

Department of Human Resources

Peer Review Group:

Dr. T. Mullins, Department of Education, UCC (Chair)
Mr. J. FitzGerald, University Librarian, UCC
Ms. K. Quinlan, Consultant of Kate Quinlan & Associates, Ireland
Mr. P. Bunting, Director of Personnel and Deputy Registrar, University of Bradford,
UK

Brief description of conduct of site visit

The site visit was conducted over 2.5 days from 13th to 15th May 2003 and included meetings with

- i) Head and staff of the department as a group and individually
- ii) Representatives of Deans of Faculties
- iii) Representatives of staff of the University
- iv) Members of Committees served by the Department, including the HR Committee,
the Excellence through People Committee and the Staff Enhancement & Development Committee
- v) Representatives of the Trade Union bodies and IBEC
- vi) Professor A. Hyland, Vice-President

and visits to departmental facilities in UCC. In addition the reviewers held a conference call with the President, Professor G. T. Wrixon.

An exit presentation of the principal findings of the Peer Review Group was made to staff of the department in the afternoon of the second day.

Description of Department of Human Resources

Head of Department: Mr. N. Keeley

No. of Staff: 35 administrative staff (33 full-time and 2 part-time)

Location of Department: the Department has offices in the East Wing, 2 & 3 Elderwood, College

Road and Perrott's Avenue, College Road

Mission Statement

“To contribute to the development of the University as a high quality institution through the development and implementation of human resource policies and programs aimed at enhancing individual and organisational effectiveness.”

To achieve this vision and mission, the Department is structured in four functional areas of human resource management as follows: Recruitment; Compensation and Benefits; Training and Development and Employee Relations.

Functions

- Office of the Vice-President for Human Resources:
 - Development of policy and procedures / ethos of service
 - Facilitation and co-ordination of Strategic Planning
 - Development of the human resources function throughout College
 - Provision of support, information and advice to College management, staff, College committees
 - Liaison with external organisations and committees
 - Responsibility for compliance in the area of employment legislation

- Recruitment:
 - Develop and implement the recruitment activities of the University
 - Manage and control the establishment of the University
 - Plan, develop, co-ordinate and deliver the recruitment policies and procedures of the University
 - Manage, deliver and co-ordinate the University's Academic Promotions and Establishment Scheme
 - Provide the necessary administrative framework to support the area of post establishment and approval, temporary and permanent recruitment and academic establishment and promotion
 - Offer guidance and support to Heads of Department on the processes involved in filling a vacancy
 - Process the issue and renewal of all employment contracts for temporary and fixed-term, full-time academic staff
 - Review on an ongoing basis the operation of current recruitment practices within the University and the development of updated procedures in conjunction with college committees
 - Provide advice and guidance to selection committee members in the conduct and operation of the recruitment process
 - Put in place a team of trained Human Resources Representatives within the University to support and advise selection committee membership and review the role of the Human Resources Representative on an ongoing basis.
 - Manage the recruitment budget and put in place service providers to provide accommodation and refreshments where required to support the interview process
 - Offer guidance and feedback to applicants, both internal and external
 - Produce reports for Governing Body and other College bodies
 - Ensure compliance with legislation and recruitment best practice

- Compensation & Benefits:
 - Developing and pro-actively supporting the necessary human resources policies and procedures to contribute to the achievement of the University's strategic objectives
 - Supporting and advising all staff, managers and heads of departments on all aspects of human resources and best practice in dealing with specific departmental issues
 - Managing all aspects of human resource administration for the University
 - Ensuring policy development and implementation in the key area of Compensation and Benefits with management responsibility for ensuring a comprehensive range is available to staff across all disciplines with the university
 - Ensuring progressive management of employment benefits in order to maximise those offered to staff
 - Developing salary policy and the setting of all salary scales in compliance with national directives and wage agreements. Developing and negotiating new salary scales
 - Providing a professional advisory service to staff on all elements of the compensation and benefits package as well as interpretation and relevance of same for each individual employee
 - Managing the College-wide communication programme on all aspects of the compensation and benefits package
 - Managing relationships with service providers e.g., Mercer Ltd, Marsh, VHI

- Managing, reviewing and, where necessary, revising the range of employment contracts offered to staff
 - Providing interpretation and, where necessary, arbitration on disputes arising from the contract of employment, entitlements or other work related issues
 - Managing the University's leave policies and schemes including the review of current schemes and developing new policy for the introduction of new leave schemes, e.g. maternity leave scheme, parental leave, paternity leave, etc.
 - Managing, reviewing and counselling all sick leave cases involving monitoring, requesting medical referrals, counselling and advising on all aspects of the options available to staff including early retirement
 - Responsibility for the development, maintenance and implementation of the University's Human Resource Information System including responsibility for training and staff support
- Training & Development:
- Leading the development of UCC's training & development strategy, policy and procedures and playing a direct role in the effective deployment of these throughout the organisation
 - Promoting the development of excellence and best practice in the management of training & development in UCC, at a strategic and operational level, ensuring UCC's position as a leader in the sector
 - Determining the strategic direction of the training function through on-going analysis of training needs of all University staff and making decisions in relation to meeting those needs
 - Promoting linkages among the various categories of staff by developing and leveraging progressive training & development initiatives
 - Actively contributing to establishing and maintaining effective, relevant and accurate communication with all University stakeholders, both internally and externally
 - Developing and implementing a performance/development review system for all staff
 - Providing internal consultancy to the Executive Management Group, supporting members in their role of managing and leading the organisation and determining its strategic direction
 - Advising and supporting Heads of Department and Deans in achieving Faculty and Departmental strategic objectives
 - Providing professional support for organisational development initiatives, including faculty or departmental restructuring; review of policy and initiation of new policy and procedures
 - Compiling and disseminating reports and recommendations for action
 - Designing and developing an annual programme of training for management and staff to support all staff in their current and future roles and ensure the attainment of the University's strategic objectives
 - Delivering an effective Induction Programme for all new staff at UCC, including those appointed to senior management positions
 - Providing a confidential consultancy service to individual staff in relation to personal, professional and career development
- Employee Relations:
- Developing and implementing a comprehensive policy framework for all employee relations matters
 - Developing and maintaining the UCC Human Resource Manual
 - Administering the grading / job evaluation scheme for administrative staff

- The introduction of early intervention strategies in dispute resolution
 - Effective co-ordination and administration of industrial relations activities
 - Providing enhanced employee relations advice and support to management and staff
 - Creating new opportunities for communication and exchange of information (i.e. focus groups etc.)
 - Managing the delivery of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)
 - Measuring and monitoring employee morale and attitudes
 - Developing and introducing Harassment and Bullying policy and procedures
 - Developing and implementing family friendly policy e.g. flexible working arrangements etc.
 - Managing and delivering the University staff welfare and equality initiatives
- Secretarial Centre
- Providing a variety of services including typing, a stand-by copying service, binding, laminating, folding and enveloping
 - Assistance in setting up new administrative offices
 - Supporting 'one-person' departments and sections without secretarial staff
 - Co-ordinating special projects, e.g. compiling Internal Telephone Directory, organising New Staff Reception, issuing Staff ID Cards, organising Secretaries Day Out
 - Dealing with requests for application forms and receiving and acknowledging completed forms
- Switchboard
- First point of contact for all incoming calls to main UCC number
 - Provision of a comprehensive world-wide call-booking service
 - Daily updating of Web Page telephone list
 - Facilitating call conferencing
 - Processing accounts for all 'personal calls' booked through switchboard

General Comment on Quality Review

The Self-Assessment Report was considered to be a clear and comprehensive assessment of the performance of the department. The report was particularly effective in detailing the deficiencies of the department and the recommended actions to deal with these (it is noted that many such actions are already under way). The consultative and analytical methods employed in the preparation of the report, particularly the comprehensive survey of staff, were excellent. The format and presentation of the report was also excellent. In summary, the PRG considered the report to be a model of good practice.

The SAR was considered to be accurate and all interviews confirmed this.

The PRG recognised that the Department has responded effectively to internal and external pressures to establish effective policies and services and must now reassess its objectives to define a new set of strategic priorities for the next stage of its development. The PRG felt that the Department should develop its role as an active support to the College's strategic mission by using new inclusive approaches to policy development and service provision and by focusing on achieving gradual cultural change within the institution.

Reassuringly, the Department is aware of its own rapid developmental growth and the strong perceptions that have emerged in the academic community during this period of expansion and establishment. The reviewers were of the opinion that the Department has been effective in maintaining a sense of common purpose and professionalism at both team and individual

level, and there is a strong desire among the staff to embrace the future in a positive and constructive manner.

The PRG noted a number of identifiable achievements:

- The granting in 2003 of the Fás Excellence through People Award
- The quality and standard of the publications and other outputs, such as training and development initiatives
- The successful performance of the Department when benchmarked against other comparable organisations, including other Irish universities
- The universal approval among the representative administrative and academic staff met by the PRG of the professionalism and helpfulness of each individual staff member of the Department
- The strong sense of departmental identity
- The implementation of and planned further enhancements to the HRIS
- The development of a comprehensive HR policy framework.

Progress on Implementation of Recommendations for Improvement

Abbreviations

PRG: Peer Review Group

HR: Human Resources

QPC: Quality Promotion Committee

QIP: Quality Improvement Plan

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of the QPC	Follow-Up Report October 2004
PRG welcomed and endorsed the many recommendations for improvement made by the Department. See text of report for details.	QPC welcomed the positive actions for improvement being planned by the Department and noted the timescales as indicated.	
The Department should continue to develop its strategy for developing more positive relationships within the University.	QPC welcomed and endorsed action by Department.	Staff of the department have visited every department during 03/04 and it is planned to repeat the visits on annual basis. Heads of departments have been briefed on contract procedures/budgets/timescales. The department will continue to make efforts to engage with the departments. The department has developed as new website with all relevant forms on line. The department is continuing to develop informal relationships with sectors of the university, and holds meetings with deans and heads of departments.
The Department should develop a strategy to convince the academic community that its allegiance is not to any section	This is an issue about communications. The PRG fully appreciated the difficulties the Department	The department is continuing to work towards developing and implementing a strategy for improving communications

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<p>of the community (such as Heads of Departments) but to policies and procedures. This strategy should also seek to demonstrate an understanding of the stated concerns of the community and an empathy with its core values and ethos.</p>	<p>of HR works under but felt a strategy to improve the communication and sense of understanding would be beneficial. The QPC endorsed this view and requested the Department of HR to address the recommendation as part of its Quality Improvement Plan.</p>	<p>with departments. The department has an allegiance to the organisation and not to heads of department or individuals.</p>
<p>While there is very strong support for the Employee Assistance Programme, feedback suggests that there should be additional internal support structures for staff experiencing individual work related problems which would complement the EAP without threatening its successful role.</p>	<p>QPC welcomed and endorsed this recommendation and noted the response of the Department. QPC requested that the specific actions to be taken should be addressed in detail in the QIP.</p>	<p>All staff were notified in 2004 of assistance available to them. New information flyers have been issued to all staff. The contract for the external support for the EAP scheme is due for renewal and the Department is investigating alternatives to the present service provider, including the possibility of the service being provided from within Ireland.</p> <p>Work is on-going on the staff welfare strategy. However presently there is not a Staff Welfare Officer as the previous incumbent has resigned her post. A Staff Welfare Group, headed by the Manager Employee Relations, is working with the Partnership Group to continue to develop the strategy.</p>
<p>The effectiveness of the Bullying and Harassment policy should be reviewed. Usage of the Staff Contacts system should be monitored, while ensuring the confidentiality of the role, to ensure the system is operating effectively. Consideration should be given to increasing the ratio of contacts to staff.</p>	<p>QPC was somewhat concerned as to whether full use is being made of the procedures. QPC endorsed the recommendation of the PRG and wanted and welcomed the plans for review by the Department of HR. The QPC did recognise that many issues may be resolved by the use of the Staff Ombudsman and the Grievance</p>	<p>The staff contacts system has been reviewed and enhanced, with retraining of staff contacts.</p> <p>A new Well Bring Policy is being developed and is planned for implementation by March 2005.</p> <p>The review of the policy will be conducted by the Staff Welfare Group during 04/05. Education of staff in relation to the policy and its implication will also be</p>

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	procedures thus resulting in relatively few staff resorting to the procedures under Bullying & Harassment.	implemented.
The Administrative Staff Grading process should be reviewed since the process as currently designed appears to consume excessive time and resources. Serious consideration should be given to devolving responsibility for initial grading at departmental level (i.e. the department of the applicant) with any appeals being handled by an internal representative committee which would include trades union involvement.	QPC did not endorse the recommendation of PRG. The QPC accepted and agreed with the response of the Department of HR in relation to the implementation of the scheme. However the QPC did express concerns and reservations about the grading scheme itself (although not about the manner in which the scheme is managed by the Department) and requested that perhaps the Department might give some thought to the possibility of reviewing the details of the process itself.	The Administrative Staff Grading process has been reviewed. The Chair of the Grading Committee is finalising a paper as to the changes needed. The scheme has been improved and now remains open to applicants all the time.
The role, remit and composition of the HR Committee should be reviewed. The committee does not appear to be operating optimally.	QPC strongly endorsed the recommendation and recommended immediate action. The QPC agreed that the terms of reference of the Committee needs to be re-considered and perhaps a new mandate should be put in place.	A new HR Committee has been appointed by the GB, chaired by Mr. Douglas Kelleher, and is now meeting regularly, discussing issues of mutual concern. The Committee will discuss priorities and strategy and will report annually to the GB and then will be published.
Serious consideration should also be given to establishing a separate HR Users Committee, or similar. (see text of report for details)	The QPC felt that the HR Committee was put in place to be a committee where representatives of all categories of staff would meet and discuss issues of mutual concern. The QPC agreed with the response of the Department and did not endorse this recommendation. Effective operation of the HR Committee should mean there would be no need for	No requirement for action.

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of the QPC	Follow-Up Report October 2004
	a separate Users Committee.	
<p>The academic promotion process needs to be reviewed with a view to speeding up the decision-making. It is recommended that specific dates be agreed annually in advance during which the process would be conducted and completed. These dates should be published each year in the College Calendar.</p>	<p>QPC welcomed the commitment to improve decision-making time on applications for promotion. QPC suggested monitoring and a review within one year.</p>	<p>A new SL Promotion Scheme was put in place and the Promotion & Establishments Board is due to deliver its recommendations on the first round of implementation shortly. The Academic Council should then be asked to review its operation following a report from the Promotion & Establishments Board.</p> <p>It was decided to refer the issue of the review of the AP Promotion Scheme to Academic Council in the first instance, with a suggestion that the committee that had been appointed to review the SL scheme should be asked to extend their work to the AP scheme.</p>
<p>The issue of inequitable terms and conditions etc. of temporary staff needs to be addressed as a priority taking into account legislation implementing the relevant EU directives and the fact that the University as 'an emanation of the state' is likely to be vulnerable to individual challenge directly under the directives regardless of the position on home legislation.</p>	<p>QPC acknowledged the difficulties and resource restraints the University is working under in regard to addressing these issues. The QPC was aware that as much as possible is being done in this area and that appropriate action is not always in the control of the Department of HR</p>	<p>The HR Department has carried out a full assessment of all staff on temporary contracts and has visited every department to verify the situation in each and advise on same.</p> <p>All HR staff have been briefed on benefit alignment and all departments have also received information on same.</p> <p>The VP for Research Policy & Support has been advised of concerns expressed around difficulties experienced by staff on externally funded, renewable contracts.</p> <p>The Department has ascertained where the part-time budget is being spent. The allocation to the pat-time budget has been adjusted as temporary contracts have been converted into</p>

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		permanent contracts. The examination of the use of part-time staff will be completed by December 04. In discussion with the VP for Research Policy & Support, a policy is being developed on proleptic appointments which will be sent to the Academic Council and then to GB in December 04.
The issue of workloads should be addressed within the Department. Specifically, the Department should determine priorities, undertake activity analysis, and develop job profiles for all staff.	QPC endorsed the recommendation and welcomed action by Department. The QPC requested that the specific actions that are to be taken be detailed in the QIP.	Implemented. The Department formed part of the pilot for Performance Management review scheme. Individual priorities and workloads have been agreed with all staff. Role descriptions have been agreed for teams and individuals.
Steps should be taken immediately to improve internal communication in the Department. It is noted that this is addressed in the Self-Assessment Report. This initiative should be continually reviewed and assessed through the use of staff feedback.	QPC endorsed the recommendation and welcomed action by Department. QPC requested that the specific initiatives and structures be included in the QIP.	Department has retained commitment to taking all staff offsite at least once per year to consider critical issues. Work is still in progress on the implementation of the HRIS and codifying standard operating procedures in relation to recruitment activity and the administration of contracts.

The PRG welcomed and endorsed the many recommendations for improvement made by the Department. These are detailed in the following table, and were endorsed by the Quality Promotion Committee and the planned actions welcomed.

Recommendation by Department	Department Action	Follow-up Report October 2004
Communication of Information	Develop Standard Operating Procedures around all routine activity and queries and circulate to all staff. Non-routine queries should be transferred to the appropriate member of staff and outcomes should be logged and advised to all HR staff	Not yet complete. Is in process of implementation. Implemented and on-going.

Recommendation by Department	Department Action	Follow-up Report October 2004
	<p>Continue to develop the HR web site</p> <p>Review Induction process</p> <p>Consider adopting a buddying system for new staff</p> <p>Develop induction materials as a publication</p>	<p>A new web site has been developed and its improvement is continuing.</p> <p>Completed. Changes implemented for induction programmes in 2004.</p> <p>Not implemented. It was decided not to implement this recommendation at this point in time.</p> <p>Completed. All materials are published on web site.</p>
Customer Service	<p>Communicate delays to customers</p> <p>Develop systems for tracking correspondence and complaints</p> <p>Work with Campbell's catering, a key provider of refreshments and meals to both training and recruitment initiatives, to ensure a consistently high service.</p>	<p>Implemented and on-going.</p> <p>Implemented by Head of Department.</p> <p>Work is still ongoing in this area. Service is still not consistently reliable.</p>
Grading Recruitment/Interview feedback/Issue of Contracts/Staff Progression	<p>Issue reminders to everyone involved in recruitment as to the confidentiality of the process</p> <p>Extend use of service quality questionnaire to all Chairpersons of interview boards (academic and administrative)</p> <p>Work with College authorities to better distribute recruitment activity throughout the year</p> <p>Review implementation of HRIS to ensure that contracts are being issued in a timely fashion and prior to commencement of</p>	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>Implemented.</p> <p>A policy on this was approved and Deans-EMG now hold specific meetings throughout the year to approve post proposals.</p> <p>This is still on-going and plans are in place for completion by March 2005.</p>

Recommendation by Department	Department Action	Follow-up Report October 2004
	<p>employment/expiry of contract</p> <p>All part-time staff to be issued with contracts and/or terms and conditions of employment</p>	Implemented.
<p>Development of HR Department; HR in relation to Management/HR Roles</p>	<p>Develop HR web-site to identify roles and responsibilities within the department and introduce a complaints function to link to VP for HR</p> <p>Arrange regular briefing sessions for University staff to introduce publications, new policies, publicise HR Charter and HR Queries e-mail address</p> <p>Identify a contact person in each functional unit to be the first point of contact for all queries *</p> <p>HR staff to be briefed on work in other administrative areas of the University</p> <p>Develop open communication between HR and applicants, including in relation to feedback to unsuccessful candidates</p> <p>Consider opportunities to integrate Pensions Administration into the Department of Human Resources</p> <p>Progress capacity to manage headcount and engage in long-term manpower planning activities and support the University in continuing to make strategic appointments.</p> <p>Examine all opportunities to devolve HRM to department level:</p>	<p>Implemented from September 2004.</p> <p>Implemented and on-going.</p> <p>Implemented.</p> <p>Is being implemented as necessary.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Not being implemented at the moment.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Planned for March 2005.</p>

Recommendation by Department	Department Action	Follow-up Report October 2004
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave management programme being devolved <p>Development of Welfare initiatives/policy</p> <p>Examine potential to make existing student health and welfare services available to staff</p>	<p>Ongoing. See references above.</p> <p>This has been looked into and is not an option at the moment.</p>
Training	<p>Develop more job-specific training for different staff categories</p> <p>Discuss possibility of ECDL being made compulsory for all new administrative staff at grades EA and SEA over a specific time scale</p> <p>Revisit scheduling of training courses to facilitate enhanced participation by part-time and job sharing staff</p> <p>Additional web design training to be provided within the Department</p> <p>Investigate whether Careers Service can offer guidance and support to staff</p> <p>Design and deliver mandatory management/leadership development training for Heads of Departments and Deans</p>	<p>This is on-going and is being done.</p> <p>It has been decided not to implement this recommendation.</p> <p>This is under active consideration and is an on-going exercise.</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>This is not possible within existing resources.</p> <p>Implemented.</p>
Relevancy of Staff support schemes/advantage scheme	<p>Revise UCC Advantage scheme and re-publicise</p> <p>Improve quality of information available on the web</p>	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>Implemented. Web site has been updated with improved quality of information.</p>
Performance Management	<p>Progress implementation of agreed staff performance management system:</p>	<p>This is on schedule and is envisaged that the system will be fully implemented in January 2005 as planned. The</p>

Recommendation by Department	Department Action	Follow-up Report October 2004
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree model for UCC including full consultation with all staff • Introduce pilot scheme with necessary training • Review pilot scheme • Full implementation 	full scheme will be presented to Governing Body in December 2004 for final approval before full implementation in January 04.
Staff Attitudes/Climate Surveys	Continue to survey staff, exploiting the use of IT wherever possible, publicise results and address issues raised in line with existing practice	This has not yet been implemented.
Benchmarking	Actively continue to benchmark and develop the Department's activities in line with sectoral and professional best practice	Ongoing activity.
Secretarial Centre	<p><i>Confidentiality</i> Application Forms – turn completed application forms face-down when on desks Be aware of sensitivity of staff on temporary contracts and keep conversations low. Photocopying – ensure <i>all</i> work awaiting collection is covered.</p> <p>Put a version of the Internal Directory on the Intranet when it is launched (staff access only) to enable continual updating.</p>	Will be implemented when staff intranet is launched.
Switchboard	<p>Complete independent review of Switchboard service currently underway</p> <p>Communicate details of the full service and operating times (following completion of review above) to all staff at regular periods throughout the academic year.</p> <p>To balance demands arising from internal and external callers at peak times</p> <p>A Standard Greeting to be</p>	<p>The Switchboard operations have been improved following recommendations from an external consultant.</p> <p>Operating times have been extended and all other recommendations as listed here have been implemented.</p>

Recommendation by Department	Department Action	Follow-up Report October 2004
	<p>adopted whereby the operator will identify themselves to all callers</p> <p>A recommendation on proper use of voice-mail to be communicated to all staff following the review of services (see above)</p> <p>Develop a Code of Practice on Customer Service for Switchboard staff for immediate implementation</p>	

Recommendations from Department	Recommendation of the QPC	Follow-up report October 2004
<p>That the North Wing Conference Room be refurbished or, at a minimum, painted.</p>	<p>The QPC strongly endorsed this recommendation and agreed to write to the Buildings Committee asking for immediate action.</p>	<p>The Buildings Committee was written to and some improvements were made. However the work was not completed and the room is still not in a satisfactory state of repair. The Director of Quality Promotion undertook to write to the Director of Buildings & Estates requesting immediate action.</p>
<p>That the Department be assigned dedicated space for interview facilities.</p>	<p>QPC did not endorse this recommendation of the Department. It was noted that there are two new re-furbished rooms in the Tower of the North Wing that are now in use and extremely suitable for interviews. The rooms may be reserved by contacting Room Bookings in the Office of Buildings & Estates. The QPC did not endorse the recommendation of a dedicated interview room when there is such a shortage of space in the University.</p>	<p>This had not been endorsed by the QPC. With the availability of the refurbished Tower Rooms provision of dedicated interview rooms is not now an issue.</p>
<p>That the upper floors of the houses on College Road be fitted with air conditioning.</p>	<p>The QPC recommended that the Department seek assistance and advice from the Office of</p>	<p>No further action has been taken. This is not a problem during the winter months nor</p>

Recommendations from Department	Recommendation of the QPC	Follow-up report October 2004
	Buildings & Estates as to how the situation may be improved. There may be alternatives to air-conditioning that would alleviate the difficulties experienced.	when the summer months are not very hot.