

Background to the IRIU Process

Under Section 35 of The Universities Act, 1997, Irish universities were required to establish and implement procedures for quality assurance and arrange for a review of the effectiveness of these procedures "from time to time and in any case at least every 15 years." In 2002, the governing authorities of all seven universities authorised the establishment of the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) and delegated to the IUQB the function of arranging regular reviews of the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures, which are institutional in their scope. The IUQB operated an institutional review process every five-six years. The Institutional Review of Irish Universities (IRIU) process was designed by the IUQB to confirm whether Irish universities were compliant with the requirements of (i) Section 35 of The Universities Act, and (ii) consistent with the Part One requirements of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2005 (ESG). The IRIU process is undertaken by a team of six independent national and international reviewers selected by the IUQB Board.

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012) commenced on 5th November 2012 and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established on 6th November 2012. On that day, Section 35 of The Universities Act (1997) was repealed and QQI took over responsibility for the external quality assurance review of the universities. In the transition period following establishment, in accordance with Section 84 of The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012, QQI continues to operate in line with the requirements of the IUQB Memorandum of Association, 2006.

Background to the University

University College Cork (UCC) was founded as Queen's College Cork in 1845 and became a College of the National University of Ireland in 1908. Under The Universities Act 1997, it was designated as a Constituent University of the National University of Ireland and awards degrees in its own right. The University is located in Cork close to the city centre and is focused around the original Quadrangle Building opened in 1849.

UCC is the third largest university in the State. Its student population of over 18,000 represents an increase of 16 per cent over the seven years since the last institutional review. International students account for about 12 per cent of the current student population. UCC draws the majority of its students from the Munster region. UCC is one of the largest employers in Cork City and its economic impact is considerable.

Since the last institutional review, the number of graduate and doctoral students studying with UCC has increased very substantially and is projected to grow further, with a particular emphasis on doctoral students.

The University has a well-established partnership with Cork Institute of Technology that enables joint programmes to be offered, some leading to joint awards. UCC has established educational collaborations and student exchanges with other partners in Ireland, in the USA, the European Higher Education Area (under the Bologna Process) and in China, Singapore, Africa and South America. With the National University of Ireland Galway, UCC has also entered into a partnership with a private higher education institution in Malaysia to develop a medical school there.

UCC has been successful in attracting external research income and has made substantial investments in its physical and research infrastructure. The University hosts several of Ireland's leading international research institutes, centres and units. In 2009, UCC undertook a ground-breaking Research Quality Review that has confirmed its research strengths and identified areas for further development.

The Review Team

The review was conducted by the following team of six reviewers, trained by QQI on 8th November 2012. The Planning Visit to UCC was undertaken on 9th November 2012. The Main Review Visit was conducted by the full team from 10th -13th December 2012.

Professor Jonathan Osmond,
Former Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students,
Cardiff University, Wales, UK (*Chair*)

Dr Anne Martin,
QA Consultant, Former Deputy Vice Chancellor & Vice
President (Academic), Deakin University, Australia

Professor Roger Downer,
Former President, University of Limerick

Ms Andrea Blaettler,
Studying a Political Science and Philosophy BA at the
University of Lucerne, Switzerland

Dr Don Thornhill,
Chairman of the National Competitiveness Council, Ireland
and Chairman, Hibernia College

Dr David Cairns,
Director, Quality Assurance Research for Higher Education
Ltd and Former Assistant Director, Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education (QAA) UK (*Co-ordinating Reviewer*)

Review Team Conclusions

Based on the Review Team's evaluation of the Institutional Self-Assessment Report, supporting documentation and meetings conducted during the Main Review Visit, the Team found sufficient evidence to confirm:

CATEGORY	KEY REVIEWER FINDINGS
Statutory Requirements	The Review Team concluded that the University's activities are compliant with statutory requirements.
European Standards	The Review Team concluded that the University's activities are consistent with the European standards.
National, European and International Best Practice	The University is taking account of national, European and international best practice.

Review Team Commendations*

The Team found sufficient evidence to commend the following examples of good practice for further promotion internally, nationally and internationally:

1	UCC's productive relationship with the external Members of its Governing Body who are alert to their roles and responsibilities and committed to the University's continuing success.
2	The design and implementation of the Research Quality Review (RQR) as an instance of good practice worthy of wider emulation, and the conduct of the RQR which was a remarkable exercise that has acted as a significant stimulus to UCC's work as research institution, and for the energetic way the University has followed up the Review.
3	The commendable loyalty of staff in its support services and the way they have enabled UCC to continue to provide good levels of support for students.
4	The progress its staff are making towards establishing research-led teaching as a normal expectation, assisted by the no less commendable work of Ionad Bairre and NAIRTL.
5	The introduction of uLink, its peer support and mentoring programme for first-year and other students.

Review Team Recommendations*

The Team found sufficient evidence to recommend the following activities to the University for attention and development:

1	Consider how projects in its Operational Plans that are linked to the findings and recommendations of Quality Review reports that have University-wide relevance can be more clearly identified, so that the Quality Review process can more clearly demonstrate its contributions to University-wide change and improvement.
2	Ensure that all development and operational aspects of its collaborations outside Cork, including those overseas, are subject to formal quality assurance procedures and governance that are at least as secure as those for its collaboration with Cork Institute of Technology, and that regular reports on current and planned collaborations are made to the Governing Body, Academic Council and senior managers.
3	Give close attention to securing greater consistency in the way its regulations are observed across the Colleges.
4	Ensure that student membership of all Quality Review, programme approval, and programme review panels is a feature of the next iteration of its quality arrangements.
5	Draw on the experiences of other higher education institutions in Ireland, and further afield in Australia and the UK, to improve response rates to its own institution-wide student surveys and, until the planned Irish National Student Survey comes into full operation, conduct its own Student Satisfaction Survey annually and rationalise and coordinate the student surveys that are conducted by Departments and Schools to reduce 'survey fatigue' among students.

**The five key commendations and recommendations are presented in the Summary Report. A comprehensive list of all commendations and recommendations made by the Review Team are presented in the Conclusions Section of the Full Review Report.*

QQI Board Ratification

The QQI Board received and considered the Review Team's report on the review of University College Cork at its meeting on 10th June 2013. The Board formally signed off the report for publication, having satisfied itself that the review process was completed in accordance with published criteria.

Further Information

The full University College Cork review report alongside the institutional response to the IRIU will be published in the Quality Reviews Catalogue at: <http://www.iuqb.ie/Reviews/>.

Further information on the IRIU review process, internal and external reviews of Irish Universities, and the range of quality assurance and enhancement activities undertaken by QQI and formerly by the IUQB can be found at: www.QQI.ie and www.iuqb.ie



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

www.QQI.ie