

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

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT/QUALITY ASSURANCE

PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT

DRAMA & THEATRE STUDIES PROGRAMMES

ACADEMIC YEAR 2007/08

27 August 2008

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PEER REVIEW GROUP MEMBERS

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Chair of Drama, University of Wales, UK

Professor Carole-Anne Upton (*Chair*)
Professor of Drama, University of Ulster

TIMETABLE OF THE SITE VISIT

The timetable for the site visit is attached as Appendix A.

The Peer Review Group found the composition of the timetable to be well considered. However, the Peer Review Group found the number of meetings scheduled over days 2 and 3 to be too intensive in the timeframe provided. There was no opportunity between meetings for the Group to consider issues raised during the site visit. The meetings themselves were of sufficient duration to visit facilities and meet with staff. The range of staff, students and stakeholders interviewed was comprehensive and appropriate.

Recommendation:

The Peer Review Group recommends extending the Peer Review Group site visit to three full days and to allow for 15-minute intervals between meetings for Peer Review Group discussion.

PEER REVIEW

Methodology

The Peer Review Group met on the evening before the two day review process to:

- Receive a briefing from the Director of the Quality Promotion Unit

- Discuss the Self-Evaluation Report
- Select a Chair
- Select a Rapporteur
- Assign particular responsibilities to each member.

Professor Carole-Anne Upton was duly elected Chair and Mr. Cormac McSweeney was appointed Rapporteur.

Members were assigned areas of specific thematic responsibility as follows:

- Research – David Ian Rabey
- Teaching and Learning – Orlaith McBride
- Administration – Cormac McSweeney
- External Relations/Careers/Student Profile/Admissions – Carmel Halton

For the most part, the interviews were conducted by all members of the Peer Review Group sitting as a panel. However, for part of the second day of information gathering the Group divided into two parallel teams in order to accommodate the full timetable, one team to meet with staff individually and the other team to meet members of the Board of Drama & Theatre Studies individually as follows:

Meetings with Staff

- David Ian Rabey
- Orlaith McBride
- Carmel Halton

Meetings with Board members

- Carole-Anne Upton
- Cormac McSweeney

Each member participated in the meetings during the site visit which was deemed satisfactory in terms of duration.

Discussion and evaluation of information received occurred on the evening of the second day and the afternoon of the third day prior to the delivery of the verbal report to the assembled staff of Drama & Theatre Studies by the Chair of Peer Review Group. Further discussion occurred on the evening of the third day and a draft report was prepared.

The information informing this report came from the Drama & Theatre Studies Programmes Self-Evaluation Report as well as interviews with the staff and students of Drama & Theatre Studies and other stakeholders and members of the University Executive.

The report is divided into the following headings:

1. The Self-Evaluation Report
2. Discipline Details, including organisation and planning
3. Teaching & Learning
4. Research & Scholarly Activity
5. External Activity & Support Services
6. Recommendations

THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

Content of the Report

The Peer Review Group commends the staff involved in the delivery of the Drama & Theatre Studies Programmes for their constructive engagement with the review process and the preparation of the Self-Evaluation Report. The Peer Review Group notes that all efforts were made to include all staff responsible for delivery of the programmes in the Quality Review. While the Peer Review Group found the Self-Evaluation Report to be an informative document it notes that the Self-Evaluation Report did not clearly articulate the shared sense of the strengths of the provision. It did articulate the clear sense of frustration with existing resources and structures. The Appendices were found to be comprehensive, particularly with regard to the data on both internal and external stakeholder views. The visual presentation of workshops and practices is also commended. Overall, the Self-Evaluation Report informed the

Peer Review Group sufficiently when engaging with staff and students at the meetings arranged as part of the overall process.

Aims and Objectives of the Discipline

The Peer Review Group notes and endorses the broad aims and objectives of the discipline as stated in the Self-Evaluation Report:

- To increase the range of disciplines available within the university;
- To provide enhanced academic and career opportunities for Irish students;
- To utilise existing departmental structures cooperatively;
- To offer opportunities for professional development to staff with specific research and teaching interests in this field;
- To enrich the cultural and intellectual life of the university and the region.

The Peer Review Group also notes and endorses the specific educational objectives of the Drama & Theatre Studies Programmes to provide students with a range of analytical, informational and creative skills related to the understanding of theatre and drama in all their phases.

The Peer Review Group applauds the educational philosophy of the discipline which prioritises:

- Integration of theory and practice
- Utilisation of a broad palette of teaching/learning styles
- Broad-spectrum assessment (to include continuous assessment, practical work, projects, etc.)
- Strong emphasis on Active Learning Strategies in course delivery
- Consciousness of need to set up creative dialogue between theatre practice and textual/critical studies.

The Peer Review Group commends the members of the Board of Studies for their efforts and dedication developing Drama & Theatre Studies at all levels in UCC over the last ten years. It recognises that the interdisciplinary nature of the provision, whilst seen as a great strength by

students, staff and stakeholders, also creates obstacles for development because of existing structures in UCC, which traditionally do not facilitate or favour interdisciplinary programmes. In that context the Peer Review Group considers the timing apt for a review of the existing programme structures, particularly in light of the overall restructuring currently ongoing in UCC.

The Peer Review Group notes and applauds the research activity that has been developed within the discipline, particularly given the existing demands on staff. The Peer Review Group considers that there are significant opportunities to pursue research. The Peer Review Group would hope that the consolidation and substantiation of Drama & Theatre Studies as proposed would provide a new and properly formalized structure for collaborations with staff from other departments and permit valuably mutually informative interdisciplinary initiatives, without compromising the autonomy of Drama & Theatre Studies with regard to teaching, research or administration.

SWOT Analysis

The Peer Review Group notes and commends the SWOT analysis for its detailed reflection on a wide range of issues relevant to the discipline. It is considered a coherent and well structured evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the discipline and highlights the necessity to address strategic issues and move forward. The Peer Review Group notes the key factors highlighted by Drama & Theatre Studies regarding the future opportunities and threats which are summarised as follows:

- **Changes in University Structure.** *“In the next six months or so we will need to decide which School affiliation will best serve the developmental needs of Drama & Theatre Studies.”*
- **The Competitive Environment.** *“Formulating imaginative, appropriate and workable responses to the changing landscape of arts training in the region, nationally and internationally will be crucial to the survival and growth of Drama & Theatre Studies.”*
- **Resources.** *“Finding ways of properly resourcing the Drama & Theatre Studies Programmes in terms of staffing, spaces and equipment will be a particular*

challenge under the new RAM arrangements. We have already begun to find mechanisms to tackle some of this issue but need to negotiate them through the appropriate university bodies.”

The Peer Review Group also notes the conclusions of Drama & Theatre Studies with regard to its assessment of the discipline’s strengths and weaknesses:

“Broadly speaking the discipline runs well in an informal and friendly way but needs to be strengthened in terms of communications and systems of management. Staff are strongly motivated and committed to the task in hand but are somewhat over-stretched in terms of teaching, leaving insufficient time for research. Over the next few months, we need to take action on the following specific issues:

- *Formulate a long-term strategy for the development of the discipline*
- *Seek improvement to staffing levels (including administrative and support staffing)*
- *Re-examine workloads to see if we can work more effectively*
- *Institute more formal delegation procedures (including appointment of year leaders, for instance)*
- *Seek formal secondments (fulltime or part-time) for staff based outside Drama & Theatre Studies*
- *Regularise Board and Management Committee meetings*
- *Actively seek improved space allocation for staff, teaching and postgraduates.”*

In that regard the Peer Review Group considers the SWOT to be a useful forerunner of sustained strategic thinking. For the most part the Peer Review Group agrees with the issues raised by the SWOT analysis that are discussed in a thematic way in the sections that follow.

Benchmarking

The Peer Review Group notes and commends Drama & Theatre Studies on the number of benchmarking visits undertaken. The benchmarking exercise was considered strategically effective, given that it reflected the aspiration of Drama & Theatre Studies to be compared to the most highly regarded and well-established departments in the UK and their immediate peers in Ireland.

However the Peer Review Group did consider that Drama & Theatre Studies were overly aspirational in benchmarking itself against some of the universities given the length of establishment and resources available therein. The Peer Review Group considered that including some recently established Drama departments would have provided more appropriate comparison, in addition to those chosen by Drama & Theatre Studies.

A detailed comparative analysis by the Board between the benchmarked sites and Drama & Theatre Studies at UCC would have been helpful in terms of future strategic planning.

DISCIPLINE ORGANISATION & MANAGEMENT

Drama & Theatre Studies was initially established as an interdisciplinary programme under the Board of Drama & Theatre Studies. At the time of its establishment, the University administration deemed it necessary for academic programmes to be anchored within an existing academic department. The Department of English took on this role and has hosted the Board's operations to date. The Peer Review Group were informed that arrangements are now in train to make clearer the financial and administrative independence of Drama & Theatre Studies as an independent Discipline under the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences. The undergraduate programme had its first intake in 2001-02 with an enrolment of fifteen students; it now has an annual intake of approximately twenty-five first years with a total of approximately seventy undergraduate students for the programme. Also in 2001-02, seven students enrolled on the MA in Drama & Theatre Studies programme. The annual intake on the MA programme has increased to fifteen per annum and there are also four PhD students and one MPhil student currently registered.

As well as an academic base, the degree has a placement component and there is a strong emphasis on practical work.

Staffing

The following table, based on Appendix A of the Self-Evaluation Report, summarises the staff from the contributing departments.

Department	Number of Academic Staff	Teaching Contribution to Drama & Theatre Studies
Drama & Theatre Studies	3.5	3 full-time permanent and one 0.5 contract post

In addition, lecturing staff in the Departments of English, French and German all contribute to the teaching of the programmes in Drama & Theatre Studies. Drama & Theatre Studies also employs the services of the Technical Manager of the Granary Theatre and of some visiting lecturers on a part time basis.

The staff has varying levels of input into the programme and their status varies from permanent full-time to temporary part-time. The Management team consists of the Director and the full time Drama & Theatre Studies staff, supported by a part-time temporary Executive Assistant.

The Peer Review Group notes the recommendations of the Self-Evaluation Report for the

- appointment of a full-time technical support staff member
- a full time administrative support
- and enhanced staffing

to maintain the discipline's position in an increasingly competitive environment.

The Peer Review Group also notes the requirement expressed by Drama & Theatre Studies for additional specialist teaching staff in order to implement the proposed Single Honours programme and to enable the expansion of PhD numbers.

It is the view of the Peer Review Group that the delivery of the programme to date owes much to the goodwill of certain staff members, which is not sustainable in the long term. The Peer Review Group wishes to commend the commitment of those staff and in particular that of the Director with whom so much of the credit associated with the development of the programme to date rests. The Peer Review Group recommends that such commitment be recognised and rewarded.

The Peer Review Group notes the reliance to date of Drama & Theatre Studies for leadership on staff with significant commitments in other departments, particularly in a context where work pressures are increasing for all categories of staff.

It is a strategic imperative for the long term leadership and direction of the unit that a full-time Chair in Drama and Theatre Studies should be created.

Recommendations:

The Peer Review Group recommends that the establishment of a Chair should be incorporated within the strategic planning process.

The Peer Review Group recommends that the current Director should be appointed to lead Drama & Theatre Studies on a full time basis, particularly given the immediate strategic decisions to be considered and progressed and until the appointment of a Chair is made.

The Peer Review Group notes that the reliance of one-off contract staff for both teaching and technical support represents an important weakness in the delivery of the programmes of Drama & Theatre Studies. It also acknowledges and compliments the quality of administrative help given to the Board of Studies and recognises the desire to appoint a full time administrator. However the Peer Review Group considers that a strategic review of the future direction of the discipline, including the development of a five year Strategic Plan, should be undertaken before any permanent appointments are made in these areas. The potential alignment within certain Schools will inform the rationale for appointments within the discipline going forward and it would be premature to make such appointments in the short term.

Space

In most universities space is at a premium and this is clearly the case at UCC. The Peer Review Group notes the very poor quality of space available to Drama & Theatre Studies which is inhibiting both the administration and teaching quality of the programme at present. The fact that staff are not located in one central space is unacceptable. Furthermore the existing space available to staff is too small and quite inaccessible. The Peer Review Group has concerns with the Health and Safety of some of the office space currently provided. The

Administrator's office is inappropriately placed to deal with the regular comings and goings of eighty to ninety students.

The Peer Review Group also considers the existing teaching space to be inadequate to meet the requirements of the programme. The existing space is too small to properly facilitate the class sizes in Drama & Theatre Studies. There is no dedicated performance space at the disposal of Drama & Theatre Studies. Although the Granary Theatre provides a useful specialist resource to support the programme, access is restricted during the main two teaching terms to seven to eight weeks in all.

The physical distance between teaching spaces causes frustration for staff and students in that travel time disrupts the class timetable. This needs to be addressed as soon as possible by the University.

Recommendations:

The Peer Review Group recommends that in the immediate term the University moves to ensure all Drama & Theatre Studies staff offices are located in the same building. The University should also seek in the short term to harmonise the distribution of teaching spaces with the demands of the timetable as far as possible.

In the long term the Peer Review Group recommends that a feasibility study for a purpose-built central space for Drama & Theatre Studies be undertaken by the University.

The Peer Review Group welcomes the comments of the Head of College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences in supporting such an initiative.

Discipline Organisation & Governance

Clarifying roles and responsibilities

The Peer Review Group is aware that the University is currently undergoing the re-structuring of its academic administration and notes the opportunities that this might create for the reconsideration of the governance of this discipline. In particular there is a necessity for Drama & Theatre Studies to place the discipline strategically in the new structures.

Recommendations:

It is the recommendation of the Peer Review Group that in the first instance the current Management Team (Director and full-time Drama & Theatre Studies staff) should have the responsibility to consider the strategic future of Drama & Theatre Studies. This Group should make recommendations on the future strategic alignment of the discipline to the Board for consideration.

The present system of establishment of a Board of Studies with responsibility for the programme needs to be reviewed.

In particular the existing informal structures which have been established over time need to be replaced as it is the view of the Peer Review Group that the informal arrangements are now under strain and consequently a more structured management of the discipline is required.

The roles and responsibilities of the Board, the Director and the Management Team need to be defined and clarified, with appropriate recognition for the efforts of staff who are involved in the management and delivery of the discipline. As it stands a heavy administrative load falls on the Director of the Discipline.

Recommendation:

The Peer Review Group recommends that the terms of reference of the Board of Drama & Theatre Studies be reviewed and re-defined.

Formal arrangements regarding the complement of the Board, tenure of Board members and responsibilities of the Board should be reviewed in the light of changing circumstances.

Recommendation:

The Peer Review Group recommends that the administration of the Discipline by the Management team (as presented in the Self-Evaluation Report) be formalised. The appointment of a full-time Director is essential in this regard.

The Peer Review Group recommends that the responsibilities of each staff member with regard to roles and responsibilities be made explicit.

The Peer Review Group noted from the Self-Evaluation Report that certain responsibilities had been assigned, i.e. Research Officer, but it was unclear as to the specific tasks applied to the actual role.

Department based Structures and Systems

With most interdisciplinary disciplines, there is a risk that the programme may become identified with one department, or with a small group of individuals. The Peer Review Group considers that this has happened in the case of Drama & Theatre Studies, where it is apparent that the leadership of the current Director is recognised throughout the university as having been the driving force in the development of the discipline to date. The Peer Review Group is concerned with regard to the future leadership of the discipline once the current Director reaches retirement age.

Recommendation:

As part of the strategic review of the discipline, Drama & Theatre Studies needs to incorporate a succession planning element for the long term leadership and ongoing development of the programmes.

At present, funding in UCC is predominantly department based and this creates difficulties for interdisciplinary programmes. At present the student FTEs (full-time equivalents) are allocated to Drama & Theatre Studies and participating departments are compensated financially for their contribution to the teaching of the programmes. Some participating departments have indicated their desire to renegotiate this arrangement. The University has an important role to play in the encouragement of interdisciplinary programmes, in particular in the establishment of transparent mechanisms for the allocation of resources (staffing, finance, space). The Peer Review Group welcomes the introduction of the Resource Allocation Model and wishes the needs of interdisciplinary programmes to be supported under the model. It is understood that discussions are ongoing at Senior University Management with regard to how FTE's and ultimately income is allocated to such programmes. The Peer Review Group also notes the recent establishment of Drama & Theatre Studies as a discipline which will allow for greater transparency in the allocations to the discipline. Historically financial allocations were made direct from Faculty or College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences to Drama &

Theatre Studies. Drama & Theatre Studies was given a separate account number for the management of these funds as a sub-code within the English Department accounting codes. From autumn 2008 this will no longer be the case.

The Peer Review Group noted that full and independent budgetary control has been exercised by the Head of Drama & Theatre Studies for many years. Complete separation from the host department of financial matters (in terms of cost codes, etc.) would, however, assist in making this independence clearer and more apparent in the University.

Recommendation:

The University should undertake to ensure the complete separation of financial matters (in terms of cost codes, etc.) for Drama & Theatre Studies from any department.

Summary of Recommendations

The Peer Review Group recommends that:

- A Chair in Drama and Theatre Studies be established as part of the strategic development of the discipline
- The current Director be seconded on a full time basis to Drama & Theatre Studies to lead and manage the required strategic development of Drama & Theatre Studies
- A review of the management structure of the Drama & Theatre Studies discipline, including the current Board, is undertaken immediately to establish clearer definitions of roles and responsibilities
- The University provide appropriate dedicated space and facilities for the teaching and administration of the discipline, including for the support of research postgraduate students
- The University develop its policies and workable formulae for budgetary aspects and resource allocation for interdisciplinary degree programmes in the context of the RAM (Resource Allocation Model).
- Consideration be given by the University to ways of incentivising the participation of schools and colleges in interdisciplinary degrees.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Review of the curriculum of the degree programme

The Peer Review Group notes the context of the ongoing restructuring within the University and that Drama & Theatre Studies is considering its own alignment within the School structure developing in the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences. Drama & Theatre Studies has to consider where best to position itself in a restructured University/College and where it should align itself going forward.

The Peer Review Group noted from students the tension between the weighting applied to academic work versus the weighting applied to practical work and the Peer Review Group recommends that Drama & Theatre Studies review the existing credit weightings to address some of these concerns. The Peer Review Group notes that there was consistent need expressed by staff and students for the expansion of the practical element of the course but an injection of resources was required to facilitate it.

Concern was raised regarding accessibility to the technical component of the programme and the Peer Review Group recommends that the University facilitate the appointment of a technical resource to allow for development in this area.

The Peer Review Group observed that finalisation of the curriculum was a protracted process in any year particularly with regard to the complexity of timetabling within an interdisciplinary environment. The Peer Review Group considers it important that curriculum be agreed much earlier than is currently the case.

Quality of Teaching

In general, the quality of teaching across the discipline is very good and is very well appreciated by the students. This was evident from discussions between students and the reviewers and the evaluation forms included in the Appendices to the Self-Evaluation Report. The Peer Review Group noted the comments from external stakeholders regarding the professionalism being imparted by lecturers to the students and many former students commented favourably on their continuing use of particular learning methodologies they first encountered on the Drama & Theatre Studies Programmes, e.g. use of journals.

The heavy teaching commitments of staff engaged with the Drama & Theatre Studies Programmes were noted by the Peer Review Group. Given the extensive practical component of the course, student contact hours are high on this course, thereby placing greater demands on staff in Drama & Theatre Studies than in more traditionally book-based academic programmes.

It was not clear from the Self-Evaluation Report or from meetings between staff, students and the Peer Review Group how often students are regularly reviewed for their opinion on the quality of the teaching and learning experience, though the Peer Review Group noted the largely very positive experience of most students.

Feedback on assignments

The Peer Review Group considers that the assignments, both practical and written, that the students have to complete are valuable. However, it recommends that standard protocols regarding the return of assignments and staff members' terms of engagement with students should be established to ensure that students can benefit fully and consistently from comments and feedback at strategic points in the programme.

Student Feedback

The Peer Review Group commends efforts made by all staff to ensure that the students are supported in all aspects of their experience in UCC.

Recommendation:

The Peer Review Group recommends that students should have a representation on the future oversight of Drama & Theatre Studies so any issues from the student perspective regarding the quality of teaching can be addressed formally.

This might include student representation on the Board of Studies or the establishment of a formal staff student liaison committee.

Work Placements

The Peer Review Group is of the opinion that the work placement experiences form a valuable aspect of the programme. However, students and stakeholders suggested that the timing of the current placement within the curriculum was problematic as some theatre companies close for

the summer when the placements usually occur. The Peer Review Group also noted that the coordination of placements was *ad hoc* and to some extent, it was left to the students themselves to organise.

The Peer Review Group recommends that consideration be given to moving the placement from the Summer to Easter and to applying a more structured and coordinated approach to the student placement process.

The Peer Review Group also recommends that in the context of any future curriculum developments the length of the placements should also be reviewed in the light of the aims and objectives of the programme.

Single Honours Degree

The Peer Review Group notes plans by the Drama & Theatre Studies to introduce a single honours degree. This has not as yet come to fruition due to the unavailability of resources required to deliver same.

Recommendation:

The Peer Review Group recommends that the University provide the resources to deliver this programme as a priority, given the desire of students in particular for the inclusion of more practical and technical elements to the existing joint honours programme, and the evidence of successful provision in Drama & Theatre Studies to date.

Recommendations:

The Peer Review Group recommends:

- That the University facilitate the appointment of a technical resource to allow for development in this area.
- An induction programme be considered, especially for mature students who might not be familiar with the university environment.
- More formal feedback arrangements should be established to ensure that students can benefit fully and consistently from the comments and feedback at strategic points in the programme.

- An exit presentation for students be considered which includes career planning, preparation for interview and construction of CVs and other issues relating to their future outside of UCC.
- That consideration be given to moving the placement from the Summer to Easter and to applying a more coordinated approach to the student placement process.
- That in the context of any future curriculum developments the length of the placements should also be reconsidered in the light of the aims and objectives of the programme.
- That students should have a representation on, or to, the planning committee of the Drama & Theatre Studies so any issues from the student perspective regarding the quality of teaching can be addressed formally.

RESEARCH & SCHOLARLY ACTIVITY

Overview of Research

There are currently many research strengths in the Departments which contribute to the Drama & Theatre Studies discipline. All of the full time staff involved in the Discipline have either a PhD or are currently pursuing a PhD and are also research active. A small number of individuals have extensive research portfolios and a national or international profile in their disciplines in the area of Drama & Theatre Studies. It is noted that there are currently four students pursuing PhD's in Drama & Theatre Studies and another currently pursuing an MPhil.

The Peer Review Group acknowledges the time restraints on staff, due to very heavy teaching commitments and the difficulties associated with balancing teaching and research commitments. However, the Peer Review Group noted that to date Drama & Theatre Studies had had little engagement with the Office of the VP for Research who had resources to facilitate and develop research amongst staff.

Promoting Interdisciplinary Research

Despite the strength of research profiles in individual areas, little interdisciplinary research appears to be taking place across the cognate departments involved in delivering the Drama &

Theatre Studies Programmes. The Peer Review Group recognises that there may be tension between department based and inter-departmental research. In particular, it understands that according to current structures in UCC the lack of management and budget line encourages the former over the latter. For that reason the Peer Review Group suggests there is a need to look at ways of encouraging and promoting interdisciplinary research between all staff and postgraduate students in the area of Drama & Theatre Studies. The Self-Evaluation Report suggests that Drama & Theatre Studies has a dedicated Research Officer but the Peer Review Group could not ascertain the precise role of this staff member, and therefore recommends that the role be reviewed and, if necessary, revised. The Peer Review Group recommends that an integrated research strategy be drafted in Drama & Theatre Studies and that a Research Committee attached to the discipline be established to facilitate this. Furthermore staff should be encouraged to construct an individual five year research plan and to explore synergies and common themes in the research of all staff. The exploration of the potential for the joint submission of applications for research funding should be investigated.

Staff Development

It is important for the quality of the teaching and development of the discipline that it is research led. This is also important for staff members' personal and professional development and for progressing the promotional prospects of individual staff members. The Peer Review Group notes the difficulties for staff in a small department to access sabbatical leave given the already heavy workloads. The Peer Review Group believes there is an important leadership role for senior staff in the Discipline in encouraging interdisciplinary research in all areas of the programmes.

Recommendation:

The Peer Review Group recommends that the Director of the Drama & Theatre Studies engage with the Head of College re the provision of additional funding to allow for existing staff to avail of sabbatical leave to further research activity.

The Peer Review Group notes the comments of the Head of College that some funding is available from the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences for research support.

Summary of Recommendations

The Peer Review Group recommends

- That an integrated research strategy be drafted in Drama & Theatre Studies and that a Research Committee attached to the discipline be established to facilitate this; to explore synergies and common themes in the research of all staff and to explore the potential for the joint submission of applications for research funding.
- The Peer Review Group recommends that the Director of the Drama & Theatre Studies engage with the Head of College re the provision of additional funding to allow for existing staff to avail of sabbatical leave to further research activity.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Drama & Theatre Studies Profile

The Peer Review Group notes the high regard that the Drama & Theatre Studies Programmes is held within the local and national stakeholder group and the international reputation of certain staff members in the area of research and publication. There was a consistent acknowledgement by stakeholders of the high quality of the graduates of the programme, in their professionalism, discipline and academic achievement. Drama & Theatre Studies has established strong links both locally and nationally with theatre companies and drama groups and there is recognition of the quality of the programme being delivered.

Support Services – Library

The Peer Review Group found the library facilities were excellent and wishes to encourage greater use of this resource. The Peer Review Group encourages the exploration of ways to develop greater use of the library and specialist librarians by students. This might be facilitated by greater coordination between teaching and library staff - the Self-Evaluation Report makes reference to a library representative but again clarity regarding the exact nature of that role needs to be defined.

Students on the Drama & Theatre Studies Programmes currently enjoy strong support from the subject librarian and from the number of staff currently available to provide support and assistance on the library floor.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Peer Review Group would like to summarise the detailed recommendations in this report as follows:

Governance

- It is recognised by the Peer Review Group and Drama & Theatre Studies that this is a transitional time in the Discipline's development where the informal structures are under strain and Drama & Theatre Studies needs to move to more formalised structures. The opportunity exists under restructuring to suggest new structures.
- There needs to be a suitable academic synergy between Drama & Theatre Studies and future partners.
- A five year plan needs to be constructed incorporating specific preferences regarding the alignment of Drama & Theatre Studies with other departments.
- The management committee should make recommendations to the Board of Studies regarding proposals for the strategic development of Drama & Theatre Studies. Once the position of Drama & Theatre Studies within the new structures has been consolidated, the new Drama & Theatre Studies Board of Studies should begin by establishing clear terms of reference.

Teaching and Learning

- The Peer Review Group recognises a need to address issues around the tension that staff experience in terms of their own career advancement, specifically in terms of balancing research, teaching and professional responsibilities.
- The Peer Review Group considers that feedback on assignments and performances needs to be more structured. Specific protocols need to be developed and formalised.
- Access to specialist spaces needs to be extended to facilitate teaching and learning agendas in Drama & Theatre Studies.

- The placement is a very valuable addition to the course; however, a designated placement co-ordinator to prepare students and supervisors is necessary for optimum results.
- The location of the placement in the Easter period is advised by Peer Review Group.

Curriculum Development

- The Peer Review Group suggests that the more technical and administrative areas of the course need to be further developed.
- The Peer Review Group recommends that the issues which emerged from discussions with students around weightings need to be addressed as inconsistencies between workloads for 10 and 5 level credit weightings were evident.
- An issue arose around induction and a need was identified for designated staff contact for induction which the Peer Review Group would endorse.

Research and Scholarly Activity

- The Peer Review Group recommends that connections between Drama & Theatre Studies and the VP for Research be extended. The Peer Review Group considers the interdisciplinary nature of Drama & Theatre Studies is a real strength in terms of supporting cross-disciplinary research, an area that is ripe for development in the current University research climate. The Peer Review Group recommends that Drama & Theatre Studies should take an active role in the development of new models of clustered research thereby, building on the existing connections.
- The Peer Review Group recommends that a research officer be appointed with a clear remit to further promote and progress the research agenda, including the 4th level agenda and to increase the number of PhD students.
- *Perforum* should be further developed as it was seen by all as a real strength, facilitating good contact between students and a wide network of professional practitioners. *Perforum* was identified as a unique contribution that Drama & Theatre Studies makes to the broader cultural life of Cork and anchors it within this context.

Staff Development

- The Peer Review Group recognises a need to provide greater opportunities for sabbatical/research leave to pursue research agenda/s.
- Each member of staff should be supported to construct a five year research plan.

Services

There is a clear need for more formalised support structures within Drama & Theatre Studies for students including:

- Placement coordination and support, including preparing the students in advance.
- Induction support for First Year students, particularly mature students on the BA and MA courses.
- There is a need for specific roles and responsibilities of staff to be established, including year co-ordinators and research officer.
- Clear mechanisms and protocols are required for feedback on written and practical work and for maintaining ongoing communication with students.

Staffing

- There is a need to redress the current over-reliance on part-time and contract staff.
- A clear succession plan is needed to ensure the ongoing growth and development of Drama & Theatre Studies.
- Additional teaching and technical staff are needed to consolidate developments and to progress Drama & Theatre Studies profile both nationally and internationally.
- A strategy regarding staff progression and the development of promotional opportunities and career paths for staff in Drama & Theatre Studies is essential.

Accommodation

- Space is a major issue and the Peer Review Group endorse what is said in the Self-Evaluation Report – there is no scope for expansion without additional appropriate teaching space being made available.

- An immediate housing of all Drama & Theatre Studies staff within the one building is essential. This would include the teaching and administration staff.
- The tension between the demands of the timetable and the need to travel between teaching spaces should be urgently addressed.
- A purpose built accommodation would be desirable and important.

Communications

- Communicating with other key areas of the university is important and Drama & Theatre Studies needs to represent its own interests better – optimally drawing on the wider resources of the university and becoming a more visible presence.
- The website needs to be upgraded and regularly maintained for optimum profile.

Future developments

- There is a desire amongst staff and students to introduce a single honours undergraduate programme in Drama & Theatre Studies. This initiative is supported by the Peer Review Group and it is recommended that the University seeks to facilitate this development through appropriate resourcing of the discipline.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

This section gathers together the Peer Review Group comments regarding the recommendations for improvement made in the Self-Evaluation Report as well as the Peer Review Group's own recommendations for improvement.

Response to Recommendations made in the Self-Evaluation Report

The Peer Review Group endorses all of the recommendations made in the Self-Evaluation Report.

Key Recommendations for improvement made by the Peer Review Group

- The Peer Review Group recommends a Chair in Drama & Theatre Studies be established. The establishment of a Chair is necessary for the strong leadership of the discipline within

a new School structure and the Chair would serve to consolidate the reputation of Drama & Theatre Studies.

- A dedicated head of unit (Peer Review Group recommends that this should be the current Director of Drama & Theatre Studies initially) should be appointed.
- The Strategic Plan should also include a recommendation that Drama & Theatre Studies proceed towards single honours but with a precondition of additional resources to be made available.
- An increase in staff of Drama & Theatre Studies is required, both as a precondition of single honours provision and to progress the 4th level agenda.
- The Peer Review Group strongly recommends that Drama & Theatre Studies develop a strategic plan by the end of 2008, led by someone with appropriate leadership skills and experience such as the current Director, working with the Management committee. The Strategic Plan should include expanding Drama & Theatre Studies to support achieving the criteria for appointment of a Chair.
- The Peer Review Group suggests that the interdisciplinary basis of the taught programme may have to be reviewed and negotiated to address issues of strategic and operational management in the context of structural changes within the institution. In terms of research, there is potential for strengthening arrangements to support interdisciplinary collaborations with Drama and Theatre Studies staff.

APPENDIX 1

PEER REVIEW GROUP SITE VISIT TIMETABLE

In Summary

- Tuesday 20 May: The Peer Review Group arrives at the Kingsley Hotel for a briefing from the Director of the Quality Promotion Unit, followed by a meal with representatives from Drama & Theatre Studies.
- Wednesday 21 May: The Peer Review Group considers the Self-Evaluation Report and meet with programme staff and student and stakeholder representatives. A working private dinner is held that evening for the Peer Review Group.
- Thursday 22 May: The Peer Review Group meets with relevant officers of UCC. An exit presentation is given by the Peer Review Group to all Drama & Theatre Studies staff. A working private dinner is held that evening for the Peer Review Group. This is the final evening of the review.
- Friday 23 May: External Peer Review Group members depart

Tuesday 20 May 2008	
16.00 – 18.00	Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group Briefing by Director of Quality Promotion Unit, Dr. N. Ryan. Group agrees final work schedule and assignment of tasks for the following 2 days. Views are exchanged and areas to be clarified or explored are identified. Venue: Suite 1, Business Centre, Kingsley Hotel
19.00	Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group, Director of Programme and representatives from the programme. Drama & Theatre Studies Representatives: Dr Franc Chamberlain Ms Bernie Cronin Dr Ger FitzGibbon (Director) Ms Siobhan Keane-Hopcraft Dr Mary Noonan Dr Roisin O’Gorman Dr Manfred Schewe

Wednesday 21 May 2008		Venue: O’Rahilly Building, Room 201
08.30 – 09.00	Convening of Peer Review Group and consideration of Self-Evaluation Report	
09.00 – 09.30	Dr. Ger FitzGibbon, Director, Board of Studies, Drama & Theatre Studies Programmes	
09.30 – 10.30	Meeting with the teaching staff and Board members of Drama & Theatre Studies Dr. Stephen Boyd Ms Ann Callaghan Dr Franc Chamberlain Ms Bernie Cronin Dr Ger FitzGibbon (Director) Dr Gert Hofmann Ms Siobhan Keane-Hopcraft Dr Carmel McCallum Dr Chris Morris Dr Mary Noonan Dr Roisin O’Gorman Dr Manfred Schewe Dr Ber Sweeney	
10.30 – 10.45	Tea/coffee	
10.45 – 12.00	Private Meetings with Teaching Staff <i>Peer Review Group Members:</i> <i>D. Rabey, C. Halton, O. McBride</i> 10.45 Dr Ber Sweeney 11.00 Dr Franc Chamberlain 11.15 Dr Roisin O’Gorman 11.30 Ms Siobhan Keane-Hopcraft 11.45 Ms Bernie Cronin Venue: O’Rahilly Building, Room 201	Private Meetings with Board Members <i>Peer Review Group Members:</i> <i>C. McSweeney & C. Upton</i> 10.45 Dr Manfred Schewe 11.00 Dr Mary Noonan 11.15 Dr Gert Hofmann 11.30 Dr Carmel McCallum Venue: O’Rahilly Building, Room 244
12.00 – 13.00	Working private lunch for members of Peer Review Group	
13.00 – 15.00	Visit to core facilities, escorted by Dr. Ger FitzGibbon, Director, Board of Studies, and Dr Franc Chamberlain. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meet at Granary Theatre - Foyer 2. Visit Sheares House (staff office) 3. Muskerry Villas (staff and Drama & Theatre Studies admin offices) 4. DramaLab (S4), Conn B teaching room & storage facilities. 5. Room J1 (or similar) 6. Granary Theatre and Studio. 	

15.00 – 15.30	<p>Representatives of 1st Year BA Students</p> <p>Aoife Clarke Donna Keeney Maeve Bolger Sean Creagh Annette O’Shea Mark O’Sullivan</p>
15.30 – 16.00	Tea/coffee break
16.00 – 16.30	<p>Representatives of 2nd and 3rd Year BA Students</p> <p>Annie Hoey (2nd Year) Mary Ronayne-Keane (2nd Year) Emma Nash (3rd Year) Amy O’Connell (3rd Year) Laura Wyatt (3rd Year)</p>
16.30 – 17.00	<p>Representatives of Graduate Students</p> <p>Fiona Brennan (PhD) Aoife Cahill (MA) Sile Penkert (MA) Irene Kelleher (MA) Billy Kennedy (MA)</p>
17.00 – 18.30	<p>Representatives of recent graduates, employers and stakeholders</p> <p>Ms. Ann Barry, Cork School of Music, Graduate and Drama teacher Mr Tony McCleane-Fay, Artistic Director, Granary Theatre Ms. Emelie Fitzgibbon, Graffiti Theatre, Employer/Stakeholder Ms. Julie Kelleher, Meridian Theatre Company, Cork, Graduate and Theatre Administrator Ms. Maeve Lewis, Granary Theatre Administrator, Stakeholder Ms. Kate McCarthy, Drama Department, Waterford Institute of Technology, Graduate and Drama lecturer Ms. Ide McSweeney, Masters Graduate of Drama & Theatre Studies and freelance Drama Teacher Ms. Oonagh Montague, Corcadorca, Cork, Employer and Theatre Administrator Ms. Mairin Prendergast, Stakeholder, Graduate, Actress and Drama teacher Ms. Marion Wyatt, Theatre Programme, Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa, Graduate, Director and Employer.</p> <p>Venue: Staff Common Room, North Wing, Main Quadrangle</p>
19.00	<p>Meeting of Peer Review Group to identify remaining aspects to be clarified and to finalise tasks for the following day, followed by a working private dinner.</p>

Thursday 22 May 2008	
Venue: Tower Room 1, North Wing, Main Quadrangle	
08.30 – 09.00	Convening of Peer Review Group
09.00 – 09.30	Professor Paul Giller, Registrar & Senior Vice-President
09.30 – 10.35	Visit to UCC Library, meeting with Ms. Margot Conrick, Head of Information Services and Mr Ronan Madden, Subject Librarian
10.35 – 10.55	Professor Colbert Kearney, Head, Department of English
10.55 – 11.15	Tea/coffee
11.15 – 11.30	Ms. Áine Foley, Finance Office
11.30 – 12.15	Professor David Cox, Head of College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences
12.15 – 12.35	Professor Peter Kennedy, Vice-President for Research, Policy & Support <i>(Conference call)</i>
12.35 – 13.00	Professor Grace Neville, Vice-President for Teaching & Learning
13.00 – 14.00	Working private lunch for members of Peer Review Group
14.00 – 14.30	Dr. Ger FitzGibbon, Director, Board of Studies
14.30 – 17.00	Preparation of first draft of final report (tea/coffee at 15.30)
17.00 – 17.30	Exit presentation to all staff made by Professor David Rabey, Chair of the Peer Review Group summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group.
19.00	Working private dinner for members of the Peer Review Group to complete drafting of report and finalise arrangements for completion and submission of final report.