

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

**Quality Improvement/Quality Assurance**

**Peer Review Group Report**

**Department of Physical Education & Sport**

**Academic Year 2003/04**

**15<sup>th</sup> January 2004**

### **Members of the Peer Review Group:**

	<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Affiliation</u></b>	<b><u>Role</u></b>
1.	Professor F. O’Gara	Departments of Microbiology & Medicine, UCC	Chair
2.	Professor Máirtín Ó Fathaigh	Department of Adult & Continuing Education	Internal Peer Reviewer
3.	Mr. Brian Mullins	Director of Sport, University College Dublin	External Peer Reviewer
4.	Ms. Lyn Goodliffe	Consultant, UK	External Peer Reviewer

### **Timetable of the site visit**

The timetable for the review visit, detailing the meetings with staff, students and other stakeholders and visits to the facilities of the Department of Physical Education and Sport is attached as Appendix A.

The review group found the timetable to be both suitable and appropriate for the purpose of the review. The group expressed their appreciation to all those who made themselves available for discussions with the group during the visit. The reviewers in particular appreciated the support and co-operation of the staff of the Department.

### **Peer Review**

#### **Methodology:**

All members of the review panel participated in all discussions and in visits to the facilities of the Department. The report was written cooperatively as a single report and all members of the group were involved in the discussions on all sections of the report. The report was drafted during the afternoon and evening of the second day of the visit. The report was completed following the review visit by circulation of drafts to all members for comment and final analysis. All members of the PRG approved the final draft. It should be noted that the PRG members supported all aspects of the Report unanimously.

### Site Visit

The PRG appreciated being shown all the facilities of the Department.

### **Overall Analysis**

#### Self-Assessment Report (SAR):

The reviewers found the self-assessment report to be comprehensive and very well prepared. All areas of activity were covered in the report and provided the review panel with an excellent insight into the department as it currently operates. The Department had undertaken a SWOT analysis and a benchmarking exercise and these are commented on below in the detailed text of this report.

#### SWOT Analysis and Benchmarking

The SWOT analysis was inclusive of all members of the department and the panel considers it provided an honest view. The PRG congratulated the Department in taking the initiative in bringing in an external facilitator. This provided a comprehensive analysis and gave the PRG valuable information and aides in conducting their review of the department.

A benchmarking exercise was undertaken and included in the self-assessment report. The PRG recognised the difficulty experienced by the department in establishing relevant criteria and information, based on the well-known problems of obtaining appropriate comparators for analysis.

The SAR and the appendices were extremely helpful to the PRG and provided comprehensive data in giving an honest and full account of the current activities of the Department. The PRG thanks the members of the Department for their time and efforts and participation in the review.

## **Findings and Recommendations**

### **1. Mission Statement and role of Department and role of University in delivering a quality sport and recreational service**

From the documentation provided it is obvious that a multi-disciplinary process was in place that culminated in the progressive development of physical education and sports activities at UCC with the opening of the new Mardyke Arena. This was an important development for achieving the goals and aims to:

- Enhance student experience
- Provide foundations for a balanced lifestyle
- Encourage mass participation
- Promote elite success.

The outline mission statement of the department was considered to be realistic by PRG. With the facilities of international standard now in existence a coherent policy and implementation plan for sport must be developed to interface with the UCC Mission.

The facilities now in place provide the potential to deliver sport and recreational services for a broad range of users needs. A partnership model involving all relevant stakeholders is the obvious necessity to move to the next phase. The relevant status and position of sport, physical education and physical recreation needs to be clarified in the context of the stated university Mission. This is particularly relevant given the imminent retirement of the current Director of Sport. The PRG recommends that:

- *The post of Director is safeguarded.*

In the reappointment process the University should seek to appoint a candidate with experience in a broad range of activity so as to be able to move the Department forward in a variety of directions as required by the University Mission.

The committee noted the current arrangement of how student services are delivered in the institution and were strongly impressed by recognition of senior college officers that imminent re-structuring is necessary. In that context the role and provision of student services is of paramount importance particularly in relation to sport. A process needs to

be initiated by senior management to consider and decide what appropriate structures should be put in place. As the President has already initiated key changes in the delivery of improved initiatives in impacting on the sport and recreational elements of student life it is recommended that he continue to drive this suggested reform process to an effective conclusion.

The outcome should be a timely and transparent plan identifying who takes responsibility at an executive level to initiate and develop this process. This needs to ensure that there is both strategic planning and policy and also operational delivery. The PRG feel that it is vital that the key role of sport is recognised as a high priority in UCC.

The PRG were fully aware of the funding and commercial nature of the operation and structures in the Mardyke Arena. The PRG fully understands the necessity in financial terms of how this reality emerged. The PRG recognises the valuable contribution of the Arena to the sport and recreational experiences of students in UCC. An inclusive partnership in policy and operation terms would benefit all concerned. Consequently the PRG recommends that:

- *A partnership at both the policy and operational levels be established to deliver a quality service to all stakeholders.*
- *A partnership model involving all relevant stakeholders is the obvious necessity to move to the next phase.*
- *A process needs to be initiated by senior management to consider and decide what appropriate structures should be put in place.*

## **2. Staffing and Management Structures**

The Peer Review Group recognised the high level of assistance and support rendered by Departmental Staff. The Department is held in high esteem by users, both internal and external. These positive relationships are important elements in increasing participation and enhancing user experiences. This positive process enhances the status/role of UCC in the broader community.

To continue to provide a high level of services and facilities to the users, the Peer Review Group recommends that:

- *The management and organization structures within the Department be reviewed and modified.*

This would enable the mission of the University and Department to be delivered in a more efficient and coherent manner to the increased numbers of targeted user groups. Specifically the Peer Review Group recommends the following:

- *The formation of a UCC Sports and Recreation Council/Committee representative of all relevant stakeholders. This should be implemented as a matter of urgency.*
- *The development of a strategic plan for Sport & Recreation within the University to include policy development, best practice and financial generation and management.*
- *The creation of a functional working group representative of the Department of Physical Education & Sport and the Mardyke Arena to develop and deliver a coherent operational system for UCC sport and recreation beneficial to all user groups and individual students. One specific issue needing attention is access and operation of the front foyer. Based on patterns of use it should be possible to formulate a more efficient system.*

This working group should be established as a matter of urgency with an appropriate Chairperson.

The Peer Review Group recommends that:

- *A co-ordinated approach to all aspects of communication and the mechanisms to disseminate information to all members of the department and associated parties be established.*

The Peer Review Group understands the differing perspectives and views regarding the recent move of the Department to the Mardyke Arena but feels this is the most appropriate current location.

The Peer Review Group recommends that:

- *The working group, as outlined above, should address as a matter of urgency the working conditions for all staff concerned in a collaborative way.*

The university is fortunate to be able to avail of the involvement and goodwill of former graduates and other volunteers in provision of coaching services. This system is not sustainable long-term and is already changing. The university must be aware of the need to embark to recruit accredited coaches to support the sport and recreational activities.

The Peer Review Group recommends that:

- *Future coaches must be suitably qualified.*

The PRG noted and understands that this provision will have a financial implication, and recommends that:

- *Provision should be made for this in the strategic plan.*

### **3. Facilities and Services**

The investment, initiative and efforts through the years have resulted in many high quality facilities and services. Significant financial fundraising and investment have achieved this. However, against this positive background some outstanding issues remain.

The Peer Review Group recommends that:

- *Immediate attention be devoted to the provision of modern changing room facilities at Curraheen and the Mardyke.*

In discussion with college officers it became apparent that the strategic planning process in the wider development of the University may impact on the delivery of these new facilities. Monies accruing from land use changes should be directly reinvested in

carrying out the long awaited development at the main Sports facilities at Curraheen and the Mardyke.

To improve operative efficiency at the outdoor grounds the PRG recommends that:

- *A supervisor/foreman be appointed to ensure best practice in the delivery of outdoor facilities.*

The Review Group recognises the valuable nature of the Human Performance Laboratory as an important element in the Department. Consideration should be given to enhancing the use of this asset in modern sporting activities, at both commercial and recreational levels.

The PRG recommends that:

- *A review of car parking arrangements at the Mardyke Arena is undertaken and, in particular, that match officials (including coaches, medical support staff, referees, umpires, etc.) be accommodated with reference to car parking.*

#### Health & Safety

The current arrangement at the goal ends of the synthetic surface in the Mardyke does not conform to H&S regulations. The PRG recommends that:

- *Urgent attention be given to the appropriate barriers between the hockey pitch and the track.*

Other health & safety issues should be given due attention in the strategic plan.

#### **4. Training & Development.**

The UCC experience for students is significantly impacted by sport, as sport is now a core experience for enhancing the quality of life in the University community. It must be viewed as a professional activity. Against the background of the UCC Mission statement of engaging student participation up to 75% by 2005 the PRG recommends that:



- *The strategic plan for sport at UCC should contain appropriate measures for staff training and development at all levels.*

A suggested portfolio could include:

- Customer training
- H&S issues
- Quality customer service
- Communications
- Change management.

It was pleasing to note that the department has always supported training for staff in term of accessibility and financial support. It is hoped that this will continue. Continuing professional development should be an integral part of future progress.

## **5. Sports and recreational clubs and support systems**

The spectrum of sports activities and services provided to students and other users is comprehensive and impressive. The positive relationship between the Athletic Union representing the clubs and the Department is to be applauded and this mechanism of co-operation for the enhancement of sport should be fostered in the future.

The recent initiative regarding the role of sports development officers is very welcome and plays a key role in skills development, participation and excellence. The PRG recommends that

- *Consideration should be given to the funding mechanisms for the sustainability of the existing development officers and the creation of additional similar posts.*

The interface between the demands of the sporting and academic programmes needs to be evaluated. Therefore it is recommended that:

- *Arrangements and practices leading to more efficient time management should be developed and implemented to enable students to participate in sport and recreation.*

Furthermore it is also recommended that:

- *Consideration should be given to the introduction of formal procedures to facilitate the development of the potential of elite athletes.*

The introduction of an agreed credit accumulation system in UCC will positively enhance and facilitate the development of all students.

Development officers could play a valuable role in advising in the development of academic timetables, which would also facilitate participation in sports and recreational activities by all students.

An important consideration for the university will be to ensure that the needs of diverse student groups are catered for both in policy and provision.

## **6. Scholarships and Awards**

The Peer Review Group recognises the importance of initiatives undertaken in recent years in providing scholarships/sports awards and opportunities to attract talented sports persons to UCC. These initiatives are also important in enhancing the culture of career development, embracing sporting and academic excellence. The Peer Review Group recognises the importance of retaining these initiatives and recommends that:

- *Factors underpinning the sustainability of the schemes are addressed and integrated into the financial plan for sport at UCC.*

The drive towards creating an environment to progress talent is an important part of the ambition to accommodate elite sports people.

Furthermore the PRG recommends that:

- *More multidisciplinary training and support programmes appropriate for the development and mentoring of talented sports persons in academy structures needs to be explored and implemented.*
- *That a benchmarking exercise should be undertaken involving other institutions to examine models of good/best practice.*

## **7. Budgets and Finance**

In view of the time constraints it was not possible to undertake a full review of the budgetary and financial systems of the Department.

The PRG recommends that:

- *In the development of the strategic plan particular attention should be paid to financial and budgeting issues and the potential for increased income generation.*

The review of the Department has been timely due to a number of factors. These include the fact that

- (i) the new Mardyke Arena is now in place;
- (ii) the Department of Physical Education & Sport has relocated;
- (iii) the Head of Department will retire next year;
- (iv) there may be possible changes in land use.

Against this background the University has an ideal opportunity to move forward together so that future developments for Sport and Recreation is not fragmented but is planned and cohesive. This should be based around a policy of inclusivity involving all key major stakeholders, management and operational staff in the University.

**Timetable for conduct of Peer Review Visit**

**Department of Physical Education & Sport**

***Monday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2003***

- 18.00 Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group  
Briefing by Chair of Peer Review Group, with Ms. Aoife Ni Neill of the Quality Promotion Unit.  
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.
- 20.00 Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group and members of the Departmental Co-ordinating Committee

***Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2003***

- 08.30 Convening of Peer Review Group in Hospitality Suite, Mardyke Arena
- 09.00 Mr. Kieran Dowd, Head of Department
- 09.30 Meeting with all staff of Department
- 10.30 Coffee/Tea for reviewers and staff
- 11.00 Ms. Helen O'Leary, Executive Assistant
- 11.15 Sports Operatives  
Mr. William Fahy  
Mr. Martin McGrath  
Mr. Michael Lyons  
Mr. Pat Murphy  
Mr. Tom Horgan
- 11.45 Ms. Christine O'Donovan, Physical Education Officer (Administration)  
Mr. Pat Price, Physical Education Officer (Activities/Facilities)  
Mr Trevor Wood, Exercise Physiologist
- 12.15 Ms. Michelle O'Brien, Ladies Hockey Development Officer  
Mr. Eamonn Ryan, GAA Development Officer  
Mr. Gary Byrne, Director of Rugby
- 12.45 Working lunch
- 13.30 Mr. Michael Farrell, Administrative Secretary
- 14.00 Professor Aidan Moran, Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs

- 14.30 Tour of facilities at Mardyke, escorted by Mr. Kieran Dowd
- 15.15 Meetings with representatives of student users  
 Kieran Healy, Athletic Union President  
 Ian O Sullivan, Athletics  
 Lizzie Lyng, Camogie  
 Sinead Connery, Ladies Hockey  
 Darren Hayes, Soccer  
 Ciaran Martin, Volleyball
- 16.15 Meetings with representative selections of staff users  
 Joe Bogue, Dept of Food Business & Development  
 Louise Burgoyne, Dept of Epidemiology & Public Health  
 Áine Flynn, Registrar's Office  
 Jason MacMahon, Dept of History  
 Patricia O'Reilly, Registrar's Office  
 Paul Sheehan, Computer Centre
- 17.00 Meetings of reviewers with representative selections of external users.  
 Dave Brady – Club Official at Evergreen FC  
 Mick Conroy – FAS (soccer training course for young footballers)  
 Dick Hodgkins – Chairman of Cork City Sport Committee  
 Adrian Moloney – Coach to UCC Karate Club
- 19.00 Meeting of Peer Review Group to identify remaining aspects to be clarified and to finalise tasks for the following day, followed by a working private dinner for members for the Peer Review Group

***Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2003***

- 08.30 Convening of Peer Review Group in Hospitality Suite, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Mardyke Arena
- 09.00 Visits to outlying facilities of Unit at Curraheen, escorted by Mr. Kieran Dowd
- 10.30 Coffee/Tea
- 11.15 Mr. Michael O'Sullivan, VP for Planning, Communications & Development
- 11.45 Mr. Mark Poland, Director of Buildings & Estates
- 12.30 Mr. Michael Kelleher, Secretary & Bursar/VP for Administration & Finance
- 13.00 Working Lunch for members of the PRG
- 14.00 Preparation of first draft of final report
- 16.30 Exit presentation made to all staff of the Unit by the Chair of the Peer Review Group summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group

Venue: Hospitality Suite, Mardyke Arena  
 Followed by a reception for staff and reviewers to close the review.

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.

***Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2003***

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