

**University College Cork  
National University of Ireland, Cork**

**Quality Improvement/Quality Assurance**

**Peer Review Group Report**

**Department of Music**

**Academic Year 2004/05**

**Confidential**

**1<sup>st</sup> March 2005**

## **MEMBERS OF THE PEER REVIEW GROUP:**

Professor Robert Yacamini, Department of Electrical & Electronic Engineering, UCC  
(Chair)

Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, Department of Folklore and Ethnology, UCC

Professor Harry White, Department of Music, UCD

Professor David Cooper, School of Music, University of Leeds, UK

## **PEER REVIEW**

### **Timetable of the site visit**

The timetable is inserted as Appendix A.

The timetable allowed for consultation with all interested parties and was adequate to that purpose. The problem of travelling from the Music Building in Sunday's Well to the main campus and back on Day Two was not sufficiently accommodated in the timetable. The fullness of the timetable made it inevitable that the slightest delay would have a knock-on effect on the rest of the day's timetable. Though there were private meetings only with two members of the staff of the Department (other than the Head and the Chair), the ten-minutes per meeting limit allotted in the timetable would have been greatly challenged if more staff had wished to have private meetings.

### **Methodology:**

The primary responsibility of each member of the Peer Review Group was as follows:

Professor Robert Yacamini: Chair

Diarmuid Ó Giolláin: Rapporteur

Professor Harry White: Specialist in the discipline

Professor David Cooper: Specialist in the discipline.

### **Site Visit**

The PRG was treated with great courtesy and kindness by the members of the Department and would like to thank the Head of Department, Dr Paul Everett, and his staff for their cooperation.

It should be noted that the stairs in the Music Building must be climbed with care: a member of Campbell's Catering who provided us with our food on the first day suffered a fall while bringing the PRG refreshments, and his injury required several stitches.

### **Peer Review Group Report**

The Exit Report was accepted as the basis for the full report. The rapporteur compiled a draft based on it and circulated it to the other members of the PRG. A penultimate draft drew on the comments, observations, additions and corrections of the other members of the PRG before being circulated to them. With their assent the rapporteur drew up the final report.

## **OVERALL ANALYSIS**

### **Self-Assessment Report**

The Self-Assessment Report was exemplary. The 'Analysis and Recommendations' section, the essence of the report, from pp. 3 to 13, was a model of concision and clearly outlined the role and the objectives of the Department to the satisfaction of the PRG. The rest of the report, consisting of Appendices A to K, gave comprehensive information on the Department and its activities.

### **Analysis**

The overall analysis dwelt legitimately on the Department's undoubted strengths, but gave less specific consideration to weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

### **Benchmarking**

The benchmarking exercise, the findings of which are outlined on p. 4 and the organization of which is described on p. 140 of the Self-Assessment Report, appears to have been competently executed. The chosen institutions were the Department of Music at Wesleyan University, a leading Liberal Arts College in the USA with which UCC's Department has an exchange agreement, and the School of Music in Queen's University, Belfast. Though the benchmarking focus as described on p. 140 was on (a) curriculum and teaching, (b) staff profile and activity, (c) the department's public face

and (d) resources, what is outlined on p. 4 of the Self-Assessment Report essentially limits itself to the question of resources and only emphasises those areas in which the Department is under-resourced by comparison. In so doing, it misses the opportunity to stress its merits, or indeed note its weaknesses, in the other areas.

## **FINDINGS OF THE PEER REVIEW GROUP**

### **Department Details**

These were to the satisfaction of the PRG.

- We agree that the Department exists in a tradition of reflection and innovation, providing leadership and an unique voice in Ireland's university sector.
- We agree that the Department has an excellent staff team, diversely skilled yet united in approach; a team that is creative, open to new ideas, and caring of its students.
- We agree that the Department has a rich, diverse curriculum and highly flexible system of course options, delivering teaching informed by staff-members' experience in research, professional performance and composition.
- We agree that the Department is friendly and welcoming, good at communicating with students and the public.
- We agree that the Department has good management structures and information systems.

### **Department Organisation & Planning**

The additional funding accruing from the Early Start Semester and Junior Year Abroad programmes, though not part of the Department's budget allocations, is not referred to in this section of the Self-Assessment Report or elsewhere. Otherwise the details were to the satisfaction of the PRG.

### **Teaching & Learning**

The details were to the satisfaction of the PRG.

### **Research & Scholarly Activity**

The details were to the satisfaction of the PRG.

### **Staff Development**

The details were to the satisfaction of the PRG.

### **External Relations**

The details were to the satisfaction of the PRG.

### **Support Services**

The details were to the satisfaction of the PRG.

### **Departmental Co-ordinating Committee & Methodology employed in the preparation of the Self-Assessment Report**

The details were to the satisfaction of the PRG.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

### **Recommendations for improvement made by the department**

1. We agree that the Department should raise and enhance its profile locally, nationally and internationally, and that this should be achieved with apposite levels of ongoing resourcing and professional consultation.
2. We agree that the *potential* of the Music Building as a teaching/learning, performance and research space should be fulfilled.
3. We agree that the difficulties for students arising from the remoteness of the Music Building from the main campus should be significantly reduced.
4. We agree that it should be ensured that the Music Building is a safe place, properly secure for its stakeholders.

5. We agree that it should be ensured that the Music Building is properly accessible by people with disabilities.
6. We agree that the Department should be at the cutting edge of technological development.
7. We agree that the Department should further develop graduate studies.
8. We agree that there should be marked improvement in library provision.
9. We agree that the clerical-administrative workloads of academic staff should be reduced.
10. We agree that a new scheme of instrumental/vocal tuition for students whereby quality-control is exercised by the Department should be established.
11. We agree that an apposite level of resourcing and professional promotion for the university's provision of public music events should be achieved.

### **Observations and Recommendations made by PRG**

The PRG's observations and recommendations come under ten different headings:

#### **1. The nature of the undergraduate curriculum**

- The undergraduate curriculum is extremely diverse.
- We recognise that the breadth and diversity of the curriculum leads to high staff workloads.
- The diversity is sometimes at the expense of a deeper engagement with individual topics.
- Some student feedback identified a need for more structured supervision in the design of the 4<sup>th</sup> year course. It was thought to be very heavily end-loaded.
- We recommend that the undergraduate curriculum be reconsidered in the light of the above observations.

## **2. Staff research profile**

- The achievement of the department already shows evidence of excellence at national and international levels.
- We note particular strengths in the areas of historical and critical musicology, and ethnomusicology including Irish traditional music.
- We recommend that staff registered for doctorates be given the opportunity to complete them and we recommend that in future a doctorate should be made a requirement when academic posts are advertised.
- We recognise the importance of academics publishing in international peer-reviewed journals and recommend that all staff be actively encouraged to publish.
- We commend the high national and international profile of the department in composition and performance. We acknowledge the difficulty in having these achievements adequately assessed in terms of promotion.
- We recommend that the University devise clear procedures for assessing composition and performance for promotional purposes.

## **3. Graduate Studies**

- We congratulate the department on its aspiration to develop graduate studies, in particular through the creation of an MA in ethnomusicology.
- We note in the documentation the absence of PhDs taken to completion in the review period.
- We recommend that the department's resources should be focused more on developing graduate studies and research rather than on the undergraduate programme.

## **4. Workload**

- We commend the staff on their dedication to teaching. Staff workload in our opinion is excessive and appears to be out of line with faculty

and international norms. This appears to be having a negative effect on staff research.

- We recommend that efforts be made to reduce staff teaching and administration loads.

#### **5. Staff profile – Seniority**

- We note the lack of senior appointments in the department.
- We reiterate our recommendation above that the university develop criteria to assess performance and composition in relation to research.
- Given the distinguished contribution of the department to ethnomusicology in the national and international context, we recommend to the University the creation of a Chair in Ethnomusicology.

#### **6. Library**

- We recommend that the Library substantially increase its holding in scholarly literature in music, in order to meet the requirements of this research-active department.

#### **7. Resources within the Music Building**

- We recommend that the Buildings and Estates Office be asked to complete the remedial work that has already been started.
- We recommend that the lecture room be refurbished and equipped to an appropriate standard.

#### **8. Access**

- We note the new bridge being built to the Distillery Fields site.
- We recommend that the University engages with the Department in improving access from the bridge to the Music Building.

#### **9. Security**

- We recommend that the Buildings and Estates Office should enter into urgent dialogue with the department and improve the safety of entrance and access to the building and safety in its immediate surroundings.

## **10. Identity**

- We acknowledge the Department's concern with identity, as noted on page 8 of the Self-Assessment Report, and note its leadership role in the advancement of musicology in Ireland as evidenced by its organisation of the forthcoming SMI (Society for Musicology in Ireland) conference and its success in attracting a truly international conspectus of participants.
- We acknowledge the Department's pioneering role in exploring the interface between performance and scholarship. This development we would like to commend very firmly.

## **Timetable for conduct of Peer Review Visit**

### **Department of Music**

#### ***Monday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2005***

- 17.30 Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group  
Briefing by Director of Quality Promotion Unit, Dr. N. Ryan.  
Group agrees final work schedule and assignment of tasks for the following 2 days.  
Views are exchanged and areas to be clarified or explored are identified.
- Venue: Suite 1, Business Centre, Kingsley Hotel, Cork
- 19.30 Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group and Head of Department and Departmental Co-ordinating Committee.

#### ***Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2005***

- 08.30 Convening of Peer Review Group in Arnold Bax Room, Top Floor, Music Building, Sunday's Well
- Consideration of Self-Assessment Report
- 09.00 Dr. Paul Everett, Head of Department
- 09.30 Meeting with all members of the Department
- 11.00 Private meetings of members of the Peer Review Group with members of staff.
- Mr. Mel Mercier  
Ms. Kelly Boyle
- 13.00 Working private lunch for members of Peer Review Group
- 14.00 Visit to core facilities of Department. PRG escorted by Dr. Paul Everett
- 15.00 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Undergraduate students
- Peter Maher, Arts-Music I  
Sarah Fleming, Arts-Music I  
Veronica Tadman, BMus I
- Jason Turk, Arts-Music II  
Fabrice Fortune, Arts-Music II  
Margaret McCarthy, BMus II
- 15.30 Undergraduate students
- Katie Sandham, Arts-Music III  
Domhnall Breathnach, Arts-Music III

Linda Plover, BMus III

Noreen Barrett, BMus IV  
Edel McLaughlin, BMus IV  
Tim Fouhy, BMus IV

16.00 Postgraduate students

Michelle Finnerty, MPhil  
Sarah O'Halloran, MPhil  
Eva McMullan, PhD  
Irene Buckley, PhD

17.00 Representative selections of recent graduates, employers and other stakeholders

Venue: Staff Common Room

Derek Cremin, Tutor  
Connie O'Connell, Tutor  
Frank Torpey, Past Graduate  
Karen Power, Past Graduate

Mr. Adrian Gebruers, Part-time lecturer  
Mr. Keith Pascoe, member of RTE Vanbrugh String Quartet  
Mr. Billy Lynch, Principal, Scoil Cholmcille CBS  
Ms. Caroline McCarthy, Scoil Cholmcille CBS  
Ms. Danielle Sheehy, Cork ArtTrail  
Ms. Sheila Kelleher, Cork ArtTrail

19.00 Meeting of Peer Review Group to identify remaining aspects to be clarified and to finalise tasks for the following day followed by a working private dinner for members for the Peer Review Group.

Venue: Suite 1, Business Centre, Kingsley Hotel, Cork

***Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2005***

08.30 Convening of Peer Review Group in Arnold Bax Room, Top Floor, Music Building, Sunday's Well

09.15 Mr. Michael O'Sullivan, Vice-President for Planning, Communications & Development

09.45 Ms. Carmel Cotter, Finance Office

10.00 Professor Keith Sidwell, Vice-Dean, Faculty of Arts

10.30 Coffee/Tea

11.00 Visit to Q+3, Boole Library, meeting with Ms. Olivia Fitzpatrick, Subject Librarian

12.00 Mr. Paul Prendergast, Office of Buildings & Estates

12.15 PRG return to Music Building

12.30 Working private lunch for members of the Peer Review Group

Venue: Arnold Bax Room, Music Department, Top Floor, Music Department, Sunday's Well

- 13.30 Professor David Cox, Professor of Music and Dean of Faculty of Arts
- 14.00 Preparation of first draft of final report
- 16.30 Dr. Paul Everett, Head of Department
- 17.00 Exit presentation made to all staff of the Unit by the Chair of the Peer Review Group summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group.

Venue: Arnold Bax Room, Music Department

The presentation was followed by a reception for staff and members of the PRG.

- 19.00 Working private dinner for members of the Peer Review Group to complete drafting of report and finalisation of arrangements for speedy completion and submission of final report.

Venue: Suite 1, Business Centre, Kingsley Hotel, Cork

***Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2005***

Externs depart