

## University College Cork

### Academic Quality Review (Periodic)

#### *Making Good Practice More Visible*

#### Outline of a Good Practice Case Study approach

#### **Introduction and Summary Proposal**

The UCC model of academic quality review encourages self-evaluation on the quality of the student learning experience and academic standards for taught provision, with an enhancement emphasis.

1. In the third cycle of academic quality review, all disciplinary areas engaging in review from 16/17 onwards will be encouraged to identify and include a **good practice case-study** as part of the self-evaluation process.
2. This case-study will form part of the Self-Evaluation Report and will be published as part of the follow-up to academic quality review.

Identifying good practice is a vital facet of enhancement focused self-evaluation, requiring active consideration of the practices which are working particularly effectively in a School or academic unit, and ultimately highlighting and sharing these as part of the academic quality review process. It is also an opportunity for disciplinary areas and the University to make visible the varied range of activities and initiatives directed towards providing an excellent student learning experience. This enhancement led approach accords also with prevailing external policy expectations, which emphasise a student-centred approach to teaching, learning and assessment.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Why does good practice matter?**

Acknowledging and celebrating good practice demonstrates a mature approach to quality where the outcomes of self-evaluation balance successes alongside issues identified for further development. At the level of the School or academic unit, it allows showcasing of activity to academic peers, students and colleagues across the university and also externally. It also provides the opportunity for peer learning and the potential to encourage ongoing innovation and development within the university community, as a part of a wider institutional enhancement ethos.

#### **What is meant by good practice?**

It is important to note that the term good practice, as opposed to best practice, is deliberately chosen. This is because good practice acknowledges:

- the variety and diversity of student learning contexts
- the range of disciplinary cultures and expectations
- limitations of transferability as “what works” in one setting may not be transferable directly for another setting

Importantly, good practice is identified by each academic area according to the most relevant and

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<sup>1</sup> The Yerevan Communique (May, 2015) which declared that ‘Enhancing the quality and relevance of learning and teaching is the main mission of the EHEA’ [http://media.ehea.info/file/2015\\_Yerevan/70/7/YerevanCommuniqueFinal\\_613707.pdf](http://media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/70/7/YerevanCommuniqueFinal_613707.pdf). The accompanying revised European Standards Guidelines (2015) [http://www.engq.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG\\_2015.pdf](http://www.engq.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf) and QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)

meaningful measures and examples in their disciplinary area.

Nevertheless, broad characteristics of good practice are likely to encompass approaches that are deliberative and sustained in their focus on enhancing the quality of the student learning experience. Consequently, the impact of the good practice can be identified and described.

### **What is the good practice case-study?**

In summary the good practice is something that a School is particularly proud of and considers that it does really well. The case-study approach sets out to describe the good practice activity in terms of its origin, purpose, design, implementation and review. It provides information about the particular context, motivations and other factors which influenced its formation. The case-study may be prospective, current or retrospective recognizing that the stages of development of good practice are dynamic and part of an overall enhancement ethos. The range of good practice case studies can be inclusive of the design of curricula; student support; learning spaces; learning and assessment approaches; teaching approaches; technological innovation and engagement of students; strategic planning for enhancement of the student experience. This is an indicative rather than prescriptive list.

Overall the case-study is a synoptic account of the practice, 3-4 pages, or a digital or other artefact (such as video, podcast, blog), which illustrates its scope and impact in terms of enhancing the quality of the student learning experience. The description of the case study should be accessible to a range of audiences and allow the academic unit to illustrate and disseminate its good practice as a central part of its quality enhancement activities.

### **How will good practice case-studies be used?**

In the case of each School or academic unit, the good practice case-study will be published along with the Peer Review Group report, to illustrate the university's commitment to excellence in the student learning experience. In the institutional context increasing the visibility of good practices can provide a knowledge bank of exemplars for wider internal exchange to inform approaches to shared issues as well as facilitating the re-purposing of good practices in different disciplinary settings. Some case studies maybe submitted for higher education conference or journal publications.

### **How will Schools/academic units identify a good practice case-study?**

Within Schools there will be a range of good practices in operation and Schools are encouraged to acknowledge all of these in the process of self-evaluation and in arriving at a shared view on a particular example to be the focus of the good practice case-study.

Identifying a good practice case study might ideally follow from the SWOT analysis and benchmarking processes as part of the self-evaluation procedure. The conduct of a SWOT analysis would allow particular strengths to be identified and refined further through discussion leading to identification of a defining case study of good practice which the academic unit would wish to include in its self-evaluation report. The key criterion for selecting a good practice case study is the academic unit's informed self-knowledge of its practices and a commitment to documenting and sharing the case in a peer context.

### **Developing the case studies**

Schools and academic units in writing up their case-study will be supported by QPU and the Office of the VP Teaching & Learning. At this early stage a universal template is not proposed, instead the emphasis will be on the presentation of case studies which describe analytically how the particular practice has / can have an impact on enhancing the quality of the student learning experience.

### **International examples**

Some examples of published case studies are listed below, these are at varied levels of aggregation and are purely indicative.

- Scottish Enhancement Themes work which draws on a national survey of good practice case studies <http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/publications/the-first-year-experience-curriculum-design-for-the-first-year.pdf?sfvrsn=18> (see from p61 onwards – the format is simple and evidence-based)
- UCL Institutional case studies  
<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/case-studies>  
This work comes out of an ongoing curriculum reform project “The Connected Curriculum” and some of the case studies come from internal Quality reviews
- University of Glasgow  
<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/learningteaching/resourcesforstaff/goodpracticeresources/examplesofgoodpracticeattheuniversityofglasgow/#enha>  
This institutional example lists in summary format identified good practices and as such acts as a form of sign-posting for further information.