

Department of Hispanic Studies

Peer Review Group:

Professor P. O'Donovan, Professor of French, UCC (Chair)
Professor E. Saccone, Professor of Italian, UCC
Dr. C. Cosgrove, Department of Spanish & Portuguese, Trinity College Dublin
Professor I. Praga, Departamento de Filología Inglesa, Universitario de Burgos, Spain

Brief Summary of conduct of Site Visit:

The site visit was conducted over 2 days from 26th – 28th February, 2001 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 P. Woodman, Dean of Arts Faculty,
- iv) Professor M. A. Moran, Registrar & VP for Academic Affairs,
- v) Professor B. Harvey, VP for Research Policy & Support;

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 during the afternoon of the second day.

Description of Department of Hispanic Studies

Head of Department: Professor D. Mackenzie

No. of Staff: 8 academic (5 f/t perm., 1 p/t perm., 2 p/t temp), 8 language teachers (4 seconded f/t, 4 p/t temp), 2 administrative staff

Location of Department: O'Rahilly Building

Degrees/Diplomas offered: BA, BComm (European) MA, MPhil, PhD,

No. of students in 2000/01: In 1999/2000 the department had 98 U/G FTEs and 10 P/G FTEs, distributed as follows:

Arts	Commerce	Language Centre
88	9	11

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	JYA	Socrates	Total U/G	MA Taught	MA Research	PhD	Total P/G
45	28	13	7	1	4	98	7	1	2	10

Mission Statement

“To provide teaching and research in the field of Hispanic Studies, with a particular emphasis on Language and Literature, at a level commensurate with that of an internationally-recognised university.”

Aims & Objectives

To offer students the opportunity to study the whole of the Hispanic world, both literature and language.

General Comment on Quality Review

The Peer Review Group found that the Self-Assessment Report gave a comprehensive account of the Department's work. The Department's plans for the future development of teaching and research emerged in the course of discussions with the Peer Review Group. There was clear evidence of general satisfaction on the part of students with the Department's teaching. The review group found clear evidence of a lively research culture and concluded

that the various initiatives developed in recent years for the promotion of research provided effective encouragement for the realisation of research projects (individual or collaborative).

Progress on Recommendations for Improvement

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report – Oct. '02
Finding: Objectives of Department are highly ambitious.	QPC recommended that the Department review its objectives, especially with a view to ensuring that the commitment of staff to quality undergraduate education is maintained; and that consideration should be given to the possibility of reducing over-teaching whilst ensuring a balanced programme in Hispanic Studies be delivered and examined. This would allow more time for research.	Department has reviewed its objectives and is very happy with the spread of modules offered. The students have expressed their satisfaction with the courses offered and the decision has been taken not to change the course at this time. The Department believes that it is possible to maintain their high standard with the current activities. The numbers are not decreasing in HS as in the other language departments.
That the process of devolution from the central administration could be more efficient and clarified.	The QPC agreed with this recommendation and confirmed that this is a matter receiving on-going consideration.	From the perspective of the department nothing has changed since the review.
That staff-student consultation meetings be maintained at 1 per teaching period	The QPC recommended continuance of practice	Implemented. The meetings are minuted and the minutes are published and available.
That the questionnaires used by Department to canvas student opinion be expanded.	The QPC endorsed recommendation.	Department has not used the electronic surveying system. Department has amended the questionnaires used.
That the Department should avail of opportunities for funding postgraduates from external sources.	The QPC commended the desire of the Department of HS to work towards increasing postgraduate numbers. All members of staff should be encouraged to expand their research activities.	Department continues to engage in all processes attempting to increase funding opportunities for postgraduates. Department funds MA students from within resources provided by Faculty of Arts. Department continues to support applications for Government of Ireland Scholarships. Department feels situation is now improving.
That arrangements for postgraduate supervision be kept under review	QPC endorsed recommendation and noted and welcomed departmental responses.	Implemented. Professor T. O'Reilly is Director of Postgraduate Studies in the Department and maintains very close contact with the postgraduates and their supervisors. The Department follows the IFGSB guidelines.
That the Department should fix a date for the review of the undergraduate programme.	This recommendation is linked to the first one above and the QPC strongly endorsed the recommendation of the PRG.	The Department does plan to review its undergraduate programme and monitors it continuously. However the first graduates from the new curriculum were graduated in September 2002. Thus the Department plans to wait until September 2006 before considering

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report – Oct. '02
		any substantial change to the programmes. The teaching in final year is under constant review as it is predicated on staff teaching their research areas.
Language teaching should be kept under review.	It was not clear from the documentation submitted to the PRG that this in fact was being done. The PRG was particularly focused on the teaching provided by the Language Centre at this point. The Dean of Arts would welcome a detailed exploration of the issue of language teaching. The QPC recommended discussions between Head of Department, Dean of Arts and Director of Language Centre should take place.	The Language Centre has been reviewed and action on the recommendations arising from the review will involve all the language departments. The Department of HS will be involved and will cooperate fully with all discussions on future developments, including all aspects of the language teaching.
That College Language Teachers should have improved access to IT facilities.	Discussion on facilities will form part of the review of the Language Centre and its activities.	All relevant staff will have computers shortly.
That staff development of the College Language Teachers should be improved – leading to improvement of the support to teaching by the Language Centre.	QPC noted that discussions on this issue are already on-going at a central level.	An extensive teaching support and development programme was put in place in 2001/02 in UCC. This will continue in 2002/03. All teaching staff, including the staff of the Language Centre, of the university are invited to all activities and to participate.
That improvement to on-line access to student records database should be made.	QPC noted that this is currently being considered.	Implemented. There has been a very significant improvement in the electronic communications within the department and with the student records database. The Department is very satisfied with the current level of provision.
That there should be an improvement of anticipation of support needs of academic departments by support services in UCC.	Noted by QPC	This is on-going continuously within the university. The department would welcome more improvements.
That there should be an improvement of cleaning of O'Rahilly Building	Noted by QPC	There has been no improvement. The GS Officer is aware of the difficulties. These were due to the specification for cleaning and GS went through a phase of high staff turnover that affected continuity of service. A new specification has been drawn up and GS is currently out to Tender for this service that should result in an

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report – Oct. '02
		improvement in service.
That the Library should be developed as a research resource.	QPC noted that this is under active consideration. Funds for a major postgraduate library have been applied to from the HEA	UCC has been granted substantial funds for the building and development of a research library. Plans are underway for the building of the new library.
That representatives of Library and Department consider the effective support of teaching and learning.	The QPC endorsed the recommendation for increased co-operation between the Department and the relevant staff in the Library, in particular the subject librarian and the Head of Information Services in the Library.	Meetings have been held with the relevant staff of the Library. As much co-operation has been received by the Department from the Library as is needed and all practical issues that can be resolved have been. However the lack of resources to acquire books and other materials appropriate to the needs of the Department are still very scarce and remain an issue.
That the University addresses at an early date the question of resources required by Department to participate in the BComm (European) Degree.		There has been an improvement in that a Co-ordinator of the Degree programme has been appointed. This has improved the situation. The first graduates graduated in September 2002 and it is hoped that the situation will continue to improve further. There are particular difficulties for the students who study in Spain. The Head of Department is discussing with the Dean of Commerce ways to resolve the difficulties in the near future. The Dean of Commerce has now made adequate provision for the resourcing of the B Comm (European) Degree.

Benchmarking: The Head and senior staff of the Department have considered practices in other institutions and have been working to implement all examples of good practice via the departmental plan. Activities include research seminars, changes in the teaching programme, constant evaluation and increases in the numbers of postgraduates registered to the Department. The professors of the Department act as external examiners in other institutions and are constantly monitoring practices in other countries.