



Quality Enhancement Plan
School of Applied Psychology
June 2025

FOR COMPLETION BY QEU	
Date of Peer Review visit: 2 nd – 3 rd and 7 th & 10 th October 2024	Head of Unit: Professor Chris McCusker
Link to Panel Report published on QEU website: https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/qualityenhancementunit/reports/cacsss/SchoolofAppliedPsychology-PeerReviewPanelReport2023-24.pdf	Date QEP considered by Quality Enhancement Committee: 20 th November 2025

HOS - Head of School; SM – School Manager; TO – Technical officers; HSO – Health and Safety Officer; EDI – Equality and Diversity Committee; TAL – Teaching and learning Committee; RC – Research Committee; EO – Examinations Officer; GEL – Global Engagement Lead; GSC – Graduate Studies Committee; D.Clin.Psych. – Doctor of Clinical Psychology programme; PD – Programme Directors; MC – Module Coordinators.

No	Panel Recommendation	Actions Planned ¹	Responsibility for Action ²	Resource Implications ³	Implementation Schedule ⁴	Effectiveness/Impact ⁵ To be completed as part of follow-up
1	The Panel recommends that the infrastructural challenges faced	1.1 HOS and SM continue to work with College Finance Manager with respect to protecting income to carry-over for longer term refurbishment and other strategic initiatives. This is constrained by wider university policy. However, operating within these constraints, we have had some success in this to enable actions as detailed below.	HOS SM	Staff capacity / Workload	Jan - June 2025	

	by the School be addressed as a priority in the short to medium and long-term, having regard for both strategic and operational priorities identified in the SER.	<p>1.2 Space review initiated in 2024. This continues.</p> <p><u>Phase 1</u> (new Post-Doc and Technical Officer Space) complete. Permission withheld to create new offices by partitioning larger offices. Shared office strategy commenced.</p> <p><u>Phase 2</u> – new Participatory research lab, new open access office / meeting space secured for Distillery House. Refurbishment work commenced May 2025,</p> <p><u>Phase 3</u> – refurbishment of existing labs to include soundproofing will take place if reserves allow.</p>	HOS SM TO	200k reserves Staff capacity / Workload	Jan – Sept 2025	
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⁵ To be completed as part of follow-up 12-15 months post publication of QEP - Recognising the need to reflect on the effectiveness of actions undertaken, and to what extent the actions have achieved their intended outcome

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		1.3 EDI audit of disability access now complete. Following submission of a wheelchair disability audit to B&E, they have engaged with the School of Applied Psychology and BEES, visited the site to review data and agreed to advance work on improving disability access on the North Mall Campus.	EDI HOS SM	Costs to be determined. Staff capacity / Workload	Jan – June 2025	
		1.4 Existing, but poorly fitted, social / study space for Postgraduate students has been identified. An EDI consultation with students identified the MA room as a spaces in need of redesign. Plans have been drawn up to redesign/refurbish the MA room in consultation with HoS, School manager and TPG directors. Buildings and Estates plan to commence work Summer 2025.	EDI HOS	Costs to be determined Staff capacity / Workload	April – Dec 2025	
		1.5 Repurposing of the CEC Open Access Centre. An EDI consultation with students identified the student lab as an underutilised space. HOS engaged with BEES and Buildings and Estates to agree repurposing of this space. The computer lab will be repurposed as a student common room accessible to all students that use the building, in conjunction with the Students Union who will manage the space on an ongoing basis. The common room will include a kitchen and student lockers. It is very unlikely that there is space here, or administering personnel, to create library facilities in the North Mall campus. This would not appear feasible. However, HOS will clarify this with the library, together with how a laptop loan scheme might operate.	EDI HOS SM		April – Dec 2025	

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		1.6 Security of the North Mall Walkway has not been ignored by the two Schools (our own and BEES) or indeed by the university. A <i>Risk Management Group</i> has not only been discussed but has convened on several occasions in 2024. A wide range of multi-agency initiatives, involving UCC, the GARDA, Cork City Council and the HSE have occurred (e.g. increased GARDA and UCC security activity, arrests, cutting back trees, increased cameras and lighting, needle and syringe outreach, information to students and staff re safety etc.). Both Schools keep a database of reported incidents from staff and students. These had fallen in latter part of 2024 suggesting some success. Recent increases prompted us to request reconvening of this group. This has taken place in early 2025. Further measures have been implemented including increased GARDA initiatives, and a new swipe system for the CEC and Butler Buildings and the link walkway. Our database suggests no new reports in past couple of months and reduced drug-using activity on the walkway. The situation will be kept under review.	HOS HSO	Staff capacity / Workload	March – Sept 2025	
2	The Panel recommends that a range of learning supports and student facilities be provided for students based in the satellite North Mall	2.1 Our Teaching and learning Committee (TAL) chair is engaged with wider College / University reviews of extensions and lecture recording policy, especially with respect to DS registered students. The wider School are, and will be, briefed and consulted through this process. A newly appointed Examinations Officer (EO), in consultation with colleagues at TAL, has developed and disseminated <i>standard operating procedures</i> with respect to all assessment and examination policies and protocols. This is a ‘living document’ and will be updated based on changing University policy and feedback from staff on its operation. The SoPs ensure all staff knowledge.	TAL EO	Staff capacity / Workload	Jan – Sept 2025	

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	Campus so that they are not disadvantaged vis-à-vis their colleagues on the UCC main campus.					
		<p>2.2 A designated member of staff has been appointed Global Engagement Lead. Part of this role will be reviewing School Supports and infrastructure for international students, in the context of wider supports through the international office.</p> <p>A review was undertaken of support for international students across UCC. It was recognised that it is helpful for Schools to have specific supports in addition to the UCC wide supports available and frameworks for same were proposed. Our new GEL will lead on developing School specific supports from September 2025 informed by this review and in consultation with School Council.</p>	GEL	Staff capacity / Workload	Sept – Dec 2025	
		<p>2.3 The HOS has reviewed engagement and TOR with all collaborative provision programmes (e.g. also those with ACE). Since the TPI Quality Review Report (2022) he has joined the Joint Academic Standards Committee, together with the member of staff allocated to the ongoing academic advisory role with TPI. All recommendations with respect to the TPI student experience have been discussed and are being actioned by various members of the committee, including senior university managers. Updates on library access have been requested. To date:</p> <p>TPI students currently have access to all digital and online supports and resources (e.g. library, journals, Canvas VLE, Skills Centre, Health and</p>	HOS	Staff capacity / Workload	Jan – Dec 2025	

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		<p>Wellbeing, IT support, Career Support) via their registration and UCC student email address and physical ID card. The ID card also facilitates physical use of other university libraries in the State. TPI students could use the ID card to access facilities on the UCC campus but the majority of students are Dublin-based.</p> <p>With respect to staff of the TPI organisation - Request for library access will be made to incoming UCC librarian on her taking up post in July 2025.</p>				
		2.4 The EDI committee are in current negotiations with Cork City Council with respect to a TFI self-service bike rental station in the proximity of the North Mall campus.	EDI	Staff capacity / Workload	Jan – Sept 2025	
3	The Panel recommends that student involvement in the School's activities be deepened, a Student Council be established and decision-making and communication	<p>3.1 Plans to deepen and widen our student partnership structures are underway. Existing structures include engaging undergraduate and postgraduate students in the School Assembly, Teaching and Learning Committee, EDI committee, Research committee (PhD only), module reviews, programme reviews, quality review and accreditation visits. Additional structures vary across specific courses (e.g. membership of Boards of Studies) and all years have a "class rep" system as a further channel of engagement.</p> <p>However, in an effort to deepen and widen student partnerships towards proactive collaborations in curriculum design, infrastructure, EDI and School culture, strategic priorities etc. we will support our students to</p>	TAL	<p>Significant time / capacity for staff including admin.</p> <p>Other costs may be incurred re refreshments etc.</p>	To commence Sept 2025	

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	structures and processes be reviewed, in consultation with student representatives, to ensure that the student voice is heard in its diversity.	<p>formulate and engage with a Student Council. A Terms of References has been developed and approved by the School Council.</p> <p>The Student Council will have a student and staff co-chair. It will encompass undergraduate and postgraduate subcommittees as recommended and that this forum will facilitate the sorts of training and induction to engage meaningfully and with leadership. Our intent is to have the Council operational for the 2025/26 year.</p>				
		3.2 The policy documents referred to – related to extensions, DS support, complaints etc. are currently encompassed within Programme Handbooks for students. This would appear to be the optimal way to ensure student familiarity with same. These cross-programme policy and procedure documents will be brought together, however, within a single School Sharepoint page for ease of access for both staff and students. Note that there is also significant movement underway on these matters at university level (e.g. the rapid development of a university-wide extension policy) that will shape our practice here and may result in these documents signposting towards university-level guidance and policy.	TAL TO	Staff capacity / Workload	June – August 2025	
		3.3 TAL is the forum where in-person and written guidelines on responding to student issues is formulated. This is further disseminated to all staff through School Council and a written “ <i>Matters for Report</i> ” document. These procedures ensure temporal cognizance of such policy and guidance. The new Sharepoint page (3.2) will ensure maintenance of knowledge across time if staff engage with same. In addition, we have	TAL HOS TO ALL	Staff capacity / Workload	April – Sept 2025	

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		instigated, from April 2025, a new series of monthly roundtable seminars where key topics (ethics applications and EDI practices are the first two scheduled) can be afforded a reflective space for both training and the evolution of our practices.				
		3.4 The new Student Council will bring together all students of the School, with sub-fora related to undergraduate and postgraduate units (3.1). Through this the PhD and D.Clin.Psych. doctoral students will be invited to organise a further specific forum as suggested.	TAL GSC	Staff capacity / Workload	April – Sept 2025	
		3.5 The website of the Doctor of Clinical Psychology programme, together with <i>Information for Applicants</i> and <i>Frequently Asked Questions</i> , already makes clear that successful applicants must have established the formal right to take up employment within the EU / UK. Staff unsure of these procedures will be encouraged to review this. Furthermore, information will be reviewed for clarity and prominence.	D.Clin. Psych. Masters PDs	None	Sept 2025	
4	The Panel recommends the development of a range of staff support measures to enable academic, clinical and PMSS staff to	4.1 The recommendation with respect to staff mentoring was discussed at School Council in February 2025. The following formal processes were clarified as required – <i>allocation of a mentor at recruitment; probation and establishment meetings with HOS every 6 months through the first three years of appointment; a biannual Performance Development Review System (PDRS) process every 2 years with HOS; mentoring of post-doc staff by the project PI</i> . In addition, informal mentoring takes place within research clusters and programme teams including <i>peer supervision</i> and <i>peer reflective practice</i> . Further <i>informal mentoring is undertaken by the HOS / nominee</i> if appropriate to needs identified	HOS RC	None	Feb 2025	

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	identify and pursue suitable Personal & Professional Development pathways and promotion opportunities.	following the PDRS process. Finally, the university has <i>Staff Mentoring</i> and <i>Staff Coaching</i> schemes which all staff may avail of, together with an extensive portfolio of <i>Staff Training</i> related to research and teaching as well as <i>Staff Wellbeing and Development</i> offerings. Consultation with staff, as noted above, suggested no identified need or appetite to engage in further mentoring processes. However, as part of our research review (see 8 below), and Athena Swan re-application, we will be exploring whether PIs might join in undertaking the formal UCC PDRS process of annual appraisal with their research staff.				
		<p>4.2 The panel's suggestions with respect to new posts (a "Chief" Technical officer and 2 "placement officers") were interesting but puzzling. It should be noted that the School Exec had formulated a workforce plan for the School (QR panel did not explore same at the visit), with identified priorities for two new academic staff posts (lecturer level) to replace leavers and a chair post, to replace a retirement. These business cases are crucial to the School's capacity to function and retain accreditation. They supersede any need for a Chief Technical Office and Two placement officers (neither of which were discussed with the HOS re workforce planning). It is pleasing to report that all of these business cases were successful.</p> <p>Backfill for maternity leavers and one LT sick leave has also been successful and these needs continue.</p> <p>These are extremely positive outcomes in a context where replacement posts are not always getting approval.</p>	HOS	1.0 wte admin grade	Sept – Dec 2025	

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		<p>In this context the School Exec do not perceive advancing a business case for a Chief Technical Officer to be a priority in the current climate. We currently have a senior TO and a further TO. We would appear well-resourced here. Our TO's could not either understand where this recommendation came from.</p> <p>Having been successful in business cases for crucial posts, as noted above, we will be advancing a business case for a further 1.0wte admin grade staff with 0.5wte devoted to placement administration. Workload has meant we are only now getting to the development of this.</p>				
5	The Panel recommends that the School leadership continue its workload management initiative to address increasing staff workload and morale implications.	<p>5.1 We were pleased that the panel recognised the impact of increasing workload on staff morale. Creeping workload largely comes from the ever-burgeoning quality enhancement university processes across multiple areas (new module management systems, new research supervision and management systems, new policies for hybrid working, new approaches to disability support, new EDI procedures etc.) Most of these increasing requirements are not within the control of the School. The many recommendations within this report are an example of where the major resource demand, following an important quality enhancement process, is on staff workload.</p> <p>School culture, the importance of relationships and the importance of work-related quality of life, is central to the new School strategy. It has been the focus of a School away day, monthly roundtables and other specific workshops. Mentoring, PDRS processes, reflective practice</p>	HOS	Staff capacity / Workload	Jan – Dec 2025	

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		initiatives and fair and transparent workload allocation processes (see 5.3 below) have all been central to attaining this important bedrock of the School.				
		5.2 Workload for staff is a key consideration for TAL in the coming academic year and will be highlighted as a discussion item at our TAL Away Day in December 2025. Instances of double marking (beyond cross-marking for quality assurance purposes) are only evident in the thesis research modules, where having an independent reviewer (as well as the supervisor) is deemed important for academic integrity. However, TAL will review this. We will also consider marking and assessment workload as part of a wider refresh of our assessment strategy commencing in September 2025, in line with our strategic plan.	TAL PDs	Staff capacity / Workload	April 2025 – May 2026 Interim review Dec 2025	
		5.3. A number of workload innovations have already been implemented to ensure equity, recognition of research activity and alignment to promotions criteria. This was recognised by the panel in commendations. The HOS has previously consulted with staff with respect to suggestions on research weightings. Further consultation will continue in the medium term as recommended. Moreover, HOS has engaged with the wider university over a new university wide workload allocation system. It is envisaged that this will be implemented within the next couple of years and our practices here will be informed by this.	HOS	Staff capacity / Workload	Interim Review Aug 2025 / 2026 Away Days June 2025 – June 2027	

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		5.4 See 4.2 above with respect to making a case for new staff with respect to support placements and WIL.	HOS	Staff capacity / Workload	Sept – Dec 2025	
6	The Panel recommends that inclusivity and accessibility tools be progressively incorporated and utilised in Learning, Teaching and Assessment within the School.	6.1 We are committed to increasing the inclusivity and accessibility of our teaching materials in the School and see it as important not just because of our legal obligations, but as it aligns with our values. We plan to progressively incorporate these tools, as suggested, and in line with rapid development in this space at university level. We want to move at a pace that is aligned with university guidance on this issue and takes advantage of university-level resources and supports, rather than trying to reinvent the wheel at School-level (mindful of both the limits of our expertise and the workload issues discussed in 5. above). To that end, we have made representations to college-level committees on numerous issues, such as seeking clearer guidance from Disability Support Services and contributing to lecture recording policies, etc. We have also engaged with university and college-level initiatives to improve the inclusivity of our teaching and assessment methods. These initiatives are ongoing and we have created space to share good practice at the lunchtime training sessions in the school and at the planned TAL Away Day. Inclusivity is also a primary concern as we embark on our refresh of our assessment strategy, as part of our strategic plan, and also the implementation of other initiatives such as the Student Assembly. We are also liaising with Dr Therese McKenna who is overseeing the college inclusive assessment exercise.	TAL PDs MCs	Staff capacity / Workload	April 2025- June 2027 Interim Reviews – August 2025, 2026 at annual; planning days	

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		6.2 The integration of TPI students, who are registered at UCC, is outlined above (2.3).	HOS	Staff capacity / Workload	Jan – Sept 2025	
		6.3 The School Manager, in collaboration with administration colleagues, and wider university timetabling systems and colleagues confirms that there have not been timetabling clashes for our students. Further, the commuting times between North Mall and main university campuses are taken into account in timetabling.	SM	Staff capacity / Workload	June 2025 – June 2027 Reviewed at annual timetabling	
		6.4 All programme directors and module coordinators, when they are availing of backfill / support from PhD students in teaching, should ensure that the latter students have the competencies / training / induction to teach the associated material. We will reinforce this message. In addition, we will organise an annual training / induction session for all such students.	GSC PDs MCs	Staff capacity / Workload	June 2025 – DEC 2025	
7	The Panel recommends that the School continue reviewing its programme and module portfolio offerings to maintain their	7.1 The School has indeed been mindful of the potential implications of the advent of CORU registration and actions have already occurred. Regulation of the D.Clin.Psych. programme will happen this year. The HOS and Programme Director have collaborated with other Clinical programmes in Ireland in engaging with CORU. There is no threat to the programme in that we would appear to meet the proposed new standards. There is a threat to potentially downgrading placement experiences required and we have collaborated with all programmes in Ireland with respect to these concerns.	HOS SEMC	Staff capacity / Workload	Jan – Dec 2025	

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	continuing relevance.	Greater threats are apparent to regulation of the generic “Psychologist” title. The HOS has already engaged with CORU with respect to this. He has, moreover, brought together all HOSs of Psychology in Ireland for concerted action. The School Executive Committee is coordinating these and other responses here via the Union and the Psychological Society of Ireland. The picture remains a little ambiguous. However, when further clarity is obtained next steps will be formulated.				
		7.2 The HOS had already engaged with Head of College to find a creative solution to Psychology re-engaging with the BA Arts degree without impact on SSRs and staff workload. The ACE Cert in Psychology, overseen by a member of academic staff, but delivered by external teaching assistance, will be offered to the BA students for the first year only. The HOS has also engaged with college colleagues in reviewing the BA Arts degree pathway.	HOS	Staff capacity / Workload	Jan – Dec 2025	
		7.3 The HOS has already engaged with internal and external stakeholders with respect to exploring the feasibility of a new Apprenticeship pathway for a new masters programme – Clinical Associate in Psychology. This has required much time and negotiation with stakeholders across Ireland (partner universities, programme teams internal and external to the university, the professional body, workforce leads in various agencies and the heads of Psychology Services in Ireland). This will be ongoing across the next year.	HOS	Staff capacity / Workload	Jan 2025 – Jan 2027 Review Dec 2025	

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		7.4 The School has already embarked on a reimagining of the curriculum, aligned to the second pillar (Educational excellence) of its 2023- 2028 strategy. This is far reaching and will incorporate attention to whether further WIL practices are pedagogically desirable and feasible as outlined in this recommendation. This review is also attending to the module consolidation referred to under this same recommendation, as well as the review of assessment practices outlined above, with particular attention paid to graduate skills and also graduate takeaways from assessments (e.g. building professional websites as part of an assessment, rather than writing an essay) (6.1).	TAL PDs MCc	Staff capacity / Workload	Jan 2025 – Sept 2026 Reviewed TAL away day Dec 2025	
		7.5 Exploratory discussions have already taken place as to whether the <i>People and Technology</i> research group / BA Psychology and Computing Programme team, might pursue a cohort doctorate programme. Discussions will continue, particularly in light of new Research Ireland initiatives for funding postgraduate research. and may include exploring a specific masters programme.	PD PAT	To be determined	April 2025 – April 2026 Staff member to report Dec 2025 at TAL away day	
		7.6 There has been variation in how programmes conduct Annual programme Reviews and engage with the student body in same, together with the encompassed module reviews. The HOS has developed a template for this, incorporating best practice from several programmes and generalising to all. This, together with the development of the Student Council noted above (3.1) will ensure student partnership in these quality enhancement activities.	HOS TAL	Staff capacity / Workload	April 2025 – Sept 2025	

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8	The Panel recommends that the School pursue its SER recommendation and progress its strategic efforts to enhance and embed research activities into all its domains.	8.1 The recalibration of research activity is the first pillar in the new School strategy (2023 – 2028). Annual research reports of our KPIs have demonstrated significant success in the first year of this strategy (e.g. outputs more than doubling, indirect costs the highest in the college, increased grant success, increased doctoral students). We have also instigated strategic reviews (e.g. research away day and new monthly training seminars which will include augmenting university training supports). The Research committee will incorporate the QR panel's recommendation to map all current staff research activities to identify strategic strengths and areas of capacity to leverage increased grant capture and research strengths in the context of the UCC Futures landscape and other relevant national and international opportunities.	RC	Staff capacity / Workload	April 2025 – June 2027 Updates at Annual Research Reporting Days May 2026	
		8.2 We already do engage with, utilise, and signpost colleagues to sources of small research funding for internships and other seed funding sources for staff and PhD students within the college and beyond. Moreover, we are one of the few Schools to utilise indirect cost and other income to support annual staff and PhD seed funding. The Research Committee will explore whether there are sources of funding which have not been on our radar. In addition, a review of staff awareness of same will take place and reasons why some staff rarely engage with these opportunities. There may be a need to rethink terms of reference and proactive engagement.	RC	Staff capacity / Workload	April 2025 – June 2026 Revised Nov 2025	

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Professor Chris McCusker
Head School of Applied psychology

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Professor Cathal O'Connell
Interim Head CACSSS