



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND, CORK

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT/QUALITY ASSURANCE

PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

(WITHIN THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND THEATRE)

ACADEMIC YEAR 2010 -11

Confidential

Date: 22nd March 2011

PEER REVIEW GROUP (PRG) MEMBERS

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1. Dr. Helen Phelan (Chair)	Irish World Academy of Music and Dance University of Limerick
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THE UNIT UNDER REVIEW: THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC AT UCC

The Department of Music - a component discipline of the recently formed UCC ‘School of Music and Theatre’ – is the academic unit reviewed in this report.

In the context of the on-going restructuring of colleges within UCC, and the re-classification of departments into schools and disciplines, there is, for the time being, some potential for confusion to arise with respect to the way that various entities and roles are named and referred to. Whilst this is likely to be clarified and resolved in the medium term at UCC level, the Peer Review Group (PRG) considers it to be a particular challenge for the discipline of Music in UCC on a wider level, not least because of the high profile of the Cork School of Music which has a similar-sounding name but is in fact part of the Cork Institute of Technology.

Another source of possible confusion at present (February 2011) is the fact that the position of Head of Discipline – previously referred to as Head of Department – is vacant. For this review, the PRG takes the view that day-to-day leadership of the discipline currently lies *de facto* with Dr. Mel Mercier who is also Head of the School of Music and Theatre. To avoid confusion here the term ‘Department’ is used to refer to the unit being reviewed, i.e. the

academic discipline of music only. Where the larger entity (which also includes Drama and Theatre Studies) is referred to, the term 'School' is used.

TIMETABLE OF THE SITE VISIT

The visit was conducted over two days 18th and 19th January 2011. The team was based at a meeting room in the River Lee Hotel. The visit was facilitated by Ms. Aoife Ní Néill of the Quality Promotion Unit in UCC. The final timetable is given in Appendix A.

The PRG considers that the timetable - although a full one - was well structured and appropriate for the tasks at hand. It is also considered that adequate time was available to meet all relevant people and visit the appropriate facilities. Any additional documents or other material requested by the team were made available in a timely fashion and all necessary adjustments to the timetable were handled efficiently and smoothly. For example, the PRG requested a meeting with a representative of the Office of Buildings and Estates and this was facilitated without difficulty

PEER REVIEW

Methodology

The PRG appointed Dr. Helen Phelan as chair and Mr. Brendan O'Sullivan as rapporteur. Other tasks were assigned in accordance with the recommendations of the Quality Promotion Unit (QPU). Each member of the group individually engaged with all aspects of the review process.

Site Visit: Day 1

The first formal day of the visit was hosted in the main by Dr. Mel Mercier (Head of School) and his staff. At the outset, the recent re-structuring of the Department and School was explained as well as the circumstances surrounding the current vacancy for the Chair in Music and a recent hold-up in appointing a Head of Discipline. This led on to a general discussion about the profile of the Department and its importance to the University and the city as well as a range of other matters concerning its strategic direction.

This initial meeting with the Head of School set the tone for the remainder of the visit. There was a clear welcome for the quality review and a keenness to ensure that the outcomes of the process would be acted upon by the Department, the College and the University as a whole. It was explained that the process of preparing the self-assessment report was in itself very helpful for identifying priorities for the Department and this strong engagement with the review was evident in all subsequent individual and group conversations with staff the contributions to which, without exception, were well-considered, reflective, frank and helpful.

Various issues surrounding the Music Building itself, its links to the main campus, and the facilities and equipment available were then highlighted in a comprehensive tour of the building.

This was followed by a series of meetings with undergraduate and postgraduate students without any staff members in attendance. Members of the PRG were highly impressed with these students who were found to be an extremely articulate, scholarly, engaged and able group of young people; a credit to their department, their university and the creativity of their learning environment.

The next meeting – again without staff members present - was with representatives of a number of stakeholder groups, all of whom demonstrated a deep insight into the quality of the work of the Department (as well as its provenance and development), its profile within the city and beyond, and the standard of its graduates (as evidenced in a range of different career settings). The final meeting on this first day - with Mr Con O'Brien, Vice-President for the Student Experience, was an opportunity to tease out with a member of senior University management some of the issues raised during the earlier meetings.

Site visit: Day 2

The focus on the second day was on senior University management beginning with a discussion with Professor Paul Giller, Registrar and Senior Vice-President Academic.

Professor Grace Neville, Vice-President for Teaching and Learning, and Professor Anita Maguire, Vice-President for Research and Innovation, - who both pointed out that they are currently reading themselves into their assigned briefs - showed an early keen interest in the work of the Music Department and awareness of both its importance to the University at a strategic level and a degree of sensitivity to the special nature of scholarship in the field of music and musicology. It was felt that this is significant especially in terms of how applied

research in this field is measured and assessed in university metrics and how it is valued in terms of staff progression.

This was followed by a meeting with the Professor Caroline Fennell, Head of College. This gave the PRG an opportunity to tease out a number of issues in relation to the Music Department's strategic role within the University, the governance and its particular importance to the College's own priorities in terms of enhancing its own presence and profile.

The PRG also met Mr. Cormac McSweeney of the Finance Office. This allowed the group to get a deeper understanding of the budgeting circumstances within UCC. A meeting with a representative of the Office of Buildings and Estates, Mr Niall McAuliffe, was also held.

The PRG members were heartened that the Head of College and all three vice presidents separately indicated a willingness to pay personal visits to the Music Department at an early date and - within their respective remits - to follow through on issues raised.

Completion of the Peer Review Group Report

Following these meetings, the initial version of the Peer Review Group Report was compiled collectively in draft format - with a focus on the main recommendations - and then brought to completion through the e-mail circulation of fleshed out versions of individual sections among the group. All members took part in final checking and sign-off.

OVERALL ANALYSIS

Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

It is felt that, broadly speaking, the SAR was concise and clear; that its aims and objectives were articulated well; and that there was a thorough engagement with the spirit of the evaluation process. The key concerns in the SAR are seen as being generally resonant with those areas of concern identified by the Peer Review Group in its own findings.

The SAR brings forward the rich diversity of offerings and achievements of the Department with a rare integrity and intensity of purpose. It is felt that the report articulates a generosity of

spirit, and a broad and inclusive approach to how a cutting-edge 21st century music school might be formulated.

However, the Peer Review Group is of the opinion that the report could have been much more strategic in its focus and that the overall mission and aims of the Department could have been articulated in such a way that they tie in more closely with those of the UCC Strategic Plan, the Strategic Plan of the College of Arts Celtic Studies and Social Sciences and, more crucially perhaps, with key aspects of National Strategic Cultural policy. This point is of particular significance for this Department because - in the opinion of the Peer Review Group - the performance and reputation of the Music Department are in unusually strong alignment with the core elements of these high-level decision-making instruments at University and National Level.

SWOT Analysis

It is considered that the SWOT analysis also engaged positively with the spirit of the review process and that its findings are consistent with the observed issues and priorities of the stakeholders. In some respects, it is considered that the analysis does not play up some of strengths that the Department obviously possesses (for example, the vibrancy and strength of the student body as well as the cultural profile of staff and researchers). Also, one of the terms that seemed to come up regularly in the visit - both from external stakeholders and senior University management - is that the Department is somewhat of a 'hidden gem' within UCC. Hence the need, perhaps, to include a more strategic dimension to the SWOT analysis. A more focused and extensive development of the issues raised and substantive issues in the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is also warranted. It would also benefit from a clearer and more analytical presentation of the links between these four aspects of the SWOT.

Benchmarking

In general terms it is considered that the reason for selecting the institutions chosen for comparison is not clear. On some levels indeed, they appear to be inappropriate comparators and it is noteworthy that none of them are institutions from the Republic of Ireland. The benchmarking element of the report also - as in the previous review process - limits itself to questions of resources. Whilst this may be understandable (and even helpful) in terms of pointing out deficiencies, the Peer Review Group considers this focus to be unfortunate because it does not draw out those relative successes that would show the UCC Music Department in a stronger light. Additionally, in presentation terms, if the three chosen

institutions were compared directly under consistent and similar headings a much more incisive analysis would have been achieved. On the whole whilst there was a good comparison of resources, this was a missed opportunity to analyse, reflect on and draw out the differences between the Department and appropriate peer institutions.

FINDINGS OF THE PEER REVIEW GROUP

Findings: The Self Assessment Report

It is considered that on the whole, the Self-Assessment Report is clear and comprehensive. The PRG commends the accuracy of information presented and the high level of engagement with the spirit of the review process in the production of this document. The appendices provide a wealth of detail across all the relevant headings although, in an effort to streamline future reporting, consideration could be given to making simple references to web-based documentation (e.g. extracts from the UCC calendar / website) rather than duplicating them in full.

The comments that follow are more specific thoughts of the PRG on the headings given to it by the Quality Promotion Unit:

Department/School Details:

The details are to the satisfaction of the PRG although a diagram showing the relationship of the Department to the University structures of Colleges, Schools and other Disciplines would have been helpful.

Department/School Organisation & Planning:

It is considered that the development of a transparent workload allocation model will assist in the ongoing discussions around teaching, research and administrative responsibilities. It is acknowledged that a university-wide model is currently under consideration and the PRG strongly urges the Department to work with the University authorities to bring forward such a model as a matter of urgency and to ensure that research and administration are included in the workload allocation.

Ideally, the financial statement included in this section should also include details of capital expenditure and a transparent calculation of FTE allocation so as to provide a comprehensive overview of the financial / budgetary context within which the Department is operating.

Teaching & Learning:

The details presented in the report were to the satisfaction of the PRG. The information provided on the breadth of theoretical, methodological, compositional and performance modules available, particularly within the undergraduate programmes, is resonant with the feedback received in meetings with students

Research & Scholarly Activity:

The PRG commends the articulation of key research specialisations (media theory, ethnography, cultural theory, performance, and composition) in this appendix and urges the Department to look to these specialisations as a point of departure for discussions concerning a review of undergraduate programmes, the articulation and promotion of the Department brand, and the development of specialist research clusters in both disciplinary and interdisciplinary research.

The PRG commends the Department's engagement in discussion around arts practice research. The PRG urges the Department to take a leadership role in the articulation of the full spectrum of possible research outputs for arts practice researchers.

Staff Development:

The PRG recommends that support be given to academic staff members who are interested in exploring ways in which their performance and teaching experiences may act as a point of departure for research.

External Relations:

It would be helpful to the Department if it were to get support to further articulate the impacts of their engagement with external energies. It would also be useful to present a profile of the employment/performance opportunities enjoyed by recent graduates (alumni), particularly in terms of employment opportunities, available to graduates in the wider arts community in Cork, nationally and internationally.

Support Services:

Several of the surveys included in this section indicated that aspects of the wider University support infrastructure (particularly those related to senior management) were 'not applicable'. This may be indicative of a wider sense of the separation between the Discipline of Music (reinforced by its physical distance from the main campus) and in some sense a lack of connection with the wider University body.

Departmental/School Co-ordinating Committee & Methodology employed in the preparation of the Self-Assessment Report:

The details were to the satisfaction of the PRG.

Findings: The UCC Department of Music

The Peer Review Group's experience of the UCC Department of Music, based on the Self Assessment Report and its meetings with staff, faculty and students, is of a committed, passionate and visionary unit. The Group considers the Department to have an international scope in terms of its student and staff profile, its reputation and its influence. It is of immense strategic and brand value to the University and the wider cultural sector.

The curriculum offerings are considered to be rich and diverse and the potential for postgraduate growth is seen as significant. In the opinion of the PRG the Department has the potential to be a national leader in arts practice research and in the articulation of performance and composition equivalences in terms of research outputs.

Notwithstanding the difficult economic environment, the RPG experienced a high level of energy and commitment from students, departmental staff and senior university management.

The PRG considered that the recent appointments of a new Head of School, a new Head of College, a new Vice President of Research and Innovation together with the Vice President for Teaching & Learning presents a timely opportunity for a new dialogue around the strategic importance of the Department in the context of new understandings around the recognition of the economic value of cultural activities and research.

These findings of the Peer Review Group are set in a context in which Music as an academic discipline has been going through a long process of introspection and reinvention. The traditional boundaries between conservatory-style training programmes and academic liberal arts degrees have become considerably blurred, and the range of study has broadened immensely in response to the scholarly and creative challenges and opportunities raised by cultural globalisation.

The PRG notes that the UCC Department of Music has been a leader in this process, and that in its ongoing development it provides one very compelling answer to the question of what a twenty-first century music department should be. Regardless of the challenges the Department faces, the Peer Review Group commends the staff for their vision in undertaking and continuing this process, and feel that this pursuit embodies the highest of scholarly and artistic ideals.

The following more specific findings of the PRG are set out using headings suggested by the University:

Governance

The PRG recognises the significant achievements in the areas of learning and teaching, research and contribution to UCC initiatives and to music in the University and the city, region and country. The PRG also notes the persistent narrative concerning ‘over-stretch’ or ‘over-extension’ and related issues of staff within Music.

The PRG also recognises the incomplete status / process of the appointment of a Head of Discipline and the disproportionate workload carried by the Head of School. Under the current circumstances and given the recent merger with Drama & Theatre Studies there is considerable pressure on the Head of School. The School and the discipline would benefit from the resolution of the appointment of Head of Discipline process to facilitate initiatives and to free the Head of School to address the strategic issues related to the recent merger.

The PRG finds that the School of Music & Theatre and the Discipline of Music were not accruing the significant and potential benefits from the application of strategic leadership. The PRG finds that the potential is great and that significant steps have already been undertaken by

the leadership of the School, but is of the view that greater focus on strategic interests could accrue further benefits.

Therefore the PRG considers it necessary that the new leadership face a number of decisions relating to:

1. The core mission and strategic focus of the discipline.
2. Issues relating to the breadth and depth of the curriculum, including the integration of more explicit levels in the undergraduate curriculum.
3. A rebalancing of the proportion of the undergraduate and postgraduate provision and opportunities.
4. A redefinition of, expectations from and communication with a variety of offices and bodies within UCC.
5. The introduction of transparent workloads with a view to focusing on the core strategic mission.
6. The rationalisation of academic administrative structures within the discipline and to take the opportunity of the benefits of the merger in designing the academic committee structures, perhaps considering the extension of the Learning and Teaching Committee, the membership of the Graduate Studies Committee, the Research Committee and perhaps the creation of a School Executive Committee in order to create synergies and spread the administrative load and to bring the creativity necessary to create a conducive environment to achieve the disciplines' full potential.

Staffing

In general the Department has an appropriate and diverse range of skill sets and competencies .The PRG acknowledges the issues the Department has faced because of ongoing vacancies, and the replacement of full-time posts with part-time or limited term ones. The PRG notes the broad range of specialisms represented in the staff, their profile as scholars and practitioners, and the benefit that this brings to the students, the University and the City. This School is clearly one of the most public faces of the University, and is playing a leading role in realising UCC's strategic goal of strengthening its 'external engagement and contribution to society', and its 'lead actions for achievement' to increase internationalisation.

The PRG wishes to emphasise that the Department suffers from significant staff morale problems due primarily to a perceived lack of care for the condition of their building and the perceived (and apparently real) lack of career progression and post graduate opportunities within the School. Enthusiasm for teaching was obvious, and this was confirmed by all student and stakeholder groups. The staff should be commended for their longstanding commitment in this area. Enthusiasm for research was somewhat mixed, with both traditional and practice-based researchers stating that they felt their research activity was misunderstood to some degree and in some cases under-appreciated within the Department, as well as outside it. Participation in and enthusiasm for other areas of university activity was notably lacking in many cases.

A particular issue in terms of staff morale was the lack of promotions: it appears that only one application for promotion to Senior Lecturer was successful within the Department over the last 20 years. This is a serious matter of concern for staff. There is a feeling that less traditional forms of research output, such as composition or performance, might not be accepted as valid for the purpose of staff progression and promotion. The Peer Review Group wishes to note the general level of open-mindedness towards this issue exhibited by the members of senior university management met during the review visit.

Whilst the criteria for progression across the merit bar (for University Lecturer) specifically recognise "professional practice or creative output", the Peer Review Group notes that the criteria for promotion to Senior Lecturer are different, however, recognising "written materials used in public performance", which would seem to rule out performance and possibly composition. Those for Associate Professor recognise "*creative works of international repute*" but not performance per se. It is considered that this inconsistency is unhelpful and breeds doubt.

It was clear from discussions with members of staff that many felt their careers had stalled, and some even felt insecure in their jobs. It would appear that the lack of senior staff positions will present serious strategic problems for the Discipline and indeed School if it is not addressed. The recent substantial progress toward the appointment of the Chair in Music is a positive move in this direction, but further strategic appointments within the Discipline (such as Senior Lecturers) will be necessary if the Discipline is to remain viable.

Through discussions with staff members and external stakeholders (many of whom had relationships with music at UCC which go back decades) it became clear that the Department had gone through a prolonged period of withdrawal in terms of its engagement with the wider university and city. The PRG acknowledges that the Head of School has made marked progress in reversing this trend, and wholeheartedly endorses his work in this area. It is, however, of vital importance that the staff as a whole also work to increase positive engagement, as there is a very real risk that the current progress will be undermined if the staff do not support this. However understandable the currently low morale may be, the Department and staff cannot move forward in a viable fashion if they do not collectively work to change this culture of isolation and withdrawal. The potential benefits of participation to the unit are great, and it is also important as one criterion for promotion, etc. The PRG acknowledges that the College and wider University can and should play a role in bridging this gap as well, and that improvements on other fronts cannot help but have a positive effect in this area.

Workloads

Through the details provided in the SAR, and through discussions with staff, the PRG was able to draw some general conclusions regarding workloads. Broadly speaking, staff contact hours (excluding individual tutorials) are not out of line with UCC norms (several individuals are below the 'normal' UCC load of 150 hours per year, which is also the minimum threshold for promotion), or indeed with what is typical in Ireland or the UK, but they are somewhat unevenly distributed. This is not necessarily cause for alarm, as Music as a discipline requires staff with a variety of focuses and specialisms, and some of this inconsistency doubtless has to do with general problems of workload distribution and continuing vacancies. In particular, the PRG notes that part-time salaried staff are carrying a higher number of contact hours than might be expected. In the absence of the application of a clear workload allocation model it is difficult to say to what extent this is compensated for, but to some extent this could be seen as a result of the choices taken to replace full-time posts with part-time ones. The dependence on hourly staff to deliver a significant portion of the unit's undergraduate teaching provision is also a concern. Were this to be cut it could easily make staff teaching workloads untenable, or render the undergraduate programme non-viable in its current form.

Administrative loads are more difficult to assess without a more detailed workload plan. The PRG notes that administrative support has not grown in parallel to student numbers and the unit's growth of activity, and that this, together with the continuing vacancies and lack of senior appointments, has clearly placed an undue administrative burden on the unit. The great

bulk of this burden falls upon senior staff, in particular the Head of School; doubly so in that he is the *de facto* Head of Discipline. The PRG agrees that depending on academics to a large extent for administrative tasks is neither efficient nor cost effective. The same holds true for low level events support. The lack of support in the area of events management is particularly notable, as it is out of step with staffing at peer institutions both within Ireland and abroad, and is particularly surprising given the broad range of events the School now presents and the considerable benefit that accrues to the University from them.

Research time was not factored into workload allocation models. However, in discussions with individual staff, it emerged that most staff did manage to take their weekly term-time research day with reasonable consistency. Given that research output as a whole is also reasonable, if not exceptional, it would appear that there is not a general problem with access to research time.

Accommodation

The PRG finds that there are a number of serious issues in terms of accommodation for the Department. These stem from the many maintenance and security issues associated with the music building. As it is a historic building, this presents a range of day-to-day challenges, especially for a Department with such specialist requirements as this one (in terms of upkeep of specialist equipment, humidity and temperature control needs, soundproofing and other issues).

Another major issue relates to physical access to and from the building and its physical links to and from the main campus and other Departments.

Financing

It is imperative to recognise that the Discipline of Music is a net contributor to the College.

The PRG found that a number of difficulties and resource issues could be ameliorated through a systematic yet staggered release of funds to the School. The PRG were informed of developments relating to the transfer of funds to the College of ACSSS that could in turn be used to redress pressing issues from the net contributions made by Music.

The PRG recognises that Music needed to draw up a list of priorities, to attach specific costings and to negotiate a schedule to implement the initiatives relating to refurbishment, instrumentation, building works, access and health and safety issues with the offices responsible.

The PRG recognises that the Discipline could benefit financially and in terms of addressing the workloads issue from a reconsideration of the balance of provision between the undergraduate and the postgraduate programmes. In this regard, the Discipline of Music might benefit from an exploration of ways in which it could accrue the full benefit of its current FTE weighting.

The PRG considers it necessary to indicate a similar exploration of options and the potential to generate further non-exchequer income especially relating to non-EU students and philanthropy.

The PRG recognised that the adverse financial position had a negative impact on staff research opportunities, conference attendance and research times.

Communications

Music in UCC is very positively perceived internally and externally. Staff are recognised for their academic and cultural value and students are recognised as bringing fresh energy and dynamism to the Campus. However, it is important that the research and scholarly work of staff and students be promoted alongside the performance event/lecture element to avoid any possibility of the School being perceived solely as the provider of entertainment and being valued primarily for this contribution. The PRG noted the importance of University support for the scholarly work of the Department as well.

Communication within the Department of Music: Regular fortnightly staff meetings are held; Good engagement and dialogue exist between staff and students at an informal level; students believe staff are responsive and are very available to them; students recognised that they have a privileged and regular access to staff formally and informally

Communication with the Wider University: Fuaim series/lectures/concerts/events are excellent and enable Music within UCC to be very visible to staff and students and to external stakeholders. It is recognised that the relatively remote location of the Department, coupled

with a lack of formal performance space, presents challenges for regular and easy showcasing and communication internally

Communication with City/Nationally/Internationally: Music at UCC is recognised as being a significant contributor to the cultural life of the city, region and country; Staff are recognised as practitioners and cultural operators; Stakeholders recognise the energy and enthusiasm of staff for collaboration and engagement; Fuaim series/lectures/concerts/events are very highly regarded and they energise and engage staff, students and the public. They fulfil a key ambition of the University to engage with its context.

Teaching and Learning

There were some issues with consistency in terms of the delivery of undergraduate teaching. Students expressed particular concerns about the nature of module materials provided, and the timeliness and extent of feedback, and noted that module feedback forms were not always used. Students acknowledged that significant progress had been made in this area, but that problems are ongoing, and for some members of staff turn-around times for marking far exceeded University guidelines (as much as an entire academic year). This is clearly unacceptable and needs to be addressed. Some students were unsure of what effect their module feedback forms had, if any. While we were not able to pursue this question in detail it is clear that the unit could benefit from the establishment of a formal annual review process that would track and implement changes arising from student module feedback forms.

It is notable that the PRG and all stakeholders are in broad agreement that the breadth and diversity of the undergraduate module provision constitute a great strength and advantage. The PRG found the students to be strikingly articulate and insightful, and passionate about the broadening aspects of their learning experience. That said, questions surrounding a perceived lack of depth in the programme arose repeatedly, in examination of the curriculum and in discussions with internal and external stakeholders. Sometimes this took the form of concerns about graduate employability. There was broad agreement amongst the PRG and stakeholder groups that increased breadth and diversity did not necessarily result in a corresponding increase in quality, and that some stronger core requirements (perhaps in streams corresponding to the unit's research strengths) and greater use of prerequisites might be of benefit. The emphasis the unit placed on the diversity of its undergraduate provision appeared at times to be at odds with the goal of increased activity in the areas of research and postgraduate teaching. For these reasons the PRG is of the view that the scope and makeup of

the undergraduate curriculum should be reconsidered (see recommendation 23 below). The PRG wishes to stress that greater depth (for instance through 'streams', the use or pre-requisites, etc.) could be of benefit to students and the Department in general. The PRG considered that where greater depth and focus should be developed is really a matter for the Department to decide. The PRG notes that significant progress has been made in this area, and stresses that, if continued, this could have numerous benefits in terms of finances, reputation, etc.

Research

The 2009 Research Quality Review noted evidence of a growing research culture in the Discipline with some world-leading outputs of an internationally excellent standard. The unit is to be commended for its commitment to research as a core activity, even while it is transitioning from a long tradition as a teaching-intensive institution.

Staff research is supported through the provision of staff research days, but large amounts of administrative responsibilities are reported as adding strain to the workload. The SAR notes that research and creative work is not factored into the statement of workloads provided. This may have the unintended effect of creating the perception that research is not a core activity, or of placing it in a position where it has to be 'fitted in' to other, fixed and allocated responsibilities. Staff research is also coming under strain due to the current freeze in funding support for conferences and related events. The PRG were strongly of the view that research and other scholarly activity must be factored into any calculation of workload, whilst recognising the inherent difficulties in doing this.

The PRG noted the ongoing engagement of the Discipline with the facilitation of an environment to promote arts practice research among practitioners. There is evidence of critical engagement with this process from faculty, who are working to develop an understanding of arts practice research and its potential outputs, suited and adapted to the specific needs and research desires of faculty.

Furthermore, the unit has been successful in communicating the importance of including performance and composition in research outputs to the wider University, as evidenced in its inclusion in documentation related to the promotions process (see above). The Discipline has committed to continued engagement with national and international colleagues, not only in arts

disciplines, but also with other disciplines engaged in practice-based research, towards the articulation of research outputs in practice research.

While there is a notable increase in activity at the postgraduate level since the last review, with the creation of three new taught Masters programmes and an increase in PhD numbers, the overall postgraduate numbers remain small for a unit of this size. Pedagogical, strategic and financial indicators support the rebalancing of the unit's offerings towards an increase in postgraduate numbers and a rationalisation of undergraduate offerings. An increase in postgraduate numbers is also predicated on a greater stability in numbers and levels of full-time faculty (e.g. full-time posts have been converted to part-time posts in recent years and the number of senior appointments in the Discipline is far less than it should be for a unit of this size and impact) as well as scholarship funding. At the time of writing, no scholarship support is available internally to postgraduate students of music, though the Head of College indicated that the redevelopment of a scholarship fund at College level was under review.

Implementation of recommendations for improvement made in Peer Review Group Report arising from last quality review

There is clear evidence that the Discipline of Music has taken on board the majority of recommendations made by the PRG during the last quality review. While there is still ground to cover in terms of the development of a postgraduate energy, several steps have been taken in this direction, including the creation of three new taught MA programmes since the time of the last review. The Discipline has engaged in a rationalisation process concerning undergraduate offerings, which should assist in the process of addressing faculty workloads and supporting research.

It is striking, however, that several of the recommendations made during the last review will reappear in this current report. These include:

- Concerns around the impact of the remoteness of the building from the main campus in terms of student experience.
- Concerns around security in the building.
- Concerns regarding disability access to the building.
- Concerns regarding the level of technological provision in the building.
- Concerns around the development of graduate studies.

- Concerns regarding library provision.
- Concerns regarding the clerical-administrative workload of faculty and staff.
- Concerns regarding the level of funding and resourcing allocated to the promotion and coordination of public music events.

The reappearance of so many issues six years later is a cause of concern both in terms of the lack of an institutional-level response, as well as its impact on the integrity and value of the Quality process itself. The PRG noted that implementation of these recommendations requires additional resources and does not lie solely, or indeed, primarily with the Department.

Developments and actions taken since the last quality review undergone by the Department/School.

It is a matter of grave concern to the PRG that the progress report of 2006, referring to the last Quality review in 2004, notes that 13 of the 24 recommendations of the PRG were listed as ‘not implemented’. These include recommendations that:

- the difficulties for students arising from the remoteness of the Music Building from the main campus should be significantly reduced.
- the Music Building should be a safe place, properly secured for its stakeholders.
- the Music Building should have proper access for people with disabilities.
- the Discipline should be at the cutting edge of technological developments.
- there should be a marked improvement in library provision.
- the clerical-administrative workloads of academic staff be reduced.
- a new scheme of instrumental / vocal tuition whereby quality-control is exercised by the Discipline should be established.
- the undergraduate programme be reconsidered.
- the Disciplines resources should be focussed more on developing graduate studies and research rather than on the undergraduate programme.
- efforts be made to reduce staff teaching and administrative loads.
- a Chair in Ethnomusicology be created.
- the library substantially increase its holdings in scholarly literature in music
- the University engage with the Discipline in improving access from the bridge to the Music Building.

Notwithstanding some repetition in these recommendations (e.g. concerning academic staff workload and access to the building), as well as the issues which have been addressed since this report was written in 2006 (e.g. development of graduate programmes and some rationalisation of the undergraduate programme) there are an unacceptable number of issues which remain unaddressed during the seven years since the last quality review. Several of these appear in the recommendations made by the PRG below. The PRG noted that responsibility for implementation of the majority of the recommendations listed above lies with the University rather than the Department alone, and indeed in many instances implementation will require significant additional resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Recommendations for improvement made by the Department

The PRG fully endorses all the objectives stated by the Discipline in the SAR report and will supplement these with a number of additional recommendations below. These recommendations are made with a view to support and enhance the work that is ongoing in the Discipline. The PRG notes that five of the eight objectives stated in the SAR relate to concerns around the Music Building. This high proportion, coupled with the presence of similar concerns in the last quality review makes these matters of immediate concern.

Recommendations for improvement made by the Peer Review Group

The PRG recommends that

General

1. those outstanding matters recommended in the previous quality review be addressed and brought to finality.

Governance & Leadership

2. the appointment of the Chair of Music be expedited.
3. the Head of Discipline issue be resolved as a matter of urgency.
4. an appropriate structure of senior staff be established within the Department of Music to support the Chair, Head of Discipline and other staff.

5. in addition to the above recommendation, any vacancies at Senior Lecturer level at that might result from the appointment of the Chair and Head of Discipline ought to be filled at that level.
6. the Department adopt a strategic approach to its engagement with the College and University at various levels.
7. the Department re-draft its mission statement and set of operating objectives so that that they are more closely aligned with the strategic plan of the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences, the Strategic Plan of the University and national cultural and arts policies.
8. in re-drafting its mission statement and objectives, the Department focus on its 'Unique Selling Points', its brand values and a clear set of strategic priorities that have a regional, national and international horizon.
9. all academic staff in the department individually and collectively take responsibility– at the highest level – for advocating for and articulating the abilities, capacity and potential of the Music Department among other departments, disciplines, schools colleges and other University entities.
10. the Vice Presidential Offices of Research and Innovation, of Teaching and Learning, and of the Student Experience, together with the Head of College, make a joint response to the recommendations set out in this review and bring forward proposals for addressing those issues that within their remit with a particular emphasis on recognising and enhancing the role of the Music Department in promoting the University both regionally and worldwide.

Communication: the City/ National/International

11. a full-time Events Organizer / Communications officer be appointed to help plan, organise and facilitate the schools ambitious programme of events. Consideration could be given to making this appointment at a strategic level within the School of Music & Theatre, or at College level, in conjunction with the priorities of the Head of College.
12. the revised mission statement and objectives (see recommendation 8 above) be communicated at all appropriate levels including promotional material, the departmental website, College website and UCC International Students Office.

Communications: the Wider University

13. In accordance with the governance issues mentioned above, the Department develops a more focused and strategic approach to advocacy within the University community and to influencing other schools, decision makers, disciplines and units both in terms of enhancing the departmental profile at the highest levels and in terms of a broad outreach for joint or interdisciplinary research, teaching and practice with peer units and individuals within UCC.
14. the Head of School and key senior staff communicate more strategically and more regularly with decision makers at all levels of University structures and that staff participate where possible on all key working groups and assembly meetings at School, College and University level.

Communications: Internal within the School

15. consideration be given to making staff meetings more efficient and businesslike, i.e. as a decision making forum rather than a debating / discussion forum and that substantive and detailed matters be dealt with at committee level.
16. a Department wide system/process be established to analyse student feedback/reviews.
17. the Department enhance its positive relationships with its alumni and other student and graduate networks.

Staffing

18. the Department adopts a Workload Allocation Model as soon as possible, as this would provide clarity in terms of workloads, enable reconsiderations of the balance and nature of staff activity, and help facilitate discussions and negotiations with the University and College. This model should include research and should precisely account for administration.
19. the College and University prioritise additional senior appointments within Music, beyond the Chair of Music and Head of Discipline. It is the understanding of the Peer Review Group that strategic appointments can be made even within the current restrictions imposed by Government, and it is recommended that this be considered as an urgency requirement in order to secure the longer term viability of the Department of Music.

Teaching and Learning

20. the Department reconsiders the number of joint honours combinations being offered at undergraduate level with a mind to solving the issues of timetabling and transit between the building and the main campus.
21. the Department reconsiders its mission in terms of research strengths and develop programme-wide learning outcomes, with a mind to student exit trajectories and employability.
22. a rebalancing of student numbers in favour of postgraduates is achieved.
23. the Department continue its process of recasting the curriculum and give strong consideration to reducing the number of programmes and modules with the following points in mind:
 - a. Making gains in workloads, efficiencies, and maximising departmental FTE income;
 - b. Improving the consistency of quality for graduates and improving their employability;
 - c. Creating greater depth through the creation of a stronger core curriculum. This might take the form of multiple cores perhaps centred around research strengths / clusters in the areas of Media Theory, Ethnography, Cultural Theory, Performance and Composition.

Research

24. the Department establishes clear, prioritised research clusters - such as those noted in the SAR (media theory, ethnography, cultural theory, performance and composition) – and that these be articulated in the reconfigured mission statement and teaching and learning objectives recommended above.
25. the Department continues its engagement with the University in what has been a positive initial discussion about how its research activities, and specifically practice-based research activities, should be evaluated for purposes of research assessment and promotion.
26. the Department continues to support faculty in reaching their full research potential through the inclusion of research in a transparent and equitable workload allocation model and the development of support mechanisms for faculty interested in exploring practice-based research as a medium of publication.

27. the Head of College and Vice-President for Research & Innovation initiate a dialogue with the Discipline towards the establishment of clearer principles for assessing the entire spectrum of research in music.
28. that the Department explore the potential for increased numbers of postgraduate students.
29. the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences re-establishes its fund for postgraduate scholarships (as discussed with the Head of College) as a matter of urgency and explores means of supporting academic staff in attending research conferences and related events.
30. the Department initiates discussion with the Head of College and the Vice President for Research & Innovation towards the articulation of a research initiative exploring the cultural and economic impact of the arts in Ireland. This should be explored with reference to the cultural events coordinated by the Department for the public at the university, city, national and international level.

Finance

31. the Department prioritises objectives in line with its budgetary capacity.
32. the discipline-specific requirements be embedded in budget lines (including special building requirements, equipment, facilities etc.).
33. the Department explores options to accrue the full benefits of the FTE weighting for the purpose of income generation.
34. the Department identifies and examines priorities for the development of initiatives to raise non-exchequer funding streams for the ongoing development of the Department.

The Music Building

35. the Audits of Health and Safety, Disability / Access and Security be carried out and that the Head of School, Head of College and Head of Buildings and Estates agree a costed and phased implementation of the remedial works required.
36. a budget line be established by the College to meet the discipline-specific building requirements in the Music Building (including sound-proofing, temperature and humidity control in specified rooms etc).
37. a schedule of general repairs and maintenance to be prioritised, agreed, budgeted for and carried out.

Learning Environment

38. issues to do with access to and from the Music building (including links to the main University campus) be resolved and prioritised within the University's strategic plan.
39. full Wireless internet access be made available throughout the entire building as an immediate priority.
40. the deficiencies in computer laboratories need to be addressed.
41. Discipline-specific equipment needs be assessed and prioritised (e.g. Music Technology software / hardware, Instrument acquisition / maintenance / tuning, PA systems etc.).
42. the café / social area be improved, given the remote location and the lack of local facilities.
43. a more coherent and consistent approach to issuing front-loaded course outlines, early feedback, availability of materials, and evaluation needs to be implemented.
44. the traditional collections of pertinent books in the library were thin, yet the overall provision in other areas was deemed excellent.

APPENDIX A

Timetable for site visit for Department of Music

Monday 17 January 2011			
16.00	Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group. Briefing by Ms. Aoife Ní Néill, UCC Quality Promotion Unit. Final work schedule agreed and tasks assigned for the following 2 days. Views exchanged and identification of areas to be clarified or explored.		
21.00	Informal dinner for members of the Peer Review Group with Dr. Mel Mercier (Head of School) and Ms Carmel Daly, Department Administrator		
Tuesday 18 January 2011			
08.30	Convening of Peer Review Group. Transfer to Music Building		
08.45	Meeting with Dr. Mel Mercier, Head of School of Music and Theatre		
09.30	Group meeting with Departmental staff		
11.00	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <u>Private meetings with individual staff members. Group 1:</u> Dr Chris Morris; Mr. Paul O'Donnell Ms Carmel Daly; Dr. Melanie Marshall; Dr. Paul Everett; Mr. John Godfrey Dr Jeffrey Weeter </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <u>Private meetings with individual staff members. Group 2:</u> Ms Kelly Boyle; Mr John Hough; Ms Michelle Finnerty; Dr Derek Cremin </td> </tr> </table>	<u>Private meetings with individual staff members. Group 1:</u> Dr Chris Morris; Mr. Paul O'Donnell Ms Carmel Daly; Dr. Melanie Marshall; Dr. Paul Everett; Mr. John Godfrey Dr Jeffrey Weeter	<u>Private meetings with individual staff members. Group 2:</u> Ms Kelly Boyle; Mr John Hough; Ms Michelle Finnerty; Dr Derek Cremin
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14.15	Visit to core facilities of Department, escorted by Dr. Mel Mercier and Mr. John Godfrey of Department of Music		
15.00	<u>Representatives of 1st and 2nd Year Students:</u> Ms Katie Nora Dennison; Ms Michelle Foy; Ms Niamh Costello; Ms Catherine Gillespie; Ms Sile O'Brien; Ms Eimear O'Donovan; Mr Fiachra O Corragáin; Ms Claudia Schwab; Mr Alex Lough (visiting student from Wesleyan University)		
15.40	<u>Representatives of 3rd and 4th Year Students:</u> Ms. Sharon Bramers; Ms Tara Breen; Ms. Gillian Fenton-Leogue; Mr. Patrick O'Donnell;		

	Mr. Michael Ryan; Ms Grainne Blake; Mr Paul Hannon; Mr. Robert McDonnell; Ms Ide O’Sullivan; Mr. James Gray (Diploma in Irish Traditional Music); Ms Maria Wills (H Dip in Arts).
16.20	<u>Representatives of Graduate Students:</u> Ms Sinead Hanrahan; Mr Cian Heffernan; Ms Eva McMullan; Ms Estelle Murphy
17.00	<u>Representatives of stakeholders, graduates and employers.</u> Mr. John Fitzpatrick (Festival Director, Cork International Choral Festival); Mr. Adrian Gebruers (Carillonneur, St. Colman’s Cathedral); Mr. William Hammond (Cork Folk Festival); Mr. Danny McCarthy (artist and founder member of Triskel Arts Centre and the National Sculpture Factory and guest lecturer in various institutions); Ms Catriona Ni Shiochain (Past Graduate and School of Languages, Literature, Culture and Communication, University of Limerick); Ms. Margaret O’Sullivan (Graduate, cultural consultant).
18.30	Mr. Con O’Brien, Vice-President for the Student Experience
19.00	Meeting of Peer Review Group to identify remaining aspects to be clarified and to finalise tasks for the following day. Working private dinner.
Wednesday 19 January 2011	
08.30	Convening of Peer Review Group in the Tower Room 1, North Wing, Main Quadrangle UCC
08.45	Professor Paul Giller, Registrar & Senior Vice-President Academic
09.15	Professor Grace Neville, Vice-President for Teaching and Learning
09.35	Visit to UCC Library, meeting with Ms Margot Conrick, Head of Information Services and Ronan Madden, Arts & Multimedia Librarian, Q+1, Boole Library.
11.00	Mr. Cormac McSweeney, Finance Office
11.15	Professor Anita Maguire, Vice-President for Research & Innovation
11.35	Professor Caroline Fennell, Head, College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences
13.15	Mr. Niall McAuliffe, Capital Projects Officer, Buildings and Estates Office

13.30	Working lunch
14.30	Preparation of first draft of final report
16.30	Meeting with Dr. Mel Mercier, Head of School of Music & Theatre
17.00	Exit presentation to all staff made by the Chair of the Peer Review Group, summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group.
19.00	Working private dinner for members of the Peer Review Group. Finalisation of arrangements for completion and submission of final report.