

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK  
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND, CORK

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT/QUALITY ASSURANCE

PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT

*FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT OF LAW*

.....

ACADEMIC YEAR 2012-13

Date 6th March 2013

## PEER REVIEW GROUP MEMBERS

Name	Affiliation	Role
1. Professor Ivana Bacik	School of Law, TCD	Co-Chair, Co-Rapporteur
2. Professor Colin Scott	School of Law, UCD	Co-Chair, Co-Rapporteur
3. Professor Sally Wheeler	School of Law ,QUB	
4. Professor Keith Stanton	School of Law, University of Bristol	
5. Professor David Ryan	School of History, UCC	
6. Professor Neil Collins	Faculty of Commerce, UCC	

## TIMETABLE OF THE SITE VISIT

The site visit timetable appears as Appendix 1 to this document.

The reviewers found the time table for the site visit to be well structured and well organised. They met with a variety of staff, students and stakeholders as well as senior officers of UCC. The PRG had the opportunity to visit the Faculty and its facilities, its Moot Court, the Library and to consider its IT facilities. The schedule was full and the PRG received all the information that it requested.

## PEER REVIEW

### Methodology

Professor Ivana Bacik, School of Law, TCD Co-Chair, Co-Rapporteur **(School Details, Organisation and Planning, Governance, Communications)**

Professor Colin Scott, School of Law, UCD Co-Chair, Co-Rapporteur **(Financing)**

Professor Sally Wheeler, School of Law ,QUB **(Teaching and Learning, Staffing)**

Professor Keith Stanton, School of Law, University of Bristol **(Research and Scholarly Activity, Compliance with European Standards and Guidelines)**

Professor David Ryan, School of History, UCC **(Staff Development)**

Professor Neil Collins, Faculty of Commerce, UCC (**External Relations, Services and Accommodation**)

Each member of the PRG was assigned a particular area of responsibility and led the discussions within their remit.

### **Site Visit**

The PRG was impressed by the dedication of the staff and the facilities within the Department, including the Moot Court, the audio-visual facilities, the IT equipment and rooms for the PhD candidates. It also recognised the positive impact that the refurbishment of the facilities had made on staff morale.

### **Peer Review Group Report**

The report was compiled by the entire team of the PRG. The Joint Chairs and Rapporteurs co-ordinated the assembly and writing of the report. Each member of the PRG was assigned a particular area to write before circulation and redrafting.

## **OVERALL ANALYSIS**

### **Self-Assessment Report**

A great deal of work clearly went into the preparation of the SAR, and the PRG highly commends all those from the Unit who were involved in developing the very comprehensive, accurate and helpful set of materials provided in advance to the PRG. Where additional information was sought by the PRG (eg on student evaluations), this was quickly forthcoming.

### **Departmental/School Co-ordinating Committee & Methodology employed in the preparation of the Self-Assessment Report**

A small co-ordinating group within the Faculty was responsible for the preparation of the SAR and appears to have worked very well together, with the co-operation and support of members of the Faculty generally who engaged very well with the process. The report produced was excellent with comprehensive information provided to the PRG.

### **SWOT Analysis**

The SWOT analysis of the Faculty and Department was undertaken during a half day meeting with strong participation from members of the Faculty. The analysis provided is

extensive and cogent. The analysis lists key concerns and then offers a strategic agenda for the Faculty as a whole to show priorities in sustaining strengths, addressing weaknesses, taking advantage of opportunities, and neutralising threats.

### **Key Strengths**

Key strengths include a highly qualified staff, collegiate atmosphere, strong ambition for both teaching and research, a high degree of high quality research activity, very good facilities and support, a wide range of degree and course options at both graduate and undergraduate level, strong national and international networks, strong external links with both practitioner and policy communities, strong media engagement, and strong engagement with staff development.

### **Assessment of Weaknesses**

The assessment of weaknesses by the Faculty is candid, and includes limited targeted administrative support for some key activities (such as research), securing engagement with and feeding back to students, staff-student ratio, under-resourcing of library materials, weaknesses in the Faculty website, lack of promotional opportunities, governance structures between the Faculty, the College and the University, limited recruitment of students beyond Munster.

The Faculty has identified many opportunities to further develop its national, international and online presence and thereby to engage more students and also policy and professional practitioners with its programmes of study and research. Stronger use might be made of its very good facilities.

Key threats identified include the reduced attractiveness of the study of law because of the external environment and challenges faced by the legal profession, continuing reduction in the unit of resource, limited opportunities for external research funding (especially at national level), and the general challenges of the public sector operating in a recessionary environment (including retention of outstanding staff, staff-student ratios, limited resources and so on).

### **Benchmarking**

The Unit embarked upon a benchmarking exercise in November 2012. This exercise had been recommended by the PRG in 2006. The range of units that were chosen to benchmark against were somewhat eclectic, the rationale being based on a range of factors including personal connection. None of the Law Schools that provided detailed comment for UCC Law were mentioned as comparators in answer to question 7 on the Staff Questionnaire. Indeed few of the Law Schools approached for benchmarking were mentioned as comparators. The range of Law Schools approached did not really do justice to the level of ambition that UCC Law demonstrates in actual areas of practice such as LLM provision and research. It would seem more useful to benchmark against Schools that are like them in terms of very strong regional and national presence or that

they would like to be like. It might be more beneficial to select fewer Schools and visit them as raw measures of SSR and accounts of activity do not always translate in the way that might be anticipated. Nevertheless several examples of good practice were identified for possible adoption – review of grant applications and the structure of management mechanisms for teaching and learning.

## **FINDINGS OF THE PEER REVIEW GROUP**

### Department Details, Organisation and Planning

There is very good morale and a great sense of collegiality and ambition within the Law Faculty. Academic staff are clearly very highly committed to their work, both in teaching and research. Staff have strong publication records and approximately 90% of them have PhDs (23 out of 26 full-time staff). Students both at undergraduate and postgraduate level are enthusiastic about the Faculty and speak very positively about their experience within UCC. Similarly, UCC University officers also appear to have high regard for the Faculty. The newly refurbished Faculty building contains excellent facilities including a state-of-the-art moot courtroom, and its completion has clearly contributed to raising morale generally.

There is currently some uncertainty however around the status of the academic unit as a Faculty within the College of Business and Law. Ongoing discussions and concerns about changes to this structure, itself only introduced in 2006, have caused damage to morale within the unit and tend to operate to drain energy from senior staff within the Faculty. It appears that the Unit has been excluded from key decision-making roles on the future of the College. The PRG recommends that a more inclusive approach to resolving this issue would be preferable. The SAR clearly expresses the unit's own preference for retaining Faculty status, and that also appears to be the preferred option for external stakeholders who were consulted by the PRG.

The PRG recommends that retention of the status of Faculty would continue to give the academic unit an autonomy and a clear identity which members of staff and external stakeholders alike are anxious to maintain. Whatever decision is made, the key concern is for the unit to retain its current boundaries and an appropriate level of autonomy and identity.

### **Teaching & Learning**

The Faculty is to be commended for the range of different degree options which it offers. In particular, the two specialised BCL degrees designated as Clinical and International are very attractive to students with increasing numbers of students enrolled. The clinical programmes are very successful and the students speak very highly of them. While numbers have fallen on some other courses, the Faculty have done well to retain

different routes of access to legal study, notably through the evening BCL and the Certificate in legal studies.

The PRG also heard favourable reports about the diploma in common law or junior year abroad options which could be especially attractive to students from North America. The development of new specialised courses at LLM level is also commendable. Further product development will be required to maintain/increase numbers at both UG and PG level. The possibility of further joint degrees might be explored however such programmes would require a commitment of additional administrative resource support from the Centre. Additional joint programmes, in common with the existing Law/Language provision, raise issues around timetable and assessment overload which can only be addressed on an inter-departmental or College basis.

There is a strong commitment to developing teaching and learning, with potential innovative use of online and other non-exam based assessment on the LLM. The existence of a full-time technical officer is a real asset.

The introduction of a skills module in first year and the mooting programme in final year have greatly enhanced the student learning experience. The Employers that the PRG met were highly complimentary in their praise of the skills and knowledge base of UCC Law graduates.

PhD students are well integrated into the Faculty and appear keen to focus on academic careers. They were very positive about the course on methodology that they receive from within the School. It was not clear whether additional training in the area of methodology and employability skills was available at College level or from the wider University. This is something that could be addressed at either of these levels but there is a development need here. The provision of a qualification led teaching course for PGR students is a very good example of best practice.

The appointment of a new director of student welfare, alongside the existing personal tutor system, is very welcome. The personal tutor system is worthy of commendation but needs to be more pro-actively managed by staff driving engagement with students. From conversations with students the PRG met, this seemed to happen in some but not all cases.

Greater use could be made of innovative assessment methods, and more coursework, on the undergraduate programmes, and more use made of e-learning techniques - although the review group was told that some online learning initiatives have not been taken up by the students. E-learning has a role to play in product development particularly for PG provision. The students are however very enthusiastic about the availability of lectures by way of podcasts or video links on blackboard. These should be introduced more widely in the Unit as a supplementary resource. The appointment of a technology post is a very positive development from the last review in terms of developing this area.

It was not very clear to the PRG how teaching and learning issues fed into the management of the Unit or how the Student Council fed into teaching and learning management at the level of Teaching and Learning Director and the supporting committee. Learning technology developments and training also need to come within at least the purview of this group if not under their management. It was not clear that this was happening. This is part of a wider governance issue that is addressed elsewhere. It is not clear how student feedback on modules through questionnaires, the wider University student survey and external examiner reports are fed into the teaching and learning process. Student satisfaction is very high and so this is as much a development concern as a quality concern. The PRG recommends that the Faculty and Department adopt a mechanism of annual programme review which enables it to ensure that feedback from student evaluations, external examiner reports and other sources is considered and acted upon in timely fashion.

It was not clear how Teaching and Learning issues were managed between the Unit and the wider College. This seems to be a lost opportunity for the development of training and delivery synergies and the inculcation of best practice.

### **Research & Scholarly Activity**

The research and scholarly activity within the Faculty is highly impressive, for a range of reasons.

- Academic staff are highly committed to their work as legal researchers and have strong publication records. Much of the work is being published in international journals
- The appointment of a Research Director in the Faculty is a positive step which should improve the level of support provided to staff.
- The Research Quality Review of 2009 concluded that the Faculty then had a high profile for its research nationally and internationally. On the basis of the evidence shown to the PRG (which cannot have involved a detailed consideration of publications), it is felt that that position has probably been maintained in the intervening years.
- The PRG received interesting examples from external stakeholders of cases in which research conducted within the Faculty had had a positive impact on policy/law reform or in the development of legal principles.
- The PRG received an impressive list of grant applications (although their value and success was not clear). The overall value of awards obtained has fluctuated substantially in recent years, but shows a considerable success rate.
- Law staff are actively involved in five of the research clusters within the Institute for Social Sciences in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

- Research students are enthusiastic about the Faculty and speak very positively about their experience within UCC. They were receiving good support in terms of training and funding for conference attendance. It was notable that they all indicated an intention of pursuing an academic career.

However, there is no room for complacency as the Faculty is operating in a highly competitive environment and financial constraints could do severe damage to research activity and output in the future.

It needs to be recognised that there is considerable competition for high quality researchers in law and that limited support and opportunity for internal promotion may lead to a loss of highly qualified researchers to other institutions.

The Research Quality Review in 2009 made a number of general recommendations concerning: administrative support of research; funding; mentoring and sabbaticals. The PRG is of the view that those recommendations remain of relevance.

The role of the newly appointed Faculty Research Director, while very welcome, needs to be defined to include research mentoring. The encouragement of more active clusters of researchers within the Faculty would be of considerable benefit. The PRG had the impression that many of the research themes listed by the Faculty are dependent on the work of a single member of staff and that some members of staff feel that their research interests leave them relatively isolated within the Faculty.

The provision of adequate library and information resources is likely to be central to the future success of the Faculty. As a great proportion of law library expenditure is devoted to serials, the PRG would commend the Faculty's decision to supplement the book budget. However, it has to be recognised that this support is based on the use of "soft" money and that a long term solution is needed if the library is to remain a high level support for research activities. The PRG was made aware of considerable concern that other pressures were eroding the amount of time available to staff to spend on research. Some junior staff are clearly carrying very heavy teaching and administrative loads and this is bound to impede their development as world class researchers.

Research support structures could be strengthened. The PRG noted that the University provides a high level of support for staff who are mounting bids for research grants and that considerable experience exists at central level in relation to potential funding bodies. However, it needs to be recognised that much research in law is unlikely to attract external funding and that greater attention needs to be paid to supporting staff conducting such research. It is also felt that a more proactive approach to making the central research support facilities known to law staff could have a positive effect in the number of grant applications submitted and the success rate. Members of the PRG met inexperienced staff who had had no support in drafting grant bids.

Funding difficulties have inevitably threatened the support for staff to attend conferences. The loss of University travel and conference grants is regrettable. The PRG strongly commends the Faculty on taking an initiative to meet these challenges,

through the establishment of the Faculty's strategic research fund. However, if the University wishes the Faculty to maintain its level of success, it must continue to make efforts to maintain such support.

As is commonly the case in law schools, the PGR found that externally funded research tended to be concentrated in particular areas and on particular members of staff. In order to ensure the maintenance of a strong research profile across the whole range of legal scholarship in the Faculty, it needs to be recognised that those staff who are conducting research in areas which are unlikely to attract external funding need to be supported.

The PRG noted that the Research Quality Review of 2009 recommended that early career researchers should be allocated a reduced teaching load in line with practice in other law schools. The PRG's understanding is that this recommendation has not been implemented and that to do so might prejudice an individual's promotion prospects. The PRG recommends that this issue be revisited.

### **Staff Development**

The Faculty has a positive and considered approach to staff development. The unit was impressive in most regards with concerns identified in a limited number of areas. The Faculty's vision makes clear that all staff are central to 'all that we do as a Law school'. This ethos was widely reflected in the structure, organisation of the offices and the committees as well as in the positive staff attitudes and morale.

Staff achievements were recognised and celebrated in a variety of ways. Staff have had considerable success with internal and external recognition and awards. The extensive presence of Law faculty in the various university offices and committees is testimony to their contribution and commitment. The number of staff achievements / awards should be commended.

Like all units in the current environment, a number of concerns were advanced on the freeze on promotion opportunities. Though these have recently reopened, there is considerable concern with the number of opportunities open to staff to promotion.

The Faculty has had considerable success with sabbatical leave; nine members of staff have availed of the opportunity over the past three years. There was considerable concern that while the success should be noted and celebrated that more junior staff were disadvantaged by the scheme because it had to be cost-neutral. Such an approach presented junior staff with prohibitive costs to replace teaching and perhaps influenced them to not apply for the scheme. The PRG recommends that this issue be considered at University level and that the Faculty take a more systematic approach to mentoring junior staff on research strategies, including sabbatical leave. Semesterisation may present greater opportunities for this.

Informal mentoring is recognised as a strong feature of the Faculty which was also supported by a strong ethos of collegiality. The PRG recommends that the Faculty continues to consider the recommendations made in 2006 to enhance the mentoring scheme and to place it on a more formal basis. The PRG recognised that the university had introduced a system in recent years. The PRG commended the appointment of the Staff Welfare and Development Officer who has the remit of advancing initiatives in this area.

The PRG was made aware of considerable concern with the erosion of staff time for research, which impacted on staff development. The increasing administrative burdens were identified along with what appeared to be a duplication of administrative functions at Faculty and College level. Staff also indicated concerns with the overall heavy bureaucratic structures of the institution. The PRG recommended that these concerns be put to the Academic Council Research and Innovations Committee. Further the PRG suggested a more integrated administrative structure within the Department.

A considerable number of the staff in the Department had conducted the various levels of Teaching and Learning training. The ethos and ambitions of the unit in this regard were evident and the PRG commended the unit for its extensive engagement in the area. It also recognised that individuals within the unit had participated in a variety of other software and IT training, including online learning methods. The PRG noted that there was considerable opportunity to enhance assessment strategies and teaching and learning techniques to capture a wider variety of learning outcomes at the undergraduate level. Simultaneously it commended the diversity of assessment and teaching methods employed at graduate level.

### **External Relations**

The Faculty has long established and good relations with its external stakeholders. Local legal firms, placement providers and others are very supportive and offer useful and structured feedback.

For example, comments from employers have been influential in the recalibration of assessment to include more group work and mootings. CPD and other events are well supported. These long term relationships are augmented by adjunct appointments primarily at national and international level.

### **Support Services**

The Faculty is particularly well served by the Careers Service and it has good interaction with the Disability Support Service, Mature Students Office, the International Education Office and the Library. Efforts are underway to improve links with the VP for Research Office and the International Education Office.

### **Governance**

The Faculty has done much to improve governance internally and to rationalise the numbers and functions of committees. The PRG notes in particular that the number of committees has been reduced, in accordance with recommendations from the 2006 review, which is very welcome. In their place a range of new academic directors has been put in place, and this delegation of roles to specific individuals is also a positive step and should make for more efficient and effective decision-making and planning.

In addition, the recent establishment of a management team in accordance with the recommendation of the Peer Review Group report of 2006 is a very welcome development.

The PRG also notes with approval the introduction of a Student Council which offers students an opportunity to engage on a regular basis directly with the Dean of the Faculty, although it recommends that this Council be broadened out to include relevant academic directors to ensure the obligation for bringing feedback to students does not rest solely with the Dean.

The PRG recommends that the ongoing internal governance reforms should be developed further to ensure that decision-making processes within the Faculty are refined, so that there is no duplication of decision-making functions between different committees, or between the department and the Faculty. The number of committees still appears large with potential for duplication of functions between them. In addition, the PRG notes that reporting and feedback structures between the different committees are not clear.

In particular, the PRG is concerned that the separate decision-making structures of the department and the Faculty create unnecessary duplication. It notes that the Law Department is the primary department in the Faculty of Law, and that in recent years the Head of Department is also the Dean of the Faculty of Law. It recommends that given the clear overlap of personnel between the two entities, consideration be given to holding joint meetings or otherwise streamlining processes so that duplication is avoided.

The PRG also recommends that the level of student representation on all Faculty/departmental committees should be clarified.

The PRG further recommends that the newly appointed directors could be given a more formal role on the management committee and that the management committee should become a more formal executive, with specific student representation and clearer feedback and reporting structures between the management committee and the general Faculty meetings.

The PRG recommends that the roles of administrative staff within the Faculty could be clarified further, perhaps in line with the newly created responsibilities and functions of different academic directors and remaining committees.

## **Services**

The University support services, notably the Careers Office, international office, disability service and Ionad Barra were praised to the review group.

## **Staffing**

There is a good gender balance across the academic staff at all levels. There is a strong profile of staff at professorial level but this should not disguise the frustration that staff feel at the lack of the facility for promotion. Some junior staff are clearly carrying very heavy teaching and administrative loads and this is something that should perhaps be addressed in the light of the fact that the Unit does have a number of senior staff. The requirement of the University that staff demonstrate an annual teaching contact level to be eligible for promotion would seem to fly in the face of developments with teaching and learning technology and staff development more generally. This requirement prevents the Unit from adjusting workloads to give targeted research and career development time to staff. This is regrettable. Staff mentoring could be more formalised, with a focus on temporary contract staff and their career development needs. This could be done through the newly appointed staff welfare director in association with academic support units across UCC.

## **Accommodation**

The Faculty's accommodation is of a very high standard, and the recent refurbishment has generated excellent facilities including a dedicated moot courtroom and impressive workspace for research students; although the PRG recommends that designated space should be made available for LLM students.

## **Financing**

The characteristics and sustainability of the financial position of the Faculty and Department is not intended to form a major part of the Quality Review process. Peer Review Groups generally are not provided with detailed financial data nor detailed analysis of the operation of resource allocation models.

In common with other universities in Ireland, the financial sustainability of the Faculty and Department is highly dependent on numbers of students recruited both to undergraduate and graduate programmes because of the direct feed into both fee and grant income. The Faculty has been alive to the opportunities for developing new programmes at both undergraduate and graduate level which offer new streams of students who, in many cases, add numbers to existing offerings, with limited new provision. Certain strategic investments in new provision, for example clinical programmes, have positioned the Faculty distinctively and are likely to support sustaining or growing student numbers.

The development of high quality courses must be accompanied by appropriate investment in student recruitment both nationally and internationally.

The Faculty and Department has been effective not only in securing external funding for research, but has also had outstanding success in securing Government of Ireland Scholarships for PhD students. This initiative has significantly strengthened the PhD programme of the Faculty and Department while simultaneously ensuring that the programme is a significant source of income and prestige to the Faculty and Department.

The PRG recommends that the Faculty and Department continues to keep under review the financial contribution of its programmes, to evaluate new opportunities, and secure the engagement of its external stakeholders in seeking new opportunities for funding, for example through developing bespoke CPD activity or a programme of philanthropic giving.

### **Communications**

Communications within the Faculty between staff appear to work well, with welcome improvements in communications structure due to the changes made to internal governance outlined above. The staff survey with which the PRG was provided suggests staff are generally satisfied with internal communications, and the meetings held by the PRG with individual staff confirmed this.

The Head of Department/Dean undertakes regular one-to-one meetings with all staff and this is a highly commendable and important practice.

Staff-student communications also appear to work well, particularly since the introduction in 2012 of a new Student Council giving students the opportunity to engage directly with the Faculty Dean. Students with whom the PRG met expressed strong support for this initiative, and appear very satisfied with the way it is working.

Communications with external stakeholders appear excellent, with an impressive range of practitioners and policy-makers willing to engage with the PRG as part of the review process. These external stakeholders expressed strong support for the work being done by the Faculty and gave many instances of initiatives taken by the Faculty which have made significant positive contributions to the community more generally.

The PRG recommends that the Student Council could be expanded so that relevant academic directors are also included, to ensure the most efficient communication of feedback to students where issues are reported with particular courses, for example.

### **Implementation of recommendations for improvement made in Peer Review Group Report arising from last quality review**

The Faculty and UCC responded positively to the recommendations of the last review. Issues around an unacceptably high SSR were addressed by new appointments, however

the advantage of this has been somewhat eroded by the replacement of professorial staff seconded to College level jobs by lecturer level staff.

Library provision has improved due in no small part to the use of Faculty funds to augment the budget allocation from the Centre. The Faculty is right to raise the sustainability of this support in the medium to long term.

Accommodation issues have been addressed by the refurbishment of the current law school accommodation to a very high standard.

Research dissemination was identified as an issue in the last PRG process and this has been addressed.

The PRG was impressed with the range and quality of stakeholders who testified to the impact of research done by Law at UCC. The research section of this report comments on this in more detail.

Student support has been tackled at Faculty level by the creation of a Student Council and the introduction of a personal tutor system. The section on governance deals with its integration into the Unit management structures.

The 2006 PRG recommended that ad hoc committees be streamlined and that a tighter more cohesive management structure be adopted. This has happened to an extent but concerns remain around the reporting and feedback structures within the Faculty at management level. These continuing concerns are addressed in the governance section of this report.

### **Compliance with European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area – especially relevant sections of Part 1 of the ESG**

The PRG was assured by the Registrar that the University had been found to be in compliance with these standards. However, some items of data required by the guidelines were not shown to the PRG by the Faculty (eg monitoring the progress and achievement of students, including student progression, employability, the profile of the student population and marking criteria).

The PRG has no doubt that this data either exists or could easily be produced. It would, however, comment that this may be an example of the need for the Faculty to ensure that data relevant to quality assurance is collected and reviewed as a matter of course.

The PRG did receive some data on graduate first destinations but, as is common in the case of degrees followed by professional courses, it was relatively meaningless as the great majority were pursuing further studies. Such data would be far more meaningful if collected again 18 months after graduation.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

### **Recommendations for improvement made by the Faculty**

In its Self-Assessment Report the Faculty and Department offers a cogent and critical analysis of its own quality and its own recommendations for improvement are consistent with that strong self-understanding. The PRG endorses the Recommendations for Improvement made in the Self-Assessment Report, including examination of curricula, diversification of entry study pathways and delivery models, further investment in student recruitment, better provision for a non-law entry at graduate level, enhancing support for research activity, better coordination of tasks between Department, Faculty, College and University levels, and maintenance or enhancement of current resourcing levels.

In its own additional recommendations, drawn from the body of this Report, the PRG adds a number of suggestions which focus, in particular, on procedures for better meeting the objectives set by the Faculty and Department.

### **PRG Recommendations**

#### **Department Organisation and Planning**

- The PRG recommends that an inclusive approach be taken to resolving the issues around the status of the Faculty; and that retaining the status of Faculty would continue to give the academic unit the autonomy and clear identity which members of staff and external stakeholders alike are anxious to maintain. Whatever decision is made, the key concern is for the unit to retain its current boundaries and an appropriate level of autonomy and identity.

#### **Teaching & Learning**

- The PRG recommends that greater use be made of innovative assessment methods, and more coursework, on the undergraduate programmes, and more use made of e-learning techniques. Lectures could also be made available more widely by way of podcasts or video links on blackboard. This would provide considerable opportunity to enhance assessment strategies and teaching and learning techniques to capture a wider variety of learning outcomes at the undergraduate level.
- The PRG recommends that the Faculty and Department adopt a mechanism of annual programme review which enables it to ensure that feedback from student evaluations, external examiner reports and other sources is considered and acted upon in timely fashion.

- The PRG recommends that there be greater clarity as to how teaching and learning issues are managed between the Faculty and the wider College, as there could be greater opportunities for the development of training and delivery synergies and the inculcation of best practice.

### **Research & Scholarly Activity**

- The PRG recommends that the recommendations made in the Research Quality Review in 2009 concerning administrative support for research; funding; mentoring and sabbaticals remain of relevance.
- The PRG recommends that the role of the newly appointed Faculty Research Director, while very welcome, needs to be defined to include research mentoring and further recommends the encouragement of more active clusters of researchers within the Faculty.
- The PRG noted that the Research Quality Review of 2009 recommended that early career researchers should be allocated a reduced teaching load in line with practice in other law schools. The PRG's understanding is that this recommendation has not been implemented and that to do so might prejudice an individual's promotion prospects. The PRG recommends that this issue be revisited.

### **Staff Development**

- Informal mentoring is recognised as a strong feature of the Faculty which was also supported by a strong ethos of collegiality. The PRG recommends that the Faculty continues to consider the recommendations made in 2006 to enhance the mentoring scheme and to place it on a more formal basis.
- The PRG recommends that concerns about erosion of academic staff research time be put to the Academic Council Research and Innovations Committee. Further the PRG suggests a more integrated administrative structure within the Department might assist with this issue.

### **Governance**

- The PRG recommends that the ongoing internal governance reforms should be developed further to ensure that decision-making processes within the Faculty are refined, so that there is no duplication of decision-making functions between different committees and to improve reporting and feedback structures between the different committees.

- The PRG recommends that given the clear overlap of personnel between the Department and the Faculty, consideration be given to holding joint meetings or otherwise streamlining processes so that duplication is avoided.
- The PRG also recommends that the level of student representation on all Faculty/departmental committees should be clarified.
- The PRG recommends that the newly appointed academic directors could be given a more formal role on the management committee and that the management committee should become a more formal executive, with specific student representation and clearer feedback and reporting structures between the management committee and the general Faculty meetings.
- The PRG recommends that the roles of administrative staff within the Faculty could be clarified further, perhaps in line with the newly created responsibilities and functions of different academic directors and remaining committees.
- The PRG noted with approval the introduction of a Student Council which offers students an opportunity to engage on a regular basis directly with the Dean of the Faculty, although it recommends that this Council be expanded to include relevant academic directors and others to ensure the obligation for bringing feedback to students does not rest solely with the Dean.

#### **Accommodation**

- The PRG recommends that if possible, designated accommodation space should be made available for LLM students.

#### **Financing**

- The PRG recommends that the Faculty and Department continues to keep under review the financial contribution of its programmes, to evaluate new opportunities, and secure the engagement of its external stakeholders in seeking new opportunities for funding, for example through developing bespoke CPD activity or a programme of philanthropic giving.

#### **Communications**

- The PRG recommends that the Student Council could be expanded so that relevant academic directors are also included, to ensure the most efficient communication of feedback to students where issues are reported with particular courses, for example.

## Appendix 1

### Faculty of Law

#### Peer Review Group Site Visit - Timetable

<b>Tuesday 5 February 2013</b>		
16.00 – 18.00	Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group. Briefing by: Professor Ken Higgs, Acting Director of Quality 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	Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group, Dean of Faculty of Law and members of the Faculty Co-ordinating Committee:  Professor Ursula Kilkelly, Dean of Faculty of Law Professor Steve Hedley Dr Fidelma White Dr Owen McIntyre Dr Catherine O’Sullivan Mr. Sean Ó Conaill	
<b>Wednesday 6 February 2013</b>		
08.30 – 08.45	Convening of Peer Review Group	
08.45 – 09.30	Professor Ursula Kilkelly, Dean, Faculty of Law	
09.30 – 10.30	Group meeting with all Faculty staff	
10.30 – 11.00	Tea/coffee	
11.00 – 13.00	Private meetings with individual staff members  11.00: Dr Áine Ryall 11.15: Mr Seán Ó Conaill 11.30: Ms Veronica Calnan 11.45: Dr Benedicte Sage-Fuller 12.00: Dr Fidelma White 12.15: Professor Shane Kilcommins 12.30: Dr Conor O’Mahony 12.45: Dr Claire Murray	Private meetings with individual staff members  11.00: Dr Aisling Parkes 11.15: Professor John Mee 11.30: Dr Mary Donnelly 11.45: Dr Darius Whelan 12.00: Dorothy Appelbe 12.15: Ms Mags Walsh 12.30: Professor Siobhan Mullally
13.00 – 13.50	Working lunch	

14.00 – 14.40	Visit to core facilities of Faculty, escorted by Professor Ursula Kilkelly, Dean, Faculty of Law and Dr. Conor O’Mahony.	
14.40-15.00	Teleconference call with: Ms. Emily Logan, Ombudsman for Children.	
15.00 - 15.40	<u>Representatives of 1<sup>st</sup> &amp; 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Students</u> Ms. Mary Cronin, BCL 1 (Graduate of Certificate in Legal Studies-Level 6) Ms. Andrea McElroy, BCL 1 Ms. Niamh Carey, BCLF 1 Mr. Enda Kerr, BCLI 1 Mr. Alan Hassett, EBCL 2 Mr. John Prendergast, BCLGa 2 Mr. Gareth Mulrain, BCLI 2	
15.40 – 16.20	<u>Representatives of Final Year Students</u> Ms. Kathy Bunney, BCL 3 Ms. Aisling Ryan, BCL 3 Ms. Ruth Corcoran, BCLI 4 Mr. Cian Dennehy, BCLC 4 Mr. Brendan McGrath, BCLC 4 Ms. Deirdre Kelleher, EBCL 4 Mr. John Casey, BCLI 4 Mr. Aidan Burke BCLI 4 Ms. Lís Ní Chonchúir, BCLGa 4	
16.20 – 16.50	<u>Representatives of Graduate Students</u> Ms. Katherine Wade, PhD 1 Ms. Maria Alejandra Calle, PhD 2 Mr. John McNally, PhD 5 Ms. AnnaMarie Brennan, PhD 3	<u>Representatives of Graduate Students</u> Ms. Karen O’Regan, LLM 1 Ms. Joanne Kelleher, LLM Child & Family Law 2 (part-time) Ms. Naomi Kennan, LLM Child & Family Law 1 Ms. Ummu Fallon, LLM Intl Human Rights & Public Policy Ms Dearbhaile Flynn, LLM Criminal Justice 1 Ms. Sorcha de Paor, LLM Criminal Justice 1 Ms. Aimee Ni Cholla, LLM Criminal Justice 1 Ms. Emilie Ghio, LLB 1 Ms. Josephine Higgins, LLB 2 (part-time)
17.00 – 18.00	<u>Representatives of stakeholders, past graduates and employers</u> Mr. Ronan Barnes, Barrister Mr. John Boylan, Solicitor Ms. Katherine Kane, Law Society Representative	

	Mr. Mortimer Kelleher, Solicitor Mr. Don Murphy, Solicitor Mr. Alan O'Dwyer, Solicitor Mr. Raymond St. John O'Neill, Solicitor Ms. Jane Anne Rothwell, Solicitor Ms. Kim Walley, Solicitor Ms. Helen Boyle, Solicitor
19.00	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.  Venue: Tower Room, River Lee Hotel, Western Road

<b>Thursday 7 February 2013</b>	
08.30 – 09.00	Convening of Peer Review Group
09.00 – 09.45	Professor Irene Lynch-Fannon, Head, College of Business & Law
09.45 – 10.00	Mr Paul Moriarty, Interim Chair of Student Services
10.00 – 10.15	Dr Siobhan Cusack, representing the Vice-President for Research & Innovation
10.15 – 10.30	Mr. Cormac McSweeney, Finance Office
10.30 – 11.00	Tea/coffee
11.00 – 11.15	Dr. Bettie Higgs, Deputising for the Vice-President for Teaching and Learning
11.30 – 12.00	Professor Paul Giller, Registrar and Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs
12.00 – 12.30	Visit to UCC Library, meeting with Ms Margot Conrick, Head of Information Services and Ms Ann Byrne, Subject Librarian, Boole Library
12.30 – 13.00	Working lunch
13.00 – 13.20	Teleconference call with: Dr. Vincent Power, Adjunct Professor and Partner, A&L Goodbody.
13.30 – 15.30	Preparation of first draft of final report
15.30 – 15.45	Professor Ursula Kilkelly, Dean, Faculty of Law
16.00 – 16.30	Exit presentation to all staff, to be made by the Chair of the Peer Review Group or other member of Peer Review Group as agreed, summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group.  This presentation is <u>not</u> for discussion at this time.

