

School of the Human Environment (Geography and Archaeology) – Quality Improvement Plan & Follow up

The table below details recommendations from the Peer Review Group arising from the Quality Review of the School of the Human Environment in December 2013. The School prepared a Quality Improvement Plan and a Follow up meeting was held in 26th November 2016.

<i>PRG recommendations</i>	<i>Proposed actions</i>	<i>Responsibility for actions</i>	<i>Resource implications</i>	<i>Delivery date</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	<i>School-level Action by 2016</i>	<i>Dept of Geography Action by 2016</i>	<i>Dept of Archaeology Action by 2016</i>	<i>Follow up meeting 26th November 2016</i>
1a. The School structure be used more effectively to ensure participation for all staff in the decision-making processes of the College and University.	A. Review of staff participation in decision making structures at College and University level. Further encouragement given to staff in both units to participate on College and University-level committees.	A. HoS, HoDs	A. No new provision, but adjustment to workload balance as required.	A. Oct. 2014	A. This review of staff participation in UCC will be reviewed on annual basis, as part of revised workload allocation model.	School academics are now represented on all the main CACSSS committees (list available on request). They also serve in key managements positions, notably Dr MacEinri as the recent Associate Dean for International Affairs in CACSSS, Professor O'Brien at CEMC, Academic Council and ADSC committee, the Professor Promotion Board among others. Professor Lyons sits on the CACSSS International	Continued membership of key CACSSS Committees.	Continued membership of key CACSSS Committees.	Increased participation on College and University committees welcomed.

						Committee, and Academic Council.			
1b. That the full potential of the School for the disciplines in relation to strategic matters such as resourcing in the broadest sense, innovative academic development, particularly in the areas of future research and where the disciplines meet.	<p>A. Launch of <i>MA in Archaeology and Geoinformatics</i>. This School-level initiative was PAP-approved in 2012, but did not proceed due to staffing issues.</p> <p>B. Investment in scientific areas of both disciplines, with emphasis on palynology, geoinformatics and remote sensing.</p>	<p>A, HoC, UMT</p> <p>B. HoC</p>	<p>A. New staff appointment in Archaeology (Lectureship in Digital Archaeology).</p> <p>B. Establishment of dedicated laboratory and fieldwork funding for both Archaeology and Geography. Establishment of ICT equipment/software grant allocation for both Archaeology and Geography.</p>	<p>A–B 2014/2015</p>	<p>A. Appointment of new lecturer, with advertising of <i>MA in Archaeology and Geoinformatics</i> to follow. This appointment to introduce new combined modules in digital applications at undergraduate level, with emphasis on CK107, but also CK101 and CK118 BA in Digital Humanities and Information Technology).</p> <p>B. Improved facilities leading to positive student experience and learning environment, as well as enhanced research capacity.</p>	<p>A. This position has not been progressed due to current budgetary restrictions.</p> <p>B. No dedicated long-term sources of laboratory or fieldwork funding have been created in CACSSS/UCC in recent years due to current budgetary restrictions.</p>	<p>1.b Due to the lack of funding there has been no progression in this area. The Geography Department funds its own computer and technology needs from its own budget. Mostly this is derived from our H.Dip in GIS. Enrollment is falling each year so the medium to long term future is not good.</p>	<p>B. Archaeology received a once-off grant of €5000 in 2015/16 to support upgrading of postgraduate computer lab.</p>	<p>The School would benefit from once-off investment for equipment.</p>
1c. That the School be	A. Review research	A. HoDs	A. None	A. Sept 2015	A. New policy on postgraduate	A. There have been no	B. There is little	C. In 2014 Archaeology	The disciplines share a joint

<p>utilised in relation to support creative and innovative teaching, the teaching of academic transferable skills, grant writing for research students and cartographic skills at undergraduate levels.</p>	<p>training for postgraduates in Archaeology and Geography, with a view to rationalizing delivery in areas of common interest, with reference also to offerings from CACSSS Graduate School.</p> <p>B. Ongoing development of palynology training in third year BA, through modules AR3050/GG3051 introduced in 2012/13.</p> <p>C. Introduction of new module 'Geoarchaeology Field School' in 2014/15 for students in CK107 degree. This module will introduce students to the principles and</p>	<p>B. Dr Ben Gearey and technical staff in Geography; HOC</p> <p>C. Dr Ben Gearey and new Lecturer in Physical Geography; HOC</p>	<p>B. Investment in equipment for Geography palynology laboratory. New up skilling opportunities for technical staff support.</p> <p>C. Financial allocation for one-week residential field school for new module in CK107.</p>	<p>B. June 2015</p> <p>C. Oct 2014.</p>	<p>training to be implemented for start of 2015/16 academic year.</p> <p>B. Upgrading of technical facilities for palynology research in Department of Geography</p> <p>C. Delivery of field school in April 2015, and in subsequent years of second-year CK107 degree</p>	<p>initiatives at school level in this area, partly due to the current budgetary restrictions, but also due to the very different needs of the two disciplines. The departments cooperate to provide support for postgraduate students where cross-disciplinary training is required. As an example, Archaeology students have taken GIS training in Geography in recent years, while Archaeology has offered laser scanning technical support to Geography students.</p>	<p>crossover between archaeology and geography. Primarily due to the nature of the disciplines. Most geographers are either cultural or physical geographers. There is potentially some opportunity for research collaboration between our new SL in physical geography who has interests in historical climatology. Dr Hickey (geography) does jointly lead the AR2046/GG2022 field school.</p>	<p>introduced an Easter field school for Geography and Archaeology students in the CK107 degree (module AR2046 <i>Geoarchaeology Field School</i>).</p>	<p>fieldtrip and teaching in geomorphology and geoarchaeology.</p>
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	methods of geoarchaeological fieldwork and their application to the analysis of historic landscapes. Students will participate in a supervised landscape study leading to a survey project.								
2a. That a medium planning cycle for staff deployment be introduced.	A. Both Archaeology and Geography will review current workload allocation models, with a view to balanced rotation of teaching commitments and other roles and responsibilities . This will include a schedule for sabbatical leave applications for coming years.	A. HoDs	A. None, apart from maintenance of current staffing levels and continuation of sabbatical leave scheme. Workload allocation to be adjusted to take account of staff appointments/departures	A. Dec. 2014	Report on workload allocation and roles and responsibilities to be sent to HOC. Details to be included in AWDM-FEC process.	Both departments have devolved workload systems in place, with balanced role and responsibility allocations as well as sabbatical rotation (details available on request). Arising from the Quality Review, both units reviewed staff workload, and are satisfied that there are no significant inequities in the present		Following the 2013 Quality Review, Archaeology introduced a sabbatical rotation, which three staff have availed of to date. Archaeology updates our balanced workload and devolved management document every year.	School's response welcomed.

						allocations. Both units are fully engaged with the AWDM-FEC process			
3a. That the Department of Geography examines the potential for cooperation with other Departments and Colleges for some third year physical geography modules.	A. Geography will examine the science modules for potential teaching cooperation. However, a major problem with expanding offerings for 3rd year <u>BA</u> geography students are the prerequisites attached to 3rd and 4th year modules across the sciences.	A. HoD, Geography, physical geography staff.	A. None	A. Sept 2015	A. Documentation of same.		Due to the prerequisite requirement there is little ability (or interest) among BA geography students to take BSc science courses.		The Department of Geography now offers the BSc Geography in collaboration with the School of BEES. However, the prerequisite requirements for SEFS are still proving a barrier for entry to 3 rd year geography students.
3b. That a serious attempt is made to re-install participation in excavation as a teaching goal for 2nd or 3rd year students in CK101 and maybe also	UCC Archaeology is currently the leading provider of excavation training in the Irish University system. This is delivered at taught masters level (<i>MA in Archaeological</i>								The Department of Archaeology stated that the comments under 'Proposed Actions' still stand.

<p>CK107. In the latter course this might be combined with other practical skills in for instance GIS modelling.</p>	<p><i>Excavation</i>), which we consider to be the level appropriate to deliver such cost- and time-intensive fieldwork as part of graduate professional training. We have a strong fieldwork programme for undergraduates, which like the other Irish Archaeology departments does not include excavation for the aforementioned reason, but also in our case for timetable, financial, and staffing factors. We have considered the matter, but will not be implementing this</p>								
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	recommendation								
3c. That participation of stakeholders is sought with regard to participation in the MA course on archaeological excavations, and in the search for suitable lifelong learning modules (CPD).	A. Archaeology will continue to contact relevant stakeholders in private and State sectors to encourage such participation. These contacts are made on an ongoing basis, but every effort will be made to increase the involvement of different interests. This can be done in several ways, including the use of our third year professional development course (AR3047). We will continue liaison with our professional institute (IAI) in respect of CPD offerings.	A. HoD	A. None.	No specific date as this will have to be an ongoing effort.	Depending on responses, this outreach activity may lead to a greater number of work placements and support for CPD initiatives.			This year Archaeology has opened up professional training modules in our <i>MA in Archaeological Excavation</i> for CPD purposes. We continue to engage with commercial archaeology companies in respect of employment graduates for our students. We invite representatives from these companies to speak to our third year AR3047 Professional Practice module, and to our weekly research seminar programme.	Implemented.

<p>3d. All students in the School should be encouraged to develop their critical thinking skills throughout their undergraduate career culminating in a final piece of individual investigative work.</p>	<p>A. Geography. Critical thinking skills are encouraged throughout the degree. We have restructured our entire 1st year curriculum and the core modules of our second year curriculum.</p> <p>B. Geography. We will ensure that the approximately 10% of students that are currently not undertaking a piece of investigate work in their final year do so, by requiring that all students enroll in at least one module that has an investigative assignment.</p>	<p>A-B. HoD, Geog. Staff.</p> <p>C. HoD, HoS, HoC, UMT</p>	<p>A. None</p> <p>B. None</p> <p>C. 3 additional staff members (see 7b)</p>	<p>A-B 2015/16</p> <p>C. 2016/17</p>	<p>A-B. Development of an alternative way of producing a final piece of investigate work in the form of a new module.</p> <p>C. 3 additional staff hires</p>		<p>A-B While it is beyond the resources of the geography department to offer a dissertation option to every student, 1st and 2nd year modules (GG1015; GG2038) now have research components that all students most complete.</p>		<p>The Department of Geography is of the view that it is not currently feasible to require all students to produce a dissertation in their final year due to staff limitations.</p>
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	<p>C. Without additional resources (see, 7b) it is not feasible to require every student to complete the dissertation module.</p> <p>D. Archaeology already have a third year dissertation requirement for all students and an emphasis on critical thinking already features in our curriculum.</p>								
4a. That both departments devise a strategy to develop larger and stronger research clusters and provide a more international dimension to research. This should	A. Archaeology and Geography will continue to develop research collaborations in areas of mutual interest and expertise. These include palynology, geoinformatics and remote sensing, as well as aspects of	A. Staff, Archaeology and Geography	A. None.	A. n/a	A. Current policy and research performance to be examined in light of forthcoming RQR review.	Following the 2013 Quality Review both departments looked at areas of potential research collaboration. It was soon obvious that the research interests of staff are so very different as to limit (but not	Realistically there is very little opportunity for research collaboration. Potentially the new GIS hire in Geography <u>may</u> be able to collaborate with Archaeology staff but there	Following this recommendation, and a similar one made in the RQR review of 2014, Archaeology has re-organised research strategy. We have dropped the 'Research Group' model,	Noted.

<p>emphasise publication in peer-reviewed high impact journals rather than book chapters. One way of doing this might be to use existing research as case studies to participate in international debates</p>	<p>historical geography. Examples of past and current research collaborations are listed in the SAR document. Individual staff members are best placed to pursue such internal collaborations, for which there will always be support at School and department level. There are not enough areas of mutual interest or critical mass in staffing to establish credible research clusters. The School encourages bottom-up research collaborations, but is not prepared to create</p>					<p>entirely remove) the possibility of useful collaborations. While staff are encouraged to engage on these matters, and there are no organizational barriers to same, areas of mutual interest have not developed to any great extent. The School remains open to possibilities, but is also wary of forcing connections that are not meaningful in academic terms.</p>	<p>is no guarantee that any staff member hired would have similar skills.</p>	<p>and reduced emphasis on research ‘structures’, with the Department now the central structure that supports research activity. The new emphasis in on three core ‘Research Areas’ that cover staff interests, expertise and the responsibilities of the Department in respect of Irish archaeology. They include: <i>Archaeological Science</i> (palynology, human osteoarchaeology, environmental archaeology, palynology, forensic</p>	
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	structures that are not meaningful in respect of research activity. Our most important research collaborations tend to be external, either within UCC or with interests outside of the University and often outside of Ireland. This approach is encouraged as it supports the internationalization agenda mentioned in this PRG recommendation.							archaeology, geophysics and remote sensing, artifact science) <i>Prehistoric Transitions</i> (Chalcolithic, Bronze Age, and Iron Age Ireland in its European context) <i>The Medieval World</i> (early Christian landscapes, the Vikings, Cork city, medieval economy, technological change)	
5a. That both Departments avail of centrally provided staff development courses where these exist. We recommend to the School that the staff	A. Staff in the School (academic, administrative and technical) will continue to be encouraged to avail of such training as appropriate to their professional	A. Staff, Archaeology and Geography	A. The School will make provision within existing budget allocation to support training needs.	A. Ongoing	A. Measurable impact on staff promotion. Improved service delivery (teaching, technical support, administration) leading to improve RQR reviews.	Academic, administrative and technical staff in both departments are encouraged to participate in training courses as they become available and are appropriate to the needs of	Staff are encouraged to attend appropriate courses and some have availed of this opportunity. Promotion is outside the remit of the School.	The central training priority in Archaeology is health and safety. We are now moving to a situation where all staff routinely involved with student	Noted.

are encouraged to avail of University initiatives that are available in this area and that promotional criteria should recognise participation in such courses	development and the needs of the School. The issue of promotional criteria is one for the University to consider.		B. Ongoing costs for University in respect of HR provision of such training.			those posts. Both departments support staff training through flexible working arrangements and, if necessary, financial support.		fieldwork become certified occupational first-aiders. To date, four of seven academics in the department have completed this four-day training course in UCC.	
5b. That consideration be given to the research climate provided for young researchers to ensure that they have a career path.	A. This principle is accepted by both disciplines and will be supported through workload allocation weighted in favour of early career staff.	A. HoDs	A. None.	A. Ongoing	A. Enhanced career prospects for younger staff leading to improved teaching and research performance.		Staff are offered sabbatical leave on a rotation basis. Unfortunately only one staff member per semester can take leave. Generally staff taking leave are excused from 1 st year lecturing but this is not always possible.	For many years Archaeology has applied a workload allocation model where early career staff have fewer teaching and administrative responsibilities than senior staff.	Noted.
5c. That a more realistic consideration	A. Both Departments will review	A. HoDs	A. None	A. Dec 2014	A. Possible adjustment to workload		There is simply not enough	Not an issue for Archaeology.	Noted.

of the additional stress and burden imposed by high student numbers be incorporated into the next version of the workload allocation model.	workload allocation to achieve greater balance in respect of class sizes, but also taking into account the total amount of teaching undertaken by individual staff and the current provision of additional payments for grading of course work.				allocation based on the identification of inequities in present system.		resources to reduce the amount of teaching or grading.		
6a. That the existing links with private and public sector bodies which arise from former graduates of the School be better exploited.	A. Geography will attempt to develop a tighter alumni network/advisory board. B. Archaeology (see 3c comments above)	A.HoDs, Staff	A. None	A. Ongoing	A. Opportunities for student work placements and graduate training		A. We have attempted to increase our linkages with both the Cork Geography Teachers group but making time available for transition students to visit the department. We have also begun to explore closer linkages with Public and Private Sector	B. A number of Archaeology students have availed of the new undergraduate work placement option. We have two work placements as part of the <i>MA in Museum Studies</i> introduced since the 2013 Quality Review. This	Noted.

							groups that work in the areas of Geographic Information Systems and Remote Sensing.	builds on graduate links as many of these same Irish museums are staffed by former students.	
7a. That for the Department of Geography the recruitment of a senior physical geographer be prioritised immediately.	A. In progress	A.HoD, HoS, HoC, UMT	A. Cost of SL position (depending on salary point)	A. Jan 2015	A. Successful Hire of Senior Lecturer		achieved		Implemented.
7b. That following the appointment of the key position above, a strategic case for further appointments should be made for at least three other posts in Geography over the next two years. These should also be	A. Develop a strategic plan for three new hires to further deepen our existing research clusters. Initial meetings will take place in the autumn at our away day.	A. HoD, HoS, HoC, UMT	A. Cost of new lecturer position (depending on grade and salary points)	A. 2016/17	A. Three successful new hires		Appointment of new lecturer in GIS approved in 2015/16; still in progress with offer made in early 2017.		The Head of College and Head of Geography monitor this situation regularly.

<p>specified to assist with the forthcoming programmes being undertaken both at school and departmental level.</p>									
<p>7c. That a commitment to provide a proportion of teaching and examining be sought from the Research Institutes who are involved in Masters programmes such as the Coastal GIS Masters.</p>	<p>A. In progress</p>	<p>A. HoD, CMRC, IMERC</p>	<p>A. No direct costs (research staff cannot be paid beyond their normal 40 hour salary)</p>	<p>A. ongoing</p>	<p>A. Continued support and good will from the CMRC and IMERC.</p>		<p>We currently rely on staff from MaREI (marine and renewable energy research centre) for our MSc in Applied Coastal and Marine Management but we are completely dependent upon their good will since we cannot pay them directly to</p>		<p>Noted.</p>

							teach for us.		
7d. That, for Geography, greater use be made of senior postgraduate s in a tutorial programme, to support fieldtrips and practical classes, and conceivably in a new teaching module to assist with alleviating staffing pressures on the full time staff and to free some time for them to engage in research networking.	A. We do attempt to maximize the total hours that postgraduates are allowed to work—for those who wish to work. The Postgraduate Committee will meet to examine if further efficiencies can be made.	A. HoD, Graduate Committ ee, HoC	A. Dependent upon part-time pay budget; PhD fee and/or stipend scholarships	A..2015/6	A. Maximization of post graduate work hours. Continual documentation.		Senior postgraduates are used for tutorials and fieldtrips. We have used recently graduated PhD students for teaching purposes but generally due to emergency needs rather than by choice.		Noted.
8a. The Review Group recommends that some proportion of existing budget, however small, should	A. Agreed in principle, subject to overall budget allocation. We will continue to encourage staff to apply to existing	A. HoDs	A. This proposal must be seen in the light of School/depa rtment budgets that have been	A. Sept 2014 (resource depende nt)	A. Schedule of networking visits by School staff leading to new research opportunities.	Budget policy is devolved to departments within our school, so each unit has the means to establish its own priorities in this			Noted.

be allocated to facilitate networking visits for researchers at a higher level than at present.	schemes at College level for funds to support research networking.		cut back several times in recent years. An additional allocation to the School budget is required to implement this proposal in coming year			area. Staff can also avail of central College funding to support travel and conferencing etc. Any new area of budgetary policy must take into account the stringent financial climate of recent years.			
9a. That, for Geography, the frequency of full staff meetings be increased as currently they are not adequate to engender a shared vision of where the Department is going or how individual contributions are discussed and organised.	A. Increase full staff meetings to every six weeks	A. HOD	A. None.	A. Sept 2014	A. Documentation/ storage of staff meeting minutes		Geography has reorganized its committee structures. We experimented with monthly meetings but found that burdensome. Now we meet approximately every six weeks, with smaller committees (e.g., teaching and learning) meeting more frequently		Implemented.
9b. That significant rationalisatio	A. Rationalisation of Geography	A. HoD	A. None	A. Sept 2014	A. New Committee groupings. 3-4		There are now 4 significant		Noted.

<p>n of the committee structure in Geography be considered. The existence of 8 committees for 12 full time staff (Geography) is not an efficient use of staff resources and entails multiple involvements and probably some disenchantment for individual staff at times.</p>	<p>committee structures is ongoing.</p>				<p>committees in total.</p>		<p>committees within geography. A steering committee make up of 3 SLs and two lecturers was set up but deemed unsatisfactory . It has been replaced by a core faculty committee to deal with academic issues only.</p>		
<p>9c. The Peer Review Group recommends a rotating chair for Geography staff meetings. The involvement of staff in a shared vision of the Strategy of</p>	<p>A. Agreed in principle by HoD for Geography subject to support from staff.</p>	<p>A. HoD</p>	<p>A. None.</p>	<p>A. Sept 2014</p>	<p>A. Staff meeting minutes reflecting same.</p>		<p>There was significant opposition to the idea of rotating chair for staff meetings from all staff. Hence, that idea was abandoned.</p>		<p>Noted.</p>

<p>the Department as well as the development of key managerial skills would be assisted by having staff meetings chaired by staff members other than the Head of Department.</p>									
<p>9d. We would recommend that Staff development and departmental cohesion would also be assisted by a series of 'away days' where strategy and team building could be addressed. This might be assisted by the Quality Promotion Unit.</p>	<p>A. Agreed.</p>	<p>A. HoDs</p>	<p>A. Small measure of financial support required to facilitate away-day process</p>	<p>A. 2014/15</p>	<p>A. Input into Strategic Planning for School and its constituent departments.</p>			<p>Archaeology held a major 'away day' as part of the RQR research planning process in 2014</p>	<p>Comment from Archaeology noted.</p>

<p>9e. We recommend that a report from the Staff-Student Liaison Committee be placed formally on the agenda for staff meetings and that both undergraduate and postgraduate issues be formally addressed. A representative of the postgraduate community should also be considered for attending staff meetings.</p>	<p>A. Commencing in 2014/15 undergrad and postgrad students will be formally represented (at School meetings.</p> <p>B. Reports from staff/student committees to be placed on department management group meetings</p>	<p>A. HoS B. HoDs</p>	<p>A. None. B. None</p>	<p>A. Oct 2014 B. Oct 2014</p>	<p>A. Greater input of student opinion and concerns into decision-making at School and Department level.</p>		<p>Graduate students are involved in committee structures. Attempts to contact the Student Union to ascertain yearly representatives have been unsuccessful despite numerous efforts.</p>	<p>Archaeology has a staff/student liaison committee that meets once each semester. The reports of this group are considered at our monthly department management group meetings where all staff are present.</p>	<p>The Heads of Department support student engagement but despite putting structures in place, student participation is low.</p>
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