



**Fheabhsú Cáilíochta
Quality Enhancement**

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE PANEL REPORTS THEMES
FOR
ACADEMIC QUALITY REVIEW 2018/19**

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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

This report provides an analytical summary of the themes arising from unit (academic and administrative) Periodic Quality Reviews undertaken during the academic year 2018/19. Eight Unit quality reviews were undertaken in 2018/19. The report summarises the non-unit specific themes arising from these reviews and provides an overview and analysis of the findings at Unit, College, and University level.

The following Units and Schools were reviewed:

2018/19:

UNITS:

- Buildings and Estates (B&E)
- Centre for Adult Continuing Education (ACE)
- Office of the Vice-President for Learning & Teaching (VP L&T)

SCHOOLS:

- Cork University Business School (CUBS)
- Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha
- School of Computer Science and Information Technology (CSIT)
- School of Engineering
- Scoil Léann na Gaeilge (SnaG)

1.2 Method of Analysis

An analysis of the Panel Reports was undertaken with focus on the non-unit specific themes arising from the Reviews. This qualitative data was systematically organised, analysed and thematically coded by highlighting or underlining 'significant statements', 'meaning units' and 'textural descriptions' (Creswell, 2007¹). The analysis process enabled clusters of statements and meanings to evolve into broader categories. Further classification enabled the emergence of five main themes: Strategic, Staffing, Student Issues, Learning & Teaching, and External Relations (Fig. 1.2). No recommendations appear in Panel Reports without associated context in the main body of the report. Therefore, while all reports were read in detail deductive coding was carried out only on the listed Panel recommendations. Categories of recommendations were provided in all reports which were used as the starting point for analysis. Using the above main themes deductive coding was then applied to the

¹ Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design Choosing Among Five Approaches*. Sage Publications. *Thousand Oaks, CA*.

The collegiality and commitment of staff was highlighted in all four Panel Reports; dynamic leadership was also deemed evident across three of the four reports. Innovative activities and high levels of external engagement were also commended. Additionally, the panels highlighted the positive engagement with the self-evaluation process in two of the four reports (Fig. 1.0; table 1.0)

Table 1.0 – Sample commendations

SAMPLE COMMENDATIONS
Collegiality
<i>“Ccollegiality, collaboration and commitment of B&E staff”</i>
<i>“evidence of commitment and collegiality across the staff” [ACE]</i>
<i>“Highly committed and engaged staff who “box above their weight” in delivering a service across the University” [VP L&T]</i>
<i>“Highly committed, collegial and innovative staff” [SnaG]</i>
Dynamic leadership
<i>“leadership in relation to award-winning Sustainability/Green Campus initiatives, which has advanced UCC’s profile as a Green Campus” [B&E]</i>
<i>“Excellent leadership on the part of the Director, Senior Management Team and staff in turning around the fortunes of ACE”</i>
<i>“Committed and dynamic leadership of the School, which has seen exciting and innovative projects come to fruition” [SnaG]</i>
Innovation
<i>“award-winning Sustainability/Green Campus initiatives” [B&E]</i>
<i>“digital delivery platforms e.g. the Celtic digital resource and the distance/online” [SnaG]</i>
<i>“Innovative pedagogies – pro-active learning approaches, performative learning” [SnaG]</i>
External engagement
<i>“ACE’s partnership way of working – both within the University and beyond”</i>
<i>“Significant external engagement in liaising with partner organisations across the city for Life-Long Learning, as acknowledged by external stakeholders” [VP L&T]</i>
<i>“Exemplary evidence of community engagement (e.g. Cork Folklore Project; Gaelcholáiste Mhic Shuibhne, Knocknaheeny); the School was highly commended by external stakeholders” [SnaG]</i>
Self-evaluation
<i>“impressive, thorough approach to self-evaluation” [B&E]</i>
<i>“The extensive self-evaluation process engaged in by ACE as part of the quality review and the comprehensiveness of the documentation which was presented”</i>

1.4 Summary Findings by Theme



Strategy and Planning

- Strategic Plan (100%)



Staffing

- Workload model (50%)
- Succession planning (50%)
- Leadership (37.5%)
- CPD opportunities (50%)



Learning & Teaching

- Programme review (37.%)
- Assessment/Feedback (50%)
- Digital Education (75%)



Student issues

- Communication (25%)
- Committee representation (37.5%)



External relations

- Harnessing alumni (62.5%%)
- Professional engagment (37.%)

Figure 1.2: Themes and sub-themes identified from qualitative data analysis

2.0 General Findings of 2018 – 2019 Panel Reports

2.1 Distribution of Panel Recommendations

Figure 2.0 indicates the number of recommendations by School/Unit and the number of those recommendations at College- and University- level. This highlights that approximately two-thirds of the recommendations are directed towards the Units and one-third to the Colleges and University. UNIVERSITY-LEVEL recommendations focused on strategic support for individual units, policy development (e.g. Panopto) and promotional activities. 3/8 unit reports had COLLEGE-LEVEL recommendations; these largely focused on providing support for specific unit-level activities recommended in each specific report. Given the overwhelming amount of UNIT-LEVEL recommendations the remainder of this report will deal with Unit-level themes only.

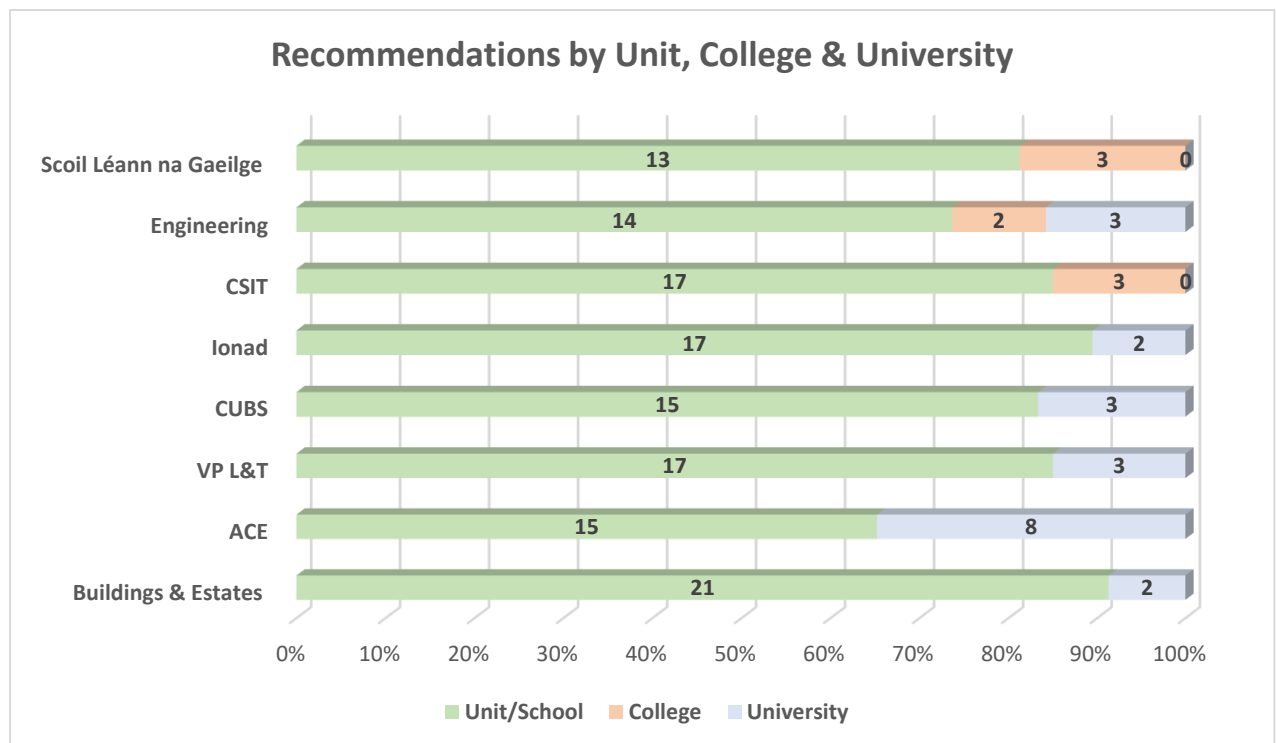


Figure 2.0: Recommendations by School, College and University

2.2 Thematic Analysis

2.2.1 Breakdown of Themes

From the content analysis of the Panel Reports, the following sub-themes emerged via deductive coding from the main themes mentioned above (figure 1.1). these sub-themes are presented in order of present/absence in each Panel Report (figure 3.0), e.g. absence of a strategic plan or articulated vision was mentioned in all eight reports (100%), whereas communication was mentioned in only two reports (25%).

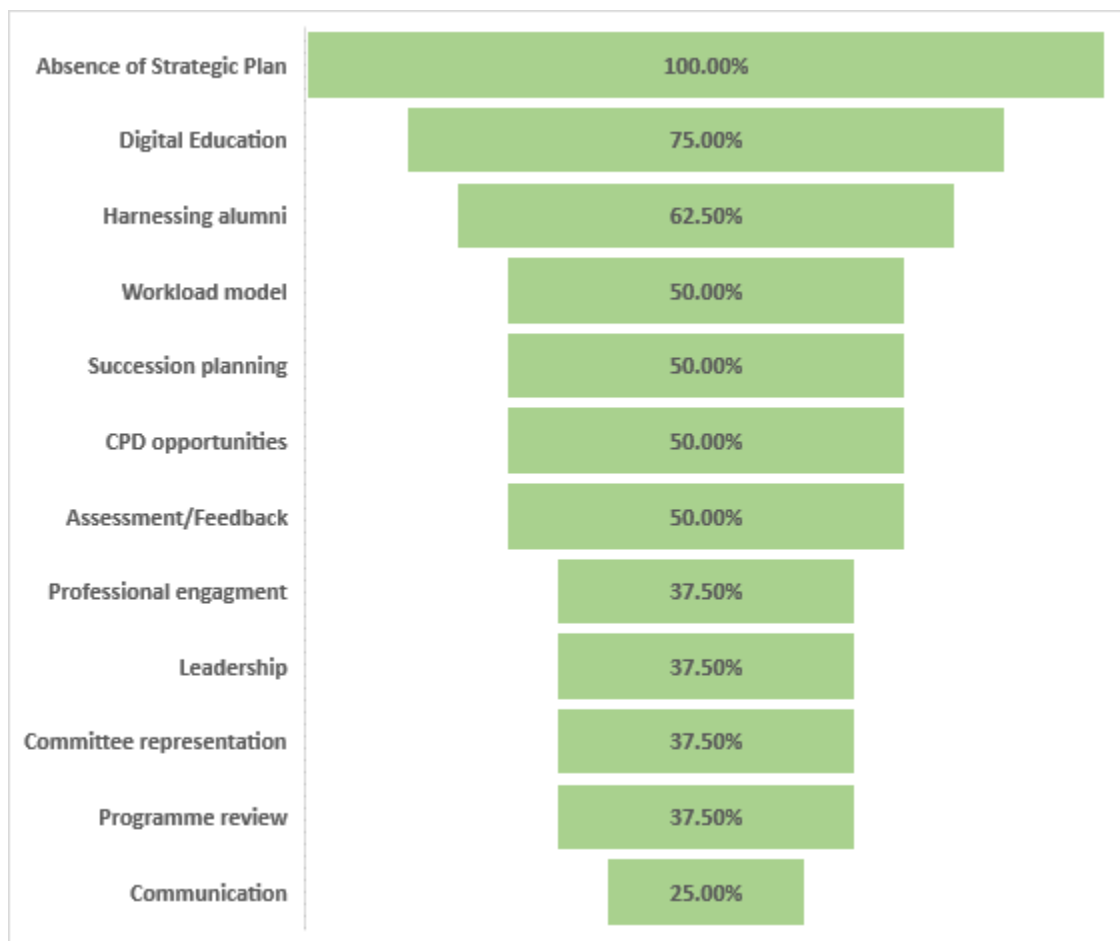


Figure 3.0: *sub-themes with specific mentions in the eight Panel Reports*

The next sections summarise the seven themes appearing in 50% Panel Reports; those appearing in less than 50% of reports are summarised in Appendix C. For the purposes of this report, the seven sub-themes are presented in the ranked order of importance (appearance) to all Units.

2.2.1.1 Sub-theme One: Strategy and Planning

The impact of Schoolification has not been fully resolved from a strategic perspective and divisions remain in Schools in particular, along legacy discipline and departmental lines, which is impacting on overall Strategic Planning. All eight Panel Reports referred to Unit Strategic Plans.

SUB-THEME 1: Absence of Strategic Plan (100%)		
Theme	Sub-theme	Units
Strategic	Absence of Strategic Plan	All
Sample recommendations		
<i>"A Strategic Plan is required to provide overall direction into the future through clear articulation of priorities which will enable medium and long-term operational planning"</i>		
<i>"Formulate and articulate a Strategic Plan for the School, which reflects its shared, cognate and collegial priorities. This should reflect the University's strategic vision"</i>		
<i>"Outlining a clear road-map for the Strategic Plan which is time-bound, and addresses the business and operational aspects of implementing the Plan"</i>		
<i>"Develop a strategic plan which articulates the distinctive strengths of the School and identifies the opportunities that arise from Schoolification"</i>		

2.2.1.2 Sub-theme Two: Digital Education

6/8 (75%) of Panel Reports had recommendations that have been categorised as 'Digital Education'. Ensuring that all staff move exclusively to the University's new VLE, Canvas and other standard University systems to enable the development and implementation of a University-wide policy, matching UCC's sustainability goals, dominated these recommendations.

SUB-THEME 2: DIGITAL EDUCATION (75%)		
Theme	Sub-theme	Units
Learning & Teaching	Digital Education	B&E, VP L&T, CUBS, Ionad, CSIT, ENGEERING
Sample recommendations		
<i>"Ensure a consistent approach to electronic submission of course work in line with the University's sustainability goals"</i>		
<i>"Develop and use, as a matter of routine, appropriate infographics to show achievements in room utilisation and maintenance of standards"</i>		
<i>"Develop light touch, stand-alone, digitally-badged opportunities and interventions to sustain on-going engagement with pedagogical development"</i>		
<i>"Explore the possibility of accreditation for current course offerings under the European Framework along with the use of digital badges to provide learners with appropriate credentials for the learning achieved"</i>		

2.2.1.3 Sub-theme Three: Harnessing alumni

5/8 (62.5%) of Panel Reports suggested that units should harness the potential of their alumni, and industry and community-based external stakeholders by recruiting and training them, in expert and advisory roles, to support student placement and career development.

SUB-THEME 3: HARNESSING ALUMNI (62.5%)		
Theme	Sub-theme	Units
External relations	Harnessing alumni	ACE, VP L&T, CUBS, CSIT, ENGINEERING
Sample recommendations		
<i>“Establish a School Advisory Committee/Industry Board comprising of external stakeholders and alumni to advise on industry trends, strategic direction and programme planning”</i>		
<i>“Harness the enthusiasm and interest of CIRTL alumni by establishing a community of practice to facilitate on-going knowledge-sharing”</i>		
<i>“Work to harness the potential of its alumni by recruiting and training them to conduct peer mentoring”</i>		
<i>“Consider centralised roles for functions such as marketing for programmes, and alumni and industry engagement, etc. and clarifies what should be done at Department, School and University levels”</i>		

2.2.1.4 Sub-theme Four: Workload model

There remains considerable concern around staff workload and appropriate workload models. 4/8 (50%) of Panel Reports recommended the implementation of workload models applicable to the unit under review; e.g. adaptable to applied Schools, multi-disciplinary Schools, etc.

SUB-THEME 4: WORKLOAD MODEL (50%)		
Theme	Sub-theme	Units
Staffing	Workload model	VP L&T, CUBS, IONAD, SnaG
Sample recommendations		
<i>“Implement a transparent workload allocation model which takes account of the administrative duties of academic staff – especially in relation to the Programme Director roles”</i>		
<i>“Put in place a flexible, transparent workload model for the whole School”</i>		
<i>“The staffing complement, configuration, roles and responsibilities should be reviewed”</i>		
<i>“Consider the appointment of College-located educational developers”</i>		

2.2.1.5 Sub-theme Five: Succession planning

Issues around succession emerged in the aftermath of the Employment Control Framework and a perceived need for the University to develop an ambitious strategy for attracting and retaining top

quality researchers and teachers (UCC Strategic Plan 2017-2022). 4/8 (50%) of Panel Reports recommended that units put succession mechanisms in place to enable the continuation of services following retirement, illness, etc.

SUB-THEME 5: SUCCESSION PLANNING (50%)		
Theme	Sub-theme	Units
Staffing	Succession Planning	B&E, ACE, IONAD, CSIT
Sample recommendations		
<i>“Develop and coordinate an approach for succession planning to preserve and transfer existing expert institutional knowledge and cultural diversity”</i>		
<i>“There is a need to ensure that effective succession planning approaches are in place in light of the career stages of the staff cohort”</i>		

2.2.1.6 Sub-theme Six: CPD opportunities

Workload model issues further limit the time available to staff to pursue their own research and/or opportunities for Continuing Professional Development (CPD). 4/8 (50%) of Panel Reports recommended that units increase the opportunities available to staff for CPD.

SUB-THEME 6: CPD OPPORTUNITIES (50%)		
Theme	Sub-theme	Units
Staffing	CPD opportunities	ACE, VP L&T, CSIT, SnaG
Sample recommendations		
<i>“Consider CPD offerings for internal staff and alumni to enable continued engagement with current educational technologies”</i>		
<i>“Create and implement a staff development plan which enables staff to proactively advance their own career objectives, aligned with the strategic direction of the University”</i>		

2.2.1.7 Sub-theme Seven: Assessment/Feedback

The absence of School-wide implementation of policies in relation to assessment, which specifically addresses Principle 3 of the University’s Academic Strategy: *“Assessment practices will be effectively aligned with learning outcomes”* was apparent in 50% of Quality reviews. Schools need to review their approach to assessment and its weightings and ensure timely feedback to students. It was suggested that this review take place in conjunction with programme rationalisation or review activities.

SUB-THEME 7: ASSESSMENT/FEEDBACK (50%)		
Theme	Sub-theme	Units
Student issues	Assessment/Feedback	CUBS, CSIT, ENGINEERING, SnaG
Sample recommendations		

<i>“Review the approach to assessment and its weightings, and ensures timely feedback to students”</i>
<i>“Diversify assessment modalities, and communicate assessment policies, (grading criteria, etc.) with students across all departments within the School; standardise the timing of feedback to students”</i>
<i>“Implements the framework to review and rationalise the portfolio of programmes, including assessment and student workload”</i>
<i>“Implement an assessment and feedback policy”</i>

APPENDIX A - Recommendations by Unit, College & University

Table A1.0 – Recommendations by Unit, College & University (Figure 1.1)

<i>Unit/School</i>	Unit/School	College	University	Total
	Units			
<i>Buildings & Estates (B&E)</i>	21	0	2	23
<i>Centre for Continuing Adult Education (ACE)</i>	15	0	8	23
<i>Office for the Vice-President for Learning and Teaching (VP L&T)</i>	17	0	3	20
	Schools			
<i>Cork University Business School (CUBS)</i>	15	0	3	18
<i>Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha</i>	17	0	2	19
<i>School of Computer Science and Information Technology (CSIT)</i>	17	3	0	20
<i>School of Engineering</i>	14	2	3	19
<i>Scoil Léann na Gaeilge</i>	13	3	0	16
	129	8	21	158

APPENDIX B - Deductive coding (presence or absence or predetermined categories) for all units

Table B1.0 – Deductive coding (presence or absence or predetermined categories) for all eight units (Figure 1.2)

		<i>B&E</i>	<i>ACE</i>	<i>VP L&T</i>	<i>CUBS</i>	<i>Ionad</i>	<i>CSIT</i>	<i>Engineering</i>	<i>Scoil Léann na Gaeilge</i>	<i>TOTAL (%)</i>
<i>Strategic</i>	Strategic Plan	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8 (100%)
<i>Staffing</i>	Workload model	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	4 (50%)
	Succession planning	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	4 (50%)
	Leadership	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	3 (37.5%)
	CPD opportunities	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	4 (50%)
<i>Learning & Teaching</i>	Programme review	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	3 (37.5%)
	Assessment/Feedback	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	4 (50%)
	Digital Education	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	6 (75%)
<i>Student issues</i>	Communication	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2 (25%)
	Committee representation	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	3 (37.5%)
<i>External relations</i>	Harnessing alumni	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	5 (62.5%)
	Partnership development	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1 (12.5%)
	Professional engagement	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	3 (37.5%)

APPENDIX C - Additional sub-themes that warranted recommendation

25% - 37.5% of the Panel Reports include the following:

SUB-THEMES 8 - 12: 25% - 37.5% of recommendations		
Theme	Sub-theme	Units
Varied	Varied	Multiple
Sample recommendations: Professional engagement (37.5%)		
<i>"Ensure that programmes remain current and linked to industry requirements for graduate employability"</i>		
<i>"Establish a School Advisory Committee/Industry Board comprising of external stakeholders and alumni to advise on industry trends, strategic direction and programme planning"</i>		
Sample recommendations: Leadership (37.5%)		
<i>"Appoint an Office Manager which would ensure cohesion across all of the Units of the Office"</i>		
<i>"The appointment of a School Manager should be supported as a matter of urgency; this role should support the Head of School (HOS) and the embedding of School structures"</i>		
Sample recommendations: Committee representation (37.5%)		
<i>"Monitor effectiveness of new structures and include empowered student representation. Student membership and representation on appropriate School committees is critical"</i>		
Sample recommendations: Programme review (37.5%)		
<i>"Undertake a review of its module offerings and delivery to ensure the most efficient use of resources, including expertise and laboratories; ensure that students have familiarity with the latest industry-standard technologies and opportunities to develop their soft skills"</i>		
<i>"Overhaul and modernise programmes and curricula to align with state of the art advancements in the fields, and to reflect the digital transformation of industry, eliminate redundancy"</i>		
<i>"Develops a framework to systematically review and rationalise the programme portfolio"</i>		
Sample recommendations: Communication (25%)		
<i>"Develop an internal and external communications strategy to inform people about achievements, the full range of services, priorities and developments within the B & E function, with good news and high impact visuals"</i>		
<i>"Take steps to ensure communication, coordination and coherence of the joint programmes from a student perspective"</i>		