Office of the Vice-President for Research Policy & Support

Including the following:

Industrial Liaison Office
Research Office

Peer Review Group

       Professor J. Gamble, Department of Geology, UCC (Chair)
       Mr. M. Kelleher, Secretary & Bursar, UCC
       Mr. F. Ó Móráin, Enterprise Ireland, Dublin, Ireland
       Dr. C. O'Carroll, Conference of Heads of Irish Universities, Dublin
       Mr. T. Hockaday, Isis Innovation Ltd., University of Oxford, UK

Brief Description of conduct of site visit

The site visit was conducted over 2.5 days from 12th – 14th May 2004 and included meetings with

i)	Head and staff of the Unit as a group and individually
ii)	Representatives of internal users of the services offered by the Office
iii)	Representatives of employers, past graduates and other external stakeholders
iv)	Professor Gerard Wrixon, President
v)	Mr. Michael O'Sullivan, Vice-President for Planning, Communications & Development
vi)	Mr. John Fitzgerald, Librarian
vii)	Mr. Mark Poland, Director, Buildings & Estates
viii)	Professor David Cox, Dean, Faculty of Arts
ix)	Mr. Michael Farrell, Administrative Secretary

and visits to 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 the Vice-President for Research Policy & Support

Vice-President for Research Policy & Support: Professor J. Kevin Collins
No. of Staff: 8 staff: 1 Vice-President, 2 Heads of offices, 1 Projects Officer, 2 full-time contract staff, 2 administrative support staff.
Location of Unit: North Wing, Main Quadrangle; No 5, Brighton Villas

Mission Statement

       "To provide the College with research support through information, assistance, guidance and advice on all aspects of the planning, execution, sustaining and application of research."

Function

       ➤ To develop and implement research policy in UCC in line with the research strategy outlined in the Strategic Plan *Agenda for Excellence*.

Aims & Objectives

       ➤ Quality improvement of its research infrastructure.

> ➢ Creation of centres of excellence which bridge traditional divisions in the Sciences, Technology and Humanities and which promote collaboration and integration.

> ➢ Increased quality of graduate output

> ➢ Strategic development of the University's capacity for innovation

> ➢ Support the commercialisation of research outputs as and where appropriate and beneficial to UCC

> ➢ Enhance UCC's competitiveness in attracting external funding

> ➢ To optimise protection and commercialisation of research for the benefit of the University, the regional and national economies

> ➢ The implementation of a research policy for the promotion of excellence across a range of prioritised subjects.

General Comment on Quality Review

The review team was impressed by the Self-Assessment Report and congratulated the Office for Research Policy & Support team for the quality, depth and frankness of the information provided.

The panel agreed that the SWOT analysis provided by Research Support Office and Industrial Liaison Office was accurate, honest, forthright and refreshingly open. A number of the issues raised in the SWOT analysis were amplified as a result of the interview sessions carried out in the interview of staff. These formed a substantive portion of the recommendations below.

The panel concluded that the choice of comparisons in the UK universities were not directly comparable with UCC. In the case of the benchmarking undertaken by the Research Policy & Support Office, the panel noted that the name of the UK comparator was not identified, but understood the need to uphold a request for confidentiality in this regard. Nevertheless, it would have been preferable if the selected institution had been available for cross-referencing by the panel. In relation to the benchmarking exercise of the Industrial Liaison Office, the UK examples quoted were not considered appropriate for reasons of scale of operations in these institutions relative to UCC. Comparison with Trinity College Dublin was considered entirely appropriate for the purposes of the assessment.

The panel commented in further detail under each of the headings in the Peer Review Group report.

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 J. K. Collins 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 Vice-President for Research Policy & Support 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
That the request for more resources needs to be accompanied by clear plans and objectives identifying what the new resources will deliver to the benefit of the University. In asking for more resources the office needs to develop a clear business plan setting out these returns which are of course not only financial. This requires the members of the office to meet new challenges.	Endorsed. QPC noted the action by the VP.
That the future role of the VP for Research should be that of a leadership role in developing research policies and strategies for all the areas of the University. The administrative and professional roles should be delegated to appropriate senior staff reporting to the Vice-President for Research.	Endorsed. QPC noted that the next call for proposals for PRTLI-IV is imminent and that the VP-RPS will be required to take a leadership role in leading preparation of proposals.
That there is a need to restructure and consolidate the commercialisation aspect of research activities in the University.	Endorsed. The QPC noted the comments made with respect to the need for structuring of the technology transfer function of the Office and for expertise in the specific aspects of commercialisation, e.g. Biotransfer, ICT. At the same time the need for communication and coordination between those responsible for such activities in different centres was acknowledged. The Office of the VP-RPS has a role to play in coordinating these activities.
To avoid issues of the appearance of conflict of interest there is a need for transparency and formality in University wide decision-making.	Strongly endorsed. QPC welcomed actions by Office
The panel recommends better communication to ensure that the processes by which University-wide decisions related to research policy are made are more open and accountable. This will require the ORPS to	Endorsed.

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC following consultation with the Unit
seek advice, possibly from HR, and to activate processes in which lead to change in this area	
In relation to the structure of the ILO and RSO the panel sees a need for closer liaison between the two - the panel recognises the parallelism of the RSO and ILO – there needs to be more and more effective inter-communication.	Endorsed.
Through the proceedings the panel became aware of the need to address issues of management in the entire ORPS – this involves communication, planning and prioritisation of activities.	Endorsed. The QPC noted and welcomed the commitment for the time to be spent on VP duties by the post-holder
That the location of office space should be reviewed.	QPC endorsed the on-going discussions leading to a review of locations and possibilities.
That senior managers should review the roles and interactions between various academic committees, particularly those associated with the wider research activities of the University. It is vital that an open and effective conduit of communication be maintained between ORPS, Research Committees and Senior Management at UCC.	QPC noted and endorsed that this recommendation will be considered as part of the discussions on re-structuring. This is a standing item on the UMG agenda. The VP-RPS is preparing a report for UMG.