QUALITY REVIEW FOLLOW-UP MEETING

SCHOOL OF ENGLISH

A meeting was held on the 16th of January 2012 to discuss the progress of the School of English and the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences (CACSSS) in implementing the recommendations for improvement arising from the quality review of the School of English.

Present: Professor Patricia Coughlan, Acting Head, School of English
Dr Alan Gibbs, School of English
Dr Gwenda Young, School of English

Professor Caroline Fennell, Head, College of Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences

Ms. Deirdre O'Brien, Administrative Officer, Quality Promotion Unit
Dr. Norma Ryan, Director, Quality Promotion Unit

Abbreviations

PRG: Peer Review Group   *VP: Vice-President*

QPC: Quality Promotion Committee   *QIP: Quality Improvement Plan*

HR: Human Resources   *CACSSS: College of Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences*

PRG Recommendation		QPC Comments	Follow-up Report January 2012
	Governance/Administration		
1.	A strategic vision and plan be developed as a matter of urgency. The Strategic Plan should carefully consider the contingencies imposed by external factors, both within UCC and nationally and internationally, and plan positively for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.	Recommendation strongly endorsed. QPC noted the importance of all staff of the School being engaged with the development of the strategic plan and implementation of actions arising from the plan.	Ongoing A School Working Group is in the process of drafting a Strategic Plan. It is expected to be ready in draft form by the end of February 2012. It is awaiting finalisation until the appointee to the Chair of English, currently being recruited, is appointed and can input into the Plan. The finalised Plan will also include input from the College ACSSS Strategic Plan and the new UCC Plan for 2013 - 2018.
2.	The School collectively develops and agrees appropriate and transparent management structures to implement its strategic vision and plan.	Recommendation strongly endorsed. QPC noted the urgency and importance given to this agenda by the reviewers and recommends immediate action	Implemented The School has developed and agreed both transparent and reformed management structures, and clear administrative procedures in relation to its teaching and research mission. These are operating smoothly and successfully, and they will form a basis for the realisation of the Strategic Plan.
3.	The School devises protocols and mechanisms to address the perceived disharmony in the School. This might include activities such as an away-day exercise and/or other team building exercises.	Recommendation strongly endorsed. QPC recommended that the Head of College ACSSS be requested to ensure that professional support is available for the Head and staff of the School as they continue to embrace organisational change and new management structures within the School	Implemented Since April 2011 the Acting Head of School and School members have worked together successfully to achieve an atmosphere of harmony and productive cooperation.

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4.	The School develops clear administrative procedures to implement its teaching and research mission.	Recommendation strongly endorsed. The QPC noted that this is essential to ensure that maximum benefit is derived from the resources available to the School.	Implemented See recommendation 2.
5.	The School develops financial management systems to ensure effective use of its resources in the future	Recommendation strongly endorsed.	Implemented The School has put in place a Finance and Part-Time-Teaching Budget committee for this purpose and this is proceeding effectively, reporting to the School as a whole.
	Staffing		
6.	The University approves a replacement for the chair of Modern English as a matter of urgency. That the definition and scope of this position should be an urgent priority of the School's strategic plan.	QPC noted that this is an issue for the School and the College ACSSS.	Partially implemented This Chair is in the process of being filled. The appointment will be recommended on the 27th of January. There was a very strong field of both internal and external candidates as a result of an energetic international search.
7.	The School develop a clear statement on all staffing requirements (academic and administrative) appropriate to meeting its strategic vision and anticipating future needs.	Recommendation endorsed.	Ongoing This has been discussed in the School since early September. The School has taken into account the College of ACSSS initiatives in this regard and is currently discussing how it might best react to them. The discussions to date have been both productive and strategic.

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8.	The School should prepare appropriate succession planning given that it will face a number of staff retirements in the next few years.	Recommendation strongly endorsed. QPC noted that it is essential for good management and to ensure sustainability of activities that planning is undertaken for all activities to ensure smooth continuation of education provision and research as changes in staffing personnel occur	Implemented. See response to recommendation on staffing requirements above.
9.	The University establish appropriate promotional criteria for all staff in preparation for the removal of the Government moratorium.	Recommendation endorsed. QPC noted that the University has been and is continuing to consider the criteria for promotion to senior academic positions and that discussions are continuing.	Ongoing The University has yet to establish criteria for promotion to the senior academic grades. It is anticipated that consideration of this issue will take place in the academic year 2012/13.
10.	The School and College develop clear structures for support for early career academic staff, as well as a mentoring system for more senior appointments	Recommendation strongly endorsed. QPC noted that this is an essential staff development tool.	Ongoing The School does have an informal mentoring scheme with good collegial relationships in place, and is currently considering introduction of a formal mentoring scheme. A small-grants system to foster School research (staff and postgraduate) has already been instituted and working since June 2011. The College has a support scheme for staff networking opportunities - sabbatical, research support, grant matching funding for some grants.

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11.	The School develops a model of workload allocation to ensure fair and transparent distribution of work and responsibilities across all staff.	QPC noted that the University committee working on the development of workload allocation models for implementation in UCC is due to report in the autumn to Academic Council. QPC recommended that the School take on board the recommendations that will come from the committee and seek to implement them, as appropriate for the School in 2011.	Ongoing The Acting Head worked with the School Administrator from April to July 2011 to prepare an audit of existing workloads in the School. However, the implementation of this has been halted in view of the University's new workload model which is being rolled out on a pilot basis. The School will work with the university model for accounting of academic workload and will revise its allocation systems accordingly.
	Environment		
12.	An urgent review is undertaken of the space requirements of the School to define its future needs. Of particular importance is the need to provide dedicated seminar and postgraduate rooms.	Recommendation endorsed. QPC noted that the School will need to work closely with the Head of College ACSSS and that additional space is not always available where a school or department would wish.	Ongoing During September 2011 the School conducted a review of existing space and IT provisions. This is in light of the rapidly increasing numbers of PhD students and researchers for which existing provision remains inadequate. The School has reformed the usage of the postgraduate room and worked actively with the College regarding the accommodation in Sheridan Court. There is now a more formal and transparent system for the occupation of desk space. The School is proud of the work done to date but space remains a significant issue. The effecting of significant improvements in this respect lies with CACSSS and the University. The Head of College expressed hope that more space will become available in Sheridan Court when the Confucius Institute moves out but pointed out that the College as a whole has only 59% of its current space needs.

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13.	Dedicated equipment funding be restored to allow the School to update its IT facilities	QPC suggested that the School engages with the Head of College on this issue who holds the budget for all academic units within the College.	Ongoing Improvements have now been effected in these respects, using funds earmarked within the School's budget allocation. However, the School may not be in a financial position to ensure that this continues in the long-term and there is also no line in the budget for equipment. The Head of College expressed concern that there is no dedicated IT support in the College.
	Teaching and Learning		
14.	The School develops a clear vision of its teaching needs in keeping with its strategic plan.	Recommendation strongly endorsed.	Ongoing This will be considered as part of the Strategic Plan. The School has a Teaching Officer for the last 4/5 years and at least four of their staff have undertaken the Teaching and Learning courses in UCC.
15.	New resources are provided by the College to enable the School to develop the first year tutorial programme, with a particular focus on transition from secondary school to 1st year and onwards.	QPC referred this issue to the Head of College ACSSS who holds the budget for all academic units within the College. QPC noted that the School and College may wish to re-examine the priorities for the current level of resources available.	Not implemented. The Head of College confirmed that the College is continuing to try to improve in this regard and is attempting to address the issues of transition on an on-going basis.
	Research		

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16.	The School develops a clear vision of its research activities in keeping with its strategic plan, with an emphasis on prioritised foci and clustered research.	Recommendation strongly endorsed. QPC noted that the reviewers did have access to the comments and plans of the School following on the RQR and that the PRG was of the opinion that more could be done in this regard	Ongoing The School already has (current and past) research cluster projects and endorses the aim of further developments in this area. School members have, in recent months, become actively involved in larger CACSSS projects. The School continues to maintain its commitment to individual research and publication of an international standard.
17.	The School reviews and publishes its performance evaluation procedures for doctoral students consistent with University policies.	Recommendation strongly endorsed. QPC commented that the procedures should be implemented without delay.	Implemented. There is a handbook which is revised annually.
18.	A clear programme for planned research sabbatical leave for academic staff be developed with the School.	Recommendation endorsed. QPC noted the value given to sabbatical leave for research in disciplines in the humanities and also that the issue of granting of sabbatical leave is now devolved to Colleges with the University Sabbatical leave Committee retaining an oversight role.	Implemented. The School now has an effective and smooth-running system in place to manage applications for sabbatical leave. The School believes that it is important to manage this process collectively and transparently.
19.	The School develops seed funding schemes for research projects, as well as small grants to support postgraduate research once earned income becomes available.	Recommendation endorsed.	Ongoing. The Acting Head of School has devised and implemented a scheme for this; a small-grants system to foster School research (staff and postgraduate) has already been instituted and working since June 2011.

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20.	The School gives consideration to linkages with Cork University Press as part of its research publication strategy.	Recommendation noted	Implemented Linkages are in place and many staff members are on the board. At least five School members have served, or currently serve, as Editorial Committee members at CUP, and these and others are regularly recruited as anonymous readers for manuscripts.
	External Relations		
21.	The School web site be redesigned to reflect the range and excellence of the School's activities and to provide adequate information for the full range of its users.	Recommendation strongly endorsed. QPC noted that the University has introduced new protocols for unit web sites and strongly urged the School to adopt these without delay	Not implemented The School is aware that this is outstanding and is working to rectify the situation as soon as possible.
22.	The School considers appointing a web officer to ensure maintenance of the web site	Recommendation endorsed.	Not implemented The School is in discussion with a staff member in this regard.
23.	The School considers developing a policy for adult education programmes in light of its long tradition of involvement in this area.	Recommendation strongly endorsed. QPC noted that provision of adult education courses is also a means of income generation which would provide some financial resources to allow the School to develop in other areas.	Not implemented The School is working towards the implementation of this recommendation and expects to have a policy for October 2012.

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24.	The School explores ways in which it can further engage city and regional communities in the arts and literary sphere	Recommendation strongly endorsed. QPC noted that this recommendation is in line with the University strategic plan and vision and hopes the School will make every effort with respect to implementation	Ongoing An External Relations Committee has been set up but no specific proposals have come from it yet. A number of individuals in the School are regular media performers. The School is working on how to expand within available resources.