

## Roinn an Bhéaloidis

### Centre for Folklore & Ethnology

#### *Peer Review Group*

Professor M. Herbert, Department of Early and Medieval Irish, UCC (Chair)  
Dr. E. Twohig, Department of Archaeology, UCC  
Professor P. Lysaght, Department of Irish Folklore, UCD, Ireland  
Professor P. Narváez, Department of Folklore, Memorial University of Newfoundland,  
Canada

#### *Brief Description of conduct of site visit*

The site visit was conducted over 2.5 days from 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2004 and included meetings with

- i) Head and staff of the department as a group and individually
- ii) Representatives of undergraduate and postgraduate students
- iii) Representatives of employers, past graduates and other external stakeholders
- iv) Professor M. Aidan Moran, Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs
- v) Professor J. Kevin Collins, Vice-President for Research Policy & Support
- vi) Professor David Cox, Dean, Faculty of Arts
- vii) Ms. Carmel Cotter, Finance Office
- viii) Mr. Cathal Kerrigan, UCC Library
- ix) Mr. Denis O’Sullivan, Head of Operations/Networks, Computer Centre

and visits to departmental facilities in UCC and the Northside Folklore Project.

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 Roinn an Bhéaloidis

*Head of Department:* Professor Gearóid Ó Cruaí

*No. of Staff:* 5 academic, 1 administrative, 1 unit manager

*Location of Department:* Nos 1 and 5 Elderwood and No 54 College Road

*Degrees/Diplomas offered:* BA, MA, MPhil, PHD

*No. of Students:* Department has 26 Student FTEs: 23 UG and 3 PG FTEs distributed as follows:

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Evening Courses	JYA	Socrates	Total U/G	Master Taught	PhD	Total P/G
8	3	2	2	7	1	23	1	2	3

#### *Mission Statement*

“The Department seeks to conserve and promote scholarly and general knowledge of Folklore and Tradition by means of teaching and publication, collection and archiving, research and interpretation.”

#### *Aims & Objectives*

- Making a contribution to the international discourse of the disciplines of folklore and ethnology
- Contributing to interdisciplinary scholarly discourse regarding cultural process in the contemporary world

- Using our understanding of the cultural process to contribute to national socio-cultural life at a time when the meaning and importance of the concept culture is changing
- Equipping our students with skills (including those of ethnographic fieldwork and interviewing) and a facility for critical reasoning that will benefit them and the society in which they live.
- Playing a part in local and regional community life, identity-formation, confidence-building and development through involvement with local projects and groups
- Using the perspective of our discipline to meaningfully integrate global, international, national, regional and local aspects of cultural activity and theoretical understanding.

The department also has a set of short-term aims and objectives, some of which arise due to the recent achievement of full departmental status. We wish to:

- Consolidate the identity of the department, particularly from a disciplinary viewpoint
- Raise the profile of the department within UCC, among other third level institutions and in civil society
- Attract higher numbers of new students
- Rebalance the curriculum, moving towards modules of discrete study and broadening choice for the students
- Continue and increase our levels of involvement with the Cork Northside Folklore Project.

### **General Comment on Quality Review**

The PRG appreciated the frank self-appraisal contained in the SAR although a certain unevenness in the interpretation of the guidelines was apparent. In the opinion of the PRG, the SAR would have benefited from better preparation, organization, and editing. In matters of content, the description of the Department, its history, organisation, and budgetary details might have been more fully discussed. Its academic activities might have been more fully documented, for example, by incorporating data such as full outlines of the modules taught. Additional material, which was submitted during the site visit, might have been provided in advance.

The SAR would have benefited particularly from more extensive analysis and reflection on strategic planning. The PRG was disappointed that such significant elements were not addressed. At this critical point in the Department's development it is vital to develop and formulate a realistic strategic plan for the future. In the critical absence of such a plan in the SAR, the Department's view of its future had to be elicited during the course of the site visit. Despite the aforementioned reservations, the PRG confirmed its acceptance of the SAR.

The reviewers considered that the Department has been remarkably successful in attracting research funding and appeared to have availed of all possible sources of revenue. In this

context the reviewers commended the comprehensive and informative report on the Northside Folklore Project contained in the SAR.

The PRG concluded that the Department of Béaloideas/Folklore and Ethnology is to be commended on its scholarly endeavours thus far, and on its success in attaining departmental status. This newly-fledged Department fulfills an important scholarly and cultural role within the university, and has a highly important link with the wider community through the Northside Folklore Project. The PRG recommends that the Department be supported in every way possible to enable it to reach its full potential.

### **Progress on Implementation of Recommendations for Improvement**

A meeting to discuss progress made in implementing recommendations for improvement arising from the review of the Department of Modern Irish was held on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2006.

Present: Mr. Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, Head, Department of Béaloideas  
 Professor D. Cox, Acting Head, College of Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences  
 Dr. N. M. Ryan, Director of Quality Promotion

#### Abbreviations

*PRG: Peer Review Group*

*QPC: Quality Promotion Committee*

*QP: Quality Promotion*

*EMG: Executive Management Group*

*VP: Vice-President*

*HR: Human Resources*

*JYA: Junior Year Abroad*

<b>Recommendation of PRG</b>	<b>Recommendation of QPC</b>	<b>Follow-up Report January '06</b>
That a more formalised administrative structure be put in place, to include department management group meetings.	Endorsed by the QPC.	Implemented  A formalized administrative structure has been put in place in the department. Formal departmental procedures have been developed for various eventualities, including absences, missing of lectures and examinations.
That a formal staff:student committee be established.	Endorsed by the QPC.  The QPC welcomed the response of the Department.	Implemented.  The staff:student committee is in its second year of operation.
That staff responsibilities be rotated so that all staff engage in and gain experience in departmental administration.	Endorsed by the QPC.  The QPC welcomed the response of the Department.	Implemented.  - in so far as is possible with the small cohort of staff available.
That a realistic strategic plan for the Department be developed and formulated as soon as possible.	Endorsed by the QPC.  The QPC recommended that discussions should take place	Implemented.  A strategic plan has been developed and includes support

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	with the Deans of the Faculties of Celtic Studies and Arts on the development of Celtic Studies in UCC and the relationship of an Roinn an Bhéaloidis with other cognate departments, in particular those interested in Celtic Studies.	for the proposal of a School of Irish/Celtic Studies
That serious concerted attention be given to the areas of teaching and learning.	Endorsed by the QPC.	<p>Implemented and on-going.</p> <p>The Department has given priority in getting the new First Year programme successfully launched. The Department is planning to review some courses in 05/06.</p> <p>The Department has also introduced a Visiting Lecturer programme which brings in an external speaker every two weeks.</p>
That a first-year programme in Folklore be initiated as soon as possible.	Endorsed by the QPC.	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>The new programme has commenced and 20 Irish plus additional visiting students are registered. There is no evidence of a reduction in the course on Irish Language already offered in First Year.</p>
In tandem with future planning and curricular review, that material culture be considered as an appropriate area of specialization for a new appointment.	Both the recommendation and the comment of the Department were noted by the QPC.	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>A new appointment in the Department has taken responsibility for this.</p>
That a curriculum review be carried out and that a 3-year BA in Folklore be introduced.	Endorsed by the QPC.	Implemented.
That opportunities to develop or enhance pedagogical skills be availed of.	Endorsed by the QPC.	<p>Implementation on-going.</p> <p>Staff are taking advantage of all opportunities to engage in</p>

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		enhancement of pedagogical skills.
That archival resources and audiovisual aids be regularly used in teaching.	<p>Endorsed by the QPC.</p> <p>The comment of the Department was noted by the QPC, who confirmed this is being addressed. The QPC noted that significant resources are being put into support for equipping and upgrading as many of the common teaching spaces as possible over the summer months. The QPC hoped this will alleviate some of the difficulties experienced by the Department</p>	<p>Implemented as far as is possible with resources available in teaching rooms allocated to the Department.</p> <p>Members of the department use A/V aids and are improving A/V resources. Many of the courses use archival material and this use is increasing. The department's pilot CD-ROM, <i>An Léann Dúchais Leictreonach</i>, funded by the HEA, is now almost ready. One member of staff is in the process of sourcing Irish-language A/V materials, particularly from TG4 and Radio na Gaeltachta. Further HEA funding, to the tune of €25,000, was secured by a member of the Department in 2005 order to put <i>An Léann Dúchais Leictreonach</i> on-line. Also in 2005 an application from a member of staff won €2,300 from the President's Strategic Fund for the project 'Backlog Reduction and Enhancement of Archival Knowledge'.</p>
That the teaching of the Department should continue to be informed by the use of student questionnaires.	Endorsed by the QPC.	Implemented.
That both Folklore and An Leánn Dúchais be maintained at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.	Endorsed by the QPC.	Implemented.
The PRG welcomed the first draft of a Departmental Student Handbook, and recommended that the completed document should include course outlines, an overview of	<p>Endorsed by the QPC.</p> <p>The QPC noted and welcomed the prompt action of the Department in this regard.</p>	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>The Department noted that all appropriate publications and source materials are used to support teaching.</p>

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programmes, and, where appropriate, more recourse to publications of folklore scholarship in Ireland.		
That more submissions to appropriate international peer-reviewed journals are made.	<p>Recommendation noted by the QPC.</p> <p>The QPC noted the very significant publication record of the academic staff of the Department and the award to a member of the Department of the Faculty of Arts Research Achievement Award</p>	<p>The staff of the Department continue to publish extensively in all appropriate media, including international peer-reviewed journals. The Department submitted an extensive list of publications since the quality review.</p>
The PRG also recommended that the southern region's rich traditions and resources should be a particular focus for fieldwork, research, and publication.	<p>Noted by the QPC.</p> <p>The QPC noted the comments of the Department in connection to this recommendation and the current research interests of the staff of the Department.</p>	<p>Recommendation and comment noted.</p> <p>The research of the Department will continue to be informed by best practice elsewhere.</p>
That further links with other institutions, both national and international be sought and formalised.	<p>Endorsed by the QPC.</p>	<p>Implementation on-going.</p> <p>For the size of the Department it has an extensive range of links with other institutions, national and international, and the Department is seeking to extend these further.</p>
The Department's web site should be continue to be developed.	<p>Endorsed by the QPC.</p>	<p>The web site has been improved. The Department is planning at developing a fully bi-lingual web site.</p>
That, on retirement of the present Head of Department, a replacement be appointed without delay.	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>The QPC noted that a 3-year appointment at Lecturer level had recently been approved by the Deans-EMG.</p>	<p>Implemented.</p>
That the Tenure B post be regularized.	<p>Endorsed by the QPC.</p>	<p>Implemented.</p>
That the members of the Department be located in one venue.	<p>Endorsed by the QPC.</p> <p>The QPC requested that the</p>	<p>The Department is not a large one and to be divided over three locations is seriously</p>

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	Space subcommittee of the Buildings Committee be written to recommending that this issue be given due attention.	disadvantaging for the members. It is recognised that space is a difficult issue in UCC. Nevertheless it should be possible to resolve the needs of this Department, even with current restrictions.
The Departmental Folklore Archive be given sustained financial support to secure its future, and to provide a full-time archivist.	<p>QPC noted this recommendation and commented on the importance of the archive. QPC suggested that perhaps some resources allocated to the Department from JYA funds or other international sources be used for this valuable purpose.</p> <p>The QPC suggested that the Department consult with the Head of the International Education Office on possible avenues for funding.</p>	There has been no sustained financial support to date to secure the archive's future nor to provide a full-time archivist. At the moment, the only source of funding available for the archive is from JYA.
Both Departmental and Archival computing facilities, including those of the Northside Folklore Project, be upgraded.	<p>Endorsed by the QPC.</p> <p>The QPC noted and welcomed the intention of the Department to seek funding for this purpose.</p>	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>The departmental computer facilities are in the process of being upgraded and have substantially improved since the Quality Review was carried out.</p>
Urgent steps be taken to ensure the safety of the Northside Folklore Project's archival holdings.	<p>Endorsed by the QPC.</p> <p>The QPC recommended that the issue be discussed with the UCC Librarian.</p>	With regard to the safeguarding of the Northside Folklore Project's archival holdings, the transfer of sound recordings to the departmental archive has already commenced. Of major concern is the future of the part-time director of the Northside Folklore Project, who has been in post for the last five years. At present she is being from the McCarthy Bursary and from departmental funds. After 2006-2007 the McCarthy Bursary will no longer be available. The role and abilities of the archivist are central to the survival of the Project, which was highly praised in the Quality Review. It is hoped that it might be possible

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		to regulate this position with a Tenure B post.
That the Department be supported in every way possible to enable it to reach its full potential.	<p>Endorsed by the QPC.</p> <p>The QPC re-iterated its view that the possibility of establishing a 'School of Celtic Studies/School of Irish Studies' be explored actively with cognate departments and relevant Deans in UCC. The QPC would welcome and strongly support all such moves in this direction.</p>	The Department is not being supported 'in every way possible [in order] to enable it to reach its full potential'. Of continued major concern are the questions of housing for the department and the future of the Northside Folklore Project when the McCarthy Bursary expires.