

**University College Cork  
National University of Ireland, Cork**

**Quality Improvement/Quality Assurance**

**Peer Review Group Report**

**History of Art**

**Academic Year 2004/05**

**26<sup>th</sup> October 2005**

### **Members of the Peer Review Group:**

- Professor Eamonn O Carragáin, Department of English, UCC (Chair)
- Dr. Grace Neville, Department of French, UCC (Rapporteur)
- Professor Lena Johannesson, Department of Art History & Visual Studies, University of Gothenburg, Sweden
- Professor Lubomír Konecný, Institute of Art History, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague, Czech Republic.

### **PEER REVIEW**

#### **Timetable of the site visit**

The timetable is attached as Appendix A.

The timetable was suitable and adequate, and the location in the seminar room of the Department of History of Art was comfortable and appropriate.

#### **Peer Review**

The members of the PRG worked as a group for all meetings and for the drafting of the PRG Report. The two external members took particular responsibility for the teaching, curriculum and research activities. All members participated in all review activities during the two-day site visit.

#### **Site visit**

The PRG visited all the teaching rooms, including those in the West Wing and the Kane Building that are assigned to the department for delivery of teaching. The PRG found the rooms, including those in the West Wing and in the Kane Building, allocated to the department to be well equipped, pleasant and with good facilities (that included data projection), and equivalent to the standards pertaining in their home institutions.

On the other hand, the seminar room in the History of Art building on Perrott's Avenue is quite unsuitable for the large number of students using it. It was particularly clear from the explanations given by Mr. Tony Perrott who met with the

PRG. An interesting and imaginative solution would be to attract donor funding to equip one of the rooms in the Connolly Building for the needs of Art History students and those of cognate disciplines (for example, Film Studies, Drama & Theatre Studies) given the increasing popularity of these subject areas for students. This could lead to the development of a compact hub or centre for image studies which would also encompass nearby locations such as the UCC Granary Theatre and the Kino Cinema. This would also address the need to facilitate the booking of rooms for longer periods than one hour for film and similar activities.

The PRG recognizes the general principle that care of equipment must be the responsibility of a department - thus ensuring the equipment will be cared for. On the other hand, however, there is an issue for the university in rooms being 'owned' by a particular department. This proposal would suggest that the Department of History of Art would have primary control over a room but would agree to allow it to be used by other departments when not in use by the Department.

In the interim, the PRG strongly recommends that links be fostered with the Kino Cinema in order to alleviate current pressing needs for suitable venues for showing of films, etc.

The PRG noted security issues surrounding the seminar room in Perrott's Avenue. If a dedicated centre for image studies was put in place, this would solve many of the issues and concerns of staff and students.

### **Peer Review Group Report**

The reviewers drafted the recommendations and findings of the report during the site visit on the Wednesday and Thursday evenings. The report was finalised by communications via email subsequent to the visit. All the reviewers concur with the content and recommendations contained in the report.

## **OVERALL ANALYSIS**

### **Self-Assessment Report:**

The PRG found the SAR to be a very interesting, open and honest document, which presented a true reflection of the Department. Any additional information requested by the PRG was provided immediately by the Department, including detailed information on funding and teaching workloads. The Department should be commended for the forthcoming nature of the document. Detailed information on staff profiles of all teaching staff should have been provided in the original documentation. No part-time staff profiles were included in the original document.

### **SWOT Analysis**

The Department prepared a SWOT analysis in which all members of the Department participated. The PRG endorsed the analysis and addressed a number of issues raised by the Department in the findings described in this report.

One of the great strengths of the Department is that its staff comprises a number of scholars studying art from different perspectives. They are operating in a harmonious environment. There is a consensus that the thrust of the Department should not only be in any one particular direction. Another very real strength of the Department lies in the diversity of approaches by the staff to the study of art history, something that is clearly valued by the staff and students of the Department. Both students and staff agreed that the Department does not and should not alienate students who are not interested in particular periods. The PRG strongly recommend that both strengths in the Department should be retained.

The PRG were concerned that not all teaching staff have doctorates and, particularly in the context of the attraction of potential PhD students, recommend that this weakness be addressed and remedied.

The PRG also noted with concern the high number of part-time teachers in the Department, some of whom teach for very few hours per year. While this is essential for the delivery of the teaching in the immediate term, the PRG would warn against this becoming a permanent feature of the departmental operation. The PRG were

pleased to note that more recent figures show that in 2004/05 this trend is beginning to be reversed, helped by a new appointment.

Among potential opportunities, the department were very well aware of the potential in fostering links with the Glucksman Gallery and the Crawford College of Art, and noted the recognition of the department in this matter. The PRG recommends that this very important aspect of the work of this small department be continued and expanded.

The most significant threat is a feature of the unusual organisation of the Department, whereby the Head of Department is present in UCC for only half the year. In the context of re-structuring, the PRG is particularly concerned at the potential risk to the department of the consequences of the present incumbent leaving his post and no replacement being made. Would this lead to the closure of the Department and/or to its merger into another larger department? Neither option would, in the opinion of the PRG, necessarily be in the best overall interests of the discipline within UCC.

### **Benchmarking**

The PRG noted that the benchmarking exercise carried out by the staff of the Department. The PRG would have liked to see evidence of further benchmarking and comparisons with some European institutions/non-English language speaking comparable departments elsewhere.

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

### **Department Details**

A significant amount of teaching was delivered by part-time staff in 2003/04. The PRG were concerned, but noted this will be reduced in the areas of 20<sup>th</sup> century art history by a new permanent appointment that has been made. While this enables the undergraduate programmes of the department to be carried out by qualified staff, the committee are of the opinion that this is the absolute minimum necessary and that, as student numbers continue to increase, the PRG recommends that consideration should be given to the appointment of more permanent staff.

In general the PRG was pleased to observe that the student FTEs have significantly increased, and that PhD candidates are already present in the Department.

In general terms, the PRG consider that in the medium term it is crucial that all the academic staffing of the Department should have attained a qualification to doctoral level, as it is only such members that can fittingly engage in PhD teaching and supervision.

### **Department Organisation & Planning**

The Department is very well run, with evidence of good structures and advanced planning. Lectures are well planned; and the PRG were particularly impressed with the production of stores of images well in advance of lectures; it noted that this is an admirable element of department, immensely appreciated by students at all levels. The basic structures of the Department are sound and efficient, with planning of the Department being excellent, both scholarly and innovative, combining a broad ranging survey of historical phases of mainly Western art history, with third year students being introduced to topics ranging from very traditional to modernist. We feel students should be prepared in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Years for the contemporary emphases that they will meet in 3<sup>rd</sup> Year. Similarly, students should be introduced to methodology in 1<sup>st</sup> Year.

The Department should have regular meetings to discuss courses, policy and future development. This is particularly important in the case of a new and developing department.

The PRG was of the opinion that the transitional phase in which the Head of Department is present for only half a year is justified by the remarkable achievement of the last two years. However, the committee and all the staff consulted are strongly of the opinion that this arrangement must come to an end in 2006. Without a fulltime Head of Department, the proper development of the Department cannot be assured.

The PRG would recommend that a representative of the part-time teaching staff be a member of the departmental staff committee in order to ensure better integration of

this category of staff in the work of the Department and its planning. This is very much standard practice in many departments in UCC.

### **Teaching & Learning**

The PRG were very impressed with the quality of teaching and with student morale. It was clear that students feel engaged in an elite activity, and are excited to be involved in what they see as a pioneering programme of study with new courses. The PRG was appreciative of the high level of commitment of members of staff but somewhat concerned at the ability of the staff to sustain this indefinitely.

The PRG highly commended the imaginative and comprehensive IT services organised by the department for its staff and students. The PRG feels that the expertise within the Department in this area represents a unique opportunity not just for the Department but for the entire Faculty of Arts. This use of IT pioneered in this Department could be expanded and under the auspices of the Teaching & Learning Support Group in UCC, and the expertise of staff in this Department could thus be supported and made available to other departments.

### **Research & Scholarly Activity**

The PRG were immensely impressed by the creativity of staff of the Department. For the future, it would be desirable that the scholarly activity be further distributed throughout the Department. The management of research and scholarly activity in an academic department in the first instance is dependent on there being a fulltime head in the department in question.

The PRG recommend better preparation in the medium and long-term for seminars and reading groups, in advance of internationally acclaimed scholars visiting UCC, in order to maximise the use of their time while on campus for the benefit of staff and students and the wider college community. The presence of such scholars on campus represents another unique opportunity for the department and the whole university community. There should be a closer relationship between visiting scholars / the Department of History of Art and cognate departments.

The Committee noted that among the stakeholders there was an admirable desire for the department to establish clearer links between international movements in the art world and the Irish response to such international movements.

The PRG would like to see clearer links established between the international and the Irish experience in the courses offered in the department.

The PRG would like to see some evidence of collaborative research projects being developed. The committee noted with approval one example of such a collaborative research project and would encourage further activity in this area.

### **Staff Development**

PRG would recommend that the Department consider planning for sabbaticals. PRG recommended that such planning for sabbatical leave be envisaged well in advance. The PRG note that this is commencing and recommends that this development be strongly encouraged in the future.

### **External Relations**

The PRG noted that the department has already fostered and established strong relationships with the Glucksman Gallery, the Crawford College of Art and other local and national institutions. The PRG recommends that the department continue to strengthen these links.

At the stakeholders meeting, it was evident that the activities of the department have made a considerable impact on other educational institutions in Cork and are welcomed by them. The PRG considers that the activity of the department in encouraging visual awareness throughout the College is praiseworthy and admirable, and notes the combined seminars it is planning to hold with the Crawford College of Art.

The PRG considers that closer connections can and should be established between the Department and other units in the Arts Faculty e.g. Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Film Studies, Drama & Theatre Studies, and School of Languages and Literature.

Stakeholders expressed strong interest in postgraduate training in art theory (to be more closely defined and integrated into a study of methodology, for students of all levels) but also in the art of curatorial and art management and administration. This however would depend on new appointments.

The Department should try to establish closer contacts with similar institutions in Europe, for instance in Scandinavia, and with other departments with similar interests not only in history but also in visual studies. The PRG considers that while the links with the USA are obviously rich and important, it is of primary importance to explore links with European institutions. The PRG consider that such links would enable the Department to respond to the general policy of the university of fitting within an international European framework. It is only under such conditions that fully fruitful links in Europe can be established.

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

All members of department participated in the preparation process of the Self-Assessment Report.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

The PRG considered all recommendations made by the department in the SAR and have included comments on these in the text above. Herewith is a summary of the recommendations of the PRG (incorporating those of the department) and on which more detailed comment may be found in the text of this report.

### **Recommendations**

1. It is imperative that the question of the headship of this department be addressed in the immediate future. The arrangement regarding the current headship is that the present incumbent is head for half of each academic year. All things considered, the PRG feel that this arrangement is not in the best interests of the Department or the discipline, and must not be allowed to

continue indefinitely. We strongly recommend that from the end of the current arrangement, a full-time head be appointed in the Department of History of Art and that the necessary arrangements should be put in place well in advance of that date.

2. It is vital that the rich diversity of approaches to the history of art currently fostered among departmental staff be maintained; alternative traditions should be actively integrated (as in the Annales School, Bologna semiotics, the Warburg Institute tradition, the works of Carlo Ginzburg, Simon Schama, Peter Burke, Michael Twyman, etc.).
3. We advise that the possibility of attracting donor funding to fully equip one of the rooms in the Connolly Building for the needs of, *inter alia*, History of Art students be investigated. This could lead to the imaginative development of a compact hub or Centre for Image Studies, which would also encompass nearby locations such as the UCC Granary Theatre and the Kino Cinema. In the interim, links should be fostered with the Kino Cinema in order to alleviate current pressing needs for suitable venues for showing of films, etc.
4. The Department should ensure better preparation for seminars and reading groups, in advance of internationally acclaimed Art History scholars visiting UCC, in order to maximise the use of their time while on campus for the benefit of the whole college community; this should include acquisition of materials for the Boole Library where necessary, so that a real dialogue can ensue between visiting scholars and students/ staff.
5. The Department should ensure that scholarly activity is more evenly spread throughout the staff of the entire department.
6. The Department should ensure that all teaching staff across the Department have doctorates.
7. The Department should ensure that, as far as possible, teaching is delivered by full-time staff.

8. The Department should plan well in advance for sabbatical leave and other types of staff development.
9. The Department should continue to foster fruitful links with local stakeholders such as the Glucksman Gallery, the Crawford College of Art and Design and the CIT.
10. The Department should focus further in its work on other comparable European institutions/non-English language speaking departments elsewhere.
11. The Department should establish clearer links between international movements in the art world and the Irish response to such international movements.
12. The Department should ensure greater 'follow through' from First Year to subsequent years by introducing some elements of the current Final Year programme into First Year.
13. The Department should continue to foster collaborative research projects with other departments throughout the University.
14. The Department should explore the possibility of introducing postgraduate programmes in art theory and also in the art of curatorial and art management and administration.
15. Consideration should be given to providing a full-time administrative assistant for the Department. In the meantime, the current arrangement whereby the Departmental executive assistant has a photocopier in her office should be discontinued for health and safety reasons.

**Timetable for conduct of Peer Review Visit  
Department of History of Art**

***Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2005***

- 17.30 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.
- 19.30 Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group and Head of Department and Departmental Co-ordinating Committee.

***Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2005***

- 08.30 Convening of Peer Review Group in Seminar Room, No. 3 Perrott's Avenue  
Consideration of Self-Assessment Report
- 09.00 Professor James Elkins, Head of Department
- 09.30 Meeting with all members of Department
- 10.30 Tea/Coffee for PRG + All members of Department
- 11.00 Conference Call with Dr. Flavio Boggi
- 11.30 Meetings with individual staff
- 11.30 Dr. Sabine Kriebel  
11.45 Mr. Simon Knowles  
12.00 Dr. Jennifer O'Reilly  
12.15 Ms. Veronica Fraser
- 12.30 Meeting with part-time lecturers
- 12.45 Ms. Ann Wilson, *Cork Institute of Technology*
- 13.00 Working private lunch for members of Peer Review Group
- 14.00 Professor Peter Kennedy, Vice-President for Research Policy & Support
- 14.30 Professor Paul Giller, Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs
- 15.00 Consideration of Issues by PRG
- 15.25 Representatives of 1<sup>st</sup> Year students
- I.M. Selby-Bennetts
  - Patrick K. Morel-Berthlie

- Oisin Brady
- Miranda J. Corcoran,
- Emily Curley
- Sarah E. Lynch
- Julia Mary Nolan

15.50 Representatives of 3<sup>rd</sup> Year students

- John-Paul MacMahon
- Enda Horgan
- Majella Egan

16.15 MPhil students

- Teresa Briganti
- Martin Dineen
- Emma Rowe

17.00 Representatives of external stakeholders

- Ms. Fiona Kearney, *Director, Glucksman Gallery*
- Mr Geoff Steiner-Scott, *Principal, Crawford College of Art & Design*
- Mr. Peter Murray, *Curator, Crawford Art Gallery*
- Ms. Dawn Williams, *Exhibitions Officer, Crawford Art Gallery*
- Ms Marguerite Lynch, *Centre for Adult Continuing Education and member of Glucksman Board*
- member of *Visual Arts Society*

19.00 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 for members for the Peer Review Group.

***Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2005***

08.30 Convening of Peer Review Group in Seminar Room, No 3 Perrott's Avenue

09.00 Mr. Michael O'Sullivan, VP for Planning, Communications & Development

09.30 Visit to core facilities of Department escorted by Mr. James Cronin

10.00 Visit to Boole Library, meeting with Ms. Margot Conrick, Head of Information Services and Ms. Olivia Fitzpatrick, Subject Librarian

10.30 Tea/coffee

11.00 Mr. Tony Perrott, Head, Audio-Visual Services, UCC

11.15 Ms. Carmel Cotter, Finance Office

11.30 Professor David Cox, Dean of Faculty of Arts

12.00 MPhil students cont'd

- Bernie McCarthy

12.05 Representatives of 2<sup>nd</sup> Year students

- Daniel Deasey
- Thomas Curtin
- Aoife Leach
- Ruth O'Sullivan

12.30 Professor James Elkins, Head of Department

13.00 Working private lunch for members of the Peer Review Group

14.00 Professor Dermot Keogh, Head, Department of History

14.30 Preparation of first draft of final report

17.00 Exit presentation, to be made to all staff of the Unit by the Chair of the Peer Review Group or other member of Peer Review Group as agreed, summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group.

The presentation was not for discussion at this time.

Venue: Seminar Room, Dept of History of Art, No. 3 Perrott's Avenue

19.00 Working private dinner for members of the Peer Review Group to complete drafting of report and finalisation of arrangements for speedy completion and submission of final report.

***Friday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2005***

Externs depart