UCC

Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh, Éire
University College Cork, Ireland

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND, CORK

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT/QUALITY ASSURANCE

PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT

SCHOOL OF ENGLISH

ACADEMIC YEAR 2009/10

29 May, 2010

ABBREVIATIONS

AC: Academic Council

ECTS: European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

ESG: European Standards & Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

IT: Information Technology

PMDS: Performance Management & Development System

PRG: Peer Review Group

QA/QI: Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement

QPC: Quality Promotion Committee

QPU: Quality Promotion Unit

SAR: Self-Assessment Report

SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

PEER REVIEW GROUP MEMBERS

Name	Position/Discipline	Institution
Cllr. Tom Higgins	Member of Governing Body & the Quality Promotion Committee	University College Cork
Professor Liam Kennedy	Clinton Institute for American Studies	University College Dublin
Professor David Lloyd	Professor of English	University of Southern California, USA
Professor William O'Brien	Professor of Archaeology	University College Cork
Ms. Edel O'Donovan	Vice-Principal	St. Angela's College, Cork

TIMETABLE OF THE SITE VISIT

The timetable for the site visit is attached as Appendix A.

Overall, the timetable was found to be suitable and adequate for our purposes. The Peer Review Group did request additional time with the Head of School and this was facilitated. The Group would have welcomed meetings with senior staff of the School. The Peer Review Group regrets the non-appearance of 1st and 2nd year BA students at the scheduled meeting. The Group feels that the review would have been more efficiently completed if the panel had divided for meetings with University officers and representatives of support services. This would allow more time for meetings with School staff and students as required. Finally, the Group did not have an opportunity to consider the needs and prospects of administrative staff owing to the current SIPTU industrial action.

PEER REVIEW

Methodology

The panel appointed Professor David Lloyd as chair and Professor William O'Brien as rapporteur. Individual panel members had responsibility for questioning in areas such as teaching and research, school management, administration and external relations. During the review the Head of School, Professor James Knowles, facilitated requests for additional information. The PRG are satisfied that the review was undertaken to the highest standards, and wish to compliment the Quality Promotion

Office for their support. The PRG also wishes to thank the School of English for assisting in this review.

Site Visit

Apart from the non-appearance of 1st and 2nd year students, all of the scheduled meetings took place. There was considerable time pressure in respect of meetings with School staff and University officers; however the PRG is satisfied that adequate consultation took place with relevant parties.

Peer Review Group Report

The initial draft of the report was compiled by the entire PRG panel, at meetings held on 23rd and 24th of March. Dr Norma Ryan assisted in the initial drafting of this report. However, the views contained are entirely those of the panel members. The PRG achieved a broad measure of consensus in its views, with the final recommendations written in the presence of all members. Following the site visit, Professor William O'Brien compiled a second draft, which was sent by email on 28th March to the other panel members for their views. These were incorporated in the final document, which was seen by the panel prior to submission to the University on 7th April, 2010.

OVERALL ANALYSIS

The PRG wishes to commend the School of English for the excellence of its research and teaching activities. The PRG recognises that this achievement is all the more significant in view of the difficulties the School has faced with the current financial climate. The School maintains high research standards and productivity, allied with excellence in teaching to large numbers of undergraduates and postgraduate students. The staff are dedicated and enthusiastic, and demonstrate a positive engagement with their students and with the development of their discipline. The School deserves the international reputation that its research output has earned it, as affirmed in the recent Research Quality Review (RQR) conducted in University College Cork.

Self-Assessment Report

The PRG notes that the reviewers who undertook the QA/QI Report[1] of 2002 on this unit made the following observation:

> *The Report as presented would have benefited from further editing and attention to lay-out,*
> *for instance in the matter of a Contents List, the provision of a unified system of pagination*

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[1] Published at http://www.ucc.ie/quality

and the excision of extraneous pages such as ERIN cover-sheets. Overall, the Report was a somewhat difficult document to peruse.

The PRG were disappointed to find that an almost identical complaint could be made of the current SAR. The PRG was surprised by the inadequate state of the documents delivered, which frustrated the efficiency of the review process itself. There is no contents page, no proper pagination and serious omissions in content. The latter include a failure to explain methodologies (e.g. Appendices H and O), the absence of job descriptions and an inadequate definition of the distinct roles of committees and officers in the School. There was insufficient information on School resources and no details on financial planning or administration. The PRG was especially surprised to find the strategic plan incorporated in the SAR comprised a single A4 page written under the previous headship. Despite covering the period to 2012, this document was explicitly disowned by the chair and other members of the School, raising questions as to why it was included in the SAR. The PRG notes with some concern the failure to include a current Strategic Plan. There was no formal addressing of the previous QA/QI report and the recommendations therein. Other omissions include student evaluation data, handbooks, lists of postgraduate research topics and minutes of department/school meetings. Much of this information was provided on request, which only confirms that the SAR was not adequately prepared.

The PRG's brief was to review the School over an eight-year period since the last QA/QI review. This work was seriously hampered by the fact that no departmental/school documentation was provided for the period 2002 to 2008, apart from details of research during this period submitted as part of the RQR exercise. This means that the PRG was unable to deal adequately with a number of issues, including the background to the development of the School and its material position over the past decade.

The PRG is aware of a number of critical issues that have affected staffing at a senior level at time of preparation of review, which also influenced the composition of coordinating committee. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the final responsibility for preparation and presentation of the SAR lay with the Head of School. The PRG is concerned that the Head and senior staff did not fully embrace the opportunities presented by the review process to drive quality improvement in the School. While it is difficult to assign overall responsibility for the somewhat negative tenor in the report, it reflects poorly on the approach taken by the unit to this entire process.

SWOT Analysis

The PRG regards the SWOT Analysis undertaken by the School of English (SAR Appendix I) as inadequate in its scope and recommendations. The analysis does identify many of the challenges facing humanities disciplines in the Irish university sector. However, the exercise was not used to identify opportunities for development and improvement. For example, it would have helped the

reviewers to have seen reflection on the opportunities as well as threats offered by IT developments, e.g. digital developments etc. The PRG was confounded by vague references to the establishment of a 'think-tank' within the School, the composition and terms of reference of which were not defined. This is consistent with other aspects of the SAR that refer to policy not yet developed.

The PRG were initially unclear as to the full meaning of the following paragraph in the SWOT analysis:

> *"Discussion of structures and style identified recent changes as having had an adverse impact on efficiency and morale, and were thus noted as areas of weakness. The duplication of work and roles, the creation of roles with a high added workload and the uncertainty around the executive power of committees were for example noted as specific areas of concern. It was felt that a greater inclusivity and openness were required in order to get the maximum benefit from the School's strategy which is currently in development."*

In the course of meetings with individual staff it became apparent that the style and content of the final SWOT document does not fully reflect the fraught nature of discussions and interpersonal relations that emerged during that exercise. This has revealed a major weakness in the School, with such conflicts posing a serious threat to its future effectiveness and reputation.

Strengths

PRG agrees with the SWOT analysis that this unit has commendable strengths in areas of teaching and research, especially given the unfavourable staff/student ratio. From the perspective of those outside the School it is a highly productive and successful unit, which is certainly an excellent platform on which to build for the future. The PRG note that the perceived strength in research is confirmed by the excellent grading this unit received in the recent RQR exercise.

Weaknesses

There is no indication from either the SWOT analysis or the SAR document that the school has a clear understanding of how to address its internal difficulties. This is highlighted by the absence of a Strategic Plan. The ability of the Head of School to develop a strategic vision is constrained by the lack of articulated consensus among the staff. The decidedly negative approach to this QA/QI review meant that the unit did not put its best foot forward, at a time when performance evaluation is a major concern for the University.

Opportunities

The PRG is disappointed at the ways in which the SWOT discussion focussed mainly on threats. The Group feels that more consideration could be given to how the School might renew itself and develop new projects, intellectual directions etc, notwithstanding the current difficult conditions. The SWOT does not address the opportunities presented by adult education initiatives or by engagement with the wider arts/literary scene at a local and national level. It is also clear that the profile of the School within the College and University could be enhanced.

Threats

The PRG acknowledges the real challenges faced by the School of English and by other academic departments in UCC in the current financial climate. Notwithstanding these considerations, the absence of a positive outlook within the School does pose a serious threat to the development of this unit. The School must prepare for the challenges posed by reduced income and declining staff numbers at a time of increased student intake.

Benchmarking

This exercise was useful, but perhaps not as balanced as it could have been, as it largely sought to reinforce concerns the School has about workload and resources. It is not clear on what basis the comparator units were chosen. The PRG would have preferred if the School had compared their own research output to that of the benchmark universities, although the Group does appreciate the difficulty of obtaining relevant data.

FINDINGS OF THE PEER REVIEW GROUP

School resources

The School did not clearly articulate its staffing needs in the SAR document. While certain appointments are clearly necessary, there appears to be no internal agreement as to their precise nature. Remarkably, the one-page strategic plan included in the SAR makes no reference to the vacant chair of Modern English, which the entire School agrees is a major staffing priority. Finally, the SAR did not adequately detail the resources available to the School, either in terms of finance, space, equipment or administrative support.

School Organisation & Planning

The SAR does not contain an adequate breakdown of the management structure and administration of the School. There is no listing of devolved areas of responsibility and how these are rotated among the staff. The committee structure does not appear to be well thought out and there is a lack of clarity on their operation. There is no evidence of strategic planning structures, apart from the ill-defined 'think tank'. The SAR did not contain any information on financial planning and accounting, procurement policy or front office management. Neither is there any information on health and safety policy and practice within the School, in contravention with University requirements in that area.

Governance

The SAR does not adequately examine the role of the Head of School, the executive committee and the principal officers of this unit. No details on line management were submitted and there are no minutes for meetings of the executive committee. There is no evidence from the SAR that any dialogue exists between the School management and College management. The Head of College confirmed to the PRG in discussion that he was aware of ongoing management and inter-personal difficulties within the unit, yet no considered course of action was pursued.

Teaching & Learning

The SAR contained adequate detail on the undergraduate teaching programme. The PRG is impressed by the range of teaching undertaken, and by the considerable effort made to balance lecturing with small-group seminars. The introduction of second and third year seminars is viewed as successful, although it has led to an overall reduction in course options, in particular for single honours students. The impact of this reduction should be considered in a future review of the teaching programme.

The lecturers have a considerable teaching load, with concerns expressed in the Self-Assessment Report and in staff interviews as to overall workload levels. The School has not yet developed an adequate workload allocation model that would balance teaching, research and administration commitments among its staff. The Peer Review Group noted information provided by the School in Appendix C of the Self-Assessment Report in respect of academic workloads and the discussion of a proposed workload allocation model that has not yet been implemented. The Group was unable to comment on the likely effectiveness of the proposed model. The information provided by the School lacked detail on the allocation and rotation mechanisms of roles and responsibilities, how this operated in respect of staff grade and how it was balanced against research commitments. The Group would have welcomed more detail on this subject in the SAR. In respect of teaching, it is not entirely clear that module contact time is balanced against ECTS requirements, or that there is consistency

across the lecturing staff in this area. Also, the Self-Assessment Report provides no information on School policy regarding Blackboard. It is important that the School office provides a welcoming environment for undergraduate students, which may require additional space and staff resources.

The SAR did not contain much information on the administration of teaching programmes, on examination and continuous assessment policies, staff responsibilities etc. Other issues include the absence of final year dissertations, which has been raised by external examiners. Indeed, it is not clear from the SAR how the School addresses the recommendations made by external examiners. Also, the teaching programme does not contain an obvious vocational element, nor is any career guidance explicitly provided. In general, the School does not appear to have a strong awareness as to the final destination of their graduates in the workplace.

The organization of taught masters programmes within the School appears to be strong. The PRG have some concerns in respect of PhD supervision and performance evaluation. Apart from the PhD-track upgrade, the PRG found no evidence of periodic reviews of doctoral student work by a supervision committee if such exist within the School. In this respect, the unit may not be conforming to best practice in respect of PhD monitoring as recommended by the University and Higher Education Authority. There is no evidence that the School has developed a suitable handbook for doctoral studies. The web-site is seriously inadequate in respect of information on postgraduate studies and the profiling of same.

Research & Scholarly Activity

The School of English has a strong research reputation and publication output, which is all the more impressive considering its commitment to teaching. The PRG recognises the quality of this research, but feels that the School could do more to profile their activity. In particular, it needs to define long-term research priorities as part of a strategic planning process, and to communicate this effectively to potential doctoral and post-doctoral researchers.

Research in the School mostly consists of individualised activity, which corresponds to the culture in English departments in other universities within Ireland and abroad. There are, however, many examples of highly collaborative, inter-disciplinary research currently being undertaken within the discipline, including some examples within the School of English in UCC. The PRG feels that the School might think more explicitly about developing clustered activity as part of any strategic planning of future research.

Staff Development

The PRG acknowledges that the School is actively engaging with the Ionad Bairre Teaching and Learning Support Centre. Three staff members have completed the *Postgraduate Certificate in*

Teaching and Learning, though issues were raised in the SAR about the value of this qualification. These concerns might be communicated directly to Ionad Bairre.

There is an apparent absence of appropriate mentoring support for the head of school and for individual academic and administrative staff within the unit. The PRG did not receive any information from the SAR or staff interviews as to the operation of the PMDS staff development programme within the school.

The PRG feels that the absence of an adequate sabbatical leave system in UCC is not consistent with the declared ambition of the University to apply international standards to research. This has important implications for academic research and staff development in the School of English.

External Relations

The SAR does not deal with the external relations of the School of English in any significant way. There is no consideration of adult education possibilities nor of engagement with the wider community. While some staff members are active in the local arts scene, the School as a whole has no clear policy in that area. Neither does it appear to have a policy on schools outreach or involvement with curriculum development at second level. The SAR is also unclear as to the representation of School staff on external arts/literary committees at a national and international level. While this undoubtedly occurs, the data was not compiled for the purposes of this quality review.

The School web-site is adequate, but could be improved in respect of design and content. The academic profiles and photographs for several staff are not available. The web site does not adequately profile the scope and excellence of the school's activities in undergraduate teaching, while the treatment of community engagement might be improved. It does not include information on current PhD students, or provide downloadable handbooks for students.

There is no consideration given in the SAR to possible links with Cork University Press. The School is not proactive in respect of alumni connections. Neither does it track the career development of its graduates in a manner that might influence the development of teaching and research.

Support Services

The School of English clearly enjoys a positive working relationship with the Boole library in UCC, and with many other support offices within UCC.

School Co-ordinating Committee & SAR Methodology

The PRG was surprised that responsibility for the compilation of much of the SAR report was devolved to early career staff (lecturers). Not only would they not have been familiar with the period prior to their appointment, but also staff at this point in their career should not have been appointed to the task. The PRG is also concerned that the composition of the coordinating committee was not fully representative of the full range of academic and administrative staff in the School.

FINDINGS OF THE PEER REVIEW GROUP

Governance

In the course of staff interviews the PRG became aware of discontent and dissension within the School faculty. These problems are serious enough to damage the reputation and day-to-day operation of the School, in addition to having already compromised the review process. This constitutes a long-term threat to the School's reputation. There is striking disagreement about governance, management style and structures. Some of the School's difficulties predate the appointment of the current head. For example, the PRG found evidence of an absence of strategic financial planning and investment in the period prior to 2008 when significant surpluses were accumulated. This has exacerbated the School's current material difficulties.

The School urgently needs to rebuild both its management culture and its collegiality, to develop a sense of confidence among colleagues that departmental systems and structures are inclusive and enable representation of their views. The PRG views this matter as critical for the future growth and development of the unit.

Above all, there is a need to develop a clear strategic vision for the School. This should be an occasion for reflection within the unit including an understanding of opportunities for the School and what is distinctive about its identity. The PRG believes that an enormous opportunity for the development of the School is being missed by a failure to reflect on and illustrate their vision for a multidisciplinary School. The Group believes that the School has the capacity to imagine productive collaborative relationships with related programmes such as film and media studies, as well as dynamic new interdisciplinary formations such as digital humanities. The current disagreement surrounding the relationship of Drama and Theatre Studies to the School of English must be resolved. The PRG urges the School to engage in discussion on such issues and possibilities.

The School needs to rethink its organisational structure to adapt to the new environment in the Irish university sector. While it is clear to the PRG that the current period of transition is causing frictions and uncertainty, the Group encourages the School to develop the necessary clarity in its management structures. The PRG notes that in the SWOT analysis 'shared values such as professional

commitment, collegiality were identified as a strength' of the School. The PRG was also impressed by the consensus among the staff as to the need to move forward to meet the challenges of the current climes. This will require a reorganisation of its management structure and systems. A review of school committees and devolved responsibilities must now take place, possibly assisted by the involvement of an external facilitator and an away-day exercise.

Services

In a satisfaction survey undertaken for the SAR (Appendix H), the School is quite critical of a number of University offices. These include the Registrar's Office, Research Office, Quality Promotion Office and the Audio Visual Office. The School needs to identify the sources of these difficulties and actively engage with the above units to address the problems.

Staffing

The unit needs to decide its staffing priorities as part of a long-term strategic plan that supports the teaching and research aims of the unit. This needs to take into consideration the present strengths of school and what they consider to be the possible future directions of the discipline. This could include some consideration of the desired balance between the appointment of a chair and other senior posts versus more junior positions.

The PRG is reluctant to make clear recommendations for the filling of particular posts in the absence of a proper strategic plan. Nevertheless, there is broad agreement within the School that the vacant chair of Modern English is a key staffing priority. The PRG certainly supports this view, but the School needs to resolve internal divisions as to the academic direction of this post. It also needs to plan for upcoming retirements among senior staff, as well as develop a long-term view on new appointments in relation to such issues as fields and departmental research and teaching foci.

Accommodation

The physical space and facilities allocated to the School of English are not suitable for a unit of this size. Staff offices are cramped, as is the front office. The PRG is surprised that a School this size has no dedicated seminar room, which could also be used for staff meetings. The quality of postgraduate study space is a particular concern, as the available space is hopelessly inadequate for a unit with 45 doctoral students. There are no dedicated facilities for students in taught masters programmes. IT facilities in the School are poor, though this is compensated to some extent by proximity to computing resources in the Boole Library.

Financing

An obvious failure over the review period to use income earned by JYA and other sources in a strategic manner indicates that the School needs to improve financial planning. Such an approach is not sustainable in the current financial climate, with all academic units in UCC now operating within a financial year budgetary framework.

Communications

As previously noted, the PRG has concerns about line management, committee structures and devolution of responsibilities within the School. The communication of School activity to the outside world might also be improved, beginning with an over-haul of its web-site.

Comment on developments and actions taken since the last quality review undergone by the Department/School.

The Peer Review Group noted, with regret, that the School had not explicitly addressed the recommendations made in the last quality review (2002). The Group noted that the report provided in the SAR was generated in 2004 and that an updated response to the previous QI/QA review recommendations was not provided.

<u>Introduction</u>

The Department of English underwent a Quality Review in the academic year 2001/02. The following is a report on the progress made in the implementation of recommendations since that time and is written by the Peer Review Group. It should be noted that the recommendations are not in any particular order of priority.

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up report by PRG in March 2010
That the Head of the Department pursue the issue of the position of the senior tutors with the Department of Human Resources	QPC noted the response of the Department and will await a report	Implemented. The issue has now been resolved

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up report by PRG in March 2010
That two additional lecturing staff be appointed.	The QPC noted the comments of the Dean of Arts in relation to the requirement for a detailed analysis of the teaching loads of staff in the Department. The QPC referred the issue to the Dean of Arts for further consideration	Implemented.
That a representative of the Department would liaise with the Room Bookings Office to provide for the tutorial teaching needs of the department	QPC endorsed recommendation and welcomed action by Department	Implemented. Note: the PRG has made further recommendations re facilities in this report.
That the Department explore ways of giving its research students a greater sense of belonging.	The QPC felt this is an issue for the Department and should be addressed.	Implemented and on-going.
The reporting process from departmental committees to the remainder of the Department should be improved.	The QPC felt this is an issue for the department and should be addressed. If the Department feels a requirement for additional help perhaps this may be sought from the Department of HR.	Implemented. Note: the PRG has made further recommendations re management structures in the School in this report.
That the system of rotating Headship be extended to include other qualified staff members (as well as the full professors). That the period of the Headship be extended to 3 years (from the current 2)	The QPC welcomed this recommendation and the willingness of the professors to enter into a new system, similar to that in practice in other departments in UCC. The QPC feels the period of the Headship should be extended to 3 years. The QPC referred the issue to Dept. of HR for action, including confirmation of their agreement with the 2 full professors.	Implemented. With the move to a School structure Heads will be appointed for a fixed term following an application and interview process.
Regular surveys to facilitate increased levels of student feedback should be considered	QPC welcomed action of department	Implemented.
The issue of assessing and equalising (academic staff) workloads should be addressed.	QPC strongly endorsed recommendation and agreed that this is a management issue for the Head of Department. The committee referred it to the Head for appropriate action	Not implemented. Note: further recommendations in regard to workload are made in this report.

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up report by PRG in March 2010
That the department seek to agree a policy in the context of all interdisciplinary programmes, particularly the new Drama and Theatre Studies course. That the university address the question of resourcing of interdisciplinary programmes.	The QPC noted that the Academic Council has agreed a policy for the implementation and conduct of interdisciplinary degree programmes. The Department of English has responsibility for the Drama & Theatre Studies programme and must address the issues raised by the programme. The resourcing of the Drama & Theatre Studies programme is a matter for the Head of Department of English and the Dean of Arts.	Implemented. Interdisciplinary programmes are now resourced and governed according to Academic Council policies approved in 2009.
The Department should consciously identify its teaching strengths and plan to move in these directions. Anglo-Irish Literature and Creative Writing are areas worth considering	QPC endorsed this recommendation and recommended that the Department should consider how best to use available resources, including by rationalisation of existing courses being delivered.	-----------------
Attention should be given to the possible re-balancing of second and third year student options	QPC endorsed this recommendation and referred the matter to the Department for appropriate action	Implemented.
Provision of a theory/ideology module to be taken by all students.	QPC endorsed this recommendation and referred the matter to the Department for appropriate action	Not implemented following review by Department
Advice and mentoring should be given to second and third year students in regard to the quality and consequences of particular option combinations with the degree pathway	QPC endorsed this recommendation and referred the matter to the Department for appropriate action	The Department is actively exploring ways of encouraging students to explore new options and has implemented a process whereby detailed information is given to 2nd Year students on options.
That arrangements be put in place to promote more small group teaching in years one and two.	QPC endorsed this recommendation and recommended that the Department should consider how best to use available resources, including by rationalisation of existing courses being delivered.	Implemented, following a major revision of the BA programme in English and modules offered.
There should be more direct and sustained involvement of lecturers in the training and supervision of postgraduate tutors.	QPC would welcome more information from the Department on how the Department proposes to act on this	Implemented.

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up report by PRG in March 2010
Department should organise departmental teaching Portfolio seminars to facilitate the desire of staff to learn in the area of pedagogy	QPC would like to see more members of the Department attending the centrally organised Teaching Portfolio seminars and contributing to them.	Implemented. Staff are attending the University sessions and the Department is encouraging staff to participate in all activities.
Additional lectures to students studying for the taught MA Degree in the subject content of their specialisations should be considered.	QPC felt that this is an internal matter for the Department	Implemented.
Department should identify a room to be devoted to open-access computers for students.	QPC requests that the department identify a room and if the room is made open-access UCC will assist in the provision of the computers	See recommendations on space and facilities in this report.
Department should celebrate its achievements in research and scholarship. The university should formulate a way of counting practice alongside publication for such purposes as promotion.	QPC endorsed this recommendation and will welcome action by the Department.	Implementation on-going. The Department is celebrating its successes, for example, holding receptions to celebrate book launches.
The university should consider the introduction of a satisfactory sabbatical leave system.	QPC noted that the issue of sabbatical leave is under active consideration by the AC Staff Enhancement & Development Committee which will be reporting shortly to the AC and faculties.	The University has approved a revised sabbatical leave policy with devolution of decision-making to College level.
The Department might consider whether the proposal for a shared UCC/NUIG Irish Studies initiative might provide opportunities for further development in the area of Anglo-Irish Literature.	QPC felt that this is an internal matter for the Department	------------------
That the teaching and administrative workloads for senior tutors should not be so heavy as to exclude time for research.	QPC endorsed recommendation, and recommended transparency in workloads within the Department	Senior tutors are not contractually obliged to do research and thus this is not a matter for the Department.
The University should recognise and support the Department's outreach initiatives	QPC endorsed this recommendation. Proposals for such recognition and support should come from the Department	The PRG has made recommendations in relation to outreach in this report

Recommendations for improvement made by the school

In the absence of a strategic plan it was difficult for the PRG to comment on the recommendations for improvement made in the SAR. The absence of a strategic plan makes it very difficult for the PRG to make the kinds of specific recommendations that might be directly helpful to the School.

Recommendations for improvement made by the PRG

The PRG recommends that:

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.

2. The School collectively develops and agrees appropriate and transparent management structures to implement its strategic vision and 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.

4. The School develops clear administrative procedures to implement its teaching and research mission.

5. The School develops financial management systems to ensure effective use of its resources in the future.

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.

7. The School develop a clear statement on all staffing requirements (academic and administrative) appropriate to meeting its strategic vision and anticipating future needs.

8. The School should prepare appropriate succession planning given that it will face a number of staff retirements in the next few years.

9. The University establish appropriate promotional criteria for all staff in preparation for the removal of the Government moratorium.

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.

11. The School develops a model of workload allocation to ensure fair and transparent distribution of work and responsibilities across all staff.

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.

13. Dedicated equipment funding be restored to allow the School to update its IT facilities.

Teaching and Learning

14. The School develops a clear vision of its teaching needs in keeping with its strategic plan.

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.

Research

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.

17. The School reviews and publishes its performance evaluation procedures for doctoral students consistent with University policies.

18. A clear programme for planned research sabbatical leave for academic staff be developed with the School.

19. The School develops seed funding schemes for research projects, as well as small grants to support postgraduate research once earned income becomes available.

20. The School gives consideration to linkages with Cork University Press as part of its research publication strategy.

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.

22. The School considers appointing a web officer to ensure maintenance of the web site.

23. The School considers developing a policy for adult education programmes in light of its long tradition of involvement in this area.

24. The School explores ways in which it can further engage city and regional communities in the arts and literary sphere.

SCHOOL OF ENGLISH

PEER REVIEW GROUP SITE VISIT TIMETABLE

In Summary

Monday 22 March:	The Peer Review Group (PRG) arrives at Jury's Hotel for a briefing from the Director of the Quality Promotion Unit, followed by an informal meeting with School of English staff members.
Tuesday 23 March:	The PRG considers the Self-Assessment Report and meets with school staff and student and stakeholder representatives. A working private dinner is held that evening for the PRG.
Wednesday 24 March:	The PRG meets with relevant senior officers of UCC. A working private dinner is held that evening for the PRG in order to finalise the report.
Thursday 25 March:	An exit presentation is given by the PRG to all members of the School. External PRG members depart.

Monday 22 March 2010	
16.00 – 18.00	Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group Briefing by Director of Quality Promotion Unit, Dr. Norma Ryan. Group agrees final work schedule and assignment of tasks for the following 2 days. Views are exchanged and areas to be clarified or explored are identified.
19.00	Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group
21.00 – 22.00	Meeting with members of the Peer Review Group and Professor James Knowles, Head of School and School Co-ordinating Committee. *School of English Staff*: Ms. Loretta Brady, Postgraduate Professor Patricia Coughlan Professor Alex Davis Dr. Lee Jenkins Professor James Knowles (Head of School) Dr. Heather Laird Dr. Barry Monahan Dr. Clíona Ó Gallchoir
Tuesday 23 March 2010	
08.30 – 09.00	Convening of Peer Review Group
09.00 – 09.30	Professor James Knowles, Head, School of English
09.30 – 10.30	**Group meeting with all School Staff**

	Professor Graham Allen Ms Mary Breen Ms Valerie Coogan Professor Patricia Coughlan Ms Jennifer Crowley Professor Alex Davis Dr Carolyn Duggan Dr Anne Etienne Ms Anne Fitzgerald Dr Ger FitzGibbon Dr Alan Gibbs Ms Jools Gilson-Ellis Ms Elaine Hurley Dr Andrew King Professor James Knowles Dr Sam Ladkin Dr Heather Laird Dr Barry Monahan Dr Juliet Mullins Dr Orla Murphy Dr Clíona Ó Gallchóir Ms Carol Power Dr Kenneth Rooney Dr Eibhear Walshe Dr Gwenda Young
10.30 – 11.00	Tea/coffee
11.00 – 13.00	**Private meetings with individual staff members** Group 1 Professor David Lloyd Professor William O'Brien 11.00: Dr Orla Murphy 11.15: Dr Lee Jenkins 11.30: Professor Patricia Coughlan 11.45: Dr Juliet Mullins 12.00: Mary Breen 12.15: Professor Alex Davis 12.30: Dr Andrew King 12.45: Dr Sam Ladkin

Private meetings with individual staff members

Group 2

Cllr. Tom Higgins
Professor Liam Kennedy
Ms. Edel O'Donovan

11.00: Dr Heather Laird
11.15: Dr Alan Gibbs
11.30: Professor Graham Allen
11.45: Dr Gwenda Young
12.00: Dr Ger FitzGibbon
12.15: Dr Clíona Ó Gallchoir
12.30: Dr Kenneth Rooney
12.45: Dr Eibhear Walshe

13.00 – 14.00	Working lunch
14.15 – 14.45	Visit to core facilities of School, escorted by Professor James Knowles & member of staff from the School of English
15.00 – 15.40	**Representatives of 1st and 2nd Year Students** *No representatives met with the Panel*
15.40 – 16.20	**Representatives of Final Year Students** Eileen Connolly Eoin O'Callaghan
16.20 – 17.00	**Representatives of Graduate Students** Mary Crowley - MA, (American Literature and Film) Sean McGillicuddy - MA (American Literature and Film) Aoife Moloney – MA (Irish Writing) Avril Buchanon – PhD (Renaissance Literature) Katie Kirwan – PhD (American Historical Literature) Sarah Hayden – PhD (Female Modernist Poets) Michael Waldron – PhD (Irish Studies; 20th Century Literature)
17.00 – 18.30	**Representative of stakeholders, recent graduates & employers**

	Ms. Geraldine Collins, Ashton School Mr. Ray Cooney, Coláiste an Spioraid Naoimh Dr. Louise Denmead, recent PhD graduate Mr. Finian Driscoll, Coláiste an Spioraid Naoimh Ms. Siobhan O'Dowd, Project Director, Ballyphehane/Togher Community Development Project Ms. Abigail Rowe, Graduate
19.00	Meeting of Peer Review Group to identify remaining aspects to be clarified and to finalise tasks for the following day, a followed by a working private dinner.

Wednesday 24 March 2010	
08.30 – 08.45	Mr. Cormac McSweeney, Finance Office
09.00 – 09.20	Professor Grace Neville, Vice-President for Teaching and Learning
09.20 – 09.40	Professor Paul Giller, Registrar
09.40 – 10.40	Visit to UCC Library, meeting with Ms. Margot Conrick, Head of Information Services, Subject Librarian and Ms. Elaine Charwat – Special Collections, Archives & Repository Services, Q-1.
10.40 – 11.00	Mr. Con O'Brien, Vice-President for Student Experience
11.00 – 11.15	Ms. Anne Marie Cooney, Financial Analyst, College of Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences
11.15 – 11.45	Professor Peter Kennedy, Vice-President for Research Policy & Support
11.45 – 12.30	Professor David Cox, Head, College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences
12.30 – 13.00	Professor James Knowles, Head of School
13.00 – 14.00	Working lunch
14.00 – 17.00	Preparation of first draft of final report
19.00	Working private dinner for members of the Peer Review Group to complete drafting of report and finalisation of arrangements for completion and submission of final report.

Thursday 25 March 2010	
09.00 – 09.30	Exit presentation to all staff made by Professor L. Kennedy, on behalf of the PRG, summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group. *This presentation is <u>not</u> for discussion at this time.* Professor Lloyd was not present for the presentation