University College Cork

Periodic Quality Review

Making Good Practice More Visible

<u>Outline of a Good Practice Case Study approach</u>

Introduction and Summary Proposal

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

1. In the third cycle of academic quality review, all disciplinary and functional areas engaging in review from 16/17 onwards are encouraged to identify and include a **good practice case-study** as part of the self-evaluation process.
2. This case-study needs to be included in the unit's the Self-Evaluation Report and, subsequently, 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 an academic or professional services unit, and ultimately highlighting and sharing these as part of the internal quality review process. It is also an opportunity for disciplinary and functional areas and the University to make visible the varied range of activities and initiatives directed towards providing an excellent service, directed or indirectly aimed at continually enhancing the 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.[1]

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 academic or Professional Services unit, it allows showcasing of activity to peers, colleagues, students and other relevant stakeholders 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?

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[1] 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. The accompanying revised European Standards Guidelines (2015) http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf and QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)

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 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 unit 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. For an academic unit, 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. Similarly, for a Professional Services unit, the range of good practice case studies can be inclusive of any initiative that benefits the service delivery and fulfilment of the functional area's remit.

Overall the case-study is a synoptic account of the practice, 4-5 pages, or a digital or other artefact (such as video, podcast, blog), which illustrates its scope and impact in terms of enhancing service delivery, either directly or indirectly impacting upon 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 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 settings.

How will units identify a good practice case-study?
Within units there will be a range of good practices in operation. They 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 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
In writing up their case-study units under review will be supported by the Quality Enhancement Unit and the Office of the VP Teaching & Learning. A guidance document and template for the redaction of a Case Study of Good Practice is available at the QEU website and accessible through the following link:

https://www.ucc.ie/en/qeu/guidelines/

For both types of units – academic and professional services - the emphasis will be on the presentation of case studies which describe analytically how the particular practice has/can have an impact on enhancing service delivery, the fulfilment of the functional area remit and, ultimately, 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.