

**UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK  
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND, CORK**

**QUALITY IMPROVEMENT/QUALITY ASSURANCE**

**PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT**

**SCHOOL OF ASIAN STUDIES**

**ACADEMIC YEAR 2013**

**December 2013**

## PEER REVIEW GROUP MEMBERS

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Role</b>
1.	Professor Tim Barrett	University of London, UK	
2.	Professor James Cox	University of Edinburgh, Scotland	
3.	Ms. Mary McNulty	University College Cork	Chair
4.	Ms. Mary Collins	University College Cork	
5.	Ms. Aoife Ní Néill	University College Cork	Rapporteur

## TIMETABLE OF THE SITE VISIT

- The timetable appears as Appendix 1 to this document.
- The site visit was conducted over a shorter than usual period of 1.5 days. This resulted in intensive meetings with staff, students, senior officers and external stakeholders. However, the PRG met all the necessary representatives to enable them to form a consensus first draft report with priority recommendations.

## PEER REVIEW

- Methodology
  - List areas of primary responsibility of each member of the Peer Review Group.
  - Ms. Mary McNulty, University College Cork                      Chair
  - Ms. Aoife Ní Néill, University College Cork                      Rapporteur

The Review team comprised an expert in the Study of Religions and an expert in Asian Studies, a member of the Quality Promotion Committee, a student representative and a member of staff from the Quality Promotion Unit. At the briefing meeting, it was agreed Ms. Mary McNulty from UCC would act as Chair to enable the external experts to focus their attention fully on the business of the meetings.

- Site Visit
  - Comment on any aspects of the site visit as appropriate.

Suitable time was allowed for visits to the facilities of the School, the University, and the Library. Additional meetings were sought and facilitated within the time frame of the visit.

- Peer Review Group Report
  - How was the Peer Review Group Report put together?

At the briefing meeting on the first evening, the PRG discussed the areas to be considered over the site visit. Responsibilities for certain topics were agreed and assigned. Individual PRG members took responsibility for writing up in fuller form responses in agreed identified areas. The draft first version of the report was collated by the Rapporteur and circulated to the PRG for review, revision and comment. A second draft, taking account of the above stage, was collated and circulated by the Rapporteur. In light of final comments by the PRG members, a final version of the report was submitted to the Quality Promotion Unit in UCC.

## OVERALL ANALYSIS

- Self-Assessment Report

The PRG acknowledged the significant amount of time and effort that went into producing the SAR and related appendices and would like to thank the team within the School who prepared this document.

The SAR was a comprehensive document completed in two sections with an overview of the School of Asian Studies. The PRG chose to deal with the Study of Religions (SOR) and the Chinese Studies/Asian Studies (CHAS) SAR documents separately in the context of the separate histories of the different components of the School and concurred with the view that this worked pragmatically.

The Study of Religions Department should be commended for its place in Irish universities as the only non-confessional, non-theological programme dedicated to the objective, neutral and scientific study of religions. It is noted that the Self-Assessment Report underscores that Study of Religions, although located in the School of Asian Studies, is an independent and autonomous academic unit devoted to the study of global religions and as such is not restricted to the study of Asian religions. Study of Religions are also to be commended for undertaking this exercise in a short time frame. The compilation of necessary documents for the SAR was aided by the degree to which SoR has monitored its activities on an annual basis.

The Chinese/Asian Studies Department, largely without due warning, has had to suffer major changes in staffing, from which it is in the process of recovering. This has made detailed assessment of its situation difficult. Even so, it is evident that the current teaching staff has worked extremely well to stabilise the situation. PRG notes that Chinese Studies to a significant extent and Korean and Japanese also are dependent on external funding, which in the case of Chinese Studies takes the form of an Institute that it was beyond the remit of the PRG – and it would seem, of the University as a whole – to subject to scrutiny. Though we feel confident that current problems of communications reported by students can and will be resolved successfully through good personal relations between CHAS and Confucian Institute colleagues, the PRG urges UCC to ensure that it has considered the legal consequences of its arrangements with regard to its duties towards its students.

The PRG found the SAR to be a complete document, which clearly outlined its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It was thorough and honest and clearly reflected the state of transition currently affecting Chinese Studies.

The PRG recognised that the School is still in its infancy and factored that into its overall assessment.

- SWOT Analysis

The completion of SWOT exercises was clearly of benefit to the disciplines under review. The outcomes of the SWOT analyses were realistic and pragmatic, and were presented in a clear and concise manner.

The PRG concurs with the SWOT analysis that the School of Asian Studies has become the leading academic centre dealing with Asian Studies and the Study of Religions in Ireland. The PRG endorsed the School's broad strategy of attempting to integrate and find synergies in different areas of Asian Studies and Study of Religions Department.

Weaknesses. Both Study of Religions and Chinese and Asian Studies are attempting to deliver ambitious academic programmes with a limited number of staff. Although this is a potential weakness, the most obvious problem has resulted from considerable and sometimes unexpected staff turnover in CHAS.

Opportunities. PRG support current plans in CHAS to recruit the very best scholars possible. It concurs that CHAS should follow the lead of Study of Religions by aiming to create a compact, lean and efficient course structure that strives for excellence at all levels in the delivery of its academic programme.

Threats. The PRG agreed that the SAR in both Study of Religions and CHAS realistically presented threats as resulting from the need for building a sustainable and coherent academic programme within the newly amalgamated School of Asian Studies. This includes ensuring that adequate financial provisions are maintained and that the various components of the diverse courses are rationalised.

- Benchmarking

The PRG recognise that in light of the recent consolidation of Chinese and Asian Studies with Study of Religions into the newly created School of Asian Studies, it wasn't possible for the School as a whole to complete a benchmarking exercise prior to this Review. In the case of the Study of Religions Department, the Self-Assessment Report indicates that no formal benchmarking exercise was carried out because it was founded in 2007 under external guidance. In addition, the Professor of the Study of Religions has wide experience in establishing and running departments in the study of religions in the UK. Another factor referred to was the fact that the Department has been reviewed annually by an external examiner. In light of the goal of a close integration of all programmes in the School of Asian Studies, the PRG urges the School as a whole to conduct a benchmarking exercise by identifying schools of similar size with analogous objectives against which the courses and overall academic programmes on offer can be compared. One possible programme against which the School could conduct a comparison is the School of Asian Studies in the University of Edinburgh which includes courses on Chinese, Japanese and Sanskrit and incorporates the Confucius Institute for Scotland. It also has a year abroad programme and runs an MSc (MA in the Cork sense) in Asian Religions and an MSc in East Asian Relations. The Religious Studies programme in Edinburgh for many years has incorporated undergraduate courses in Asian Studies as part of its four year degree.

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

The Peer Review Group is asked to comment specifically on the department/school under the following headings:

- Governance
- Services
- Staffing & Staff Development
- Accommodation
- Financing
- Communications
- Implementation of recommendations for improvement made in Peer Review Group Report arising from last quality review

## **Department/School Organisation & Planning**

Plans for future organisation must include resolution of questions of governance concerning the relationship of the Confucius Institute to the University.

## **Governance**

The PRG noticed nothing about Asian Studies itself that required comment, but draws the attention of UCC to the unusual situation whereby CHAS is involved through its associated Institutes in various ways with outside bodies, of which the Confucius Institute appears to be the most important. While it lies beyond the remit of PRG to comment on the relevant governance arrangements, we strongly recommend that UCC give some thought in future to the governance of these organizations. While some limitations on the autonomy of UCC in return for funding and other modes of support may well be found acceptable, it is in the interest of UCC as it seeks to develop Asian Studies to be perfectly clear where those limits currently lie, and what future changes might be in the best interests of the School and of UCC as a whole.

## **Teaching & Learning**

### CHAS

At the undergraduate level, as already noted, the main issues would seem to be for students their relations with the Confucius Institute. In the first year those with extensive language learning experience in particular seemed to find the somewhat different methods used for teaching Chinese, with its very different writing system, disconcerting. The Department might like to think of briefing new arrivals on this matter. More established students seem to have experienced difficulties with the flow of information to students, and this may best be resolved by ensuring good personal ties between CHAS and CI personnel.

The taught graduate programmes would appear to be working well, though PRG concurs in the view that rationalisation of teaching provision may be required to eliminate duplication of effort.

At the doctoral level the PRG notes that past mistakes may not be laid at the door of any current teachers, but even so problems have plainly gone beyond matters of the continuity of supervision in a time of staff changes to touch on issues of the quality of supervision. The PRG is reassured to learn that in future sole responsibility for doctoral supervision will be replaced by the involvement of at least one more person in the supervision of each and every doctoral student, even if in the majority of cases one individual will play the major role in supervising. We would further note that the institution in due course of a departmental seminar on a frequent and regular basis, as in SOR (see below), would help reduce the isolation that doctoral students often feel.

We further note that keeping records of modules not simply in terms of aims and outcomes but also at the more detailed level of listing both lecture titles and suggested reading, while undoubtedly adding to the burden of record keeping, allows external assessors to grasp more of the content of modules and hence to suggest synergies or other possible improvements. CHAS will however have to decide whether the advantages of greater detail outweigh the disadvantages.

### Study of Religions

The teaching programme in Study of Religions is ambitious with a wide variety of courses being offered from the undergraduate level through the taught MA, including the Higher Diploma for students requiring conversion courses. With just four full-time staff in Study of Religions, this has meant that it must keep its undergraduate programme, in the words of the Self-Assessment Report, 'compact and efficient'. In practice, this means that courses can be offered only on a rotating basis and that their number and content must be restricted. The postgraduate MA in Contemporary Religions must be delivered annually with courses offered in the specialisations of the staff in the

Department. Problems resulting from a limited number of staff to deliver the undergraduate and postgraduate courses include the fact that undergraduate students enrolled in the four year international programme with one year abroad find course availability highly restricted due to the rotational system, and a certain amount of juggling of courses on the taught MA programme is inevitable if staff research leave and unexpected events (such as illness) are to be anticipated.

The PRG discovered that PhD students currently are assigned to one supervisor. As is done in other universities, it is recommended that each PhD student has two supervisors assigned to them. One could be the principal supervisor and the other the secondary supervisor, or, where appropriate, some students could be co-supervised. This allows for consistency of supervision when one of the supervisors is on study leave or may otherwise be unavailable.

The site visit found that thus far, despite its limited size, the Study of Religions Department has been delivering its programme effectively and to the satisfaction of students. Staff morale is very high and research output is extremely strong. The students we met at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels were overwhelmingly positive. They commended the staff for the clarity of their course outlines, feedback provided by lecturers on assessed work, the openness and availability of staff, teaching methods employed, and the excellent supervision provided for dissertations at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

## **Research & Scholarly Activity**

### CHAS

To recruit and retain staff in competitive markets such as Chinese Studies depends crucially, as PRG was told with commendable frankness, on career development and prospects. For some the rewarding opportunity to train future scholars and to gain from the stimulus provided by younger researchers is a particular incentive, so efforts to enhance the attractiveness to doctoral students of UCC must be unrelenting. The current permanent full time staff can boast excellent academic achievements in the publication of significant research, and it is to be hoped that recruitment of similarly talented individuals will further add to the lustre of the Department. In securing the necessary material support for further research and publication the role of the Research Office will clearly be vital, and the PRG is encouraged by the proactive outlook of that Office to believe that its relations with CHAS are potentially very rewarding.

### Study of Religions

The Study of Religions Department has attracted 8 postgraduate research students (7 in the PhD programme and one on the MPhil research degree). This is a reasonable number and quite manageable, with room for a limited expansion. The academic staff operate weekly research seminars in which postgraduate research students can present their work to date and also have the opportunity of hearing visiting lecturers. Both PhD and MA students have been encouraged to attend and present papers at national and international conferences.

The research output of the staff is formidable. Each member of the staff is research active and has produced impressive numbers of publications including monographs, edited volumes and articles in peer reviewed international journals.

## **Staff Development**

On staff performance review, changes consequent on the current review, strategies for change and measures for change, the PRG had no specific comments, save to reiterate its remarks on the value of benchmarking already outlined above.

## CHAS

The single most important factor in prospect for staff development in CHAS is the recruitment of able colleagues to form the nucleus of a permanent team. Only then will the beginnings of a stable teaching and research culture in which scholars can flourish and develop be established, particularly with a view to allowing a clear, predictable and if at all possible generous scheme of sabbatical leave to be set up. This may ultimately require further appointments to the team. Though PRG believes that expansion is in line with the UCC overall policy of internationalisation, it accepts that, given the diminishing resources from the exchequer, the only ways this aim is likely to be achieved are through securing further external funding and through the gradual and careful rebalancing of internal resources.

## Study of Religions

The ambitious teaching programme in SOR thus far has not limited the research ethos of the Department, but this will need to be maintained by a carefully managed and well regulated expansion of the postgraduate programme, which should include a planned rota for staff leave. The Self-Assessment Report refers to staff leave being available 'every few years'. This is too vague and does not allow staff to plan their research activities and may even mean that they have to 'double-up' on their teaching load in years they take leave.

## Publishing research

PRG notes that one area where advanced doctoral students need guidance and support is in the initial publishing of their own work. Just as the School appears to be taking a lead in the foundation of national associations for the study of the areas covered, some thought might be given to exploring publishing opportunities that would lead to some of the work of School students and staff appearing in published form in association with the UCC logo, even if securing publications in established and recognised journals and series will also continue to be required to sustain the research profile of staff and students alike.

## **External Relations**

### CHAS

As noted above, many existing elements in CHAS are the product of important external relations. The prospect of further internationalisation suggests that many more opportunities for funding in Asia and elsewhere are yet to be found. But as with the potential funding for SOR, the PRG considers it essential that existing arrangements for the scrutinising of the ethical aspects of funding should be checked for robustness.

Though the future shape of CHAS is as yet to be determined, it is clear that the Department has an outward-looking ethos of involvement beyond the academic world, especially as regards its links with business. Once the resources at its disposal have become clear, no doubt the Department will build upon its current strengths.

## Study of Religions

The newly founded Marginalised and Endangered Worldviews Study Centre, which was launched in October 2013, has already formed links with international partners and promises to provide an important source for research collaboration and external funding. We learned while we were on the site visit that Dr Oliver Scharbrodt has been successful in receiving a major grant for two years to conduct research on Shi'a Islam in London. This will bring with it substantial external funds and buy-out time for a replacement for Dr Scharbrodt, and also result in the appointment of a postdoctoral fellow and a postgraduate placement in the Department. These efforts have been complemented by other initiatives referred to in the Self-Assessment Report such as the presence of three post-doctoral researchers in the Department between 2008 and 2011, which were funded by the Islam in Ireland project of the Irish Research Council.

The Self-Assessment Report refers to other funding ideas including approaching faith communities to sponsor lecturers or courses. The recognition in the Report that such sources of funding are problematic is underscored by the Peer Review Group, since faith communities have a vested interest in the content of what is taught, a fact which might compromise academic freedom.

## **Support Services**

While PRG is enthusiastically in favour of the move both towards attracting more graduate students and towards internationalisation, it notes that the increased revenue from these developments will also incur increased expenditure – the move towards a higher average age profile in the student population will for example entail more demands for child care arrangements. Further internationalisation also has implications for library provision. The library is doing well in providing at the undergraduate level, but at higher levels students are dependent not simply on online provision but also on resources in the private possession of their teachers. The Library is well aware of the trend, and is prepared both to seek more donations similar to the Zaki Badawi library in order to secure unique resources to attract researchers at UCC and to expand its holding in Asian languages, though it is aware that this may in due course require new posts for dedicated staff for acquisition and cataloguing in Asian languages. This then has resource allocation implications for UCC at the centre, though PRG notes that only through investment in this area can a competitive level of attractiveness in a vibrant international market be guaranteed.

The PRG spoke to a range of students, local, international, mature and postgraduate. Feedback from students was unanimously positive about UCC and the School and can only be highly commended. Many of the students were actively involved in student life and were members of clubs and societies and held positions of responsibility on campus e.g. uLink peer support leaders.

Recommendation: Library acquisitions should be encouraged to put aside “priority money” to buy books for the School of Asian Studies. Internationalisation requires more financial human resources including employing dedicated staff for cataloguing some Asian Languages.

## **Accommodation**

The panel visited the accommodation of the School in the O’Rahilly Building. The physical space and facilities provided appeared to be adequate. Staff and students expressed satisfaction with the accommodation.

## **Communication**

The PRG commended SOR on its non-hierarchical, leadership model that allows for open lines of communication. Departmental meetings are minuted and circulated. There are regular student-staff consultative meetings alongside an open door policy for students as well as timely feedback on assignments. All of these factors contribute to good internal communications.

Chinese Studies and Asian Studies have less well developed lines of communication. The PRG welcomes the plans within the department to have more informal “brown bag” seminars where research work can be presented as this will improve communication channels for graduate students and assist them in forming a research community.

## **Financing**

PRG felt that the School is at a transitional stage, so any review of its financial standing should await a more stable period in its development. It recognises that CHAS plans to fill three posts for next year where two were left vacant last year, and that this already represents a modest degree of

expansion. In the longer run, however, further expansion of staffing to the level where it might become comparable with (for example) Edinburgh will require either outside funding or a gradual re-balancing of resources within the College.

The School of Asian Studies recognises that it needs to explore new avenues for funding postgraduate students from external sources. The University as a whole can also be of assistance in providing guidance to students seeking financial aid and scholarship opportunities.

PRG notes that some UK institutions have had a measure of success in persuading sources in industry and finance to provide scholarship funding for taught graduate courses and also for doctoral studies, and hopes that the School will try to emulate them.

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

The PRG wish to commend the School of Asian Studies who compiled a very thorough and comprehensive SAR within a very short timeframe.

### **Compliance with European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area – especially relevant sections of Part 1 of the ESG**

The School complies with European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance as set out in the ESG. However, as previously recommended, a benchmarking exercise would be most beneficial to the School in the coming year.

### **Features of Good Practice/Commendations**

The Study of Religions Department should be commended for its place in Irish universities as the only non-confessional, non-theological programme dedicated to the objective, neutral and scientific study of religions.

The staff members in Study of Religions are commended for student satisfaction with the clarity of course outlines, feedback provided by lecturers on assessed work, the openness and availability of staff, teaching methods employed, and the excellent supervision provided for dissertations at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

The Study of Religions Department is to be commended for its central role in founding the Irish Society for the Academic Study of Religions (ISASR), which has been accepted into membership of the International Association for the History of Religions and by extension into the European Association for the Study of Religions.

Study of Religions should be commended for seeking external research funds for members of staff and for working closely with the University's Research and Innovation programme in this regard.

Study of Religions are commended for involving postgraduate students in national and international conferences and for encouraging them to present papers both in departmental seminars and at the conferences they attend.

The PRG commends warmly the work of all those who have helped to surmount the staff shortages with which CHAS was faced at the end of the last academic year. We are also grateful to Professor Sheehan for providing the materials we needed for our assessment of CHAS at very short notice very soon after arriving at her post.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

	<b>Recommendations for Improvement made by Studies of Religions</b>	<b>Response from the Peer Review Group</b>
1	The Self-Assessment Report recommends that the undergraduate teaching programme should remain lean and compact and not add further modules. The Self-Assessment Report admits that this creates problems for students who spend their third year abroad, particularly those training to be RE teachers. They recommend that some courses should be substituted for modules offered in the SOR programme. Currently, they are exploring options with the Classics Department, which offers two courses on Christianity accepted by the Teaching Council.	The PRG recognised the current difficulties in cross-listing courses with other Schools in the University due to financial regulations and FTE counts. As an immediate solution to this problem, it is recommended that courses relevant to culture and religion being taught by members of staff in Chinese and Asian Studies (CHAS) also count towards the BA programme in Religions and Global Diversity requirements. This would solve the problem of rotating modules and would also make more options available to undergraduate students in SOR. It would not address the problem of RE teachers who need courses in the Christian tradition as prescribed by the Teaching Council. In the long run, the PRG encourages the College to form clusters crossing over the current Schools to allow cross-listing of courses from other Schools, such as modules offered in Sociology, Anthropology, Philosophy, Classics and Media Studies, without current Schools being disadvantaged financially.
2	The Self-Assessment Report recommends that students be exposed to more 'real-life' religions. This would entail field visits to religious communities so that students can meet practitioners and experience rituals from the religions they are studying.	Endorsed by PRG
3	In accordance with the University's goal of outreach into the community and as a means of fund-raising, the SOR Report recommends that it offer evening classes in the lifelong learning programme in the Study of Religions to be taught by the Department's PhD students.	Whereas the PRG recognises that this is a commendable goal that gives teaching opportunities to PhD students, it urges that quality control be exercised by the staff of SOR and that due consideration be given to the primary commitment of PhD students to complete their research and submit their theses in a timely fashion.
4	The SOR Report recommends that	The PRG expressed concern that the

	marketing the postgraduate programmes needs to be made more strategic and planned and less reactionary.	public image of SOR and its national and international recruiting strategies might be compromised by the Department being placed within the School of Asian Studies. It might appear to the outside world that the Study of Religions in UCC was equivalent to the Study of Asian Religions. Although the PRG does not recommend a change in the name of the School, it strongly urges the Study of Religions Department to market itself and brand its courses as falling squarely within the academic study of religions, including global religions, indigenous religions and theoretical discussions in the study of religions. This needs to be emphasised to retain the current image of SOR at Cork as a mainstream department among other international departments in the science of religions.
5	The SOR Report called for developing strategies to secure more external funding. It suggested that links to philanthropic organisations and religious communities will need to be expanded in order to fulfil this recommendation.	In order to make ‘real-life’ religious studies possible, good relations need to be cultivated with religious communities in Cork, but these communities should not become a major source of funding or be approached to finance a permanent post unless clearly established guidelines ensuring academic freedom and institutional autonomy are obtained and strict ethical regulations enforced. In general, the PRG discouraged the Department from approaching faith communities for external funding.
6	The SOR report recommended that clarification of the place of the Studies of Religion Department in the School of Asian Studies be clarified with possibilities for close cooperation with Chinese and Asian Studies.	The PRG fully supports the Study of Religions Department in its aim to explore ways that the academic programmes operating with the larger School of Asian Studies can be integrated where common interests are served and where pedagogical integrity can be fostered. Where this is deemed academically appropriate, this should include offering courses from both sections of the School in the taught undergraduate and graduate programmes in order to promote choice and expand the content on offer. This recommendation is made with the proviso that the Study of Religions Department must maintain its own identity for disciplinary and marketing purposes as noted above.

	<b>Recommendations for Improvement made by CHAS</b>	<b>Response from the Peer Review Group</b>
1	To radically to reform the teaching programme...to offer from 2014-15 a leaner, less complex UG and PGT programme...	The PRG endorses the aims of the proposed review, and recognises that details of these changes must depend on the future appointments made during this academic year. They understand that due attention will be paid to the creation of modules highlighting the nationally unique ability of the School to deliver trans-regional and comparative teaching on Asia.
2	To maximise synergies between CHAS and SOR whilst respecting the strategic aims of each area.	The PRG concurs in seeing the exploitation of available synergies in both teaching and research as the best way to conserve staff efforts and maximise effective outcomes.
3	To clarify the governance of the Confucius Institute and to have this located unambiguously within the College of ACSSS and SAS.	There is institutionally no easy way to secure beyond all peradventure the interests of UCC students taught by the Confucius Institute, though such arrangements as best safeguard those interests should presumably be of paramount importance. While the PRG would therefore endorse the view that the primary location of the CI should be within ACSSS and SAS, we would also note that it plays an important role within UCC as a whole (and indeed beyond), and that any future arrangements should allow free scope for this role to continue.
4	To clarify the conceptual 'shape' of the areas covered by CHAS and to adopt a new and less confusing nomenclature	The PRG accepts the urgent need for rationalization of the various overlapping arrangements covering Chinese Studies, but notes both that the bodies relating to Japan and Korea remain important as potential locations for fundraising and for links with the wider community, so that their status needs to be maintained or even enhanced, and that any future arrangements for Chinese should likewise allow not simply for the integration of internal teaching and research but also the similar promotion of funding and outreach opportunities.
5	To enhance the capacity of CHAS to serve the needs of business and industry,	The PRG notes that recent innovations in UCC should help facilitate any such

	possibly through the creation of a College Company.	arrangements.
6	Significantly to raise average standards of language proficiency.	The PRG concurs in the view that low language proficiency in Asian Languages benefits neither UCC nor the future employers of its graduates, but notes that crucially for students of Chinese the issues raised under point 3 above must be realistically addressed.
	<b>Teaching &amp; Learning</b>	
7	Recruitment of well-qualified and skilled teachers...to teach the majority of courses, with only auxiliary use of less experienced TAs and PhD students.	The PRG agrees that such a policy can only enhance the appeal of UCC to potential students, but notes that the provision of some teaching opportunities can be of benefit to doctoral students when they come to seek academic employment themselves – another area in which success would help guarantee future applications.
8	Periodic qualitative student evaluation of courses.	The PRG agrees, and would like to point out that regular internal monitoring and recording of the results and consequent changes can only assist in rendering any future Quality Assurance exercises less time consuming.

	<b>Recommendations for improvement that the Peer Review Group would like to make in addition to those made by School</b>	
1	That the current links with Birr Castle mentioned under CHAS Opportunities (p. 7) be actively developed with an eye to securing external funding not simply for the exploitation of archives there but in order to involve other archives elsewhere, several of which are listed in R. G Tiedemann, <i>Christian Missionary Societies in China</i> , in other Irish locations. Collaboration between CHAS and SOR in this venture might not simply strengthen ties with China but also perhaps raise funds for researchers who might help provide teaching for SOR.	
2	That some thought be given by UCC to the future assessment of the School, by	

	including in its Research Quality Review panels expertise in Asian Studies.	
3	Library acquisitions should be encouraged to put aside” priority money” to buy books for the School of Asian Studies. Internationalisation requires more financial human resources including employing dedicated staff for cataloguing some Asian Languages.	
4	A benchmarking exercise should be completed by December 2014.	
5	In the ‘schoolification’ process, clusters of related subjects should be recognised so that cross-listing of courses can be accomplished without it being financially detrimental to do so for any School in question.	
6	PhD students should have two supervisors assigned to them, one could be principal supervisor and the other a secondary supervisor, or staff could co-supervise where academically appropriate.	
7	PRG support current plans in CHAS to recruit the very best scholars possible. It concurs that CHAS should follow the lead of Study of Religions by aiming to create a compact, lean and efficient course structure that strives for excellence at all levels in the delivery of its academic programme.	
8	Plans for future organisation must include resolution of questions of governance concerning the relationship of the Confucius Institute to the University.	
9	The taught graduate programmes would appear to be working well, though PRG concurs in the view that rationalisation of teaching provision may be required to eliminate duplication of effort. Some thought might be given to exploring publishing opportunities that would lead to some of the work of School students and staff appearing in published form in association with the UCC logo, even if securing publications in established and	

	recognised journals and series will also continue to be required to sustain the research profile of staff and students alike.	
10	The Self-Assessment Report refers to staff leave being available 'every few years'. The PRG recommend a planned rota for staff leave.	
11	Chinese Studies and Asian Studies have less well developed lines of communication than SOR. The PRG welcomes the plans within the Department to have more informal "brown bag" seminars where research work can be presented as this will improve communication channels for graduate students and assist them in forming a research community.	
12	The PRG recognised the current difficulties in cross-listing courses with other Schools in the University due to financial regulations and FTE counts. As an immediate solution to this problem, it is recommended that courses relevant to culture and religion being taught by members of staff in Chinese and Asian Studies (CHAS) also count towards the BA in Global Religions requirements. This would solve the problem of rotating modules and would also make more options available to undergraduate students in SOR. It would not address the problem of RE teachers who need courses in the Christian tradition as prescribed by the Teaching Council. In the long run, the PRG encourages the College to form clusters crossing over the current Schools to allow cross-listing of courses from other Schools, such as modules offered in Sociology, Anthropology, Philosophy, Classics and Media Studies, without current Schools being disadvantaged financially.	
13	The PRG expressed concern that the public image of SOR and its national and international recruiting strategies might be compromised by the Department being placed within the School of Asian Studies. It might appear to the outside world that the Study of Religions in UCC was equivalent to the Study of Asian	

	<p>Religions. Although the PRG does not recommend a change in the name of the School, it strongly urges the Study of Religions Department to market itself and brand its courses as falling squarely within the academic study of religions, including global religions, indigenous religions and theoretical discussions in the study of religions. This needs to be emphasised to retain the current image of SOR at Cork as a mainstream department among other international departments in the sciences of religion.</p>	
14	<p>In order to make ‘real-life’ religious studies possible, good relations need to be cultivated with religious communities in Cork, but these communities should not become a major source of funding or be approached to finance a permanent post unless clearly established guidelines ensuring academic freedom and institutional autonomy are obtained and strict ethical regulations enforced. In general, the PRG discouraged the Department from approaching faith communities for external funding.</p>	

## Appendix 1

### SCHOOL OF ASIAN STUDIES PEER REVIEW GROUP SITE VISIT TIMETABLE

#### In Summary

- Tuesday 26 November: The Peer Review Group (PRG) arrives at UCC for a briefing from the Director of the Quality Promotion Unit, followed by a meeting with the Head of School and external stakeholders.
- Wednesday 27 November: The PRG meets with school staff, students and relevant officers of UCC. An exit presentation is given by the PRG to all members of the School. A working private dinner is held that evening for the PRG in order to finalise the report. This is the final evening of the review.
- Thursday 28 November: External PRG members depart.

<b>Tuesday 26 November 2013</b>	
<b>Venue: Rm. 2.27, Tower Room 2, North Wing, Main Quadrangle</b>	
14.00 – 16.00	Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group. Briefing by: Ms. Fiona Crozier, Director Quality Promotion Unit. Group agrees final work schedule and assignment of tasks for the following day. Views are exchanged and areas to be clarified or explored are identified.
16.00 – 17.00	Professor Brian Bocking, Acting Head of School of Asian Studies
17.00 – 18.00	<u>Representatives of stakeholders, past graduates and employers</u> Mr Chris Heinhold (Study of Religions Alumnus) Ms Isabelle Ruane (Study of Religions alumnus) <b>Venue: Staff Common Room, North Wing, Main Quadrangle</b>
19.00	Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group & staff members of School of Asian Studies: Professor Brian Bocking, Professor of The Study of Religions Dr. Oliver Scharbrodt, Study of Religions Professor Jackie Sheehan, Asian Studies <b>Venue: The Weir Bistro, River Lee Hotel</b>

**Wednesday 27 November 2013****Venue: Rm 2.27, Tower Room 2, North Wing, Main Quadrangle**

08.30 – 09.00	Convening of Peer Review Group	
09.00 – 09.30	Professor Caroline Fennell, Head of College of Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences	
09.30 – 10.15	Professor Paul Giller, Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs Dr. Bettie Higgs, Deputising for the Vice-President for Teaching and Learning Professor Anita Maguire, Vice-President Research & Innovation	
10.15 – 10.45	<u>Representatives of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students</u> Ms. Shaunagh Brophy, BA (Joint) 2, SOR Ms. Riona Coleman, BComm 2, CHAS Mr. Paul Creagh, BComm 2, CHAS Ms. Lorraine Donovan, year 1, CHAS Mr. Patrick Joseph Hall, BA (Joint) 2, SOR Mr. Cormac Kiely, BA 2, CHAS Ms. Alana Kiely, BA 2, CHAS Mr. Sean King, BComm 2, CHAS Ms. Tahti Korpela, year 1, CHAS Mr. Daniel Morley, BComm 2, CHAS Ms. Laurant O'Reilly, BA 2, CHAS Mr. John Joseph Twomey, BA 1, SOR Mr. Tomas Vaicelis, year 1, CHAS	
10.45 – 11.00	Tea/coffee	
11.00 – 11.30	<u>Representatives of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students</u> Ms. Tania Claire Daunt O'Keeffe, BA 3, SOR Mr. Geoff Gould, BA 4, CHAS Ms. Margaret O'Mahony, BA 3, SOR Mr. Rory O'Neill, BA 4, CHAS Ms. Kai-Lyn Ng, BComm 4, CHAS	
11.30 – 12.15	<u>Representatives of Graduate students</u> Ms. Marian Caulfield, MA 2, SOR Ms. Claire Schedi, PhD (Arts) 1, SOR Mr. Colin Duggan, PhD (TCC) 4, SOR Mr. Brendan McNamara, PhD 2, SOR Mr. Conor Keaveney, HDip (Springboard) 1, CHAS Ms. Fahmeda Naheed, PhD 4, CHAS Ms. Helen Murphy, PhD 4, CHAS  <b>Venue: ORB 338, O'Rahilly Building</b>	
12.15 – 12.30	Visit to core facilities of School, escorted by Professor Bocking	
12.30 – 13.00	Visit to Boole Library	Professor T. Barrett met with Professor J. Sheehan.
13.00 – 14.00	Working lunch	

14.00 – 14.40	Meetings with Chinese Studies/Asian Studies staff, including Mr. Mike Murphy Department of Management & Marketing and Director of MBS Asian Studies <b>Venue: ORB G27B, CACSSS Meeting Room, Ground Floor</b>
14.40 – 15.10	Meetings with Study of Religions staff <b>Venue: ORB G27B, CACSSS Meeting Room, Ground Floor</b>
15.10 – 16.30	Preparation of first draft of final report
16.30 – 16.45	Professor Brian Bocking, Acting Head of School of Asian Studies
17.00 – 17.30	Exit presentation to all staff, to be made by the Chair of the Peer Review Group or other member of Peer Review Group as agreed, summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group.  This presentation is <u>not</u> for discussion at this time. <b>Venue: ORB G27B, CACSSS Meeting Room, Ground Floor</b>
19.00	Working private dinner for members of the Peer Review Group to complete drafting of report and finalisation of arrangements for completion and submission of final report. <b>Venue: Tower Room, River Lee Hotel</b>