

Quality Enhancement Plan

School of Food and Nutritional Sciences

Originally prepared April 2019; Revised February 2025

FOR COMPLETION BY QEU	
Date of Peer Review visit: 19 th – 21 st September 2017	Head of Unit: Professor Alan Kelly
Link to Panel Report published on QEU website: https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/qualityenhancementunit/reports/sefs/FoodandNutritionalSciencesPRGReport201617.pdf	Date QEP considered by Quality Enhancement Committee: 15 th May 2025

Item No	Panel Recommendation	Actions carried out by April 2019	Actions ¹ carried out by February 2025	Responsibility for Action ²	Impact & Completion Status ³
1	The Panel recommends that the School develops a Strategic Plan, with a shared vision integrating the interests of all the disciplines across the School, and puts in place, with the involvement of the College and University, an	Work commenced on each strand of the strategic plan and an implementation plan, including the School mission and core values, ambition in terms of teaching and learning, research, achievement, development of human capital, capital	Development of a formal Strategic Plan was paused in 2020 due to Covid and the subsequent introduction of UCC Futures - Food, Microbiome and Health, which is a significant consideration in terms of the research element of	HoS, SM, MCTO	While there are still some academic posts outstanding that need to be filled, FNS is nearly fully staffed. There has been an increase in the number of interdisciplinary research projects (e.g., co-led by food

¹Outline the actions taken to implement the panel recommendation

² Give the title of those responsible for the implementation of the panel recommendation E.g. Head of School, School Manager, all staff, specific committees etc

³ If achieved, outline the impact of the implementation of the recommendation. If not yet achieved outline the current completion status.

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	<p>ambitious Implementation Plan to support the School in delivering on the University's strategy to be leaders in Food and Nutrition. Among the issues to be addressed in the Strategic Plan are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A shared vision and mission for the whole School - A staff recruitment strategy which takes account of imminent retirements and succession planning over the next five years and beyond <p>Mechanisms for supporting interdisciplinary engagement across the School by bringing people (staff and students) together socially, physically and academically through, <i>inter alia</i>: providing shared spaces for academic and social interaction; developing opportunities for knowledge-sharing and inter-professional learning and research; supporting a Graduate Committee for networking and peer-support amongst postgraduate students.</p>	<p>development and engagement with Food-related stakeholders Nationally and Internationally.</p> <p>The HoS developed with the Head of SEFS, HR Business manager and the financial analyst a 3-5 years recruitment and staff development plan.</p> <p>The School developed a refurbishment plan, including reorganisation of office and laboratory spaces.</p> <p>Initial meeting of Processing Hall working group was held, March 2019. Shared physical space for academic and social interaction exist currently.</p> <p>The School planned to hold its first annual Internal Conference in September 2019 to facilitate sharing, networking and learning across research disciplines.</p> <p>The School underwent a revision of its operational structure. Our priority, to place teaching and learning and research at the core</p>	<p>our Strategic Plan. The planning process has been reactivated</p> <p>FNS developed a recruitment strategy as part of the Futures initiative and hired approx. 10 new academic staff since 2017.</p> <p>Refurbishment of the building took place in 2024 and included a new staff kitchen, upgraded lab spaces and new offices.</p> <p>A Strategic Plan for Dairy Science was developed by the School in 2022 to harness the historical strengths of the School, and position it for growth, in this area</p> <p>Initiatives were introduced across FNS to promote interdisciplinary engagement. These include a monthly seminar series, Christmas party, Foodie Fridays and a new tea room.</p> <p>The Internal Conference was held in Dec 2019 in the facilities at Nano Nagle and was a success. Further conferences were paused due to Covid but reintroduced in 2022 and 2023. Unfortunately, it was again</p>		<p>science and nutrition colleagues, funded by sources such as DAFM, Industry and SFI/RI) undertaken in the school and representation on committees is balanced with members of food science and nutrition.</p> <p>New academic programmes and modules were introduced by the School in 2023 (e.g., PG Diploma and MSc in Dairy Technology and Innovation).</p> <p>Two new interdisciplinary academic staff (Senior Lecturer in Sustainable Dairy Processing and Lecturer in Nutritional Dairy Ingredients) were recruited in 2023.</p> <p>Alignment with the development of the UCC Futures area in Food, Microbiome and Health is part of our overall strategic planning process.</p>

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		of the School structure, includes the creation and support of dedicated UG and Graduate Committees, with links to the relevant T&L and Research committees. Operational structure revision, May 2019. UG committee initiated, March 2019.	<p>paused in 2024 due to Project Alpha but will take place in 2025.</p> <p>Some operational structures were updated in 2019 however, Covid 19 paused further changes.</p> <p>Structures were again assessed and updated in 2023 on the appointment of the new HoS.i Changes included; the creation of the PG Studies Committee, now separate from the Research & Innovation Committee, a revised SMT and the introduction of a Vice-Head role.</p>		
2	The Panel recommends that the School should pursue the external accreditation of the BSc in Nutritional Science <u>as a matter of top priority</u> given that their original accreditation has lapsed and liaise with AfN to see how best this can be achieved in the shortest time possible. In addition, the School should actively engage in external communication and dialogue to examine the potential of IFST becoming an external professional	<p>The application for AfN accreditation of our <i>BSc Nutritional Sciences</i> was submitted May 2019.</p> <p>The <i>BSc Food Science</i> programme became accredited with IFST (until September 2023, and first course outside the UK); https://www.ifst.org/organisations-accreditation-schemes/accredited-degree-programmes</p>	<p>The BSc Nutritional Sciences received AfN accreditation in 2024 following a lengthy review process.</p> <p>BSc Food Science was reaccredited with IFST in 2024.</p>	Programme directors, HoS	<p>Accreditation for both programmes received, and the AfN accreditation was confirmed in 2023. Several follow-on modifications to the BSc Nutritional Sciences have had to be made to be compatible with the terms of this accreditation.</p> <p>Accreditation on both UG programmes has led to an increase in CAO points in 2024.</p>

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	accrediting body for the BSc in Food Science.				
3	The Panel recommends that the School implements a transparent workload model and develops a plan to support career development of all staff, through mentoring, training and balanced workloads to allow staff to achieve key performance indicators.	<p>Data on the <i>Academic Work Distribution Model-Full Economic Costing</i>: 2016/2017, instigated by UCC central administration, was completed by all School academic staff by summer 2018.</p> <p>In addition, School academic staff completed an in-house survey in relation to their number of lectures and lab hours for academic year 2018/19. This is used by the Head of School in allocating teaching loads. This is to be repeated and analysed annually by the HoS in collaboration with programme Directors, academic and technical support staff to ensure transparency.</p> <p><i>Performance and Development Reviews (PDRS)</i> 2017/18 were undertaken in Spring 2018. The next cycle of PDRS will be undertaken in 2020.</p>	<p>Further development of a Work Load Model was paused due to Covid 19 as priorities were redirected. Currently development of a new model is in progress, with the proposal under discussion in SMT.</p> <p>FNS also submitted an application for a Silver Athena Swan Award in 2024 which was awarded in March 2025.</p>	HoS	A new system, developed by the HoS, for recording the breadth of academic staff activities is being piloted in Spring 2025 (TRAC).

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		As per our Athena Swan Action Plan, submitted in April 2019, all staff with line-management responsibilities, including Principal Investigators with post-doctoral researchers and other research staff, will undertake training in performance development and review to facilitate the creation of professional development plans by all staff.			
4	The Panel recommends that the School leverages the goodwill of industry links and their willingness to engage e.g. for teaching, guest speakers, career events, seminars etc. In addition, the School should exploit the opportunities for building and harnessing academic links with APC, Teagasc and others by, for example, exploring the possibility of joint academic appointments.	<p>UCC's Food Institute was launched in January 2019 and the School is fully engaged with this initiative, has membership of its strategy group and will input to the formulation of the Institute strategy and operational plan during the 2019 planning phase. The UCC Food Institute plans to engage a high level Advisory Board, for the benefit of Food at UCC, including the School.</p> <p>The School already has strong links with Industry. For example, the School provides extensive</p>	<p>The School regularly engages industry speakers for lectures and other events, and through FITU. In addition the school has made good use of strategic appointment of adjunct staff, who come from Teagasc, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, the HSE and industry (e.g., Nestle). A number of innovative joint programmes have also been launched with industry, such as a UCC-Kerry MSc programme, the first graduates from which will be conferred with their degrees in March 2025.</p> <p>Existing industry support has been maintained, and new supporters secured for prizes to recognise</p>	HoS	<p>Industry engagement has continued as per the actions in April 2019. This has been further strengthened by the involvement of the Alumni and Development Office. FITU have also grown stronger in recent years with increased programme offerings and bespoke training for companies on their request.</p> <p>The Food Institute has now been superseded by the development of Futures – Food, Microbiome and Health.</p>

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		<p>support to the Food Industry Training Unit, including its management team and programmes and in turn benefits by deep engagement with the Agri-Food sector.</p> <p>The School has a wide industry collaborative network, including the Dairy Processing Technology Centre, The Meat Technology Ireland, both Enterprise Ireland funded.</p> <p>Individual staff members engage continually with the food industry sector, which is responsive to invitations for guest lectures, hosting of student placements, and site tours on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>We have approximately 8 joint appointments with Teagasc and several School academic staff are APC faculty. The Academic appointments process is discussed in Point 1.</p>	<p>student academic achievement in our UG and PG programmes.</p>		

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5	The School should ensure that the programmes continue to be responsive to industry needs, for example, by monitoring placement length and where resources permit, include sensory and statistical elements within modules, or provide electives for other food areas such as seafood.	<p>The School's programmes continue to be responsive to industry needs; however, in the past we have had mixed messages from industry regarding the length of the work placement (i.e., whether it should be 6 months or 9 months), and we will continue to review this.</p> <p>We surveyed our students in 2016/17 and 2017/18 in relation to their satisfaction around placement length (71-90% reported Good to Excellent).</p> <p>A review of the <i>BSc Food Science</i> and <i>BSc Food Science and Technology International</i> is well progressed and still ongoing (see also point 10).</p> <p>Statistical/data handling and analysis skills are being addressed in all three UG programmes.</p>	<p>Programmes undergo continuous review, in particular as part of the accreditation process. Both UG programmes underwent changes to meet accreditation needs as well as part of the introduction of the CIM system.</p> <p>Programme Academic Boards of Study are now in place for all BSc and MSc programmes, and are taking the lead in monitoring the areas mentioned, in line with the introduction of new UCC systems such as CIM Modules and CIM programmes. External feedback such as External Examiner reports, student employer/mentor feedback and the Business Advisory Board of FITU remain a key source of validation and quality control.</p> <p>The introduction of new staff has increased the module offerings to reflect industry needs with modules such as innovative food transformation, food formulation and design, and food factory design introduced.</p>	School Teaching and Learning Committee	<p>Accreditation of the BSc Food Science, BSc Nutritional Sciences and MSc Human Nutrition and Dietetics programmes.</p> <p>Increase in CAO points in 2024.</p>

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			Statistical/data handling and analysis skills are still being reviewed.		
6	The Panel recommends that the School put formal staff-student committees or processes in place to get feedback from students particularly at module and year level.	<p>Staff-student committee (as outlined opposite) has been active over 2018 and 2019. The information gathered from these meetings were fed into the School Academic Committee for consideration and actioned, where appropriate.</p> <p>A bespoke Undergraduate Student Questionnaire was administered to all our undergraduate students (years 1 through to 4 in both BSc programmes) in 2016/17 and 2017/18 academic years. This questionnaire was designed by the School for our previous Quality Review with the purpose of gaining insight into students' overall view of the BSc programmes.</p> <p>A report on the survey findings was considered by the School Teaching and Learning</p>	<p>Staff-student committee (Student Experience Committee) is still operational and provides students with opportunity to voice requests, and concerns. The committee contains representatives from all programmes and years.</p> <p>A new module survey was developed in 2024 and is now being sent out to all students at the end of each semester. Time is being allocated in lectures and labs for completion to maximise response rates, and feedback from the first cycle of the survey is currently being reviewed to identify follow-up actions.</p>	School Teaching and Learning Committee	Teaching and Learning Committee regularly review feedback and consider same when reviewing modules and programmes.

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		<p>Committee, and actioned, where appropriate.</p> <p>A survey for 2018/19 academic was conducted in Spring 2019</p> <p>As per point 1, a new student undergraduate committee has been initiated based on feedback from students as to their preference for a forum. This student-led committee, supported by School administrative staff and the HoS, has been initiated (March 2019).</p>			
7	The Panel recommends that the School explores more non-traditional approaches to teaching and learning, and engage with the OVPTL for this.	<p>We have established a new Working Group for Teaching & Learning Innovation, including both academic and technical support staff, in January, 2019. Two volunteers (one each from academic and technical support staff) explored options around the best forum within the School in which staff who have undertaken PGCert, PGDip and MA in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education can share experiences and innovations.</p>	<p>The Working Group for Teaching and Learning Innovation was curtailed by Covid 19.</p> <p>In 2023 Foodline UCC delivered 173 webinars and 17 short courses to students from 39 countries. This innovative teaching approach allowed wide dissemination of food and nutritional science advancements.</p> <p>School staff are leading a major international Erasmus+ funded Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) project on development and implementation of innovative</p>	School Teaching and Learning Committee/FI TU	<p>Currently FNS has an active Teaching and Learning Committee which consider best practice for teaching.</p> <p>A Summer School was held in UCC in June 2023 for 50 students and teachers across Europe to supporting teaching, learning and development of a community of practice of teachers across Europe.</p> <p>An online Dairy Hub virtual learning environment is under</p>

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		This forum is now established and will report into the School Academic and Technical Committees as well as the School Assembly.	teaching and learning resources and skills to support the dairy sector. FNS also introduced induction sessions for new academic staff.		development and will be launched in June 2025.
8	The Panel recommends that the School ensures parity and equity of access for post-graduate research students to resources, including shared spaces, computers, research equipment etc. A transparent process for this needs to be implemented.	<p>This was discussed in detail at the School Management Team, School Academic Committee and the Technical Support Officer meeting. There is a gap between the physical presence of a piece of equipment and its accessibility for student projects, often for valid reasons, including the technical expertise required for operation, maintenance and repair costs and its usage for research projects, often funded by the agency that funded the equipment purchase.</p> <p>The School has generated a list of its research equipment, highlighting pieces of equipment that are available and not available for shared access, along</p>	Our recent remodel of the main research labs on floors 1 and 2 of the food science building and areas of the processing hall have proven popular with research students as they have more dedicated spaces.	School Management Team	<p>FNS continues to have one of the highest PhD numbers in UCC as our reputation is excellent.</p> <p>Included in the recent refurbishment were dedicated spaces for PG research students with computer access. This upgrade has included areas for PG research students with computer access to facilitate their work and writing up of results.</p>

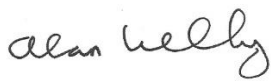
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		<p>with information on key restrictions such as training, essential support requirement from technical support/researcher to operate the equipment, cost, contribution to service contract costs, and rough lead times for access.</p> <p>This will improve clarity and access for student projects and promote collaboration between research groups.</p>			
9	The Panel recommends that the School ensures the integration of international students by involving them in different aspects of School activities and social events and ensuring that Irish students in the School benefit from this multicultural environment as well.	<p>A School Undergraduate Student Committee was established in March 2019. The minutes indicated that students wanted more Food Science and Nutrition-focussed social and science-related events. The Quiz run by Dr A Lucey in 2017 was a great exemplar of a successful event. The Committee wish to organise their own events, with peer support, including a class specific event in the evening of orientation day.</p>	<p>A number of new actions have been introduced to better integrate international students into the school.</p> <p>For undergraduate students (e.g., those in our partner programmes with Beijing Technical and Business University), these include welcome events on arrival in Cork.</p> <p>As another example, BTBU President Prof Guo Jianhua visited UCC in September 2024,</p>	HoS/Director of International BSc programme	BTBU have extended the agreement with UCC on the International programme and the School has been approached by other Chinese universities for similar agreements.

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		A reception to celebrate the end of year will be held for final year students of all undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes in May 2019. A Start-of-year reception for all students and staff was held for the first time in September 2018, incorporating a prize ceremony and past graduate speakers: this will be an ongoing annual event.	and students were invited to a get together in the glass atrium for the BTBU president visit with refreshments. Finally, the research postgraduate population of the school (and the MSc Food Science class) continues to be largely international.		
10	The Panel recommends examining the weighting of the marks attributed to lab work and the preparation of guidelines in advance of the labs. In addition, where possible an emphasis on food/nutrition is incorporated in modules at the earliest stages of the degree programs.	As part of the review of BSc Food Science and International, the School has restructured third-year laboratories and practicals into a stand-alone module, which will address this concern. From the 2018-19 academic year the School will increase the amount of Food Science modules in the first year of the BSc Food Science from 5 to 10 credits and we will also bring 5 credits of food processing into 2 nd year	The introduction of the CIM system meant a review of all modules and its content to ensure they are in line with UCC requirements. Lab work was included in this with changes such as doubling of labs to accommodate class sizes and the introduction of lab competency training for the MSc students.	School Teaching and Learning Committee	Both BSc programmes were reviewed and amended for their respective accreditations. Mark weighting is now in-line with professional body requirements.

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		(previously it was introduced in 3 rd year).			
11	The Panel recommends the encouragement and support of an inclusive and collaborative student society in association with the UCC Societies Guild which actively engages with all students within the School. This should be student-led and incorporate representation from each student group (class representatives, international student representative, postgraduate representative etc.) on its committee to drive its active engagement and success as an inclusive student society for the School.	The School agrees with this recommendation: we propose to encourage establishment of a student society along the lines suggested.	The Food and Nutrition Society/Foodies has been reactivated.		The School continues to support and encourage student social interactions.
12	The Panel recommends that the School examines the programme content on the Postgraduate Diploma in Nutritional Science to ensure employability and progression of graduates and ensure that students receive comprehensive information in relation to graduate outcomes	<p>The School plans to review its postgraduate programmes in Nutritional Sciences in the light of the introduction of its MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics in 2020.</p> <p>The PG Diploma in Nutritional Sciences may evolve into a feeder</p>	The need and sustainability of the PG Diploma in Nutritional Sciences programme was strategically reviewed and a decision made in 2022 to discontinue .	Programme Director, Teaching and Learning Committee, SMT	The PG Dip in Nutritional Sciences was phased out and finally discontinued in 2022. Student numbers on the programme were low and the impact was minimal.

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	prior to entering the School's programmes	programme for the MSc, or we may choose to phase it out.			

For completion by Unit

Head of School/Unit: Prof Alan Kelly	Signature: 	Date: 6/5/25
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Head of College/Functional Area:	Signature: 	Date: 08/05/2025
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