

## **Student Careers Service**

### *Peer Review Group:*

Professor P. Murphy, Department of Electrical & Electronic Engineering, UCC (Chair)  
Dr. J. O'Halloran, Department of Zoology & Animal Ecology, UCC  
Mr. D. Killen, Personnel & Training Director, Smurfit Group, Dublin  
Ms. R. Mortenson, AGCAS Training Manager, UK

### *Brief Description of conduct of Site Visit:*

The site visit was conducted over 2.5 days from 28<sup>th</sup> February – 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2001 and included meetings with

- i) Head and staff of the unit as a group and individually,
- ii) Representatives of students,
- iii) Representatives of the academic staff,
- iv) Representatives of employers,
- v) Professor M. A. Moran, Registrar & VP for Academic Affairs
- vi) Professor A. Hyland (member of EMG),
- vii) Dean of Science, Professor P. Giller,
- viii) Dean of Engineering, Professor R. Yacamini
- ix) Mr. N. Keeley, Director of Human Resources.

An exit presentation of the principal findings of the Peer Review Group was made to all the staff of the Student Careers Service in the afternoon of the second day.

### **Description of Student Careers Service Unit**

*Head of Unit:* Mr. Seamus McEvoy

*No. of Staff:* 16 full-time staff and 1 part-time staff

*Location of Unit:* Brighton Villas, Western Road

*Functions of Unit:* Careers Advice and guidance; Careers Information; Undergraduate Work Placement; Employer Relations and Graduate Recruitment

### *Mission Statement*

“The Careers Service mission is to support students to understand their career interests, evaluate and assess career opportunities and effectively implement their career decision.”

### *Aims & Objectives*

- To work closely with academic departments and faculties to design and deliver a focused range of services to their students.
- Delivering a diverse range of stand-alone services to all students on campus.
- Working with specialist services such as Disability Support Service and Adult and Continuing Education to provide a careers service for their constituencies.

### **General Comment on Quality Review**

The PRG were impressed with the detail, accuracy and volume of material contained in the Self-Assessment Report. The information provided in the appendices was well organised and presented and greatly facilitated the understanding of the structure and operation of the careers service. However, it was felt the level of critical and strategic analysis contained in the report did not fully meet the guidelines set by the Quality Promotion Unit. The recommendations contained in the Self-Assessment Report were, in general, considered and realistic. The importance of staffing issues was apparent and this matter was considered in detail. The Peer Review Group wished especially to acknowledge the professionalism and dedication of the staff members of the Careers Service. In their view, the quality of service, which is realisable

in such a unit, is ultimately dependent on the quality of individuals available to deliver that service. For this reason the group believed the University is particularly fortunate in having assembled such an impressive team.

### **Progress on Recommendations for Improvement**

<b>Recommendations of PRG</b>	<b>Recommendation by QPC</b>	<b>Follow-up Report – Oct. '02</b>
That the reporting line for the Careers Service should be changed from the Registrar's Office to that of the VP for Planning, Communications & Development	Noted. No specific action recommended for the present.	No action was taken.
That the integrity of the service is preserved and all current activities are retained within the unit	QPC endorsed recommendation	There has been no change to current status.
The degree, frequency and nature of interaction of an academic department with the Careers Service be included in the QA requirement for all academic departments.	In a sense this is already part of the QA of each department in that they are asked to comment on all services including careers.  Endorsed proposal of Careers Service re delegate in each academic department.	All academic departments are asked to comment on the Careers Service as a part of their Self-Assessment Report. In a small number of departments there is a member of staff delegated responsibility for liaison with the Careers Service. All academic departments were written to inviting them to nominate a member of staff to liaise with the Unit. The structures need to be embedded and formalised and this process will be completed by the end of this academic year.
Career progression of graduates be used as a metric in assessing the quality of an academic department.	QPC commented that this is not always a useful metric for all departments. Can be very useful in some cases and should be used then.	Recommendation has not been acted upon. Full information is maintained and available in Careers Service Office if required. First Destination Reports for all graduates are prepared every year and data is available to all departments.
That the Careers Service continues to be centrally funded and that academic departments are permitted to avail of its normal services without charge.	Endorsed recommendation of PRG. There should be no charges for services internal to UCC. Recommendation re additional resources was not endorsed. Recommendation: Outside bodies should be charged for any services, including alumni	Funding is as it was at the time of the review. The difficulties of increasing the level of service offered have been acknowledged by the QPC. The Head of the Unit is investigating alternative options for funding services in areas where there are insufficient resources currently. These options include introducing charges for services for outside bodies, including alumni. It is planned to consider options in detail in summer/autumn 2003.  A CV writing service for students has been introduced in September 2002 – the fees for this service part funds one administrative staff member. Recruitment fair has expanded, thus

Recommendations of PRG	Recommendation by QPC	Follow-up Report – Oct. '02
		increasing fee income.
That the QPC should address the issue of the quality of service of Buildings & Estate Office, the AVS unit, General Services, etc. as these also have an effect on the quality of service of the Careers Service	Comment: These Services are already scheduled for review.	No action has been taken as the other service and support units were already scheduled for review as part of the review schedule.
That the Buildings Committee visit and inspect the accommodation of the Careers Service and give urgent consideration to the issues raised in the Report	Recommendation not endorsed by the QPC	As the recommendation was not endorsed by the QPC this has not been followed up. Space is still an issue for the Unit especially interview rooms for employers. Maintenance of existing space is a major problem. The exterior décor of the building is very dilapidated and presents a poor image to visiting employers.
That a procedure be put in place whereby the Careers Service is informed of the details of the presentations by students recently returned from placement and relevant placement staff are invited to attend.	Endorsed action by staff of the Careers Service	This has now been implemented and is routinely carried out.
That the issue of contract staffing levels be given immediate attention. That the Director of Human Resources initiate procedures to transfer contract staff members to Tenure B positions	Endorsed recommendation and noted action proposed by Head	The Head of the Unit has discussed the matter with the VP for HR. There is not such a thing as Tenure B administrative positions in UCC. Long-term (3 year) contracts have been issued to a number of staff (e.g. all Work Placement Officers are on contracts to 2004). The proportion of contract to permanent staff in the unit is still very high.
That the Head of the Service begin a consultation process with the staff of the service and the College authorities with the aim of defining and establishing a post of Co-ordinator of Placement Services	QPC endorsed action proposed.	The current budgetary climate increases the difficulties in increasing staffing levels. The Head of the Unit is investigating possibility of establishing a self-financing post. There may be a possibility of generating income from, for example, increased services to alumni. There are no feasible options at the moment. The Work Placement Officers already meet every 4-6 weeks to agree policies and consistent procedures. This has helped improve the co-ordination of activities within existing resources. The results of the benchmarking exercise (see below) will influence future actions and decisions in this area.

<b>Recommendations of PRG</b>	<b>Recommendation by QPC</b>	<b>Follow-up Report – Oct. '02</b>
That procedures are put in place whereby the Careers Service makes contact with undergraduate students at an earlier stage in their careers than is currently the situation.	QPC suggested Head follows up by contacting all academic departments. If a delegate were to be appointed in each department to liaise with the Careers Service this would facilitate implementation.	Action on this recommendation is ongoing. Information has been inserted into the Student Handbook. All 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year classes receive a 5 minute talk at the beginning of the academic year about the services offered by the Unit. Usage of the services of the Unit by 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Years has increased.
That services should be offered to postgraduate students but at a reasonable rate	Comment by Head noted. QPC endorsed the proposal to offer additional services to alumni providing fees are paid and the quality of the existing service to undergraduate students is not affected for the worse.	The proposal to offer additional services to alumni is being considered and will be decided upon in Summer 2003 following on the conclusion of the benchmarking exercise.
That opportunities to reduce the cost of printing be availed of.	QPC noted recommendation and response of the Unit	Action on this recommendation is ongoing. The unit is already working with the Procurement Office to reduce costs. Reductions are being implemented wherever possible.
That the possibility of providing a free-phone service and appointing specialist advisors for mature students be investigated in conjunction with the Center for Continuing and Adult Education	Noted that Head will investigate possibility of implementing recommendation.	There are no additional resources available for a free-phone service at the moment. The unit is investigating the possibility of offering an email services to all users and is considering systems in use in the UK. It should be noted that the funding from the HEA for a Mature Student Careers Advisor has been discontinued, and replaced with a Mature Student Officer post in the Registrar's Office. This post holder is to provide a full support service to mature students including careers advice.