

**University College Cork
National University of Ireland, Cork**

Quality Improvement/Quality Assurance

Peer Review Group Report

Department of Human Resources

Academic Year 2002/2003

27th June 2003

Members of the Peer Review Group:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role</u>
Dr. Tom Mullins	Head of Department Department of Education University College Cork	Internal PRG Member (Chairman)
Mr. John FitzGerald	University Librarian, University College Cork	Internal PRG Member
Mr. Paul Bunting	Director of Personnel and Deputy Registrar, University of Bradford	External PRG Member
Ms. Kate Quinlan	Kate Quinlan & Associates	External PRG Member

Timetable for conduct of Peer Review Visit

Tuesday 13th May, 2003

- 18.00 – 19.30 Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group
Briefing by Director of Quality Promotion Unit, Dr. N. Ryan.
Group agrees final work schedule and assignment of tasks for the following 2 days.
Views were exchanged and areas to be clarified or explored are identified.
- 20.00 Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group and Head of Department, Mr. Noel Keeley, and departmental co-ordinating committee (Eilis Caffrey, Grace Conway, Kieran Creedon, Maeve Lankford, Emily McCarthy, Susan O'Connor, Maureen Ring)

Wednesday 14th May, 2003

- 08.30 – 09.00 Convening of Peer Review Group in President's Dining Room, East Wing
- 09.00 – 13.00 Consideration of Self-Assessment Report and other inputs along with all unit staff, including administrative and technical staff, as appropriate.
Time will be allowed for private meetings of members of the Peer Review Group with members of staff.
- 09.00 – 09.30 Mr. Noel Keeley, Head of Department
- 09.30 – 10.30 Meeting with all staff of Department (except the Head)

(Venue: Boole 1)

10.30 – 11.00 Tea/coffee (Venue: outside Boole 1)

Venue: the following meetings took place in the President's Dining Room

11.00 – 11.20 Staff of Human Resources section (except the Manager)

11.20 – 11.40 Staff of Employee Relations section (except the Manager)

11.40 – 12.00 Staff of Training & Development section (except the Managers)

12.00 – 12.20 Staff of Recruitment section (except the Manager)

12.20 – 12.40 Staff of Secretarial Centre, including Switchboard Operators
(except the Supervisor)

12.40 – 13.00 Managers

Ms. Eilis Caffrey, Supervisor, Secretarial Centre

Ms. Anne Gannon, Manager, Recruitment

Dr. Maeve Lankford, Manager, Training & Development (J/S)

Ms. Helen O'Donoghue, Manager, Human Resources

Mr. Paul Ryan, Manager, Employee Relations

Ms. Mary Ward, Manager, Training & Development (J/S)

13.00 – 14.00 Working lunch for members of Peer Review Group

Venue: President's Dining Room, East Wing

Attended by

Professor Paul Giller, Dean, Faculty of Science

Professor Peter Woodman, Dean, Faculty of Arts

14.00 – 14.45 Visit to core facilities of Unit (Elderwood, East Wing, North Wing
Conference Room, Switchboard in O'Rahilly Building) escorted by Mr. N.
Keeley and Ms. M. Ward

15.00 – 15.30 Deans of Faculties

Ms. M. McDonagh, Dean, Faculty of Law

Professor R. Yacamini, Dean, Faculty of Engineering

15.30 – 16.00 Meeting with Chair of Staff Council and Representatives of Excellence
Through People Committee

Ms. Marita Foster, Chair, Staff Council

Ms. Kathryn Neville, Member, ETP Committee

Mr. Billy Ring, Member, ETP Committee

Mr. Christy Roche, Member, ETP Committee

16.00 – 16.30 Representatives of Heads of Departments

Dr. Maeve Conrick, Head, Department of French

Dr. Jim Grannell, Head, School of Mathematics, Applied Mathematics &
Statistics

Professor Peter Kennedy, Head, Department of Microelectronic
Engineering

16.30 – 17.00 Conference call with Professor G. T. Wrixon, President, UCC

Venue: President's Office, East Wing

- 17.00 – 17.15 Mr. John Horgan, Chair, UCC Grading Committee
- 18.30 – 19.30 Meeting of Peer Review Group to identify remaining aspects to be clarified and to finalise tasks for the following day
- 19.30 Working private dinner for members for the Peer Review Group

Thursday 15th May, 2003

- 08.30 – 09.00 Convening of Peer Review Group in President's Dining Room, East Wing
- 09.00 – 09.30 Professor Áine Hyland, Vice-President, member of the Executive Management Group, and Chair of Staff Enhancement & Development Committee
- 09.30 – 10.00 Mr. Pdraig Lynch, Governor, Member of HR Committee
Mr. Frank Martin, Governor, Member of HR Committee
- 10.00 – 10.45 Representatives of Trade Unions and Inter-Union Group
Ms. Mary Steele, International Education Office – SIPTU
Dr. Michael Creed, Civil & Environmental Engineering – IFUT
Mr. Maurice O'Donoghue, Department of Microbiology – Inter-Union Group
Mr. Frank McGrath, Buildings & Estates – Inter-Union Group
- 10.30 – 10.45 Mr. Alan O'Leary, Branch Secretary, SIPTU
- 10.45 – 11.00 Coffee/Tea
- 11.00 – 11.30 Mr. Donagh Corcoran, IBEC
- 11.30 – 11.40 Ms. Mary O'Mahony, Switchboard Operator
- 11.40 – 11.50 Ms. Mary Margaret Buckley, Switchboard Operator
- 12.00 – 13.00 Mr. Noel Keeley, Head of Department
- 13.00 – 14.00 Working Lunch for members of Peer Review Group
- 14.00 – 16.30 Preparation of first draft of final report
- 16.30 - 17.00 Exit presentation made to all staff of the Department by the Chair of the Peer Review Group summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group.
Venue: Council Room, North Wing
- 19.00 Working private dinner for members of the Peer Review Group to complete drafting of report and finalisation of arrangements for speedy completion and submission of final report.

Friday 16th May, 2003

Externs depart

Methodology:

The report was drafted jointly by all members of the group. The report was drafted during the review and revised subsequently using confidential e-mail communication. The revision process was coordinated by the internal PRG members.

1. Conformation/Comment on the details of the Self Assessment Report (SAR)

The SAR is considered to be a clear and comprehensive assessment of the performance of the department. The report is 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, are excellent. The format and presentation of the report is also excellent. In summary, the PRG considers the report to be a model of good practice.

The SAR is considered to be accurate and all subsequent interviews have confirmed this.

2. The present state of the Department of Human Resources

The Department of Human Resources was established in 1999 and founded on the former Personnel Office. Since 1999 the Department has rapidly established a comprehensive policy framework for HR in UCC and has quickly developed active HR support services to all University activities. This initial stage of intensive infrastructure development has been driven by two main forces:

- a) the urgent need for the University to comply with emerging regulation and legislation in employment law and related areas;
- b) the selection of Human Resources by the President, as espoused in the UCC Strategic Plan, as requiring strategic development and significant investment in order to provide improved support for the staff of the University.

This initial formation phase has been very successful. The University and its staff now enjoy a comprehensive and robust set of HR policies in addition to professional support in the areas of recruitment, employee relations, compensation and benefits and training and development.

The PRG recognises 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 feels 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 which have emerged in the academic community during this period of expansion and establishment. 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 has noted the high approval ratings for the department in its survey of UCC staff. 80% of respondents register that they find the services offered by the Department to be very good or excellent.

3. Comment on activities

Each of the four main sections have performed well in their roles to date.

Training and Development policies have been sound and very effective. It is noted that this section has coordinated the QA process and the Excellence through People initiative, in addition to developing a very impressive calendar of training and development initiatives aimed at staff across all levels and areas of the College.

The staff of the Employee Relations Section have worked well in containing potential industrial relations and grievance issues at local level through early intervention, and in reducing the number of historical employee legal disputes. Much of this work is hidden from public view and the PRG wishes to commend this section for their continued success in this area. In addition, this section has contributed greatly to the development of the policy infrastructure through a particularly inclusive approach to the drafting of policies by involving staff and trades union partners. All interviewees commented on the personal commitment and professionalism of the staff involved in negotiations. However, many voiced dissatisfaction with the amount of time taken at institutional level to resolve issues.

The Recruitment Section has a reputation for efficiency and good service to departments. However, recent delays in the University's post approval procedure have exacerbated the problems associated with handling a 'batch' process placing inordinate pressure on this section. It should be noted that complaints about these delays are frequently levelled at the Department and the University should undertake to streamline its post approval process - not just to relieve pressure on the Department, but to ensure that the best people can be attracted to the University through timely and planned recruitment procedures.

The Compensations and Benefits Section has succeeded in establishing administrative procedures and systems to control the very large amount of information which is required for smooth staff deployment throughout the organisation. It is noted that the very recently implemented HR Information System (HRIS) will greatly assist this Section and the management of human resources generally.

The Secretarial Centre continues to provide excellent support to the Department and to other areas throughout the College and presents as a well managed and well functioning service.

The central role of the Switchboard in acting as the reception point for telephone visitors and users is perhaps not fully recognised in the Department. The staff of this section appear to work under some constraints which should be reviewed immediately by the management of the Department in the context of the review which is being undertaken.

Current efforts to amalgamate the Recruitment Section with the Compensation and Benefits Section are welcomed in order to increase efficiency and to equalise workloads across both areas through sharing of staff. The extent of the challenge in making this amalgamation work successfully is not to be underestimated. While staff are very committed to further

improving services in these areas, great care should continue to be taken to include all staff in this change process and to clarify the roles and levels of responsibility involved.

4. Achievements

The PRG note 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.

5. Deficiencies/Inadequacies

5.1 Internal

- a) The PRG noted that there is concern among staff at all levels about workloads. This is understandable, given the pace at which policies and services have been developed in the last number of years. The PRG notes that there is some unease in relation to the amalgamation of the two sections within the department and that staff feel they are not being adequately consulted about their changing roles. There is also a feeling that, as one staff member stated “accountability needs to be matched by recognition”, in terms of appropriate grading within the Department.
- b) Internal communication within the department, between sections and between levels needs to be improved generally. Staff feel a need to be listened to and engaged in decision-making, especially that decision-making which is relevant to their area. They recognise also that they could assist each other more, and thereby provide a better service, by improving communications with colleagues in other sections about what they are doing etc.: the high workloads involved have made this difficult to achieve.
- c) The Switchboard requires attention as a Section. There appears to be an absence of policies in relation to telephone use at departmental level. Reports of entire departments using voice-mail or call-forwarding are worrying. There is understandable anxiety about the recent decision to afford priority to all internal calls over incoming external calls. Within the Section, there is concern about equity in the allocation of duties and designation of authority, particularly between part-time and full-time staff. There would appear to be unresolved problems in relation to staffing of the Reception Point and the staffing levels at the Switch at certain times during the day. The physical condition of the Switchboard staff office needs to be reviewed. There is concern also about the possible implications on the future

of the service of the review that is being undertaken. Switchboard staff need to be engaged more directly and actively in resolving all of these issues.

5.2 External

- a) The Department now needs to engage more fully with the campus community, and work jointly with the academic community. The PRG detected some negative reaction to the growth of the department and its perceived powerful role in traditionally academic-led initiatives (promotion, recruitment, staff development, etc.). Many in the academic community are not fully convinced that HR should have the apparently dominant role it appears to have at the moment.
- b) There is a need for the Department to display to the academic community the Department's understanding of the particular features of the academic ethos.
- c) There is a need for the Department to win the trust and gain the commitment of the academic community. The Department should become more sensitive to the perception of the department as a threat to the traditional values and culture of the University.
- d) There is a strong perception that HR, particularly from the trade union and staff representatives, is always on the side of Management in dealing with issues or disputes at departmental level. Furthermore, in relation to some disputes, it was felt that instead of attempting to find a resolution to an issue within the community through full and proper negotiation, HR too quickly resorted to calling in outside agencies and so the issue tended to grow out of proportion.
- e) Some staff who are not in positions of power and influence, particularly among support staff, feel great apprehension about how they may be treated if they raise individual work problems with HR. There is a strong feeling that staff are not always treated as people and that personal concerns are ignored. This is against a background of what was described as, a "culture of fear" in the University.
- f) An expectation was developed (particularly among trade unions) that things would have improved following the joint efforts at building the HR infrastructure. This expectation would not appear to have been fulfilled for the trade union representatives.
- g) The administrative staff grading process does not appear to be operating optimally. The system of referring all new and existing posts for grading to a Committee in the first instance, and to the Grading Appeals Committee in the case of an appeal, appears to be excessively bureaucratic and not in the best interests of staff or the efficiency of the institution.
- h) There is some lack of clarity in how to access HR services: it is not clear to the enquirer who is responsible for what and how queries will be dealt with. There is evidence of some lack of consistency in the responses from different HR staff and in the continuity of support (e.g. in the servicing of committees by HR - not including job selection committees - where it is not clear if certain individuals have been assigned on an ongoing basis to particular committees).

- i) The academic promotion process needs to be reviewed to ensure it takes less time from application to decision.
- j) The role of the Human Resource Committee is not clear. The remit and the composition of this Committee needs to be reviewed. There is a feeling of an over-dominant presence of HR, both in the number of staff in attendance at committee meetings and in control of the agenda.
- k) The survey of staff indicated a problem of inequity in the terms, condition and treatment of staff on temporary contracts.

6. Critical Resource Limitations

Assuming a continuation of the existing level of functions and demands the current funding levels would appear broadly to be adequate.

The quality of the space occupied by the Department and the dispersal of the department across two locations are not satisfactory and contribute to the internal communication difficulties noted. Office space is generally cramped and overcrowded for the nature of the work involved. There is no private consultation space at Elderwood.

The physical condition of the Switchboard office is inadequate.

The condition of North Wing Conference Room is poor and makes it an unsuitable location for recruitment interviews. This is often the prospective employee's first encounter with the University and it sets a poor image. A well specified multi-use space which could serve as an interview, training and meeting room should be assigned to the Department either by refurbishing the North Wing Conference Room or provision of alternative space.

7. Department's Recommendations for Improvement

The PRG affirms the actions proposed and undertaken by the Department in reviewing the Department's strategy, management, functional operation and location of offices. The group endorses their recommendations and does not wish to take issue with any of the recommendations or plans.

7.1 Action already taken

The survey of staff of the Department of Human Resources and the SWOT analysis process led to the identification of required action in a number of areas as highlighted in the Self Assessment Report, Section 5. The Department has taken appropriate action in all the priority areas identified as follows:

Action Required	Action Completed
<p><i>Reviewing the department strategy, management, functional set-up and location of offices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify consultant to support Department in developing its strategic plan and direction for the next five years. • Review functional set-up of the department and management structures. • Work to support the implementation of the HRIS system and consequent business processes also involves re-examining the existing functional set-up, particularly in relation to the allocation of work between staff in Recruitment and Compensation and Benefits and a revised structure and office location is currently being developed. 	<p style="text-align: center;">✓ Planned for 14 & 15 April 2003</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓ On-going and part of session on 14&15 April</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓ On-going. Restructuring of Recruitment and Compensation & Benefits for completion in April 2003.</p>
<p>Improving Internal Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice board in place in the kitchen in 3 Elderwood • Development of the HR website to improve the quality of information available to all staff, including staff of the department • Development of an electronic bulletin board for use within the HR department • Implementation of monthly department-wide meetings, including briefing on recent developments within the Department and/or the University and an opportunity to brief/train all HR staff on new policies and procedures as they are being implemented. • Manager's meetings now take place fortnightly, complemented up by fortnightly meetings at the unit level. • Retained commitment to taking all staff, off-site, to consider critical issues once or twice per year. 	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓ On-going</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓ wef. March 2003</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓ wef. Nov 2002</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓ wef. Oct 2002</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓ Dates to be determined</p>

Action Required	Action Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of cross-functional teams have also been established to improve and facilitate internal communication around issues that require a strategic intervention: IT Committee Health and Welfare Committee • As part of the implementation of the HRIS, a number of Standard Operating Procedures are currently being codified in relation to recruitment activity and the administration of contracts to ensure a consistent and high quality approach to all such areas of activity. 	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>Est'd wef 20/12/02 Est'd wef 21/11/02</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>Work in progress</p>
<p>Training –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All new staff are to be inducted into all functional areas of the Department with immediate effect. • All staff now receive briefings on new HR policy initiatives at monthly Staff Meetings. • All staff have been advised that it is departmental policy that everyone would have two training opportunities per annum, subject to a normal maximum of 5 days. • All managers to conduct developmental reviews with staff to identify training and development needs on an on-going basis, pending the introduction of a University-wide Performance Management process. 	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>On-going wef 10/02</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>On-going wef</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>On-going.</p>
<p>Customer service</p> <p>Development of Customer service charter for the Department: <i>Code of Professional Conduct and Practice</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>Circulated 03/02</p>
<p>Information Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of department-wide IT Committee (see above) • On-going development of Departmental web-page • Members of staff in each functional area are being trained in updating and maintaining their respective web pages 	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>On-going</p>

Action Required	Action Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on-going for all staff on all aspects of HRIS system relevant to their work. 	<p style="text-align: center;">✓ On-going</p>

7.2 Recommended future action

Following review of the feedback from HR Department staff, the Staff Survey and the Benchmarking process, the Department has recommended the following actions in relation to the following broad areas of departmental activity:

- Communication of Information
- Customer Service
- Grading, Recruitment; interview feedback; Issue of contracts; Staff Progression
- Development of HR Department/ HR in relation to Management/ HR Roles
- Training – relevancy and issues
- Dealing with Staff Problems/Bullying, Harassment
- Relevancy of Staff Support Schemes/ Advantage Scheme
- Treatment of contract, temporary and academic staff
- Performance Management
- Staff Attitudes/Climate Surveys
- Benchmarking

Recommendation	Action
<p>Communication of Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Design and deliver an awareness campaign for different categories of staff/audiences on the work, publications and staff of the Department • Continue to develop the HR web site • Review Induction process • Consider adopting a buddying system for new staff • Develop induction materials as a publication 	<p>Functional Managers</p> <p>All staff</p> <p>All Managers</p> <p>HRIS Project Manager</p> <p>T&D Manager</p> <p>T&D Manager</p> <p>T&D Manager</p>

Recommendation	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake more aggressive communications process to make management and staff aware of existing policy and procedures 	T&D Manager / All Functional Managers
<p>Customer Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training to HR staff on telephone technique and customer service issues Increased use of Display phones Communicate delays to customers Develop systems for tracking correspondence and complaints Work with Campbell's catering, a key provider of refreshments and meals to both training and recruitment initiatives, to ensure a consistently high service Identify dedicated interview space in the Department 	T&D Manager VP for HR All staff VP for HR T&D Manager / Recruitment Manager VP for HR / Director of Buildings & Estates
<p>Grading Recruitment/Interview feedback/Issue of Contracts/Staff Progression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review implementation of new Grading scheme to ensure concerns have been addressed Issue reminders to everyone involved in recruitment as to the confidentiality of the process Extend use of service quality questionnaire to all Chairpersons of interview boards (academic and administrative) Work with College authorities to better distribute recruitment activity throughout the year Review implementation of HRIS to ensure that contracts are being issued in a timely fashion and prior to commencement of employment/expiry of contract Train Heads of Department on contract procedures/budgets/time scales 	ER Manager Recruitment Manager Recruitment Manager VP for HR / Recruitment Manager HR Manager & Recruitment Manager HR Manager & Recruitment Manager

Recommendation	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All part-time staff to be issued with contracts and/or terms and conditions of employment 	HR Manager / ER Manager

Recommendation	Action
<p>Development of HR Department; HR in relation to Management/ HR Roles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop HR web-site to identify roles and responsibilities within the department Arrange regular briefing sessions for staff to introduce publications, new policies etc. Develop systems for receiving comments/queries/feedback from staff Identify a contact person in each functional unit to be the first point of contact for all queries – this could be a rotating role Log all queries received into main HR reception HR staff to be briefed on work in other administrative areas of the University Develop open communication between HR and applicants, including in relation to feedback to unsuccessful candidates Consider opportunities to integrate Pensions Administration into the Department of Human Resources Progress capacity to manage headcount and engage in long-term manpower planning activities Support the University in continuing to make strategic appointments Examine all opportunities to devolve HRM to department level Development of Welfare initiatives/policy 	<p>HRIS Project Manager / All Managers</p> <p>All Managers</p> <p>VP for HR</p> <p>All Managers</p> <p>Receptionist staff</p> <p>VP for HR / All Managers</p> <p>Recruitment Manager</p> <p>VP for HR / HR Manager</p> <p>Recruitment Manager</p> <p>VP for HR / Recruitment Manager</p> <p>VP for HR / HR Manager / HRIS Project Manager</p> <p>VP for HR / HR Manager / ER Manager</p>

Recommendation	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine potential to make existing student health and welfare services available to staff 	VP for HR / Registrar & VP for Academic Affairs

Recommendation	Action
<p>Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop more job-specific training for different staff categories ECDL to become compulsory for all new administrative staff at grades EA and SEA over a specific time scale Revisit scheduling of training courses to facilitate enhanced participation by part-time and job sharing staff Additional web design training to be provided within the Department Investigate whether Careers Service can offer guidance and support to staff Design and deliver mandatory management/leadership development training for Heads of Departments and Deans 	<p>T&D Manager</p> <p>T&D Manager</p> <p>T&D Manager</p> <p>HRIS Project Manager</p> <p>VP for HR / Registrar & VP for Academic Affairs</p> <p>T&D Manager / VP for HR</p>
<p>Bullying and Harassment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement new Well Being Policy Re-Communicate the services available to staff 	<p>VP for HR / HR Manager / ER Manager</p> <p>ER Manager</p>
<p>Relevancy of Staff support schemes/advantage scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise UCC Advantage scheme and re-publicise Improve quality of information available on the web 	<p>HR Manager</p> <p>HR Manager</p>
<p>Treatment of contract, temporary and academic staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff need to be advised re. Benefit alignment that has 	<p>HR Manager /</p>

Recommendation	Action
<p>already taken place and briefed on future developments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All HR staff to be briefed on benefit alignment Advise VP for Research Policy and Support of concerns expressed around difficulties experienced by staff on externally funded, renewable contracts 	<p>ER Manager</p> <p>HR Manager / ER Manager</p> <p>VP for HR</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further examine the apparently excessive use of part-time staff in UCC in relation to benchmark comparators 	<p>VP for HR</p>
Performance Management	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress implementation of agreed staff performance management system 	<p>T&D Manager / ER Manager / Partner-ship Committee</p>
Staff Attitudes/Climate Surveys	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to survey staff, exploiting the use of IT wherever possible, publicise results and address issues raised in line with existing practice 	<p>VP for HR / T&D Manager</p>
Benchmarking	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively continue to benchmark and develop the Department's activities in line with sectoral and professional best practice 	<p>All Managers</p>

SECRETARIAL CENTRE

Recommendation	Action
Confidentiality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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>All staff in Sec Centre</p> <p>All staff in Sec Centre</p> <p>All staff in Sec Centre</p>

<p>Internal Telephone Directory</p> <p>Put a version of the Directory on the Intranet when it is launched (staff access only) to enable continual updating.</p>	<p>Supervisor of Secretarial Centre</p>
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<p align="center">SWITCHBOARD</p>	
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>Action</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete independent review of Switchboard service currently underway 	<p>HR Manager / Supervisor of Secretarial Centre</p>
<p>Hours Of Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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>Supervisor of Secretarial Centre</p>
<p>Operator Response Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To balance demands arising from internal and external callers at peak times • Exceptional calls will always require additional time and attention but operators are aware that the majority of calls must be dealt with as swiftly as is reasonable in the circumstances. 	<p>All Switchboard Operators</p> <p>All Switchboard Operators</p>
<p>Customer Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Standard Greeting to be adopted whereby the operator will identify themselves to all callers • A recommendation on proper use of voice-mail to be communicated to all staff following the review of services (see above) • Develop a Code of Practice on Customer Service for Switchboard staff for immediate implementation 	<p>All Switchboard Operators</p> <p>Supervisor of Secretarial Centre</p> <p>HR Manager / Supervisor of Secretarial Centre</p>

8. PRG's Recommendations for Improvement

In addition to the foregoing, the PRG wishes to make the following specific recommendations for action. These are grouped into those which are broadly external and internal to the Department.

8.1 External Recommendations

- a) The Department should continue to develop its strategy for developing more positive relationships within the University. This might include the use of open forums (some of these should be issue-driven), department visits, clinics and other relationship building initiatives. These initiatives could be promoted collectively by a strap-line such as 'getting alongside'. The Department should also devise a way of relating good news about the department and its work to the University community, perhaps through a more frequent newsletter or use of the WWW site.
- b) The Department should develop a strategy to convince the academic community that its allegiance is not to any section 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. This initiative links with that recommended in (a) above.
- c) 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 compliment the EAP without threatening its successful role.
- d) 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.
- e) 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.
- f) The role, remit and composition of the Human Resource Committee should be reviewed. The committee does not appear to be operating optimally.
- g) Serious consideration should also be given to establishing a separate Human Resources Users Committee, or similar. This would act as a forum where HR plans and policies could be openly discussed. The Users Committee should comprise elected representatives of services and administrative areas and elected academic representatives of each faculty. This would ensure direct linkage with the University decision-making system and would lead to greater awareness by all staff of the role of HR, as well as greater involvement and endorsement in HR policy planning by the academic community. The HR Users Committee could be chaired

by a member of the HR Committee who would provide a report to each meeting of the Human Resources Committee.

- h) The academic promotion process is unduly slow. This causes great dissatisfaction among applicants. The 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.
- i) 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. Apart from the legal position there would be major benefits in terms of improved motivation and retention of this group who form a vital part of universities' staff profile.

8.2 Internal Recommendations

- a) 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.
- b) 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.

Concluding Remarks

The PRG wishes to thank Dr. Norma Ryan and the staff of the Quality Promotion Unit for their support during the assessment process. The organisation of the review was exemplary and ensured that the PRG could focus exclusively on the review itself.