

# QUALITY REVIEW FOLLOW-UP REPORT

## DEPARTMENT OF GEOLOGY

### Introduction

A meeting to discuss progress made in implementing recommendations for improvement arising from the review of the Department of Geology was held on 8 October 2007.

Present: Professor Patrick Fitzpatrick, Head, College of Science, Engineering and Food Science  
Professor John Gamble, Head, Department of Geology  
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*

*SEFS: Science, Engineering & Food Science*

*VP: Vice-President*

*QIP: Quality Improvement Plan*

*ACSSS: Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences*

| <b>PRG Recommendation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>QPC Recommendation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Follow-up Report<br/>Oct 07</b>                                                                                                                    |
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| The name of the Department of Geology be changed to the "Department of Earth Science".                                                                                                                                          | Noted.<br>The QPC recommended that discussions take place with all interested parties, including the Heads of the Colleges of ACSSS and SEFS. The QPC would welcome an early response on the outcome of these discussions. | Ongoing<br>The Department is currently in discussion with cognate discipline(s) with a view to forming a School.<br>This will be progressed in 07/08. |
| The Department align itself in a central position in a future 'School of Earth and Environmental Sciences' in the new College of Science, Engineering & Food Science, with a view to playing a pivotal role in its development. | Noted.<br>The QPC recommended that discussions take place with all interested parties, including the Heads of the Colleges of ACSSS and SEFS                                                                               | Ongoing<br>The Department is currently in discussion with cognate discipline(s) with a view to forming a School.                                      |
| The First Year programme be reformed so that in future years there will be a minimum of three modules of Earth Science in the first year CK404 programme.                                                                       | Endorsed.<br>The QPC noted and welcomed that action has already taken place on this recommendation                                                                                                                         | Implemented.<br>The Department now offers three first year modules in Earth Science.                                                                  |

| <b>PRG Recommendation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>QPC Recommendation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Follow-up Report<br/>Oct 07</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| <p>The existing undergraduate degree programmes be restructured, to offer a single BSc degree programme in Earth Science, but with the potential for specialisation from the Third Year into three distinct degree options.</p>                                   | <p>Endorsed.</p> <p>The QPC would welcome an agreed outcome between all interested parties and strongly recommended that full discussions should take place. The QPC also noted that progress on this recommendation could potentially result in a reduction of overlap between courses and thus help reduce the teaching workload.</p>                                                                                            | <p>Ongoing.</p> <p>The undergraduate programmes are currently being restructured; the department is happy with the progress made to date and hope to implement the newly restructured degree in 2009/10. New programmes will be submitted to Faculty for approval in 2008/09.</p> |
| <p>New course curricula to reflect recent trends in the Earth Sciences, the external career market and the Bologna agreement be developed. The PRG also recommends that a cost-benefit analysis be carried out prior to the introduction of any new programme</p> | <p>Endorsed.</p> <p>QPC recommended that the Department consider and reduce the number of modules offered – i.e. undertake a process of rationalisation</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>Implemented and ongoing</p> <p>The degree is being restructured as outlined above. The department is fully compliant with the Bologna agreement.</p>                                                                                                                           |
| <p>A professional, fee-paying, MSc Postgraduate programme in the Environmental Earth Science area be developed. The PRG also recommends that a cost-benefit analysis be carried out prior to the introduction of any new programme.</p>                           | <p>Endorsed.</p> <p>The QPC noted that this programme could be funded in part by expansion of the undergraduate programme. The QPC commented that the process of rationalisation of the teaching of the undergraduate programme and fee income would assist in the support of the programme. The QPC also suggested that perhaps the Department should consider developing a Postgraduate Diploma as a foundation for the MSc.</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>The Department is anxious to implement this recommendation but will review this recommendation once a School has been formed.</p>                                                                                                                               |
| <p>An audit of essential knowledge, concepts and skills for each degree programme be carried out.</p>                                                                                                                                                             | <p>Endorsed.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>Implemented</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p>Learning outcomes for each programme and each individual module be specified.</p>                                                                                                                                                                              | <p>Endorsed.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>Implemented</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p>Courses and assessment appropriate to the learning outcomes be designed.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>Endorsed.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>Implemented</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

| <b>PRG Recommendation</b>                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>QPC Recommendation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Follow-up Report<br/>Oct 07</b>                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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| Undergraduate teaching resources be improved.                                                                                                                                                         | Noted.<br><br>Proposals should be made to the College of SEFS by the Department                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Ongoing<br><br>There have been no developments on this to date but it is hoped that the formation of a School may generate some resources and that the re-location of all staff into one area might also be achieved. |
| The technical support be increased by one member of staff, with a focus on IT support and other appropriate skills, to support the Departmental core activities (see Recommendation under resources). | Noted.<br><br>The QPC noted that in the new structures there are possibilities for the formation of larger entities, which could warrant the appointment of a dedicated IT support staff. However it is difficult to justify dedicated IT support for every department and unit, irrespective of size. | Not implemented<br><br>The situation is unsatisfactory at present but it will be reviewed in the context of the formation of a School.                                                                                |
| Teaching workloads be reduced and balanced.                                                                                                                                                           | Endorsed.<br><br>QPC referred Department to comments above.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Not implemented<br><br>The issue of academic workloads has not been addressed at departmental level and remains an issue for the College as a whole.                                                                  |
| That key attention be given to academic staff involvement in extramural evening programmes and outreach programmes. This could be a focus for part-time staff.                                        | Noted.<br><br>The QPC noted that this is a University-wide issue across all four Colleges and referred it for consideration to the Colleges.                                                                                                                                                           | Not implemented<br><br>The issue of academic workloads has not been addressed at departmental level and remains an issue for the College as a whole.                                                                  |
| The Department should make available course handbooks to all students.                                                                                                                                | Endorsed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Partially implemented.<br><br>Some handbooks have been made available but not all courses have handbooks yet.                                                                                                         |
| The Departmental web site be developed.                                                                                                                                                               | Endorsed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Implemented                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

| <b>PRG Recommendation</b>                                                                                                                                   | <b>QPC Recommendation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Follow-up Report<br/>Oct 07</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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| The Department needs to develop a coherent research strategy and plan as a matter of urgency.                                                               | Strongly endorsed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Ongoing<br><br>The Department is working towards the development of a research strategy and plan and has established a Departmental Research Committee to oversee this aim. It was noted that because of teaching commitments and requirements each staff member has their own research speciality. |
| The Department should continue to develop and strengthen its research focus on marine and environmental geology, as indicated in the SAR.                   | QPC noted and endorsed the departmental response. The QPC would encourage the Department to give consideration to developing more collaborations with national groups, e.g. the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies and other HE institutions. | Implemented<br><br>The Department has furthered this recommendation with the establishment of a national committee, the Heads of Earth Sciences Institutes Committee in May 2006.                                                                                                                   |
| The Department be consolidated into <u>one</u> building.                                                                                                    | Endorsed.<br><br>The QPC noted the difficulties in implementation of this recommendation and that possibilities are being considered at University level.                                                                                        | Not implemented<br><br>This will be one of the key ambitions of the newly formed School.                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| One additional academic staff member be appointed, in an area of research relating to the Department's renewed impetus in environmental and marine geology. | Noted.<br><br>The QPC referred this recommendation for consideration to the Head of College of SEFS, also noting the comparatively favourable student/academic staff ratio for the Department.                                                   | Not implemented                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| One additional technical staff member be appointed, with a focus on IT support and support for the core teaching activities of the Department.              | Noted.<br><br>The QPC referred this recommendation for consideration to the Head of College of SEFS, also noting the comparatively favourable student/academic staff ratio for the Department.                                                   | Not implemented                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

| <b>PRG Recommendation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>QPC Recommendation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Follow-up Report<br/>Oct 07</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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| The Department should explore access to equipment that is already owned by UCC, particularly within the College of Science, Engineering & Food Science, with a view to acquiring access for the staff and students of the Department of Geology. | Endorsed.<br><br>QPC referred this recommendation to the Head of the College of SEFS for consideration of possibilities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Ongoing<br><br>The Department is continuing to explore lines of collaborations within UCC.                                                                                                                                                  |
| The Department should seek ways of acquiring new equipment to support future developments in teaching and research.                                                                                                                              | Endorsed.<br><br>The QPC would encourage the Department to submit applications to relevant funding agencies/bodies, both internal and external to UCC. The QPC would also encourage the Department to consider collaborating with other departments/disciplines within UCC, in particular with regards to possibilities for sharing of new equipment, etc. | Ongoing<br><br>The Department continues to explore possibilities for external funding and will continue to apply for grants - a recent joint application to SFI (with TCD & UCD) has resulted in a €300,000 grant for analytical equipment. |
| A Departmental Committee structure be introduced to deal more effectively with the implementation of decisions taken at staff meetings in areas such as academic, budgetary, policy and safety matters.                                          | Endorsed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Implemented<br><br>A new departmental management structure based around 4 subcommittees was established in May 2006 and is fully operational.<br>- Graduate Studies<br>- Research<br>- Teaching<br>- Management                             |
| Communication lines between staff, and between staff and students, and between the Department and College and University must be improved.                                                                                                       | Endorsed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Ongoing                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| A Staff Development Policy to deal with a range of issues identified in the SWOT analysis be established.                                                                                                                                        | Endorsed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Ongoing<br><br>The Department will have their Staff Development Plan available by November 2007.                                                                                                                                            |
| The work of the technical and administrative staff be reviewed to ensure their greater involvement and effectiveness in the work and activities of the Department.                                                                               | Endorsed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Ongoing<br><br>The Department will have their Staff Development Plan available by November 2007.                                                                                                                                            |

| <b>PRG Recommendation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>QPC Recommendation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Follow-up Report<br/>Oct 07</b>                                                                                         |
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| The Department continues to build on its strong track record in the field of Adult and Continuing Education.                                                                                                                             | Endorsed.<br><br>The QPC commended the Department for its excellent contributions to date to Adult continuing Education. The QPC also referred back to recommendation 6 above and suggested that the Department should continue to focus its attention on the development of postgraduate Diplomas and qualifications, recognising the income generation possibilities that arise from such activities and the increased emphasis being placed on such activities at local and national levels. The rationalisation of the overall teaching load of academic staff of the Department needs to be actively pursued. | Ongoing<br><br>The Diploma in Geology is now in its second year.                                                           |
| The Department engages in more active promotion of the Earth Sciences at secondary school level to increase awareness of the discipline.                                                                                                 | Endorsed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Implemented and ongoing                                                                                                    |
| The Department seeks to provide, through a number of regional and national initiatives, a programme of in-service Geology training for Geography teachers.                                                                               | Endorsed.<br><br>QPC welcomed actions already taken.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Implemented<br><br>The Department now runs training sessions for Secondary School Geography teachers.                      |
| Investigate the possibility of work placement related training in Geology                                                                                                                                                                | Strongly endorsed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Not implemented<br><br>As there is a global shortage of geo-scientists all graduates received job offers after graduation. |
| The possibility that the First Year Mathematics and Chemistry courses would be much more attractive to students (and encourage progression to Second Year Geology) if they were made more relevant to the needs of the Geology students. | Endorsed.<br><br>The QPC also referred this recommendation for consideration of possible actions to the Head of the College of SEFS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Ongoing<br><br>This issue is being developed and debated at departmental level.                                            |