



UCC

Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh, Éire
University College Cork, Ireland

**UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND, CORK**

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT/QUALITY ASSURANCE

SCHOOL OF CLINICAL THERAPIES

PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR 2009/10

Date: 5th March 2010

ABBREVIATIONS

HRB: Health Research Board

IASLT: Irish Association for Speech and Language Therapy

PBL: Problem Based Learning

PRG: Peer Review Group

OT: Occupational Therapy

TBL: Task Based Learning

SAR: Self-Assessment Report

SLT: Speech and Language Therapy

SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

PEER REVIEW GROUP MEMBERS

Name	Position/Department	University/Institution
Ms Anne Geraghty	Acting Chief Executive Officer	Brothers of Charity Services, Galway
Professor Catherine Mackenzie	Division of Speech & Language Therapy	University of Strathclyde, Scotland
Dr Seamus O'Reilly	Department of Food Business & Development	University College Cork – National University of Ireland Cork
Professor Ivan Perry	Department of Epidemiology & Public Health	University College Cork – National University of Ireland Cork
Professor Gaynor Sadlo	School of Health Professions	University of Brighton, UK

TIMETABLE OF THE SITE VISIT

The Peer Review Group (PRG) thanks the Quality Promotion Unit for the efficient organisation of all aspects of the review including the site visit. The timetable was appropriate for the requirements of the peer review visit. The timetable is attached as Appendix A.

PEER REVIEW

Methodology

The PRG reviewed the Self-Assessment Report prepared by the School and met with members of staff (18 in total) both individually and collectively. The Group also met the relevant University Officers as detailed in the timetable.

The PRG was impressed with the rigor of the review process and the enthusiastic engagement of staff, students and stakeholders. The Group recommends the use of a standard methodology (that includes class representatives) for the appointment of student representatives to meet the review team in future reviews. The Group also recommends the

use of a standard methodology for the nomination of external clinical stakeholders such as therapy managers for inclusion in future reviews, and that the stakeholders be informed that they have been invited as a representative sample

The School provided a comprehensive Self-Assessment Report in advance of the site visit. Some additional documentation was requested and was supplied by the School without delay during the site visit.

The following additional documents were reviewed during the site visit:

- Copies of External Examiners reports for the undergraduate programmes on OT and SLT for the past two years;
- Copies of the accreditation reports for the two disciplines;
- A summary of assessment methods for the two undergraduate programmes;
- Results of the survey of students;
- Descriptions of modules offered in programmes, including assessment methodologies;
- Sample timetables.

Primary responsibility of each member of the Peer Review Group.

Professors Catherine Mackenzie and Gaynor Sadlo acted as Co-Chairs for the review.

Professor Ivan Perry acted as Rapporteur for the review.

Site Visit

The site visit was well organised and gave the Peer Review Group a comprehensive overview of the School's facilities, including a live demonstration of the Information Services available to students.

Peer Review Group Report

A draft of the Report of the PRG was prepared during the site visit. The draft was subsequently amended and edited by members of the group using electronic communications. This work was coordinated by the Rapporteur. All members of the group reviewed and approved the final document.

OVERALL ANALYSIS

Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

The Peer Review Group was impressed by the Self-Assessment Report prepared by the School. It was well edited and succinct. It provided a reasonably comprehensive overview of the School's teaching, research and administrative activities and it reflects a culture of critical self-reflection on performance and a clear striving for excellence. The report also provided the external members of the panel with an excellent overview of the structures with the College of Medicine & Health and the wider university within which the School operates. Inclusion of the Schools submission to the 2009 UCC Research Quality Review exercise and the Report from the Research Quality Review Panel was of considerable assistance to the PRG in its assessment of the School's research activity. As detailed above, a number of additional documents were requested to supplement the material summarised in the SAR.

The overall impression of the Peer Review Group was that the School has done an excellent job in a relatively short period of time in the development of the undergraduate programmes and achieving the accreditation of these programmes by the relevant professional bodies in Ireland. The Group also noted that, in relation to the recency of the establishment of the School, good progress had been made with respect to the development of the research agenda. The Peer Review Group affirms the quality of core structures and processes within the School and the quality of its teaching programmes. It was also noted that the Departments within the School have developed and maintained extremely positive engagement with local stakeholders. With regard to the student experience, it was abundantly clear to the PRG that students in the School find the staff to be approachable and supportive. The PRG was also impressed by the extent to which staff in the School are open to recommendations and suggestions on how best to consolidate the achievements and successes to-date and plan for the further development of the School over the next decade.

In summary, the Peer Review Group commends the School for its engagement with the process of self-assessment and for their focus on quality enhancement. The Group is firmly of the opinion that the School has strong programmes and considerable potential for further development of both teaching and research to the high levels to which the School aspires.

SWOT Analysis

The Peer Review Group reviewed the summary of the SWOT analysis conducted by the School in September 2009. From review of the material available to the Group and from its meetings with members of staff, the PRG broadly concur with the SWOT analysis.

In particular, the Peer Review Group concurs with the School's view of its strengths under the following headings: "strong work ethic and dedication of staff", "strong emphasis on student support", "approachable and engaging style" and "shared values between departments (within the school)". Under the heading of strengths, members of the Peer Review Group would also highlight the fact that staff in both Departments have academic skills and interests that are relevant to a number of other departments and courses across the University, of which greater advantage could be taken. The fact that the School is recruiting students with high levels of academic achievement, with leaving certificate points above the 95th centile nationally represents an additional important area of strength. With regard to weaknesses the Peer Review Group concurs with the concerns about "reduced promotional structure", which has important implications for staff retention, and with the perception of "Handholding students". With regard to threats, the fact that virtually all graduates of the School are dependent on a single public sector employer (HSE) might be added to the list. The current public sector financial environment represents a further threat to the School (as it does to the Irish third level sector generally) and thus the School and College of Medicine & Health will need to be vigilant and proactive in representing their needs in the short to medium term. Under the opportunities heading, the Peer Review Group highlighted the potential to explore and develop new areas of work for SLT and OT graduates in the public sector, the private sector and the increasingly important third sector (non-governmental organisations). It was also felt that the School is underplaying the potential opportunities for inter-professional education as well as multidisciplinary research (including clinical and health services research drawing on both quantitative and qualitative methods) that arise from its location in the Brookfield Health Science Complex in close proximity to the Schools of Nursing, Medicine, Dentistry and Pharmacy.

The Peer Review Group would encourage the School to use the SWOT as a living document - perhaps including it on agendas of some School staff meetings. In using the SWOT to guide strategic development the School might consider factors within their control (strengths &

weakness) and those outside their control (opportunities & threats) that the School might seek to influence.

Benchmarking

The Peer Review Group commends the School on the benchmarking exercise with international centres of excellence as summarised in Appendix J of the Self-Assessment Report. In the view of the Group, the centres were well chosen and it is clear that the findings from this exercise have considerable potential to inform the School's research strategy, with particular reference to the importance of developing well defined "niche" research areas where the School can be nationally and internationally competitive.

The PRG was surprised that the School did not consider a further benchmarking exercise within Ireland, based on metrics from both the longer and more recently established academic units.

FINDINGS OF THE PEER REVIEW GROUP

School Organisation & Planning

It is evident to the Peer Review Group that working relationships within the School are harmonious and productive. It is also clear that organisational/planning structures and processes within the School are well established and effective. However, some duplication of administrative work with regard to programme planning and administration between the department and the school level structures was noted. It is also noted that the 2.5 WTE administrative staff do not share office space.

The PRG was of the opinion that the workloads of all staff within the School are high compared to international norms for the disciplines and felt very strongly that these should be reviewed taking account of teaching, research, clinical and administrative commitments, in a transparent way. This is discussed in further detail below

Teaching & Learning

The PRG appreciated the research-informed innovative curricular designs based around active small-group learning methods and integrated subjects. However, the written course

documents were presented as if the subjects were taught more separately. Future course documents could more explicit about the actual student week.

It is the view of the PRG that contact hours and the burden of assessment for some modules (for both students and staff) are excessive in relation to the credit allocation. In particular the load associated with frequent review of student small group work of and providing feedback almost on a weekly basis should be reconsidered. There seemed to be a tension between encouraging a problem/task based approach where students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning, and the need to check that they had completed/comprehended the work. Staff-performance review mechanisms should be used to support the process of reducing the number of assessments.

Based on review of the available information on teaching, assessment and student surveys (as summarised above under Methodology) and the meetings with students and external stakeholders, the PRG formed the view that the overall quality of teaching is high. However there was some evidence of unevenness in the quality of the delivery of the PBL/TBL curriculum in SLT and OT and some concern about the level of clinical experience of some of the tutors. The School will need to maintain the current arrangements for PBL/TBL tutor training and ensure that people employed as PBL/TBL tutors have the necessary experience, including clinical, to fulfil the role as tutors in PBL. The clarity of grades is a further issue that arose from a number of meetings with students and stakeholders. This issue is particularly relevant to the grading of the workplace experience element of the programmes where a pass/fail assessment may be more appropriate than the current grading scheme which requires clinical colleagues/ practice educators working in service settings to make fine judgements on honours grades. There may also be a need to moderate students' expectations regarding honours grades and it was noted that the proportion of students awarded 1st class Honours in OT and SLT appears very high by international standards. In discussion with external stakeholders, the need to ensure that students have an adequate appreciation of the day to day reality of clinical work in SLT and OT was highlighted.

The Peer Review Group noted that the professional programmes offered by the School meet the accreditation requirements of the relevant professional bodies. However the Group also

noted the questions raised by IASLT on several occasions relating to the psychology content of the curriculum and recommends that the School ensures that the psychology requirements of the IASLT accreditation guidelines are fully met.

The PRG acknowledges the efforts of the School in the development of taught postgraduate programmes. However it was noted that the current MSc Evidence based Therapy Practice and the Professional Doctorate in Occupational Therapy are not attracting significant numbers of students. The Peer Review Group would also highlight the need to give careful consideration to the advisability of seeking to attract postgraduates for profession training in areas such as physiotherapy where there is limited expertise within the School. The School should consider the viability of the entire suite of postgraduate taught programmes currently on offer and should consider restructuring by availing of generic postgraduate modules offered within UCC. The issue of collaboration with other Universities should also be considered.

Research & Scholarly Activity

The Peer Review Group was concerned that the high teaching contact hours and the administrative workloads of academic staff are hindering staff from development of their research activities. It was felt that staff pursuing PhD programmes of study should be offered protected time and, in addition, that particular support should be offered to staff who have recently completed their PhD Degree in order to facilitate publication from their research and further their research career development. The Peer Review Group considers that the suggested review of workloads (as discussed above) and consequent reductions in teaching and assessment will facilitate staff developing their research activities including grant applications and international peer-reviewed output.

The Peer Review Group noted that in the 2009 UCC Research Quality Review Report on the School of Clinical Therapies, the research achievements and potential of the School may have been underestimated because key senior staff were not considered in the review due to the census date adopted by the University in its guidelines. The Peer Review Group supports the recommendation of the Research Quality Review Panel that the School reduce the number of research strands and develop a more thematic approach to research, focused on a small number of well defined topics. This will facilitate:

1. interdisciplinary research within the School, College and University;
2. targeted grant applications (including early career researcher grants) at national and international level;
3. inter-institutional research on the island of Ireland.

The PRG anticipates that a greater focus on a small number of interdisciplinary research themes that are well aligned with national priorities including HRB and Therapy Advisory Unit Strategies combined with strategic alliances with national and international collaborators will increase peer reviewed research grant funding and achieve a significant expansion of the research student cohort. The School should encourage PhD student intake that supports these specific research themes. It is clear from the SAR that the academic leaders within the School are well aware of these issues.

Staff Development

Staff have not recently had performance management development reviews and the PRG welcomes the recommendation in the SAR to embed an annual review into the planning process. The PRG was of the view that this is now timely, in the light of the recent appointment of a new Head of School, for the Staff of the School to undergo a performance review. This would facilitate, *inter alia*, the engagement of the staff with the new School structures and the development of appropriate research agendas, etc.

The Peer Review Group noted that the University has an Employee Assistance Programme scheme in place and accessible to all staff.

External Relations

The School has excellent relations with external stakeholders. In particular it is clear that the School is respected and supported by local practitioners. The Peer Review Group has noted the difficulties which have arisen about clinical practice facilitation for Occupational Therapy students completing their work placement module. The Peer Review Group has serious concerns about clinical practice placement facilitation for Occupational Therapy, in relation to the vacancies of the Regional Practice Facilitators and Practice Tutors. This should be

addressed at College of Medicine & Health and University levels by way of negotiation with the Health Services Executive.

As discussed above, the PRG has reflected on the viability of the current School-specific MSc programme, given the staff workload and the small number of students registering for the programme. By contrast, however, it was clear from discussions with stakeholders that there is considerable demand for continuing professional development courses. The School should explore the business case for short continuing professional development courses, including advanced clinical skills. It was felt that that provision of such short courses will further strengthen the relationship with local practitioners.

Governance

The Governance arrangements within the School include a School Board, School Executive, School Graduate Studies Committee, Departmental Committee and a Student Staff Consultative Committee. These arrangements are in accordance with university policy and are clearly working well. However the issue of streamlining or merging a number of these committees merits consideration. This issue was flagged by staff in the School in the Self-Assessment Report. The need for the two Departments to work more effectively as a single unit and the need for more clearly defined line management and team working for the School administrative staff were also raised in the SAR. These are important governance issues for the School at this time.

Services

The PRG noted the positive comments in the SAR on the range of services available to the School. The Group met Mr. Cathal Kerrigan, College of Medicine & Health Librarian. It is clear that the staff of the Medical Library provide an excellent service for staff and students in the School and that specific issues that arise in relation to problem and task based learning are well addressed by the library. The Peer Review Group also noted the frequent staff comments in relation to unsatisfactory audio visual and computer support. The Group felt that this is primarily an operational issue that can be addressed at School level, possibly in collaboration with other Schools in the College of Medicine & Health.

Staffing

The Peer Review Group broadly concurs with the view of the Research Quality Review Panel that the School has a relatively favourable staff student ratio. However the majority of staff are at Lecturer grade and it is clearly in the interest of the School that UCC's structures for promotion by internal competition be restored at the earliest opportunity.

Accommodation

The PRG was impressed by the Brookfield Health Sciences Complex and the standard of accommodation available to the School. Co-location with the other Schools in Medicine & Health and with the Health Science Library is a significant advantage.

Financing

The funding model for the Schools teaching programmes was discussed with the relevant university officers and clarified to the satisfaction of the Peer Review Group. The Peer Review Group is strongly of the view that the School should take active steps to exploit the diversity and range of funding opportunities available for research support. This will require detailed and more proactive engagement with the Office of the Vice-President for Research Policy and Support.

School Co-ordinating Committee & Methodology employed in the preparation of the Self-Assessment Report

The Peer Review Group welcomed the level of engagement and interaction across the departments during preparation for the quality review process which was evident in SAR and in the interaction of staff with the Peer Review Group.

The Peer Review Group are also asked to comment specifically on developments and actions taken since the last quality review undergone by the Department/School.

The Peer Review Group noted that this review is the first quality review undergone by the School.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Recommendations for improvement made by the School

The Peer Review Group considered all the recommendations made by the School in the Self-Assessment Report and have endorsed and incorporated these, as deemed appropriate, in the recommendations below.

Recommendations for improvement made by the Peer Review Group

The Peer Review Group recommends that:

1. The workloads of all staff within the school should be reviewed taking account of teaching, research, clinical and administrative commitments, in a transparent way.
2. Student contact hours and the volume of assessment of students should be reduced, particularly in relation to fostering independent student learning in a manner that is consistent with the PBL/TBL approach adopted.
3. The School ensures that the psychology requirements of the IASLT accreditation guidelines are fully met.
4. The concerns about clinical practice placement facilitation for Occupational Therapy students be addressed at College of Medicine & Health and University levels by way of negotiation with the Health Services Executive.
5. The School continues to provide PBL/TBL tutor training to ensure consistent delivery of the curriculum and support for students.
6. The School continues to monitor and benchmark the degree awards in relation to the proportion of students achieving first class honours.
7. The School should consider whether grading of clinical placements by clinicians should be on a pass/fail basis only.
8. Staff pursuing PhD programmes of study should be offered protected time and in addition, that particular support should be offered to staff who have recently completed their PhD Degree in order to facilitate publication from their research and further their research career development.
9. The School should consider the viability of the entire suite of postgraduate taught programmes currently on offer and should consider restructuring by availing of generic postgraduate modules offered within UCC and also collaboration with other Universities.

10. The School should explore the business case for short continuing professional development courses, including advanced clinical skills.
11. That the School reduce the number of research strands and develop a more thematic approach to research, focused on a small number of well defined topics.
12. The School should take active steps to exploit the diversity and range of funding opportunities available for research support.
13. There should be deeper engagement by researchers in the School with the Office of the Vice-President for Research Policy and Support.
14. The College of Medicine & Health should provide additional targeted support for early career researchers in the skill of grant application writing and in research grant management.
15. Staff should be encouraged to participate in scientific writing workshops such as those organised annually by the HRB.
16. The departments should focus on student services and the School should deal with programme planning and administration, and thereby reduce duplication of effort.
17. Workload and grading for the administrative staff should be looked at in the context of functioning of both Departments and School offices.
18. The concerns of the course team about audio-visual, IT and speech technology laboratory support should be resolved at Head of School level, possibly working in collaboration with other Heads of School in the College of Medicine & Health.

APPENDIX A

SCHOOL OF CLINICAL THERAPIES

PEER REVIEW GROUP SITE VISIT TIMETABLE

In Summary

- Monday 25 January: 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 staff from the school.
- Tuesday 26 January: The PRG considers the Self-Assessment Report and meets with staff, students and stakeholder representatives. A working private dinner is held that evening for the PRG.
- Wednesday 27 January: The PRG meets with relevant senior officers of UCC. An exit presentation is given by the PRG to all members of the department. A working private dinner is held that evening for the PRG in order to finalise the report. This is the final evening of the review.
- Thursday 28 January: External PRG members depart.

Monday 25 January 2010	
16.00 – 18.00	Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group Briefing by Deirdre O'Brien, Administrative Officer, Quality Promotion Unit. 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. Venue: Tower Room, Jury's Hotel
19.00 – 21.00	Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group Venue: Jury's Hotel
21.00 – 22.00	Informal meeting for members of the Peer Review Group, Head of School of Clinical Therapies and School of Clinical Therapies staff. <u>School of Clinical Therapies Staff:</u> Professor Gill Chard Professor Fiona Gibbon, Head of School Venue: Jury's Hotel
Tuesday 26 January 2010	
Venue: Tower Room 1, UCC	
08.30 – 09.00	Convening of Peer Review Group
09.00 – 09.30	Professor Fiona Gibbon, Head of School
09.30 – 10.30	Group meeting with all staff

	Professor Gill Chard Ms. Clodagh Donohoe Professor Paul Fletcher Professor Fiona Gibbon Ms. Helen Lynch Ms. Shelly Mack Ms. Margaret Murphy Ms. Helen O'Sullivan Dr. Ciara O'Toole Venue: Council Room, North Wing	Ms. Janice Crausaz Ms. Clara Egan Dr. Robert Fourie Dr. Alice Lee Dr. Phil Mc Gowan Ms. Kerry Murphy Ms. Clare O'Sullivan Ms. Yvonne O'Sullivan Ms. Jean Tobin
10.30 – 11.00	Tea/coffee	
11.00 – 13.00	Private meetings with individual staff members 11.00: Ms. Helen Lynch 11.15: Dr. Alice Lee 11.30: Ms. Kerry Murphy 11.45: Dr. Robert Fourie 12.00: Professor Gill Chard 12.15: Professor Paul Fletcher 12.30: Dr. Phil Mc Gowan Venue: Tower Room 1	Private meetings with individual staff members 11.00: Ms. Clare O'Sullivan 11.15: Dr. Ciara O'Toole 11.30: Ms. Helen O'Sullivan 11.45: Ms. Yvonne O'Sullivan 12.00: Ms. Margaret Murphy 12.30: Ms. Shelly Mack 12.45: Dr. Nicola Bessell Venue: Tower Room II
13.00 – 13.50	Working lunch	
14.00 – 14.50	Visit to core facilities of the School (Brookfield Health Sciences Complex), escorted by Professor Fiona Gibbon and Ms. Margaret Murphy, School Manager.	
15.00 – 15.40	Representatives of 1st and 2nd Year Students Ms. Maria Bracken - 1 st Year SHS Ms. Ciara Cooney – 2 nd Year OT Ms. Bianca Doherty – 1 st Year OT Ms. Eileen Hegarty – 2 nd Year OT Ms. Doris Murphy – 2 nd Year SHS Ms. Sarah O'Mahony – 2 nd Year SHS Ms. Zoe Rooke – 1 st Year SHS Ms. Laura Teahan – 1 st Year OT	
15.40 – 16.20	Representatives of 3rd and 4th Year Students Ms. Orna Curtain – 4 th Year OT Ms. Una Leonard - 4 th Year SHS Ms. Catherine O'Leary - 3 rd Year SHS Ms. Cliona O'Donovan - 3 rd Year SHS Ms. Elaine Saunders – 4 th Year OT	
16.20 – 17.00	Representatives of Graduate Students Ms. Iosoilde Dromey – MSc PT Ms. Emma Gleeson - SHS Graduate Student Ms. Brid McEvoy – MSc PT Mr. Niels Ruddigkeit – MSc OT	

17.00 – 18.30	<p>Representatives of Stakeholders including past graduate and employers</p> <p>Ms. Anne Horgan, Speech & Language Therapy Manager, Eye, Ear & Throat Hospital Ms. Áine Lane, Mother of Ciarán Harrington Ms. Anne Quirke, Occupational Therapy Manager, Mercy Hospital, Cork Ms. Úna Sharry, Senior Speech & Language Therapist, Sonas Primary School</p> <p>Venue: Tower Room 1, UCC</p>
19.00	<p>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.</p> <p>Venue: Tower Room, Jury's Hotel</p>
<p>Wednesday 27 January 2010</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Venue: Tower Room 1, UCC</p>	
08.30 – 09.00	Convening of Peer Review Group
09.00 – 09.20	Professor Grace Neville, Vice-President for Teaching and Learning
09.20 – 09.50	Professor Paul Giller, Registrar & Senior Vice-President
09.50 – 10.50	Visit to Library at Brookfield Health Sciences Complex, meeting with Ms. Margot Conrick, Head of Information Services, Boole Library and Mr. Cathal Kerrigan, Clinical Therapies & Basic Sciences for Medicine Librarian.
10.50 – 11.00	Tea/coffee
11.00 – 11.15	Mr. Cormac McSweeney, Finance Office
11.15 – 11.45	Professor Peter Kennedy, Vice-President for Research Policy & Support
11.45 – 12.30	Professor Michael Berndt, Head, College of Medicine & Health
12.30 – 13.00	Professor Fiona Gibbon, Head of School
13.00 – 14.00	Working lunch
14.00 – 17.00	Preparation of first draft of final report
17.00 – 17.30	<p>Exit presentation to <u>all staff</u>, made by the Chair of the Peer Review Group, summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group.</p> <p>This presentation is <u>not</u> for discussion at this time.</p> <p>Venue: Council Room, North Wing</p>
19.00	<p>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.</p> <p>Venue: Tower Room, Jury's Hotel</p>