

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT / QUALITY ASSURANCE

DEPARTMENT OF FOOD BUSINESS & DEVELOPMENT

Present: Ursula Kilkelly, Fiona Crozier, Michael Ward, Nick Chisholm, Olive McCarthy, Seamus O'Reilly

Abbreviations

PRG: Peer Review Group

VP: Vice-President

QPC: Quality Promotion Committee

QIP: Quality Improvement Plan

HR: Human Resources

CBL: College of Business & Law

CSEFS: College of Science, Engineering & Food Science

PRG Finding/Recommendation		QPC recommendations/comment	Follow up August 2013
1.	That there should be a streamlining of management structures, with a reduction of number of committees.	Endorsed	Completed. Management structure was reviewed and clusters established and operational; number of Department committees reduced by 6.
2.	A departmental management team should be established with a small number of academics and a representative of administrative support.	Strongly Endorsed	Completed. A management team has been established; it includes Head of Dept, Deputy Head, Head of Clusters and a representative of administrative support.
3.	That the Head of Department and senior staff should avail of all opportunities for in-house leadership/ management training and staff development offered by UCC.	Strongly endorsed	Ongoing. Staff endeavour to take the opportunity for training when it is available.
4.	That the Performance Management Review System in place in UCC be implemented within the Department.	Endorsed	Implemented.
5.	The Senior Lectureship post recently filled following interview should be released and the appointment completed as a matter of urgency.	Noted	Ongoing. The Senior Lectureship position was approved and filled. However, the appointee has since left the job due to a promotion elsewhere. The Dept is working hard to get this post filled again.

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6.	A review of administrative arrangements within the Department should be undertaken with a view to enabling a more flexible assignment of tasks.	Strongly endorsed	Ongoing. Departmental Manager retired shortly after QR took place. There is a staff member on a half-time basis providing support but it is not sufficient for the Depts needs.
7.	The budget allocated by the College of Business and Law for administrative support backfill arrangements should be availed of for special projects.	Referred for consideration to Head of College BL	Acting Head of College of Business & Law operating under severe financial constraints.
8.	A complete review of all teaching programmes (UG and PG) across the entire department is required as a matter of extreme urgency with a view to exploring synergies/consolidating offerings to become more efficient and reduce teaching loads.	Strongly endorsed	Completed Reviews of UG and PG programmes were completed with a view to bringing individual teaching loads in line with University norms. Included review of service modules and combining groups where appropriate.
9.	A Director of learning should be appointed within the Department to ensure the implementation of these recommendations.	Endorsed	Completed The Deputy Head of Dept filled this post until June 2013.
10.	Opportunities for more student centred learning should be explored.	Strongly endorsed	Completed (As part of review of programmes, see recommendation 8 above).
11.	The amount of contact and supervision at module level needs to be reviewed.	Endorsed.	Completed. Review undertaken.
12.	Postgraduate students should be employed for seminar and tutorial work to assist in alleviating teaching workloads and provide additional transferable skills to students.	Endorsed. QPC welcomed response of Department	Completed. The Dept introduced a tutorial system using postgraduate students.
13.	Ensure that students have appropriate prerequisites for modules undertaken in the programmes.	Endorsed	Ongoing. Review of programmes (recommendation 8) will ensure that this continues to be the case.
14.	Provide feedback on assessments in a timely and appropriate fashion	Strongly endorsed	The Department has an agreed policy - the review and future coordination of all programmes (recommendations 8 & 9) will ensure full implementation of this policy. Dept conducted an in-house seminar regarding feedback and problems associated with group work and individual marking.

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15.	Institute a system of regular feedback and module assessment from students.	Strongly endorsed This refers to feedback from students on the quality of the T&L experience not to assessments submitted by students	Ongoing. The Department is committed to the University policy regarding module assessment by students.
16.	Focus on the skills set being acquired by students and the extent to which this fits the needs of future employers	Endorsed	Ongoing. The Department used the opportunity of the review of programmes (see recommendation 8) as an opportunity to review how programme learning outcomes address the following: level of knowledge and understanding, subject-specific skills, key skills, professional skills, progression to employment/further study, and personal development. Where appropriate they will engage at College and University level regarding student skill-sets, in particular writing, numeracy and IT skills.
17.	Provide training to students on writing skills, particularly in relation to reports.	Endorsed	Ongoing (see recommendation above)
18.	Provide a module on communication and problem solving.	Endorsed Response noted	Ongoing (see recommendation 16 above)
19.	Provide appropriate career and postgraduate advice	Endorsed Response noted and endorsed	Ongoing The Department engage with the Graduate office and encourage students to avail of Careers Services.
20.	Placement procedures should be reviewed, in particular in relation to timetabling, guidelines for students and employers.	Endorsed	Ongoing. Some of the timetabling challenges have been addressed in terms of return to 4 th Year studies. There will be continuing engagement with the Careers Service with regard to placement policies and procedures.

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21.	A regular staff - postgraduate student seminar series should be established which would facilitate the development of a research culture and sharing of experiences amongst all staff and postgraduate students, especially research students.	Endorsed	The Department is committed to putting more focus on the seminar series.
22.	A system of research mentoring for early career staff should be put in place immediately. Time and thought needs to be given to how all staff can be supported to develop and enhance research capability and priority should be given to staff completing their doctorates.	Strongly endorsed Add comment	Ongoing Partly addressed in the context of recommendation 4 (Performance Management Review System) and recommendation 23 below. Full implementation of the new University workload model will also be helpful.
23.	The department should improve its research profile by increasing its research output in peer reviewed journals by approving the division of staff into clusters with a leader to assist and support development of research excellence in these clusters.	Endorsed Response and action welcomed	Completed. Research clusters were established with designated leaders (rotating on a biennial basis) will be established to support research endeavour, including early career researchers. The aim is to focus research activity on thematic clusters and hence build on intradepartmental collaboration, deepen expertise and increase research funding.
24.	The external marketing of programmes offered by the Department needs to be improved.	Endorsed	Ongoing. Continued engagement with Admissions and Graduate Studies office. Improved and updated information on web-site.
25.	The Department should review the range of its programmes in line with external requirements and in response to market opportunities and to staff workload.	Strongly endorsed	Completed. See recommendations above.
26.	Both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes should be promoted in the context of demand for food graduates nationally & internationally.	Endorsed	Ongoing.

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27.	There is a need to leverage opportunities across the three areas covered by the department currently, especially in food sector with a particular focus on food business areas.	Strongly endorsed	Ongoing. The Department has deliberately nurtured a three-way synergy among Food Business & the Consumer, Co-operative Organisation and Sustainable Rural Development. The overriding purpose is to contribute to the development of a sustainable food system, which integrates the rights of the consumer to quality food and the rights of the producer to make a living through effective food supply chain operation.
28.	There is a need to engage with other leading universities around the world (in food and food development).	Strongly endorsed	Ongoing. The Department is continually aiming to strengthen links with other Universities through existing programmes (e.g. Agri Mundus) and sister Universities involved in joint delivery of rural development programmes.
29.	The Department is advised to renew and strengthen links with the College of SEFS, especially the food-related disciplines. The Group suggested regular meetings/away days with staff in food science as one means of achieving this objective. Further engagement with Teagasc should also be considered a priority.	Strongly endorsed	Ongoing. The Department aims to strengthen research links with food scientists in SEFS and health professionals in the College of Medicine and Health, and external institutions, in particular joint research projects in the UCC-Teagasc Strategic Alliance, Centre for International Development and the proposed Food Institute. In addition, they aim to build on current participation in the Institute for Social Sciences in the 21st Century (ISS21) ¹ based in the College of Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences in terms of joint research projects.
30.	An advisory board with external input should be established to assist in the development of strategy and curriculum, facilitating links with external agencies, employers and other stakeholders.	Endorsed	
31.	External stakeholders should be invited to provide guest lectures, workshops etc.	Endorsed	The Department endeavours to provide these, however current financial constraints are limiting resources.

¹ Participating in two clusters: (i) Civil Society and (ii) Health, Food and Wellbeing.

Notes: Got the lectureship and Uni pulled it. Took a year of persuasion and person was finally appointed. Person lasted one year before getting a promotion elsewhere. Had people on contracts and working towards getting someone else again. Is an issue that M Ward is concerned with. On their agenda.

Linked to that. Lost Dept manager within months of QR. Managed to set up committees without a manager. Have compromise position, person on a half-time basis now. M ward made point to M Farrell that half time isn't sustainable but will make do. Ward worried that can't fully implement and bring through what he wants without full support of missing academic and manager.

Research record has suffered as academics doing admin and committee work. Will suffer for RQR. Pathways programme taking academics from research.

Ward, need to do a bit more on recc for regular speaker series. Hasn't happened to extent Ward wanted it to happen but no backup so tried via Summer School. Have commitment to put more focus on it.

Nick head of one of clusters. Olive another. Seamus deputy head.

Staff review. Finishing that now. Director of Learning = Seamus. When his review is done, that will roll on. Some dates some roles will expire and will be picked up after review.

Three main cluster areas. Seamus, head of other cluster Food Business

Opportunities for students, did something. Did it work? Ward – quality of service to students, not always what they'd like. Changing and implementing at same time. Have put in tutoring system. Despite resource implications.

Feedback to students and relate to students. Seamus said has a seminar session on feedback and problems associated with group work and individual marking. Pedagogically a lot more mature. Managing time is the difficulty. Role of tutors are key. Dept has inclination to teaching so they went back to role of PG to ...recc 5 (or 12). Small amt of money in part time teaching budget for tutoring is very valuable. Using PG students. All former PG of Int PG degree (not sure).

Ward – making decisions. Put management team in place, lost Manager. Can put money in various directions. Will take time to make choices better and make financial decisions.

Ursula. Resources, financial. Issue is huge for everyone. Trying to do budget restructuring at Collge level to try and make sure more is passed down. Arrangements have been in place that worked historically but trying to unravel. Pressures similar. Front line Dept and student experience is directly effected.

Fiona asked if colleagues in other Unis are as bad off? UCD starting to feel it now, what we've been experiencing for years. Ursula said Maynooth bucking trend and scale of investment.

Seamus said this period of time is very important for Dept. Individual academic looking at what they are doing as it isn't rewarding long-term. There is a Uni drive for non-exchequer funding and individual academic set of incentives are.

Ursula. All top slicing done and at College level, incentivising to get funding in but the incentives are gone.

Fiona brought up RQR. We want to use information more strategically this time.

Ward, as a College, a lot of posts fell. As a Dept, associate prof post was ready to be advertised and had to be offered up. Ward argues that these posts should be recorded so the history remains. Ass Prof to focus on non-exchequer areas. Happened in other depts. also.

3 senior lecture posts still vacant. Legacy.

Ward – as Dept contribute to Uni administration. Seamus chairs IMI and was on QPC. Nick was on Centre for Global Development. It has consequences, as staff otherwise involved in committee.

Ursula, it's not a transparent system. Ppl want their contributions recognised and they are now saying, no thanks.

Involved in two colleges. Academically, half progs in SEFS. In College of Business & Law. Hasn't been easy and not resolved. Part of business and different take on business. Is fundamental issue and hasn't been resolved.