

DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

PEER REVIEW GROUP

- Professor I. Perry, Department of Epidemiology & Public Health, UCC (Chair)
- Professor T. Dinan, Department of Psychiatry, UCC (Rapporteur)
- Professor A. Moran, Department of Psychology, UCD
- Professor A. Colley, School of Psychology, University of Leicester, UK

SITE VISIT

The site visit was conducted over 2.5 days from 27 February - 1 March 2005 and included visits to departmental facilities and meetings with

- Head, Professor and staff of the department as a group and individually
- Representatives of undergraduate and postgraduate students
- Representatives of employers, past graduates and other external stakeholders
- Mr Michael Kelleher, Secretary & Bursar
- Professor J. Kevin Collins, Vice-President for Research Policy & Support
- Professor David Cox, Dean of Faculty of Arts
- Ms Áine Foley, Finance Office
- Mr Cathal Kerrigan, Subject Librarian
- Conference call with Professor Eleanor O'Leary

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 DEPARTMENT

Note: Data given is for the academic year 2004/05

Head of Department:	Dr. Sean Hammond
Staff:	1 Professor, 1 Associate Professor, 3 Senior Lecturers, 11 Lecturers, 3 (five-year) contract part-time Lecturers, 9 Research Staff, 1 Technician, 4 Administrative Staff
Staff Academic FTE:	19.71 (16.20 FTE academic staff; 3.51 FTE part-time budget)
Student/Staff Academic FTE Ratio:	23.06
Location of Department:	Enterprise Centre and Donovan's Road
Degrees/Diplomas offered:	BA, BSc, BSocSc, HDip, MA, MPhil, PhD

NUMBER OF STUDENTS

The Department has 454.43 Student FTEs distributed as follows:

Undergraduate Student FTEs

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total U/G	Economic	Visiting American	Visiting European
197.92	83.17	51.42	6.17	337.67	14.92	9.67	5.50

Postgraduate Student FTEs

H Dip	Master Taught	Master Research	PhD	Total P/G
59.02	40.25	5.50	12	116.77

MISSION STATEMENT

“To teach, research and communicate Applied Psychology as a scientific and professional discipline with creativity, rigour, imagination and compassion, reaching a broad spectrum of people and organisations.”

AIMS OF DEPARTMENT

- *To achieve excellence in teaching undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Psychology.* The Department aims to deliver courses that meet the highest academic standards, satisfy the accreditation requirements of the relevant professional bodies, benefit students, promote access and are relevant to the needs of the community.
- *To achieve excellence in research and scholarship.* The Department aims to make contributions to the discipline of psychology by encouraging its staff to engage in research and by developing a strong tradition of postgraduate research training.
- *To contribute to the development of psychology as a profession in Ireland* by developing professionally relevant postgraduate courses and by encouraging staff to engage with the profession.
- To contribute to the development of other cognate professions by developing and contributing to relevant courses.
- *To contribute to society* by engaging with local, national and international organisations in teaching, training, consultancy and research.

GENERAL COMMENT ON QUALITY REVIEW

It was evident to the PRG that a great deal of time and effort had been expended by the Department in producing their two-volume self-assessment report. However, the document would have benefited from a comprehensive executive summary together with clearer details on the following:

- i) the number of students attending modules provided by the Department,
- ii) student FTE's broken down by course,
- iii) grant income per academic per annum,
- iv) research collaborations especially with other leading international universities.

SWOT Analysis: The PRG carefully reviewed and broadly endorsed the departmental SWOT analysis as presented in the Self-Assessment Report.

Strengths: Strengths included committed competent staff; good peer support within the Department; Effective and responsive administrative staff; Contribution by postgraduates to teaching; Good gender balance among departmental colleagues; Staff value and are accessible to all students; High student completion rates in all years and courses; Wide range of professional accreditations among staff in the Department; Outreach to and involvement with community; Wide vision about the contribution that psychology can make; Staff have autonomy to initiate developments; Administrative duties shared within the Department; Belief in importance of discipline of psychology; High demand for undergraduate and postgraduate courses; Range of areas of excellence in research and teaching; Arrangements for teaching programmes are complex but delivered on time; UG and PG Boards of Studies provide a cohesive force.

Weaknesses. The PRG concurred with the issues raised by the Department. In particular the PRG highlighted the need for the Department to urgently address the lack of clarity in department strategy; the lack of trust, transparency and consultation in decision-making; and the fact that the undergraduate students do not see full range of staff.

The PRG commended the Department for their analysis of the opportunities facing the Department and suggested the inclusion of the introduction of a structured PhD programme. The PRG found the benchmarking exercise to be informative in highlighting areas of underprovision and apparent inadequacy in the Department of Applied Psychology, UCC. These include a high staff/student ratio, inadequate technical support, and relatively poor provision of laboratory and computing facilities. With regard to completion rates for undergraduates and post graduates and other outcomes including the proportion of students attaining honours degrees, the Department is performing at a comparable level to the benchmarked institutions.

The PRG noted in particular that the Department's undergraduate psychology degree programme has one of the highest CAO entry points in the Arts Faculty. Another main strength of the Department is the positive relationship between staff and students. The high regard in which members of the Department are held by current and former students was clear to members of the PRG. Overall students perceive a good atmosphere in the Department. Specifically, staff are perceived widely as being approachable and supportive. In addition there was evidence of several interesting teaching innovations among the staff (for example, person-centred teaching, and the use of the internet to deliver certain modules).

The Department has research grant income that is well above average in the Faculty of Arts and has high PhD completion rates. The PRG were also impressed by the ethos of applying Psychology to a range of practical issues and with the success of the Department in acquiring substantial funding from the EU and from Health Boards.

The PRG expressed concerns about the quality of the building in which the Department is located.

PROGRESS MADE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PRG RECOMMENDATIONS

A meeting to discuss progress made in implementing recommendations for improvement arising from the review of the Department of Applied Psychology was held on 27 November 2006.

Present: Professor David Cox, Head, College of Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences
 Professor Eleanor O’Leary, Head, Department of Applied Psychology
 Dr Norma Ryan, Director, Quality Promotion Unit
 Ms Deirdre O’Brien, Administrator, Quality Promotion Unit

Abbreviations

PRG: Peer Review Group
 QPC: Quality Promotion Committee
 HR: Human Resources
 P&E: Promotion & Establishment
 VP: Vice-President
 QIP: Quality Improvement Plan
 ACSSS: Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences
 AC: Academic Council

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report November 06
<p>Endorsed the need for one additional lecturer and agreed that there is a gap in the cognitive/cognitive neuropsychology area. However, such a post requires linkage with existing staff in research interests. The Department also needs to ensure that the Dean is briefed on the technical resources required to support such a post.</p>	<p>QPC noted this recommendation. Decisions on staffing at this level are a matter for the Dean of the College of ACSSS and the QPC recommended that the Department discuss the need for this post with the Dean.</p>	<p>Ongoing The Department has made a submission to the College of ACSSS and the Head of College acknowledged it to be identified as one of the priorities for the next staffing round should funding become available.</p>
<p>Endorsed the need for an IT technician/specialist programmer.</p>	<p>See response to recommendation above. The QPC noted the significant level of research and consultancy funding obtained by the Department and suggested that perhaps posts such as the one proposed here could be funded from this income. The QPC recommended that the Department discuss this possibility with the Dean.</p>	<p>Not implemented The Department’s research funding is for specific research uses and cannot necessarily be used to finance such a post. The Head of College has noted that such a post is desirable for the Department but funding for such a post is not possible at present.</p>
<p>Endorsed the need for permanency for the temporary Executive Assistant post.</p>	<p>QPC noted this recommendation. Decisions on staffing at this level are a matter for the Dean of the College of ACSSS and the QPC recommended that the Department discuss the need for this post with the Dean.</p>	<p>It was confirmed that the funding for the EA post is in the College of ACSSS budget and thus is available to the Department.</p>

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report November 06
Endorsed the need for better facilities on the Enterprise Centre site, including improved laboratory facilities linked to teaching and research activity.	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>The QPC noted that improvement in research laboratory facilities may well be something that could be funded from research income and recommended that the Department actively pursue possibilities in this direction.</p>	<p>Not implemented.</p> <p>Some improvements have been made to existing facilities, e.g. a lift has been provided through a connecting bridge with the adjacent building allowing movement of equipment but access to toilet facilities for the disabled still remain a problem.</p>
Endorsed the need to reconsider the commitment to Service teaching.	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>QPC asked that full details of actions to be taken are provided in the QIP.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>The Department is continuing with its existing commitments but considers itself to be unable to extend its current level of commitment to service teaching.</p>
Endorsed the need to continue to develop open, transparent procedures in the management of the Department.	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>QPC asked that full details of actions to be taken are provided in the QIP.</p>	<p>Implemented</p> <p>The Department has a number of committees where staff are given a voice in the management of the Department, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Departmental staff meetings ▪ Undergraduate Board of Studies ▪ Regular Staff Meetings (membership includes permanent administrative members of staff) ▪ Postgraduate research committee ▪ Ethics committee <p>The Department engages in a continuous process in its development. Initiatives such as transparency of workloads and the establishment of a Planning Committee are recent examples.</p>
Endorsed the need to develop support systems for all staff.	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>QPC asked that full details of actions to be taken are provided in the QIP.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>The Head of Department is available for formal consultation hours during term.</p>

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report November 06
<p>That a formal mentoring scheme for junior academics should be put in place.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>QPC asked that full details of actions to be taken are provided in the QIP.</p>	<p>Implemented</p> <p>There is now a mentoring system in place for junior academic staff (those below the bar on the Lecturer scale and in their first two years of employment).</p>
<p>That all staff without a permanent contract be fully apprised (in writing) on their employment contract with the university.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>QPC referred this to the Department of HR and also suggested that the Department reconsider the taught postgraduate programmes with a view to reducing the dependency on part-time staff for their delivery.</p>	<p>This is a HR matter but it has in effect been resolved with the implementation of the Fixed Term Workers Act.</p>
<p>That a system be developed to ensure a more equitable spread of teaching, and to ensure, in particular, that more junior staff have protected time to develop their research profile.</p>	<p>Recommendation strongly endorsed.</p> <p>QPC noted that implementation of this recommendation requires transparency and more coherency in the management of the department. The Department should be managed as a single unit and should look to increasing the number of staff with a PhD qualification. This is particularly important for junior staff of the department if they are to seek promotion and to supervise PhD students. The Department must also seek to increase the number of PhD students registered in the department.</p> <p>The QPC would very strongly advocate that all teaching staff have an equitable (i.e. equal or as near to it as is reasonable) teaching workload. The Committee noted that it is invaluable to students to be exposed to all staff, including those who excel in research as well as those who excel in teaching. Good teaching is research-led and students should be exposed to those who conduct research.</p>	<p>Implemented</p> <p>The Department has developed a workload record in which all teaching and supervision hours are recorded and distributed to all staff members thus ensuring transparency. Efforts have been made to ensure a more equitable distribution of academic workload.</p> <p>The Head of Department is cognisant of those members of staff without a PhD qualification and is encouraging and actively supporting them in completion of the studies required for a PhD.</p>

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report November 06
<p>That members of the Department develop a shared research agenda and identify core research priorities.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>The QPC commented that it understood the concerns of the department. However the QPC is concerned that junior staff, in particular, are encouraged and supported in developing research programmes and, in the cases of those staff who do not have a PhD qualification, that these staff are actively encouraged and facilitated in studying for a PhD.</p> <p>The QPC also expressed concern at the lack of coordination between research areas and stressed the need for a department-wide approach and strategy. The QPC noted the cost of some of the postgraduate taught programmes and recommended these be reviewed with a view to eliminating those with too few students.</p> <p>The QPC requested that a plan be drawn up by the Department to address these concerns.</p>	<p>Implemented and on-going.</p> <p>A Departmental research strategy was considered by the Department during the quality review. The Department has three very active research centres/units. These centre/units have developed a shared research agenda and core research priorities.</p> <p>Mentoring of junior academic staff is now taking place.</p>
<p>That the Department should consider developing a higher research profile in clinical and health science areas.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>See comment under recommendation above (regarding a shared research agenda).</p>	<p>Ongoing and implemented.</p> <p>The Department considered it is very active in research in the clinical and health sciences areas and has significant funding from Health Boards and the European Union.</p>

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report November 06
<p>That the Department establish systems for research management which provide targets and record progress.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed. See comment under recommendation above (regarding a shared research agenda).</p>	<p>Implemented. Every member of staff (bar one) is now recorded on the Research Information System (RIS). Participation in the Performance Management & Development System now established in UCC ensures that individual targets are set and monitored each year. The Department has engaged with the training courses prior to implementation of the scheme, which is planned for September 2007.</p>
<p>Science Faculty entry should be reconsidered for undergraduates.</p>	<p>QPC would encourage the Department to consider this recommendation, while noting the comment made by the Department. The QPC noted that the trend will increasingly be towards encouraging and incentivising interdisciplinarity in degree programmes in UCC.</p>	<p>Not implemented. Consideration was given to the recommendation but it was decided it was not practicable for a number of reasons. It was noted that the Department completes a phased withdrawal from the Science Faculty this year.</p>
<p>That the Department consider the need to rationalise the profile of post graduate courses, particularly in the light of University policy with respect to the development of self funding Masters courses rather than Higher Diplomas.</p>	<p>Recommendation strongly endorsed. QPC noted that the release of some teaching workload might facilitate the offering of other courses, following on the review of the curriculum referred to earlier. The department is asked to consider ways of promoting and encouraging students from other faculties to take courses offered by the department.</p>	<p>Implemented The Department has discontinued two postgraduate Diplomas and one Masters programme.</p>
<p>The Department should consider developing a research strategy which will enable staff and postgraduates target specific high impact peer reviewed journals.</p>	<p>Recommendation strongly endorsed. QPC would encourage all staff to publish in good quality journals, and all postgraduate students as well. The QPC noted that it is common in many disciplines for postgraduate students to publish prior to submission of their thesis.</p>	<p>Ongoing The Department publishes in peer reviewed journals on an ongoing basis. It was noted that it is not common practice for postgraduate students in the College of ACSSS to publish prior to the submission of their thesis.</p>

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report November 06
<p>The Department should also consider setting a minimum number of papers to be submitted for publication to peer reviewed journals before the award of higher degrees.</p>	<p>Recommendation strongly endorsed.</p> <p>The QPC strongly supported this and the previous recommendation. The QPC is cognisant of issues for promotion for academic staff and supports all staff in their promotional aspirations. Publication of research outcomes is an essential part of the promotion process.</p>	<p>Not implemented</p> <p>As per the recommendation above, it is not common practice for students in the College of ACSSS to submit papers to be published before the award of higher degrees although students are strongly encouraged to publish prior to award of degree by the Department.</p>
<p>That in the context of a strategic review of post-graduate teaching, the Department should consider the introduction of a Practitioner Doctorate programme.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>The QPC noted that there are a number of practitioner doctorates in existence in UCC and that these are being offered within the resources of the departments concerned.</p>	<p>Implemented</p> <p>Applications for a Practitioner Doctorate in Psychology are being taken from 01/12/06.</p>
<p>That the Department focus its activity on a single site in order to ensure coherence.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p>	<p>Not implemented</p> <p>An improvement in and the provision of extra facilities (required for undergraduate teaching) are the priority for the Department, particularly in provision of improved laboratory facilities, which give cause for concern. The Department feels that the dual-site situation is managed perfectly in accordance to the needs of the Department although it would be preferable to have a single site on the main campus (especially in the O'Rahilly Building) where most students who take a module in psychology (approximately 1,200 in 2006) are taught.</p>

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report November 06
<p>With regard to the wider UCC environment, there is a need for continued critical review of promotional structures. There is a perception that the current promotional procedures do not value teaching. This perception gives rise to considerable stress and frustration among academics.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>The QPC noted that a review of the SL Promotional Scheme is currently underway and that a report is planned for the autumn to be considered by the AC.</p>	<p>This recommendation is not within the Department's remit and is a matter for the P&E Board.</p> <p>It was noted that the current SL promotional scheme values teaching equally with research and evidence is required for both when applying for promotion.</p>