

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND, CORK

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT/
QUALITY ASSURANCE

PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT

CENTRE FOR ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION
(ACE)

ACADEMIC YEAR 2012-13

Date: November 2012

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PEER REVIEW GROUP MEMBERS

<i>Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Role</i>
Professor John Benyon	<i>University of Leicester, UK</i>	Institute of Lifelong Learning
Dr. Bairbre Fleming	<i>University College Dublin</i>	Director, Adult Education Centre
Professor Fan Hong	<i>University College Cork</i>	Head, School of Asian Studies
Mr. P.J. O'Brien	<i>University College Cork</i>	SU Education Officer
Professor Per Anderson	<i>Linköping University, Sweden</i>	Associate Professor, Education and Adult Learning

TIMETABLE OF THE SITE VISIT

The timetable is attached as Appendix 1.

The timetabling was ambitious and at times the PRG struggled to keep to the schedule. The first day's timetable was particularly demanding. The hotel accommodation was pleasant and convenient and the room set aside for the PRG to work in over dinner was comfortable and proved very useful. The lunches provided for the PRG were poor. The PRG was pleased to have adequate time with groups of students who proved forthcoming and very informative.

PEER REVIEW

Areas of primary responsibility of each member of the Peer Review Group:

MISSION, OPERATIONS, VISION	Professor John Benyon (Chair)
FINANCES/ RESOURCES/ STAFFING	Dr. Bairbre Fleming
EXTERNAL RELATIONS/ ENGAGEMENT	Mr. P.J. O'Brien
RESEARCH AND IMPACT	Professor Fan Hong
QUALITY AND TEACHING & LEARNING	Professor Per Anderson
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SITE VISIT

The site visit was engaging, tightly timetabled, revealing and challenging. The limited time to meet key people sometimes made matters difficult while there were one or two occasions when there seemed to be a generous allocation of time for other groups. For example, there was quite a lot of time allowed for meeting stakeholders at the end of the first day when some of this time might have been better utilised elsewhere.

The Peer Review Group (PRG) was also conscious that there were stakeholders that were not included in the visit. For example the PRG did not meet staff working in allied areas of the University such as the Access Office. Nor did the group meet any academic colleagues from the colleges who are operating in partnership with ACE. The PRG met the ACE Co-ordinators, some of whom teach on some of the modules, and also a number of stakeholders who teach on ACE courses, but the latter were met in the context of the informal meeting with stakeholders at the end of the first day and this did not allow any formal consideration of teaching issues sitting round a table.

As noted elsewhere, the poor quality and late arrival of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) meant that the site visit was somewhat hampered by lack of information and inadequate preparation by members of the PRG. As a result, the PRG had to spend a disproportionate amount of time during their time in Cork attempting to understand and absorb the material that was only supplied right before, or even during, the site visit. More time was spent going through the SAR and appendices than might have been planned or indeed usual.

PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT

The PRG met on the first day at 4 pm and after discussion agreed that Professor John Benyon should act as Chair for the group. Various strands and themes were identified during the initial meeting and these were assigned to the various members of the group as set out above. The PRG then focused on those areas during the site visit, although other topics and issues were considered as appropriate. On the final afternoon of the site visit the group spent nearly two hours drafting the outline of the principal findings and recommendations. At 5 pm on the final day, these were presented to a meeting of the ACE staff. The PRG then worked on an initial draft of the Peer Review Group Report which was agreed before members of the group departed. It was also agreed that members of the group would add to and amend the report in an agreed sequence and that all changes and amendments would be agreed by the whole group before the Chair sent it to the QA Office in UCC.

OVERALL ANALYSIS

SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

The Peer Review Group was undoubtedly hampered in conducting this review by the lateness of the delivery of the Self-Assessment Report, the paucity of information it included, and its lack of critical analysis and reflection.

The PRG has no wish to seek to apportion blame or to engage in recriminations – but it must be noted that this was something of a missed opportunity as the PRG would clearly have benefited from clear analysis of data and trends and well-considered recommendations in the Self-Assessment Review.

The SAR gave a poor first impression about the ACE for the review group. This initial negative impact was counterbalanced by highly positive impressions in meetings with individual members of staff and students.

The SAR was disappointing in a number of respects. It did not include sufficient data on student enrolments on different types of courses and the trends that could be discerned. It did not include sufficient information on financial issues. There were no data on the results of course evaluations and the PRG could not find external examiners' comments or feedback. The SAR is generally thin and poorly structured with a high level of repetition. There was insufficient critical reflection in the SAR, and it was unclear who had authored which sections, and what the rationale was for inclusion of some material and the exclusion of other material.

The SAR did not seem to follow the outline recommended by the University's Quality Office. This lack of recognised structure made navigation of the report unnecessarily difficult. As a consequence the PRG spent a lot of time attempting to find information and ideas and suggestions that should have been in the SAR. The SAR appendices were also problematic. Some seemed to be incorrectly labelled and the appendices did not all have page numbers so it became difficult to navigate through the appendices or to discuss them in the group. There was limited attempt to analyse the raw data listed in the appendices. There was some material in the appendices which would have been better placed in the SAR, and should have been discussed and evaluated in the SAR as part of the review. These elements included the SWOT analysis, staff surveys and student feedback.

The assessment of ACE by Professor Gaetz was included in its totality in the SAR and the PRG found this interesting and helpful. In his report he cites and notes the opportunities to expand

and extend the work of the Centre and its reach into the community. We fully endorse this statement by Professor Gaetz:

There is an opportunity for UCC to expand its lifelong learning programme and thereby enhance its engagement with the community, increase interest in its degree programme, generate new revenue and contribute to increasing opportunities for Irish citizens (Gaetz, 2012).

In addition, we share his view that ‘a focus on lifelong learning also helps the University meet some of its other needs, including a) external engagement with the community, b) access and c) revenue generation.’

SWOT ANALYSIS

There was a SWOT analysis of ACE apparently conducted by an external agency and this is mentioned in the SAR. However, there was no attempt to incorporate the SWOT analysis into the SAR, little obvious attempt to interrogate the findings of the SWOT exercise and no serious discussion of what lessons should be learned from the SWOT analysis. We feel that this is another missed opportunity for critical reflection. The SWOT analysis included some confusing points or inaccuracies – for example, in the SWOT analysis there is a reference to ‘No Centre Administrator’ post as a weakness – the PRG assumes this should read No *Course* Administrator.

The PRG studied the SWOT analysis in Appendix G and felt that, whilst there were some interesting comments in the exercise, there was no attempt to summarise or prioritise the elements in the SWOT exercise and by inference it was difficult to assess or incorporate the SWOT findings into the deliberations of the group.

BENCHMARKING

It was not entirely clear to the PRG what lessons for ACE could or should be learned from the benchmarking exercise other than some information about the research activities at the Linköping University Institute. It appeared to the PRG that ACE was being benchmarked against a unit that was not really that comparable. For example, the Linköping University Institute does not offer adult education courses in the same way that they are offered in UCC. ACE has, rightly, an ambition to become more research active. However, it was not that evident how the benchmarking exercise would help to achieve this aspiration given the big differences between the two units that were being compared. The benchmarking exercise would have been more useful by using a Centre or School operating in a similar context and conditions as ACE.

FINDINGS OF THE PEER REVIEW GROUP

UNIT DETAILS

The actual details of the unit were difficult to infer or decode from the SAR. There were some details in the appendices and there was an Organogram included in the Appendix. This chart was somewhat difficult to interpret.

UNIT PLANNING AND ORGANISATION

Several staff drew our attention to the issue of senior management in the unit. We learned that the unit had been through a previous QA/QI review. There was limited evidence that the review process had resulted in significant or positive changes in the unit.

The issue of work management was cited in this review and clearly this is a challenge for the staff in the centre. Some individuals referred to perceptions of disproportionate workloads and the inflexibility of some staff to support others during busy periods.

LIST OF CLIENT/USER GROUPS FOR THE UNIT

The PRG found that ACE serves a large and diverse list of client and user groups. The evidence heard from different users all indicated the value and quality of the centre's work and the high regard in which ACE and, through it, UCC is held. The PRG heard compelling evidence in the powerful testimonies of the students who gave evidence. These testimonies clearly illustrated the value of the programmes and the outstanding support offered by staff in ACE to a broad constituency of lifelong learners.

The centre is clearly making a significant contribution to the University's widening participation mission. The testimonies of the students clearly showed how the work of ACE is widening access to higher education and enabling people to enter UCC using non-traditional routes. It is no exaggeration to say that the courses provided by ACE have changed peoples' lives.

The centre also acts an 'incubation' unit for the University – offering a means for UCC to develop new and innovative programmes and partnerships. However, in addition to this function of incubation, more research into adult education would be valuable to develop the academic dimension of the unit's work. The university should seriously consider developing more research in ACE particularly into different aspects of adult education and its delivery.

SERVICE STANDARDS

There was little evidence supplied of standards or evaluation of the services to and from ACE.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The PRG could find no reference to staff development in the SAR, but noted that Staff Development Objectives were cited in Appendix F. However, as with the SWOT, there was no obvious attempt to critique the staff comments on Staff Development in the appendix. The job descriptions and roles of some staff in ACE were identified as an issue during the site visit. The PRG was unclear about the frequency of staff appraisals or how the results of appraisals are implemented. During individual interviews with staff a limited number of possible development opportunities were noted. However, the overall impression was that staff did not perceive a long-term developmental route for their work and role. Critically, staff did not cite or seem to consider staff development as a reasonable or likely option for them.

UNIT BUDGET

The PRG group noted the absence of current financial information and current data and material that could facilitate greater understanding of the funding and participation patterns in ACE¹. The evidence received from the University's Finance Officer was very helpful but tended to indicate that the overall trends in income and expenditure need further careful analysis to develop a longer-term plan.

UNIT CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE & METHODOLOGY EMPLOYED IN THE PREPARATION OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

As previously noted, the PRG was not entirely clear how the SAR had been prepared or who had responsibility for which parts.

GOVERNANCE AND STAFFING

The appendices to the SAR included an organisational chart for ACE showing lines of responsibility and also vacant posts. It was not always easy to understand the functions of senior staff. The PRG formed the view that the direction, supervision, liaison and guidance for administrative staff need to be reviewed and improved. Some staff said they felt they were not kept informed about developments. We would recommend that relatively short but regular fortnightly meetings of all administrative staff should be held.

The expertise and commitment of all the staff we met was clear and evident throughout the review. This is an important strength for the future development and prospects of ACE. It seems to the PRG evident that the University is in a strong position to take lifelong learning

opportunities forward by utilising the strengths of the existing staff. This will require effective leadership and appropriate investment.

ACCOMMODATION

ACE is currently located in a building which is close to the university campus, but separated from it by a busy road. Its location was considered by the PRG to be both a literal and figurative barrier to the full integration of ACE in the University mission. In addition, the facilities of the centre are cramped and not fit for purpose. The PRG notes that the previous review reported similar findings.

FINANCING

The PRG found that the financial status of the various activities and salaries in ACE was ambiguous and unclear. We were surprised to find that financial analysis of different activities in ACE seemed, at best, rudimentary when it came to identifying which activities are viable and which are not. This seems to us to be another part of the problem with management information. As previously noted, the information from the University Finance Officer was very helpful. However, the financial information appeared to be historical and this delay in being able to access and review financial data must prompt reactive rather than proactive planning. The basic financial systems may also frustrate attempts to project and predict future direction.

COMMUNICATIONS

The problems of internal communication were a recurring theme throughout the review process. The PRG formed the view that greater and more meaningful dialogue between staff would be beneficial for all concerned and for the more effective development of ACE. There appeared to be something of a division between different layers of the administrative staff and between co-ordinators and administrative staff. This division seemed unhelpful and counter-productive for all staff.

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT MADE IN PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT ARISING FROM LAST QUALITY REVIEW

The PRG examined closely the recommendations of the 2006 review and the extent to which they had been implemented. The last review generated 26 recommendations. The SAR revisits these recommendations, but does so in a different format with different numbering which caused some difficulty for the PRG in interpreting and analysing them. It would appear from the evidence the group was given that many of the recommendations have not been acted upon.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT MADE BY THE UNIT

The SAR referred to the ambitions to develop and extend a research profile for ACE and also recommended that the position of Director of ACE should be elevated to that of a full Professor. Overall the SAR is disappointing in terms of the recommendations it suggested to the PRG.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT MADE BY THE PEER REVIEW GROUP

PREAMBLE

As previously reported, the Peer Review Group was impressed by much of what it heard from staff, students and stakeholders. The PRG would like to thank all those involved in the review process for the frankness and openness in the way they engaged with the process. The group would also like to thank everyone at UCC for their hospitality and courtesy.

Despite the problems with the Self-Assessment Report which have been noted, the PRG formed a favourable view on the work of the ACE which seems to reflect very favourably on the University. ACE deserves congratulations on the work it is doing.

During the visit, the PRG heard about the difficulties that the centre has experienced during the last five or six years with the loss of several senior staff including the Director. The group learned that a number of key posts had remained vacant and the centre had been run by temporary part-time directors. The current acting director has only been running the centre for a limited period and has clearly had a difficult job given the challenging history and legacy of past problems. In essence there is a sense that ACE has languished for a number of years and it is to the great credit of the staff that the courses have been maintained at a high standard despite the problems.

The PRG met senior staff from the University including the Registrar. We were very grateful to these staff for the time they gave us to explore the past, present and future of adult education at UCC. We were greatly encouraged by the strong endorsement from these senior managers of adult education within the University and of the potential and capacity of ACE to take forward the lifelong learning mission.

MISSION, OPERATIONS, VISION

The mission of ACE was implied or inferred throughout the process, but rarely clearly stated or defined. The PRG believes that a good starting point for future developments would be for ACE and the University to reappraise and revitalise the centre's mission.

We recommend that the mission statement of ACE should be revisited and amended to include the views of staff and stakeholders.

The new mission statement should be aligned with the UCC strategic plan and endorsed by the wider University community.

The PRG found that there are various new developments which deserve to be commended and the group ***recommends*** that the centre should report and disseminate their achievements and initiatives both within the University and outside. It is important to highlight the excellent work which is being done and to persuade others in the University to build on this work. Success brings success.

The PRG was surprised at the lack of effective management information and hard data to support the anecdotal evidence of participation and progression. The group was further surprised by the lack of information about who participates in courses, breaking the data down by key social characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, social class, previous educational achievements, geographical location, etc. This information is needed to enable effective planning and development.

We recommend that this should be a matter of priority to improve and integrate all aspects of management information

The *National Plan for Equity of Access* has made clear statements and nominated targets for access to higher education. The PRG were surprised that there was limited reference in the SAR or during the visit to national policy, although the work of ACE is making a clear contribution to UCC's widening participation (WP) mission. This needs to be quantified and case studies need to be highlighted and celebrated.

The group notes that one of the objects of the University is to facilitate lifelong learning, and ACE is clearly well-positioned to support the University in achieving this objective. Similarly, ACE is making a significant contribution to developing and facilitating CPD and improving skills. The centre has much to celebrate and to publicise and news of these activities should be disseminated and encouraged in line with the UCC Strategic Plan 2009-2012, p.19.viii.

We recommend that ACE and the wider university should continue to prioritise lifelong learning activities and to publicise and celebrate the successes.

In terms of vision the PRG found great enthusiasm for renewed emphasis on all aspects of lifelong learning amongst many people the group spoke to during the site visit, from within ACE, across the wider University and beyond.

We recommend that the enthusiasm for, and commitment to, lifelong learning should be harnessed within a new business plan based on appropriate investment as necessary.

The PRG notes that the review that reported in June 2006 recommended the following:

That as a matter of immediate importance significant improved internal communication measures are put in place; that clear and unambiguous reporting relationships are set out; and that contracts of employment for staff be reviewed with a view to creating stable working conditions. (PRG Report June 2006, R2)

We consider that this recommendation remains valid today. In particular:

We recommend that, despite some improvements during the last year or so, internal communication should be addressed by ACE, for example by improved reporting relationships, better management and supervision, more frequent and regular staff meetings involving genuine and meaningful dialogue, and a regular weekly internal bulletin sent to all staff.

The PRG notes the absence of a clear management information system as an impediment to targeted planning and reporting.

We recommend that ACE should develop clear and accessible information systems that will provide evidence on enrolment patterns, progression rates from ACE to undergraduate degree programmes, age profiles, disability support needs and attrition rates per programme.

We commend the implementation of an online booking and payment system for several of the courses in UCC and note this as a positive example of innovation and flexibility in attracting and supporting adult learners on part-time programmes. We propose that this initiative could be expanded to offer additional material, evaluation sheets, student supports and feedback online.

In spite of the efforts of the staff, the building currently occupied by ACE is clearly not fit for purpose. It is unsuited for students as there is no teaching space in the building and few, if any, spaces to meet students individually or in private. The PRG did visit the Western Gateway but

we do not consider that this would be a good alternative location for ACE as it is not at the centre of the UCC campus.

In the PRG Report of 2006 the following recommendation was made:

That as a matter of urgency appropriate and suitable accommodation for staff in ACE with reference to allocation of work space, light and hygiene facilities, and bearing in mind the high profile of the Centre's activities with external stakeholders, (CPE in particular) be sourced as soon as possible. (PRG 2006, R3)

We consider it is most regrettable that over six years have passed without any discernible action being taken. We consider it is essential that the ACE unit should be housed in appropriate modern accommodation at the centre of the University in order that it can fulfil its mission and functions.

We recommend that ACE should be located in an appropriate building on the main campus with teaching space and facilities in order to enable it to act as a gateway into the University for people in the region and beyond, and to enhance the adult student experience. This would also facilitate greater integration of ACE with other units on campus and enable the further development of lifelong learning throughout UCC.

During the Site Visit the PRG also noted that the various courses and classes are offered in a variety of buildings across campus. Some of the buildings seem to be more suited for the needs of the students than others. The provision of suitable catering facilities is also an issue.

We therefore recommend that an attempt is made by UCC to locate adult education classes in one building that has a sufficient number of appropriate rooms in one area with the provision of catering as appropriate.

This building should communicate a clear message of welcome and inclusion for the part-time adult students who will congregate there. This concentration of adult students will afford an opportunity for adult learners to network and develop a sense of community, ownership and integration into college life. This building should also be accessible and be appropriately serviced with catering facilities.

FINANCES/ RESOURCES/ STAFFING

The issue of financing is a vexatious and difficult one for ACE. As noted earlier, the financial reporting facility used in ACE is reactive and appears not to be reported in real time. This makes management and planning for the unit difficult.

The PRG also notes that in the last review recommendation 24 concerned finance in ACE. It is worth repeating that recommendation here:

That the financial recording and control within ACE should be strengthened and that ACE's own financial system should be made transparent (PRG Report June 2006, R24).

The PRG heard about a new agreement on financial modelling set out in a Memorandum of Understanding between ACE and CACSSS. It would seem sensible for this to be reviewed and replicated elsewhere.

We recommend that new modes of financial modelling should be investigated further.

The PRG notes that ACE is contributing to the university mission in terms of widening participation and innovating and developing new courses. It is unclear how these can be properly costed and measured, but we would like to recommend that a financial model be developed to include the value of goodwill towards UCC across the region and the value of the innovative elements of ACE's development work.

During the PRG visit it appeared that the financial data that was presented was incomplete. There was a sense that the financial reporting in ACE was operating separately from the University system. The costs did not appear fully loaded. It was unclear what contribution the University was making financially to the centre in terms of salary costs, provision of class rooms and other services, and the value of the UCC brand to ACE. Conversely, it was unclear what value the University does, or could, place on the goodwill and positive engagement with the community.

We recommend that the financial accounting software systems and expertise in UCC be used to support ACE in reporting and predicting its costs, outturn and direction.

The PRG noted the recent initiative of partnering with the Credit Union to offer students loans. This appears to be an innovative and positive development and we commend ACE for its resourcefulness in securing this facility.

The role of the co-ordinators was raised during the site visit. This is a difficult issue without an obvious or equitable solution. Unless carefully managed, the various different roles within ACE may lead to friction. The co-ordinators clearly perform a crucial role and some of those the group met want to do more research and appear capable of so doing. The University would be well advised to retain many of the co-ordinators and to utilise their skills. Some of them would like a title that would enable them to function more effectively within the University and to

develop a greater academic role. However, the case for changing them to academic posts was not compelling or clear. The position of these staff needs further investigation and resolution.

We recommend that a more appropriate term is used to capture the nature and complexity of the role of co-ordinator.

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

The last PRG made the following recommendation about the structure of ACE:

That the current structure of the centre be reviewed and adjusted to enable it to deliver the University's adult continuing education and lifelong learning strategy more widely (PRG Report June 2006, R6)

We support this recommendation and further note the introduction of new committees under the current Acting Director.

We recommend that the role of Director is refocused to embrace a senior university advocacy role, a regional ambassadorial role and a research leadership role.

We recommend that there should be a new Deputy Director appointed to assist the Director as necessary, but primarily to focus on internal ACE management.

The group notes that this issue of the management structure was identified in the PRG of 2006 when the following was recommended:

That the current management structure of ACE should be reviewed, and changes agreed and put in place with a view to streamlining its management. (PRG Report June 2006, 13)

The PRG strongly supports the view that the current management structure should be closely examined by the University.

We recommend that the communication within the ACE should be reviewed and where possible improved. A regular departmental meeting should take place at least every few weeks.

The PRG sees several opportunities for ACE to strengthen team dynamics within the unit. We are convinced that the many individual staff we met would welcome and benefit from a facilitated intervention to address and remediate staff dynamics.

We recommend that staff dynamics are addressed through an externally facilitated process that should acknowledge individuals' roles and contributions and suggest future roles and

alternative work practices; this may also resolve any legacy issues that remain in the centre.

The review group notes that the 2006 PRG report stated:

That ACE's work should be represented on all major University committees and bodies and that adult and continuing education should be standing items on all appropriate agendas (PRG Report June 2006, R19)

The PRG regrets that it appears no progress has been made on this and we recommend that this should be implemented in order to promote lifelong learning activities across the institution.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS/ENGAGEMENT

During the PRG visit the group was shown several examples of the new brochures used to market the centre's programme 2012-13 and its short courses. The group also saw additional examples of marketing material, including USBs and Gallery posters used to highlight the centre's partnership with the Crawford Gallery.

However, the PRG sees several untapped opportunities to market and communicate the ACE mission. Indeed, the need to enhance the marketing of ACE was raised by several staff during the site visit. The PRG believes there is a strong case for a dedicated marketing officer who would oversee marketing and also contribute to the development of new courses based on identified needs. The group also suggests that staff might consider social media as a means of marketing their courses and events.

We recommend that the ACE website should be updated and that the web development should be included in the University web development process that is currently underway.

The PRG also advocates the following.

We recommend that ACE liaise with the various marketing and communication units in UCC to seek support in communicating their mission and their offerings.

This liaison would help utilise expertise from across campus, raise the profile of ACE in the University community and help ACE identify and expand its market base.

The PRG notes the legacy and history of ACE in engaging with outreach activities and considers that it should be developed further, building on successful experience.

We recommend that the scope and range of outreach activity in ACE should be enhanced and expanded.

The group feels that there is considerable opportunity for improving communication within ACE, but also within the University and within the region. This could be done using a wide variety of means.

We recommend that the issue of communication within ACE, within the University and within the region should be addressed, enhanced and improved as a matter of high priority.

We note that the last PRG recommended the following:

That a ACE Advisory Board, with specific terms of reference, should be established, which would include external stakeholders such as community and voluntary groups, employers, representatives of industry, of trade unions and professional bodies, and which would meet at least once a term. The ACE Advisory Board should have a direct relationship with ACE, pinpointing key strategic directions, guiding it and advising it on strategy, new course development, and relationships with accrediting bodies, for example. The Chair of the ACE Academic Board should sit on the ACE Advisory Board. (PRG Report June 2006, R5)

We endorse this recommendation and believe it should be implemented.

RESEARCH

The PRG believe there is a strong case for developing a research profile in adult and continuing education, in accordance with the University's research plan.

The group believes that there is great potential in developing research projects and creating new research areas in ACE.

We recommend ACE should develop research partnerships within the University and beyond.

For example, ACE should explore a relationship with the Centre for Teaching and Learning (Ionad Bairre). We also believe this initiative would strengthen teaching and the student experience within the centre. This would correspond with UCC's teaching and research plan for the university.

We note that the last PRG suggested:

That ACE should develop a research group or groups, possibly including researchers across the University where appropriate, in adult and continuing education, and to this end should work more closely with the Office of the VP for Research Policy and Support. (PRG Report June 2006, R22)

We strongly endorse this view and recommend it should be implemented.

In 2006 the PRG noted the following:

That the appointment of a Research Director/Research Professor to lead research on lifelong learning and adult continuing education within ACE and across the University be considered. (PRG Report June 2006, R12)

As noted above, we endorse this recommendation through our recommendation on the appointment and refocusing of the Director's role to include research leadership.

QUALITY AND TEACHING AND LEARNING

We were most impressed by what the students we met had to say about the quality of their teaching and learning experiences.

The PRG was told evaluations take place at the end of some courses but the group was not clear if these took place at the end of *all* courses. The group has not seen quantitative evidence which reflects the student feedback it heard. The PRG is also unclear what action, if any, is taken with students' evaluations and feedback.

During the site visit the PRG noted the Course Handbooks and Study Skills Handbooks and found them to be clearly written and appropriate for adult learners.

The last PRG stated:

That recognition is given to all the staff of UCC who contribute to the development and support of lifelong learning and the adult and continuing education agenda by appropriate measures such as noting this as a criterion for promotion. (PRG Report June 2006, R15)

This recommendation strengthens the value of the process.

We recommend systematic evaluation of all courses and modules and that the results should be presented to staff meetings and the ACE Board and elsewhere in the University as appropriate.

We endorse the introduction of the Programme Approval Process (PAP) which seems to be working well. We further note that since the last review all courses were modularised and mapped to the NFQ.

We note that the last review referred to the development of pathways of progression.

That the pathways of progression for adult learners within UCC be further developed to enable them to advance their knowledge, develop their skills, and gain accredited learning

through access transfer and progression within the University and particularly in relation to Continuing Professional Education (CPE) courses. (PRG Report June 2006, R7)

We note there has been some progress but feel there is much more that can be achieved and so recommend that special attention is paid to the further development of possible pathways of progression.

We note that the relation between course co-ordination and teaching is crucial for high quality in courses. Therefore

There is a strong case for encouraging 'co-ordinators' to teach on the courses where applicable and we so recommend. This will help them to evaluate quality and the student experience.

This is taking place in some cases, but our impression is that it is an area that could be developed.

The PRG strongly commends the student support models evidenced during the site visit.

We note that the last PRG recommended:

That a line should be included in the Library's budget for ACE to enable it to be fully integrated into the Library service i.e. so that books required for ACE courses can be bought under its own budget line. (PRG Report June 2006, R25)

We believe this remains an important issue to be pursued and we so recommend.

We also note that this last review noted:

That liaison should be strengthened between ACE and the appropriate support services in UCC, such as the Access Office, the Disability Office, the Student Career's Office, etc. to ensure the optimal use of these resources. (PRG Report June 2006, R26)

We believe that student support is pivotal and that this recommendation should be a key priority.

THE WAY FORWARD – WHERE SHOULD ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION BE GOING?
Although the PRG found some issues of concern, which need attention, the group formed the view that overall the ACE programme is of a high quality and there is great potential for the further development of lifelong learning activities in UCC.

In light of what the PRG found we do feel there is a strong case for a new chapter to open as University moves forward. We have recommended a change of location, a revisiting of the mission and vision, and the development of a new leadership model with a deputy director playing an important role. We also consider that it would be timely to rename ACE to better reflect current circumstances and future opportunities.

We recommend that the current ACE should be renamed SPACE – the School of Professional and Adult Continuing Education

APPENDIX 1: TIMETABLE

Monday 19 November 2012		
16.00 – 18.00	Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group. Briefing by: Professor Ken Higgs, Acting Director of Quality Group agrees final work schedule and assignment of tasks for the following 2 days. Views are exchanged and areas to be clarified or explored are identified.	
19.00	Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group, Director of ACE and members of the Co-ordinating Committee: Lyndsey El Amoud Marian Elders Mary O’Grady Dr Seamus O’Tuama, Director Rose Walsh	
Tuesday 20 November 2012		
08.30 – 08.45	Convening of Peer Review Group	
08.45 – 09.30	Dr Seamus O’Tuama, Director, ACE	
09.30 – 10.30	Group meeting with all ACE staff	
10.30 – 11.00	Professor Paul Giller, Registrar and Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs Tea/coffee	
11.00 – 13.00	Private meetings with individual staff members <u>Group 1</u> 11.00: Ciara Staunton 11.15: Christine Ui Casaide 11.30: Marian Elders 11.45: Louise Fleming 12.00: Lindy Meldon 12.15: Marie Riordan 12.30: Karen Sheehan 12.45: Mary O’Grady	Private meetings with individual staff members <u>Group 2</u> 11.00: James Cronin 11.15: Willie Weir 11.30: Tom Mallin 11.45: Sheila O’Driscoll 12.00: Regina Sexton 12.15: Linda Foley 12.30: Brenda Healy 12.45:
13.00 – 14.00	Working lunch	
14.00 – 15.00	Private meetings with individual staff members <u>Group 1</u> 14:00: Sinead Lennon 14.15: Julianne Moynihan 14.30: Lyndsey El Amoud 14.45:	Private meetings with individual staff members <u>Group 2</u> 14.00: 14.15: Deirdre McGlynn 14.30: Rose Walsh 14.45:

15.00 – 15.15	Professor Anita Maguire, Vice-President for Research Policy & Support
15.30 - 16.15	<u>Representatives of Students</u> Maurice Ahern, Diploma in Genealogy, Year 1 Sheila Angland, Short Courses David Butler, Short Courses Michael Doorley, Diploma in Social Studies, Year 2 Deirdre Homan, Diploma in Environmental Science & Social Policy, Year 2 Hannah Joyce, Diploma in Genealogy, Year 1 Mary Moon, Diploma in Non Formal Guidance, Year 2
16.15 – 17.00	<u>Representatives of Students</u> Ian Coughlan, Higher Diploma in Personnel Management, Year 2 Anne Desmond, Higher Diploma in Safety, Health & Welfare at Work, Year 2 Cliona Dwyer, Masters in Learning & Development Consultancy, Year 1 Katherine Keane, Higher Diploma in Safety, Health & Welfare at Work, Year 2 Kevin Murphy, Higher Diploma in Personnel Management, Year 2 Liz O'Sullivan, Higher Diploma in Safety, Health & Welfare at Work, Year 2 Mary Pappin, Higher Diploma in Safety, Health & Welfare at Work, Year 2 Paula Sheehan, Higher Diploma in Safety, Health & Welfare at Work, Year 2 Stephanie Wojack, Higher Diploma in Human Resource Management
17.00 – 18.00	<u>Representatives of stakeholders, past graduates and employers</u> Mr Tim Bingham, past graduate Mr Gerry Buckley, past graduate Mr Michael Daly, Secretary, Southern Chapter, Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. Mr Douglas Kelleher, Chair, ACE Management Board Mr Jimmy Kerrigan, past graduate Mr Shane Lehane, Colaiste Stiophan Naofa Ms Norma Lynch, Cork Chamber of Commerce Ms Geraldine McCarthy, past graduate Mr Aiden McGuckian, past graduate Mr Eddie Marnane, Cork County Council Ms Lorna Moloney, Irish Ancestry Research Centre Mr Vincent Murphy, Safety First Mr Con O'Connell, Construction Federation Industry, Chartered Institute of Personnel Development Ms Anne Pettit, Irish Institute of Training and Development Mr David Smith, FAS Mr Roy Watson, Director, The Glen Resource Centre
19.00	Meeting of Peer Review Group to identify remaining aspects to be clarified and to finalise tasks for the following day, a followed by a working private dinner.
Wednesday 21 November 2012	
08.30 – 08.45	Convening of Peer Review Group
08.45 – 09.45	Visit to core facilities of School, escorted by Dr Seamus O'Tuama, Director, ACE and Rose Walsh

09.45 – 10.00	Mr Paul Moriarty, Acting Vice-President for Student Experience
10.00 – 10.15	Mr Cormac McSweeney, Finance Office
10.15 – 11.00	Professor Grace Neville, Vice-President for Teaching & Learning
11.00 – 11.30	Tea/coffee
11.30 – 12.30	Visit to UCC Library, meeting with Ms Margot Conrick, Head of Information Services and Mr Ger Prendergast, Subject Librarian, Boole Library.
12.30 – 13.00	Preparation of first draft of final report
13.00 – 13.45	Working lunch
13.45 – 14.30	Professor Paul Giller, Registrar
14.30 – 17.00	Preparation of first draft of final report
17.00 – 17.30	Exit presentation to all staff, to be made by the Chair of the Peer Review Group or other member of Peer Review Group as agreed, summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group. This presentation is <u>not</u> for discussion at this time.
19.00	Working private dinner for members of the Peer Review Group to complete drafting of report and finalisation of arrangements for completion and submission of final report.