



**Coláiste na hOllscoile, Corcaigh
University College Cork
National University of Ireland, Cork**

**Quality Improvement/Quality Assurance
Feabhsú Cáilíochta/Dearbhú Cáilíochta**

Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha

**Tuairisc an Phiarghrúpa Athbhreithnithe
Report of Peer Review group**

Academic Year 2010/11

Confidential

19 April 2011

Peer Review Group Members

1. An tOllamh Liam Mac Mathúna, An Coláiste Ollscoile, Baile Átha Cliath (Chair)
2. Pádraig Ó hAoláin, Údarás na Gaeltachta
3. An Dr Diarmait Mac Giolla Chríost, Ollscoil Cardiff
4. An tOllamh Des MacHale, Coláiste na hOllscoile, Corcaigh
5. An Dr Rónán Ó Dubhghaill, Coláiste na hOllscoile, Corcaigh (Rapporteur)

Introduction

- The Peer Review Group (PRG) experienced constructive engagement with everyone they met with during the course of the Quality Review.
- The central location of IGL and the general visibility of Irish was noted.
- The staff of IGL were excellent in their engagement with the process and the PRG noted the high quality of the documentation provided in advance of the visit. Points of clarification were promptly resolved during the course of the visit. The IGL were proactive in providing additional documentation during the visit. Any supplementary documentation requested was supplied promptly.
- The staff were very positive and confident in themselves. It is obvious that *esprit de corps* is good and that they have pride in UCC. The team is young with a good mix in ages and gender. They work as a team.

- IGL has good library and IT facilities. The equipment is excellent and they have a good teaching room.
- Reference was made to the Quality Review process itself. Comments were made on the need for an improved explanation to staff in advance.
- IGL has a strong connection with the city but it is challenged by the lack of an Irish centre in the city.
- There are good relations between IGL and student societies, such as An Chuallacht, Áras Uí Thuama and Cumann na Drámaíochta.

Timetable of the Site Visit

The timetable for the site visit is inserted as Appendix A. The PRG is very grateful for the efficient manner in which the Quality Promotion Unit organised the timetable. It also appreciated the opportunity to meet with a wide range of representatives of the various people who participate in the Ionad's activities and with UCC Authorities who interact with the Ionad.

Peer Review

Methodology

The PRG worked as a team throughout the visit. The PRG drafted the report on the last day of the visit. The report was finalised through subsequent email communications. All members of the PRG were involved in writing the report in Irish and English.

Site Visit

The group visited the offices and location of the Ionad in the O'Rahilly Building and student accommodation at Brú na hOllscoile, Áras Uí Thuama.

- The offices and all the teaching resources were seen.
- The PRG was very impressed with the standard of accommodation at Brú na hOllscoile.

Overall Analysis

The Self-Assessment Report and SWOT Analysis

The Self Assessment Report and SWOT Analysis were detailed and quite comprehensive. The Strategic Plan provided during the visit complemented them. The PRG felt that the SWOT analysis was very useful. The PRG confirmed its findings during the Quality Review and the PRG agreed with the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and key challenges identified by IGL.

Benchmarking

The PRG recognises from the initial stages of benchmarking that it would be beneficial for the Ionad to contact comparable international centres.

Findings of the Peer Review Group

Governance

Recommendation 1. The need for an Advisory/Strategic Group of 6/7 members is recognised. This group would be responsible for the strategic development of the Ionad. A senior officer of the University should chair this Advisory Group and its members should include people from inside and outside the University. The Advisory Group would operate on a pilot basis until the next review. The first task is to renew the strategic plan.

Recommendation 2. The PRG recommends that the Director is a member of Bord na Gaeilge and that another member of IGL act as secretary of Bord na Gaeilge. It is

recommended that the Senior Officer of the Office of Corporate and Legal Affairs or his/her representative, have membership on Bord na Gaeilge because of the duties of that office arising from the Official Languages Act.

Recommendation 3. Staff recognise the need to implement the Official Languages Act and that the scheme is being operated in UCC. It is also recognised that it is a sensitive issue as far as some positions are concerned and that discretion is required in the manner in which people are advised to comply with it. It is preferable that this direction comes from UCC's Office of Corporate and Legal Affairs.

Services

IGL is exceptional in the service it provides. It demonstrates strong leadership and it is proactive in finding opportunities to increase services and earn income.

IGL adds value to the services of other units. It is regarded as a model and leader in adopting and implementing new approaches, for example in the field of pedagogy. IGL was the first unit in the University to introduce a mobile classroom. Another significant example is its participation in the "Bridging the Gap" project to widen access to the University (2002-2009). Participation in this activity continued even after the project itself ended.

Recommendation 4. The PRG recognises the current importance of Dún Chíomháin. It is recommended that the discussion between NUIG and UCC is reinforced to promote partnership with regard to advancing Irish university education in the Dingle area.

Recommendation 5. There is a growing need for translation and there is a need to keep it under review as it grows. The importance of translation is increasing in the context of the language scheme and management should ensure that appropriate resources are available.

Recommendation 6. The importance of teaching courses was recognised. They should be

developed, progressing from basic courses to applied courses and should be tailored to the needs of staff e.g. library staff, reception staff.

Staff

The number of staff was increased due to the last review. The staff are responsive, very positive and are confident in their work. It is obvious that *esprit de corps* is good and that they have pride in UCC. The team is young with a good mix in ages and gender. They work as a team.

The PRG recognizes the continued support given to staff development and the PRG wishes this to continue for all staff, including the Director.

Recommendation 7. The PRG recommends that the team would agree to allocate more formal responsibilities and take responsibility for overseeing specific areas daily to ensure effective continuity of service.

Students

Recommendation 8. It is recommended that the scholarship scheme is developed as an added incentive for the promotion of Irish. Currently there is a fee of €5,500 and the granting of a €500 scholarship at year end. It is recommended that

- the scholarships are raised to €1,000, with the fee reduced by €500 at the beginning
- that the scholarship be paid in two installments, and
- that all students are required to organize events to earn credits.

The PRG proposes that the number of scholarships is increased to enable 40 students to be accommodated in a house.

Recommendation 9. It is recommended that some assistance is provided to An Chuallacht to support grammatical accuracy in their publications; to nominate a member of IGL staff annually as a general point contact person to provide assistance to students.

Accommodation

It is recognized that good library and computer facilities exist. The equipment available is excellent and the Ionad has a fine teaching room. It is important to make more space available soon. Suitable accommodation should exist for staff in keeping with their professional work. The PRG recognises that a space problem exists and that some staff are sharing offices. The PRG wishes to note that it recognises that steps are being taken to rectify this.

Recommendation 10. It is recommended that the opening hours for an Seomra Caidrimh are extended and that another Seomra Caidrimh is made available for students.

Recommendation 11. The PRG strongly recommends that any new space being made available is located near the Ionad to maintain the physical presence of the unit.

Finance

In addition to the core budget funding from UCC, IGL has three revenue streams:

1. IGL central budget allocation from € 40,000 (non-pay, determined by the Registrar). This is a decrease from €62,000 in 2008/09 and from €50,000 in 2009/10.
2. Ring-fenced funding for Irish initiatives; the Registrar determines how this is allocated; €485k is the current accumulated balance available to IGL. The 2010/11 funding of €160,000 was used to support 3 positions requiring €185,000.
3. Its own revenues; in 2009/10 €75,000 was received in income from courses and €14,000 from translation.
4. €485,000 is the cumulative balance available for IGL. PRG recommends that immediate steps be taken to use this fund for its activities and project implementation as part of its five year Strategic Plan.

The PRG notes that the current allocation of €40,000 equates to much more than the pro rata reduction across the University. Ironically this could be seen as penalising the IGL for its entrepreneurial success in generating external income.

While taking account of current financial difficulties, one would expect the IGL to have knowledge of its allocation from various sources early in the financial year in line with best financial practice.

The PRG recognises the proactive initiatives being pursued by IGL to generate non-exchequer income. It is perceived as a model that other units should follow. IGL has a very good reputation internally and externally.

Recommendation 12: It is recommended that IGL put together a 5-year strategic financial plan.

Communications

Internal communication should be more formal. A formal connection with the committee of An Chuallacht is recommended, especially in the use of social media.

There is a strong informal connection among staff. It was recommended that regular meetings be held for all staff at least four times per year.

Recommendation 13. There is a need for a more formal communications system. It is recommended that regular meetings, are held for all staff (including Dún Chíomháin), at least four times per year.

Recommendation 14. Every opportunity for publicity should be used e.g. *UCC News*.

Implementation of the Recommendations of the last Quality Review

The PRG notes that most of the recommendations made in the last quality review have been implemented.

Benchmarking

Recommendation 15. The PRG recommends that benchmarking includes comparison with an appropriate international group e.g. in Wales.

Recommendation 16. In preparation for this process, IGL should engage with their counterparts throughout the island of Ireland.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendations from staff are taken into account.

1. The need for an Advisory/Strategic Group of 6/7 members is recognised. This group would be responsible for the strategic development of the Ionad. A senior officer of the University should chair this Advisory Group and its members should include people from inside and outside the University. The Advisory Group would operate on a pilot basis until the next review. The first task is to renew the strategic plan.
2. The PRG recommends that the Director is a member of Bord na Gaeilge and that another member of IGL act as secretary of Bord na Gaeilge. It is recommended that the Senior Officer of the Office of Corporate and Legal Affairs or his/her representative, have membership on Bord na Gaeilge because of the duties of that office arising from the Official Languages Act.

3. Staff recognise the need to implement the Official Languages Act and that the scheme is being operated in UCC. It is also recognized that it is a sensitive issue as far as some posts are concerned and that discretion is required in the manner in which people are advised to comply with it. It is preferable that this direction comes from UCC's Office of Corporate and Legal Affairs.
4. The PRG recognises the current importance of Dún Chíomháin. The PRG recommends that the discussion between NUIG and UCC is reinforced to promote partnership with regard to advancing Irish university education in the Dingle area.
5. There is a growing need for translation. There is a need to keep it under review as it grows. The importance of translation is increasing in the context of the language scheme and the management should ensure that appropriate resources are available.
6. The importance of teaching courses was recognised. They should be developed, progressing from basic courses to applied courses and should be tailored to the needs of staff e.g. library staff, reception staff.
7. The PRG recommends that the team would agree to allocate more formal responsibilities and take responsibility for overseeing specific areas daily to ensure effective continuity of service.
8. It is recommended that the scholarship scheme is developed as an added incentive for the promotion of Irish. Currently there is a fee of €5,500 fee and the granting of a €500 scholarship at year end. It is recommended that
 - the scholarships are raised to €1,000, with the fee reduced by €500 at the beginning
 - that the scholarship be paid in two installments, and
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- The PRG proposes that the number of scholarships is increased to enable 40 students to be accommodated in a house.
9. It is recommended that some assistance is provided to An Chuallacht to support grammatical accuracy in their publications; to nominate a member of IGL staff annually as a general point contact person to provide assistance to students.
 10. It is recommended that the opening hours for an Seomra Caidrimh are extended and that another Seomra Caidrimh is made available for students.
 11. The PRG strongly recommends that any new space being made available is located near the Ionad to maintain the physical presence of the unit.
 12. It is recommended that IGL put together a 5-year strategic financial plan.
 13. There is a need for a more formal communications system. It is recommended that regular meetings, are held for all staff (including Dún Chíomháin), at least four times per year.
 14. Every opportunity for publicity should be used e.g. *UCC News*.
 15. The PRG recommends that benchmarking includes comparison with an appropriate international group e.g. in Wales.
 16. In preparation for this process, IGL should engage with their counterparts throughout the island of Ireland.

Appendix A

IONAD NA GAEILGE LABHARTHA

PEER REVIEW GROUP SITE VISIT TIMETABLE

Monday 21 March 2011			
16.00	Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group Briefing by Director of Quality Promotion Unit, Dr. Norma Ryan. 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	Informal dinner for members of the Peer Review Group, Head of Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha and members of the Ionad Co-ordinating Committee. Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha Staff: Mr. Pól Ruiséal Mr. Brian Ó Donnchadha Ms Marian Ní Shúilliobháin		
Tuesday 22 March 2011			
08.30	Convening of Peer Review Group		
08.45	Mr. Pól Ruiséal, Head of Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha		
09.30	Group meeting with all Ionad staff		
10.30	Tea/coffee		
11.00	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Private meetings with individual staff members</p> <p><i>Prof L. Mac Mathuna</i> <i>Dr. R. Ó Dubhghaill</i></p> <p><u>Group 1</u></p> <p>11.00 Ms. Nuala de Búrca 11.20 Mr. Brian Ó Donnchadha 11.40: Ms. Gobnait Ní Loingsigh 12.00: Ms. Marian Ní Shúilliobháin</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Private meetings with individual staff members</p> <p><i>Prof D. MacHale</i> <i>Dr. D. Mac Giolla Chríost</i> <i>Mr P. Ó hAoláin</i></p> <p><u>Group 2</u></p> <p>11.00 Ms. Áine Ní Gadhra 11.20: Ms. Claire Ní Mhuirthile 11.40: Mr. Seán Ó Laoi 12.00: Mr. Cearbhall Ó Colmáin</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>Private meetings with individual staff members</p> <p><i>Prof L. Mac Mathuna</i> <i>Dr. R. Ó Dubhghaill</i></p> <p><u>Group 1</u></p> <p>11.00 Ms. Nuala de Búrca 11.20 Mr. Brian Ó Donnchadha 11.40: Ms. Gobnait Ní Loingsigh 12.00: Ms. Marian Ní Shúilliobháin</p>	<p>Private meetings with individual staff members</p> <p><i>Prof D. MacHale</i> <i>Dr. D. Mac Giolla Chríost</i> <i>Mr P. Ó hAoláin</i></p> <p><u>Group 2</u></p> <p>11.00 Ms. Áine Ní Gadhra 11.20: Ms. Claire Ní Mhuirthile 11.40: Mr. Seán Ó Laoi 12.00: Mr. Cearbhall Ó Colmáin</p>
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12.30	Working lunch		
14.00	Visit to core facilities of Ionad, escorted by Head of Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha & member of staff from Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha		
14.55	<u>Representatives of Students</u>		

	<p>Ms. Maedhbh de Brún, Law II Ms. Siobhán de Paor, Arts II Ms. Karen Nic Aodha (<i>Hayes</i>), Arts II Ms. Fodhla Ní Chonchúir, Science II Ms. Rút Nic Ginneá, Law II Mr. Dónall Ó Cuilleanáin, Law II Mr. Caoimhín Ó Muirgheasa, Arts II</p>
15.35	<p><u>Representatives of Students</u></p> <p>Ms. Caoimhe Donnellan, Medicine I Ms. Cady Koenigs, GA1120 (Introduction to Modern Irish) Ms. Elaine Linehan, LCS II Mr. Éanna Mac Gearailt, Medicine I Mr. Colm Murphy, Engineering PhD Ms. Áine Ní Chartúir, Arts Ms. Maggie O’Connell, Arts II Mr. Séamus Ó Grádaigh, Arts Ms. Anne Parrin, GA1120 (Introduction to Modern Irish)</p>
16.15	<p><u>Representatives of UCC Staff</u></p> <p>Dr. Neil Buttimer, Roinn na Nua Ghaeilge Dr. Michael Byrne, Student Health Dr. Tracey Connolly, School of Education Mr. Dick Hogan, Office of Media & Communication Dr. Fiachra Long, Department of Education Ms. Anne Mallon, Office of Corporate & Legal Affairs Mr. Crónán Ó Doibhlin, Boole Library Mr. J.P. Quinn, Visitors Centre</p>
17.00	<p><u>Representatives of stakeholders, past graduates and employers</u></p> <p>Dr. Geraldine Boylan, College of Medicine & Health Ms. Olive Byrne, UCC Plus+ Ms. Marian McCarthy, Ionad Bairre Mr. Aidan O’Donovan, Audio Visual Services Mr. Liam Ó Riarda, Gaelcholáiste Daibhéid An tOllamh Alan Titley, Roinn na Nua Ghaeilge, UCC</p>
19.00	<p>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.</p>
<p>Wednesday 23 March 2011</p>	
08.30	<p>Convening of Peer Review Group</p>
08.45	<p>Professor Paul Giller, Registrar & Senior Vice-President Academic</p>
09.15	<p>Mr. Donnchadh Ó hAodha, Cathaoirleach, Bord na Gaeilge</p>
10.15	<p>Tea/coffee</p>

10.45	Mr. Cormac McSweeney, Finance Office
11.00	Professor Grace Neville, Vice-President for Teaching and Learning
11.20	Mr. Con O'Brien, Vice-President for the Student Experience
11.50	Visit to Áras Uí Thuama, Student accommodation, Victoria Cross escorted by Ms. Claire Ní Mhuirthile
13.00	Working lunch
14.00	Preparation of first draft of final report
16.40	Mr. Pól Rúiseal, Head of Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha
17.00	Exit presentation to all staff, made by the Chair of the Peer Review Group, summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group.
19.00	Working private dinner for members of the Peer Review Group to complete drafting of report and finalisation of arrangements for completion and submission of final report.