

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY

PEER REVIEW GROUP

- Professor G. Ó Cruaíoch, Department of Béaloideas, NUI Cork (Chair)
- Dr C. O'Halloran, Department of History, NUI Cork
- Professor J. Waddell, Department of Archaeology, NUI Galway
- Professor B. Cunliffe, Institute of Archaeology, University of Oxford, UK

SITE VISIT

The site visit was conducted over 2.5 days from 22-24 February 2005. It included visits to the departmental and library facilities in UCC and included meetings with

- Head and staff of the department as a group and individually
- Representatives of undergraduate and postgraduate students
- Representatives of employers, past graduates and other external stakeholders
- Professor Áine Hyland, Vice-President
- Professor David Cox, Dean of Faculty of Arts
- Ms Carmel Cotter, Finance Office

An exit presentation of the principal findings of the Peer Review Group was made to staff of the department in the afternoon of the second day.

DESCRIPTION OF DEPARTMENT

Note: Data given is for the academic year 2004/05

Head of Department:	Professor Peter Woodman
Staff:	9 academic (1 Professor, 2 Senior Lecturers, 4 Lecturers, 1 Archaeologist, 1 part-time Senior Demonstrator), 2 administrative staff
Staff Academic FTE:	9.51 (8.35 FTE academic staff; 1.16 FTE part-time budget)
Student/Academic Staff Ratio:	16.3
Location of Department:	Connolly Building
Degrees/Diplomas offered:	BA, MA, Cert, Dip, HDip, MPhil, PhD

NUMBER OF STUDENTS

The Department has 155.01 Student FTEs distributed as follows:

Undergraduate Student FTEs

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total U/G	Economic	Evening Courses	Visiting American	Visiting European
74.58	32.08	26.08	1.26	134.01	21.08	3.50	20.58	2.00

Postgraduate Student FTEs

H Dip	Master Taught	Master Research	PhD	Total P/G
5.00	11.50	0.50	4.00	21.00

MISSION STATEMENT

“The goals of the Department are the advancement of archaeological research and the promotion of an informed appreciation of the Archaeology of Ireland and beyond.”

AIMS OF DEPARTMENT

- Providing undergraduate students with an understanding of the discipline of Archaeology and the skills that will enable them to develop a career in Archaeology and/or to proceed to postgraduate studies. They will also have the necessary skills for career moves into other areas.
- Providing postgraduate training in the theory and practice of Archaeology, particularly in the undertaking of archaeological research. Continuing the Department's development as a centre for excellence for research on Irish Archaeology with special reference to the Archaeology of Munster.
- Providing a series of services to the community through the provision of education and information on Archaeology.

GENERAL COMMENT ON QUALITY REVIEW

The Peer Review Group found the Department of Archaeology's Self-Assessment Report (SAR) to be both thorough and explicit in its coverage of the greater part of the work of the Department. One aspect, however, of the Department that could have done with more detailed clarification is the organisation and operation of the Archaeological Services Unit. Further comment and recommendation regarding this issue is made below.

In being satisfied that all other major issues relating to the work of Department were addressed and in congratulating the compilers of the SAR for the quality of their work the PRG wishes to comment on the somewhat overly modest character of the Department's Self-Assessment. We feel that a more explicit highlighting of the many real and impressive strengths of the Department would have been both justified and appropriate. It was clear to the PRG that the Department of Archaeology had benefited from its participation in the initial pilot Quality Improvement Exercise of 1996/7 and from its efforts to implement the issues arising in its own strategic planning 2000-2004. Its present degree of insight into its own nature and functions is to be commended and give it a platform from which it could reasonably have presented itself to greater effect. It is the hope of the PRG that ways will be found for the Department to proceed to do this within both the University and the wider community.

SWOT analysis: The PRG considered the SWOT analysis as presented by the Department of Archaeology to be result of a careful, reflective exercise whose chief value was to articulate for the Group – and for the Department itself – a correct understanding of where the Department stands at present and of what circumstances and contexts are pertinent to the future of the Department

Strengths: the PRG estimated the Department to be in robust health, overall; functioning in an effective and productive manner and ready to both contribute and collaborate further within the University and in the wider professional and community setting. The key strengths identified were: Strong teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate level; Flexibility: adapted very well to changing circumstances both within teaching profile and the profession; Welcomes and attracts overseas and non-traditional students; Good research output; Governing and Management is democratic and open.

Weaknesses: the key weaknesses identified were: lack of recognition of Department's activities within the university; Department shares greater faculty-wide difficulty in attracting PhD students from outside; Department has not been able to clarify its relationship with ASU. The PRG acknowledged, along with many staff, a weakness which has to do with the period of rapid, rotating Headship of the Department in the recent past. Arising from the then prevailing circumstances, this rapid rotation of the Headship impeded and militated against strategic long term planning. While there is no doubt that the Department was well managed, it was, nevertheless, difficult for strategic planning to be actively pursued given the commitments of the succession of serving Heads.

Opportunities: the PRG were of the opinion that the opportunities identified by the Department in the SWOT analysis were correct ones.

Threats: The PRG found the threats to the Department indicated in the SWOT analysis reflected a realistic assessment of issues that could hamper the workings and development of the Department in the future. The PRG was satisfied that such threats are addressed under Recommendations and noted that such threats have also been discussed with the appropriate Officers of the University in the course of the site visitation.

Benchmarking: The methodology underpinning the Benchmarking exercise was clearly laid out and demonstrated the effort put into choosing an appropriate department in Britain. The PRG was satisfied that the Benchmarking exercise was executed to an admirably high standard and that the insights deriving from the comparative analysis involved have been properly used by the Department in the preparation and presentation of its Self-Assessment and its Recommendations for improvement.

Teaching: The PRG was extremely impressed by the teaching ethos and commitment of the Department and the enthusiasm for teaching expressed by staff members. The students we interviewed were, without exception, most complimentary about staff dedication, their teaching skills and their approachability.

The PRG was particularly impressed by the range of teaching engagement from PhD through Adult and Continuing Education to schools level.

The PRG also noted the exceptionally broad scope of the undergraduate curriculum, which placed Irish Archaeology in an international context and which introduced a significant science-based element into the study of Archaeology. The latter is an exceptional feature of the Cork programme, unique in the State.

Research: The PRG found the research record of the staff to be impressive particularly given the heavy involvement of most of the staff in teaching - something which was drawn out in particular by the Benchmarking exercise. The increase in the number of Ph.D. students in recent years is, in some measure, the result of the Department's growing research reputation and, of course, further enhances that reputation.

The presence of the Survey Unit and Services Unit adds considerably to the research ethos of the department. Their output is also admired not only locally but also nationally and internationally. The Survey Unit sits comfortably within the department as a discrete research unit focussed on a clearly circumscribed set of tasks. Its presence and its archive feed into the student experience. The Services Unit is more wide-ranging in its activities involving a number of researchers with specific skills in the more practical aspects of archaeological research. Taken together the two units considerably extend the capabilities of the department to teach and to pursue its own research.

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report September 06
<p>That the College should pay immediate attention to the serious shortcomings of the Connolly Building particularly with respect to the stability of the structure, disabled access and the need to maintain ease of access for bulk archaeological materials.</p>	<p>QPC supported this recommendation</p> <p>QPC noted actions already undertaken by the Office of Buildings & Estates and supported continuation of the efforts to improve the building. It was noted that the Connolly Building is on the agenda of the Buildings Committee. The QPC acknowledged that the Connolly Building is poor quality space and that it will require millions of euro to bring the building to the required standard.</p>	<p>Partially implemented.</p> <p>The Office of Buildings and Estates have worked to address minor issues, however, the problem lies with the safety of the building structure itself and there is currently no plan in place at University level to address this issue. It was noted that a plan for the maintenance and improvement of the structure of the building, both inside and outside, is needed.</p>
<p>Review Aspects of the Curriculum with particular reference to the Undergraduate Programme</p>	<p>QPC endorsed this recommendation and welcomed the positive response of the Department.</p> <p>QPC will welcome details of how and when the curriculum is to be reviewed in the QIP.</p>	<p>Implemented and on-going.</p> <p>The undergraduate programme is significantly different this year, considerable progress has been made to date. It is anticipated that further progress will be made once the newly appointed Chair takes up position.</p>
<p>That the 50 and 40 credit syllabi for Third Year should provide for one 10-credit module to be taken by all such students.</p>	<p>Endorsed.</p> <p>QPC would welcome specific proposals for action in the QIP to be developed by the Department.</p> <p>QPC expressed concern at the use of undergraduate modules in postgraduate programmes and recommended that serious consideration be given to any programme where this occurs. The QPC also referred this issue to the SNCDC for consideration and reporting to AC.</p>	<p>Implemented.</p>
<p>That workloads should be weighted to take account of the extra burden of core module teaching</p>	<p>Endorsed.</p> <p>QPC would welcome specific proposals for action in the QIP to be developed by the Department.</p>	<p>Not yet implemented.</p> <p>The new Chair will address this issue in the coming academic year.</p>
<p>That the Department should include group work as part of all of its taught programmes.</p>	<p>Endorsed.</p>	<p>Implementation of this issue has not progressed to date.</p>

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report September 06
<p>That an element of double marking of exams should be introduced into all years, either by the sampling method, and/or by selecting one core module for each year.</p>	<p>Endorsed.</p> <p>QPC endorsed the departmental response, noting that the departmental policy on double marking conforms to faculty policy (June 2000) i.e. “<u>where a module is assessed solely through one piece of continuous assessment e.g. a dissertation then double marking should be used</u>” e.g. AR3010 (dissertation). In other areas, such as first year, sample double marking takes place. The QPC acknowledged the problems associated with the relatively poor staff student ratio in UCC. The issue is one that is re-visited by AC regularly. The QPC noted that the Department conforms to Faculty and AC policy in this regard.</p>	<p>Implemented.</p>
<p>Expand the role of the Higher Diploma.</p>	<p>Endorsed.</p>	<p>Implementation is on-going. Some progress has been made and there is an increase in registrations for 06/07.</p>
<p>Examine changes to the Postgraduate Programme</p>	<p>Endorsed.</p> <p>QPC noted that the University is introducing new incentives to departments for encouraging increases in postgraduate programmes such as the PhD scholarships for Faculty of Arts students, and incentivisation in the new RAM being developed for the University.</p>	<p>Implementation is on-going.</p> <p>It is planned to expand the graduate programme of the Department, with a balance between Research Masters and PhD programmes. The Department recognises the need to attract more PhD students.</p>

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report September 06
<p>That the Department explore ways in which its research ethos can be further developed, including</p> <p>(a) establishment of regular research seminars</p> <p>(b) development of new research foci and programmes on the lines suggested in the SAR</p> <p>(c) exploration of the ability of the Services Unit to generate monies to support the research work of the Department</p>	<p>Endorsed and welcomed.</p> <p>In particular the QPC welcomed and endorsed recommendation (c).</p>	<p>Implementation is ongoing.</p>
<p>That the second Executive Assistant post in the Department be maintained and filled as an essential requirement of proper Departmental administration.</p>	<p>QPC noted that the Dean of Arts confirmed that the post has been approved.</p>	<p>Implemented.</p>
<p>Improve communication with support staff.</p>	<p>Endorsed.</p> <p>QPC noted and welcomed action by Department.</p>	<p>Implementation is ongoing.</p> <p>A member of the part-time staff is now on the Departmental Management Group</p>
<p>Expand Department's curriculum and activities through the provision of new staff.</p>	<p>Recommended that the Department discuss the question of additional staff with the Head of the College of ACSSS. Decisions on staffing levels in departments will be the responsibility of the Head of the College from October 2005.</p> <p>QPC noted and welcomed the comments in relation to clarification and management of the Archaeological Survey and Archaeological Services Units associated with the Department.</p>	<p>The appointment of new staff has not been progressed; however, significant progress has been made regarding the contracts of existing staff in the Survey and Services Units.</p> <p>It was noted that if more non-EU students were attracted into the Department then the additional fee income could be used to assist in the funding of new staff positions.</p>

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report September 06
Expand the contribution of Archaeology to other programmes within the University.	<p>Supported the concept envisaged in this recommendation and welcomed proposed action by the Department.</p> <p>The QPC noted the difficulties presently being encountered in the development of interdisciplinary programmes and that the AB has established a committee under the Chairmanship of Professor A. Hyland, to consider the issues surrounding the introduction of a greater number of interdisciplinary programmes and the greater flexibility that this will entail.</p> <p>The QPC also noted that the RAM is likely to reward development of interdisciplinary programmes and increasing module choice across a wider range of disciplines than at present.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>The provision of strategic funding for a post-doctoral position to be shared between Archaeology and Science is under discussion.</p>
That the College and the Department should together develop ways to publicise the achievements of the department since Archaeology is eminently newsworthy and will bring credit to the College.	<p>Endorsed.</p> <p>QPC suggested that the Department contact the Office of Marketing & Communications for assistance.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>The Department is aware of the need to publicise. The second issue of a new research journal has just been published and a recent conference gained national publicity.</p>
That urgent attention be given by the Department and the College to the rectification of the contractual position of research staff	<p>QPC recommended that this recommendation be referred to the Department of HR for action as necessary. In the referral reference should be made to the actions taken by the School of Nursing & Midwifery in this regard.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>The issues of appropriate contracts for research staff has been addressed by the University. However the status of such staff within the University remains an issue for resolving.</p>
That the Survey Unit be treated as a research unit embedded within the Department. This relationship should be formalised by appointing a staff member to the role of Principal Investigator – reporting to the Head of Department.	<p>Strongly endorsed.</p>	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>The contractual position of staff and financial arrangements have been resolved satisfactorily.</p>

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report September 06
<p>That immediate attention be given to clarifying the position of the Services Unit within the Department.</p> <p>(a) appoint Director reporting to Head of Department</p> <p>(b) Director should draw up a business plan aiming to make an annual profit to fund further research.</p> <p>(c) A services agreement should be drawn up between the department and the unit with respect to teaching time, space resources, etc. to help clarify the financial relationship of the two organisations.</p>	<p>Strongly endorsed.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>
<p>Develop the Department's Role in Archaeology</p>	<p>Strongly endorsed.</p> <p>QPC welcomed action proposed by the Department and strongly endorsed the proposals to establish a focus group with partners in archaeology within the region and an annual research seminar for the archaeological community</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>
<p>That serious consideration be given to the development of Continuous Professional Development programmes for the archaeological profession in the wider community</p>	<p>Strongly endorsed.</p> <p>Noted that the proposed pilot course in the area of CPD was put forward at the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland Conference Cork April 2005.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the new Chair will pursue the development of these programmes.</p>
<p>That a realistic Strategic Plan for the next five years of the Department's existence be drawn up as a matter of urgency.</p>	<p>Strongly endorsed.</p> <p>QPC noted that this plan for the Department must be developed in line with the University Strategic Plan 2006-2011, being developed by the University at present.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>A Strategic Plan for the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences is being developed and will be endorsed shortly. The Department will develop its own plan in line with the University and College plans.</p>