

**University College Cork
National University of Ireland, Cork**

Quality Improvement/Quality Assurance

Peer Review Group Report

Food Industry Training Unit

Academic Year 2004/05

14th April 2005

MEMBERS OF THE PEER REVIEW GROUP

Professor John O'Halloran, Department of Zoology, Ecology & Plant Sciences, UCC
(Chair)

Professor Ciaran Murphy, Department of Accounting, Finance & Information
Systems, UCC

Mr. Pat Moynihan, FÁS, Dublin, Ireland

Professor Colette Shortt, Yakult Ltd, London, UK

Timetable of the site visit

The timetable of the visit is given in Appendix A.

Suitability and adequacy of the timetable.

The timetable was adequate for the QI / QA assessment.

PEER REVIEW

Methodology

The size of the unit allowed the Peer Review Group (PRG) to work in a coherent group, interviewing and meeting staff and officers of the university. We sought views of each participant on their role, their input, contacts with unit and their future perspectives for the unit. Professor Murphy acted as Rapporteur for the group. During the meetings with students, lecturing staff and industry representatives, Professor Murphy and Mr. Moynihan met with lecturing staff, whilst Professor Shortt and Professor O'Halloran met with students in two separate groups.

Site Visit

The PRG undertook their meeting in the teaching room used for running the courses. Underpinning facilities include the food-processing hall, as well the meetings rooms and lecture room and staff offices are well set out and suitable for the size of the unit.

The PRG Report draft was prepared on the final morning of the visit and the final draft agreed using email.

OVERALL ANALYSIS

Self-Assessment Report:

The self-assessment report (SAR) was adequate basis for the PRG to undertake the review. There was evidence of full participation by staff, evidence of benchmarking undertaken and detail of SWOT analysis. The SAR included details of courses undertaken, including curriculum and sample hand-outs and course outlines. The CVs of a number of the lecturing staff were also provided. Although it was clear that much of the unit's activities are underpinned by the faculty research, there wasn't clear evidence to demonstrate this very important and strong link (as established through the PRG deliberations).

The PRG were very impressed by the training provided by the Unit. The commitment and dedication of the staff in and associated with the Unit was obvious to the PRG and to the students met during the site visit. The PRG were unanimous in their praise for the Unit's staff in all aspects of the course development and delivery. The PRG also noted that the Unit provides a very valuable link between researchers in the Faculty of Food Science & Technology, in particular, and industry. The benefits to both UCC and industry of the activities of the Unit were evident in both the SAR and during the discussions held during the site visit.

FINDINGS OF THE PEER REVIEW GROUP

Self-Assessment Report.

The Self-Assessment Report of the unit was considered under the following headings:

Unit Details

The unit details provided in the self-assessment report were sufficient for the needs of the PRG to make an assessment of the Unit. The science and technology activities and services provided, details of the staff, Faculty of Food Science & Technology, staff profiles and external relations were well set out in the report. During the PRG visit we were satisfied that the report represented what existed on the ground.

Unit Planning and Organisation

It appeared to the PRG that given the level of activity, staff levels and the existing staffing structure, together with the existing reporting lines, that there seems to be very little opportunity for long-term strategic planning (see recommendations).

Clearly the immediate planning for and execution of courses, conferences and training workshops were well organised. The PRG received feedback from industry, students and lecturers that indicated a high level of professional planning by unit staff.

List of Client Groups for the Unit

A list of companies, client groups and customers of the unit was provided. A clearer analysis and presentation of the various client groups would have been useful.

Service Standards:

There is an ongoing system of quality assurance for all courses on offer by the FITU, which includes an assessment of delegates and lectures and a high percentage of courses carry formal accreditation. Evidence of feedback was provided in summary form. The level of satisfaction was very high from the delegates and students, particularly at the individual level. However, the value to the companies which the course participants represented was not always obvious. During the meeting with students it was mentioned that there were a small number of instances where lecturers did not appear to have met the expectations of the students. The PRG are aware that there is a formal system in place for evaluation by students of the courses and for feedback to staff. However it was not clear to the PRG how the Unit ensures that corrective action, if required, is taken and whether this is communicated back to the students and staff concerned.

Staff Development

Because of the role of the unit, its staff are primarily involved in coordination/management on a project basis, i.e. they are not generally involved in delivering the courses themselves. Any training needs analysis should concentrate on the areas of personal/technical development and project/ programme development and evaluation.

The PRG found no evidence of structured identification of training needs or staff development plans.

Unit Budget

The PRG note that the information provided in the self-assessment report, was along the guidelines provided by Quality Promotion Unit. Using commercial norms it was not possible for the PRG to determine if the unit is self-financing. The college-wide financial control systems should also be adopted by the unit. While the PRG acknowledged that all financial business was conducted appropriately and all monies accounted for through the University Finance Office, it was not clear to the PRG what the benefit/costs of each individual course offered by the Unit is. The system is not flexible enough to account for the benefits accruing to the FITU for the individual courses offered. Other systems are available in the University, for example, in the case of research accounts a dedicated account cost code is set up with a named signatory. Perhaps the FITU might consider this approach for all courses and activities offered. Thus the costs of each course offered could be clearly identified, both by the Unit and by the University.

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

Co-ordinating Committee for Self-Assessment Report

- Professor Yrjo Roos, Dean, Faculty of Food Science and Technology
- Ms. Maura Conway, Programme Manager, Food Industry Training Unit
- Mr. David Twomey, Programme Manager, Food Industry Training Unit
- Ms. Deirdre Crone, Food Industry Training Unit Co-ordinator
- Ms. Mary McCarthy-Buckley (Chair), Training Manager, Food Industry Training Unit

The following were undertaken to collect the information required to prepare this Report:

- 1 Benchmarking
- 2 SWOT Analysis
- 3 Questionnaire Analysis – Students and Lecturers (Appendix D-in FITU report)

- 4 Questionnaire Analysis – Industry Employers (Appendix D-*in FITU report*)
- 5 Questionnaire Analysis – Food Industry Training Unit Staff (Appendix D-*in FITU report*) and
- 6 Interviews - Views of Academic Colleagues of the Food Industry Training Unit.

Governance

Given the structure of the unit and its almost exclusive dependence on part-time employees, there is no individual with a clear responsibility in this area. It was felt that there is a need for a Director with overall responsibility for governance.

Services

There was evidence of disconnection/isolation of the unit from central service providers. The Unit appears to operate in isolation from the central administration services, and the PRG found some evidence of lack of awareness of the services being offered by the unit itself among such services.

Staffing

The PRG noted and affirmed during the review that the entire staff are enthusiastic, committed and professional at an operational level. The PRG noted that there is no clearly defined college mechanism for accommodating academic staff wishing to participate in the work of the unit.

Accommodation

The PRG noted that the accommodation and facilities provided for the activities of the Unit are adequate.

Financing

The PRG noted the absence of dedicated funding for the Unit and it appeared that there is an over-reliance on a limited and unpredictable funding base.

Communications

Informal communications seem very good within the unit and with faculty staff. However the PRG noted that there was an absence of formal links to facilitate

communication. Contact with industry and state development agencies appears to be *ad hoc* and programme-related, and its level was significantly although not totally dependent on individuals, as opposed to corporate. One step towards that might be a formal report to faculty each year and a FITU newsletter.

Mission statement of UCC

The PRG noted the absence of a reference to industry in the University Mission statement.

SWOT analysis

The PRG commended the SWOT analysis prepared by the unit. The PRG noted that regrettably, there was no industry or development/funding agencies participation in the process. The PRG agreed with the general outcomes of the SWOT analysis.

Benchmarking

It appeared to the PRG that the benchmarking process did not add value and it was unclear how the reference points were determined.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The PRG was presented with two sets of recommendations. The first set of these was contained in the Self-Assessment Report and the second set was presented by the Manager of the Unit to the PRG on Tuesday 15th February, 05

Recommendations for Improvement made by Unit in Self-Assessment Report

The PRG endorses the following recommendations proposed by the Unit (where the PRG has made a change or expanded the recommendation this is represented in italics).

1. The Food Industry Training Unit should continue to be *located* in the Faculty of Food Science & Technology.
2. Consideration should be given to the establishment of *other Industry facing and similar training units for the wider University – all should be under an*

umbrella of a “Corporate College” with a mandate to establish UCC as the preferred education and training partner in Ireland.

3. A formal business advisory board should be appointed to help the long-term strategic development of the Food Industry Training Unit. Composition of this should reflect the industry sectors and policy setting/funding bodies being targeted by the Unit and the relevant agencies/organisations, which share a parallel responsibility for the sector’s development.
4. The Food Industry Training Unit should facilitate the development of a part-time degree in ‘Food Studies’ in University College Cork. *In this context UCC needs to have an active policy and culture of credit accumulation to facilitate flexible learning.*
5. The Food Industry Training Unit should *diversify sources of funding including exploring opportunities* with the Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre, the Bio Transfer Unit, the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Ireland Centre, the Centre for Co-operative Studies and the Centre for Sustainable Livelihoods and explore new potential linkages with the School of Pharmacy, Environmental Research Institute and other relevant constituencies in University College Cork.
6. The position of Manager of the Unit should be full-time *and the manager of the unit should be responsible for the delivery, accreditation and resourcing of all programmes.*

Additional recommendations made by PRG

7. The University needs to decide whether it is serious or not about interfacing with industry and specifically in providing continuing and professional development programmes. If it is, it must put in place appropriate structures and policies to accommodate this imperative. Specifically teaching on FITU programmes should constitute part of the normal teaching allocation of staff.

- 8 The Unit should give urgent consideration to having a policy of having some of their programmes accredited at level 7 of the National Framework of Qualifications (ordinary bachelor degree)
- 9 A strategic review/plan should be developed for the unit as a matter of urgency using agreed terms of reference/methodology. The review should also assess the brand and title of the unit. Following on this we envisage the appointment of an experienced part-time Director of the Unit who would be responsible for implementing the recommendations emanating from the strategic plan.
- 10 The Faculty should contribute proactively to the development and work of the Unit. Regular formal meetings should be set-up to discuss plans and progress.
- 11 In line with international practice and Government Policy, the unit should make greater use of E-learning and other methods of programme delivery.
- 12 The Unit should adopt an explicit customer charter.
- 13 The Unit should implement summary improvements from the Self-Assessment analysis. Many of these represent improvements that can be implemented quickly and would enhance student satisfaction.
- 14 The Unit should carry out business intelligence analysis on competitors' student retention rates and reputation.
- 15 The Unit should implement greater financial controls and accountability.
- 16 That the FITU would consider the possibilities and advantages of making a formal report to faculty each year and of publishing a FITU newsletter.

Timetable for conduct of Peer Review Visit

Food Industry Training Unit

Sunday 13th February 2005

17.30 Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group
Briefing by Director of Quality Promotion Unit, Dr. N. 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.

Venue: Suite 1, Business Centre, Kingsley Hotel, Cork

19.30 Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group, Head of Department and members of the co-ordinating committee responsible for preparation of the Self-Assessment Report.

Monday 14th February 2005

08.30 Convening of Peer Review Group in Room 247, Food Science & Technology Building, UCC

Consideration of Self-Assessment Report

09.00 Ms. Mary McCarthy-Buckley, Head of Unit

09.30 Co-ordinating committee responsible for preparation of the Self-Assessment Report

Mary McCarthy-Buckley
Professor Yrjo Roos
Deirdre Crone, FITU Co-ordinator
Maura Conway, Programme Manager
David Twomey, Programme Manager

10.30 Tea/Coffee

Meetings with members of staff.

10.45 Maura Conway, Programme Manager

11.00 Deirdre Crone, FITU Co-ordinator

11.15 David Twomey, Programme Manager

11.45 Professor Áine Hyland, Vice-President and Acting Vice-President for Academic Affairs

12.15 Professor Yrjo Roos, Dean of Faculty of Food Science & Technology

13.00 Working private lunch for members of the Peer Review Group

14.00 Visit to core facilities of Unit escorted by Ms. Mary McCarthy-Buckley

14.15 Representative selections of staff of UCC.

- 14.15 Professor Denis Lucey, Dean of Faculty of Commerce
14.30 Professor Ger Fitzgerald, Dept. of Microbiology
14.45 Professor Mairtin Ó Fathaigh, Centre for Adult Continuing Education
15.00 Dr. Seamus O'Reilly, Dept. of Food Business & Development
15.15 Ms. Michele Daly, Programme Co-ordinator FITU
15.30 Tea/coffee
15.45 Ms. Carmel Cotter, Finance Office
16.00 Mr. Don O'Sullivan, Dept. of Management & Marketing

17.00 Representatives of recent graduates, employers and other stakeholders

Venue: Staff Common Room

Lecturers

Mr. Dan Galvin, Lecturer p/t, Dawn Meats
Dr. Mary Grufferty, Lecturer p/t, Cert & Dip Courses in Food Science & Technology
Mr. Joe O'Keeffe, Lecturer p/t, Business Consultant

Industry Student Representatives

Mr. Vincent Buckley, Dairygold Co-Operative
Mr. Sean Cregan, Food Prep Ltd.
Mr. Paul Finnegan, Irish Sugar
Ms. Sandy Fitzgibbon – Graduate
Mr. Seamus Murphy, Kerry Foods
Mr. Charlie O'Connell, Department of Agriculture and Food
Mr. Paul O'Connell, Veterinary Department, Cork County Council
Ms. Ruth Rice, PepsiCo
Mr. Tony Water

- 19.00 Meeting of Peer Review Group to identify remaining aspects to be clarified and to finalise tasks for the following day, followed by a working private dinner for members for the Peer Review Group.

Venue: Suite 1, Business Centre, Kingsley Hotel, Cork

Tuesday 15th February 2005

- 08.30 Convening of Peer Review Group in Room 247, Food Science & Technology Building, UCC
08.30 Professor Joe Buckley, Dept. of Food & Nutritional Sciences
08.45 Professor Charles Daly, Faculty of Food Science & Technology
09.15 Ms. Mary McCarthy-Buckley, Head of Unit
09.45 Preparation of first draft of final report and agreement of arrangements for finalisation of the report of the PRG

12.00 Exit presentation made to all staff of the Unit by the Chair of the Peer Review Group summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group. The presentation is not for discussion at this time.

Venue: Room 247, Food Science & Technology Building, UCC

12.30 Lunch for staff and members of PRG

15.00 Externs depart