

Department of French

Peer Review Group:

Professor P. Ó Riain, Department of Early and Medieval Irish, UCC (Chair)
Professor S. Ó Coileáin, Department of Modern Irish, UCC
Professor P. Ó Gormáile, Department of French, NUI Galway
Professor J. Brihault, Department d'Anglais, Université de Rennes, France

Brief description of conduct of site visit

The site visit was conducted over 2.5 days from 19th to 21st March 2002 and included meetings with

- i) Head and staff of the department as a group and individually
- ii) Representatives of undergraduate and postgraduate students
- iii) Professor A. Hyland, VP
- iv) Professor B. Harvey, VP for Research Policy & Support
- v) Professor P. Woodman, Dean, Faculty of Arts
- vi) Professor S. Green, Dean, Faculty of Commerce
- vii) Mr. E. McIntyre, Faculty of Law
- viii) Ms. L. Tobin, Head, International Education Office

and visits to departmental and library facilities in UCC.

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 of French

Head of Department: Professor P. O'Donovan

No. of Staff: 11 academic staff (permanent full-time), 10 College Language Teachers, 1 Lector

(temporary full-time) and 2 administrative staff

Location of Department: O'Rahilly Building

Degrees/Diplomas offered: BA, MA, PhD

No. of students: In 2000/02 the Department had 188.05 U/G FTEs and 8.67 P/G FTEs, distributed as follows:

Arts	Commerce	Engineering	Law
149.1	14.9	5.8	26.9

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Evening	Socrates	Total U/G	MA Taught	Total P/G
66.17	64.33	26.84	2.25	3.79	188.05	8.67	8.67

Mission Statement

"The mission of the Department of French is to preserve, extend and transmit knowledge of the French language and of French and francophone culture, and to cultivate the appreciation of French among teachers, students and the wider community."

Aims & Objectives

- To provide students with the opportunity to achieve excellence in the study of French
- To provide programmes in French of high educational value and interest for students at all levels from undergraduate to PhD
- To encourage the pursuit and realization of research projects in French language and French and francophone culture

- To maintain standards of excellence in the areas of French as a subject which feature in its teaching and research: French language and linguistics, literature, thought and the history of ideas, cultural studies, and society and institutions.

General

- To integrate teaching and research by means of the development of elective specialized modules (undergraduate and postgraduate)
- To encourage intellectual curiosity, self-discipline and range on the part of students of French
- To provide a framework for self-development in teaching and research on the part of staff
- To participate in planning and policy development affecting teaching and research in French and in modern languages
- To participate in the development in the University of learning resources for French
- To promote academic development through co-operation with departments of the School of Language and Literature and of the Faculties of Arts, Commerce and Law

Undergraduate

- To provide advanced training in the use of French
- To encourage wide reading and study in French literature, thought and other forms of cultural production
- To equip students with the skills and knowledge required to engage in independent analysis and interpretation
- In *Year One* and *Year Two*, to provide a structured learning framework for the study of the French language and French culture, and for the acquisition of specialized skills in analysis, interpretation, argument and communication
- In *Year Three* and *Year Four*, to provide a structured learning framework for advanced work in the French language, and for the development of capacities for responsiveness, synthesis and independent critical thinking in the study of French culture
- To provide opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge in different areas of French, according to students' interests and aptitudes and to foster intellectual development by providing structured progression in strands representing different branches of French as a humanities subject
- To encourage students to use their studies in French as a basis for personal and career development
- To enhance the acquisition of transferable skills, including information gathering, analysis, interpretation, the capacity for co-operative work, skills in the use of information technology
- To seek to enhance student motivation
- To provide a stimulating learning environment for students (e.g. through the use of seminar teaching, by promoting accessibility of staff to students).

Postgraduate

- To develop taught postgraduate programmes and modules according to developments in the subject and to student demand
- To prepare researchers and university teachers of the future
- To provide effective training in research methods and to foster professional self-development on the part of research students.

Research

- To enhance the conditions for research and for the realization of individual and collaborative research projects
- To foster the creation of a framework for the identification and pursuit of research themes in the humanities on the basis of collaboration with colleagues in U.C.C. and beyond
- To develop research networks with partners in Ireland, Europe and beyond as a means of providing staff and students with opportunities for the planning and realization of research projects.

General Comment on Quality Review

The reviewers found that the self-assessment report comprehensively reflected the department's assessment of its present position and vision of its future development. The Department of French is one of the larger departments of UCC and it had undergone a period of sustained growth, making it the largest undergraduate centre for French in Ireland. The reviewers deemed the new inter-faculty courses to have been very successful. The group was impressed by the range and quality of courses offered by the Department. It was also impressed by the level of general satisfaction with courses and with the teaching of staff expressed by students of the Department. It noted with approval the success of the Department in 'customizing' courses, for example in relation to the BCL (Law and French). The reviewers noted the number and quality of the books and articles the department has produced, as well as the regular attendance of its staff members at international conferences, and felt the Department can be proud of its strong record in the areas of research and scholarly activity. A contributory factor to the Department's rate of success in research has been its policy of distributing workloads so as to ensure that one day per week is free for research. The research seminar has also helped to produce a favourable research environment. The interdisciplinary character of much of the research involvement of staff was highly commended by the group.

Progress on Recommendations for Improvement

The Department of French made **88** recommendations for improvement in their Self-Assessment Report. The PRG endorsed all the recommendations. However the group also made some recommendations and did focus on some of the departmental recommendations in particular and these are indicated below.

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report - Oct. '03
That special attention is paid to the support and working conditions of the staff of the LC. The department's language teaching mission should receive greater emphasis	Endorsed recommendation. For action by UCC and Dean of Arts and Director of LC.	The whole issue of the future direction of the Language Centre is currently under review by the University following the resignation of the Director. The Dean of Arts and the Department are awaiting the outcome of the discussions before taking action.
There should be a collective Departmental approach to matters such as research initiatives and to empowerment of groups of staff to make recommendations to departmental staff meetings with a strong presumption of acceptance.	Strongly endorsed recommendation	Implemented. Delegation of decision-making to the relevant departmental committees has been agreed and been put into place by the Department.
Rotation of responsibilities among all staff in relation to departmental committees and regular review of composition of departmental committees	Strongly endorsed recommendation	Implemented. A review of the departmental committees took place and rotation of responsibilities among staff, including CLTs, took place. Staff preferences were the most important criterion in assignment of

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		duties. In some cases staff preferred to remain with their existing responsibilities and this was facilitated by the Head of Department. Chairs of committees will be changed every two years. The composition of all committees will be reviewed every two years and will include consideration of preferences expressed by individual staff.
All workloads should be made known to all staff and reviewed regularly	Strongly endorsed recommendation. Commented that this is highly desirable as a matter of good practice in departments.	Implemented for 2002/03. Not implemented for 2003/04 at the date of this report. Action on this recommendation has not yet occurred for the academic year 2003/04. The Head of Department undertook to circulate details of all workloads (undergraduate, postgraduate, administration) by the end of October 2003. This has not happened.
The budget for the following academic year should be reviewed annually at the May planning meeting	Endorsed recommendation. Commented that this is highly desirable as a matter of good practice in departments.	Implemented as far as possible. The time of circulation of budgetary information is dependent on the HEA and on government decisions. The budget was circulated immediately upon receipt by the Department at the end of July 2003.
As far as practicable, budgets should be allocated according to strategic purposes (e.g. teaching, research, development of access to media) and that economies in routine expenditure should be pursued so as to facilitate this process	Strongly endorsed recommendation.	Implemented and acted upon in 2003. Recommendations were made by departmental committees and agreed and acted upon by the Department. Equipment was updated. Economies were made in the area of savings in expenditure on the photocopier. No free student access to the photocopier was permitted.
As far as practicable, decisions on budgets should be linked to the responsibilities of specific committees in implementing departmental policy	QPC recommended that the Department should make decisions on expenditure of the departmental budget in a collegial fashion and individual committees within the Department should make decisions.	Implemented.
That the role of administrative staff	Endorsed recommendation.	Implemented in part.

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of the department be extended to the provision of support for other staff (than the Head of Department) in relation to operation of departmental committees and research initiatives.	For action by the Department.	Administrative staff act as secretaries to departmental committees and assist with conference planning and organisation.
Information on the work of the departmental office, with a list of the respective duties of each of the members of staff, should be maintained	Endorsed recommendation. Commented that this is highly desirable as a matter of good practice in departments.	Not yet implemented. To be completed by December 2003. <u>Action:</u> By Head of Department by end of December 2003. Confirmation to be sent of Dean of Arts and Director of Quality Promotion Unit.
Staff achievements should be highlighted — and celebrated — more visibly and more actively.	Endorsed recommendation. Commented that this is highly desirable as a matter of good practice in departments.	Implemented. Under Chairperson's business on the agenda for staff meetings, achievements and activities of individual staff are highlighted. Highlighting at the level of the university was recommended and the Dean of Arts undertook to consider possible actions.
Since some academic staff appear to have no involvement in language-teaching, the policy underlying this should be clarified.	QPC endorsed the recommendation that a review of the policy with regard to the teaching of language be carried out. QPC recommended that the review involve the Dean of the Arts Faculty, the Head of Department and all relevant staff of the department.	Implemented. The policy is that there is a balance maintained between the literary seminar and language teaching. Every academic staff member teaches 2 hours per week of seminar/language and some staff teach both. Imbalances in teaching workloads are addressed by allocation of additional language teaching. If staff are requested to become involved in language teaching they must participate. Will be kept under review.
That, bearing in mind its overall mission, the Department consider producing a policy with regard to the use of French in the teaching of content courses	QPC endorsed the department's proposal that a review of the policy be carried out as soon as possible.	Discussed in 2002/03 and will be implemented in 2003/04. The policy that has been agreed is that French is used as much as possible but English may also be used. The students are informed in October each year which literary seminars will be in French and in English. Assessment for all students taking literary seminars will be of the same format.
Every effort should be made to communicate more effectively to	Endorsed recommendation. Commented that this is highly	Implemented and on-going.

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students the level of continuity within the programmes of years 1-4.	desirable as a matter of good practice in departments.	
More use should be made of the many (mostly already available) means of enhancing the teaching of the language, such as language laboratories, the provision of Computer Aided Learning (CAL), the use of the Media Room, the revitalisation of the French Society, and the creation of a French CineClub.	Strongly endorsed recommendation.	Implemented for the major part. The French Society was re-vitalised. A CLT co-ordinated the liaison and the project was very successful. French CineClub was set-up. These activities will continue in 2003/04.
The Department should seriously consider the possibility of providing remedial language teaching	Endorsed recommendation.	Implemented. In line with the recommendations of the reviewers on the Language Centre and by agreement with staff, the Department did use some of the unused time of the CLTs. 2 hours per week for each programme year provided supplementary grammar classes. It was noted that course materials were somewhat expensive.
Since joint honours students normally experience difficulty in availing of the year abroad option, every effort should be made to integrate it into their programme.	QPC recommended that serious consideration should be given to a 4-year BA programme incorporating one year of study abroad and that the possibilities of the Socrates programme be considered.	Implemented. The Department facilitated as many students as wished to participate in the LCS programmes and allowed students to change into these if they desired. The Department undertook to continue to encourage students to spend a year abroad, for example by encouraging 2 nd year students to apply for posts as language assistants in French secondary schools.
The Department should ensure that all staff receive encouragement to visit the students abroad by availing of the funds available from the International Education Office to assist in these visits.	Endorsed recommendation.	Implemented. 2 members of staff did visit Erasmus Universities during the year. However it was noted that the funding received from the International Education Office was insufficient and staff have to subsidise the visits from their personal funds.
Department should seek to increase the number of PhD students in French; consider relaunching the MA in Translation Studies; consider availability of Co-Tutelle	Strongly endorsed recommendation. The QPC did not endorse the suggestion that additional funding be provided by the university. The QPC advised	Implemented. Another GoI Scholarship was obtained in 03/04 for a PhD student. An advertising brochure

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scheme as a means of attracting doctoral students. Increased funding should be sought from the university to aid in attracting PhD students	the department to investigate sources of funding available nationally and internationally.	was developed and staff participated in all postgraduate open days. There was a significant increase in the numbers taking the MA in Applied Linguistics and in the MA in French. The MA in Translation Studies was not re-launched but the possibility will be kept under review. Department is committed to continuing the efforts to attract postgraduate students in these and other degrees where and as appropriate
All staff should be encouraged to participate in the teaching-staff exchange scheme funded by Socrates	Endorsed recommendation.	Implemented. 2 staff were approved for the teaching staff exchanges. The needs of the Department will also be taken into account in planning participation in the scheme.
Where members of a Department are asked to assume University responsibilities on or outside campus, both University and Department should more carefully consider the implications of these added responsibilities for the administrative support staff.	Endorsed recommendation. QPC confirmed it is university policy for a department to support all staff who undertake additional responsibilities on behalf of the university, and that all efforts should be made by a department to facilitate such activities. Ultimately all staff work for UCC and every effort to support UCC activities should be made by all staff.	Department agreed to facilitate this recommendation in so far as it is possible. However it was noted that conditions for administrative staff are the responsibility of the Department of HR. It was commented that the University had a responsibility to ensure that entities put in place (e.g. Examination Appeals Officer) should be properly supported.
To function more effectively, Departments need to receive appropriate budgetary information, however provisional, from central administration well in advance of the beginning of the academic year	This is now in place in UCC. All departments will receive information on the budget allocation prior to the commencement of the academic year from this year forward.	Implemented.
Steps should be taken to facilitate the introduction of service language courses in other Faculties, which is now held back by the implications this has for FTEs.	QPC referred the issue to the Council of Deans for their consideration.	This had been referred to the Council of Deans. The Dean of Arts undertook to ensure that all such teaching must be recognised appropriately. Action: Dean of Arts
That the University consider defining a strategy for the provision of more development support for CLTs	There is already a very extensive and very well advertised staff training and development programme in UCC, including a rapidly expanding range of activities in teaching development. It was noted by the committee that all CLTs (along	The University has a strategy and all CLTs are entitled to 20 days additional leave every 2 years to allow them to study abroad. There is also a very extensive staff training and development programme in UCC and the CLTs were and continue to be encouraged

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	with all other staff) are notified of these routinely but have, with one or two exceptions, not availed of these to date. The QPC did not support the development of a separate programme for the support of CLTs only.	to participate in these.
The University should take steps to ensure that the shortfall in the part-time staffing budget of the Department be rectified with a view to providing financial support for PhD and MA students	Recommendation not endorsed. The QPC noted that monies are available nationally and that the part-time staffing budget is there to provide support for the teaching functions of the Department.	It was noted that there is no funding available nationally to support students on taught MA programmes. Part-time budget is used to support lector/lectrice positions. The Department has no funding available to assist postgraduates or cover other incidental costs such as once-off visiting lecturers, etc.