

# QUALITY REVIEW FOLLOW-UP REPORT

## DEPARTMENT OF PHYSIOLOGY

### Introduction

A meeting to discuss progress made in implementing recommendations for improvement arising from the review of the Department of Physiology was held on 30 January 2008.

Present: Professor Patrick Fitzpatrick, Head, College of Science, Engineering and Food Science  
Professor Robbie McConnell, Acting Head, College of Medicine and Health  
Professor David Kerins, Head, School of Medicine  
Professor Edward Johns, Head, Department of Physiology  
Dr Norma Ryan, Director, Quality Promotion Unit  
Ms Deirdre O'Brien, Administrator, Quality Promotion Unit

### Abbreviations

*PRG: Peer Review Group*

*QPC: Quality Promotion Committee*

*SEFS: Science, Engineering & Food Science*

*M&H: Medicine & Health*

*VP: Vice-President*

*QIP: Quality Improvement Plan*

*HR: Human Resources*

*B&E: Buildings & Estates*

<b>PRG Recommendation</b>	<b>QPC Recommendation</b>	<b>Follow-up Report Jan 08</b>
That the possibility of combining students from different streams into common modules be examined.	Recommendation endorsed.  The QPC recommended that the Department should keep this issue under continuous review, with an examination of all possibilities, on an on-going basis.	Ongoing  This recommendation is under active debate within the Department and changes are introduced every year in an effort to implement this recommendation. It should be noted that Physiology, to a large degree, is subject to the decisions made in other departments regarding their course delivery and timetable and the Department cannot always dictate the curriculum and how it is delivered.
That the Department give consideration to the potential advantages that would accrue from the clustering of cognate disciplines such as Physiology, Pharmacology and Anatomy.	Recommendation endorsed.  The QPC noted the positive response of the Department to this recommendation. The QPC recommended strongly that discussions around this issue and possibilities arising from this should proceed.	Ongoing  Discussions are ongoing, in the light of academic restructuring, regarding a potential new working relationship between Physiology, Anatomy and Pharmacology. It is hoped these discussions will be finalised in the current academic year.

<b>PRG Recommendation</b>	<b>QPC Recommendation</b>	<b>Follow-up Report Jan 08</b>
<p>That the Department/discipline of Physiology be represented at Faculty Board or equivalent decision-making body in the new College of Medicine and Health. Effective communication channels need to be established in order that all relevant decisions be communicated to the Department in sufficient time for the Department to respond.</p>	<p>The QPC noted the positive response of the Department to this recommendation and the reasons for it. the QPC endorsed the recommendation that effective channels of communication be established. The QPC was of the opinion that all the pre-clinical sciences (and clinical disciplines) should be represented at College of M&amp;H Board and that mechanisms should be put in place to effect this</p>	<p>Not implemented</p> <p>This recommendation has not been implemented to date; however, it will be addressed and explored during the on-going restructuring process.</p>
<p>That, in view of the unacceptable quality of the present building, the University takes measures to rectify this as a matter of urgency.</p>	<p>The QPC noted that within the new 4<sup>th</sup> level initiative there will be money set aside for refurbishment of 'older' buildings the Universities. The University is aware of the difficulties experienced in the Windle Building and is hopeful that money will be released by the Government in 2006 for such purposes.</p> <p>The QPC recommended to Buildings &amp; Estates that the refurbishment of the Windle Building be listed as a priority as soon as funds become available.</p> <p>The QPC also noted that there if the Universities are part of the NPD 2006 – 20011 then this might provide another source of funds</p>	<p>Implemented</p> <p>This recommendation has been implemented. Physiology will be housed in the new IT Building which is due for completion in December 2008. However, there remains some concern that the Department may be divided physically between two locations. Presently there is no accommodation for staff in the new IT Building and assurances are being sought that all departmental offices and laboratories will be located in the IT Building</p>
<p>That teaching at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels be supported by a senior administrator, to be appointed in addition to the existing Senior Executive Assistant. Such a resource could more likely be provided by an amalgamated structure. The appointment of a senior administrator would free up technical support time</p>	<p>The QPC referred this recommendation to the Acting Head of the College of M&amp;H for consideration. The QPC also noted that such appointments are more likely in an amalgamated structure and recommended that this possibility be very actively explored.</p>	<p>Not implemented.</p> <p>The implementation of this recommendation is dependent on the outcome of restructuring and the proposed new working relationship between Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology.</p>

<b>PRG Recommendation</b>	<b>QPC Recommendation</b>	<b>Follow-up Report Jan 08</b>
<p>That all course and year co-ordinators be clearly identifiable to the student body.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>The QPC noted the departmental response re the identification of coordinators in the Book of Modules but is concerned that such information is also made available in student handbooks and on Notice-Boards in the Department. The appointment of year co-ordinators was deemed very important.</p>	<p>All co-ordinators are identified in the Book of Modules and on Blackboard. All year coordinators have been identified, noting that slightly different arrangements pertain in the School of Medicine.</p>
<p>That, in light of current significant teaching commitments of the staff, the Department may wish to consider further exploiting IT resources for delivery of course material</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>The QPC noted that the Computer Centre has taken over the management of the computers in the Department and that the Department should liaise with the Computer Centre on the support to be provided.</p> <p>The QPC also suggested that the Department should liaise with the Schools in the Brookfield Campus concerning the possibility of sharing some of the excellent facilities provided there.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>There is an increased use of IT, where possible. A large number of new laboratory sessions have been developed and additional IT support will now be provided to all departments by the School of Medicine.</p> <p>However, the IT facilities cannot be used to their full potential because of constraints in the Windle Building. It is anticipated that the facilities in the new IT building will allow for the full implementation of this recommendation.</p>

PRG Recommendation	QPC Recommendation	Follow-up Report Jan 08
<p>That teaching delivery, currently on a course-wide basis, be replaced with one more focused on a systems-based model. This would facilitate teaching across programmes and reduce duplication of effort.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed. The QPC welcomed the response of the Department that the recommendation will be considered very carefully.</p>	<p>Ongoing This recommendation has been implemented in part with the BSc programme and is under active development, with regular and ongoing discussions at departmental level.</p>
<p>That any further expansion of teaching commitments be matched by resource allocation to recruit appropriate lecturing staff</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p>	<p>Implemented Three new staff have been employed and will commence work over the next three months. The Head of Department is anxious to ensure adequate office space for them and has undertaken to write to the UMG Space Sub-Committee in this respect.</p>
<p>That a mechanism be developed to provide feedback to students following examination and other methods of assessment.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed. QPC welcomed actions taken by Department (... <i>informal feedback is given to students who fail their examination and support is given. In terms of MCQ tests, the Department is currently developing software whereby MCQ tests can be provided, marked and a degree of feedback given almost instantaneously. This will initially be tried and tested by having lab tests at the end of each practical using the computer systems. In this way, the student should have informative feedback on their learning objectives almost immediately</i>).and noted that a grant to assist in this project has been provided from the Quality Improvement Fund 2005</p>	<p>Ongoing This is being actively considered and developed within the Department. The MCQ developments (software providing instant feedback) introduced to date are working well.</p>

PRG Recommendation	QPC Recommendation	Follow-up Report Jan 08
<p>That the Department continues to develop its BSc Physiology Degree, into a truly flagship programme that will provide a platform for the expansion of postgraduate driven-research.</p>	<p>Recommendation strongly endorsed.</p> <p>Response of Department welcomed (<i>this recommendation is one that is already being actively considered by the Department and in fact the process was begun in 2002. The appointment of two new academic staff, the disruption of teaching synergies for Medical, Dental and Science students has meant that the Science course had to be taught entirely separately. Thus, the Department has seized this opportunity and meetings are being held to develop a flagship programme for the BSc Physiology Degree</i>).</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>The Department continues to develop and implement strategies to ensure that the BSc Physiology Degree is the flagship programme of the Department.</p>
<p>That the Departmental Strategic Plan should take particular cognisance of research opportunities to develop translational research programmes from molecules to man.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p>	<p>Implemented</p> <p>The Department has begun to develop a Research Plan. All research active staff have contributed to a potential research strategy.</p>
<p>That further encouragement be given to the development of collaborative research, by members of staff, with others in cognate research areas in other departments</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>The Department is actively pursuing research collaborations.</p>
<p>That a formal appropriate representative Departmental Committee be established, which should meet at least once a term</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>QPC noted and welcomed action by Department (a <i>Departmental Committee has already been established and has met twice. Its composition and remit are still under consideration and development. Several sub-groups have been established to monitor and report on progress of teaching in each of the major programmes. The plan is that the full committee will meet at least twice per term</i>).</p>	<p>Not implemented</p> <p>Due to administrative shortages all departmental committees meet on an <i>ad hoc</i> basis. The Head of Department has undertaken to write to the Head of College to pursue the additional administrative support required.</p>

PRG Recommendation	QPC Recommendation	Follow-up Report Jan 08
That a staff /student liaison committee be established	Recommendation endorsed.	Not implemented As above - due to administrative shortages all departmental committees meet on an <i>ad hoc</i> basis. The Head of Department has undertaken to write to the Head of College to pursue the extra administrative support required.
That the allocation of teaching and other duties be done in a fully transparent manner.	Recommendation endorsed.	Ongoing The Department has developed a workload plan which will be considered further at the next departmental Away Day.
That the Department develop a Strategic Plan, covering teaching, research, administration and other aspects such as staff and curriculum development	Recommendation strongly endorsed.	Ongoing The Departmental Strategic Plan is still under development.