

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

SCHOOL OF APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The School made recommendations for improvement in their Self Assessment Report in the following areas: staffing and SSR, staff development; teaching and learning; research; internationalisation, communication and contribution to society; environment; and organisation. In a positive quality review report, the Peer Review Group (PRG) agreed with most of these recommendations. In particular, they agreed that there is an urgent need to address the SSR which, if not addressed, will lead to the loss of accreditation for the School's undergraduate programmes. This Quality Improvement Plan is the School's strategic response to the Quality Review Report. Extracts from the School's response to the PRG report are included to indicate work-in-progress at the time of the PRG visit.

Recommendations for improvement by the Peer Review Group	Relevant Extracts from School Response to PRG Report	Proposed Objectives and Actions	Responsibility for Action	Resource Implications	Delivery Date	Measurement Benchmarking																		
1. That the College consider some form of annual monitoring for Schools on key KPIs such as SSRs and that this is communicated upwards to and acted upon by University senior management.	<p>However in the specific case of the School's SSR, it should be noted that the ratio increased dramatically in just over a year. This was due to success in recruitment way beyond our expectations.</p> <p>It should also be noted that when the extent of the SSR increase became apparent, the Head of College and Head of School developed a strategy for increasing staff levels and bringing SSR close to accreditation requirement (24:1) within the next four years.</p>	<p>NOTE: The monitoring recommendation is already in place. As part of the annual staffing review process the SSR data is considered by the Head of College, the HR Business Partner and the College Finance Analyst. It is one of the criteria which is reviewed in terms of staffing decisions.</p> <p>The Head of College (HOC) and Head of School (HOS) have agreed the following academic staffing objectives:</p> <table data-bbox="851 1197 1220 1380"> <thead> <tr> <th><i>Year</i></th> <th><i>Net Gain</i></th> <th><i>Est. SSR</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2014</td> <td>2</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2015</td> <td>2</td> <td>27</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2016</td> <td>1</td> <td>26</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2017</td> <td>1</td> <td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018</td> <td>1</td> <td>24</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Net Gain</i>	<i>Est. SSR</i>	2014	2		2015	2	27	2016	1	26	2017	1	25	2018	1	24	HOC HOC and HOS	<p>UMTO has to agree to allocate budget and headcount if the staffing plan is to be realised.</p> <p>The alternative, reducing student numbers, will reduce School budget and ability to support PhD studentships and other initiatives.</p>	Degree re-accreditation is scheduled for 2016. To have any chance of accreditation, significant SSR progress has to be made by end of 2015 with a credible plan for completing the task by 2018 at latest.	Annual report of SSR
<i>Year</i>	<i>Net Gain</i>	<i>Est. SSR</i>																						
2014	2																							
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		<p>These objectives are set in the context of the budgetary and Employment Control Framework (ECF) constraints, decisions about which are made at University Management Team Operations (UMTO) level.</p> <p>Failure to re-balance SSR by increased staffing will inevitably result in School withdrawal from programmes to retain accreditation.</p>	<p>UMTO</p> <p>HOS</p>			
<p>2. That the School develops an appointments strategy linking with existing expertise or to strategically develop new areas, sustainably, which it has the resources to support.</p>	<p>We have a strategy of appointing in research areas that we aim to develop. However the national and University situation with regard to staff recruitment has not enabled the School to act on its strategic goals in this area. Going forward, any recruitment that we undertake will attempt to satisfy the dual needs to (1) grow staffing in core research areas to increase our chances of forming networks and winning funding and (2) support other income generation opportunities.</p>	<p>In line with 1 above the School pays particular attention to strategic needs when recruiting. There are two overlapping elements: Research and Teaching Portfolio.</p> <p>The School will populate the Staffing Plan in 1 above to reflect recruitment priorities over the next 5 years. These priorities involve satisfying two related objectives with each appointment:</p> <p>(a) Nurturing School Research Groups and Themes (see point 13 below)</p> <p>(b) Exploiting potential for Income Generation in postgraduate teaching and professional training.</p> <p>Developing the plan will involve a School Executive Working Group to:</p>	<p>Working group consisting of the following members of the School Executive: HOS, Strategic leads for Research and Teaching and Learning.</p> <p>The Working Group will bring the plan to School Council for approval before sending it to CACSSS to be incorporated into CACSSS 5 year staffing plan.</p>	<p>Staff time involved in developing the strategic plan.</p> <p>Realising the plan requires the development of UCC HR policy and practice to reduce the time taken to recruit and to introduce flexibility in salaries offered (e.g. reflecting current salary and fully recognising research experience) to support recruiting the strongest</p>	<p>Developing the plan will take 3 months - January 2015.</p>	<p>Annual review of staffing by School Executive Committee to assess coherence of research and teaching groupings and their sustainability.</p>

		<p>(a) identify areas that should be strengthened through recruitment (b) identify resources (e.g. equipment, critical mass of staff, etc) needed to sustain academic posts in those areas (c) articulate a rationale for those appointments for UMTO, beyond the underlying SSR rationale.</p> <p>The resulting plan will be sent to CACSSS to be incorporated into CACSSS 5 year staffing plan.</p>		<p>candidates in a competitive market.</p>		
<p>3. That the School considers how the School Executive Committee should be constituted in relation to the School Council to allow for the efficient operation of its functions.</p>	<p>Agreed. This is not as clear as it should be. We will write School Rules (in line with College Rules) to address this gap.</p>	<p>The School will write and approve School Rules to operate in line with College Rules. These will define School structures, responsibility and authority.</p>	<p>The School Executive Committee.</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>6 months - April 2015.</p>	<p>Annual review of effectiveness of Rules by School Council.</p>
<p>4. That all School meetings are formally minuted to provide an accurate record of discussions and on-going actions.</p>	<p>Most formal meetings are currently minuted and, in future, all formal meetings will be minuted (e.g. School executive, School Council, Staff-Student Liaison, Teaching Committee, Research Committee).</p> <p>Up to September 2013, all formal meetings were minuted. In September 2013, when School administrative support reached a critically low level, it was agreed that the School Council would be the only meeting that would have</p>	<p>Done – all formal meetings are being minuted.</p>				

	<p>administrative support to take minutes. However minutes are taken by academics at most meetings and the minutes are circulated in the normal manner. When the School returns to full administrative staff complement, administrative support will again be provided to minute all formal meetings.</p>					
<p>5. That the School set up a regular schedule of staff–student committee meetings for each year group or programme and takes steps to ensure that a culture of student representation and consultation is formally embedded into School structures.</p>	<p>The School has had regular staff-student meetings for many years, though the format for the meetings has changed from time to time to try to maximise student engagement.</p> <p>This year we started a consultation process with students to establish how they would like staff-student meetings to work.</p> <p>In response to the RPG comments and student feedback, we have set up a regular schedule of staff–student committee meetings.</p> <p>Students have been represented on some School Committees and Groups for some time (e.g. Marketing and Community Engagement). This will be extended with a view to establishing a representative culture.</p>	<p>In order to ensure clear communication across a variety of formal and informal channels, the School will formalise its existing staff students meetings in the form of:</p> <p>(a) a formal meeting each term between the Teaching and Learning Committee and student representatives from each year of UG programmes and each PG programme.</p> <p>(b) Monthly meetings between individual Course Directors / Year Heads and student representatives from their courses / years.</p> <p>The School will also review the issue of student representation at other school meetings e.g. Teaching and Learning, Research, Community Engagement etc..</p>	<p>Teaching and Learning Committee.</p> <p>School Executive Committee.</p>	<p>No financial resources.</p> <p>Staff and student time.</p>	<p>Staff-student meetings will start during Semester 1.</p> <p>Review of student representation on other committee meetings will take one cycle of School meetings and will be completed by the end of Semester 1 2014. The plan will then be implemented from the start of Semester 2 Jan 2015.</p>	<p>Annual review of effectiveness by Staff-Student Liaison Group.</p>

<p>6. That the School keeps under review its portfolio of taught programmes and takes this opportunity to think strategically about how those programmes can develop.</p>	<p>The School has quite a strategic view of PG taught course development. It has a very successful MA Applied Psychology (MAAP) around which other Applied Psychology Masters programmes have been developed. ... the newer programmes (e.g. Research Methods, Coaching Psychology) have taken advantage of a core of methodology, skills, and conceptual modules provided by the MAAP (e.g. Advanced Research Methods, Psychometric Measurement, Critical Issues in Applied Psychology).</p>	<p>Consistent with our strategic objective of increasing postgraduate taught and PhD numbers in the School, we will continue to develop new programmes as release of pressure on SSR permits. An MA in Work and Organisational Psychology is at Planning stage and an MAAP (Mental Health) will follow.</p>	<p>School Executive will continue to review the portfolio of programmes at least annually.</p>	<p>Staff time.</p>	<p>Annual</p>	<p>Annual report to School Council, the point of which will be to critically test the coherence and sustainability of the portfolio of taught programmes.</p>
<p>7. That the School set up an annual curriculum review process.</p>	<p>This is currently done at a review meeting undertaken soon after examinations each year. It generally considers 'lessons learned' from the year just completed and the kinds of changes that need to be made for the coming year. In future a higher level review of the overall curriculum will be included in this meeting.</p>	<p>Frame the annual curriculum review meeting as a systematic review of the School's curricula including content, teaching methods, assessment, etc. of each programme.</p> <p>The annual curriculum review is underpinned by a culture of iterative improvement across the year culminating in the year end evaluation of changes supported by the external examiners reports. This has happened in the School up to now and is certainly continuing this year via actions such as (i) overview by T&L of minor changes proposed (by Dec 3rd) to check balance of assessments</p>	<p>Chair Teaching and Learning Committee will lead this annual review process and meeting.</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Annual</p>	<p>External examiner reports which will be considered at the annual review meeting together with a report from Chair Teaching and Learning.</p>

		across modules and coherence of any proposed curriculum changes, (ii) review of marking criteria, (iii) review of moderation process.				
8. That the School review processes for providing feedback to students.	<p>Regular feedback on essays and other CA is given in all programmes. This includes written feedback, verbal feedback, a ticked rubric or a mix of methods. Almost all of this is available to students on BlackBoard, the online learning platform, for a whole academic year. It appears from the RPG report that some students did not realise that the feedback was available to them, although it was signalled in Year and Module Handbooks.</p> <p>As is the case across the university, according to student surveys, feedback is slower than we and the students would like it to be. Although this cannot be a surprise with SSR of 32 and classes as large as 500, we are working on a plan which will more systematically and prospectively engage PhD students as markers (under staff direction and with second marking by staff) to improve the turnaround time.</p>	<p>In process.</p> <p>To provide systematic feedback on assessed work within 4 weeks.</p> <p>For all modules where feedback on an assessment could support student reflection and revision of subsequent assessments, feedback will continue to be provided within three weeks. For example, in the research design and statistics modules, students usually receive feedback at least one week before they submit the next piece of work.</p> <p>Build on existing systems of marking - criteria, operationalization of criteria, and moderation, to support involvement of PhDs in marking for very large classes.</p> <p>Arrange training for staff in VLE marking and feedback to systematise use of Blackboard for feedback and to maximise efficiencies from use of rubrics etc.</p>	Chair Teaching and Learning leading a working group of Teaching and Learning committee members.	<p>The key resource is staff time which is at a premium.</p> <p>Improving quality assurance systems such as increased moderation and documentation of that process will also create greater workloads for staff.</p>	Plan will be completed by the end of November 2014 and implemented immediately thereafter.	<p>Record time taken to return feedback for each module and include it in a brief module level report for external examiners.</p> <p>External examiner reports which will be considered at the annual review meeting together with a report from Chair Teaching and Learning.</p>
9. That the School ensures that existing	The School of Applied Psychology had a successful	Done.		No significant resource	Immediately	Review by Staff Student

<p>opportunities for pastoral support are communicated to all students.</p>	<p>mentoring scheme some years before CACSSS introduced its mentoring scheme. Its value is recognised by students in all student feedback surveys.</p> <p>The School also produces handbooks for each year including PhD students in which contact points within and outside the School are listed and circumstances in which they could be approached described.</p>	<p>The School will continue to publicise opportunities for pastoral support and will extend our efforts to inform students in any way we can think of (staff-student liaison group, more notices on school notice boards, blackboard announcements, etc.)</p> <p>Elicit student feedback on key communication channels eg. handbooks during 2014-2015 semester to target message and delivery for audience.</p>	<p>School Manager Year Heads and Course Directors</p>	<p>implications</p>		<p>Liaison Group at least each semester.</p>
<p>10. That appropriate induction is provided for those who are involved in teaching.</p>	<p>Induction and extensive training is provided for PhD students who tutor. The staff responsible for research practicals in Years 1 and 2 run a half day training session for them at the start of the year. They also meet them regularly during the year in apprenticeship mode, discussing their marking and tutorial work with them. They, and other staff, cross mark 30% of practicals to ensure a fair and consistent standard, and use discussion of the cross-marked work as an opportunity for further learning for the tutors.</p> <p>The University also offers a Teaching and Learning module for postgraduate students who are starting to teach. Our students are strongly encouraged</p>	<p>Done.</p> <p>Expanding on what is already done, objectives include:</p> <p>Each year the Tutors and demonstrators are inducted and trained for the module for which they will be part of the teaching team. This training includes the procedures, as well as sessions on Teaching Philosophy and Practice; Integrity and Standards and a review of the manual, which details the role of, and expectation of each member of the teaching team.</p> <p>Three further half-day sessions are planned, in addition to the current Induction and meetings as part of the mentoring model already in place. These sessions will focus on</p>	<p>Research Committee which looks after PhD student interests and training</p>	<p>This involves a significant investment of staff time</p>	<p>Immediately</p>	<p>Annual review by Research Committee who will report to School Council</p>

	<p>to take that module but it is not mandatory.</p> <p>We will endeavor to identify any gaps that there may be in our induction for PhD tutors, in case there is unevenness of provision, but we feel we are doing a very good job overall in this regard.</p>	<p>translating teaching philosophy into practice, and how assessments are developed to align with learning objectives. The newly developed sessions formalise what previously happened at a module teaching team level, and ensures all demonstrators and tutors receive equivalent training. In addition, a resource library of material relevant to teaching practice is under development, in collaboration with the PhD students. This library is a source of both module specific information, and also more generic material on how to develop skill and confidence in small and large classes</p>				
<p>11. That the School and OVPRI develop together a plan for identifying and securing sources of research funding and collectively develop some strategies that will maximise research opportunities and income.</p>	<p>We will contact OVPRI to arrange a meeting. We already have a very active relationship with CACSSS Research Officer who supports us in this area and, in many ways, mediates our relationship with the very busy OVPRI.</p>	<p>Continue active relationships with CACSSS Research Officer, which is likely to continue to be the one that helps identify and develop many of our research opportunities.</p> <p>Contact OVPRI to arrange a meeting with the staff of the School to explore potential for collaborative proposal development with Schools and Units outside CACSSS and to take advice on likely funding sources given our research themes. Suggest that this meeting be organised as a seminar with staff and PhD students.</p>	<p>Research Committee</p>	<p>No significant resource implications</p>	<p>Immediate</p>	<p>Research Committee</p>
<p>12. That the School</p>	<p>The School has a Research</p>	<p>The role of PhD Tutor (also Chair</p>	<p>Research</p>	<p>Staff time.</p>	<p>Immediately</p>	<p>Annual review</p>

<p>appoints a postgraduate research tutor/Director to oversee and provide support for postgraduate research students.</p>	<p>Committee. One of its roles is to look after PhD students, including their applications and progress reviews. PhD supervisors and the Research Committee play roles in supporting and mentoring PhD students. That said we see value in the suggestion that a specific person be named as PhD Tutor and will do so in allocation of roles for the coming year.</p>	<p>of Research Committee) has been formalised and all students made aware.</p>	<p>Committee which looks after PhD student interests and training</p>			<p>by Research Committee who will report to School Council</p>
<p>13. That the School decides upon a structure for research groupings and a clear vision for strengthening the research portfolio within the School that can inform its appointment strategy.</p>	<p>The School already has three identified research groups which were identified at around the time of the last RQR. In response to the publishing of H2020 funding areas, as well as to staff changes in the last five years, the School has been in the process of reviewing its research groupings to see if they are fit for purpose and convey our strengths clearly to potential EU collaborators. Discussions with RPG confirmed the value of that exercise. The Review is now coming to an end and the research themes identified will inform many priorities for the coming years, including appointments strategy, priority areas for postgraduate studentships, and School financial support for equipment, seminars, and networking. These will be the areas that will be strengthened and in which we</p>	<p>Done</p> <p>The School has identified four research themes or challenges to inform its research activity and its recruitment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustainable / Successful Ageing 2. Advances in Assessment and Evaluation 3. Resilience and Transition 4. Digital Futures (People and Technology) <p>Staff initiatives are already clustering fairly organically around these themes e.g. H2020 proposals on successful ageing and successful UCC strategic research grant applications on Ageing, resilience and assistive technology.</p> <p>Four job advertisements in the last six months or so have been directed toward one or more of</p>	<p>School executive Committee in consultation with Research Committee.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Immediately</p>	<p>Annual review by School Executive Committee in consultation with Research Committee with a view to clarifying, reorienting, or simply changing in response to changing situation.</p> <p>Any proposals for change will be brought to the School Council.</p>

	will invest with a view to attracting research funding.	these themes.				
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