

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT / QUALITY ASSURANCE

SCHOOL OF FOOD & NUTRITIONAL SCIENCES

Present: Fiona Crozier, Tanya Mulcahy, Kevin Cashman, Paul McSweeney, Alan Kelly & Mairead Kiely

Abbreviations

PRG: Peer Review Group

VP: Vice-President

QPC: Quality Promotion Committee

QIP: Quality Improvement Plan

HR: Human Resources

SEFS: Science, Engineering & Food Sciences

UMT: University Management Team

PRG Finding/Recommendation		QPC Comment/ Recommendation	Follow up Report June 2013 <i>[Recommendation status and comment]</i>
1.	The deficit in funding for library resources be addressed in light of the importance of access to the highest quality resources.	Recommendation endorsed.	Ongoing. The deficit has been managed so as to optimise the School of FNS's library resources but there has been cuts in the School's subscriptions. There is potentially the need for a further €12,500 cut in existing subscriptions. There is a need for the School and SEFS to work closely with the library staff.

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2.	The School should consider whether it would be more efficient and less disruptive to adjust structures in the School to match the College structures at a somewhat slower pace, to allow the School to focus on its core teaching and research activities.	Recommendation endorsed	Completed. Over the last two to three years, the School of FNS has systematically adjusted its committee structures and operational modes to mirror and accommodate changes made at an operational/committee level within the College of SEFS. This has not distracted from the core academic and research missions of the School. As both SEFS and School are now beyond initial genesis stages, this recommendation is now largely defunct.
3.	Academic workload models should be discussed within the School and workloads made transparent.	Recommendation strongly endorsed. QPC noted that a University-level Working group is currently undertaking to develop an academic workload allocation model with a view to adoption across all academic units in UCC. The School might wish to be cognisant of this and await the outcomes of the discussion which are due in the autumn 2010.	Ongoing. Academic staff in the School undertook the University-wide Workload model exercise, and also a workload exercise linked to the implementation of full economic cost (FEC) model [FEC to be instigated in UCC within the next 2 years]. A new cycle of the University-wide Workload exercise, following refinement from the 1 st iteration, will be conducted over the next 12 months. However, there is still a need for a derivatised model within the School to inform teaching workload assignment in context of admin and research activities.

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4.	Various options for raising the bar for entry into the Food Science degree programme should be considered	Recommendation strongly endorsed.	Ongoing. The School following a review process, has highlighted curriculum changes which it will introduce to the programme in a staged manner and cognizant of semesterisation implications.
5.	The School should have as a goal to make Food Science the first choice for the majority of entrants into that programme from the CAO.	Recommendation strongly endorsed. QPC noted that a number of possibilities exist to address the issue of student numbers, including reversing the policy of the 'direct entry' route; the potential for expansion of the further education programmes, and the graduate programmes should be actively explored.	Achieved. The School has worked hard in relation to CAO first preferences for both its BSc programmes and seen 1st preferences for the BSc Food Science rise in recent years and 1st preferences for BSc Nutritional Sciences remain very strong. The School actively engages with career guidance teachers and created a new website (http://foodatucc.ie/).

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6.	The School should develop a strategic research agenda for the School with a shared vision aimed at world-leading research.	Recommendation strongly endorsed.	Ongoing. The School has continued to be proactive and lobby for a UCC-led Institute of Food Research. To underscore its desire (which has been mandated twice, in Research Quality Review [2009] and Dept Quality Review in 2010), the School included a key strategic research action in its School Strategic Plan (Dec 2012): that the three core areas within the Institute be expanded to four, two of which were Food Science and Technology, and Food Nutrition and Human Health – to reflect the two core research areas of the School. This was adopted. The formal proposal for an Institute at UCC is likely to be submitted within the next 6 months.
7.	A PMDS should be developed and more visibly linked to the goals and objectives of the strategic plan of the School.	Recommendation endorsed. QPC noted that it is University policy that a PMDS is in place and operating in all areas of UCC.	Ongoing. A cycle of Performance and Development Reviews were undertaken in the School and finalised on time in 2011. The forecasted plans and actions of School staff aligned very closely to the teaching and research goals of the School. The new cycle of reviews will be completed by Autumn 2013 and these will be framed in the context of our recent School Strategic Plan.

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8.	The wealth of knowledge within the School of FNS should be disseminated widely to key stakeholders.	Recommendation endorsed.	Ongoing The activities of the School in terms of education, outreach and research have been disseminated by a number of means, including our dedicated, and self-funded, new website (http://foodatucc.ie/) and, a Food@UCC newsletter. There has been major engagement by School staff in relation to funding agencies The School (through A. Kelly as programme coordinator) runs the Agri-Food Graduate Development Programme which also plays a role in dissemination of its knowledge to young Irish food-related postgraduates.
9.	Partnerships with external agencies should be fostered in a variety of ways.	Recommendation endorsed.	Ongoing. The School has liaised closely with and supported the actions of the Food Industry Training Unit. The School has been proactive in terms of engagement with funding agencies.
10.	Consideration should be given to the establishment of a resource hub/centre on Diet and Health.	Recommendation endorsed.	Ongoing. The School has been proactive in terms of disseminating information on education, outreach and research (see point 8 above).

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11.	Consideration should be given to the development of modules/courses on specialist nutrition topics, which could include a Public Health Nutrition course.	Recommendation endorsed. QPC recommended that the School bring forward proposals to the College SEFS where all implications could be considered.	Ongoing. Since proposing this recommendation the financial environment within the 3 rd level sector has changed considerably making decisions about the priority taught MSc versus specialist MSc (such as a Public Health Nutrition MSc) of critical importance in terms of operating within existing resource allocation and yet playing a role in income generation through postgraduate numbers (taught MSc as well as research). Thus, the School is carefully monitoring the potential opportunities while balancing against resource. Specialist MSc (such as Clinical Nutrition) remain an academic priority and will be looked at again from a resource perspective.
12.	Possibilities for integrating food microbiology staff more closely with the activities of the School should be explored.	Recommendation endorsed.	Completed. The Department of Microbiology have had discussions with the School of FNS in relation to the <i>BSc Food Science</i> programme and its streams and also in relation to Research in the context of the Institute. The Department of Microbiology (currently in transition to a School within College of SEFS) was in discussions about a 'Life Science School' but integration with FNS was not a realistic option.

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13.	The School needs to formulate a strategic plan for the School and to formulate concrete, practical, implementation plans for the realisation of its strategic objectives.	Recommendation strongly endorsed. QPC noted that it is essential that this is completed as a matter of priority.	Completed. The School developed and submitted its Strategic Plan to the College of SEFS in Dec 2012.
14.	An effective “management team” should be established in the School.	Recommendation strongly endorsed. QPC noted that it is essential that this is completed as a matter of priority.	Ongoing. In terms of ‘management team’, the School has a Head and also Vice-Head of School as well as key committees (each with a Chair) mandated in the core areas of teaching and learning, research, health and safety etc.
15.	The University should develop a committee designed to deal with external relationships, which is comprehensive in scope and has relevance for both Colleges and Schools.	Recommendation endorsed. The QPC noted that there are College and School advisory Boards in existence and that it is part of the policy of the University that this be normal practice. The Committee referred this recommendation to the VP External Affairs for further consideration as to possible action.	Ongoing. External relationships have continued to be fostered by School staff in various constructs (as referred to in the above points).
16.	A Head of School is appointed without unnecessary delay.	Recommendation strongly endorsed.	Completed. This recommendation was achieved on time, and now the Head re-appointment process is pending again (<i>postscript note: New Head appointed 1st Sept 2013</i>).

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17.	The School should carefully consider its options for how to make use of the two new lecturer appointments, such as the research areas in which it would be most desirable to hire. The School should further strive to integrate the new lecturers into the School in a collegial and supportive atmosphere. The School should evaluate the effect the new appointments have on workloads etc. before considering the possible need for further additional staff.	Recommendation strongly endorsed. QPC noted that it is very important the new appointments are made so as to support the overall strategic objectives of the School, College and University	Completed. The two new lecturers in the School have proven themselves to be in extremely strategic research areas in terms of the School research plan and external research funding environment. Both have integrated well with the School, and have been afforded a supportive environment in which to begin their UCC academic careers. Both have academic mentors and both received seed funding from the UCC-Food Industry Partnership Board to allow them establish research links and networks. The newest submission in terms of academic staffing was in the area of Sensory Science, and while supported and prioritized on academic and strategic grounds, the financial support for this was placed back on the School (as opposed to core funding) and thus is still under consideration.
18.	The undergraduate teaching laboratories should be refurbished to a higher and more uniform standard, as a matter of urgency.	Recommendation strongly endorsed. QPC noted that this is a question of resources and that the School needs to discuss this need with the Head of College SEFS.	Completed. The School was successful in securing competitive internal strategic funding within the College of SEFS for refurbishment of its undergraduate labs in Food Science and Nutrition. There has been a huge improvement in both undergraduate laboratories.

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19.	The School should provide clear and complete information to potential entrants to the Food Science and Nutrition undergraduate programmes about the academic programmes.	Recommendation strongly endorsed.	Completed. The School has been extremely proactive in providing potential entrants to its Food Science and Nutrition undergraduate programmes information that is accurate and complete. It has used our new website (http://foodatucc.ie/) and also supplied this information via Open days and various meetings with career guidance teachers as well as School visits.
20.	The School should consider ways in which 3 rd year students could provide information and support to 1 st and 2 nd years about the need to take Physics, Chemistry and Maths in these first two years.	Recommendation strongly endorsed.	Ongoing. The School has brought students from more advanced stages of its BScs back to speak to the younger students on the need and importance of core science subjects such as Physics, Chemistry and Maths. The Programme coordinators have also highlighted this to the 1 st year cohorts. Work with the three Departments/School (Physics, Chemistry and Maths) has ensured a careful monitoring of the performance of our 1 st years in relation to these subjects.