



# UCC

University College Cork, Ireland  
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

## Fheabhsú Cáilíochta Quality Enhancement



QUALITY REVIEW

PEER REVIEW PANEL REPORT

SCHOOL OF APPLIED SOCIAL STUDIES

November 2023

*“To support the University’s mission and strategy for excellence in learning, research and related services through developing and embedding a culture of quality enhancement based on the outcomes of robust expert peer review and informed by ongoing analysis of key quality indicators.”*

(UCC’s Quality Enhancement Committee Aim)

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## Context

The School of Applied Social Studies in UCC is one of ten schools situated in the College of Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences (CACSSS), and is the foremost School in UCC for the delivery of lifelong learning initiatives which promote educational access to non-traditional learners. The School currently offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in social policy, social work, youth and community work and early years and childhood studies respectively. There are five accredited and eight non-accredited programmes, specifically anchored in the School of Applied Social Studies with the BA Early Years and Childhood Studies (CK111) programme undergoing its first professional QAB accreditation in 2024-25. The School of Applied Social Studies also serves as the anchor School for multiple collaborative CPD programmes (predominantly with the Adult Continuing Education unit) in UCC.

Staff in the School are currently spread across campus with the administrative staff situated in the William Thompson House on Donovan's Road. The School currently comprises of 86 academic staff members (34 permanent and 52 hourly paid), 6 permanent, full-time administrative staff, and 5 research staff along with several people contributing to the various modules on offer by the School. There have been significant changes in the staff profile since the previous quality review in 2013 with the School now consisting of 3 professors and 9 senior lecturers, as well as 2 Vice-Heads appointed in July 2022. The gender mix of full-time and part-time, permanent and fixed-term staff in the School is 77% female and 23% male, with a senior management team that is primarily female. The School of Applied Social Studies focuses on providing an educational and research environment which promotes a culture of critical, intellectual as well as practice enquiry in the social sciences based on participation, inclusion, and diversity. The appointment of the new Head of School in 2023, coincided with the School's periodic Quality Review process.

The most recent FTE student figures reported in the School's SER refer to the academic year 2022/23 and corresponds to 582 students of which 378 are undergraduate and 204 postgraduate students. Among the postgraduate students, 47 students are currently registered on Doctoral/PhD programmes in the School of Applied Social Studies, 12 of these students are receiving scholarships. Staff within the School supervise more than 18 PhD/Doctoral students anchored in other academic units (including Education, Clinical Therapies, Drama and Theatre Studies, Public Health, Music etc.) From 2014 to 2023, 39 students that were supervised by staff in the School have graduated with PhDs/Doctorates and two students have graduated with an MPhil and an MRes respectively.

## Methodology and Site Visit

Since 2022, the model for conducting Quality Reviews was changed to a hybrid review comprising of a two-day on-campus site visit, followed by two half-days of virtual meetings. The review for the [School of Applied Social Studies](#) occurred accordingly, distributed over two weeks in October 2023.

During the in-person site visit, the Panel met with staff in the School, undergraduate and postgraduate students, senior members of UCC staff as well as relevant internal stakeholders to UCC. During the virtual meetings, the Panel met with stakeholders external to the School and to UCC and focused on writing the Report with specific emphasis on the commendations and recommendations. The sequencing of meetings was to ensure consistency and succession in the conduct of the review. The online platform used for the virtual meetings was MS Teams.

The timetable for the site visit is included in [Appendix B](#). The Panel comprised of national and international peer reviewers. The internal reviewers provided knowledge of institutional and organisational structures whereas the external reviewers contributed their peer expertise. The student reviewer served as the voice of the student and brought valuable insights, and perspectives on student matters and the student experience. At the end of the second week of the review, the Panel presented its initial findings, both commendations and recommendations, to the staff in the [School of Applied Social Studies](#).

To support the Peer Review Panel and facilitate effective engagement throughout the site visit, additional guidance and support was provided by UCC staff within the Quality Enhancement Unit (QEU). This included technical support, as well as briefing and advisory support prior to and throughout the review. Review coordination was provided throughout by a Review Co-ordinator from QEU to facilitate the review process and to support the Peer Review Panel in formulating and agreeing the final Panel Report. The Report was compiled collaboratively, and the entire Review Panel had substantial input into the production of the final Report.

The Panel thought that the QEU provided an excellent level of support and organisation throughout the process in terms of meeting arrangements, note-taking and logistics and facilitated a very structured blended review process. The panel noted that the timetable of the site visit seemed somewhat strenuous in terms of time provided between meetings for reflection and discussion. The interval between the in-person site visit and the online meetings did, however, afford the panel the opportunity to reflect on the feedback received and to consider the commendations and recommendations made to the School.

### Peer Review Panel Members

The Peer Review Panel was made up of two internal Reviewers, one serving as the Panel Chair, two international Reviewers, and a student Reviewer. The Peer Review Panel Profiles are included in [Appendix A](#).

Name	Position/Discipline	Institution
Professor Sarah Culloty ( <i>Chair</i> )	Head, College Science, Engineering and Food Science	University College Cork
Professor Yvonne Nolan	Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience, School of Medicine	University College Cork
Professor Jan-Kåre Breivik	Faculty of Social Sciences	Nord University
Professor Laura Merla	Faculty of Economic, Social and Political Sciences, & Communication	University of Louvain
Ms Eleanor Emer McCahill ( <i>Student Reviewer</i> )	Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences	University College Cork

<b>Review Coordinator</b>		
<i>Ms Seugnet Kritzinger</i>	<i>Quality Enhancement Unit</i>	<i>University College Cork</i>
<b>IT and Logistics Coordinator</b>		
<i>Ms Marie O'Regan</i>	<i>Quality Enhancement Unit</i>	<i>University College Cork</i>

## Objectives of Quality Review

The overarching objectives of the quality review process at UCC are to enable units, through evidence-based self-evaluation, to:

1. Reflect on and promote the strategic enhancement of their activities (enhancement dimension),
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of their processes, in line with the University's mission and strategy (assurance dimension).

Thus, peer review goes beyond quality assurance to also embrace continuous quality enhancement. The Peer Review Panel's Report reflects these objectives in the commendations and recommendations outlined to support the [School of Applied Social Studies](#) in reviewing its strategic priorities and optimising its activities.

## Summary Commendations & Recommendations

### Commendations

Based on the information obtained from the Self-Evaluation Report and meetings with multiple internal, as well as external stakeholders to the [School of Applied Social Studies](#), the panel commends the School for the following:

1. The collegiality displayed throughout the review process, accompanied by the well-developed Self-Evaluation Report. It is evident to the panel that the staff in the School are committed, enthusiastic, professional and dedicated to their cause and to delivering education of the highest standard in the University.
2. The new governance structure to accommodate for designated leadership roles in specific strategic areas, including the two appointments of a Vice-Head for Curriculum and Academic Development and a Vice-Head for Strategic Data and Communication, as well as the initiative to appoint a third Vice-Head for Research and Innovation.
3. The successfully developed sabbatical research leave rota that encourages and supports all academic staff to take leave for this purpose.
4. The range of programmes delivered at under-and-postgraduate level with an array of teaching methods including online programmes. The panel was particularly impressed by the personal commitment and dedication of the coordinators of the Higher Diploma in Social Policy (online) that was showcased as well as the Masters in Social Policy (online) currently being developed.
5. The foresight to participate in the national Social Work Apprenticeship Programme in 2024 and the current application for government funding to develop this programme is particularly noteworthy. The panel recognise that this programme will place the School in a position of becoming the pioneers in UCC to roll-out an apprenticeship programme.
6. The diverse needs of the student body as a central focus of the School, along with the dedication and commitment of staff in the School in reaching out to and supporting these needs, to enable students to participate in their programmes. The panel particularly commends the ID+ programme and considers it as a flagship programme to be highlighted nationally and internationally.
7. The extensive, ongoing support of marginalised individuals, communities, and the partnership with key stakeholders (CAMHS, HSE, Tusla, Irish Prison Service, etc.) to open education pathways for these individuals and communities that would not otherwise have the opportunity. The focus placed on voluntary outreach and CPD programmes, as well as the strategic alliance with ACE to achieve this support was noteworthy to the panel.
8. The strength of professional relationships that have been built up, and maintained, with external stakeholders in the challenging placement element of the programmes. Discussions with these stakeholders demonstrated this as a key element in the current success of placements and highlighted the professionalism from a UCC perspective and in some cases, identifying UCC as the preferred partner for placements.
9. The Doctor of Social Sciences (DSocSc) training programme with its range of ongoing supports and organised activity to facilitate students in successfully completing their programme.

10. The anticipated use of some of the School's existing space to secure common spaces for the school to integrate and connect, particularly the incorporation of a staff common room.

## Recommendations

The recommendations made by the panel were signalled by a combination of elements, including recommendations by the School in the SER, combined with internal and external stakeholder discussions during the review. Considering this, the panel has identified the below key areas for the [School of Applied Social Studies](#) to focus on, to further enable the growth and success of the school.

### *Priority Recommendations*

The panel considers the following as priority recommendations for the School to act upon over the next 12 months:

1. Prioritise the completion of the ongoing module portfolio review to streamline content and optimise shared delivery of various degree streams.
2. Concurrent with the portfolio review, complete the review of administrative responsibilities, in conjunction with the HR Business Manager, to clarify professional staff roles and responsibilities to support the delivery of the School's academic mission.
3. Map all current staff research activity to identify strategic strength and areas of capacity and to leverage increased grant capture and research strengths in the context of the emerging UCC Futures landscape.
4. Work on a scheme with the College Finance Manager to use any additional funds coming into the School to top up PhD financial supports.

### *Medium-term Recommendations*

The panel considers the following as areas of recommendation where the School's activities could be further enhanced incrementally over the medium-term:

5. Seek opportunities and develop more formalised structures with Placement partners to secure, on an ongoing basis, the availability and allocation of placements.
6. Develop and communicate a stronger identity, both internally within the University and externally.
7. Work on a plan with the College Development Manager to identify how industry engagement and philanthropic sources can be used effectively to facilitate the School's academic activities and the overall student experience.
8. Review the process for developing undergraduate and postgraduate projects to create better alignment with ongoing research activity and enable joint student-staff publications.
9. Develop a plan to increase grant capture to include more funded PhD opportunities.

### *Long-term Recommendations*

The panel considers the following as areas of recommendation for the School to consider incrementally over the long-term:

10. Work with the Head of College and College Manager to develop a long-term plan for the school in terms of its infrastructure.
11. Engage and align with the Registrar's Office, the Office of Vice President for Research and Innovation and the Dean of Doctoral Studies to support effective and continuous lobbying of paid PhDs in the area of social sciences.

Further explanation and additional information on the above priority, medium- and long-term recommendations are provided in the *Recommendations – Further Detail* section of this report. Additional to the above recommendations, the panel identified certain observations for consideration, which the panel believes fall outside of the School's remit. The panel suggests that these observations be shared with the appropriate units to agree on a plan for addressing these observations accordingly.

*Observation to the Registrar's Office, Office of Vice-President for Research & Innovation and Dean of Doctoral Studies*

1. Continue to engage with colleagues nationally and with government regarding potential financial support of PhD students in areas such as social sciences.

*Observation to the Deputy President & Registrar*

1. Continue to engage with colleagues nationally in ongoing discussions with CORU, in relation to accreditation requirements.

*Observation to the Vice-President for Research & Innovation*

1. Work with the School to raise staff awareness around supports and available opportunities for engagement on a wider numbers of funded projects, working with other disciplines and how the School can strategically leverage these opportunities through UCC Futures. In the first instance, a dedicated information session would be of great value for the School.

## Recommendations – Further Detail

This section of the report is aimed at elaborating and providing additional information for the recommendations made by the panel for the [School of Applied Social Studies](#). The panel considered four *priority recommendations* for the School to act upon within the next 12 months, of which further detail follows:

*Recommendation 1:* The completion of the ongoing module portfolio review is essential to shine a light on the current workloads across the School, to ensure that the full range of activities undertaken by staff is visible and celebrated. The panel deems it as critically important that wherever possible, efficiencies are introduced to facilitate available time for academic staff to conduct research.

*Recommendation 2:* The completion of a review of administrative responsibilities will facilitate the first recommendation, in creating an appropriate workload balance between academic and administrative staff. The panel believes that this balance will provide opportunity for reduction in duplication of work and will ensure more cohesion and collaboration between staff within the School.



*Recommendation 3:* The mapping of current staff research activity as an initial focus of the new appointed Vice-Head for Research and Innovation will allow for engagement and collaboration with the College Research and Innovation Manager as well as OVPRI to identify national and international leveraging opportunities for e.g. in the current SFI centres call and UCC Futures. The panel believes that the School transfers a lot of their research into teaching and that this could be disseminated to a broader audience through national and international publication.

*Recommendation 4:* The identification of a more robust financial system to support PhD students will disaggregate PhD supports from teaching. A review of the current teaching allocations and academic responsibilities that PhD students are taking will ensure these students have sufficient time for their research responsibilities and that any academic work aligns with the prevailing University policy.

The panel suggested five *medium-term recommendations* for further enhancements by the [School of Applied Social Studies](#):

*Recommendation 5:* The panel recognises the current challenges in securing placement opportunities for all students and the necessity for a more structured approach, accompanied by more formalised agreements on placement numbers. Placement providers were positively disposed to having more formal structures in place and to committing in advance to certain numbers of places.

*Recommendation 6:* The development of a stronger identity for the School, through telling their story via College and University communication channels and having a unified voice around what they are doing to support this stronger identity, will create opportunities for more internal as well as external support, including student recruitment, partnerships, funding, etc.

*Recommendation 7:* While taking some time to realise, the panel believes that the effective use of industry engagement and Philanthropic sources to facilitate academic activities and overall student experience within the School will facilitate more support for a range of activities, and support students in the school.

*Recommendation 8:* The development of undergraduate and postgraduate projects with staff suggesting projects aligned to their own research has the potential to provide leveraging for research activity and joint student staff publications.

*Recommendation 9:* The panel acknowledges the current challenges of the School in securing funding for PhD students in the area of social sciences. The panel, however, believes that a focused approach re grant capture from national and European agencies identified with assistance from OVPRI and enhanced supports through ringfenced funds from school initiatives combined with philanthropic support, industry supports and wider external engagement on the plight of PhDs in this area can lead to better outcomes in the long run.

The panel considered two *long-term recommendations* for the [School of Applied Social Studies](#):

*Recommendation 10:* A long-term plan for the school in terms of its infrastructure and location is suggested by the panel to allow for better staff cohesion and an enhanced sense of identity, however, the panel further suggests, as a matter of urgency, that the School identifies desk space for PhD

students to have access 5 days per week – this may require having a booking system but all PhDs who want to be on site should be facilitated.

*Recommendation 11:* As the final long-term recommendation, which directly aligns with the observation to the Registrar’s Office, the Office of Vice President for Research and Innovation’ and Dean of Doctoral Studies, the panel suggests that the School engages and aligns with these units to devise a plan for effectively and continuously lobbying for financial support of PhD students in the area of social sciences. The panel believes that any research funding should primarily be directed to supporting PhD students.

## Overall Analysis of Self-Evaluation Process

A coordinating team was appointed by the Head of School for the responsibility of coordinating the Self-Evaluation process and compiling the Self-Evaluation Report (SER). The committee consisted of representatives from both academic and support staff as well as a student representative within the [School of Applied Social Studies](#) who collaborated, actively participated, and supported the process.

### Self-Evaluation Report (SER)

The panel perceived the Self-Evaluation Report as a well-structured document which provided enough detail and demonstrated clear and collegial self-reflection in the assessment of the school. The school has an impressive array of programmes and the significant societal impact of the programmes delivered and the impact of engagement with external stakeholders was understated in the SER. It is very clear that the School and the individual academics are highly regarded internally and externally.

The panel perceived the report to not necessarily reflect the extent of the contribution of the School within the broader UCC and externally- locally and nationally and beyond and the School is modest in its assessment of that impact. The panel recognised that the school sees a clear societal need for the educational programmes that it provides and is ambitious in trying to meet those needs - and the panel is mindful of how sustainable this approach is especially considering the workload, bandwidth of staff and concerns raised around capacity to engage in research.

### SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis was conducted by a facilitator within UCC, external to the [School of Applied Social Studies](#), as appropriate, and all staff in the School were invited to attend the SWOT workshop. This was further enhanced with systematic data collection from internal and external stakeholder groups, including students.

The panel considered that the SWOT exercise provided a foundational point of what the unit's strengths and weaknesses are, however, the challenges outlined in the report from the SWOT could have been defined and highlighted more to align to the recommendations provided by the School.

### Benchmarking

The [School of Applied Social Studies](#) conducted both national and international Benchmarking. With the new post-Covid hybrid approach to quality reviews, the Benchmarking exercises were conducted online, with two similar sized institutions being selected, Maynooth University (MU) as the Irish HEI and the University of Edinburgh as the international HEI. Both institutions were identified due to offering similar suites of programmes to that of the School, and they offer programmes in areas that the School is currently busy developing. An additional reason for selecting these institutions to benchmark against, is the fact that, these institutions are encountering similar difficulties to that of the School in securing professional placements and student recruitment.

From the Benchmarking exercise at the University of Edinburgh, the [School of Applied Social Studies](#) gained a lot of insight and key learnings on the overall positive experience with the online Masters and the undergraduate, professionally accredited social work programme. The Benchmarking exercise

with Maynooth University provided the School with insight into the Youth/Community Work programme on offer as well as the professionally accredited social work programme and additional insights into securing placements.

The panel appreciated the amount of work that went into the School's Benchmarking exercises. It does, however, appear that the school underestimates its own capacity and external peer esteem to some extent. The meetings with external stakeholders reinforced the high regard that the school and programmes run through UCC were held in.

### Developments since previous Quality Review

From the previous Quality Review of the [School of Applied Social Studies](#) in 2013, there were 21 recommendations suggested to the School for consideration. The panel considered this a significant number of recommendations to have to address. The School advised in the SER that, to date, 3 of the recommendations are completed, 14 of the recommendations are currently ongoing as they address continuing and open-ended issues, 2 of the recommendations have not been addressed, and 1 of the recommendations have been deemed outside of the School's remit and rather within the remit of library funding and Human Resources information and support issues.

The panel found that some of the actions have been completed to date and many are ongoing as suggested, however, some issues are still quite predominant. Since the School has evolved a lot from the previous quality review, so has their ability to address all the issues if accompanied by a well-developed working plan to ensure effective utilisation of resources to address these ongoing issues. The panel considers that a focus on the current recommendations is sufficient as it will address a number of the outstanding issues from the previous review.

### Case Study of Good Practice

The Higher Diploma in Social Policy (online) programme was selected as the Case Study of Good Practice for the [School of Applied Social Studies](#).

The Higher Diploma in Social Policy (online) is a postgraduate programme entailing a one-year online conversion course offered to level 7 and level 8 graduate students who are unable to pursue in-person study programmes. The programme is known to provide an essential academic, conceptual and research foundation for aspiring and practicing social professional, third sector workers, as well as activists. The programme demonstrates the possibilities and value for a changing student cohort through the thoughtful design and delivery of asynchronous education.

The success of this programme was the inspiration behind other initiatives including the current transition of the Masters in Social Policy programme to online delivery. The [School of Applied Social Studies](#) is prioritising the expansion of specialist, research-informed electives aligning to the expertise in the School, along with the increasing range of student interests as well as providing more flexible study options through micro-credential pathways.

The panel thought that the Case Study of Good Practice was a very impressive piece by the School and commended the amount of thought and administration that has gone into developing this online

programme. The panel also appreciated the care and consideration the School invests into its students.

## Facilities

The location of the School of Applied Social Studies is currently split across different buildings on the University's campus. The School noted that the current facilities give rise to various challenges for cohesion and creating a sense of community. The age and state of repair of some buildings were also noted as concerning given the risks associated with access and safety. The School has provided some recommendations in the SER directly relating to the physical location including the need for a designated space serving as a staff common room, the installation of keypads/swipe cards and the requirements of workspace for the large number of part-time/temporary colleagues.

A tour of the School's location was undertaken prior to the site visit. The school office is split over two locations and, upon this visit, the office was closed due to staff working remotely three days per week. As the school office is often a central point of interaction for staff and students, identifying one integrated space which may facilitate having the office open 5 days per week may support that sense of integration while the school is distributed across several building. The panel felt that the School's location layout could possibly be reassessed for more effective utilisation and that a more frequent on-site presence might facilitate a stronger sense of identity and belonging for students and staff.

## Final Comments and Conclusion

The Peer Review Panel for the quality review of the [School of Applied Social Studies](#) found the review process to be thorough and very insightful. The panel considered it as a wonderful learning experience and an opportunity for reflection, as well as engagement with social sciences colleagues and gaining a greater understanding of the contribution being made. The Panel concluded that the staff are fantastic - committed and professional - offering a range of programmes that prepare students for key roles to support different communities at every level in society. It was clear to the Panel that the work of staff in the School contributes greatly to society, especially through various voluntary activities and CPD offerings. Staff in the School also seemed really focused on the wellbeing and support of their students. The enthusiastic and collaborative engagement of staff with the self-evaluation process was greatly appreciated by the Panel. Staff in the School appeared in high regard during the meetings with internal and external stakeholders, especially students. All the enhancement-focused feedback received was aimed at processes and procedures, rather than staff and it is evident that the School is considered to be of great value to CACSSS and the University.

### Next Steps

The Panel Report will next be approved by the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC), chaired by the President, and published on the Quality Enhancement Unit (QEU) website.

The School of Applied Social Studies will implement the priority, medium-term and long-term recommendations accordingly and provide a detailed report on progress via a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The QEP will be considered and approved by the QEC and published on the QEU website.

## Appendix A – Peer Review Panel Profiles

<p>Professor Sarah Culloty (<i>Chair</i>)</p>	<p>Prof. Sarah Culloty is Head of the College of Science, Engineering and Food Science at University College Cork. As Head of College, she leads a student and staff body of over 6000 with nine academic schools and 6 research centres and institutes including the Environmental Research Institute, and five UCC Futures areas. A marine biologist working in aquatic animal health and most recently the impacts of climate change on marine environments, she has served on a number of national and international advisory boards and working groups and her research has informed international guidelines and legislation on aquatic animal health movements, diseases and controls. She has had extensive engagement in supporting EDI initiatives at UCC and was part of the university’s committee when it received its first institutional Athena Swan award and was Head of one of the first schools (School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences) at UCC to receive its award. She is currently a Governor of Fota Wildlife Park and chairs its Ethics Committee, is a board member of NIBRT the National Institute for Bioprocessing Research and Training, of the Irish Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Platform and a member of the Ireland United States Commission for Educational Exchange Board (Fulbright Commission in Ireland).</p>
<p>Professor Jan-Kåre Breivik</p>	<p>Jan-Kåre Breivik is an anthropologist with a PhD from the University of Oslo (2001). From 2012-2020, he was a professor in community work with responsibility for scientific-artistic development and innovation at the master's program in community work at the Western Norwegian University of Applied Sciences (HVL). He now works as a professor in social work at Nord University, Bodø. His interests are linked to experimental learning, homelessness, social movements, deaf communities, nomadic groups, migration, disability, socially engaged art, rituals, narrativity and climate/environment. At Nord University, he is in the process of starting projects at the intersection between socially engaged art and sustainable social development. He has been a member of ‘Apropos Teater’ since 2006, as an anthropologist, producer, and creative partner.</p>
<p>Ms Eleanor Emer McCahill (<i>Student Reviewer</i>)</p>	<p>Ms Eleanor McCahill is a 2nd year student at the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences, University College Cork. She is studying a degree in Government and Political Science. Ms McCahill has played an active role in UCC as an Academic Representative, serving her class on the college's Student Council, attending monthly meetings and College Clinics. She was an active member of her student council, at both primary and secondary school level. This</p>

	<p>engagement provided her with invaluable opportunities to represent her peers. In her final year of secondary school, she represented her school at national level, attending the Irish Second Level Students Union Annual Assembly as a voting delegate. Ms McCahill is a Peer Support Leader for first year students joining UCC in 2023/24. Through this role, she has had the opportunity to gain valuable insights into the workings of the University, as well as contributing her experience. She participated in roundtable discussions with the French Ambassador to Ireland and the Quality Enhancement Unit for the preparation of UCC's Institutional Review 2023. These discussions allowed her the opportunity to voice concerns openly, highlight areas of benefit to students, including areas for improvement, and ask any questions. As a member of UCCs Government and Political Science Society, an opportunity arose to assist in the NUI Town Hall where the senators elected by UCCS graduates were given the opportunity to introduce themselves to students as well as being asked questions, this arose a number of concerns and questions by students that had been arisen previously at other students forums, highlighting the urgency of these concerns as well as number of students affected. Thanks to these experiences with the University's Students Union, Societies and academic structures of student representation, Ms McCahill has gained valuable insights into student needs, expectations and the operations of the University, which will assist her in performing the role of Student Reviewer for the Quality Review of the School of Applied Social Studies.</p>
<p>Professor Laura Merla</p>	<p>Laura Merla is professor of sociology at the Catholic University of Louvain (UCLouvain, Belgium). She holds a master's in political sciences and a master's in Labour law and sociology of work from the Free University of Brussels (ULB) and a PhD in Sociology from the UCLouvain. She started her career in academia in 2000, with a position of teaching and research assistant in sociology at the UCLouvain. During her mandate, she was a visiting scholar at the University of Sydney. She submitted her dissertation in 2006. From 2007 to 2010 she was a Marie Curie Postdoctoral fellow at the University of Lisbon and the University of Western Australia. In 2011 she became an FNRS research fellow at the UCLouvain and was appointed Professor of Sociology in 2015. At the UCLouvain, she is the Director of the Interdisciplinary Research Center on Families and Sexualities, the Vice-President of the IACCHOS Institute, and the Head of the master's program in Sociology. She currently teaches Sociology, and Gender studies to under-graduate students, and Gender and migration, and Comparative social protection policies to master's students. In 2018 she also co-created an online course on migration studies, available on the edEx platform. Since 2015 she</p>



	<p>has supervised 7 PhD students (2 in progress) and 5 Postdocs (3 in progress). Beyond the UCLouvain, she is also a member of the Belgian Royal Academy of Sciences, Letters and Fine Arts, an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Western Australia, and the Vice-President of the Sociology of Migration Research Committee of the International Sociological Association (starting in 2024). Her main field of research is family sociology, which she crosses with various themes such as migration, care, childhood, gender, and social policies, mainly using qualitative methodologies. Over the past 17 years she has developed a research program focusing on the transformation of family relationships in the context of geographical distance and intermittent co-presence and has become a leading expert in the field of transnational families. Her research has been funded by the Belgian National Funds for Research, Belspo, 2 Marie curie fellowships, a Concerted Research Action (ARC) and an ERC Starting Grant. She has published 9 monographs and edited books and 35 chapters in renowned publishing houses, 42 papers and 6 special issues in leading scientific journals, in English, French, Spanish and Japanese. In 2023 she won the Ares Women and Science Prize for Research on Covid and Societies.</p>
<p>Professor Yvonne Nolan</p>	<p>Yvonne Nolan is a Professor in Anatomy and Neuroscience, Funded Investigator in APC Microbiome Ireland and Vice Dean of Graduate Studies in the College of Medicine and Health at University College Cork. Yvonne graduated from NUI, Galway with a BSc (Hons) in Biochemistry, and a PhD in Neuropharmacology. She was a visiting scholar at McGill University Montreal, Canada and held postdoctoral positions in Trinity College, Dublin. She was a visiting scholar at McGill University Montreal, Canada and held postdoctoral positions in Trinity College, Dublin. In 2003 she was appointed as Lecturer in the Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience, UCC. She was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 2011 and to Professor in 2020. Research in Professor Nolan's team investigates the impact of modifiable lifestyle factors such as exercise, stress and diet on memory and mood though the lifespan. The role of inflammation, the gut microbiome and hippocampal neurogenesis is of particular interest. To date she has supervised &gt;40 PhD/MSc(research)/postdoctoral researchers and numerous visiting and undergraduate students. She was awarded UCC's Research Supervisor of the Year Award in 2016. She has secured ~€6M in funding from Science Foundation Ireland, Reta Lila Weston Trust, Marigot Ltd, Irish Research Council and Vasogen Inc., Canada. She was consortium lead on a recent European Centres of Excellence in Neurodegeneration project. Yvonne is Vice Dean of Graduate Studies in the College of Medicine and Health and</p>

	<p>Professor in Neuroscience. Her mission for Graduate Studies is to 'advance curiosity-driven professionalism and research excellence for health-related global challenges, in a student-centred, respectful and inclusive environment.' With her team on the Graduate Studies committee, she is committed to supporting postgraduate students. Yvonne was Director of the BSc in Neuroscience in UCC from 2015-2020 in which she promoted collegiality, teamwork and engagement. Since her appointment in 2003, she has taught Anatomy and Neuroscience to students in Occupational, Speech and Language Therapy, Neuroscience, Medical, Dental, Pharmacy, Osteoarchaeology and Audiology programmes. In 2008 she received a National Academy award for the Integration of Research and Teaching and Learning. She was part of an interdisciplinary team that created 'Brainpower': a free online course and Digital Badge on brain and behaviour for student success. She provides both informal and formal mentoring to students and staff and was a role model on the Aurora leadership programme for women in Higher Education. Yvonne contributes to the scientific and wider community through research projects with Down Syndrome Cork and industrial partners, and public talks on adolescent and older adult brain health. She has organised conferences, symposia and public events including a symposium on the "Hippocampus in Health and Disease" in 2014 with guest speaker Nobel Laureate John O'Keefe. She sits on the Independent Advisory Board for the Wellcome/HRB Irish Clinical Academic Training (ICAT) programme. She is a member of the Executive Committee of UCC Future Ageing and Brain Science, and of the College of Medicine and Health Executive Management Committee, UCC.</p>
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## Appendix B – Peer Review Panel Timetable

### In Summary

12.09.2023 - Briefing:	Panel briefing from the Director of Quality Enhancement online.
04.10.2023 - Site Visit Day 1:	The Panel meets with the Head of School and School Manager. This is followed by a meeting with the Head of College, School Management Team, School Staff and students.
05.10.2023 - Site Visit Day 2:	The Panel meets with Programme Directors and Chairs of Board of Study. This is followed by meetings with the College HR Business Manager, Senior Management, and key internal stakeholders of the School.
10.10.2023 - Online Day 3:	The Panel meets with external stakeholders and prepares their commendations and recommendations.
12.10.2023 - Online Day 4:	The Panel meets with the Head of School. A closing presentation is given by the Panel to all members of the School. Panel members depart.

### Prior to site visit – online meeting

<b>Tuesday 12 September 2023</b>	
10.00 – 11.30	Briefing of the Panel by Director of Quality Enhancement and Quality Advisor. <i>Objective: Presentation on self-evaluation context, methodology and process at UCC, panel roles and panel to discuss aspects of site visit and Self-Evaluation Report (SER).</i>

### Site Visit to UCC – first week

<b>Tuesday 3 October 2023</b>	
During the day	Panel members arrive in Cork
19.00	Dinner for Panel members hosted by Director of Quality

<b>Wednesday 4 October 2023</b>	
09.15 – 10.00	Private meeting of Panel <i>Objective: Panel agree themes and issues to be explored in forthcoming meetings.</i>
10.00 – 11.00	Meeting with Head, School of Applied Social Studies and Former Head, School of Applied Social Studies  10.45: To be joined by School Manager, School of Applied Social Studies

	<i>Objective: Discussion regarding School developments to date, strategic priorities of the School, and overview of educational provision.</i>
11.00 – 11.30	Private meeting of the Panel (coffee break)
11.30 – 12.15	Meeting with Head, College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences (CACSSS) 12.05: To be joined by Finance Business Manager, CACSSS <i>Objective: Discussion regarding College strategy and priorities. The links between College/School financial resource allocations process, staffing resources and infrastructure.</i>
12.15 – 13.00	Meeting with School Management and School Executive Committee <i>Objective: Discussion of management, operational priorities and practices.</i>
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch
14.00 – 15.30	Meeting with All Staff of the School <i>Objective: Discuss issues such as communications, staffing, structures and staff development.</i>
15:30 – 16:15	Meeting with Undergraduate Students <i>Objective: Discussion of UG student issues, feedback, interaction with the School.</i>
16.15 – 17.00	Meeting with Postgraduate Students <i>Objective: Discussion of PG student issues, feedback, interaction with the School.</i>
19.00	Dinner for members of the Panel

<b>Thursday 5 October 2023</b>	
09.00 – 09.30	Convening of the Panel – preparation for the day ahead
09.30 – 10.30	Meeting with Accredited and Non-accredited Programme Directors and Chairs of Boards of Studies <i>Objective: Discussion on monitoring and review of programmes to include indicatively, programme &amp; module approval processes, student progression, External Examiner reports, external accreditation/recognition (where appropriate), supports for learners, placement (where appropriate) and implementation of the Academic Strategy.</i>
10.30 – 11.00	Private meeting of the Panel (coffee break)
11.00 – 11.30	Meeting with College HR Business Manager <i>Objective: Discussion on staffing and recruitment contracts and structure.</i>
11.30 – 12.00	Meeting with UCC Stakeholders

	<i>Objective: Discussion regarding school admissions, student recruitment, strategic programme development, access route into Bachelor of Social Work (BSW), strategic research focus and development.</i>
12.00 – 12.45	Case Study of Good Practice <i>Objective: Opportunity for the School to showcase good practice and enhancements to the student learning experience with a focus on the Case Study of Good Practice.</i>
12.45 – 13.15	Private meeting of the Panel <i>Objective: Opportunity for Panel to view the facilities.</i>
13.15 – 14.00	Lunch break
14.00 – 14.45	Meeting with Deputy President & Registrar <i>Objective: Discussion of UCC’s Strategic Plan and Academic Strategy</i>
14.45 – 15.30	Meeting with Senior Officers and key internal stakeholders of the University <i>Objective: Discussion on strategy and priorities.</i>
15.30 – 16.00	Private meeting of the Panel (coffee break)
16.00 – 16.45	Enhancing Student Learning Experience – CPD Offerings <i>Objective: Discussion on programme enhancements to student learning experience including undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students.</i>
16.45 – 17.15	Private meeting of the Panel <i>Objective: Summative meeting to discuss key emerging themes and topics of importance for report.</i>

### Online Meetings – second week

<b>Tuesday 10 October 2023</b>	
09.30 – 09.45	Convening of the Panel – preparation for the day ahead
09.45 – 10.30	Meeting with External Stakeholders and Practice Advisory Board members <i>Objective: Discussion on collaborating with the School in terms of professional representation in the field of social work, employment opportunities for graduates, research, programme and community collaborations and programme accountability.</i>
10.30 – 10.45	Private meeting of the Panel
10.45 – 11.30	Meeting with External Placement Coordinators <i>Objective: Discussion on student placement procurement.</i>
11.30 – 12.00	Break for Panel

12.00 – 12.45	Meeting with External Practice Teachers <i>Objective: Discussion with social workers in current practice providing practice teaching and supervision to students for assessment of proficiency in skill levels to qualify as social workers.</i>
12.45 – 13.30	Panel meeting to draft the recommendations and commendations

<b>Thursday 12 October 2023</b>	
09.00 – 10.30	Meeting of Panel to finalise recommendations and commendations
10.30 – 11.00	Meeting with Head, School Applied Social Studies <i>Objective: Clarification and discussions of main findings by Panel.</i>
11.00 – 11.30	Break for Panel
11.30 – 12.30	Panel meeting to discuss feedback from Head of School; consider the closing presentation
12.30 – 13.00	Closing presentation <i>Objective: Closing presentation to all staff, to be made by the Chair or other member(s) of Panel as agreed, summarising the principal findings of the Panel. This presentation is <u>not</u> for discussion at this time.</i>
13.00 – 13.30	Panel – wrap up meeting