# Office of the Registrar

Incorporating the following:

**Academic Secretariat**
**Admissions Office**
**Academic Programme Approval**
**Student Records & Examinations & Information**
**Systems Administration for Office of Registrar**

*Peer Review Group*
> Professor C. O'Sullivan, Department of Physics, UCC (Chair)
> Professor M. Murphy, Dean of Medicine and Health, UCC
> Professor P. Barker, Professor of Finance and former Registrar, DCU.
> Dr. D. Law, Academic Registrar, University of Warwick, UK.
> Mr. P. Curtis, Registrar, University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia.

*Brief Description of conduct of site visit*
The site visit was conducted over 2.5 days from $22^{nd}$ – $24^{th}$ March 2004 and included meetings with
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| i) | Head and staff of the Office as a group and individually |
| ii) | Heads of offices reporting to the Registrar |
| iii) | Representatives of undergraduate and postgraduate students |
| iv) | Representatives of Deans and Faculties |
| v) | Representatives of employers, past graduates and other external stakeholders |
| vi) | Professor Áine Hyland, Vice-President |
| vii) | Mr. Michael Kelleher, Secretary & Bursar/Vice-President for Administration & Finance |
| viii) | Professor Gerard T. Wrixon, President |
| ix) | Mr. Michael O'Sullivan, Vice-President for Planning, Communications & Development |
| x) | Ms. Carmel Cotter & Mr. Cormac McSweeney, Finance Office |
| xi) | Mr. Jerry Buckley & Mr. Peter Flynn, Computer Centre |
| xii) | Mr. Mark Poland, Director, Buildings & Estates |
| xiii) | Mr. Noel Keeley, Vice-President for Human Resources |

and visits to unit facilities in UCC.

An exit presentation of the principal findings of the Peer Review Group was made to staff of the department in the afternoon of the second day.

## Description of Office of Registrar

*Head of Unit:* Professor M. Aidan Moran, Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs
*No. of Staff:* 42 staff in sections included in this review
*Location of Unit:* West Wing, Main Quadrangle

*Mission Statement*
> "To provide UCC with efficient and effective administration of its academic business in the interests of its students, staff and the wider community."

> **The Academic Secretariat** supports Academic Council, Academic Board and related committees; general co-ordination of academic business including communication with faculties and departments; correspondence with the Higher Education Authority and other external agencies on academic matters.

> **The Office for Academic Programmes and Regulations** facilitates the approval and review of programme planning and is responsible for the annual publication of the University Calendars (Parts I and II), the Book of Modules and the Marks and Standards book with rules governing assessment.

> **The Admissions Office** manages the marketing, recruitment, admission and induction of new EU students, both undergraduate and postgraduate. The office is responsible for managing UCC's access programme directed at achieving greater diversity in student intake including mature students. The office also oversees measures needed to enhance student retention.

> **The Student Records and Examinations Office** is responsible for registration and student records, the management of invigilated examinations and the processing and issue of examination results, the issue of academic transcripts, student certification and administration of scholarship awards.

> **The Systems Administration Office** is responsible for the development and maintenance of information systems to support all processes within the Registrar's Office and in particular the ITS Student Record System. The office is also responsible for analysis and dissemination of summary data and reports relating to student data.

*Aims & Objectives*

> Develop academic policies and structures at undergraduate and postgraduate levels which will facilitate and support academic development.

> Ensure implementation of the academic dimension of the University's strategic development plan as a central contribution to the overall achievement of the university's goal of excellence.

> Achieve excellence and diversity in student intake in support of university policy.

> Manage the academic administration of the university so as to optimise its service to staff and students taking full advantage of IT developments.

> Improve the services the Office offers to students, staff and the community and thereby enhance the reputation of the university.

## **General Comment on Quality Review**

The Self-Assessment Report comprised five individual Self-Assessment Reports, one from each Section together with an overarching Self-Assessment Report covering the Registrar's Office as a whole. One Section (International Students) had been reviewed previously and was not covered in the current process nor were other Student Services reporting to the Registrar (Student Careers Service, Student Health, Student Counselling & Development and Disability Support Service).

The reviewers were particularly impressed by the thorough documentation, the comprehensive analysis, the enthusiastic engagement and participation by staff and the thoughtful and reflective self-reviews that emerged.

Each individual Section of the office carried out its own SWOT analysis (two in the case of the Admissions Office, which had engaged in such an exercise one year earlier). No overall SWOT analysis involving all Registrar's Office staff was carried out; instead, an overall analysis exercise was undertaken at Registrar's Management Group (RMG) level. The reviewers found no reason to dissent from the reported results of any of the analyses undertaken. Many of the recommendations listed in the self-assessment reports were of a very detailed, local nature and many had already been implemented by the time of the site visit of the Peer Review Group; these recommendations will not be addressed explicitly in this report, which has taken a more strategic focus, but they have all informed the thinking of the Peer Review Group.

The primary benchmarking exercise for the Registrar's Office as a whole was a site visit to the University of Leeds. This was an appropriate choice in light of similarities between the recent history of UCC and of Leeds University (provincial institutions that have experienced similar relative expansions in student numbers during the past decade). Individual Sections also undertook site visits to two university institutions within the state (UCD, DCU). The results of earlier visits to universities in Western Australia by the Head of the Admissions Office were also used for benchmarking purposes. The Peer Review Group concluded that benchmarking of good practice was a valuable part of regular planning and performance monitoring and should be incorporated as far as possible into the ongoing management of the Office.

The Peer Review Group noted that the Registrar in UCC, as in other Irish universities, has broader roles than is common internationally. The Irish model gives a distinctive role to a Registrar as the principal academic officer of the university as compared to the UK or Australian model of Registrar as principal administrative officer. This was taken as a given characteristic by the Peer Review Group and provided the functional context for the review. Thus the review focused primarily on the administrative functions of the Office, the subject of the self-assessments, rather than the academic leadership role of the Registrar.

The review was also directed to that part of the Registrar's Office comprising the core academic administration areas only. However, while the Student Services areas and the International Education Office were outside the direct scope of the review, the Peer Review Group did examine broadly the relationships between the different parts of the larger 'Registrar's Office' and has not felt inhibited in making recommendations that might extend to these areas. The Peer Review Group would recommend that any future review process should incorporate all units that report directly to the Registrar.

## Specific Recommendations for Improvement

Consideration by the Quality Promotion Committee of the recommendations for improvement had been deferred following the review in order to allow the appointment of the successor to Professor M. Aidan Moran to be made, so as to allow the opportunity for the appointee to be involved in decisions on actions to be taken. The appointment has now been made and the Quality Promotion Committee revisited the report of the reviewers on the quality review of the Office of the Registrar during 2005 and has responded in detail to all of the recommendations as below.

| Recommendation of PRG | Recommendation of QPC following consultation with the Unit |
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| That a wider role be developed for all parts of the Registrar's Office in support of the role of the Registrar in policy initiation. This should enable a regime in which policy informs operations and *vice versa*. | Endorsed.<br><br>The QPC noted that some action has already been taken in the intervening months since the review. |
| That those student service units currently reporting to the Registrar be integrated more closely operationally and better integrated with the core academic administration units into the managerial structure of the Registrar's Office. | The principle of greater integration of the student services was endorsed. The QPC confirmed that integration of student services is now policy of the University. Implementation is at the discussion stage and proposals are being developed for discussion and implementation.<br><br>The QPC endorsed the recommendation. A suggestion that a full-time post be considered. However the QPC acknowledged the advantages of the holder of a post being a practicing academic, seconded into this post on a part-time basis and with an academic post to return to following the period in the post. |
| That the Registrar negotiate with the relevant Vice Presidents and Directors of Centres to develop frameworks to manage the interface between his office and the Computer Centre, the Finance Office, the Office of Marketing and Communications, the Department of Human Resources, etc. | Strongly endorsed.<br><br>The QPC noted that some improvements have taken place since the review. The QPC welcomed the streamlining of services that is on-going. The QPC noted that there are still a number of areas where streamlining could be improved – for example admission of a postgraduate student requires completion of 5 separate forms prior to successful registration.<br><br>The QPC referred this issue to all offices concerned with a recommendation that streamlining of procedures be implemented as soon as possible. |
| That the devolution of the academic structure (as defined within the ITS system, e.g. module descriptors, etc) to faculties/ departments /schools be advanced and that | Endorsed.<br><br>The QPC noted the actions taken since the review. Issues around the ownership of the data |

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| the appropriate resources required to implement this be ensured. | and who would have overall control of the data were briefly discussed.  The QPC requested the Director of the Computer Centre to prepare a paper on data policy for the UMG. |
| That processes be set up within the University so that more strategic and operational planning can take place and that a structured cycle of planning, budgeting and performance monitoring and reporting be developed institution wide and within the Registrar's Office. | Endorsed.

The QPC noted that actions on this recommendation are on-going. |
| That a review of the present grading system be undertaken and that a promotion system for administrative staff (to operate in parallel with the grading system) be developed. | Endorsed.

The QPC referred this recommendation to the Department of HR.  The QPC requested a report back by the end of January '06. |
| That specific developmental multi-tasking training be provided for staff, as appropriate, as an integral part of performance management, including annual review. | Endorsed.

The QPC were of the opinion that staff should discuss their needs with the Department of Human Resources and a relevant programme should be developed to meet the needs of staff. |
| That the Registrar's Office promote greater participation by staff in appropriate university-wide staff development programmes. In particular, time should be freed up to allow staff to participate in developmental activities.  Multi-tasking should be used to best effect in order to ensure that work does not accumulate to be dealt with by someone who has spent, for example, two days on a training course. | Endorsed.

QPC recommended that the Registrar's Office and the Department of HR should discuss this recommendation and how best it be implemented.  Proposed actions to be described in the Quality Improvement Plan. |
| That internal structures of the Registrar's Office be re-configured and a supporting training programme be put in place, to enable greater integration.  Consideration should be given to a structure involving a smaller number of larger Sections. | Endorsed.

QPC recommended that the Registrar's Office and the Department of HR should discuss this recommendation and how best it be implemented.  Proposed actions to be described in the Quality Improvement Plan. |
| That the immediate commencement of the design and development of a one-stop-shop for student services (including those falling within the responsibility of the Vice-President for Finance) so that such a resource can be put in place as soon as a suitable | Endorsed.

The QPC noted that the Finance Office and the Registrar's Office are in discussions on this matter.   It is anticipated that there will be a central delivery point, which has not yet been |

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| physical location has been identified and made available. | identified. |
| That IT investment to support student administration be increased. Early introduction of a student portal will be critical. | The QPC noted and commended the fact that this recommendation has already been implemented. The QPC noted that the student portal has been established. |
| That greater use be made of 'User Groups' in planning enhanced use of IT. | Endorsed.<br><br>The QPC noted that a structure is in place linking the Computer Centre and the Registrar's Office. |
| That there be a reduction in the reliance on and production of hardcopy versions of official documents such as Calendars. | Strongly endorsed.<br><br>The QPC noted that this recommendation has already been implemented in 2005, in that the Calendar and Book of Modules are now available in electronic format only. |
| That there be a more integrated approach to the University's core publications, perhaps through the creation of a single Publications Office. | Endorsed.<br><br>QPC recommended that this recommendation be referred to the VP for Planning, Communications & Development |
| That the suitability of the ITS system should be carefully examined by a project team from the Registrar's Office, the Finance Office and the Computer Bureau. | Endorsed.<br><br>The QPC noted that this action on this recommendation is already underway. |
| That there be greater involvement of all Registrar's Office Sections in planning and resource allocation within the Office and a greater personal involvement of the Registrar in this process. | Endorsed. |
| That the Registrar's Office develop a programme of regular self-evaluation including such features as benchmarking and SWOT exercises together with routine staff exchange arrangements and client satisfaction surveys. | Endorsed. |
| That an annual cycle of key activities within Registrars Office be prepared together with associated deadlines. A web-delivered Calendar of Events should be derived from this critical path analysis planning and should be published for all stakeholders to | Endorsed. |

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| access. The Registrar should seek from the appropriate university bodies a clear authority to enforce deadlines on faculties, schools and departments, including the use of appropriate sanctions. | |
| That more systematic performance management structures within the Registrar's Office be developed. | Endorsed. |
| That documentation of policies and procedures including the formulation of standard operating procedures be put in place in all areas of the Registrar's Office as a matter of urgency. | Endorsed. |
| That an urgent application be made to the university Safety Officer for a comprehensive Health and Safety review, including ergonomic screening, of the entire Registrar's Office area. | Endorsed. |