sees them as a major challenge for the service. The PRG also recommends postgraduate and research opportunities be included in this initiative.

Recommendation	Comment from PRG
development programme while in UCC - Continue to support the administration of GET AHEAD, the forum of graduates with disabilities - Work with public and private employers and FAS to identify and inform cultural change in the workplace and inform new practices thus supporting graduates with disabilities in career development - Further develop the mentoring programme to assist graduates in the first step to employment	
Accessibility on Campus **Recommendations:** - That further funding is allocated from core budget to address access issues on campus - That the needs of vision and hearing impaired are considered when making changes to building environment	The PRG endorses these proposals but would recommend that this initiative be extended in a more holistic way to the needs to the full range of impairments to ensure inclusive environment
Student Social Activities **Recommendations** - The social aspect of University is just as important as the academic. The University should endeavour to encourage all students to participate fully in the "UCC Experience". - Further work is required especially with Clubs and Societies; simple changes to posters and leaflets could be made to include a statement offering help to those who require it and giving contact details. - The DSS should liaise further with the Student Union to raise awareness of disabilities and encourage inclusion across campus in sporting and social activities	The PRG endorses these proposals

(b) Summary of additional recommendations for improvement made by the PRG

In addition to the endorsement of the recommendations made by the Disability Support Service in their Self-Assessment Report as described in (a), the PRG makes the following recommendations. These are presented as the issues arose in the report and during the review, and the ordering of the recommendations is not intended to indicate any particular priority.

1. The PRG recommends that the DSS considers the designation of a Deputy Head of Service to ensure continuity and to free some time for the Head to pursue the strategic interests of the unit, which appears to be particularly important at this time.

2. The PRG recommends that the DSS consider other team models for organising their work

3. The PRG recommends that DSS develop its boundaries, with clear lines of responsibility in relation to where the responsibility for particular students begins and ends. For example, the unit may wish to consider boundaries in relation to some of the following areas:
   o Students with academic difficulties
   o Students with a mental health issue
   o Support for external agencies.

4. The PRG recommends that time needs to be available for staff to continue to network with other disability support services to keep abreast of best practice and to allow the DSS in UCC to find ways to disseminate their excellent work.

5. The PRG concurs with the unit's analysis that the over dependency on external funding makes any strategic plans for future years difficult and leaves staff uncertain of their future and recommends that this issue needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

6. The PRG recommends that DSS keep abreast of developments regarding discussions on new posts such as the Dean of Student Affairs or Director of Access. Whatever model of governance is adopted for DSS the PRG recommends that it avoids duplication of services and allows for maximum integration of students with a disability.

7. The PRG recommends that in making a case for review staffing levels and terms of employment that the DSS needs to distinguish posts that are essential to the service and posts that are desirable.

8. The PRG recommends that it would be far more satisfactory if the unit could be house in a single disability friendly location on the main campus. In addition, the current space does not provide all members of staff with the necessary space for private consultations about sensitive individual matters.

9. In the move to a different budgetary structure in the University the PRG recommends that sufficient funds are made available
   - to transfer core posts from contract to permanent positions
   - to maintain and further develop the level of service of the unit
   - to ensure that such funds are both ring-fenced and audited and achieving the intended purpose of improving the DSS.

10. The PRG recommends that every opportunity for synergy between units who are providing student support should be exploited.

11. The PRG recommends that if the University is genuinely serious about the student experience for students with disabilities then a number of strategies need to be developed and maintained such as:
    - Providing disability awareness as part of the induction training for all new staff, which might include also include a programme such as participation in the *Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.*

- Developing a clear relationship between staff promotion opportunities and contribution towards meeting the needs of diverse learners.

- Maintaining in research awards and awards for innovative teaching schemes the importance of contribution to a diverse learning environment as criteria for the award.

- Inclusion in all new course proposals a section on 'meeting the needs of diverse students' and having a section that requires contact with the Disability Support Officer.

- Continuing participation by UCC in national initiatives in universal access to learning opportunities such as 'National initiative to a digital repository of text books'.

- Working with the UCC Library on the DAISY standard (Digital Accessible Information System) as best practice in developing a universal accessible centre of information.

10. Conclusion

The PRG would like to thank the staff of the Disability Support Service for their excellent work in preparing for this review and for their participation in the site visit. The final report of the PRG is based on the recommendations in the Self-Assessment Report, discussions with staff and users of the service and guidelines provided by the Quality Promotion Unit.

The PRG would like to offer special thanks to Dr. Norma Ryan and Ms. Aoife Ní Néill of the Quality Promotion Unit for their support and hospitality during the site visit.

Timetable for conduct of Peer Review Visit

Disability Support Service

Tuesday 7th February 2006

17.30   Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group (PRG)
        Briefed by Director of Quality Promotion Unit, Dr. N. Ryan and PRG agreed final work schedule and assignment of tasks.
        Views were exchanged and areas to be clarified or explored were identified.

19.30   Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group, Head of Department and members of the co-ordinating committee responsible for preparation of the Self-Assessment Report.

Wednesday 8th February 2006

08.30   Peer Review Group convened in Muscraí, 2nd floor, Student Centre, UCC

        Consideration of Self-Assessment Report

09.00   Ms. Mary O'Grady, Head of Unit

09.30   Meeting with all staff of the Unit

10.45   Meetings with members of staff.

        10.30 Darrelle Keegan, *Student Support Assistant*
        10.40 Lisa Egan, *Executive Assistant,*
        10.50 Sheila Horgan, *Senior Executive Assistant, Accounts*
        11.00 Linda Doran, *Assistive Technology Officer*
        11.10 Siobhan Colclough, *Assistive Technology Assistant*
        11.20 Shirley Flanagan, *Sensory Disability Advisor*
        11.30 Avril O'Donnell, *Senior Executive Assistant*
        11.40 Janet Thomas, *Dyslexia Advisor*
        11.50 Madeline Jennings, *Senior Executive Assistant, Exam, E.S.W Co-ordinator*
        12.10 Mairead O'Sullivan, *Tutor Co-ordinator*
        12.20 Geraldine Brannigan, *Acting Careers Advisor*
        12.30 Mary Tracy Collins, *Co-ordinator of Swim Programme DSS*

13.00   Working private lunch for members of the Peer Review Group

14.00   Visit to facilities in central administration in West and East Wings

14.30   Consideration of Issues by PRG

15.00   UCC students with representatives across spectrum of disabilities including visual impairment, blindness, mental health difficulties, wheelchair users, significant ongoing illness and dyslexia

        James Northridge (*2nd year B.I.S*)
        Mariel Twomey (*2nd year B.A Music*)

Ger Sadlier (*2nd year Law*)
Freddie McCarthy, (*2nd Year B.A*)
Ben Coughlan (*PhD Zoology*)
Julie O'Leary (*2nd year Applied Psychology*)
Jeananne Doyle (*1st year Nutritional Sciences*)
Name withheld (*MA English*)
Orla Burke (*1st year B.A.*)

15.45   Representatives of academic staff of UCC

Ms. Maria Dempsey, *Assistant Dean of Faculty of Arts*
Dr. Francis Douglas, *Department of Education*
Dr. Elisabeth Okasha, *Department of English*
Ms. Catherine O'Sullivan, *Department of Law*
Dr. Ian Pitt, *Department of Computer Science*
Dr. Ed Shinnick, *Department of Economics*

16.15   Representatives of administrative staff of UCC

Ms. Suzanne Buckley, *International Education Office*
Ms. Margot Hill, *Examinations Office*
Ms. Mary O'Sullivan, *Fees Office*

16.45   Past graduates with representatives across spectrum of disabilities including visual impairment, blindness, mental health difficulties, wheelchair users

Sinead Kane (*BCL, LLM*)
Michael McElroy (*BA, M.A. P/T Tutor Philosophy*)
Brian Butler (*PhD History, tutoring for D.S.S, History Dept*)
Catherine Shortt (*BCL, LLM*)
Julianne Cuneen (*BA Early Childhood Studies*)
Diarmuid Ring (*B.Soc Sc, Library Assistant*)
Annemarie Collins (*BA, MA working with E.S.B*)
Leona Fitzgerald (*BA Early Childhood Studies, Crèche Assistant*)
Geraldine Looney (*B.Comm)*

17.15   Representatives of recent graduates, employers and other stakeholders, as appropriate

Ms. Susan Holland O'Leary, *College of Commerce*
Ms. Siobhan Daly, *Stiofain Naofa*
Ms. Mary O'Sullivan, *Access Officer, C.I.T*
Mr. Tim O'Connell, *Visiting teacher for the Blind, Dept of Education & Science*
Mr. Dermot Crosby, *Disability Employment Officer, FAS*
Mr. Gerry Whelan, *Training manager, ESB Wilton*
Ms. Sharon Lyne, *EU Project Co-ordinator, NCBI*,
Ms. Avril Clarke, *Tutor/ Notetaker*
Ms. Ruth Connolly, *Educational Support Worker/ Notetaker*
Ms. Rosemary Lynch, *Marks & Spencers, Cork*

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

Thursday 9th February 2006

08.30   Peer Review Group convened in Muscraí, Student Centre

8.35   Professor Áine Hyland, Vice-President, and Chair, Equality of Opportunity Committee

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

09.30   Tour of facilities in O'Rahilly Building, room 1.81 O'Rahilly Building, Disability Support Unit, followed by visit to Boole Library - meeting with Ms. Margot Conrick Head of Information Services and Ms. Valerie Fletcher, OPC/EDC Librarian

10.30   <u>Representatives of Computer Centre & Library</u>

            Mr. Jerry Buckley, *Enterprise Applications Manager, Computer Centre*
            Mr. Michael O'Halloran, *User Services manager, Computer Centre*
            Mr Seamus McMahon, *Library*

11.00   <u>Heads of Student Services</u>

            Father Joe Coughlan, *Head, Chaplaincy*
            Mr. Seamus McEvoy, *Head, Student Careers Office*
            Mr. Paul Moriarty, *Head, Student Counselling & Development*
            Ms. Christine O'Donovan, *Acting Head, Physical Education & Sport*
            Mr. Donnchadh O hAodha, *Manager, Student Centre*
            Ms. Maura O'Neill, *Head, Accommodations Office*
            Dr. Catherine O'Riordan, *Head, Student Health*

11.30   <u>Representatives of DSS Committee & Equality Committee</u>

            Dr. Tony Deeney, *Department of Physics*
            Ms. Sarah Simpkins, *Student Welfare Officer*
            Mr. Robert Fourie, *School of Clinical Therapies*
            Ms. Olive Byrne, *Access Officer*
            Ms. Michelle Nelson, *Deputy Admissions Officer*

12.00   Mr. Paul Prendergast, *Acting Buildings Officer*
            Ms. Sheila Maguire, *General Services Officer*

12.30   Ms. Carmel Cotter, *Finance Office*

12.45   Mr. Con O'Brien, *Academic Secretary*

13.00   Working private lunch for members of the Peer Review Group

14.30   Ms. Mary O'Grady, Head of Unit

15.10   Preparation of first draft of final report

16.15   Grace O'Leary, *Learning Technologies Unit*

16.30   Preparation of first draft of final report

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

19.00   Working private dinner for members of the Peer Review Group for completion of draft report and finalisation of arrangements for submission of final report.

Friday 10th February 2006

Externs departed