

Roinn na Nua-Ghaeilge

Peer Review Group

Dr. G. Neville, Department of French, UCC (Chair)
Professor C. Kearney, Department of English, UCC
Professor R. O hUiginn, Roinn na Nua-Ghaeilge, NUI Maynooth, Ireland
Professor K. Nilsen, Department of Celtic, Saint Francis-Xavier University, Nova Scotia,
Canada

Brief Description of conduct of site visit

The site visit was conducted over 2.5 days from 22nd – 24th February 2004 and included meetings with

- i) Head and staff of the department as a group and individually
- ii) Representatives of undergraduate and postgraduate students
- iii) Representatives of employers, past graduates and other external stakeholders
- iv) Professor M. Aidan Moran, Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs
- v) Professor J. Kevin Collins, Vice-President for Research Policy & Support
- vi) Professor David Cox, Dean of Faculty of Arts
- vii) Ms. Carmel Cotter, Finance Office
- viii) Ms Marita Foster, 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 Roinn na Nua-Ghaeilge

Head of Department: Professor Seán Ó Coileáin

No. of Staff: 7 academic, 1 college language teacher, 2 administrative (shared with Roinn na Seán-agus na Meán-Ghaeilge)

Location of Department: O’Rahilly Building

Degrees/Diplomas offered: BA, MA, MPhil, PhD

No. of Students: Department has 178 Student FTEs: 164 UG and 14 PG FTEs distributed as follows:

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Evening Courses	JYA	Socrates	Total U/G	Master Taught	Master Research	PhD	Total P/G
59	43	34	9	3	12	4	164	3	6	5	14

Mission Statement

“To promote teaching and research in the area of Modern Irish language and literature and thereby to enrich the intellectual and cultural life of the students, of the community, and of the Irish people.”

General Comment on Quality Review

The reviewers considered that the Self-Assessment Report was concise, lucid and to the point. Most of the issues the department was required to address are dealt with therein. The question of benchmarking which was not covered in the SAR, was addressed comprehensively in a subsequent document submitted to the group.

The SWOT analysis focused attention on areas of importance to Roinn na Nua-Ghaeilge (RNG). The PRG concurred with the findings of the analysis. Many of the weaknesses identified are weaknesses shared with all university departments; others are shared with other Irish or language departments. Following the site visit, the PRG were of the view that RNG has other strengths which perhaps are not identified as such in the SAR, but were repeatedly emphasized by the various stakeholders interviewed. Chief among these would be the high standards sought by RNG and the consistently friendly and democratic atmosphere that obtains in the department. This strength, however, is impaired somewhat by a potential weakness: not all university officers are aware of the high standing nationally and internationally of the department and how much it can contribute to the goals set out in the University's mission statement.

The reviewers considered the benchmarking exercise to be apposite and to the point. Recognising that Ireland provides the main academic leadership in the study of Modern Irish, it points out the difficulties found in attempting such an exercise and the pointlessness of trying to compare departments who have developed expertise in different areas of a large field. While acknowledging the validity of this argument, the PRG pointed out the fact that RNG has probably the largest undergraduate student cohort within the NUI system and a postgraduate cohort that compares favourably with most others.

Progress on Implementation of Recommendations for Improvement

A meeting to discuss progress made in implementing recommendations for improvement arising from the review of the Department of Modern Irish was held on 20th January 2006.

Present: Professor S. Ó Coileáin, Head, Department of Modern Irish
 Professor D. Cox, Acting Head, College of Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences
 Dr. N. M. Ryan, Director of Quality Promotion

Abbreviations

PRG: Peer Review Group

VP: Vice-President

QPC: Quality Promotion Committee

HR: Human Resources

RAM: Resource Allocation Model

ACSSS: Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report January '06
That clear lines of demarcation should be made and maintained between Department of Modern Irish and the Department of Early and Medieval Irish.	Agreed that the separate identities of the two departments should be supported. The QPC would encourage flexibility wherever possible and noted the comments of the Department regarding sharing of facilities, etc.	Implemented. The two departments have separate budgets and are treated as separate departments by the College of ACSSS and the University.
That an additional postgraduate room is required plus additional computing facilities	Recommended that the Department discuss the issue of space with the Dean of Arts, with a view to bringing forward a proposal to the Space Subcommittee of the Buildings Committee.	This is under active consideration by the Space Subcommittee of the Buildings Committee. The Space Subcommittee has completed an audit of the space usage in the O'Rahilly Building and is preparing a report for the

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	<p>QPC also recommended that the Department consider the availability of sources outside of UCC which might provide grants for the provision of IT equipment. The Department should consider liaising with Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha who have achieved significant success in this area.</p>	<p>Buildings Committee with recommendations for re-allocation of some space. Implementation will be difficult but is necessary if the University is serious about plans for enhancement of its research agenda.</p>
<p>That the two senior members of staff due to retire within the next number of years be replaced immediately.</p>	<p>Noted that one replacement is already in place and endorsed the recommendation that staff in the Department be replaced on retirement. The responsibility of the University to support the Irish language by ensuring the provision of appropriate programmes and by supporting the activities of the Irish departments was acknowledged.</p>	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>One replacement has already been appointed and the Chair of Modern Irish has been sanctioned for filling on the retirement of the present incumbent.</p>
<p>The transfer of the College Language Teacher to the Department is welcomed.</p>	<p>Noted that the recommendation had already been implemented.</p>	<p>Implemented.</p>
<p>The initiatives suggested by Roinn na Nua-Ghaeilge deserve full consideration.</p>	<p>Noted recommendation with support for proactive considerations of Department.</p> <p>The possibilities outlined by the Department referred to two initiatives, both with funding implications: (a) that the Department could become the principal scholarly centre for publications in the Irish language, and (b) that it would establish an archive of the Irish-language dialects of Munster which might be extended, with the assistance of the English Department, to include English-language dialects also. While these are aspirational, the Department intends to explore them further with the Dean and others.</p>	<p>This recommendation is still under consideration. To implement this recommendation would require additional space and personnel resources. The implementation of the RAM in 06/07 may realise the necessary resources.</p>

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<p>Profile of the Department</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - department should aim to achieve greater publicity for their achievements - hold regular and widely publicised seminars - include history of department on web site 	<p>QPC strongly endorsed the recommendation that the Department should celebrate its achievements on a broader scale and suggested that the Director of the Office of Marketing & Communications should assist in this endeavour.</p> <p>The QPC was made aware of a new book by the Professor of Modern Irish which has recently been published and recommended that this should be celebrated publicly.</p>	<p>The Department is continuing to work towards this goal. The web site for the Department has been significantly improved and is continuously up-dated. The department is well recognised at national and international level and has a high profile outside UCC. The Department is seeking to raise its profile within UCC.</p>
<p>That the possibility of having greater co-ordination in the language syllabus of the department be examined. To liaise with teachers and schools at second level on standards and developments and that the department should use the information in syllabus development.</p>	<p>Endorsed recommendation and noted that the Department is already seeking to take action.</p>	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>The department has re-organised the delivery and assessment of the language syllabus, ensuring that all tutors and teachers are working to the same content and same standards. The structure of language teaching has been improved and is continuously monitored.</p>
<p>That the University should fill the Chair of Literature left vacant since 1991.</p>	<p>Endorsed.</p> <p>The QPC would be very supportive of imaginative solutions to the difficulty of financing the filling of the Chair of Literature and recommended that the Department explore the possibilities for external funding of the post, for example by means of making a proleptic appointment. QPC recommended the Department should engage with the VP for Planning, Communications and Development and the Director of Development to explore possibilities.</p>	<p>Remains under consideration.</p> <p>The department is aware that filling of the Chair requires substantial investment and will engage in discussions with the VP for Planning, Communications & Development about possible sources of external funding.</p>
<p>The University should give serious consideration to establishing a centre for academic writing to service</p>	<p>QPC expressed its welcome for suggestions/proposals from the Department as to how this may be addressed. QPC suggested</p>	<p>Remains under consideration.</p> <p>This is related to the previous recommendation. Establishment</p>

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all sectors of the university.	that the Department discuss with Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha and would encourage the use of existing facilities where they exist. The development of summer schools, short programmes are all possibilities the Department are asked to consider.	of such a centre would need a dedicated post to be put in place. There is a possibility of establishing a 'University writers scheme in Irish language' The Acting Head of the College of ACSSS undertook to investigate possibilities.
Consideration should be given to acknowledging the fact that the excellent work of the administrative colleagues on the Department is carried out in two languages.	QPC recognised the expertise of the administrative staff and suggested that this be brought to the attention of the Department of Human Resources who should be requested to consider how the skills should be acknowledged and whether re-grading of the post(s) would be appropriate.	Implemented. An allowance has been made to acknowledge the fact that additional skills are required.