

DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT

QUALITY REVIEW FOLLOW-UP REPORT

A meeting was held on 30th September 2010 to discuss progress of the Department of Government and the College of B&L in implementing the recommendations for improvement arising from the quality review of the Department of Government.

Present: Professor Neil Collins, Head, Department of Government
Ms. Fiona Buckley, Department of Government
Dr. Clodagh Harris, Department of Government
Dr. Mary Murphy, Department of Government
Ms. Dearbhail O'Callaghan, Department of Government
Dr. Teresa Reidy, Department of Government
Professor Irene Lynch-Fannon, Head, College B&L
Dr. Norma Ryan, Director, Quality Promotion Unit

General Comment

The Department of Government considered the comments of the reviewers in the PRG Report and the recommendations very carefully.

Since the quality review was held the Department has continued to work towards the implementation of recommendations for improvement. However implementation of some core elements of the improvement plan and foci of the review recommendations remain a difficulty. These difficulties are detailed below under the specific recommendations.

Abbreviations

PRG: Peer Review Group

VP: Vice-President

QPC: Quality Promotion Committee

QIP: Quality Improvement Plan

HR: Human Resources

CBL: College of Business and Law

PRG Finding/Recommendation	QPC Comment/Recommendation	Follow-up September 2010
Recommendations to the University		
<p>1. Resolve the identity of the Department, particularly in relation to research and teaching in the Discipline of Politics</p> <p>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. The University might seek to make the most of the political scientists that it employs by establishing a School of Politics and inviting Politics academics outside the Department to join.</p>	<p>Recommendation strongly endorsed.</p> <p>The QPC concurred with the need to establish structures to respond quickly to external demands in the areas of politics and political sciences. The Committee agreed that it is imperative that the internal difficulties causing blocks to developments in these areas be resolved and that progress be made rapidly in formation of a School of Politics, incorporating academics from a number of disciplines. The Committee noted that there is now a precedent for such a cross-College School and requested that the matter be resolved in good time to allow students wishing to enter UCC in 2010/11 be informed of all options in these areas available to them.</p>	<p>Government is now the anchor department for the BA Politics and it is also home to the BSc Government. Both programmes continue to advance and develop, offering alternative ways of studying political science. The Department is keen to see the development of a School of Politics, which will provide a long-term home for the BA Politics.</p> <p>The core issue is the status of political science at UCC.</p> <p>UCC is now the only University in Ireland that does not recognise Politics as an area of general interest.</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>QPC recognised the need to resolve these issues but were of the opinion that action on this should be deferred until the implementation of recommendation 1 is resolved. Actions appropriate to deliver on this recommendation should be considered subsequent to the resolution of the formation of a School of Politics.</p>	<p>See 1 above.</p>

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<p>3. Resolve the structural position of the Department within the College of Business and Law. In particular, it is recommended 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, it is recommended that the Department of Government should <u>not</u> be incorporated into such a School. It is believed that such form of restructuring would hinder the development of the Politics discipline in UCC.</p>	<p>QPC noted that this recommendation is linked closely to recommendation 1 and that in the resolution of the means to implement recommendation 1 this recommendation also be considered.</p>	<p>See 1 above</p>
<p>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,</p> <p>(ii) improving research mentoring for early-career staff, and</p> <p>(iii) reducing the leadership burden on the existing senior staff</p>	<p>Recommendation strongly endorsed.</p> <p>QPC would anticipate that discussions and decisions on this issue would be expected to follow on from the development of the School of Politics referred to above.</p> <p>QPC noted the response of the Department which was considered to be unsatisfactory. QPC would anticipate submission of a plan setting out specific developments prioritised and costed.</p>	<p>The academic profile of the department indicates the need for further professorial/senior lecturer appointments. The current government-imposed Employment Control Framework on both promotion and appointments constrains any action. The Department has given consideration to appointments and promotions and a position in comparative politics is preferred should /when it become possible to make an appointment.</p> <p>The Department has discussed and considered possibilities for introduction of a mentoring approach, and plan to implement such an approach in 2010/11.</p>

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5.	<p>Increase the administrative support available to the Department by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<p>Recommendation noted</p> <p>QPC would anticipate that discussions and decisions on this issue would be expected to follow on from the development of the School of Politics referred to above.</p> <p>QPC noted the response of the Department which was considered to be unsatisfactory. QPC would anticipate submission of a plan setting out specific developments prioritised and costed.</p>	<p>(i) Progress has been made in enhancing the tenure of the Executive Assistant.</p> <p>(ii) Administrative staff have taken up training opportunities and further courses are being encouraged.</p> <p>(iii) The appointment of a Departmental Manager is tied up with the development of a school of politics.</p> <p>(iv) A placement officer was appointed, on a 3 days per week contract for 12 months, from Dec 2009.</p>
6	<p>Ring-fence some of the income from Continued Professional Development (CPD) programmes and programmes such as the JYA Certificate in Irish Politics Today, for staff development and support</p>	<p>Recommendation strongly endorsed.</p> <p>QPC noted the analysis of the PRG that there is a huge potential in this area for income generation and delivery on needs of public.</p>	<p>The financial incentive structure is inhibiting developments in the area. A new Masters programme was launched in 2010 and this is designed to generate income. The acquisition of IMI is viewed positively.</p> <p>It was noted that income from CPD programmes is ring-fenced from 2010/11 onwards, as is income from JYA programmes.</p> <p>New ideas are being developed around possibilities such a developing a summer school and courses in diplomacy.</p> <p>The Department availed of the strategic development fund in 2009/10 but there are serious budget concerns for 2010/11.</p>
Recommendations to the Department			

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7	Reduce the unnecessary non-academic administrative burden on college lecturers, particularly in relation to finance and placements	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>QPC noted the comment of the department with respect to the EA and commented that in the current economic climate this issue should be resolved within current resources.</p>	The Department has a placement officer in post. The attempts to reduce the administrative burden on staff are ongoing.
8	Regularly review the number of modules taught	<p>Recommendation strongly endorsed</p> <p>QPC recommended that curriculum be regularly reviewed with a view to maximising use of available resources and a focus on delivery of CDP with resources freed up by this means, in addition to increasing the research activity of staff</p>	The number of modules has been rationalised and co-teaching arrangements have been implemented. Maternity leave in 2010/11 required further rationalisation.
9	Devise and implement a strategy for staff development, particularly in relation to research and publications	<p>Recommendation strongly endorsed.</p> <p>QPC noted the response of the department and commented that it would have expected a research committee to be in place prior to the quality review and that meetings would occur more frequently than once per term. Implementation of the PMDS in place in UCC would also assist staff development in all areas</p>	<p>Following a strategic review of research, the following clusters were formed. These are:</p> <p>Comparative and International politics; Irish politics; and Public management, Governance and Democracy.</p> <p>External expertise was sought on developing a mentoring programme from the University of Bristol. Professor Sarah Childs visited the Department, meeting with staff and is involved in the ongoing development of the peer-mentoring scheme.</p> <p>The staff development fund provided resources for attendance at summer schools, conference attendance and research related activities.</p> <p>The implementation of the Departmental research strategy and the enhancement of</p>

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			Departmental research output and profile are constrained by: (i) funding; (ii) university sabbatical policy; and (iii) heavy teaching commitments.
10	Formalise the process of visiting positions to ensure that students are exposed to disciplinary experts in leading Politics Departments internationally	<p>Recommendation strongly endorsed.</p> <p>QPC found the response of the Department to be wholly inadequate and insufficient. QPC advise the Head of department to consult with heads of other departments who have implemented this approach successfully to improvement of the quality of the student experience.</p>	<p>The Departmental policy exists which balances workloads on an annual basis, allowing one member of academic staff to apply for sabbatical leave. However, maternity leave and other leaves of absence, which are not covered, severely constrain the operation of this policy. Furthermore, the Department avails of every opportunity to host visiting staff. It has a resource strategy to support this but this has been eroded significantly in the past two years.</p> <p>The Department has had 2 Fulbright scholars in the last 5 years among others.</p>
11	Liaise more closely with ISS 21 in relation to the expertise available on writing research grants in the social sciences.	<p>Recommendation to support and enhance research grant writing skills strongly endorsed.</p> <p>QPC recommended that a more vigorous approach to implementation be taken than that indicated in the departmental response.</p>	Staff members are directly involved in several applications through the vehicle of ISS 21 including a recent FP7 proposal as well as being a core department in the taught ISS21 PhD programme GREP.

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12	<p>Secure a more effective strategy for sabbatical leave that will ensure that all staff (but particularly early career staff) can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. develop funding linkages with politics researchers and networks abroad and ii. increase the level of research collaborations 	<p>Recommendation strongly endorsed.</p> <p>QPC did not consider the response of the department to be a serious response and is concerned at the lack of leadership exhibited by the response. It was not clear if the recommendation was accepted or not by the department and what the implementation date for action would be. QPC expect that this information will be provided in the quality improvement plan to be prepared and sent to the QPC.</p>	<p>(i)The Department has a successful sabbatical leave policy and each year a staff member is available to apply for sabbatical leave. This is organised on a three-year rotational basis and will be tailored to fit in with the new CB+L procedures.</p> <p>(ii) Several funding applications have been made and collaborations are currently active with Princeton, Strathclyde and Melbourne among others.</p>
13	<p>Formalise the position in relation to promoting awareness of the BSc Government degree in secondary schools</p> <p><i>(see PRGR for details)</i></p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed</p>	<p>A Facebook site has been added</p> <p>Essay competition has been instituted.</p> <p>The Department publishes a fortnightly newsletter.</p> <p>Close contact is kept with the Alumni.</p> <p>These activities are constantly reviewed but constrained by resource considerations.</p> <p>There is a need to re-title BSC government to BSc Political Science and the Head of CB&L agreed to discuss any issues about this proposed change with the new Head of CACSSS.</p>

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14	<p>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).</p>	<p>Recommendation strongly endorsed</p> <p>QPC noted that formation of the School of Politics will greatly facilitate delivery of this recommendation with closer links established to other areas of interest within UCC.</p> <p>The issue of a Masters opt-out should be explored.</p> <p>QPC noted that resources follow students and expressed grave concern at the recommendation to halt intake of postgraduate students until more resources are obtained.</p>	<p>A Director of Doctoral Studies has been appointed, staff/student research meetings regularly held and annual reviews put in place, all in line with UCC guidelines. The Department anticipates at least 3 doctoral candidates will graduate in the coming months.</p> <p>Greater resource clarification has been achieved. Recruitment to the programme was temporarily suspended and has now re-opened.</p> <p>A restructuring of the PhD programme is under discussion. The discussions include discussion of the Department's core PhD programme in Government, the PhD in Politics (Arts) and the GREP (ISS21) and how these might be integrated more carefully. A masters opt-out will be considered as part of these discussions.</p>
15	<p>Pursue the Space sub-committee to secure long-term dedicated space for PhD students and staff</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed</p> <p>QPC noted the importance of supporting graduate students and the quality of their experience, and also that additional space will be made available in the next few months which the department, if interested and able to demonstrate sufficient need for, could apply for via the Head of CBL to the Space Committee.</p> <p>QPC also noted that the postgraduate dedicated spaces in the Boole Library are available and in the interim could be used by students.</p>	<p>The PhD space issue has been resolved. However, staff space constraints are an ongoing issue and the Department is seeking an extra office for term 2 to facilitate accommodation of staff.</p>

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16	Generate additional income by offering more Continued Professional Development (CPD) and programmes such as the JYA Certificate in Irish Politics Today	Recommendation strongly endorsed.	See 6 above.