

QUALITY REVIEW FOLLOW-UP MEETING

DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING, FINANCE & INFORMATION SYSTEMS (AFIS)

Introduction

A meeting to discuss progress made in implementing recommendations for improvement arising from the review of the Department of Accounting, Finance & Information Systems (AFIS) was held on 24 October 2007.

Present: Professor Denis Lucey, Acting Head, College of Business and Law
Professor Neil Collins, Dean, Faculty of Commerce
Department of AFIS
Professor Ciaran Murphy, Head
Ms Patricia Lynch, Director of Placement Programme
Ms Maire Kavanagh, Administrative Officer
Quality Promotion Unit
Dr Norma Ryan, Director of Quality
Ms Deirdre O'Brien, Administrative Officer

Abbreviations

PRG: Peer Review Group

QPC: Quality Promotion Committee

HR: Human Resources

AF: Accounting & Finance Section of Department

RAM: Resource Allocation Model

VP: Vice-President

QIP: Quality Improvement Plan

B&L: Business and Law

BIS: Business Information Systems

UMG: University Management Group

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report Oct '07
The Department of AFIS should be split into two separate departments, Accounting & Finance and Business Information Systems.	Recommendation noted. QPC referred this recommendation to the Head of the College of Business & Law for consideration and discussion with the Department of AFIS. The QPC were of the view that consensus is needed in whatever decisions are taken as to the future direction and structure of the Department. Senior positions, both those currently vacant and new positions, will be filled following the development and content of the strategic plan for the College of B&L	Not implemented The matter is currently being reviewed by the Department, however, the process of recruiting a Professor of Accounting is currently underway and it is felt that this issue should await that appointment.

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report Oct '07
<p>The appointment of a Professor of Accounting should be expedited and followed by the filling of two other vacant senior positions.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>QPC referred this recommendation to the Head of the College of Business & Law for action.</p> <p>QPC specifically noted the recommendation that the vacant senior positions be filled following the filling of the professorship of Accounting.</p>	<p>Implemented and ongoing</p> <p>The position of Professor of Accounting has been approved and recently advertised but has yet to be filled. The other senior positions will be filled once the new Chair is in place as he/she will have an input into the appointment of these senior positions.</p>
<p>The funding process in relation to the HEA Skills Programme money should be made much more transparent.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>QPC anticipate that this recommendation will be fully implemented following the introduction of the RAM.</p> <p>QPC also noted that it is planned that the Skills money will cease to be available in the future.</p>	<p>Not implemented</p> <p>The funding process for the HEA Skills programme has not been clarified to the satisfaction of the department. The Head of College is anxious that this situation be addressed as a matter of urgency by the University. The Bursar has undertaken to clarify the situation with the HEA.</p>
<p>A more proactive approach should be taken by the Department to ensure that students are well informed and well prepared, particularly in First Year, for the decisions they have to take in relation to the choice of subjects, courses and to their careers.</p>	<p>Recommendation strongly endorsed.</p> <p>QPC suggested that a booklet similar to that produced by the Faculty of Arts 'Pathways' booklet should be considered.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>The Department has not produced an information booklet for students. However, students are given regular information sessions and constantly reminded of the choices that need to be made in relation to their degree subjects.</p>
<p>The possibility of re-introducing Accounting as a major in the BComm Degree should be considered, as should the introduction of a Masters in Accounting.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>QPC noted the opportunities to add value to the students. QPC would welcome more flexibility in transfer routes and closer integration of the programmes.</p> <p>Reference to these points should be included in the strategic plan for the College of B&L.</p>	<p>Partially implemented.</p> <p>The Department will not be offering Accounting as a major in the BComm Degree.</p> <p>The Department is currently developing a Masters in Accounting which is due to be launched in 2010. The Department is also investigating the potential for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses.</p>

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report Oct '07
<p>The Department should consider if the development of tutors could be improved.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>QPC noted that it is not necessary to reduce the number of tutorials and/or change those responsible for them in order to implement this recommendation. Support and development is necessary for all tutors, regardless of level of experience.</p> <p>Implementation of the recommendation does not necessarily imply additional resources are needed.</p>	<p>Implemented and ongoing</p> <p>The Department has introduced a number of actions to enhance the development of tutors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded the number of tutorial offerings • Introduced a drop-in tutoring centre for students taking accounting modules • Facilitated a training session (run by Microsoft) to instruct the tutors in how to give tutorials in computing. <p>The department undertook to seek to encourage the tutors to avail of courses offered by Ionad Bairre in support of teaching.</p>
<p>A more formal system of recognition of teaching quality be established at University level.</p>	<p>QPC noted that the University has been establishing more support and recognition of teaching quality, e.g. introduction of the President's Awards for Excellence in Teaching; a greater emphasis in the Promotions Scheme, etc. This is an on-going process and the University will continue to strive to enhance the quality of teaching by all means possible.</p>	<p>Implemented and ongoing</p> <p>The University has implemented this recommendation by introducing and supporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President's Awards for Excellence in Teaching • Awards for Research into Innovative Forms of Teaching • Parity of esteem with research in the Senior Lecturer promotion scheme • Ongoing consideration of the Associate Professor promotion scheme to ensure appropriate recognition of teaching, <i>inter alia</i> <p>The recent establishment of NAIRTL (National Academy for the Integration of Research and Teaching and Learning) in UCC is a major step forward in the implementation of this recommendation.</p>

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report Oct '07
<p>Reduce the student/staff ratio to ensure that the current standards in teaching and learning are maintained particularly as the research effort expands.</p>	<p>Recommendation noted.</p> <p>The implementation of the RAM will deliver the appropriate share of the financial resources from the University core budget to the Department.</p> <p>The QPC noted that the Department needs to increase the number of academic staff with PhD qualifications to help in delivery of the University mission in relation to fourth level Ireland.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>This recommendation required the implementation of the RAM which has not occurred to the satisfaction of the department.</p> <p>The Department is agreed that full-time permanent staff will not be employed in future without a PhD qualification.</p>
<p>Consider whether there is a need for greater emphasis on technical foundations in the BSc in Business Information Systems to ensure that graduates are flexible and can adapt readily to new environments.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>QPC would like to see greater cooperation with the Department of Computer Science and would encourage the Department to seek ways of doing so – perhaps by sharing some modules?</p>	<p>Not implemented</p> <p>The Department has considered this recommendation but has not progressed it as the department believes that the current balance in the curriculum continues to be validated by the demand for, and employability of, its students.</p>
<p>Put arrangements in place to assist lecturers who are in the process of completing a PhD. The arrangements should consist of a plan with a worked out time-schedule for completion of the thesis and the PhD defence.</p>	<p>Recommendation strongly endorsed.</p> <p>QPC noted the actions taken by the BIS staff to acquire a PhD qualification and commended all staff of the Department engaged in such efforts.</p>	<p>Implemented</p> <p>The Department has addressed this issue and is fully supportive of all departmental staff in the process of completing a PhD.</p>
<p>Develop the relations with continental Europe and be able to apply for European research grants as well as national and international grants.</p>	<p>Recommendation strongly endorsed</p>	<p>Implemented</p> <p>The Department has developed links with a variety of institutions. The Department will continue to develop and cultivate these research links.</p>
<p>Establish an Industry Advisory Board for Accounting & Finance, comparable to the BIS Advisory Board.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>QPC noted the recommendations in other cognate areas for an Industry /Advisory Board and suggested that rather than a number of Advisory Boards the Faculty/College should consider establishing a single Board to cover all the ‘business’ degrees.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>The establishment of Advisory Boards within the College of B&L is a strategic issue for the College as a whole and will be progressed by the Head of College.</p>

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report Oct '07
Investigate the feasibility of developing a Corporate College.	Recommendation noted. The QPC would welcome suggestions / recommendations from the Head of the College of B&L in this regard. The QPC considered that development of closer relationships between the Department/College and large companies would be welcomed and beneficial for all.	Ongoing The 'Corporate College' formed part of the 2007 Strategic Innovation Fund application.

Response to comments made by the Peer Review Group on recommendations made by A&F

Note: in the following table the word 'Department' is used to refer to the Department of AFIS and not just the A&F section

Recommendation	Comment of QPC	Follow-up Report Oct '07
Enhance the roles of the administrative staff specifically in the areas of placement supervision; liaison with international student office; liaison with disability support services; postgraduate admissions; career services schools open days	Recommendation endorsed.	Ongoing The Department has worked to enhance the role of administrative staff to date and further improvements will be made.
Increase numbers on postgraduate programmes. This will help to link teaching and research competencies with market needs and generate funding to be used to support PhD students	Recommendation endorsed. The QPC would particularly welcome plans to increase the number of PhD students	Ongoing Some progress has been made to date. The proposed new Masters in Accounting will enhance the postgraduate numbers.
Introduce a new four year BSc Accounting to replace the existing three-year programme which would enhance the quality of the programme with introduction of work placement and a broader curriculum which includes more focus on case-based learning	Action on recommendation noted.	Implemented The new four year degree programme, BSc Accounting, had its first student intake this year, 2007/08.

Recommendation	Comment of QPC	Follow-up Report Oct '07
Provision of dedicated seminar/meeting/tutorial room to facilitate more rational timetabling of postgraduate programmes and daytime tutorials and to provide a meeting space for interdisciplinary research	QPC did not endorse the recommendation for a dedicated seminar room, but would like to remind the department of the room bookings policy in UCC and would encourage the Department to avail of this and also to share existing facilities within the Department. The QPC also noted the recommendation of the Space Subcommittee of the Buildings Committee in relation to wider access by other Departments to the meeting room in BIS area.	Not implemented The issue of space is still outstanding and critical for both the Department and the College as a whole.
Alter the Workload Allocation Process with (1) research output in the form of published research to become part of the workload allocation process (2) teaching responsibilities for research active staff to include tutorials (3) increased scheduling of teaching to provide protected space for research.	Departmental recommendation endorsed. The QPC emphasised the need to achieve an appropriate balance between teaching and research and the ideal being that all academic staff are engaged in both activities to a significant degree, subject to a minimum of 6 hours teaching (direct contact time) per week for all academic staff. QPC would wish to see this recommendation implemented immediately.	Ongoing The Department has taken steps to ensure an appropriate balance between teaching and research having regard to the number of new staff in development mode.
Recruit Teaching Assistant and Research Assistant	QPC considered this recommendation to be a matter for decision by the Head of the College of B&L and recommended that the Department make proposals to the Head.	Ongoing The Department is reviewing the possibility of recruiting a Teaching Assistant in order to improve the quality of tutorials; however, the department has no plans to recruit a Research Assistant at present.