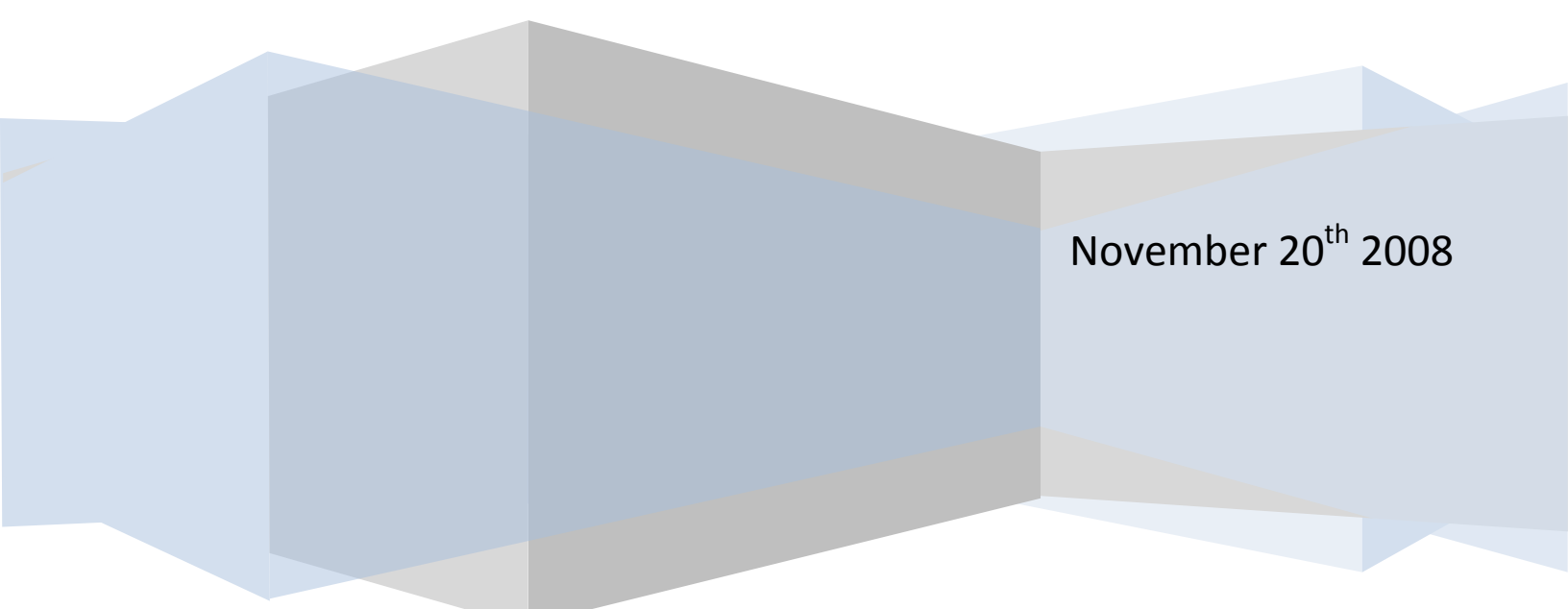


Quality Improvement/Quality Assurance Peer Review Report

Department of Government

University College Cork – National University of Ireland, Cork



November 20th 2008

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TIMETABLE FOR THE SITE VISIT

The timetable for the site visit is shown in Appendix A. Although we found the timetable to be very intense, we considered it to be both appropriate and adequate. We found it regrettable that neither the Head of the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Science, nor a representative, was available to meet us.

PEER REVIEW

Methodology

Except for meetings with individual staff (as indicated in Appendix A), the PRG worked as a group throughout the site visit. The group followed the assessment guidelines provided by the Quality Promotion Unit, and deferred to the disciplinary expertise of the external members of the PRG in assessing the performance of the Department in relation to international standards and best practice. Nevertheless, all the members participated in, and shared responsibility for, all aspects of the analysis contained in this report.

Site Visit

The Peer Review Group visited the Departmental facilities. We were impressed with the photographs on display relating to prominent visitors, as well as those capturing the successes of various staff members. This helps to provide a focal point for staff and students, and a visual identity for the Department. The site visit provided evidence on the issue of the availability of space reported in the SER. This will be considered later in the report.

Peer Review Group Report

The PRG drafted the report during the afternoon and evening of the second day, and finalised the report by email subsequent to the visit. All members of the PRG agreed to the report before finalisation.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the time and efforts of the staff of the Department of Government, the Head of the College of Business and Law, the Vice-President for Academic Affairs, the Vice-President for Research Policy and Support, the Finance Office representative, the Subject Librarians, researchers and students in the Department of Government, placement partners, employers, graduates, the Director of the Quality Promotion Unit and her staff. Our work was greatly facilitated by the openness of individuals and their willingness to provide information and to give us the benefit of their expertise. We would like to thank them all for their co-operation and hospitality.

OVERALL ANALYSIS

Self-Evaluation Report

The self-evaluation report (SER) was a self-critical and reasonably reflective report, and the Department provided a comprehensive set of accessible documentation. Nevertheless, we formed the view that there was an element of repetition in the report, and that it failed to highlight all the significant issues that became evident during the site visit – particularly in the areas of research leadership and governance.

We believe that the mission statement provided in the SER deserved more consideration by staff prior to finalising the report. In addition, we would have liked to have seen more consideration of (i) the improvement of research administration in the Department and (ii) overseas placement opportunities, which is clearly a significant strength of the Department.

SWOT Analysis

The SER provided a very detailed list of strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats. However, there was relatively little analysis of these items. We believe that greater refinement of the SWOT analysis would have provided a more insightful picture of how the Department views itself and the issues that it faces. Based on the SER and the site visit, we see the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as outlined in the following paragraphs. These will be elaborated upon later in the report.

We concur with the findings of the 2004 Group that “by all the standard measures, the Department of Government is a high achiever”. In our opinion, the most significant strength of the Department is its strong and committed academic staff. This is reflected in various ways, such as the Department’s ability to attract PhD students and the very positive postgraduate research culture evident in the Department. It is also evident in the excellent staff/student relationships (characterised by an ‘open-door’ policy) and the quality of the programmes offered. The Department provides a very thorough grounding in the study of politics, combined with a number of attractive options. The Department has an attractive work-placement programme as part of the BSc (Government), especially overseas, and has maintained a significant contribution to the local community (e.g. public engagement with local government, work with prisoners, and activities with recent immigrants). In addition, there is a growing research output amongst academic staff as well as an impressive level of engagement with professional organisations.

A number of weaknesses are also evident. Research is not always given sufficient priority in internal arrangements and structures in the Department, and there appears to be a need for more proactive research leadership. Consequently, academic staff members (particularly early-career staff) have not been sufficiently purposeful in ‘guarding time’ for such work and this is in some ways reflected in research funding acquisition and research output, although we note that the Department has been successful in raising research grants in the past. In addition, we found that there is a significant non-academic administrative load on college lecturers in particular. There is some evidence of a need for improved communication within the Department to reflect its increased size and workloads.

We believe that there are significant opportunities for the Department that would, if grasped, result in important benefits for both the Department and UCC. The Department could develop external partnerships (working with colleagues in UCC and elsewhere) to enhance research and funding competencies as part of a staff development initiative. There are also opportunities to rationalise undergraduate offerings while expanding postgraduate, JYA, and continued professional development

(CPD) programmes. We noted the success of activities organised for councillors, election candidates and civil servants and were also impressed by the personal letter of thanks we saw from the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern.

There are also some potential threats. The most significant one is the continuation of the existing disputes regarding the Politics discipline in UCC which is the cause of some incredulity elsewhere. In addition, the falling level of the CAO entry points for the BSc (Government) is a matter for concern, as is the uncertainty created by restructuring, financial cutbacks, and the lack of space for postgraduate students.

Benchmarking

The Department compared themselves to the Department of Politics at the University of Exeter. We did not find the benchmarking statement particularly useful to the review exercise, and believe that choosing one of the many UK politics Departments with approximately twelve staff would have been more appropriate given the staffing profile of the Department of Government.

FINDINGS OF THE PEER REVIEW GROUP

Preamble: The Identity of the Department of Government

The last peer review of the Department (March 2004) reported as follows:

“It is of some concern... to find that the Department’s members identify issues of recognition, status and standing within UCC as a major problem. This... relates to the professional self-image and confidence of the members of staff, and to their perception of the reaction of key sectors of the University to the Department and its activities”.

With regret, we must report that these comments apply *a fortiori* to the situation in 2008.

In all serious universities in the United Kingdom and North America (as well as elsewhere), Politics is recognised as an autonomous discipline with its own distinctive subject matter, methodology and national and international professional organisations. In UCC, it appears, the Department of Government is not allowed to use the word ‘politics’ to describe itself or its activities even though staff have been hired as Lecturers in Politics/Political Science and it is recognised universally outside UCC as an academic unit in the Discipline of Politics. This is plainly absurd. Indeed, it is almost beyond belief that

a member of the Department should receive an email (which we have seen) which advised, in respect of a particular initiative, that 'reference to Politics/Political Science/Political Leadership should be deleted from the proposal'. If this sort of thing became widely known it would seriously undermine the academic credibility of UCC in the field and the evident departure from common sense would surprise most people.

We understand the historical reasons that have led to this strange situation and the pressures that lead some to seek to maintain it. We also appreciate the difficulty of managing change. Nonetheless, the time has surely come to grasp the nettle and permit the Department of Government to flourish as the key unit involved in teaching and research in the Discipline of Politics. The danger, if there is no prospect of change, is that the University will start to lose some talented and productive departmental staff who are currently a significant asset. We were forcefully informed during interviews that under the present arrangements some of these staff currently feel demoralised and unappreciated.

Despite this, as will become clear in what follows, we are highly impressed by the overall quality of the Departmental staff and of the work that they do – in teaching, in research and publication, and in the local community, region and further.

Department Organisation and Planning

The Department has grown significantly in recent years (particularly since the last quality review in 2004). We are impressed with both the quality of the staff that the Head of Department has been able to recruit, and the many opportunities that he has created for the Department. It is not surprising therefore, that we found high levels of respect for the Head of Department amongst all staff. Overall, we found a good *esprit de corps* with ample evidence that individual staff members provide good support for their colleagues.

The expansion at College Lecturer level has resulted in a very flat organisational structure and a disproportionately high number of early-career academics. This means that the Head of Department cannot call on a sufficient number of experienced colleagues in consolidating and developing the teaching and research profile of the Department. The two existing Senior Lecturers share some of the management tasks with the Head of Department, while also heavily involved in teaching, research and administration of departmental affairs within the Department and the University. Given the scarcity of senior staff to share the responsibility of running the Department, we note, with some concern, that a considerable non-academic administrative burden is being placed on early-career college lecturers

(particularly in relation to managing Departmental finances and organising placements) and on some contract lecturers. This is not to suggest that such staff have not performed well in these roles – indeed, there is ample evidence that they perform these roles extremely well. Rather we believe that such tasks are an undesirable distraction for those who should be exploiting their potential in the areas of teaching and research at this point in their academic careers. We believe that wherever possible these administrative tasks should be undertaken by administrative staff.

The Department has followed a strategy of pursuing available opportunities in relation to many of its activities, and has recorded some notable successes: particularly in relation to programme development and external relations. In our view the Department is not celebrating its successes sufficiently in its communications with the wider UCC and external communities. The profile of the Department could be significantly enhanced through more prominent use of the UCC and external media to publicise the impressive successes of the Department.

On the other hand, there is some reason to believe that the strategy pursued to date runs the danger of leading to a lack of focus in relation to some key areas of teaching and research. While, we see numerous opportunities for the Department, we believe that it may need to be more discriminating in relation to the opportunities pursued in order to ensure more focus on key objectives. We therefore would encourage the Department to establish priorities in relation to the available opportunities. In this regard, we were impressed with the Head of Department's vision for positioning the identity of the Department vis-à-vis the cognate departments in UCD and Trinity.

Teaching and Learning

The programmes offered by the Department of Government are of at least a comparable standard to other Politics programmes in the UK and elsewhere, and in line with what would be expected from a reputable Politics Department. There are many innovative aspects to the programmes – for example, the placement opportunities in the BSc (Government) and the work with immigrant groups at Masters level. In addition, we commend the variety of the programmes that are offered.

The courses, in particular the specialist options, are taught by staff who are active in undertaking research which underpins teaching and the student experience. The staff are highly knowledgeable about, and up-to-date with, recent research which they then feed into their teaching. We are impressed by the commitment of the Department to teaching and learning and noted that many members of staff have gained Higher Education teaching qualifications and have presented papers on pedagogy.

We are highly impressed with the quality of all Department activities in relation to teaching and student support, and we noted the high level of mutual respect amongst staff and students. It is evident that staff members are investing a huge amount of time in teaching and student support, and we were extremely impressed with the positive comments from students at all levels and in both the Commerce and Arts faculties.

That said, we believe that the level of engagement with teaching and student support must be kept under regular review in terms of striking a balance with other activities. We concur with the findings of the 2004 PRG that in order to ensure adequate time for other activities, “the Department might have to reassess their open-door policy for students”. This policy was widely praised by students, including postgraduates, but there is an argument that staff need to set some limits on their availability in order to safeguard time for their own research and writing. Senior staff members in the Department need to be conscious of the need to balance teaching and student support with other competing demands on the time of academic staff. In particular, the range of modules offered, particularly options, should be regularly reviewed.

We noted that the entry level points for the BSc (Government) appear to be falling and this may adversely affect the quality of students undertaking the degree, and potentially the numbers going on to undertake postgraduate study. From our discussions with students, we have concluded that the programme may not be fully understood by secondary school students and their guidance counsellors. The Government programme does not seem to enjoy the same type of profile amongst this group as competing programmes in UCC or political science courses at other Irish universities.

We are conscious that the Department already undertakes outreach work with schools and colleges but we recommend that this should be reviewed and wherever possible increased. We believe that all academic staff in the Department should be involved in an enhanced programme of school visits. We suggest that talks for Leaving Certificate students should be organised in the September to January period (before the February CAO deadline), with talks for pre-Leaving Certificate students arranged from January to April. This initiative would require the necessary support from administrative staff to organise the visits and coordinate the availability of academic staff.

As well as increasing school visits, the branding of the degree needs to be considered as part of the process of raising awareness. The term ‘Government’ is rather narrow in conveying the range of Politics and business modules offered to students on the programme, and this was confirmed during our

discussions with students. The issue of falling points should also be considered in terms of the number of places offered on the programme (in the short term at least). In examining issues associated with re-branding, raising awareness and the number of places, we would encourage the Department to explore strategic partnerships with other disciplines within UCC with a view to offering joint honours programmes. In particular, we would see potentially attractive offerings emerging in the areas of Legal and Political Studies (in co-operation with Law) and International Political Science (in co-operation with the languages Departments such as French, German and Chinese, as with the B.Comm (International)). Such options would also appear to be in keeping with the inter-disciplinary and international aims evident in both the strategies for the University and the College of Business and Law. Of course, progress with many of these possibilities depends on a resolution of the issues outlined in the Preamble around the use of the name 'Politics' by the Department.

Research and Scholarly Standing

Staff members in the Department have publications in various reputable journals such as *Contemporary Politics*, *Comparative European Politics*, *Representation*, *Journal of European Policy*, *Politics*, *Parliamentary Affairs*, *Irish Political Studies*, and *Regional and Federal Studies*. Staff members have also had books published by leading publishers (e.g. Gill & Macmillan, Palgrave Macmillan, Routledge, Longmans, Sage, Yale University Press, and Manchester University Press).

Staff members are also active contributors to leading international conferences including those of the Political Studies Association of the UK (PSA), European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), American Political Science Association (APSA), Elections, Public Opinion and Parties Specialist group (EPOP), and the Political Studies Association of Ireland (PSAI). The level of this activity is highly commendable and compares very favourably with the best Departments elsewhere.

The success of the Department in attracting visiting academics (including Fulbright scholars) and its connections with leading universities in Europe and the USA (e.g. Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid and the University of California, Berkeley) is strong evidence of its growing international standing.

We were particularly impressed with the research output of the early-career staff. Their achievements in this area deserve particular mention in light of their other commitments (teaching, student support, programme development, engagement with the community, administrative load etc). These staff have shown they have the potential for further achievements given the time and resources and we were pleased to learn that one member of staff has been awarded sabbatical leave during 2009. In order to

continue to realise the potential we believe that strong research leadership is needed in the Department. In particular, we suggest there should be a designated Director of Research who would take the lead in further developing research strategy and activity in the Department.

There is also a need to have some regular Departmental meetings devoted entirely to exploring the research agenda and progress of early career staff. These meetings should encourage collaboration between staff and heightened levels of activity, for example in applying for research grants or preparing papers for publication. We see a significant role for the Director of Research in ensuring adequate time for planning and developing research activities, partnerships, collaborations, and publications, as well as encouraging the recruitment of postgraduate research students. This role therefore would need to be filled by a senior member of staff with significant research experience.

We believe that there is a strong argument for additional senior appointments (at Senior Lecturer/Professorial level) in the Department, given its current flat structure, the full workloads of the existing senior staff and the consequent unnecessary administrative load carried by early career staff. It is also possible that the Department could leverage its relationships with leading Politics Departments in the UK and USA to attract visiting professors to help provide research leadership and mentoring. In addition, we believe that more systematic arrangements for sabbatical leave should be put in place to allow academic staff (but particularly early-career staff) to develop their research and publishing networks, for example by spending 6 to 12 months in leading universities elsewhere in Ireland or abroad. We understand that such opportunities are currently constrained by the Department having to guarantee adequate lecturing coverage for the staff member on sabbatical and this is something that is difficult given the high student/staff ratio.

We are impressed with the growth in the number of PhD students in the Department. The quality of this cadre of researchers is evident by the success in attracting Government of Ireland scholarships. While the Department offers some training in research methods/advanced topics, and encourages students to participate in generic postgraduate modules offered by the University, we believe that it would be appropriate for the Department to consider a more structured approach to doctoral education in line with UCC's policy (30 - 90 credits plus a thesis). In line with international practice and some doctoral programmes in UCC, we recommend that the Department should offer a Master's qualification to students who complete the structured part of the programme, but do not submit the PhD thesis. This would allow the Department to offer an M. Res., or similar, qualification commonly found in universities in other countries. We believe that this approach would (i) be a more efficient use of staff resources, (ii)

facilitate the introduction of additional instruction in areas such as political science research methods, and (iii) allow for further increases in the number of PhD students (and thus FTEs).

Support Services

It is evident that support services for the Department of Government are of high quality. Students are very happy with the computing facilities provided and these facilities exceed the standards available in most UK universities. The Library services are excellent – we were impressed with the quality of the facilities as well as the range of books, journals, and electronic resources. However, the Library opening hours out of term are restrictive on postgraduate students, and should be extended until 10 pm. The Careers service has been very supportive of the Department, particularly in relation to the very successful placement programme. This has resulted in real benefits for UCC and the students.

We are particularly encouraged with research support developments through the ISS 21 initiative and acknowledge the help of staff in the Research Support Office in helping the Department launch a new electronic journal. However, while recognising that there have been some encouraging changes since the 2004 report, the Research Support Office still needs to be more proactive in support of the Department and perhaps the social sciences in general. Such support is particularly important for a Department, such as Government, that does not have a strong history of generating research funding nor sufficient numbers of senior academics available to provide advice to early-career staff on research funding. Additional support in this area should allow the Department take advantage of the significant funding available for the discipline (particularly through EU-FP7). We would suggest that raising more research grant income should be a high priority for the coming period.

External Relations

As previously mentioned in the section on research and scholarly standing, we are very impressed with the strong relationships that the Department has established with others in the political science discipline nationally and internationally, and with community groups in Ireland. In this regard, the leadership provided by the Head of the Department is highly commended. Three members of the Department serve on the Executive Committee of the Political Science Association of Ireland (PSAI), including as President and Secretary. Staff members also serve on the executive committees of prominent international bodies, including the Executive Committee of the Political Studies Association (UK) and the Governing Council of the British American Security Information Council. All academic staff are members of the PSAI, and half are members of the Political Studies Association (PSA). This level of

involvement is higher than in many Politics Departments elsewhere. In addition, the Department has active involvement with the European Confederation of Political Science Associations, European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) and the American Political Science Association (APSA).

The Department has forged excellent relationships with local and national community groups. This is reflected through partnerships and events involving most Irish government Departments, numerous city and county councils, all major political parties, various immigrant groups and representative bodies, the prison service, the Democracy Commission, etc. It is evident that it is also expanding its profile internationally as evidenced by recently welcoming the former President of Latvia. As mentioned earlier, we believe that the Department needs to do more to celebrate these successes, particularly by publicising such events within UCC and the national media. We also believe that the Department's external relations would be a significant asset were it to cultivate a range of Continued Professional Development (CPD) programmes.

Staffing

It is evident that a large proportion of the staff is young, able, and extremely enthusiastic. They are one of the most promising Politics groups in Ireland and, with appropriate management and development, could form one of the leading Politics departments. However, it is clear that many staff members are frustrated and demoralised by the ongoing issues regarding the identity of the Department and the teaching of Politics in UCC, which we highlighted in the Preamble to this report. If this situation is not resolved soon, UCC is in danger of losing staff with significant ability and potential.

However, given the large proportion of staff members that are in their early careers and the small number of senior staff (the Department has only one professor and two senior lecturers) there is a very flat organisational structure in the Department, as we have mentioned earlier. This places a heavy leadership burden on a small number of staff, and results in early-career staff having to accept high levels of administrative responsibility in areas traditionally reserved for senior staff (e.g. finances and placements) or administrators. We believe that the continuation of this situation would impede the professional and career development of the early-career staff, and seriously limit the potential for the enhancement of the discipline within UCC. In addition, we see the administrative burden and the high student/staff ratio putting staff in the Department at a disadvantage vis-à-vis colleagues in other parts of UCC when applying for promotion through the internal promotion scheme.

We think the overall staffing structure of the Department does not match its needs. While the ratio of permanent to temporary staff has improved since the 2004 review, there is still uncertainty about the ongoing funding for three temporary academic positions. In addition to securing the positions of the staff currently on temporary contracts, it is our view that the Department requires two more senior staff to assist in achieving the potential of existing staff and enhance the ability of the Department to contribute to the discipline nationally, internationally and in the wider community. In addition, there is a need for an improved programme of staff development, including more extensive research mentoring as discussed in the section on Research above.

As we have previously touched on, there is a need to improve the level and effectiveness of administrative support in the Department. Despite the high levels of growth in staff and student numbers, the level of administrative support has largely remained the same (one person) since the creation of the Department. While a Departmental Manager was appointed following the 2004 PRG report, this position was discontinued after one year. The hiring of an Executive Assistant on a temporary contract in the last year has improved the position but this contract is not guaranteed in the future. In order to provide appropriate administrative support to staff and students in the Department, this situation needs to be resolved. Otherwise it will not be possible to implement the recommendations in this report regarding reducing the administrative burden on early career staff and increasing the awareness campaign in secondary schools.

Communications and Governance

We believe that the governance mechanisms have become more formalised since the 2004 PRG report, and that staff meetings and those of specialist committees (e.g. undergraduate and postgraduate) are now held regularly. It is also evident that the Head of Department has continued to provide strong leadership in developing opportunities for the growth of the Department. However, there is a need for regular meetings devoted to research as discussed in the Research section of this report.

In addition, as might be expected given the significant growth in Department numbers and activities in recent years, there is a continuing need for the Department to reconsider the suitability of existing communications and governance mechanisms. Staff members suggested that some improvements could be made in the ways decisions were communicated, particularly those decisions taken outside staff meetings. While some decision making on an ad hoc basis is necessary for the proper functioning of any progressive Department, we believe that the significant administrative responsibility being placed on

early-career staff in relation to important departmental matters is not conducive to proper communications and governance in a department of this size. We noted the comments of the 2004 PRG in this regard, and believe that this is an area that the Department should be able to address reasonably quickly.

Accommodation

It is clear that the growth of the Department since the last review in 2004 has placed a strain on the available space. Most of the offices are in block B of the O’Rahilly Building, with two staff members in one office in block A. The Department lacks space for the proper housing of administrative supplies and archived student assessments (surely a quality-control issue). It also has to rely on space provided by another Department to accommodate a photocopier. The Department has to purchase a larger photocopier to cope with the expansion in student numbers and other activities, and it is not clear whether the space provided by the other Department will be able to accommodate the new photocopier (this room already has three photocopiers).

The Department has responded well to the call to expand postgraduate numbers and currently has 12 full-time PhD students. However, it is a matter of concern that the Department does not have accommodation for their postgraduate students, particularly as this was raised as an issue by the 2004 PRG. We were informed that students have to use lecture rooms (when they are not being used) and open communal areas in the corridors of the O’Rahilly building to work on their research and prepare the lectures that they deliver on a part-time basis. As noted above, the early out of term closing hours in the Library is also a significant hindrance for these students. These students represent a significant source of income and research innovation (one has been awarded a Government of Ireland Scholarship) for the University, and their treatment in this way is a disgrace. The continuation of this situation will adversely affect the Department’s ability to recruit quality research students. This is a matter that deserves urgent attention and resolution.

Financing

We recognise that, in common with other departments in the Commerce Faculty, the Department of Government has been regarded as a generator of income for the University. While we believe that the resourcing of the Department has improved since the 2004 report, the student/academic staff ratio is still high (in excess of 25/1), and the funding for library books and consumables is still low. While we have been assured that the new Resource Allocation Model (RAM) will provide a more transparent and

fairer allocation of funding to the Department in the future, the Department is still suffering from past constraints and under-funding. This is particularly evident in relation to the resource lag following the expansion of the Department. It is to the credit of the Department that it has managed to develop while operating within its straitened budget allocation. Given the new RAM, it would now be timely for the Head of Department to liaise with the Head of College to ensure strategic investment in the discipline. We have recommended elsewhere in the report that the Department generate additional revenue by offering Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses. It is important that the Head of College agrees to 'ring-fence' such additional income for the further development of the Department.

Departmental Coordinating Committee & the Preparation of the Self-Evaluation Report

The Self-Evaluation Report prepared by the Department included all staff in the preparation. The PRG commended the engagement of all staff in the process and the fact that students were fully consulted during the preparation stage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The PRG considered very carefully all the recommendations in the Self-Evaluation Report prepared by the Department of Government and have incorporated these, as the Group deemed appropriate, in the recommendations for improvement made below.

1. Resolve the identity of the Department, particularly in relation to research and teaching in the Discipline of Politics. We believe that the Department of Government has the potential to become one of the leading Departments of Politics in Ireland, with a strong international reputation. In the long term, the University might seek to make the most of the political scientists that it employs by establishing a School of Politics with the Department of Government as its core, and inviting Politics academics outside the Department to join. This would permit the Department of Government to flourish as the key unit involved in teaching and research in the Politics Discipline.
2. Consider re-branding both the Department of Government and the BSc (Government) with a view to reflecting more accurately their relevance within the discipline of Politics to external stakeholders (including potential students) and amongst the wider University community.

3. Resolve the structural position of the Department within the College of Business and Law. In particular, we recommend that the Department should seek to enhance co-operative relationships with other Departments in the College in relation to programmatic and research collaboration. If a Business School were to emerge from ongoing restructuring, we recommend that the Department of Government should not be incorporated into such a School. We believe that such form of restructuring would hinder the development of the Politics discipline in UCC.
4. That the College of Business and Law should make a strategic investment in new senior staff (Senior lecturer/Professor) in the Department with a view to (i) leveraging the expertise of the Department to enhance the competitive positioning of the College, (ii) improving research mentoring for early-career staff, and (iii) reducing the leadership burden on the existing senior staff.
5. Reduce the unnecessary non-academic administrative burden on college lecturers, particularly in relation to finance and placements.
6. Regularly review the number of modules taught.
7. Increase the administrative support available to the Department by (i) securing the tenure of the temporary executive assistant, (ii) provide training for administrative staff, and (iii) putting in place a process for securing the services of a full-time Departmental Manager.
8. Devise and implement a strategy for staff development, particularly in relation to research and publications. This should include formal research mentoring and the establishment of the role of Research Director (which should be filled by a senior staff member e.g. Senior Lecturer/Professor) in order to give encouragement for, and a focus to, applications for research funding and publications.
9. Formalise the process of visiting positions to ensure that students are exposed to disciplinary experts in leading Politics Departments internationally. We recommend that a Visiting Professorship be facilitated with a view to providing research and career mentoring for staff.
10. Liaise more closely with ISS 21 in relation to the expertise available on writing research grants in the social sciences.
11. Secure a more effective strategy for sabbatical leave that will ensure that all staff (but particularly early career staff) can (i) develop funding linkages with politics researchers and networks abroad and (ii) increase the level of research collaborations.
12. Formalise the position in relation to promoting awareness of the BSc Government degree in secondary schools. We recommend that academic staff at all levels should conduct more school

visits. The arrangements for these visits should be facilitated by improved administrative support. We see this as a key aspect of improving the CAO points scores of incoming students.

13. Continue growth at postgraduate level. Increase the amount of structured education on the PhD programme in line with UCC guidelines for 30-90 credits to be taken as part of the programme. In particular, we recommend additional modules on both qualitative and quantitative research methods in political science. Such modules could be offered in conjunction with other Departments in Business and Law and/or Social Science. We also recommend that a Masters opt-out be offered for students who complete 60 credits but do not submit a doctoral thesis. Such credits may include taught modules and/or a dissertation (e.g. M. Res model).
14. Pursue the Space sub-committee to secure long-term dedicated space for PhD students and staff. There is also a need for additional space for archiving student assessments etc. We consider this a matter of some urgency, and that the Head of College should be consulted on this issue immediately.
15. Generate additional income by offering more Continued Professional Development (CPD) and programmes such as the JYA Certificate in Irish Politics Today. We are particularly impressed with current community outreach initiatives (e.g. prisoners and immigrants) and recommend that the Department should explore more of these initiatives with a view to (i) increasing the community profile of the Department and (ii) generating additional income.
16. Ring-fence some of this income for staff development and support.

APPENDIX A: PEER REVIEW GROUP SITE VISIT TIMETABLE

In Summary

- Tuesday 28 October: The Peer Review Group arrived at the Kingsley Hotel for a briefing from the Director of the Quality Promotion Unit, followed by a meal with representatives from the Department.
- Wednesday 29 October: The Peer Review Group considered the Self-Evaluation Report and met Departmental staff and student and stakeholder representatives. A working private dinner was held that evening for the Peer Review Group.
- Thursday 30 October: The Peer Review Group met relevant officers of UCC. The first draft of the final report was prepared and an exit presentation was given by the Peer Review Group to all members of the Department. A working private dinner was held that evening for the Peer Review Group. This was the final evening of the review.
- Friday 31 October: External Peer Review Group members departed

Tuesday 28 October 2008	
16.00 – 18.00	<p>Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group</p> <p>Briefing by Director of Quality Promotion Unit, Dr. N. Ryan.</p> <p>Group agreed final work schedule and assignment of tasks for the following 2 days.</p> <p>Views were exchanged and areas to be clarified or explored were identified.</p> <p>Venue: Suite 5A, Business Centre, Kingsley Hotel</p>
19.00	<p>Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group and representatives from the Department.</p> <p>Departmental Representatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Fiona Buckley • Dr. Mary Murphy • Dr. Emmanuelle Schon-Quinlivan • Ms. Ann McCann • Dr. Seamus O’Tuama

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Theresa Reidy • Dr. Liam Weeks • Dr. Andrew Cottey 	
Wednesday 29 October 2008 Venue: O’Rahilly Building, Room 207		
08.30 – 09.00	Convening of Peer Review Group and consideration of Self-Evaluation Report	
09.00 – 09.30	Meeting with Dr Seamus O’Tuama (for Professor Neil Collins, Head of Department)	
10.00 – 11.00	Group meeting with all staff of the Department: Ms. Fiona Buckley Dr. Clodagh Harris Mr. Shane MacGiollabhui Ms. Ann McCann Dr. Mary Murphy Ms. Margaret O’Brien Dr. Seamus O’Tuama Dr. Aodh Quinlivan Dr. Emmanuelle Schon-Quinlivan Dr. Theresa Reidy Dr. Liam Weeks	
11.00 – 11.15	Tea/coffee	
11.00 – 12.30	<u>Private meetings with staff</u> PRG Members Professor John Benyon Mr. Martin Hayes 11.15 – 11.30 Dr. Liam Weeks 11.30 – 11.45 Dr. Theresa Reidy 11.45 – 12.00 Dr. Emanuelle Schon-Quinlivan 12.00 – 12.15 Ms. Fiona Buckley 12.15 – 12.30 Dr. Mary Murphy Venue: O’Rahilly Building, Room 207	<u>Private meetings with staff</u> PRG Members Professor David Denver Professor Yvonne Galligan Dr. Patrick Finnegan 11.15 – 11.30 Ms. Margaret O’Brien 11.30 – 11.45 Dr. Clodagh Harris 11.45 – 12.00 Mr. Shane MacGiollabhui 12.00 – 12.15 Ms. Ann McCann 12.15 – 12.30 Dr. Aodh Quinlivan Venue: O’ Rahilly Building, Room 220
12.30 – 13.30	Working private lunch for members of Peer Review Group	
13.30– 14.00	Visit to core facilities of the Department, escorted by Dr. Seamus O’Tuama and Dr. Liam Weeks	
14.00 – 14.45	PRG Members Professor David Denver Professor Yvonne Galligan	PRG Members Professor John Benyon Mr. Martin Hayes

	<p>Dr. Patrick Finnegan</p> <p><u>Meeting with 2nd Year Students</u></p> <p>Daniel Timothy Healy Patrick Higgins Kevin Hiney Amin Shanfi Isaloo Tracie Lane Laura Murphy</p> <p>Venue: O’Rahilly Building, Room 207</p>	<p><u>Meeting with 1st Year Students</u></p> <p>Steven Noonan Neill O’Callaghan Corinna O’Sullivan Edward Quinn Colin Ryan</p> <p>Venue: O’Rahilly Building, Room G40</p>						
14.45 – 15.30	<p><u>Meeting with 3rd Year Students</u></p> <p>Aoife Clancy Rory Cocking Peter Horgan Jeanette Levis Ian Mawe Eadaoin O’Halloran</p> <p>Venue: O’Rahilly Building, Room 207</p>	<p><u>Meeting with 4th Year Students</u></p> <p>Colm Diamond Margaret Donnellan Amanda Merrigan Ita O’Sullivan</p> <p>Venue: O’Rahilly Building, Room 207</p>						
15.30 – 15.45	Tea/coffee break							
15.45 – 16.15	<p><u>Albany Group</u></p> <p>Mr. Carl Swidorski</p> <p>Ms. Theresa Swidorski</p>							
16.15 – 16.55	<p><u>Representatives of Graduate Students</u></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Chantelle Wallace (MBS)</td> <td>Fergal McDonald (PhD Year 2)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Philip Murphy (PhD Year 2)</td> <td>Tim McCarthy (PhD Year 2)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Monica O’Mullane (PhD Year 4)</td> <td>Lyndsey Power (PhD Year 4)</td> </tr> </table>		Chantelle Wallace (MBS)	Fergal McDonald (PhD Year 2)	Philip Murphy (PhD Year 2)	Tim McCarthy (PhD Year 2)	Monica O’Mullane (PhD Year 4)	Lyndsey Power (PhD Year 4)
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Monica O’Mullane (PhD Year 4)	Lyndsey Power (PhD Year 4)							
17.00 – 18.30	<p><u>Meetings with representatives of stakeholders</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Mary Rose Desmond, Assistant to Mr. Micheál Martin, TD • Ms. Noelle Desmond: Past Graduate • Ms. Hannah Lane, Assistant to Ms. Kathy Synnott, MEP: Past Graduate • Ms. Jacqueline Moore, Standards in Public Office Commission: Employer on placement programme • Ms. Elena Platonova, Assistant to Ms. Kathy Synnott, MEP: Past Graduate • Mr. Tommy Quinn, Head of Strategic HR and Candidate Relations Public Appointment Service: Employer <p>Venue: Staff Common Room, North Wing, Main Quadrangle, UCC</p>							
19.00	<p>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</p>							

	for the Peer Review Group
Thursday 30 October 2008	
Venue: O'Rahilly Building Room 207	
08.25	Convening of Peer Review Group
08.30 – 08.50	Professor Peter Kennedy, Vice-President for Research Policy and Support
09.00 – 09.30	Professor Paul Giller, Registrar & Senior Vice-President
09.30 – 10.15	Professor Irene Lynch-Fannon, Head of College Business and Law
10.15 – 11.15	Visit to UCC Library, meeting with Ms. Ger Prendergast, Business and Social Sciences Librarian and Ms. Helen Mulcahy, Law Librarian
11.15 – 11.45	Tea/coffee
11.45 – 12.00	Mr. Cormac McSweeney, Finance Office
12.00 – 12.20	<u>NY State Assembly placement programme Students</u> Kerrie O'Callaghan Andrea Merrigan
12.20 – 13.00	Professor Neil Collins, Head, Department of Government
13.00 – 14.00	Working lunch
14.00 – 17.00	Preparation of first draft of final report (tea/coffee at 15.30)
17.00 – 17.30	Exit presentation to all staff made by Professor David Denver, Chair of the Peer Review Group, summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group. Venue: G46, O'Rahilly Building
19.00	Working private dinner for members of the Peer Review Group to complete drafting of report and finalise arrangements for completion and submission of final report.