

Student Centre

Peer Review Group:

Ms. A. Mills, Admissions Officer, UCC (Chair)
Professor C. Daly, Dean, Faculty of Food Science and Technology, UCC
Mr. B. Kehoe, Director of Student Affairs, DCU
Mr. B. Hamilton, Director of Memorial Union and Student Activities, University of
Rhode
Island, USA

Brief description of conduct of site visit

The site visit was conducted over 2.5 days from 4^h to 6th February 2003 and included meetings with

- i) Head and staff of the department as a group and individually
- ii) Representatives of students
- iii) Representatives of staff of the University
- iv) Representatives of past graduates,
- v) Representatives of the Trade Union bodies and IBEC
- vi) Professor A. Hyland, VP
- vii) Mr. M. F. Kelleher, Secretary & Bursar/VP for Administration & Finance
- viii) Dr. C. O'Sullivan, Chair, Student Needs & Curriculum Development
Committee
- ix) Mr. M. Farrell, Administrative Secretary
- x) Dr. John Tyrrell, Representing the Joint Board

and visits to unit facilities in UCC.

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 Unit

Manager of Centre: Mr. Donnchadh Ó hAodha

Location of Centre: Áras na MacLéinn

Mission Statement

"To enhance the campus experience by providing exceptional services and activities to the UCC community".

Aims and Objectives

- To be reliable and consistent in dealings with others
- To treat everybody with dignity and respect
- To encourage the maximum use of Áras na MacLéinn
- To promote customer loyalty based on the quality of service provided.

General Comment on Quality Review

At the outset the PRG acknowledged the excellent work undertaken by the Student Centre in preparing their Self-Assessment Report.

The SWOT analysis was excellent and very comprehensive. The Benchmarking exercise was very thorough. It is noteworthy that the Centre chose to benchmark against well-resourced American universities as well as Irish and UK universities. Completed staff surveys from some staff were included in the report but no results from student surveys were presented.

The Self-Assessment Report was well prepared and presented a major achievement given the complex nature of the Student Centre and the wide range of services that it provides.

The SWOT analysis was confirmed as accurate during the review and it was noted that some of the issues identified during the SWOT analysis, including the appointment of a commercial manager have already been addressed. The PRG noted that it was very valuable to have the implementation schedule for recommendations included in the report. The Benchmarking was impressive and confirmed that the UCC Student Centre compares well with similar centres in other Universities. The Service Standards of the unit were well documented in the report.

A good audit of internal and external users of the service was undertaken. While copies of the questionnaires were included the PRG felt that the report would have been enhanced by the inclusion of results from the completed student questionnaires.

The PRG found the Student Centre to be a large high quality facility staffed by professionals of high calibre. The PRG was particularly impressed with the manner in which its very committed staff had continued to provide a very good service during the recent building phase of the extension.

In common with other Student Centres, the dynamic of managing a variety of stakeholders (including the Students Union) and the inevitable creative tensions that arise between different needs was evident. The issues raised included the level of Students Union involvement and the availability of information in the context of the need to provide a high quality commercial service. The PRG welcomed the Student Centre commitment to improve dialogue with the Students Union to clarify issues with regard to the Student Centre. In particular, the need for frank, realistic and fair discussions on space for the Students Union emerged as critical during the site visit.

The Student Centre significantly contributes to the University mission of improving the quality of the student experience with many of the services in the Student Centre providing opportunities for student development.

Progress on Implementation of Recommendations for Improvement

Abbreviations

PRG: Peer Review Group

VP: Vice-President

QPC: Quality Promotion Committee

EMG: Executive Management Group

SU: Students Union

SC: Student Centre

SAR: Self-Assessment Report

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of the QPC	Follow-up Report October 2004
Recommendations in SAR were all endorsed by the PRG but in the context of the	Recommendations/ comments of the QPC on all recommendations were	

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of the QPC	Follow-up Report October 2004
recommendations of the PRG below.	postponed pending the report of the consultant.	
<p>The PRG recognised the importance of further dialogue regarding the dual mandate of the General Manager. In this context the option of using a facilitator might be considered.</p> <p>(a) Should the functions be split in the future it would be important to carefully consider the job specification and the reporting relationships of the Administrative Officer of the Student Union and how that function will relate to the Centre Manager.</p> <p>(b) Should the dual mandate be maintained then issues regarding workload and working relationships should be addressed.</p>		<p>Implemented.</p> <p>A post of Administrative Officer for the Students Union was approved by the university and the successful applicant for the post is due to take up the position in Jan '05.</p>
<p>PRG endorsed the SC Advisory Board as having a policy role rather than an operational role. However, some forum to discuss operational issues of common interest is worthy of consideration.</p>		<p>The SC Policy Board has been re-activated.</p> <p>The General Manager and the Administrative Officer of the SU will maintain very regular communication to ensure all issues of common interest are considered actively.</p>
<p>Recommended the need for frank, realistic and fair discussions on SU Office Space in SC to take place and that the issue must be resolved.</p>		<p>Office accommodation in the SC has been allocated to the SU. With the enlargement of the number of sabbatical officer positions it is now inadequate and is also not very good quality space. The issue of the future accommodation of the sabbatical officers and staff of the SU needs to be kept under consideration. Additionally there is a real need for some accommodation for Student Societies. There is a difficulty with access to the offices outside of normal working hours.</p>

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of the QPC	Follow-up Report October 2004
		The possibility of these needs being realised at a location other than the Student Centre should be explored by the relevant Officers of the University.
That consideration be given to the wider use of the Multifunctional Hall on a trial basis, while mindful of the need to preserve the quality of the Hall.		The Devere Hall is used both as a hall and a student common room. Preference is given to student groups for its use. The SC Policy Board will determine policy on its use in the future.
<p>That better communication in key areas of interaction (such as Entertainment, support for Irish, Publications and Advertising) between the SU and the SC be developed.</p> <p>With regard to Advertising, the PRG recommends that there be absolute clarity regarding the distinct and separate identities of the SU and the SC when either of these entities is dealing with potential advertisers.</p>		<p>Issue resolved.</p> <p>This issue has been considered by the Administrative Secretary and the SU. The situation has been clarified: the publications are the responsibility of the SU and the Student publication Xpress is produced independently by the SU.</p> <p>Selling of all advertising is by the SU. All entertainments are managed by the Events Manager of the SC. The SU also have an events manager reporting to the Administrative Officer. Everything happening in the SC is the responsibility of the SC, everything organised outside the SC is the responsibility of the SU.</p>
That the SU be provided with good and timely information (including financial and pricing policy) necessary to assist SU in decision-making with respect to their own functions.		<p>Implemented.</p> <p>Pricing policies are now the responsibility of the SC Policy Board.</p>
That a periodic review of the performance of commercial operations be undertaken. Particular attention should be devoted to UCC Travel in the context of its high turnover.		Will be undertaken by the SC Policy Board.

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That priority be given to the early development of the proposed enlarged UCC crèche.		Implemented. A new crèche facility has been incorporated into the Brookfield Campus and is expected to be completed by end of March 2005.
That there is greater crossover training and support for Sabbatical Officers (13 month contracts) and for non-sabbatical staff. This should also involve the provision of standard operating procedures manuals and good briefing notes.		Implemented in full.
That there should be realistic expectations of holders of non-sabbatical posts and that time management advice made available to students in these posts.		Improvements have been made to the situation. Further possibilities will be considered in 04/05. In particular the responsibilities of the Entertainments Officer post-holder will be actively considered.
PRG recommended the development of extra-curricular activity awards to recognise leadership among the student body.		Underway. The implementation of the Diploma Supplement will go some way towards recognising contributions and leadership. Discussions on the issue are on-going with the Athletic Union and the Guild.
PRG was unclear about the status of the SC and its legal relationship with UCC and suggested that the advisability of creating a company be considered.		It has been decided no to create a company at the present time. The situation will be kept under review.
That a major review be undertaken to assess whether the overall quality of the student experience and the level of student participation in college activities including societies and SU involvement has decreased. That the factors involved in such a decrease, if existing, be considered and	QPC recommended that each of the three Units (excluding Castlewhite Apartments) should be approached and their views sought regarding a review of their section. Proposals should be submitted to the QPC and the QPC would then decide upon the action. The student experience in the University	The issue of the student experience and student 'apathy' is a very broad one. It has been considered at joint Board and a committee, chaired by the Head of Student Counselling, and with representation from the SU and the Heads of some of the Support Services has been set up to consider the issues and the way

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<p>necessary actions identified.</p>	<p>should be on the agenda for the next meeting and this issue should also be discussed with the Quality Officers in other Irish Universities.</p>	<p>forward.</p>
<p>That the university move towards a more integrated structure for student services.</p> <p>The PRG, while realising the resource implications, recommended the consideration of a single reporting relationship to a Senior Officer whose main responsibility would be student affairs with a view to strengthening links between student services and academic staff by providing significant insights into the context of student learning.</p>	<p>QPC strongly endorsed the recommendation to move towards a more integrated structure for student services.</p> <p>QPC directed the President to engage a consultant to conduct a review of:</p> <p>How UCC provides Accommodation to UCC students in the broader context? All accommodation issues to be included with a particular focus on UCC managed accommodation - both currently existing, planned developments and future possibilities. The consultant should report back to the QPC with proposals for the development of a coherent management structure for the Accommodation Office of UCC and the management of UCC-owned student accommodation.</p> <p>Phase 2 of the work of the consultant will aim to review the reporting relationships, the management and co-ordination of all student support services in UCC with a view to developing an approach for the university towards a more integrated structure.</p>	<p>A consultant was appointed and reported on the student accommodation issues.</p> <p>The reporting relationships, etc. will be considered as part of the discussions on the possible restructuring of UCC presently in train.</p>