****

***Quality Promotion Committee 21-05-13***

***Agenda item***

Authors)

Professor Graham Allen, Chair Research and Innovation Committee

Ms Fiona Crozier, Director, Quality Promotion Unit

**Proposal for the conduct of the Review of the Quality of Research - A Research Evaluation Exercise in University College Cork**

02-05-13

**Submitted to Quality Promotion Committee** 21-05-13

**Action requested** QPC is asked to **approve** the paper as a model on the basis of which more detailed guidelines and metrics and a schedule will be developed.

**Background** This document results from discussion between the Quality Promotion Unit (QPU) and the Chair of the Academic Council Research and Innovation Committee (ACRIC) and is a remodelled version of the Interim report from ACRIC to Academic Council on the **Review of the Quality of Research - A Research Evaluation Exercise** (RQREE.) That interim report responded to consultation with Colleges and to decisions made by ACRIC in the light of the consultation. This paper now sets out the management and reporting lines for the review.

The purpose of this document is to set out the review process in broad terms. It is intended to provide an outline with a request for QPC to approve the outline and request further information and detail in the form of Guidelines for the Review.

The document is accompanied by a number of supporting appendices which cover:

A. RAI (Research Activity Indicators)

B. Terminology

C. Review Schedule

D. Institutional Schedule

**Resourcing:** discussions have been initiated with the Chief Financial Officer.

**UCC Review of the Quality of Research – An Evaluation Exercise**

**Governing principles**

* **The review period will be from 1st January 2008 to 31st December 2014 [see Appendices C and D]**
* **The review is a four stage process, involving a. self-assessment (Research Statement), b. peer-review, c. site visits by Chairs and disciplinary Vice-Chairs of Review Panels and d. reporting. This follows internationally agreed good practice for quality review processes.**
* **Each Unit under review will provide a Research Statement [see below].**
* **Those under review are classified as either Category A or Category B Researchers [See Appendix B].**
* **Category A and B staff will submit their 5 best research publications in the review period.**
* **The total research output during the period of Category A and Category B Research Staff will be disseminated through IRIS, CORA and/or made available through University administration.**
* **Work will be assessed as Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair or Poor [see Appendix A].**
* **Each Unit will be awarded an ORE (Overall Research Evaluation) of Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair or Poor [see Appendix A].**
* **Each Unit will receive a Review Group Report on the overall research submission.**
* **The process will be managed by QPU and the Steering Committee will provide institutional oversight of the management of the RQREE (see below).**
* **The ORE of each Unit will be employed in determining a portion of that Unit’s resource allocation under the RAM (see below).**

**Review Panels**

It is anticipated that there will be approximately 15 Review Panels.

A Review Panel will comprise disciplinary reviewers, disciplinary Vice Chairs for a group of disciplinary units and an overall Panel Chair. All three categories will be external to UCC. There will be two site visits for each Panel. The first involves Panel Chairs and occurs before the period of evaluation; the second involves Panel Chairs and disciplinary Vice-Chairs and occurs at the end of the evaluation period.

**External experts**

The selection of all reviewers will follow the established QR model whereby two external experts are sought to provide recommendations for reviewers for each panel. Appropriate information will be provided regarding the kinds of expertise required of reviewers.

**Disciplinary Reviewers**

Submissions which report research activity and output of disciplinary Units will be assessed by external, independent evaluators, appointed on the basis of their international research standing. These individuals are referred to as Reviewers. At least two Reviewers, appointed on the basis of their expertise in relevant areas identified by the Unit, will evaluate each submission. Two Reviewers will be appointed for every ten full-time academic researchers in a Unit. Units will be asked to confirm that the Reviewers recommended by the external experts are appropriate in terms of relevant criteria such as expertise in appropriate fields, balance between national and international agendas, and so on. Heads of School and, on appointment, Reviewers must indicate that there are no conflicts of interest in terms of UCC policies. Any issues regarding eligibility of particular Reviewers will be considered by the RQREE Steering Committee. The Chair of the Steering Committee and the Chairs of the Review Panels will approve the final list of Reviewers. Any additions to Unit lists made will be subject to the same conflict of interest process described above. The Chair of the Steering Committee and the Chairs of the Review Panels will also agree the appointment of Disciplinary Vice-Chairs and a list of reserve Reviewers. The Chair of the Steering Committee (from QPC) and V P Research and Innovation will have final sign off on the list of reviewers.

**Chairs**

Each Panel will be chaired by a leading academic, whose role will be to:

(a) ensure that the range of research activity and output over the review period is assessed in line with the criteria described in the Guidelines,

(b) confer with the University and other Review Panel Chairs in order to ensure that their Panel’s operation is consistent with the Guidelines for the review, and

(c) participate in University-led research stakeholder Panel discussions after the evaluation phase is complete.

Chairs have the academic responsibility for a Panel, and also participate in identification of potential reviewers. They are responsible for the reporting of data, and will participate in subsequent discussions regarding impact assessment and strategic development of Units.

Review Panel Chairs will meet in UCC before evaluation begins, in order to increase understanding of the procedures to be followed, encourage the adoption of a common approach across the exercise as a whole, and to increase their awareness of the research landscapes relevant to the exercise.

**Disciplinary Vice-Chairs**

Disciplinary Vice-Chairs will be responsible for co-ordinating the electronic evaluation of each disciplinary Unit. They will liaise with Panel Chairs and with the other disciplinary Reviewers to ensure consistency and the application of international standards in the evaluation. Vice-Chairs are involved in the site visit at the end of the initial evaluation period. Each panel will normally have up to 4 Vice-Chairs.

**Research Activity Indicators**

Reviewers will conduct their work electronically whenever possible, assessing a range of research activity against Quality Criteria which seek to place UCC research in relation to research in that discipline that is **Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair or Poor** [the different research activity indicators are described in Appendix A].

**Scope of Research Assessed**

The research activity of two groups of researchers will be considered for each Unit: Category A and Category B researchers [See Appendix B for definitions].

**Research Statement**

RQREE submissions made by Units will include a Research Statement. The Research Statement will provide contextual information and a self-assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of research activity since the last review in 2008, details of the research strategy followed (including postgraduate research education, and action taken as a result of the Research Quality Improvement Plan drafted after the 2008-09 RQREE), the role played by overarching research themes and research associated with each, and a statement regarding the resources, facilities and Unit research environment. The Research Statement will be 5000 words long.

**Review Group Reports**

When evaluations have been completed, the Chair will draft a report based on a standard RQREE template, the contents of which should be agreed with Panel members. The draft is submitted to the Quality Promotion Unit and forwarded to the Head of the assessed Unit to be checked for factual accuracy before it is confirmed. Disagreements with regard to fact should be resolved with the RQREE Steering Committee before a draft is finalised.

**ORE (Overall Research Evaluation)**

The research activity indicators will be combined to provide an Overall Research Evaluation (ORE). The ORE for a Unit, a five-point rating based on the quality criteria, might be the only score published by the University, although detailed scores and a Panel Report would be available to the Unit. (ACRIC will present a paper to UMTO suggesting the mechanisms by which the ORE is to be employed in the distribution of resource allocation under the RAM.)

**Reporting**

As for all other Quality Reviews, the RQREE will formally report to QPC and will form part of that committee’s annual report to the Governing Body. Reports will also be considered by ACRIC and, thus, by Academic Council.

**Appendix A. Research Activity Indicators (RAI)**

**5 Levels of Research Activity.**

* Level 5 quality is research that is **EXCELLENT** by international disciplinary norms
* Level 4 quality is research that is **VERY GOOD** by international disciplinary norms
* Level 3 quality is research that is **GOOD** by international disciplinary norms
* Level 2 quality is research that is **FAIR** by international disciplinary norms
* Level 1 quality is research that **POOR** by international disciplinary norms

(Guidance on how the 5 levels correspond to the 6 Research Activity Indicators will be included in the overarching *Guidelines* which will be developed before the evaluation period begins.)

1. **Selected published output**

Panels will be required to rate each of the five selected research outputs for each Category A and B researcher. Each publication will be rated by two Reviewers. Ratings of all selected publications will be combined to yield a selected publications quality profile.

Quality Level criteria:

* **5:** Selected publication is EXCELLENT in terms of originality, significance and rigour by current international disciplinary norms
* **4:** Selected publication is VERY GOOD in terms of originality, significance and rigour by current international disciplinary norms
* **3:** Selected publication is GOOD in terms of originality, significance and rigour by current international disciplinary norms
* **2:** Selected publication is FAIR in terms of originality, significance and rigour by current international disciplinary norms
* **1:** Selected publication is POOR in terms of originality, significance and rigour by current international disciplinary norms

Amalgamation of the two ratings of each selected publication will produce a quality profile as shown below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Quality Level** | | | | |
|  | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **% of published output of Unit** |  |  |  |  |  |

1. **Total published output**

Two Panel members will be required to allocate an individual Category A or Category B researcher’s total research output in the period, identified on IRIS/CORA to one of five quality categories.

Quality Level criteria:

* **5:** Total publication output is EXCELLENT in terms of extent, diversity and quality by current international disciplinary norms
* **4:** Total publication output is VERY GOOD in terms of extent, diversity and quality by current international disciplinary norms
* **3:** Total publication output is GOOD in terms of extent, diversity and quality by current international disciplinary norms
* **2:** Total publication output is FAIR in terms of extent, diversity and quality by current international disciplinary norms
* **1:** Total publication output is POOR in terms of extent, diversity and quality by current international disciplinary norms

Amalgamation of the two ratings of each individual researcher will produce a quality profile as shown below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Quality Level** | | | | |
|  | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **% of researchers in Unit** |  |  |  |  |  |

1. **Research-related activities**

For the purposes of the RQREE ‘research-related activity’ is intended to capture activity within and beyond the Unit by individual or groups of researchers in the Unit. This includes seminar series, research-focused public engagement exercises, specialist training provision, collaboration, research mentoring, outreach activities, support for scholarly institutions, evidence of research-led teaching at all levels, etc. The evidence for this will be collated from individual’s IRIS profiles, and the contextual information supplied by the Unit.

Each member of the Panel is asked to give a single quality level for the collective research-related activities of the Unit based on their professional judgement referenced to the following quality level descriptors:

* **5:** Total research related activity is EXCELLENT in terms of extent, diversity and quality by current international disciplinary norms
* **4:** Total research related activity is VERY GOOD in terms of extent, diversity and quality by current international disciplinary norms
* **3:** Total research related activity is GOOD in terms of extent, diversity and quality by current international disciplinary norms
* **2:** Total research related activity is FAIR in terms of extent, diversity and quality by current international disciplinary norms
* **1:** Total research related activity POOR in terms of extent, diversity and quality by current international disciplinary norms

The modal (most frequently occurring) rating across reviewers will be taken as the research-related activity score. [The higher rating will be preferred where the distribution of ratings is multimodal.]

1. **Peer Esteem**

The purpose of this metric is to capture the overall scholarly standing of Category A and Category B researchers within the Unit, based on information presented in their IRIS profile. Evidence of peer esteem includes Fellowships, Honours, Invited Plenary Presentations at significant disciplinary conferences, service on appointment panels at other institutions, external examining, translation of works, etc., as well as significant research activity which occurred before the review period began (e.g. widely cited publication, international prizes awarded, etc). The rating given to an individual should reflect the level of the individual’s achievements across his or her research career as a whole.

Two reviewers will assess each individual researcher using one of the following ratings:

* **5:** Across their career to date, individual is EXCELLENT in terms of peer esteem by current international disciplinary norms.
* **4:** Across their career to date, individual is VERY GOOD in terms of peer esteem by current international disciplinary norms.
* **3:** Across their career to date, individual is GOOD in terms of peer esteem by current international disciplinary norms.
* **2:** Across their career to date, individual is FAIR in terms of peer esteem by current international disciplinary norms.
* **1:** Across their career to date, individual is POOR in terms of peer esteem by current international disciplinary norms.

Amalgamation of the two ratings of each individual researcher will produce a quality profile as shown below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Quality Level** | | | | |
|  | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **% of researchers in Unit** |  |  |  |  |  |

1. **Post-graduate research education**

Panel members are asked to each give a single quality level for the collective activities related to postgraduate training. This rating should reflect the professional judgement of the peer reviewers concerning the quality level descriptors provided, taking into account the number of students studying for research degrees, culture of supervision and support, and research training environment and opportunities available for research students within the Unit under review. The evidence considered will include a statement on postgraduate research submitted by the Unit, information from published Unit Web-pages, numerical data from university offices regarding completion rates, completion times, etc.

Each member of the Panel is asked to give a single quality level for the collective research-related activities of the Unit based on their professional judgement referenced to the following quality level descriptors, which should summarise the overall culture and standard of postgraduate research education present:

* **5:** Postgraduate research education is EXCELLENT by current international disciplinary norms
* **4:** Postgraduate research education is VERY GOOD by current international disciplinary norms
* **3:** Postgraduate research education is GOOD by current international disciplinary norms
* **2:** Postgraduate research education is FAIR by current international disciplinary norms
* **1:** Postgraduate research education is POOR by current international disciplinary norms

The modal (most frequently occurring) rating across reviewers will be taken as the research-related activity score. [The higher rating will be preferred where the distribution of ratings is multimodal.]

1. **Research income**

Each member of the Panel is asked to give a single quality level for the collective research-related income of the Unit based on their professional judgement of the research area, taking into account the Research Landscape relevant to researchers in Ireland as described in the briefing documents provided. The research income data considered should be provided to the Unit from central sources and should reflect income from research related consultancy, studentships, as well as more traditional sources of research income. [In the case of collaborative grants involving several institutions, only the income awarded to UCC should be considered, but the role as co-ordinator etc, might be reflected in Research Related Activity]

**5:** Total research income is EXCELLENT given the research funding levels for this and cognate disciplines available to researchers in Ireland.

**4:** Total research income is VERY GOOD the research funding levels for this and cognate disciplines available to researchers in Ireland.

**3:** Total research income is GOOD giventhe research funding levels for this and cognate disciplines available to researchers in Ireland**.**

**2:** Total research income is FAIR give**n** the research funding levels for this and cognate disciplines available to researchers in Ireland**.**

**1:** Total research income is POOR give**n** the research funding levels for this and cognate disciplines available to researchers in Ireland**.**

The modal (most frequently occurring) **r**ating across reviewers will be taken a**s** the research-related activity score. [The higher rating will be preferred where the distribution of ratings is multimodal.]

**Appendix B Terminology**

**Category A Researcher:**  These staff are full-time academic staff members and PIs of a Unit during the period.

**Category B Researcher:** These are staff whose research is identified during the review period as belonging at least in part to the UCC Unit under review. They may comprise:

Emeritus Professors;

Staff who were category A researchers during some but not all of the review period;

Post-Doctoral Fellows on an independent research grant;

Senior Post-Doctoral Fellows on an independent research grant;

Research Fellows;

Senior Research Fellows;

Adjunct research staff

Clinical research staff

Research professors

A census of units will be carried out in September 2014, at which point units will be asked to bear in mind that, if the number of staff declared in category B means that the number of reviewers required to carry out the work would exceed the budget, then those numbers will have to be reviewed.

**Chair of Review Panel**. Chairs have the responsibility for a Review Panel. They are responsible for the reporting of data, and participate in subsequent meetings regarding impact assessment and strategic development of Units. On-site briefing of all Review Panel Chairs, before the evaluation of submissions begins, will help with respect to the consistency of application of the Guidelines across Review Panels, and facilitate understanding of the institutional agenda and Irish research landscape, including, where relevant, the international research context.

**Disciplinary Vice-Chair**. Each disciplinary Unit under review will have a Vice-Chair to oversee the work of the reviewers involved in that discipline (Unit), to liaise with the Chair of the Review Panel and to be involved in the second of the two site visits.

**ORE (Overall Research Evaluation)**. An Overall Research Evaluation is calculated by combining all of the scores of the Research Activity Indicators, in a way that yields a single number from the whole numbers 1 through 5.

**Review Panels.** A Review Panel comprises disciplinary Vice Chairs for a group of disciplinary units and an overall Panel Chair. They are agreed by a consultative process and finalised by the Steering Committee in autumn 2013.

(ACRIC will present a framework document on the nature and possible composition of these Review Panels to Colleges and QPC).

**RAI (Research Activity Indicator):** There are 6RAIs designed to evaluate the individual and Unit-based research activity over the review period. They are: 1. Selected published output; 2. Total published output**;** 3. Research-related activities;4. Peer Esteem; 5. Post-graduate research education; 6. Research Income [See Appendix A].

**RQREE Steering Committee:** this Committee consists of the Vice-President for Research and Innovation, the Registrar, the Director of QPU and the Chair of Academic Coucil Research and Innovation Committee. An independent member will also be included. It has the following terms of reference:

* The SC will oversee the development and implementation of the RQREE;
* It will provide guidance with regard to operation;
* It will have final approval of the appointment of reviewers, chairs of panels and disciplinary vice-chairs;
* It will sign off documentation such as Guidelines for the review and the final published outcome;
* It will serve as an avenue for appeal by Units.

**Review Panel Reports:** When evaluations have been completed and aggregated, Review Panel Chairs draft reports based on a RQREE template which is formally submitted to the institution, via QPU. The draft would be submitted for checking of fact to the Head of assessed Unit, before it is confirmed. Disagreements with regard to fact should be resolved with the RQREE Steering Committee before a draft is finalised.

**Reviewer:** Reviewers will evaluate the evidence submitted for a Unit using only the scoring scheme identified, along with at least one other reviewer for that Unit.

**Appendix C Schedule**

We envisage the following schedule will need to be closely adhered to in order to have completed the RQREE process in early 2015.

* **2013**
  + **May 2013 Proposal on the operation of the review approved by QPC**
  + **UMT(O) scrutiny of proposal**
  + **Chair of ACRIC brings revisions to document back to AC June 2013 meeting**

**July to December 2013:**

Units to be agreed

August 2013: recommendations sought for external experts sought from units;

September 2013: External experts nominated, approved by Steering Committee and contacted.

*Steering Committee approves electronically in September*

Long list of Reviewers, including indications of possible Chairs, to be provided by external experts;

Long list of reviewers to be sent to Units for declaration of conflicts of interest;

November 2013: nominations for reviewers agreed by units (any conflicts of interest noted and acted upon) and signed off by Steering Committee. Chairs approved by Steering Committee. Guidelines for exercise approved by Steering Committee.

*Steering Committee meeting in November.*

November 2013: Chairs of panels approached/appointed.

December 2013: Panel Chairs are sent the long list of panel members.

December 2013/January 2014: Chairs send back their views on panel members and disciplinary vice chairs.

**2014**

January 2014: Views of chairs on panel members and disciplinary vice chairs are approved by the Steering Committee and are approached and appointed.

*Steering Committee meeting in January.*

* + **September 2014** Census of Units, Review Panels and staff
  + **October/November 2014** Meeting in UCC of Review Panel Chairs with Steering Committee
  + **31st December 2014** End of period under review
  + **31st December 2014** Completion and Submission of Research Statement
* **2015**
  + **31st January 2015** Submission of electronic and hardcopy items for review
  + **31st January 2015** Submission of data appendix, derived from UCC records, finance, data warehouse, etc.
  + **March/April 2015** Evaluations Completed
  + **May/July 2015** Chairs of Review Panels visit UCC for meeting with REE Steering Committee and Disciplinary Vice-Chairs (along with HoCs, ACRIC)
  + **September 2015** Release of REE Outcomes, including ORE and Review Panel Reports