IRIU REPORT

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW OF

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK

~ JUNE 2013 ~

IRIU

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW
OF IRISH UNIVERSITIES

QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

THE IRIU OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK (UCC)*

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* This review was conducted by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CIT	Cork Institute of Technology (CIT)
EUA	European Universities Association
GB	Governing Body
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HETAC	(Formerly) Higher Education Training and Awards Council
Ionad Bairre	UCC's Teaching & Learning Centre [The Irish name of the Centre is a translation of the first part of the college motto 'Where Finbarr Taught let Munster Learn'] http://www.ucc.ie/en/teachlearn/about/history/
IMI	Irish Management Institute
ISAR	Institutional Self-Assessment Report
IUQB	(Formerly) Irish Universities Quality Board
NAIRTL	National Academy for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning
NUI	National University of Ireland
NUIG	National University of Ireland Galway
QPC	Quality Promotion Committee
QPU	Quality Promotion Unit
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
QR	Quality Review (of academic departments, support units and services)
RQR	Research Quality Review
UCC	University College Cork
UCD	University College Dublin
UMTO	University Management Team (Operations)
UMTS	University Management Team (Strategy)

FOREWORD BY QQI

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012, came into effect on 5th November 2012 and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established on 6th November 2012. On that day, Section 35 of The Universities Act, 1997, was repealed and QQI took over responsibility for the external quality assurance review of the universities, the function previously performed by the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) through its Institutional Review of Irish Universities (IRIU) process.

The IUQB was established in 2002 to support and promote a culture of quality in Irish Higher Education and to independently evaluate the effectiveness of quality processes in Irish universities, as required by The Universities Act, 1997. In 2004, the IUQB and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) jointly commissioned the European Universities Association (EUA) to undertake the first cycle of institutional quality reviews of the seven Irish universities.

In 2009, following consultation with a range of key stakeholders, the IUQB finalised the process for the second cycle of institutional quality reviews. The IRIU process operates in line with national legislation and agreed European standards. Previous reports arising from institutional quality assurance reviews of and by Irish universities, in accordance with The Universities Act, 1997, are published at: HTTP://WWW.IUQB.IE/REVIEWS/

THE REVIEW TEAM

The UCC review was conducted by the following team of six reviewers selected by the IUQB Board from the IRIU Register of Reviewers in 2012. The Review Team was trained by QQI on the requirements of the IRIU process in Dublin on 8th November 2012. The Chair and Co-ordinating Reviewer undertook a Planning Visit to UCC on 9th November 2012. The Main Review Visit was conducted by the full Team between 10th and 13th December 2012. QQI approved the release of the UCC reports for publication on 10 June 2013.

Professor Jonathan Osmond, Former Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students, Cardiff University, Wales, UK *(Chair)*
- » Pro Vice-Chancellor 2007-2012
- » Responsible for all aspects of students' education and experience within Cardiff University
- » Member of various Welsh, UK and European policy committees and advisory groups
- » Member of CLIOHRES, an international history network of excellence funded by the European Commission
- » Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and of the Higher Education Academy
- » Undertaken numerous external examiner and validation roles
- » Expert evaluator of the European Commission FP7 Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities Theme

Dr Anne Martin, QA Consultant, Former Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Vice-President (Academic), Deakin University, Australia
- » Former University Dean for Academic Planning and Programmes and Acting Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs in the City University of New York System
- » Former Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of South Australia
- » Former Head of the School of General Education, South Australian Institute of Technology
- » Served on numerous institutional and government committees, including the Victorian Higher Education Advisory Committee and the Tasmanian Higher Education Expert Group
- » Honorary Auditor for the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). Dr Martin is on the national auditor registers in New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain and Hong Kong
- » Recipient of the AUQA Australian Higher Education Quality Award in 2010

Professor Roger Downer, Former President, University of Limerick
- » IRIU Reviewer – NUIM, 2009
- » President of the University of Limerick (UL), 1998-2006
- » Former President of the Asian Institute of Technology
- » Former Vice-President, University of Waterloo
- » Chair of review panels at four Canadian Universities
- » Direct knowledge and experience of HE in 7 countries
- » Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada
- » Member of the Royal Irish Academy

Ms Andrea Blaettler, Studying a Political Science and Philosophy BA at the University of Lucerne, Switzerland
- » Undergraduate teaching and research assistant, Department of Political Science, University of Lucerne
- » Former President of the Executive Board, European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)
- » Former Member of the European Students' Union (ESU) Executive Committee and Academic Affairs Committee
- » Member of the Steering Group of the completed E4 – MAP ESG Project – mapping ESG implementation across the European Higher Education Area
- » Member of two EUA evaluation teams
- » Contributed to numerous European conferences on quality assurance in higher education

Dr Don Thornhill, Chairman of the National Competitiveness Council, Ireland and Chairman, Hibernia College
- » Consultant and adviser on strategy and policy; board member of organisations in the private and public sector
- » Former Chairman of the Higher Education Authority
- » Former Secretary-General of the Department of Education and Science
- » Former Assistant Secretary in the Office of the Revenue Commissioners
- » Chair of the Ageing Well Network; Deputy Chair of the Chartered Accountants Regulatory Board
- » Former Board Member of The Irish Payments Services Organisation (chair); Forfás, Science Foundation Ireland; Irish Management Institute; and the Digital Hub Agency
- » Fulbright Scholar at the Brookings Institution in Washington DC
- » Member of the Royal Irish Academy and of the Irish Academy of Engineering
- » Honorary Life Member of the Royal Dublin Society for services to Ireland

Dr David Cairns, Director, Quality Assurance Research for Higher Education Ltd, Former Assistant Director, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) UK *(Co-ordinating Reviewer)*
- » ENQA Co-ordinating Reviewer
- » HETAC Co-ordinating Reviewer
- » SKVC Co-ordinating Reviewer
- » Independent Higher Education Consultant

REVIEW REPORT

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This section of the report summarises key features of the external context within which University College Cork (hereafter 'UCC' or 'the University') operates as it was described to the Review Team (hereafter, 'the Review Team', or 'the Team') through the Institutional Self-Assessment Report (ISAR) and other UCC papers, the briefing provided for the Team by the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB), now Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), and the Planning Visit for the Review hosted by UCC.

THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT

THE CONTINUING EFFECTS OF THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS

Since 2008, successive Irish Governments have been dealing with the continuing effects of the Global Financial Crisis. Two of the Government's key policy responses to the Crisis featured prominently in the ISAR and other UCC documents and were frequently mentioned in meetings between the IRIU Review Team and members of UCC. These are the Government's Employment Control Framework, which dates from March 2009 and is now in its second iteration, and the Public Service Agreement 2010-2014, usually referred to as the 'Croke Park Agreement', signed in June 2010.

The Irish Government is determined to reduce the cost of the public sector wage bill as a way of limiting growth in the costs of public services to the State. This is chiefly to be achieved by reducing the number of employees in the public sector and the costs of employing public servants overall. This affects UCC as one of Ireland's Universities because academic and administrative members of a University's establishment are considered to be public employees with respect to pay and working conditions. Since July 2009, under the terms of the Employment Control Framework, UCC has been under pressure to reduce its staffing establishment by not filling posts when they fall vacant. At the same time, the Croke Park Agreement commits the Government not to make further reductions to public sector pay rates; not to make compulsory redundancies; to protect public sector pensions and to undertake an annual review of public service pay each Spring.

Senior members of UCC told the Review Team that the combined effects of the Employment Control Framework and the Croke Park Agreement had made it difficult to manage UCC's academic portfolio because even where an academic area had few or no students, there was no advantage to the University in closing an area because UCC would be required to continue to employ the staff, even when they could not be redeployed. The Team understood the University's argument that the combined effects of the ECF and the Croke Park Agreements had made any reconfiguration to meet the needs of students and external challenges extraordinarily difficult and encourages the University to continue to explore opportunities for rationalisation of academic programmes and provision in conjunction with other parts of the third level sector in Ireland.

CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR UCC, 2008-12

Since 2008, UCC's overall income has declined from €310 million in 2009 to an expected outturn in 2012 of €255 million. In the same period, State funding for the work of UCC through the block grant system has declined from €84.4 million in 2008 to €41.6 million (51 per cent) in 2012. UCC's Institutional Self-Assessment Report (ISAR) stated that the University anticipated a further reduction of 50 per cent of its 2012 block grant funding by 2015. At the same time, the number of taught students studying at UCC has risen, from almost 15,000 in 2008 to about 16,300 in 2011-12 and is projected to rise to 16,500 by 2015.

It was in the above context that the ISAR invited the Review Team to view the policy developments which the University was undertaking (like other Universities, with explicit Government encouragement) to increase its sources of what was termed in the ISAR 'non-exchequer revenue': that is, revenue from sources other than the Irish Exchequer. These developments include growing the number of international students studying at UCC, increasing the number of its international collaborations (see page 12) and expanding UCC's population of taught and research postgraduates (page 44).

THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

University College Cork was founded as Queen's College Cork in 1845 and became a College of the National University of Ireland (NUI) in 1908. Under the terms of The Universities Act, 1997, it achieved full legal and accreditation autonomy, being designated as a Constituent University of the National University of Ireland. UCC, therefore, makes its own academic awards.

The historic main campus of UCC is located in Cork City on the banks of the River Lee and there are several more-recently constructed satellite campuses within walking distance of the main campus. Cork is the second largest city in Ireland with a population for the Greater Cork area of about 400,000 and is the principal city of its region, from which the University draws most of its students. The Institutional Self-Assessment Report (ISAR) which UCC provided to support the institutional review and other supporting documents described UCC as a 'comprehensive university … offering a broad range of disciplines in Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Business, Law, Engineering, Science, Food Science, Medicine and Health Sciences' that enabled it to perform a 'regional role'.

In 2005, when the University was last reviewed, it had about 14,800 students overall. In 2012, there were 13,770 students studying at undergraduate level and 2,532 following taught programmes leading to graduate and postgraduate awards degrees, with a further 1,180 students studying for doctoral awards, almost double the number of doctoral students immediately before the 2005 review. This substantial increase in the number of doctoral students is particularly noteworthy as is the shift in the gender balance among the student population. The latter is linked to changes to the University's portfolio of provision with the development of health-related provision and the incorporation of Nursing into the College of Medicine of Health. In 2012, female students are in the majority.

In 2005, academic departments in UCC operated as cost centres and were grouped into Schools within Faculties. In 2005, Departments enjoyed considerable autonomy. They were supervised by the central

administration of UCC, led by the Registrar, who was and remains the Chief Academic Officer of the University, and the central management, led by the President.

Since 2005, UCC has replaced its former Faculty system with four Colleges, which now oversee the schools into which departments have now largely been grouped. Where named departments or faculties have needed to be retained to comply with legislation or existing contractual agreements, this has been permitted. At the centre of the University, its administration and management has also been re-organised: several specialised administrative services have been formed and others have been re-organised to support the corporate management of the University.

In 2012, the University Management Team was led by the President and has been reconstituted and now meets alternately as a smaller executive team – the University Management Team (Operations) (UMTO), and a larger team that meets monthly to consider strategy and monitor its implementation – the University Management Team (Strategy) (UMTS). The Heads of the Colleges are members of both University Management Teams.

The four Colleges comprise

- **The College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences** which includes 13 Schools and in 2011-12 had about 5,500 students

- **The College of Business and Law**, which is organised in two Faculties: Commerce, with five Departments and one Centre; and Law which consists of one Department, Law. Overall, the College had about 3,450 students in 2011-12

- **The College of Medicine and Health**, which includes five Schools and had about 3,100 students in 2011-12

- **The College of Science, Engineering and Food Science**, which includes five Schools and four Departments and had about 4,300 students in 2011-12.

In addition to the academic and administrative structures of the Colleges, UCC also maintains 73 research institutes, centres and groups of which the most publicly prominent are: the Tyndall National Research Institute, which specialises in microsystems, photonics and nanotechnology; the Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre, which specialises in alimentary health and in functional foods; and the Beaufort Laboratory, a new centre for the study of coastal management, wave and other marine renewable energy.

The Review Team wished to include UCC's quality assurance arrangements for its research institutes, centres and groups in the scope of its review and this report. In the limited time available in the visit, the Team was unable to assess this aspect of UCC's quality assurance arrangements in sufficient depth to come to a conclusion on this area of the University's work. While the University wished to assure the Team that that the 'activity and future plans of all [research] institutes and [research] centres have been included in the strategic planning of the University, particularly in the Research Strategy and the individual College strategic plans', the Team was not in a position to establish how the links between the University and the various research institutes, centres and groups worked in practice, how they were quality assured, and therefore how the University is able to check that their development is in line with UCC's Strategic Plans and expectations.

SUMMARY

The contents of the ISAR and accompanying Annexes, the supplementary briefing information made available to the Review Team by the University, the information provided by QQI in its briefing, and its discussions with staff, students and representatives of external stakeholders enabled the Team to appreciate the significant part UCC plays in the intellectual, educational and commercial life of its home city, the region and Ireland as a whole. The Team heard from external stakeholders that they relied on the University to contribute to the intellectual stock of society. On the basis of the evidence available to the Team, the University's stakeholders can be confident in that UCC is playing a full part in the development of Ireland and its responses to the Global Financial Crisis.

The Review Team also wishes to thank the University, through its President, for the courtesy which it received from members the Governing Body, staff at all levels, students and stakeholders. Their readiness to engage with the Team in discussion was much appreciated. The Team wishes to express its particular thanks to the staff of the Quality Promotion Unit, who marshalled those attending to meet the Team in a very full schedule of meetings which is provided as an Annex to this report.

MISSION, STRATEGY, GOVERNANCE AND CURRENT DIRECTIONS

MISSION STATEMENT

UCC's Strategic Plan 2013-2017 was formally adopted by the Governing Body in November 2012. It states that UCC's Vision is to be 'a world-class university connecting our region to the globe' and describes UCC's Mission as to inspire 'creativity and independent thinking in a research-led teaching and learning environment. Our students are our highest priority. Through our research excellence, we create and communicate knowledge to enhance the intellectual, cultural, social and economic life regionally, nationally and internationally.'

In the Strategic Plan 2013-2017, UCC's 'essential values' are stated to be 'those of leadership, excellence, accountability and collaboration. We aim to work to the highest standards and encourage initiative, creativity and innovation in all of our activities. We are committed to the intellectual growth, social formation and welfare of our students. We recognise the strength that we derive from diversity among our students and staff and we commit ourselves to a global focus in all of our activities.'

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The 2005 Institutional Quality Review Report ('the 2005 Report') found that the University had a strategic plan in place but that it did not set out UCC's 'profile' and priorities with sufficient clarity. It noted that '[too] many responsibilities were Department-based, while not enough capacity existed at Faculty-level' and that this had 'consequences for effective decision-making as well as for the allocation of financial and human resources'. The 2005 Report also considered that 'management structures and methods across UCC, in particular at intermediary level, did not yet appear sufficiently well embedded to ensure a clear link between the top-level strategies and the grass roots activities' and that 'there seemed to be many university-

wide bodies [that] felt it was their brief to cover everything and … operated on the margins of their core competences'.

On strategic planning, the 2005 Report described 'a … disconnect' between UCC's principal quality assurance process, Quality Review with its six-year cycle, the 'development and implementation of [other] strategic management tools', and the restructuring process then taking place across the University. It recommended that UCC should 'link the three central processes underway at UCC – strategic planning, restructuring and Quality Review – in order to ensure greater coherence and better understanding of these across the University'.

A section in the ISAR acknowledged that in 2005 a 'formal strategic planning process did not exist' but that in 2006, a Director of Planning and Institutional Research had been appointed to: co-ordinate University-wide strategic planning; monitor progress against the University's Strategic Plan; provide information for decision-making and support; and provide information on key performance indicators. An Annex to the ISAR described UCC's current strategic planning process, how the Strategic Plan was translated into operational plans for each academic year and operational plans were translated into component projects, each with targets and key performance indicators. The same Annex also described how progress towards completing projects in operational plans was monitored through scheduled monthly meetings of UMTS and how reports of progress towards meeting annual Operational Plans were published on UCC's website. The Operational Plans and Projects seen by the Review Team related to UCC's previous Strategic Plan 2009-2012.

The more recent Operational Plans under the Strategic Plan 2009-2012 make use of a 'traffic light system' to indicate progress with individual projects, which made it clear how many projects in the two most recent operational plans available to the Review Team had been flagged as partially complete or overdue. Members of the University told the Team that, in some cases, unrealistic targets had been set for projects, that UCC was learning to prioritise and to set more realistic expectations and targets, but that more needed to be done to ensure that project leaders were held to account when their projects were not completed on time and to specification. The Team endorses this latter point and recommends that UCC should continue to work towards the more robust management of the schedule of approved projects that form its operational plans, and towards more robust and more accountable management of individual projects, which would involve the statement of individual and (only where appropriate) group responsibilities. Notwithstanding the recommendation above, UCC has made demonstrable progress in the development of its strategic planning.

As noted above, the 2005 Report recommended that the University should bring together the processes of strategic planning, organisational change and Quality Review, so that the findings of the latter could 'feed into wider strategic considerations'. In two reports to IUQB in 2005 and 2006, UCC described how it had responded to the 2005 Report and subsequent progress reporting in 2006 that the 'three processes – strategic planning, re-structuring and quality reviews - are linked in UCC and work is continuously on-going to strengthen these links'. In the ISAR, UCC asserted that 'the use of the outcomes of internal quality reviews as a strategic tool for the development of priorities and the allocation of both human and financial resources significantly enhanced the strategic planning and decision-making processes within UCC' but offered no evidence in support of this view.

The Review Team noted that the University's Strategic Plan 2013-2017 maintained that its own formulation had been 'informed by' the University's 'quality improvement and risk management procedures' but its review of achievements for the period of the preceding Strategic Plan 2009-2012 makes no reference to using specific or generic findings from Quality Reviews (although it does refer to using the outcomes of the distinctive and separate Research Quality Review).

The Review Team was unable to find unambiguous references in recent Operational Plans to projects to address specific or generic findings from Quality Review Reports, including those on the Colleges, under the Strategic Plan 2009-2012. In contrast, action lines in Operational Plans arising from the recommendations of the Research Quality Review were clearly marked as such. As the University continues to develop its Quality Review process and the associated Annual Reports from the Quality Promotion Committee to the Governing Body, the Team recommends that the University should consider how projects in its Operational Plans that are linked to the findings and recommendations of Quality Review Reports that have University-wide relevance can be more clearly identified, so that the Quality Review process can more clearly demonstrate its contributions to University-wide change and improvement. The Quality Review process is also discussed elsewhere in this report (see below, pages 18 and 27).

THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2013-2017

The Strategic Plan 2013-2017 reviews achievements under the Strategic Plan 2009-2012 (see above) and sets a 'key strategic goal' for UCC 'to be Ireland's leading university and to sustain our position in the top 2% of universities globally', together with 'five strategic goals' which are:

1. Delivering research-inspired teaching and learning with a world-class student experience

2. Being a premier European university for research, discovery, innovation and commercialisation

3. Being pre-eminent in internationalisation, external engagement and contribution to society

4. Applying best international practice to attract, develop and retain staff of the highest quality and to enable all staff to reach their full potential

5. Strengthening our infrastructure and resource base.

The Plan subsequently defines eight 'leading actions for achievement by 2017'. They are to:

- ensure 'continued financial stability … by significantly increasing non-Exchequer income and by continuing to exploit cost-saving opportunities'

- 'strengthen the integration of research, teaching and learning'

- 'pursue excellence in teaching, learning and the student experience'

- 'develop greater opportunities for part-time and flexible learning'

- 'establish an innovative business school'

- 'strengthen [UCC's] capacity for research to meet national economic and social development needs' and 'foster innovation and entrepreneurship'

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- 'enhance internationalisation by strengthening our partnerships with universities of similar vision … by embedding a global perspective in all our activities… [and] by increasing our international student cohort to 18%'

- undertake active community and regional engagement and 'engage proactively at a national level to increase the capacity of the Irish higher education system to operate in a more competitive globalised environment', 'strengthen Cork as a city of learning… and build a more cohesive regional learning cluster by deepening our partnership with CIT and other education partners'.

Between the two successive Strategic Plans, the overall goals of the University have remained broadly the same; however, a comparison of the order in which the leading actions to achieve the goals are laid out shows a shift in UCC's priorities. In the Strategic Plan 2012-2017, for example, priority in the 'Leading Actions' is assigned to securing a significant increase in 'non-Exchequer income and by continuing to exploit cost-savings opportunities'.

The Leading Actions and Goals listed in the new Strategic Plan 2013-2017, and the future directions the Plan sets for UCC, appeared to the Review Team to represent a series of incremental adjustments to the ways in which the University was working to fulfil its Mission. The ordering and grouping of priorities reflect the University's responses to the constraints on its freedom to pursue its own planning priorities, and the imperative need for the University to increase its non-Exchequer funding through recruiting international students in greater numbers; developing international partnerships; paying greater attention to research; increasing the number of doctoral and postgraduate students; and through establishing a new business school.

INTERNATIONALISATION

As noted above, the internationalisation of the University's work appears in both its Strategic Plan 2009-2012 and its successor. The ISAR stated that 'the internationalisation of the UCC campus has markedly improved over the past seven years' and that it was committed to 'strengthening the global UCC alumni network, exploiting further opportunities for the overseas delivery of our programmes and by increasing our international student cohort to 18%'.

The internationalisation of the student body is viewed by UCC as having 'brought significant benefits to student life', although the ISAR did not specify these benefits. The University's assessment of its achievements during the Strategic Plan 2009-2012 noted that UCC's 'student population now includes approximately 3,000 international students from over 100 countries while a third of our staff is from overseas. The proportion of students travelling from overseas to study at UCC has increased marginally from 11.5% to 12%.'

The University's Strategic Plan 2012-2017 and its submission to the HEA 'Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape' reiterate UCC's commitments to further internationalisation, with the latter noting the University's participation in the 'Utrecht Network', an association of '31 universities in 29 countries, co-operating in the area of internationalisation.' The HEA submission also noted that the University's strategy and the policy of the Governing Body of UCC' was:

'to partner with universities of similar vision and to partner with other Irish higher education institutions where there are complementarities and synergies that can lead to enhanced strengths and efficiencies. This policy recognises the small scale of Ireland and the limited total resource available to the Irish higher education sector. Strong and diverse alliances with international universities of similar vision will play as important a role in meeting Irish higher education needs as regional clusters. UCC recognises that national and international strategic alliances benefit the sector as a whole, and help contribute to the development of a vibrant, integrated and internationally competitive higher education system.'

In the context of the above, the Review Team considered how the Governing Body monitors procedures for institutional oversight and management of the internationalisation strategy (page 36). The Team also explored how the strategy was being implemented in the contexts of quality assurance and accountability (page 36) and support for students (page 46).

GOVERNANCE, INCLUDING ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

The overall governance of UCC is subject to the terms of the Universities Act, 1997, which prescribes the membership and functions of the Governing Body and the Academic Council.

THE GOVERNING BODY AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Under the terms of The Universities Act, 1997, UCC's Governing Body is the source of authority within the University: it appoints the President, oversees UCC's assets and finances, and exercises oversight of all aspects of the University's work. The ISAR noted that in 2007, following the publication by the Higher Education Authority of a Code of Governance for Irish Universities, UCC's Governing Body had reviewed its own internal governance structures. According to the ISAR, this had led the Governing Body to reduce the number of its own committees from 27 to six committees that meet regularly and three that meet when required.

The Governing Body monitors the quality of the education and services UCC provides through the Annual Reports it receives from the Quality Promotion Committee (QPC), a Committee that 'is responsible to the Governing Body for the overseeing of all matters, which have an impact on maintaining, and where possible, improving and enhancing the quality of the student experience in UCC. It aims to ensure that there are appropriate procedures in place for the assurance of quality within the University and for the promotion of quality improvement in both teaching and non-teaching areas.' The membership of the QPC includes two members of the Governing Body.

The terms of reference for the QPC state that it reports to the 'Governing Body and University Management Team' and is 'responsible to the Governing Body for the overseeing of all matters, which have an impact on maintaining, and where possible, improving and enhancing the quality of the student experience in UCC. It aims to ensure that there are appropriate procedures in place for the assurance of quality within the University and for the promotion of quality improvement in both teaching and non-teaching areas.' The

inference here is that the QPC is a Committee of the Governing Body and this was explicitly stated in the 2005 Institutional Quality Review Report. However, an Annex to the ISAR depicted the QPC as a Committee of the UMTS, that is, of the University Management Team (Strategic). The Review Team recommends that UCC should make clear the source of the QPC's authority so that its status and authority are clear to staff, students and stakeholders, and to avoid confusion between governance and management structures. This matter is discussed further elsewhere in this report.

In addition to reshaping its committee arrangements the ISAR noted that the Governing Body had also instituted a review and consolidation of the University's Statutes and delegated the performance of some of its duties to the University's Academic Council and to senior managers. At the time of the present review the membership of the Governing Body stood at 39, 21 of whom were officers, employees or students of UCC. The Review Team considers that the large membership of the Governing Body and the ratio of staff to non-staff members attending present challenges for the practice of good governance.

The Review Team met a group of external Members of the Governing Body to discuss how its work contributed to the overall work of the University and, more particularly, how it discharged its responsibilities under The Universities Act, 1997, and the University's own Statutes. The Team was told that in recent years, the flow of information to the Governing Body to enable it to oversee the work of the University had greatly improved, and that substantial advance information for Governing Body meetings and the meetings of its Committees was provided by the University in a timely manner.

Members of the Governing Body's Audit Committee told the Review Team that they were confident that they were able to maintain proper oversight of the University's finances and administration and that they monitored UCC's risk management through quarterly reports. As part of the information for the present review, UCC provided an account of its approach to risk management and emergency planning for the Team and a copy of its current risk register. In the latter, the Team noted that risk to the University's reputation and its finances and strategy from overseas collaborations was ranked as 54 out of the 57 risks that were being monitored and was linked to one particular project.

The Review Team discussed with the external members of the Governing Body how they monitored the effectiveness of UCC's risk management. It was told that the Governing Body received regular reports on the top six items on UCC's risk register as identified by the University. In view of its findings and recommendations elsewhere in this report, the Team recommends that the Governing Body should now request that it be provided with regular reports on the progress of the University's overseas collaborations to enable it to be satisfied that current collaborations are subject to formal quality assurance procedures, and that reports on proposed collaborations are sought from the University's academic quality and standards experts and considered by UCC's senior managers in the initial stages of developing a collaboration, and especially for overseas collaborations (see also below, page 36).

External members of the Governing Body confirmed that it received the Reports of Quality Reviews of academic and support units. They remarked that the Reports 'had been an eye-opener' and had enabled the Governing Body to ask questions of the academic staff and make suggestions. The Governing Body was said to be aware of growing evidence of non-performance in some areas but was pleased to note that non-performance was exceptional.

Overall, the Review Team came to the view that UCC maintained a commendably productive relationship with the external Members of its Governing Body who seemed to the Team to be alert to their roles and responsibilities and committed to the University's continuing success.

ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

Chapter V of The Universities Act,1997, specifies that the University's Academic Council is to 'control the academic affairs of the University, including the curriculum of and instruction and education provided by, the University'. The ISAR and the Academic Council's Handbook, described the Academic Council as 'the primary internal authority responsible for academic affairs', noting that any 'revisions in academic governance must not undermine the legal powers granted to Academic Council but must enable it to discharge its responsibilities effectively'. The ISAR stated that, in formal terms, the role of University-level and College-level academic committees (other than those of the Governing Body) was to support and advise the Academic Council, even when 'undertaking much of the preliminary work' for the Council.

Approximately 190 members of UCC (including *ex officio* members) are listed by the Academic Secretariat as entitled to attend meetings of the Academic Council and the Review Team was told that the University's Academic Board (which has a membership of 28) acted as the principal standing committee of the Academic Council. In addition to the Academic Board, the Academic Council also works through nine other standing committees which include the Learning and Teaching Committee, the Research and Innovation Committee and the Academic Development and Standards Committee. The ISAR stated that the Academic Council had established an 'Extern Examiners Committee which both approves programme/disciplinary extern examiners and provides a summary of the comments of Extern Examiners to the Registrar and to Academic Board.' The Academic Council Handbook shows this Committee reporting to the Academic Board together with four sub-Committees of the Academic Board, which report to the Academic Council through the Board and include the UCC/IMI Programme Development and Approval Committee and the UCC/CIT Joint Academic Standards Board.

The Review Team met Members of the Academic Council and Academic Board to discuss how the two bodies worked together and how the Academic Council was able to discharge its responsibilities for programmes and the curriculum under The Universities Act, 1997. The Academic Council receives the Annual Reports of the QPC via the Governing Body but members told the Team that the Academic Council had opportunities to challenge and discuss Quality Review Reports. Members of the Academic Board also told the Team that the Director of the Quality Promotion Unit (QPU) was a member of the Board and provided it with information on quality matters. There was no suggestion, however, that individual Quality Review reports came directly to the Academic Council or Academic Board.

The Review Team explored how the Academic Council was able to oversee UCC's collaborations, including its international collaborations, and to oversee how UCC's four Colleges each discharged their operational responsibilities for the teaching and learning experiences of students. The Team noted that Joint Academic Boards between the University and the partner had been established for each of UCC's principal collaborations with Cork Institute of Technology and, more recently, with the Irish Management Institute (IMI), and that these Academic Boards reported to UCC's Academic Board (and through it to the

Academic Council). The arrangements UCC has made with CIT and IMI respectively require each to report to their equivalent of UCC's Academic Council or Academic Board. The Team was told that UCC's Academic Council did not yet have a policy for overseeing overseas collaborations and would develop one 'when the need arises'. The Team recommends, as a matter of urgency, that Academic Council should develop a policy and arrangements to enable it to receive reports on the progress of overseas collaborations that would enable it to be confident, on behalf of UCC, that the process of initiating, developing and operating such collaborations is subject to quality assurance arrangements that are at least as secure as those UCC currently operates for its collaboration with CIT.

With respect to the Academic Council's oversight of the academic work of the Colleges, the Review Team was told that UCC was determined to ensure that students across the four Colleges are treated fairly and as consistently as possible, allowing for the need in many cases to maintain external accreditation of programmes and awards by professional and statutory bodies. Members of the Academic Council told the Team that examinations, the specifications set out in the University's statement of Marks and Standards, admissions and registration continue to be operated from the centre for the University while accepting that there were variations in the way the University's Marks and Standards regulations were followed in each College. They also told the Team that UCC intended to identify those areas where consistency was necessary to ensure fairness to students and would then enforce that consistency. The Team endorses the University's determination to secure greater consistency in the way its regulations are observed across the Colleges and recommends that it should give its close attention to this matter.

More general oversight of academic administration and decision-making in the Colleges is undertaken for the Academic Council by sub-committees on its behalf. For example, although Colleges are responsible for the process of nominating external examiners, the External Examiner Sub-Committee of the Academic Board checks that nominations and appointments meet UCC's overall requirements on behalf of the Board and ultimately the Academic Council. Similarly, the Graduate Studies Committee oversees the approval process for new taught postgraduate programmes and the Academic Development and Standards Committee checks that proposals for the approval of new undergraduate programmes meet UCC's requirements and approves them on behalf of the Council.

The University's 2009-2012 Strategic Plan committed it to review its academic governance to enable the Academic Council 'to operate as effectively as possible' through, as the ISAR put it, 'clarifying roles and responsibilities to meet current business needs as a necessary stage in the planned devolution of decision-making from the Academic Council to intermediate committees and Colleges'. The ISAR described this review process in some detail but did not offer a view of the effectiveness of the revised arrangements that had resulted from the review. Members of the University at all levels told the Team that they appreciated the importance of collegiality and consultation in its overall ethos but that, too often, appeals to collegiality appeared to be used to delay action or excuse inaction. The Review Team recommends that the University should continue to work to simplify its committee structures at the centre and in the Colleges to ensure greater efficiency and transparency and what further steps it might take to enable the Academic Council to give more focused attention to priority areas such as quality assurance (including the quality assurance of international collaborations) and risk management.

ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE AT COLLEGE AND SCHOOL LEVEL

The ISAR contained little information on academic governance at College, School and Department levels across the University. In the course of the visit, the Review Team became aware of the existence of reports of Quality Reviews on the QPU web site that had been conducted on three of the Colleges. Had the findings of these reports been analysed and described in the ISAR, this would have provided a valuable basis for discussions with members of the University. The Quality Review reports on the three Colleges raised questions for the Team about the effectiveness with which the three Colleges had managed to develop their internal governance and management arrangements (including with their constituent schools) and the degree to which the three Colleges were engaging with their students. The Team recommends that when undertaking self-critical analysis, UCC should ensure that it makes full use of the complete range of reports of its Quality Reviews and that, as a University, it should consider more generally its capacity for critical self-evaluation.

MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL

The ISAR noted recent changes in the senior management arrangements of UCC including (as previously noted) the introduction of UMTS and UMTO and the creation of new senior management positions to lead in the areas of external relations, teaching and learning and the student experience. As part of the University's measures to manage the consequences of the Employment Control Framework, other responsibilities had been combined in new posts. At the time of the visit, several key University posts were vacant, such as those of the Vice-President for Teaching and Learning, the Head of Student Experience, and the Director of the Quality Promotion Unit. In each case, the duties of these posts were being covered temporarily by other senior staff while new appointments were being made.

Members of the University told the Review Team that the overall design of UCC's senior management structures was a work in progress, as the terms of the Employment Control Framework required the University to negotiate with the Government whenever it needed to create a new post on the resignation or retirement of the former post-holder.

MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP AT COLLEGE, SCHOOL, AND DEPARTMENT LEVEL

In addition to the Quality Review Reports of the three Colleges mentioned above, the Review Team was also able to refer to the Reports of the Quality Reviews organised by the QPU and the synoptic Annual Reports of the QPC to the Governing Body. Successive QPC Annual Reports to the Governing Body have called attention, in almost identical terms, to a series of weaknesses in the way Schools across the University are working, including: a 'proliferation of committees and increased administration'; much 'duplication of work between Schools and Departments'; issues with the roles and appointments of Heads of Schools and the 'governance and management structures of schools'; transparency of financial decisions within Schools; and the need for strategic planning in Schools. The 2011 QPC Annual Report to the Governing Body observed that the 'many issues identified in all reviews of Schools point to the need to ensure the implementation in full of the School structure within UCC.' It also noted that '[efforts] are ongoing and improvements have been made, but more work remains to be done.'

Quality Reviews of three of UCC's four Colleges had been organised by the QPU. The Annual Reports to the Governing Body from the QPC show that the University's College-School-Department structures (including governance structures) are still bedding in across much of UCC, which needs to give sustained attention to and support for the internal arrangements of the Colleges, Schools and Departments. The Review Team was told that UCC has had to suspend leadership training and development for its middle managers on grounds of cost although the University subsequently informed the Team that a 'targeted scheme' had been launched in 2013. The Review Team recommends that UCC should continue with the introduction of a programme of leadership, management and governance training for academic leaders and managers in the Colleges.

FURTHER DEVOLUTION OF ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT, ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ASSURANCE RESPONSIBILITIES TO COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS

The ISAR noted that further devolution of decision-making and delegation of authorities would pose challenges for the integrity of UCC as a coherent entity and that it was aware of the need to establish 'an appropriate balance between centralisation and devolution of administrative processes', commenting that the proliferation of variations to accepted University norms in assessment was of concern. Nonetheless, the ISAR indicated UCC's intention to continue to devolve 'decision-making and resource management to the greatest extent possible while ensuring the retention of an integrated institution'. This reflects the commitment in the UCC Strategic Plan 2009-2012 to 'further strengthen the academic organisation by devolving further appropriate responsibilities to College and School level'.

Even after the revisions to committee and academic governance arrangements carried out by UCC between 2009 and 2012, the University's committee structures remain complex. The ISAR reported UCC's own concerns about the expectations across the University that matters would be subject to extensive consultation and that this 'sometimes [reduced] the response-time and flexibility of the institution'.

The findings and recommendations of UCC's own Quality Review Reports on the Colleges suggested to the Review Team that governance arrangements within the Colleges are not yet sufficiently robust to allow UCC to devolve responsibilities for quality reviews to the Colleges. Until the Colleges can demonstrate that the current governance and management arrangements and responsibilities of the Colleges, including oversight of their constituent Schools, are being satisfactorily and robustly discharged, the Team recommends that UCC should not devolve further academic governance, quality and academic standards responsibilities to the Colleges. The Team also strongly recommends that responsibilities for overseeing the management, implementation, quality control and quality assurance of collaborative partnerships and trans-national education should not be devolved to the Colleges but be a closely monitored responsibility that is retained at the centre, under the direct supervision of the UMTO.

THE UNIVERSITY'S APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

The ISAR described at length the establishment of the Quality Promotion Committee in 1998 and the Quality Promotion Unit (in 1999). It outlined the Quality Review process that had been followed for reviews of academic departments, units, service providers, and administrative and management offices since 2001, and suggested that 'the quality assurance system established in UCC has been very successful in helping

to further develop a quality culture within the University with heightened awareness across the University of the value and benefit of such a system'. The ISAR stated that the 'primary goal' of UCC's Quality Review process is 'Quality Improvement' as seen in the production of a 'Quality Improvement Plan' in response to the recommendations made by the Quality Review report.

This section of ISAR seemed to the Team to have drawn heavily on a QPU guide to 'Quality at UCC'. Both stated that the principles that inform the University's approach to quality are that:

- UCC aims to assure the quality of the total student experience

- all members of UCC's staff are responsible for quality

- UCC aims to improve quality whenever possible

- the University is committed to the principle of external peer involvement in assuring quality

- UCC takes into account the views of its students.

In material linked to the Quality Review process, the Review Team noted that the UCC unit that hosts a Quality Review is seen as the owner of the review process and that it is for the unit to implement those recommendations in the Group's report that are not made to the University. Likewise, the University can accept or reject recommendations for action addressed to it. Rejections by the University are most frequently found when recommendations have financial or other resource implications. Quality Review reports are routinely followed up and reports on follow-ups are made to the QPC and included in the latter's Annual Reports to the Governing Body.

COMMENDATIONS

The Review Team commends the University for

- its productive relationship with the external Members of its Governing Body who seemed to the Team to be alert to their roles and responsibilities and committed to the University's continuing success (page 15).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Review Team recommends that the University should:

- continue to work towards the more robust management of the schedule of approved projects that form its operational plans and towards more robust and more accountable management of individual projects within its operational plans (page 10)

- consider how projects in its Operational Plans that are linked to the findings and recommendations of Quality Review reports that have University-wide relevance can be more clearly identified, so that the Quality Review process can more clearly

demonstrate its contributions to University-wide change and improvement (pages 11 and 17)

- make clear the source of the QPC's authority so that its status and authority are clear to staff, students and stakeholders, and to avoid confusion between governance and management structures (page 14)

- ensure that all development and operational aspects of its overseas collaborations are subject to formal quality assurance procedures and that regular reports on current and planned collaborations are made to the Governing Body, Academic Council and senior managers (pages 14 and 16)

- give close attention to securing greater consistency in the way its regulations are observed across the Colleges (page 16)

- continue to work to simplify its committee structures at the centre and in the Colleges to ensure greater efficiency and transparency and take further steps to enable the Academic Council to give more focused attention to priority areas such as quality assurance (including the quality assurance of international collaborations) and risk management (page 16)

- continue with the introduction of a programme of leadership, management and governance training for academic leaders and managers in the Colleges (page 18)

- defer devolving responsibilities for quality control, quality assurance and the maintenance of academic standards to the Colleges until they can demonstrate that their governance and management arrangements, including for the oversight of the Schools, are being satisfactorily and robustly discharged, and that any devolution of responsibility can be subject to robust oversight and review by the University Management Team (Operations) (page 18)

INSTITUTIONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

ENGAGEMENT WITH IRIU

UCC engaged with the Institutional Review of Irish Universities (IRIU) process through its President who was a Board member of the Irish Universities Quality Board, the body responsible for the IRIU process until IUQB was taken into Quality and Qualifications Ireland.

The former Director of UCC's Quality Promotion Unit had retired in August 2012 but had been the Chair of the Irish Higher Education Quality Network, a body formed in 2003 to serve as a forum for the discussion of quality assurance and quality improvement matters 'amongst the principal national stakeholders involved in the quality assurance of higher education and training in Ireland'. The Director of the Quality Promotion Unit had also served as a member of the Irish Universities Association Quality Committee and was a Bologna Expert for Ireland.

The IRIU of UCC is the last in the second series of such institutional reviews in Ireland and the Review Team would have found it helpful to understand what the University had learned from the Institutional Reviews that had preceded its own Review and whether, for example, UCC had discussed with other Universities that had hosted Institutional Reviews how the IRIU process operated.

THE INSTITUTIONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (ISAR)

In broad terms, the organisation of UCC's ISAR followed that which was recommended by IUQB and QQI for such documents. It opened with an Introduction and Context, followed by a section on how UCC had produced the ISAR. These sections were followed by a section on Quality Assurance and Accountability and a Section on Quality Enhancement. A short statement was provided on how UCC met the requirements of The Universities Act, 1997, and how its internal academic arrangements were consistent with Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (3rd edition, Helsinki, 2009).

HOW THE ISAR WAS COMPILED

The ISAR described the establishment of an Institutional Review Steering Committee (IRSC) by the President. The IRSC had held a number of open meetings to which staff and students had been invited and had consulted with representatives of undergraduate students, taught postgraduate and doctoral students, academic, administrative and support staff.

As part of the process of preparing the ISAR, UCC had undertaken a commendable Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis 'with a focus and open debate on the Quality Review Process' that also extended 'into all areas of quality assurance and quality enhancement in the University.' UCC had also commissioned an external commercial researcher to gather the views of external and internal

stakeholders. The ISAR stated that none of the University's partner institutions had been directly involved in these exercises.

The ISAR was drafted by individual members of the IRSC who took responsibility for particular sections. Data and analysis for the ISAR had been provided by administrators across the University and the whole had been compiled by the QPU and finalised by the Registrar and the Director of QPU. Drafts of the ISAR had been made available to the Academic Council and members of the University more generally via UCC's web site. Once finalised, the ISAR had been made available to staff and students and placed on UCC's web site. Before the Review Team's visit to the University, briefing sessions had been offered to those who had been identified by UCC to meet the team, to prepare staff and students for their meetings and to remind them of the contents of the ISAR.

Hard copies of the ISAR were received late and, as received by the Review Team, consisted of two Volumes supported by more than 40 items provided as Annexes. Volume 1 provided the main narrative but with some omissions. For example, it would have been helpful to the Review Team for the ISAR to have included information on how UCC ensured that learning outcomes were achieved in programmes placed in the National Framework of Qualifications. A serious omission was the absence of detailed references in the ISAR to the findings of the many Quality Reviews undertaken by the University since 2005.

Volume 1 of the ISAR consisted of 78 pages although the requested maximum in the IRIU Handbook is 40 pages (excluding annexes). Volume 2 of the ISAR was subtitled 'Quality at UCC' and consisted of 146 pages that provided a detailed exposition of the Quality Review Process, mostly taken from existing documents. The ISAR was provided by UCC in electronic and printed versions and one of the Annexes to the ISAR consisted almost entirely of hyperlinks to University policy and other documents which widened the range of information available to the Review Team. For future Institutional Reviews, the Team advises the University to consider carefully the advantages of providing a focused and concise ISAR.

In the course of the Planning Visit, the Chair and Co-ordinating Reviewer requested supplementary information on behalf of the Review Team to enable it reach a better understanding of how the University's procedures worked in practice and in context. In total, the supplementary information consisted of more than 160 documents including committee agendas, minutes, planning and other documents and external examiners' reports.

The University provided the supplementary information requested by the Review Team through a password-protected web page hosted by UCC's Quality Promotion Unit. This also contained electronic versions of the two volumes of the ISAR and its Annexes, links to the complete archive of QPU Quality Review Reports and protocols, and links to other web pages on the UCC web site. Together, these resources enabled the Review Team to gather and refer to a large volume of primary documents to support its work, and to make good some of the omissions in the two volumes of the ISAR and accompanying Annexes.

It seemed to the Review Team that the way that the ISAR had been compiled, the omission of any overarching analysis of the findings of Quality Reviews (other than the Research Quality Review), and the University's reliance on the Review Team's own efforts to find the information it needed for the present review from UCC's

web pages, suggested that the University had experienced difficulties in producing a concise, coherent and self-critical account of how UCC manages the quality of its educational provision for the purposes of this review. The Team noted that the report of the 2005 Institutional Review had made similar comments. The Team recommends that the University should consider how it might develop its institutional capacity to undertake self-critical evaluations of its work.

The Review Team discussed the ISAR with members of the University who joined it during the visit. The Team was told that QPU had organised briefing sessions for staff that were to meet it but that take-up for these sessions had been low and only a few of the students and staff who met the Team told it that they had read the ISAR, although some had seen earlier drafts. Members of the Students' Union who met the Review Team confirmed that students had been invited to participate in focus group meetings as part of the process of constructing the ISAR and that some had seen drafts of the ISAR in their capacity as members of the Governing Body. Students' representatives told the Team that they considered the ISAR provided a fair representation of UCC and its strengths and weaknesses.

The schedule of meetings undertaken by the Team and the names of those it met during the visit are provided as annexes to this report.

COMMENDATIONS

The Review Team commends the University:

- for having undertaken a commendably thorough Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis as part of its preparations to compile the ISAR (page 21)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Review Team recommends that the University should:

- make full use of the complete range of reports of its Quality Reviews in future critical self-evaluations (page 17) and consider how it might develop its institutional capacity to undertake self-critical evaluations of its work (page 23)

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

RESPONSE TO THE 2005 INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SECTORAL REPORT

The 2005 Review of Quality Assurance in Irish Universities, usually referred to as the 'sectoral report', offered 28 recommendations to the Irish university sector as a whole. Reviewing these recommendations as they related to UCC, the Review Team noted that some had been met by UCC before 2005 and others had been put into effect subsequently. The following, however, seemed to the Team to be of continuing relevance to UCC. They are reported below under the broad headings used in the sectoral report.

Organisation and planning of QA process. UCC stated in response to this recommendation that 'the contribution of QA to University strategy and planning [was stressed] to all involved in the process'. In 2012, the Review Team had difficulty identifying from the University's papers how the outcomes of its quality assurance processes contributed to its strategy. Likewise, the arrangements currently followed by UCC do not ensure that the results of each evaluation will be discussed between the senior management of the University, including the President, and the unit evaluated. This may be because in responding to the 2005 sectoral report, UCC explicitly rejected this recommendation, maintaining that 'the view of the University [is] that ownership by the unit in question must continue to be a core element of the process if the ultimate aim of quality improvement is to be maximised.' This matter is discussed further below in connection with the Quality Review process on page 27.

Quality improvement. The recommendation that 'quality improvement plans should be taken into account in the strategic management and other university-wide processes' did not seem to the Review Team to have been demonstrably met. Other recommendations appear to have been satisfied.

Strategic governance and management. The recommendation that the 'scheduling of evaluations should be approached in a more strategic way' seemed to the Review Team to remain relevant to UCC, as did the recommendations: 'to explore the possibilities for linking the quality review cycle to other strategic cycles'; and 'to ensure the regular analysis and overview of the QA process and outcomes across each university, and to link these explicitly to strategic management processes'.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 2005 INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY REVIEW OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK

The report of the Institutional Quality Review of UCC concluded that the University was an institution with many assets and 'competences' but that 'these are currently too fragmented across the institution'. The report reminded UCC of the rapidity with which changes were occurring in higher education across the EU and internationally and that to face these challenges successfully UCC would need 'to engage in the

necessary organisational, structural and cultural changes … in order to maintain and develop [its] own position'.

The 2005 Institutional Quality Review Report made 11 recommendations to the University, some of which are still relevant. Of these, the Review Team highlighted: strategic planning, quality assurance and restructuring; the provision of overviews and synoptic reports from the Quality Review process to inform priorities for the allocation of human and financial resources; and the development of a fully integrated management information system to support strategic management and change.

STRATEGIC PLANNING, QUALITY ASSURANCE AND RESTRUCTURING

The 2005 Report recommended that UCC should link 'strategic planning, restructuring and Quality Review – in order to ensure greater coherence and better understanding of these across the university.' UCC's follow-up reports to IUQB in 2005 and 2006 described work on this recommendation as 'ongoing'. The present Review Team found evidence that the Research Quality Review had contributed to strategic planning but was unable to find equally clear evidence that Quality Review Reports on Departments and Colleges had contributed to such planning, as noted elsewhere in the present report.

**PROVISION OF OVERVIEWS AND SYNOPTIC REPORTS FROM THE QUALITY REVIEW PROCESS
TO INFORM PRIORITIES FOR THE ALLOCATION OF HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

It is UCC's view that it provides synthesis and overview of Quality Reviews undertaken in the previous year through the QPC Annual Reports to the Governing Body which are also made available to the University Management Team (Strategy), the Academic Council and to each College Council, and that comments on the QPC Annual Reports were fed back to the Governing Body from the Academic Council and the Colleges. The Review Team read a number of QPC Annual Reports and came to the view that the format adopted for them did not enable the Reports to communicate the findings of individual Quality Reviews or summarise the findings of groups of Quality Reviews in an unambiguous and accessible manner. This matter is discussed further below.

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FULLY INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT INFORMATION
SYSTEM TO SUPPORT STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND CHANGE**

The present Review Team noted that the University has begun the development of a 'Data Warehouse' that stores information that UCC uses to support decision-making and internal activities such as the Quality Reviews. There is a separate Financial Management Information System (AGRESSO) and other IT support systems for institutional research (IRIS: Institutional Research Information System) and for academic programme approval. A student information management system is under development. The current management information systems do not appear to be in general use outside the centre of the University, however, and some Schools appear to maintain home-grown management information systems tailored to their own needs. UCC aspires to have a fully integrated management information system but does not yet operate one. This recommendation has been partly met but deserves renewed attention.

FINDINGS

UCC has responded to all the recommendations of the 2005 Institutional Quality Review Report and it can show some significant progress. In some cases, it has significantly surpassed the recommendations; in other cases, as indicated above, recommendations from 2005 remain to be addressed by the University.

PROCEDURES FOR ENSURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE UNIVERSITY'S TEACHING, LEARNING, RESEARCH AND SUPPORT SERVICES

ASSURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING:
VALIDATION AND ACCREDITATION OF NEW PROVISION

The ISAR noted that a new programme approval process had been established under which responsibility for the conduct of programme validations and approvals had been delegated to Colleges but with the conduct of some programme validations continuing to be reserved to the University. The new procedures were approved by the Academic Board and Academic Council in June 2011 and apply to the approval of new taught provision and structured PhDs. The procedure is set out in the 'Handbook Governing New Academic Programme Approval and Curriculum Change 2012', (the Handbook) which is maintained by the University's Office for Academic Programmes and Regulations. Under these arrangements, the process of developing, validating and approving a new programme of studies is in two stages, where Stage 1 leads to outline approval of the proposal and the programme title by the Academic Board, including the business case and the academic case for the proposal, and Stage 2 consists of the validation and approval of the fully-developed programme proposal.

The new procedures for programme development validation and approval were approved by the Academic Board in November 2012. The ISAR noted that authority for approving new programmes has now been delegated to Colleges but provided little information on how the exercise of this authority would be monitored by the University. The 'Handbook Governing New Academic Programme Approval and Curriculum Change' reserves the approval of programmes that are designated as 'high risk' to the Academic Board and Academic Council and states that programmes leading to joint and dual awards will be closely monitored by the Academic Board. The criteria for determining what constitutes a 'high risk' programme are not specified in the Handbook and the Review Team recommends that UCC should make good this omission and publish the criteria to Colleges, Schools and Departments for their information in a standard format that enables them to assess whether the programme they are proposing is likely to be judged 'high risk', with the Academic Board retaining responsibility for monitoring how the criteria are implemented.

The new procedure provides for the developed programme proposal to be put to a Programme Approval Panel (PAP) constituted by the College under the authority devolved to it, with the membership of the PAP required to include one or more members of the Academic Council, the Academic Development and Standards Committee of the Academic Council, or the Academic Board 'to ensure appropriate University-level oversight', together with external expert peer, practitioner and student involvement. The University has established Joint Academic Boards with each of the Cork Institute of Technology and the Irish Management Institute and joint Programme Approval Panels between the University and each of them. The 'Handbook Governing New Academic Programme Approval and Curriculum Change' explicitly states that the University's new programme approval procedures have been designed to conform to the expectations of Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

UCC plans to review the effectiveness of these new programme approval arrangements and their operation by the Colleges after their first year in operation. The Review Team recommends that this should be undertaken through a Quality Review that examines a sample of programme approvals under the new arrangements

across the Colleges and the University. The Team also recommends that the terms of reference for this Quality Review should include an examination of the effectiveness of the linked processes for approving major and minor modifications, responsibility for which has also been delegated to Colleges, and examination of the success or otherwise of the new programmes approved by the Colleges.

ASSURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING AND SUPPORT FOR LEARNING:
UCC'S INTERNAL QUALITY REVIEW PROCESS

The 2005 Institutional Quality Review of UCC described how the University had established its own Quality Review process, that its first cycle of Quality Reviews of Departments had begun in 2000-2001 and that by 2005, UCC had conducted about 40 such reviews. The Review Team noted that since 2000, the key features of the Quality Review process had been developed and applied to the whole range of UCC's academic, administrative and support services – a noteworthy achievement.

The process described in 2005 consisted of a self-assessment produced by the unit or Department under review; a review of the unit or Department; based on that self-assessment, conducted by 'group of relevant peers'; and a report produced by the peer group, that went to the Dean of the Faculty, under the arrangements that then obtained. Subsequently, 'the unit [that has been reviewed] should ensure that the recommendations for improvement are acted upon on an on-going basis'. Progress towards meeting the recommendations was monitored by the University's Quality Promotion Unit and reported to UCC's Quality Promotion Committee and, through the latter's Annual Report, to the Governing Body.

It seemed to the present Review Team that the most significant criticism of the Quality Review process in the 2005 Report concerned the 'usefulness and success of the follow-up activity after the peer review'. The 2005 Report ascribed some of the critical comments it heard on this aspect of the Quality Review process to unrealistic expectations on the part of those who had been reviewed that the outcomes of the review would lead to improved resources and hinted that some peer review teams might have given insufficient consideration to the 'resource implications of the recommendations they made' or the relative weight that should be given to particular recommendations. The 2005 Report added that, in a number of cases, 'the implementation phase following a Quality Review 'has been difficult, if not impossible, and some staff have been disappointed. Clear expectations were also held regarding possible responses from the University leadership, and in a number of cases these were reportedly not met.' The 2005 Report recommended that 'expectations need to be more clearly managed in the future … and the terms of reference of the peer review teams improved to ensure that their recommendations fit realistically into the context of the University.'

Since 2005, the Quality Review process has continued. A second cycle of Quality Reviews of Departments and services commenced in 2007-08 and, as UCC's internal structures have changed, new units have been formed and have been brought into the Quality Review process. In 2012, some units were participating in their second Quality Review.

As noted above (page 22), Volume 2 of the ISAR provided detailed information on the Quality Review process that included the terms of reference for the review of academic units such as Departments. These state that the reviews 'provide a mechanism for monitoring the status, effectiveness and progress of all

activities, with the overall aim of improving the quality of teaching and learning and research and the student experience, in line with the University's strategic objectives.' This is not entirely consistent with the view stated in UCC's response to the 2005 sectoral report that 'ownership by the unit in question must continue to be a core element of the process if the ultimate aim of quality improvement is to be maximised'. The Review Team recommends that UCC should clarify the nature and purpose of the Quality Review process as it applies to Academic Departments, Schools, Colleges, services, and administrative and management offices respectively.

The format of the Quality Review process as it applies to Academic Departments, services and administrative units has changed incrementally since its introduction but retains the broad features described in the 2005 Institutional Quality Review Report, that is:

- a self-assessment written by the unit to be reviewed against a set of agreed guidelines that also requires the completion of
  - » questionnaire surveys by staff and students,
  - » a SWOT analysis, and
  - » a benchmarking exercise
- a review of the unit under review by a group of peers, some of whom will be from outside the University and Ireland, that is
  - » based on the self-assessment
  - » involves a site visit with meetings with staff students and stakeholders and
  - » requires an exit presentation of the panel's findings to the unit under review
- a report to the University that is submitted to the Director of the Quality Promotion Unit which, when finalised, goes to the head of the unit that has been reviewed for comments and is then submitted to the Quality Promotion Committee with those comments
- a follow-up about two years later to check what the unit has done in response to the recommendations in the review report.

UCC's own assessment of the 'main weakness of the Quality Review procedures' is that there 'remains an underlying lack of confidence in the process amongst some staff, owing in part to their perception of lack of transparency in the handling of the outcomes and in the implementation of the recommendations of the reviewers, particularly proposals related to additional resources'. This suggests that the University has yet to attend to the recommendation in the 2005 Report that the University should manage the expectations of participants more carefully. The Team also noted that the panels for some recent Quality Reviews had included student members and some had not.

Members of the University who discussed the Quality Review process with the Review Team acknowledged its potential but also spoke of the burdensome nature of the preparations that were required. The paucity of comment in the ISAR on the findings of the Quality Reviews individually and collectively, and the lack of

clarity about their 'ownership', suggested to the Review Team that views of the Quality Review process at the centre of the University might not be wholly supportive.

Reflecting on these internal views of Quality Review, the Review Team considered that what united them was the continuing perception of a mismatch between the perceived costs to individual units of preparing for a Quality Review, and the likely benefits from its outcomes, as the Institutional 2005 Report observed. The Team was told that a second-cycle Quality Review had found that the Report of its predecessor had made 26 recommendations but that after five years, 15 of these recommendations remained to be addressed and noted that UCC had not provided it with evidence or case studies of the improvements to learning, teaching and the student experience that had been prompted by Quality Reviews.

UCC might now wish to consider how much of any reconfigured Quality Review process might be conducted as a desk-based exercise, drawing on the existing records and papers of the unit being reviewed, together with the data held by the University, in order to reduce the volume of papers that needs to be specially written for a review, but retaining the requirement for a concise and evaluative self-assessment. To this end, UCC might also wish to transform its intention to make greater use of the data from its developing management information systems to support internal reviews into a reality. The Review Team recommends that this should be a priority for the University. At the same time, UCC might also wish to consider what can be learned from the conduct of the successful Review of Research Quality and whether something similar for learning and teaching, focusing on Departmental or School approaches to supporting learning and teaching, might be pursued. The Team recommends that student membership of all Quality Review panels should be a feature of the next iteration of the process.

As it considers what form the next iteration of Quality Review should take, the University will also be introducing programme reviews. The Review Team suggests that UCC should consider whether the introduction of programme reviews might enable the University to sharpen the focus of its Quality Reviews so that they concentrate on the management of the unit and of the student experience it provides. The Team also suggests that Quality Reviews continue to be used to conduct cross-University thematic reviews.

The Review Team considers that it is now essential that changes are made to the Quality Review process to enable it, in its next iteration, to gain the confidence of staff, students and senior managers, such that its outcomes will make a clearer contribution to the Strategic Plan, to the improvement of students' experiences of studying at UCC, and to the University's continuing success.

PROPOSED NEW PROGRAMME REVIEW PROCEDURE

The ISAR noted that, until the present review, 'individual programmes have been reviewed as part of academic unit quality reviews to varying degrees of detail, depending on the nature of the unit and the expertise of the peer review panels' and that UCC had decided 'to introduce a more regular and specific programme review involving external experts'. At the time of the present Institutional Review, the procedure had recently been published. Its design explicitly refers to the principles of IUQB's 'Good practice for the approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards in Irish Universities' and the European Standards and Guidelines. The Review Team noted, however, that the Academic Council had suggested

targeting programmes with low student demand and that whatever is adopted should be 'light touch'. The Team advises the University to reflect on the way in which the design of the Research Quality Review process had been informed by the conduct of several pilot reviews, which had enabled the review process finally adopted to be fine-tuned. The Team recommends that the University should conduct an initial pilot of its new programme review process with a sample of programmes of varying characteristics across the University and should ensure that students have opportunities to participate in programme reviews as panel members.

The Review Team discussed with members of the University at all levels not only how new taught programmes of study are developed and approved but how programmes were withdrawn from its academic portfolio as circumstances changed. The Team was told that deleting a programme from the portfolio was difficult, with the result that there were programmes in the portfolio that had difficulty attracting sufficient students to provide a viable cohort. In the past decade, the University has also introduced substantial new areas of work (such as in healthcare and nursing) and it might now be timely for it to undertake a whole-institution review of its portfolio of taught programmes, modelled on the Research Quality Review, to identify those programmes that might better be provided elsewhere and those requiring development. The Team recommends that the University should consider how it might undertake such a whole-institution review of its portfolio of taught programmes to identify programmes in need of development and support and those that might better be offered by other institutions elsewhere or closed.

When the University has fulfilled its intention to introduce its new process for the periodic review of programmes, and as it continues to undertake Quality Reviews of Departments and Schools, it might wish to consider under what conditions it might devolve responsibility for conducting the Quality Reviews to the Colleges, once they are better established. Such an arrangement could meet any statutory responsibilities through reviewing the effectiveness of the Colleges' implementation of the Quality Review of constituent Departments and Schools. Such a development would require safeguards in the way of requirements for external peer and student participation and reserve powers for the University to step in to conduct Quality Reviews itself, should a College fail to conduct them, or fail to conduct them with sufficient thoroughness.

ASSURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF RESEARCH

In 2008-09, the University undertook a Research Quality Review (RQR) 'to assess the current state of achievement, standing and potential of research in UCC.' The RQR was an initiative of the University Management Team, approved by the Governing Body and the Quality Promotion Committee and managed for the University by the Quality Promotion Unit.

The design of the RQR process drew on international experience such as that of the former UK Research Assessment Exercise. RQR used a combination of agreed measures of performance (metrics) that were approved by the Research Committee of the Academic Council, together with a self-assessment. The research of each academic unit (including UCC's research units and institutes) was reviewed by one of 15 discipline-based panels of international peer experts 'drawn from top-ranking universities and institutes from Europe, Asia and USA, and chaired by senior academics with significant research review experience'. The process was supervised by a specially-constituted Research Review Implementation Group and a pilot exercise of the process was conducted in 2008, the experience of which contributed to the main RQR. The Review Team considered that the design and conduct of the RQR was exemplary.

Many of the findings of the RQR that had relevance across the University were summarised in the QPC Annual Report for 2009. They included recommendations for:

- the reinstatement of sabbatical leave in the humanities

- researchers to give greater attention to publishing in journals of international standing

- the University to recognise the need for investment in research facilities outside the research institutes, that high teaching loads challenged the achievement of research excellence as did inadequacies in space and facilities

- greater support by the Research Office for the humanities and social sciences, to match that already given to the pure and applied sciences and technology

- better access to international journals and books and better research information

- the development of a consistent research culture and research leadership

- the full implementation of UCC's guidelines for the support of doctoral students.

Members of the University with whom the Review Team discussed the outcomes of the Research Quality Review clearly regarded the Review itself as a watershed event. Not all the units that had been reviewed had agreed with the findings of the Review: some of the rankings that had been given had been contested but, overall, the findings had been accepted. The Team noted that the outcomes of the RQR had informed self-assessments and discussions in several Quality Reviews of Departments that had taken place after the RQR. A second RQR is to be undertaken in 2014-15.

A group of the University's stakeholders who met the Team to discuss its contribution to the City of Cork and the region offered the view that the primary function of UCC is to provide intellectual capital for the region and serve the regional economy. The Team considers that on the evidence gathered through the RQR, the University is clearly generating abundant intellectual capital for the region and Ireland.

Senior staff told the Review Team that the impact of the RQR on UCC had been far-reaching. For example, it had had a positive influence on the way research-led teaching was being developed on doctoral education, and had influenced the way that budgets were now handled in the Colleges. The University is to be congratulated and commended for its conduct of a remarkable exercise that deserves wider notice throughout Ireland and has acted as a significant stimulus to its work as a research institution. Likewise, the University deserves congratulations for the energetic way it has followed up the Review. The Team considers that the University should now take steps to bring the conduct of the RQR, and the benefits that have accrued from it, to the attention of stakeholders, including research funding agencies and Government Departments.

ASSURING THE QUALITY OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

In the Strategic Plan 2013-2017, the University has committed itself to continuing to work to provide a 'world-class student experience' through:

- the enhancement of staff support and development in teaching and through promoting staff on the basis of excellence in teaching

- acting on student feedback and recommendations for quality improvement

- improving the support provided for student learning, for the development of skills that will enhance employability and personal skills and improving placement opportunities 'so that all UCC students have the opportunity to develop the generic and transferable skills needed for effective engagement in the workplace and society'

- the co-location of support services for students through the development of a student 'hub' building.

The Review Team noted that the establishment of a 'student hub' had been a feature of the Strategic Plan for the Student Experience 2009-12, which had also emphasised the need to assist students in making the transition to University study.

COLLECTING AND ANALYSING FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS ON THEIR EXPERIENCE OF UCC

The ISAR noted that the University had undertaken an institution-wide Student Satisfaction Survey in 2009 and that this had been repeated with modifications and improvements in 2011. The University intends to continue this University-wide survey of students every second year. The response rate for the 2011 Survey had been 22 per cent of undergraduates, 10 per cent of taught postgraduate students and 21 per cent of doctoral students. A University-wide module survey (with results collected and analysed centrally) had been undertaken in 2011-12. UCC also subscribes to the International Student Barometer to gather information from its international students on their learning experiences.

The University-wide surveys conducted by UCC to date have been undertaken electronically, with generally low response rates, as noted above. Students told the Review Team that the distribution of the Module Survey during the examinations period had affected response rates. Students also observed that the restricted opportunities to give qualitative feedback in the first two Student Satisfaction Surveys had prevented the University from collecting wider ranging views and advice from its students. At the time of the present review, the University was considering alternative ways of conducting the next Student Satisfaction Survey. The Team recommends that the University should draw on the experiences of other higher education institutions in Ireland, and further afield in Australia and the UK, to improve response rates to its own institution-wide student surveys and the planned Irish National Student Survey.

Even with low response rates to the first two University-wide Student Satisfaction Surveys, the Review Team was told that the University had found the analysis of the results worthwhile. The findings have pointed to the need: to improve the timeliness with which marked assessments are returned to students with feedback; to improve the availability of academic staff to students seeking academic advice; to improve the reliability of timetabling; to increase opportunities for work-based placements; to improve opportunities for participation in student clubs and societies; and to provide financial advice for students.

The ISAR stated that pressures on the staff establishment (for both academic and support staff) accounted for some of the difficulties of returning marked assessments with feedback more rapidly. Students and staff with whom the Review Team discussed the outcomes from the Student Satisfaction Surveys and the University-wide Module Survey were pleased that information from the surveys was helping the University to identify matters for action and priorities but students commented that the University was sometimes slow to act on feedback. Students also commented that the number of surveys students were asked to complete contributed to low response rates. For example, in addition to the Student Satisfaction and Module Surveys at University level, subjects and Departments may also ask their students to complete survey questionnaires where the benefit to students in terms of improvements was not always clear.

The University is operating in volatile national and international environments for student recruitment and retention. In such circumstances, conducting a Student Satisfaction Survey every second year may not provide the University with sufficiently timely intelligence to respond to changes. The Team, therefore, recommends that until the projected Irish National Student Survey comes into full operation, the University should plan to conduct its own Student Satisfaction Survey annually and that to reduce 'survey-fatigue', it should rationalise and co-ordinate the student surveys that are conducted by Departments and Schools. The Team noted that students were said to be experiencing 'survey-fatigue', and suggests that for future annual surveys, it will be even more important for the University to inform its students how their feedback is contributing to the improvement of their learning.

STUDENT REPRESENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The University receives information on the student experience from elected class representatives and members of the Students' Union, including sabbatical officers who attend many central University committees. Class representatives may attend liaison and other committees at Departmental, School and College level and the Students' Union convenes a Council of elected class representatives through which they can share information.

Students told the Review Team that within the Colleges, Schools and Departments, class representatives and members of the Students' Union were able to participate fully in most meetings they attended. Students' Union Officers were less convinced that they had opportunities to participate as meaningfully in meetings of the University's central committees. In the course of its visit, the Review Team discussed the changing character of UCC's student body with staff and students. The Students' Union acknowledged that although women were in the majority in the student body, this was not yet reflected in the University's student representation arrangements.

The Review Team was told that some departments in UCC had introduced special arrangements for the representation of international students on some of their programmes. This seemed to the Team to be a welcome development and one worth further consideration by the University and the Students' Union, working together. The Review Team recommends that the University should encourage and support the Students' Union to work towards representation arrangements that are more representative of the gender balance and more inclusive of other nationalities in UCC's student body. Notwithstanding this recommendation, the Team came to the view that UCC's Students' Union and its class representatives were undertaking their duties in

a serious and responsible manner, and that they deserved the thanks of their peers and the University as a whole for the contributions they were making to the University's continuing success.

REVIEWS OF LEARNING SUPPORT AND OTHER SERVICE UNITS

From the introduction of the Quality Review process in 2000, UCC has conducted Quality Reviews of learning support and other services. For example, the University's Audio Visual Media Services were reviewed in 2002, the Student Centre (which then included the Accommodation and Student Activity Centre) was reviewed in 2003 and the Disability Support Service was reviewed in 2006. More recently, the Office of Buildings & Estates and the Health and Safety Office were reviewed in 2011 and the Library was reviewed in its new configuration as part of Information Services in 2012. Administrative and finance services have also been reviewed, including the Finance Office and the Procurement Office in 2005 (which are scheduled to be re-reviewed in the current session) and the Office of the Registrar (including the Academic Secretariat, the Admissions Office, the Academic Programmes and Regulations Office, Student Records & Examinations Office, and Systems Administration for the Office of the Registrar) which was first reviewed in 2004 and, again, is to be reviewed in the current session.

The reviews listed above convey some impression of the comprehensive way in which UCC has applied its Quality Review process to all aspects of the work that is done to support the operations of the University and its support for its students. Quality Reviews conducted since the Global Financial Crisis and the introduction of the Employment Control Framework and the Croke Park Agreements, such as the Quality Review of Information Services, have reported in detail on the difficulties that managers faced in seeking to adapt the support their services provide within the constraints of the ECF and the Agreement and in a context of budgets that are being reduced.

The Quality Review Report on Information Services noted that when they had been formed in 2007, a review by an external consultant had made wide-ranging recommendations for the future direction, development, and management of the merged services. The authors of the 2012 Quality Review Report unanimously endorsed all the recommendations of the 2007 review, while noting that after five years, many of its key recommendations were still to be implemented. For example, the Report noted that 'legacy organisational boundaries' remained within Information Services and were inhibiting the Services from providing a 'seamless' and 'user-centric' support to students and staff. The Quality Review Report stated that in the course of the Review, it 'became apparent that much of [the difficulty in implementing the recommendations of the 2007 review] stemmed from resource constraints'.

The Review Team met a group of staff with current operational responsibilities for the provision of student support. The Team was told that continuing to offer a service that met users' needs with a shrinking staff establishment was requiring managers to reconceptualise how to provide the support required of their services. Quality Reviews had been a good exercise in self-reflection with two types of recommendations: those that could be implemented within the unit that had been reviewed and those that required external resources, with the latter being more difficult to deal with.

STRATEGIC APPROACH TO SELF-EVALUATION, INCLUDING THE USE MADE OF EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS

The Review Team's views on UCC's approach to self-evaluation can be found in the context of its comments on the University's ISAR (see above, page 21).

The ISAR stated that the 'academic standard of existing programmes is primarily assured through the process of external examining' together with the contributions of professional bodies. Discussing the University's use of external reference points with senior staff, the Review Team was again referred to the contributions of the UCC's external examiners and of the external reviewers who participated in Quality Reviews, including the Research Quality Review. The Team was also told that the University benchmarked a range of its activities against the performance of 10 other Universities in Ireland and further afield with profiles comparable to that of UCC.

Reflecting on the University's present approach to use of external reference points in its academic quality assurance arrangements, the Team readily acknowledges the important contributions that are being made by external examiners, external peer reviewers, and professional bodies to maintaining the security of the University's awards and the learning experiences of its students. The Team was surprised, however, that senior members of the University did not refer it to the external reference points that have been developed in Ireland and the European Higher Education Area since 2000, such as the National Framework of Qualifications, the advice and guidance formerly provided by IUQB and now by QQI, the notes of guidance and consultations provided by the Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN), and Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (3rd edition, Helsinki, 2009). The Team did, however, note that the design of the University's new process for programme approvals was stated to conform to the expectations of Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines (see page 26).

As the University continues to develop its internal quality assurance arrangements, the Team recommends that it should review the extent to which, overall, it depends on the contributions of external examiners and external peers and whether it needs to rebalance its internal quality assurance arrangements to make more prominent reference to and use of external reference points such as the National Framework of Qualifications, the advice and guidance formerly provided by IUQB and now by QQI, the notes of guidance and consultations provided by the Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN), and Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (3rd edition, Helsinki, 2009).

HOW THE LEARNING OUTCOMES ARE ACHIEVED FOR PROGRAMMES THAT HAVE BEEN PLACED IN THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS (NFQ)

The ISAR noted that details of all learning outcomes and methods of assessment could be found in UCC's on-line Module Catalogue, the 'Book of Modules'. Elsewhere, the ISAR stated that 'the alignment of learning outcomes with assessment methodologies at both the module and programme level' had been 'identified as requiring considerable attention ... in a recent teaching and learning workshop run by the [Academic Council] Teaching and Learning Committee to help identify priority areas of work for the coming few years'. It reported that the Teaching and Learning Committee had 'obtained a project grant … to carry out an audit and establish the mechanisms to address any deficiencies uncovered.'

The Review Team followed up this matter in meetings with members of the University identified for the Team as leading its work on learning outcomes and assessment. They told the Team that they had not read this statement in the ISAR and were surprised to be informed that the link between learning outcomes and assessment had been identified by the University as a problem requiring 'considerable attention'. The staff (all of whom, the Team noted, had expertise in the development of learning outcomes and assessment) told it that a handbook had been produced by a member of staff on 'everything you need to know about learning outcomes' that had subsequently been translated into 10 languages, and that 'by 2010 all modules had learning outcomes'. They also told the Team that a recent sample survey had confirmed that for more than 80 per cent of modules examined, learning outcomes and assessment were in alignment and that the sample of modules checked had included some offered in China and Malaysia.

The Review Team discussed with students from across the University how learning outcomes were being used with them and was told that when commencing a module, they generally received the module outline, which included a statement of the intended learning outcomes. The Team also reviewed a sample of reports by external examiners from across the University and was unable to identify evidence of either widespread or localised problems with learning outcomes and links with assessment. Two recent Quality Review reports have mentioned the need for action on learning outcomes but in one report no supporting evidence was offered and in the other the reference was to producing 'programme-wide learning outcomes', a formulation which allows for more than one interpretation. Successive Annual Reports by QPC have recorded progress with the adoption and use of learning outcomes and their connections with assessment, with only one exception in 2011, which refers to one of the Quality Review reports cited above.

In the time available to the Review Team during the visit, it was unable to resolve this apparent discrepancy between, on the one hand, the oral evidence provided by staff and students and the positive statements about learning outcomes by external examiners in their reports and in Quality Review Reports and the findings of the Teaching and Learning Committee that learning outcomes and their alignment with assessments require 'considerable attention'. The Team suggests that the University looks further into this matter in order to resolve the discrepancy highlighted above before taking this matter further. Notwithstanding the reservations expressed in the ISAR about the extent to which the use of learning outcomes and their links with assessments have been embedded in Departments, the Team commends the work of Ionad Bairre, QPU and other UCC staff for the work that has been undertaken to date across the University to develop learning outcomes and link them to assessment.

QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES DELIVERED BY PARTNERS

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF OVERSEAS COLLABORATIONS

In the ISAR, UCC described how its 'expanding academic portfolio and international agenda have been supported through the establishment of major partnerships with national and international institutions and organisations. Internationally partnerships with universities and colleges in China, USA, Malaysia, Singapore and Ethiopia have led to the development of collaborative, joint and dual degrees'.

The description of its overseas collaborations that the University provided for the Review Team showed UCC's preference for arrangements in which students commence their studies overseas with an approved partner

and complete their degree programme in Cork. Several such collaborations with overseas partners lead to 'dual degrees', where the student can gain a degree award from each of the partner universities. In all such cases, the Team was told that the requirements of UCC's Marks and Standards framework were rigorously observed and that the academic standard of the final award by the University was underpinned by the participation of external examiners. In the time available, the Team was not able to test these arrangements.

The Review Team discussed the development of UCC's overseas partnerships with senior members of the University in several meetings. Having noted the absence of any evidence in the papers it consulted to support the assertion in the ISAR that the procedures for developing educational collaborations 'have been very well documented' and involved 'extensive engagement by the Quality Promotion Unit', it learned that the Quality Promotion Unit had not been involved in the academic due diligence of the more recent partners conducted by UCC, and that its advice had only been brought to one project at a very late stage through the ad hoc intervention of a senior manager. In this particular case, academic quality difficulties that had then been identified had led the University not to proceed with the prospective partnership.

The Review Team was told that the University had learned from the experiences described above that it needed to involve academics at an early stage in the negotiation of formal agreements for collaborations and pay more attention to project management. The Team was surprised by what appeared to be the assumptions of some senior managers that the reports of external examiners and professional bodies would provide sufficiently robust quality assurance measures for overseas collaborative and joint programmes including the suitability of the learning environment.

In 2011, UCC entered into an arrangement with the National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG) and a private higher education institution in Malaysia to prepare students recruited in Malaysia for a 'Con-joint degree in Medicine' made by the two Irish Universities. This sophisticated arrangement had been negotiated over two years with the support of the national authorities of Ireland and Malaysia. The University provided the Review Team with copies of the formal agreements between the three partners and members of the University discussed the establishment of the collaborative programme with the Team. The first two years of the programme are delivered on the campuses of the two Irish Universities, to a common curriculum and subject to the academic requirements and regulations of the Irish University at which the student is based. Students who complete their studies in Ireland successfully return to Malaysia for the final years of their degree where they undertake their clinical placements under supervision by staff employed by the Irish Universities and subject to the requirements and quality control arrangements of the Irish Medical Council and the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME).

The Review Team considered that the development of the three-way partnership described above was an enterprising and innovative form of transnational higher education. The Team was informed that the academic due diligence for this collaboration had been undertaken by 'Academic Board and the Registrar's Office through programme approval processes (and a similar process has been undertaken in the partner University, National University of Ireland Galway).' This procedure seemed to the Team to neglect the need for an institutional dimension to the academic due diligence. The Team was also concerned to learn that the University had devolved the responsibility for operational quality control and quality assurance to one of its Colleges and to learn about the extent to which the University appeared ready to rely on the Medical

Council's oversight of the collaboration. In the time available during the review visit, the Team was not able to establish how the admission arrangements to the two Irish Universities worked together and how the Irish Universities ensured that the learning experiences and academic progress of the students based on the Cork and Galway campuses remained in step and commensurate.

The University's overseas collaborations in Malaysia and China are in the early stages of development and no institutional approval or programme validation reports were made available to the Review Team. The Team also recommends that, henceforth, the University should make arrangements to ensure that its internal academic due diligence and academic quality control and quality assurance arrangements for new collaborations and especially new overseas collaborations are at least as secure as those it has developed for its work with CIT; action to ensure this should now be a priority. The Team further recommends that UCC should develop a comprehensive Quality Guide for Overseas Collaborations that draws on international good practice and that UCC should require all staff and those working for it as agents to follow the terms of this Quality Guide when it is completed.

The Review Team recommends, as a matter of urgency, that the University should:

- ensure that its internal experts on academic due diligence, academic quality control and academic quality assurance matters are able to contribute at a formative stage in the development of new academic collaborations and especially new overseas collaborations

- ask the Academic Board, on behalf of the Academic Council, and advised by its internal academic quality experts and the University's Legal Officer, to develop a comprehensive Quality Guide for Overseas Collaborations, as soon as possible, for those exploring, initiating and operating such collaborations that draw on international good practice

- require all members of the University and those working for it as agents to follow the terms of this Quality Guide for Overseas Collaborations when it is adopted

- retain responsibility for overseeing the management, quality control and quality assurance of collaborative partnerships and transnational education at the centre of the University under the direct supervision of the University Management Team (Operations).

UCC'S COLLABORATION WITH CORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

The ISAR described the longstanding partnership between the University and Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) and how their collaboration, which was strongly supported by the Presidents of the two institutions, enabled them to work together to serve the needs of the City and the region and to work with employers. One concrete focus for collaboration between the University and CIT is provided by the degree programmes that they offer together to lead to joint UCC-CIT awards. As a partner of the University, CIT, an Institute of Technology to which the former Higher Education Training and Awards Council (HETAC) had delegated authority to make degree awards, had formally agreed to design jointly-operated quality and academic

standards arrangements within a 'consortium' configuration, as required by HETAC's regulations. This exercise had required the partners to work closely and co-operatively together to meet a complex set of external and UCC requirements. The Review Team observed the work that the University had undertaken to support its partnership with CIT and that the expertise thus acquired could be applied to advantage in the University's work with other partners in Ireland and overseas. The Team commends UCC for its work with its partner CIT to provide programmes and awards that meet the needs of their City and region.

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION TO INFORM THE OPERATION AND EVALUATION OF THE UNIVERSITY'S QUALITY MONITORING AND REVIEW ACTIVITIES

The ISAR described the considerable attention the University was devoting to the improvement of its Management Information Systems (see above page 25) but noted that at the time of the review UCC's Student Information Systems required 'significant upgrading'. The findings and recommendations of the Quality Review of Information Services are discussed elsewhere (see page 34) but the ISAR frankly acknowledged the University's need to upgrade its data centre and improve the resilience of its information systems to critical events, such as the floods that affected significant areas of the Campus and the operations of the University's information systems in 2009.

Management and other information to inform the conduct of Quality Reviews of Academic Departments is provided for the Peer Review Groups that conduct the Reviews by QPU, which has access to what was described by the Review Team as 'UCC's developing data-warehouse'. The Review Team noted instances in the Annexes to the ISAR and the supplementary information provided by the University where it was clear that data and the information produced from it was being used by the University to inform policy, planning and action. The Team was told, however, that information to identify which staff were delivering and/or assessing individual modules was incomplete in some cases and unreliable in others.

The Review Team recognises that for reasons beyond UCC's control, the contents of the on-line Module Catalogue might sometimes have to be changed at short notice. It seemed clear to the Team, however, that some of the inaccuracies in the Module Catalogue that it was told about had arisen because there was insufficient information on the content and delivery of particular modules. The Team's recommendation to UCC on this matter is placed in the next section of the report.

MANAGING PUBLIC INFORMATION ABOUT QUALITY, INCLUDING THE LINKAGE WITH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL REVIEW ACTIVITIES

The Review Team was able to read a substantial number of recent Quality Review Reports, follow-up reports to some of these Reviews, and the Annual Reports of the Quality Promotion Committee since 2008. It noted that the format of the latter was to reproduce the opening sections of each Quality Review Report and Follow-up Report and provide summaries of their findings (in the case of Follow-up Reports, action on recommendations) in tables. This format is comprehensive but is intended for specialists; it is not easy to digest, demands the detailed attention and analysis of readers and it does not guide them to an appreciation of common themes (or good practice) in the Reports that might repay University-wide attention. As the

University considers how it will configure the next cycle of Quality Reviews, it may wish to consider giving greater priority to adopting reporting formats for the Quality Review Reports and the QPC Annual Reports that are concise and make the information in them more accessible to non-specialists among its stakeholders, including students and members of the general public.

As noted above, the reports of the University's Quality Reviews are publicly available on the QPU web site but are not immediately accessible. The layout of the web site, together with its search engine, work well and together enable knowledgeable users whose first language is English to find information on subjects and Departments relatively easily. For the future, the University may wish to conduct periodic follow-ups with applicants from outside Europe and North America to check that the information they need to make an application or an enquiry is easily identifiable and that the information itself is accurate and reliable. The Team recommends that the University should take all necessary steps to ensure the accuracy of the information that it publishes about its programmes and modules in its on-line Module Catalogue, including which members of the teaching staff are associated with teaching and assessment for each module.

EXTERNAL REVIEWS AND ACCREDITATION

The ISAR stated that for programmes of study where successful completion entitled the holder of the University's award to exemption from the requirements of a professional or statutory body, 'formal recognition of the degree by statutory or professional bodies plays an important role' in the University's quality assurance of its programmes. The ISAR commented that, in such cases, accreditation or recognition 'normally involves a submission by the School/Department to the relevant body for recognition of the degree and a subsequent visitation by the relevant professional body to the University with staff, students and Officers involved.'

The ISAR also noted that 'recommendations of the professional/statutory body are usually acted upon at the level of the School/Department and recommendations requiring allocation of additional resources are supported by the University, as necessary, because of the importance of recognition for the currency of the degree and the entitlement of the graduates to practise the relevant profession.' The University did not offer any further information on this matter and in the time available during the review visit, the Review Team was unable to follow it up. It occurred to the Team, however, that it would be helpful for the University to have a central record of those of its programmes that are professionally accredited and/or recognised by statutory bodies, not least to ensure that UCC can be mindful of the schedule of such professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) when drawing up its own schedule of Quality Reviews. In the present circumstances, the University might also want to ensure that any opportunities for synergies and/or economies between its own review procedures and those of a PSRB or statutory body are not overlooked

COMMENDATIONS

The team commends the University for

- the design and implementation of the Research Quality Review as an instance of
  good practice worthy of wider emulation (page 30) and the conduct of the RQR
  which was a remarkable exercise that has acted as a significant stimulus to UCC's

work as a research institution, and for the energetic way it has followed up the Review (page 31)

- the work that has been undertaken by Ionad Bairre, QPU and other UCC staff to date across the University to develop learning outcomes and link them to assessment (page 36)

- its work with its partner CIT to provide programmes and awards that meet the needs of their City and Region (page 39)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Review Team recommends that the University should

- publish the criteria for identifying a programme as 'high risk' to Colleges, Schools and Departments in a standard format that enables them to assess whether the programme they are proposing is likely to be judged 'high risk', with the Academic Board retaining responsibility for monitoring how the criteria are implemented (page 26)

- undertake a Quality Review of its new programme approval arrangements and their operation by the Colleges after their first year in operation that examines a sample of programme approvals under the new arrangements across the Colleges, the terms of reference for this Quality Review to include an examination of the effectiveness of the linked processes for approving major and minor modifications, responsibility for which has also been delegated to Colleges, and examination of the success or otherwise of the new programmes approved by the Colleges (pages 26 and 27)

- clarify the nature and purpose of the Quality Review process as it applies to Academic Departments, Schools, Colleges, services and administrative and management offices, respectively (page 28)

- ensure that student membership of all Quality Review, programme approval, and programme review panels is a feature of the next iteration of its quality arrangements (pages 29 and 30)

- make greater use of the data from its developing management information systems to support internal reviews (page 29)

- conduct an initial pilot of its new programme review process with a sample of programmes of varying characteristics across the University (page 30)

- consider how it might undertake a whole-institution review of its portfolio of taught programmes to identify programmes in need of development and support and those that might better be offered by other institutions elsewhere or closed (page 30)

- draw on the experiences of other higher education institutions in Ireland, and further afield in Australia and the UK, to improve response rates to its institution-wide student surveys and the planned Irish National Student Survey (page 33)

- conduct its own Student Satisfaction Survey annually until the projected Irish National Student Survey comes into full operation and rationalise and coordinate the student surveys that are conducted by Departments and Schools to reduce 'survey fatigue' among students (page 33)

- encourage and support the Students' Union to work towards representation arrangements that correspond to the gender balance across the University and are more inclusive of other nationalities in UCC's student body (page 33)

- review the extent to which its quality assurance arrangements depend on the contributions of external examiners and external peers and whether it needs to rebalance its internal quality assurance arrangements to make more prominent reference to external reference points such as the National Framework of Qualifications, the advice and guidance formerly provided by IUQB and now by QQI, the notes of guidance and consultations provided by the Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN), and Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (3rd edition, Helsinki, 2009) (page 35)

- ensure that the quality assurance arrangements for programmes delivered with transnational partners are at least as secure as those UCC has developed for its work with CIT; ensure that its internal experts on academic due diligence, academic quality control and academic quality assurance matters are able to contribute at a formative stage in the development of new academic collaborations and especially new overseas collaborations; develop forthwith a comprehensive Quality Guide for Overseas Collaborations that draws on international good practice which UCC should then require all members of the University and those working for it as agents to follow; retain responsibility for overseeing the management, quality control and quality assurance of collaborative partnerships and transnational education at the centre of the University, under the direct supervision of the University Management Team (Operations)(page 38)

- take all necessary steps to ensure the accuracy of the information that it publishes about its programmes and modules in its on-line Module Catalogue, including which members of the teaching staff that are associated with teaching and assessment for each module (page 40)

SECTION 4

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

RESEARCH-LED TEACHING

The University has a long-standing commitment to the advancement of research-led teaching, which was set in the Strategic Plan 2009-2012 and is the University's first educational priority in its Strategic Plan 2013-2017. This states that:

> 'High quality research-led teaching is at the core of our mission. We will strengthen the integration of research, teaching and learning through the greater engagement of researchers in teaching activities and by maximising opportunities for students to participate in research programmes throughout their undergraduate studies. Up-to-date research, practice and knowledge will continuously inform our curriculum. We will increase the proportion of students studying for postgraduate degrees from 22% to 30%.'

The Review Team met a group of staff who were active in the development and delivery of research-led teaching to undergraduates. They told the Team that UCC defined research-led teaching as falling into four quadrants: imparting knowledge to students from research findings; imparting the skills and methodologies of research; activating students as researchers; and conducting research into pedagogy. The University expected staff to be active in one or more of the quadrants. Some staff described to the Team how students were introduced to working as part of a research team from the first term of their first year and that it fostered stronger student engagement in learning. Others agreed that for first-year students, integrating current research and findings into what they were taught benefited their later studies. For other students, teaching that emphasised the practice-related and practical aspects of the topic made it more immediate and relevant to them and their work while for many students the experience of research-led teaching improved their capacity to evaluate and critique theory and practice and gave them a sense of where the discipline was developing. In that respect, research-led teaching could be expected to enable undergraduate students to make a better transition to postgraduate study.

Staff told the Review Team that Ionad Bairre and its work with the National Academy for Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (NAIRTL), which had until recently been based at UCC, had made a significant contribution to the development of research-led teaching across the University; newly-appointed members of staff would be introduced to research-led teaching as part of their induction and training for teaching by Ionad Bairre. The Team asked how the benefits of research-led approaches to teaching were promoted across the University and was told that changes to UCC's promotion policy to give greater weight to contributions to teaching had been helpful. As the University prepares its next Student Satisfaction Survey, the Team recommends that it should include questions the answers to which will enable it to establish the extent and location of research-led teaching in the Departments and Schools in order to determine where to focus efforts to embed it.

Overall, the Review Team came to the view that through its staff, UCC was making commendable progress towards establishing research-led teaching as a normal expectation across the University, assisted by the no less commendable work of Ionad Bairre and NAIRTL. The Team has some concerns, however, that the current position where staff are free to choose whether to engage with these and other valuable developments in pedagogy and the organisation of the curriculum will permit pockets of poor practice to survive without firmer academic leadership and management by Heads of Department and Schools. The Team recommends that the University should redouble its efforts through teaching awards, travel and study grants and sabbatical leave to persuade staff that it is intent on embedding these and other changes in pedagogy and the curriculum for the benefit of all its students.

DEVELOPING ENCOURAGING AND REWARDING STAFF IN SUPPORT OF THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

In addition to exploring the University's work to develop research-led teaching, the Review Team also considered how UCC was supporting the development of student learning through its staff support and development arrangements for members of the teaching staff. It noted that Ionad Bairre offered induction and training programmes in teaching and learning for newly-appointed and longer-serving staff and those seeking a higher qualification in the study and/or practice of teaching itself.

Senior members of staff told the Review Team that, although the Employment Control Framework and the Croke Park Agreement had constrained the University's capacity to promote teaching staff for outstanding performance, when circumstances allowed for the creation of new posts or for promotions, UCC undertook rigorous evaluations of the performance of candidates. Teaching staff told the Team that since 2005, UCC had placed greater emphasis in the promotion process on the submission of a portfolio of evidence of their performance in teaching and supporting learning and that when seeking promotion, student feedback on the teacher's performance needed to be included as part of the portfolio.

The ISAR did not refer to the University's arrangement for regular appraisals of staff and the Review Team was told that external constraints prevented the University from developing a meaningful performance management system backed by rewards and sanctions. Under the University's current appraisal arrangements, performance information from student surveys may be shared between a member of staff and their immediate supervisor or line manager but cannot be used otherwise. The Team suggests that this reduces the potential value of the information.

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS, INCLUDING INTERNATIONAL, POSTGRADUATE AND DOCTORAL STUDENTS

In the course of the visit, the Review Team discussed the support provided by the individual student support services with students and their representatives. Students told the Team that the International Office, the Graduate Students Office and the Careers Office (through which student placements are organised and supported) each provided a consistently high level of service to students that was greatly valued. In some cases, however, it was widely acknowledged by staff, students and senior managers that support services that were of key importance to UCC's present and future strategic success – such as those provided by the

International Office, the Careers Office, and the Graduate Students Office – were only continuing to provide a good level of service to students by staff consistently working beyond what should be reasonably (and contractually) expected of them.

The Review Team met senior members of the University's student support services to discuss how the services were managing to provide their current level of service against a backdrop of reduced investment in staff and space. The Team was told (and accepted) that front line staff were carrying out their responsibilities professionally, and with commendable loyalty to the University, often in very difficult circumstances. The Team recommends that the University should gather together evidence for its external stakeholders of the consequences of being unable to provide more support staff for areas that it needs to expand so that UCC can meet Government aspirations and how current resource constraints and, particularly, rigidities in the funding framework, jeopardise the University's present successes in supporting its students.

A recent UCC submission to the Higher Education Authority had highlighted the HEA's own findings in a 2012 report that 'UCC is the leading Irish higher educational institution in providing "equity of access" to higher education for under-represented groups … [and] … that UCC had the highest combined number of full-time new entrants of mature students, students with a disability and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds among the third level institutions in Ireland for the years 2009/10 and 2010/1.' In the present economic circumstance, this is an outstanding and commendable achievement of which the University can be justly proud.

The ISAR stated that UCC had progressively introduced more 'flexible course requirements and structures, more diverse assessment and accreditation procedures, recognition of prior learning, self-directed learning, enhanced use of technology including e-learning, learning in the workplace and in the community', all of which are likely to assist UCC to continue to make its educational provision more accessible.

When the University published its 'Strategic Plan for the Student Experience 2009-2012', one of its key objectives had been to bring together student support services that were seen as 'spatially fragmented and are insufficiently integrated into the overall student experience'. The Plan recognised that UCC's historic legacy buildings, some dating back to its nineteenth-century foundation, made access to the support and learning facilities they housed extremely difficult and sometimes impossible for students with impairments or disabilities.

The ISAR acknowledged the increased level of activity by staff in the University's Student Services 'despite reducing staffing levels in the past 5 [sic] years'. Staff and students with whom the Review Team discussed the University's arrangements for students with disabilities and impairments warmly praised the professionalism and commitment of support staff. The Team was told that a priority for the University was to move as many of its student-facing services to accessible ground-level offices as possible but also heard that the University needed to be less reactive when tackling accessibility difficulties. The Review Team noted that enrolling and supporting students with disabilities features in the University's Strategic Plan 2013-2017 and that improvements in accessibility to services required the construction of a dedicated student 'hub' which would require external funding.

The Review Team commends the University for the professionalism and dedication of the staff of its student services. It endorses the recommendations of the University's own reviews that the services it provides to disabled students require greater integration and planning and notes the commendable work done over the last decade, for example, to install an 'Assistive Technology Lab' in the Boole Library, and many other innovations by the Disability Support Service. The Team recommends that the University should take all necessary steps to secure the funds to construct its student hub and, where possible, continue to adapt its learning facilities to be more accessible.

SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The emphasis in the Strategic Plan 2009-2012 and the Strategic Plan 2013-2017 encouraged the Review Team to enquire into the University's admission, induction and support arrangements for international students. The ISAR described the University's perceptions of international students 'and their sponsors … [as]… mature and sophisticated purchasers who are demanding in terms of perceived course quality, value for money and student support facilities'. The ISAR described the University's arrangements to increase the number of UCC-managed places for international students in residential accommodation. The University has arrangements for supporting international students through its Peer Support Leader arrangements (see below) but also noted the need for better co-ordination between UCC's various student support services (see above).

The Review Team met a small group of international students to hear how the University had welcomed them to their studies and the support arrangements available to them. The Team learned that inductions were arranged for international students by the University, Colleges and Departments. Where the University is able to identify that an individual is an international student, it provides an orientation session but not all students are notified of these sessions. The Team was told that the high proportion of UCC's students who are residents of Cork City and who know one another before they enter the University sometimes made it difficult for incoming international students to enter the social circles of their Irish peers. International students also found that much of the social life and social organisation of Irish students revolved around 'the pub', with many student events involving visits to licensed premises that made it difficult for students from other cultures, where the consumption of alcohol is frowned on, to participate.

The Students' Union told the Review Team that UCC and the Union had worked together to promote alcohol awareness and that it supported alcohol-free social events; the Team encourages the University and the Students' Union to continue to work together on such initiatives. The Students' Union supports an International Students' Society but does not earmark one of its sabbatical posts for a representative of UCC's international students. The Team recommends the designation of such an additional sabbatical post, and its support by the University, to enable the perspectives and needs of international students to be made more prominent.

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS ON THE SATELLITE CAMPUSES

In addition to the University's central buildings on the main riverside campus, it has developed a number of smaller satellite campuses in Cork which are generally within walking distance of the main campus buildings.

Students who were studying on these satellite campuses and who met the Review Team spoke of enjoying limited opportunities to meet their peers informally, and limited contacts with student services on the main campus. Students also spoke of perceptions of unease when walking to and from the satellite campuses in the evening. Members of the Governing Body told the Team that the University and the City authorities worked together to ensure the safety of students.

The University later informed the Review Team that 'no major safety issues affecting students walking from different areas of the campus' had been reported to it but that as part of its 'spatial masterplan', it was intending to provide 'high quality pedestrian pathways between parts of our campus in conjunction with Cork City Council'. The Team recommends that the University should consider how it might deal with perceptions of unease on the part of students walking to and from its satellite campuses in Cork in the evening.

PEER SUPPORT SCHEME

The ISAR described how UCC had responded to the need to assist students moving to the University to adjust to the higher education environment and its demands. It had developed a programme of 250 trained and professionally-led 'Peer Support Leaders', drawn from the undergraduate body referred to as 'uLink'. In addition to providing support for first year undergraduates, Peer Support Leaders may also assist international students and students experiencing personal and health difficulties at any point in their studies.

Students with disabilities can be partly supported by uLink (with additional assistance from UCC's full-time student support services) and the Review Team noted with interest that the University has ensured that students with disabilities also participate as 'Peer Support Leaders' in their own right in the programme. Serving as a Peer Support Leader is seen by students as a valuable opportunity to develop and demonstrate life skills.

Students who met the Review Team warmly supported the development of the uLink system, which provides peer support for each first year student and accredited training for participants. The Team noted with interest that the Peer Support scheme had developed in response to student feedback in the Student Satisfaction Survey and that the training and advice provided by the full-time professionals supporting the scheme helped Peer Support Leaders to know when the student or students they were helping needed to be referred on for other forms of advice including counselling. The Team commends the University on the design and implementation of its uLink peer support arrangements which are worthy of wider notice.

SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS

The ISAR reported that in 2012 the University had undertaken 'a major review of supervision practice' that had provided information on 'the proportion of staff supervising one or more doctoral students, the frequency of team supervision, College-level trends and broad distribution of … [postgraduate research] …student FTEs.' The University's Strategic Plan 2013-2017 noted its intention to continue to increase its cohort of doctoral students, while the ISAR stated UCC's intention to 'ensure the quality assurance of supervision'.

The Review Team met a group of supervisors and, separately, a group of doctoral students to discuss the University's support for research students and their supervisors. It heard that becoming a supervisor

generally followed success in securing research funds to enable the recruitment of research students and that those who were new to supervision would be linked with an experienced supervisor. The Team learned that supervisory teams were now the norm across the University, in line with UCC's 'Policy on Models of Team Supervision', and that the University has adopted a 'Policy on Resolution of Difficulties for Postgraduate Research Students' that describes some common difficulties that research students might encounter and how they can be resolved. These include various difficulties with the supervisory relationship. There is also an overarching 'Code of Practice for the Supervision of Research Students' which sets out the responsibilities of the student, the supervisor(s) and the University.

The Review Team met a group of doctoral research students to explore their experiences of supervision and the support the University was providing for them as research students. The Team learned that some were following 'structured' PhD research programmes that included formal introductions to research methods and that the supervision arrangements that they had experienced conformed to the University's policies and requirements. The research students described the arrangements through which their supervisors and the University monitored the progress of their research. For students following structured PhD programmes of research, the arrangements appeared to be more regular than for other students, where the frequency and character of supervisory meetings might vary.

The Review Team heard that the University had established a 'Postgraduate House' with desk space, meeting rooms and a kitchen for the use of research students and that it had introduced a 'Doctoral Showcase' so that research students could share information and good practice. UCC has also established a house Journal, 'The Boolean', specifically for research students. The Team also heard from the students, however, that the Library's opening times during the Summer were restricted.

Representation of research postgraduate students in the College's discussions seemed to the Review Team to be underdeveloped and to need attention. There are now 1,180 students studying for doctoral awards in the University, almost double the number of doctoral students immediately before the 2005 review, and their views now need to be more prominently and more formally represented to the University for its consideration. The Team recommends that the University confers with the Students' Union and representatives of its postgraduate research students on how best to establish formal representation of the interests of research postgraduate students in the University's deliberative and management arrangements.

The Review Team asked what support and training the University had provided for those research students who were acting as Graduate Teaching Assistants. The Team learned that it is regarded as normal for research students to work as Graduate Teaching Assistants and that support was available from Ionad Bairre, which regularly offered accredited modules in learning, teaching and assessment. Others described how they had been given guidelines on marking and how the first batches of scripts they had marked had been checked by experienced staff.

The 2005 Report advised the University to take steps to reduce the sense of isolation among what was then a small population of doctoral students. The ISAR emphasised the work the University had subsequently undertaken to 'build a community of postgraduate students and to support and enhance their education'. On the basis of the evidence it saw, the Review Team commends the University for the ways in which it has responded to the recommendations of the 2005 Report on support for doctoral research students.

COMMENDATIONS

The Review Team commends the University for:

- the loyalty of front-line staff in its student support services who have managed to provide a high level of service to students against a backdrop of reduced investment in staff and space (page 44)

- the progress its staff are making towards establishing research-led teaching as a normal expectation assisted by the no less commendable work of Ionad Bairre and NAIRTL (page 44)

- its continuing work to enrol and support students from under-represented sections of Irish society and students with disabilities (page 45)

- the introduction of uLink, its peer support and mentoring programme for first year and other students (page 47)

- the creative way in which it has responded to the recommendations of the 2005 Report on support for doctoral research students (page 48)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Review Team recommends that the University should:

- include questions in its next Student Satisfaction Survey that will enable it to establish the extent and location of research-led teaching in the Departments and Schools (page 43)

- redouble its efforts through teaching awards, travel and study grants and sabbatical leave to persuade staff that it is intent on embedding research-led teaching and other changes in pedagogy and the curriculum for the benefit of all its students (page 43)

- gather together evidence for its external stakeholders of the consequences of being unable to provide more support staff for areas that it needs to expand so that UCC can meet Government aspirations and how current resource constraints and, particularly, rigidities in the funding framework, jeopardise the University's present successes in supporting its students (page 45)

- take all necessary steps to secure the funds to construct its student hub and, where possible, continue to adapt its learning facilities to be more accessible (page 46)

- work with the Students' Union to designate an additional sabbatical post to enable the perspectives and needs of international students to be made more prominent in University discussions (page 46)

- consider how it might deal with perceptions of unease on the part of students walking to and from its satellite campuses in Cork in the evening (page 47)

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- confer with the Students' Union and representatives of its postgraduate research students on how best to establish formal representation for the interests of research postgraduate students in the University's deliberative and management arrangements (page 48).

SECTION 5

COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 35 OF THE UNIVERSITIES ACT, 1997 AND CONSISTENCY WITH THE PART 1 ESG

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

The statutory requirements for quality assurance processes of Irish universities are presented in The Universities Act 1997 and they can be summarised as follows:

- Regular evaluation (not less than once every ten years) of each Department or Faculty and any service provided by the University by persons competent to make national and international comparisons

- Regular assessment – including by students – of the teaching, research and other services provided by the University

- Publication of findings of reviews

- Implementation of findings arising from reviews, providing the resources are available and the findings are reasonable and practical.

From the evidence provided by the University and its discussions with members of staff and students, the Review Team is confident that University College Cork is complying with each of the above statutory requirements.

- UCC's Quality Review process enables it to undertake regular evaluations of Academic Departments, support and service units within the specified timescale

- UCC's introduction of the Student Satisfaction Survey and the University-wide Module Survey enable students to contribute to the assessment of the effectiveness of the teaching, learning support, administrative and other services it provides; UCC's conduct of the Research Quality Review has enabled it to conduct a ground-breaking assessment of the merits and effectiveness of the research it conducts

- UCC publishes the findings of its Quality Reviews on publicly available portions of its web site

- UCC has generally implemented the findings of reviews where it has been financially and practically possible to do so

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CONSISTENCY WITH PART 1 OF THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

The Review Team is satisfied that the University has reviewed its quality and standards and quality enhancement arrangements against the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (European Standards and Guidelines, Part 1)* and that when the University's new Programme Review Process comes into effect in 2014, the University's quality arrangements will be completely consistent with Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines.

ENGAGEMENT WITH NATIONAL, EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL GOOD PRACTICE

The University gathers information on national, European and international good practice through the participation of its staff in national and international conferences, seminars and workshops.
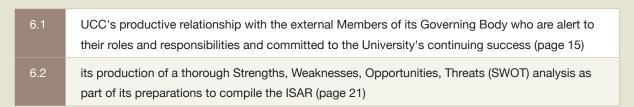
CONCLUSIONS

The Review Team recognises in UCC a fine University of high repute that is working energetically to serve the needs of its region and Ireland. Through the completion of its Research Quality Review, UCC can fairly claim to be at the forefront of national and international developments in the design and conduct of such reviews.

In the course of its visit to the University, the Team appreciated the hospitality and courtesy extended to it by all members of the UCC community and external stakeholders. The Team is also very aware of the range of quality teaching and research which take place across the institution and the attention paid to the quality of the student experience at UCC. The conclusions below limit themselves, however, to the remit of the Institutional Review process, and include a number of confirming statements, commendations and recommendations for future attention and development. The latter are intended in a constructive spirit to assist UCC in its future success.

Based on the Review Team's evaluation of the Institutional Self Assessment Report, supporting documentation and meetings conducted during the Main Review Visit, the Team found sufficient evidence to confirm:

CATEGORY:	KEY REVIEWER FINDINGS
Statutory Requirements	**The Review Team found that the University's activities comply with statutory requirements.**
European Standards	**The Review Team found the University's quality assurance arrangements to be satisfactorily consistent with Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG).**
National, European and International Best Practice	**The University is taking account of national, European and international best practice.**

The Team found sufficient evidence to commend the following examples of good practice for further promotion internally, nationally and internationally:

6.1	UCC's productive relationship with the external Members of its Governing Body who are alert to their roles and responsibilities and committed to the University's continuing success (page 15)
6.2	its production of a thorough Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis as part of its preparations to compile the ISAR (page 21)

6.3	the design and implementation of the Research Quality Review as an instance of good practice worthy of wider emulation (page 30) and the conduct of the RQR which was a remarkable exercise that has acted as a significant stimulus to UCC's work as research institution, and for the energetic way the University has followed up the Review (page 31)
6.4	the work that has been undertaken by Ionad Bairre, QPU and other UCC staff to date across the University to develop learning outcomes and link them to assessment (page 36)
6.5	its work with its partner CIT to provide programmes and awards that meet the needs of their city and region (page 39)
6.6	the commendable loyalty of staff in its support services and the way they have enabled UCC to continue to provide good levels of support for students (page 44)
6.7	the progress its staff are making towards establishing research-led teaching as a normal expectation, assisted by the no less commendable work of Ionad Bairre and NAIRTL (page 44)
6.8	its continuing work to enrol and support students from under-represented sections of Irish society and students with disabilities (page 45)
6.9	the introduction of uLink, its peer support and mentoring programme for first year and other students (page 47)
6.10	the creative way that it has responded to the recommendations of the 2005 Institutional Review Report on support for doctoral research students (page 48)

The Team found sufficient evidence to recommend the following activities to the University for attention and development. UCC should:

6.11	continue to work towards the more robust management of the schedule of approved projects that form its operational plans and towards more robust and more accountable management of individual projects within its operational plans (page 10)
6.12	consider how projects in its Operational Plans that are linked to the findings and recommendations of Quality Review reports that have University-wide relevance can be more clearly identified, so that the Quality Review process can more clearly demonstrate its contributions to University-wide change and improvement (pages 11 and 17)
6.13	make clear the source of the Quality Promotion Committee's authority so that its status and authority are clear to staff, students and stakeholders, and to avoid confusion between governance and management structures (page 14)

6.14	ensure that all development and operational aspects of its collaborations outside Cork, including those overseas, are subject to formal quality assurance procedures and governance that are at least as secure as those for its collaboration with Cork Institute of Technology, and that regular reports on current and planned collaborations are made to the Governing Body, Academic Council and senior managers (pages 14 and 16)
6.15	give close attention to securing greater consistency in the way its regulations are observed across the Colleges (page 16)
6.16	continue to work to simplify its committee structures at the centre and in the Colleges to ensure greater efficiency and transparency and take further steps to enable the Academic Council to give more focused attention to priority areas such as quality assurance (including the quality assurance of international collaborations) and risk management (page 16)
6.17	continue with the introduction of a programme of leadership, management and governance training for academic leaders and managers in the Colleges (page 18)
6.18	defer devolving responsibilities for quality control, quality assurance and the maintenance of academic standards to the Colleges until they can demonstrate that their governance and management arrangements, including for the oversight of the Schools, are being satisfactorily and robustly discharged, and that any devolution of responsibility can be subject to robust oversight and review by the University Management Team (Operations) (page 18)
6.19	make full use of the complete range of reports of its Quality Reviews in future critical self-evaluations (page 17) and consider how it might develop its institutional capacity to undertake self-critical evaluations of its work (page 23)
6.20	publish the criteria for identifying a programme as 'high risk' to Colleges, Schools and Departments in a standard format that enables them to assess whether the programme they are proposing is likely to be judged 'high risk', with the Academic Board retaining responsibility for monitoring how the criteria are implemented (page 26)
6.21	undertake a Quality Review of its new programme approval arrangements and their operation by the Colleges after their first year in operation that examines a sample of programme approvals under the new arrangements across the Colleges and that the terms of reference for this Quality Review should also include an examination of the effectiveness of the linked processes for approving major and minor modifications, responsibility for which has also been delegated to Colleges, and examination of the success or otherwise of the new programmes approved by the Colleges (pages 26 and 27)
6.22	clarify the nature and purpose of the Quality Review process as it applies to Academic Departments, Schools, Colleges, services and administrative and management offices, respectively (page 28)
6.23	ensure that student membership of all Quality Review, programme approval, and programme review panels is a feature of the next iteration of its quality arrangements (pages 29 and 30)

6.24	make greater use of the data from its developing management information systems to support internal reviews (page 29)
6.25	conduct an initial pilot of its new programme review process with a sample of programmes of varying characteristics across the University (page 30)
6.26	consider how it might undertake a whole-institution review of its portfolio of taught programmes to identify programmes in need of development and support and those that might better be offered by other institutions elsewhere or closed (page 30)
6.27	draw on the experiences of other higher education institutions in Ireland, and further afield in Australia and the UK, to improve response rates to its own institution-wide student surveys and, until the planned Irish National Student Survey comes into full operation, conduct its own Student Satisfaction Survey annually and rationalise and co-ordinate the student surveys that are conducted by Departments and Schools to reduce 'survey fatigue' among students (page 33)
6.28	encourage and support the Students' Union to work towards representation arrangements that correspond to the gender balance across the University and are more inclusive of other nationalities in UCC's student body (page 33)
6.29	review the extent to which its quality assurance arrangements depend on the contributions of external examiners and external peers and whether it needs to rebalance its internal quality assurance arrangements to make more prominent reference to and use of external reference points such as the National Framework of Qualifications, the advice and guidance formerly provided by IUQB and now by QQI, the notes of guidance and consultations provided by the Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN), and Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (3rd edition, Helsinki, 2009) (page 35)
6.30	ensure that the quality assurance arrangements for programmes delivered with transnational partners are at least as secure as those UCC has developed for its work with CIT; ensure that the Quality Promotion Unit is kept informed of new collaborations and especially new overseas collaborations and consulted on their academic and quality aspects; develop a comprehensive Quality Guide for Overseas Collaborations as soon as possible that draws on international good practice and requires all members of the University and those working for it as agents to follow the terms of this Quality Guide when it is completed (page 38)
6.31	take all necessary steps to ensure the accuracy of the information that it publishes about its programmes and modules including in its on-line Module Catalogue (page 40)
6.32	include questions in its next Student Satisfaction Survey that will enable it to establish the extent and location of research-led teaching in the Departments and Schools (page 43)
6.33	redouble its efforts through teaching awards, travel and study grants, and sabbatical leave to persuade staff that it is intent on embedding research-led teaching and other changes in pedagogy and the curriculum for the benefit of all its students (page 43)

6.34	gather together evidence for its external stakeholders of the consequences of being unable to provide more support staff for areas that it needs to expand, so that UCC can meet Government aspirations, and show how current resource constraints and, particularly, rigidities in the funding framework, jeopardise the University's present successes in supporting its students (page 45)
6.35	take all necessary steps to secure the funds to construct its student hub and, where possible, continue to adapt its learning facilities to be more accessible (page 46)
6.36	work with the Students' Union to designate an additional sabbatical post to enable the perspectives and needs of international students to be made more prominent in University discussions (page 46)
6.37	consider how it might deal with perceptions of unease on the part of students walking to and from its satellite campuses in Cork in the evening (page 47)
6.38	confer with the Students' Union and representatives of its postgraduate research students on how best to establish formal representation for the interests of research postgraduate students in the University's deliberative and management arrangements (page 48)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

MAIN REVIEW VISIT - TIMETABLE

ABBREVIATIONS

BEES: Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences

CACSSS: College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences

CBL: College of Business and Law

CMH: College of Medicine and Health

CSEFS: College of Science, Engineering and Food Sciences

GB: Governing Body

PG: Postgraduate Student

QPU: Quality Promotion Unit

QPC: Quality Promotion Committee

SU: Students' Union

VP: Vice-President

DAY 1 MONDAY 10 DECEMBER 2012

TIME	MEETING WITH	NAMES
09.00	Team arrives at UCC	
09.10 - 09.20	Meeting between the Co-ordinating Reviewer, one other reviewer and the UCC facilitator(s)	- Dr D. Cairns - Review Team member - Ms Orla Lynch, QQI - Dr Norma Ryan, UCC Review Co-ordinator - Prof Paul Giller, Registrar & Senior VP
09:30 - 10:30	The President	- Review Team members - Dr Michael Murphy, President
10.30 - 10.40	Private Review Team meeting	
10:40 - 11:40	Up to eight members of UMTO, not including the President	- Diarmuid Collins, Bursar/Chief Financial Officer, QPC member - Prof Caroline Fennell, Head, CACSSS - Prof Paul Giller, Registrar - Prof Irene Lynch, Head, CBL - Prof Paul McSweeney, Vice-Head, CSEFS - Prof John Higgins, Head, CMH - Trevor Holmes, VP External Relations - Dr R O Dubhghaill, Director of Planning & Institutional Research

TIME	MEETING WITH	NAMES
11:40 - 12:00	Private Review Team meeting	
12:00 - 13:00	Two Heads of School from each College	**CACSSS** - Prof Graham Parkes, Head, School of Sociology & Philosophy - Prof Geoff Roberts, School of History **CBL** - Prof Ursula Kilkelly, Head, Department of Law - Prof Michael Ward, Head, Department of Food Business and Development **CMH** - Prof Eileen Savage, Head, School of Nursing **CSEFS** - Dr Jim Grannell, Head, School of Mathematical Sciences
13:00 - 14:00	Private Review Team meeting and lunch	
14:00 - 14:45	Two recently appointed staff from each College	**CACSSS** - Dr Tom Birkett, School of English - Prof Jonathan Stock, School of Music & Drama **CBL** - Dr Claire Murray, Dept of Law - Dr Yu Wen (Julie) Chen, Government CMH - Dr Antonios Theocharopoulos, Dental School **CSEFS** - Prof Nabeel Riza, Dept of Electrical Engineering, School of Engineering - Dr John Quinn, School of BEES
14:45 - 15:00	Private Review Team meeting	
15:00 - 16:00	Up to eight elected student representatives - two from each College. The group overall to include a mix of undergraduate and taught postgraduate student representatives	- Mr Padraig Rice, 4th yr, Int Dev Fd Sci - Ms Aisling O'Hagan, 4th yr, Government - Ms Susan O'Sullivan, 4th yr, Physiology - Ms Marie Halinan, 2nd yr, Celtic Civilisation - Mr Cillian Lineen, 2nd yr, Medicine - Ms Michelle McCarthy, 2nd yr, Graduate Entry Medicine
16:00 - 16:15	Private Review Team meeting	

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TIME	MEETING WITH	NAMES
16:15 - 16:45	Two postgraduate research students from each College. The group overall to include students newly registered for doctoral study; students writing up and postgraduate research students acting as teaching assistants	**CACSSS** - Ms Esther Luettgen, Texts, Contexts, Cultures - Mr Michael Waldron, English **CBL** - Mr Denis Dennehy, PhD, BIS - Ms Laleh Kasraian, 2nd yr, PhD, BIS **CMH** - Mr Owen O'Sullivan, PhD, Anaesthesiology - Ms Sara Leitão, Course Co-ordinator/PhD, Dept. of Epidemiology & Public Health **CSEFS** - Ms Emer Morgan, 3rd yr, PhD, School of BEES
16.45 - 17:15	Two supervisors of doctoral students from each College	**CACSSS** - Dr Sean Hammond, Applied Psychology **CMH** - Prof John Cryan, Dept. of Anatomy - Prof Josephine Hegarty, Nursing & Midwifery **CSEFS** - Dr Ian Pitt, Computer Science - Dr Emer Rogan, School of BEES
17:15 - 19:00	Private Review Team meeting	

DAY 2: TUESDAY 11 DECEMBER 2012

TIME	MEETING WITH	NAMES
08:30	Arrive UCC. Orientation. Meeting of Review Co-ordinator and a Team member with UCC Contacts	- Dr D. Cairns - Dr Norma Ryan, UCC Review Co-ordinator
9.00 - 9.45	Up to six members of the Quality Promotion Unit	- Prof Ken Higgs, Acting Director, QPU; member of QPC - Dr Norma Ryan, former Director QPU and UCC Review Co-ordinator, QPU - Ms Deirdre O'Brien, Administrator - Ms Aoife Ni Neill, Senior Executive Assistant - Ms Frances Buckley, Executive Assistant - Ms Sheila Ronan, Executive Assistant
9:45 - 10:00	Private Review Team meeting	

TIME	MEETING WITH	NAMES
10:00 - 11:00	Up to eight members of the Academic Council	- Mr Michael Farrell, Corporate Secretary (and Head of HR) - Prof Alan Kelly - Prof Helen Whelton - Prof John Morrison - Prof Graham Allen - Prof Gavin Burnell, BEES - Mr Gerard Culley, AC Information Strategy and Education Resources Committee - Mr Paul O'Donovan, Academic Secretary
11:00 - 11:15	Private Review Team meeting	
11.15 - 12.15	Students who have used the International office and careers and work placement service; international students, including one postgraduate student	Careers students who participated in placement programmes: - Mr Shane Mulcair, 4th yr, BSc Computer Science International Education Students: - Ms Donna Noonan, Erasmus - Ms Niamh Leonard, studied at University of California - Mr Tommy Tobin, US-Ireland George Mitchell Scholars, studying Master's in Food Business and Development - Ms Rochelle Williams, from Bermuda, studying 3rd yr, BComm - Ms Rachel Walker, from USA, 1st yr BSc Food Marketing and Entrepreneurship
12:15 - 13:30	Private Review Team meeting and lunch	
13:30 - 14:15	The President of the Students' Union; the Education Officer; the Postgraduate Officer	- Mr Eoghan Healy, President, SU - Mr PJ O'Brien, Education Officer, SU - Ms Ann-Marie Harte, Postgraduate Officer, SU - Mr Sam Ryan, Deputy President, SU - Mr James O'Doherty, Communications Officer, SU - Mr Dave Carey, Welfare Officer, SU - Mr Brian Phelan, Clubs' President - Mr JD O'Connell, Societies' President
14:15 - 14:30	Private Review Team meeting	
14:30 - 15:30	The Chair and up to seven other lay members of the Governing Body, to include the Chair of the Audit Committee	- Mr John O'Callaghan, Member QPC, Cork City Partnership - Mr Dermot O'Mahoney, Chair Finance Committee - Cllr Mary Jackman, Limerick County Council - Mr Humphrey Murphy, formerly served on GB Audit Committee.
15.30 - 16:30	Private Review Team meeting	

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TIME	MEETING WITH	NAMES
16:30 - 17:30	The Chairs of each of the CIT and IMI joint management committees; a member from each partner; two members of the UCC Academic Board with direct involvement in the academic governance of joint and linked programmes generally	- Prof Paul Giller, Registrar & Senior VP, UCC, Chair CIT Joint Management Committee - Dr Barry O'Connor, Registrar, CIT, Member of Joint Management Committee - Dr Seamus O'Reilly, UCC , Chair of IMI Joint Management Committee - Ms Mary Hogan, Registrar, IMI - Mr Trevor Holmes, VP External Relations - Prof John O'Halloran, UCC, Chair of AC Standing Committee on Teaching & Learning - Prof George Shorten, Head, School of Medicine
17.30 - 18.00	Private Review Team meeting	

DAY 3: WEDNESDAY 12 DECEMBER 2012

TIME	MEETING WITH	NAMES
08:30	Arrive UCC. Orientation. Meeting of Review Co-ordinator and a Team member with UCC Contacts	- Review Team members - Dr Norma Ryan, UCC Review Co-ordinator
9:30 - 10:30	Up to eight academic staff from more than one College currently working on/delivering research-led teaching	CACSSS - Prof David Ryan, History - Prof Patrick O'Donovan, French CBL - Prof Shane Kilcommins, Law CMH - Prof Tony Ryan, Paediatrics & Child Health CSEFS - Dr Sarah Culloty, BEES - Dr Justin Holmes, Chemistry
10:30 - 11:00	Private Review Team meeting	
11:00 - 12:00	Up to eight members of the University working with and on research commercialisation and innovation to include the VP for Research and Innovation	- Prof Anita Maguire, VP Research & Innovation - Dr David Corkery - Dr Brian O'Flaherty - Mr Eamon Curtin - Prof Geraldine Boylan - Prof Cormac Sreenan
12:00 - 12:15	Private Review Team meeting	

TIME	MEETING WITH	NAMES
12:15 - 13:15	External stakeholders including employers and representatives of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, who contribute to horizon scanning and curriculum development discussions within the University	- Mr John Mullins, member GB, Chief Executive, Bord Gais - Mr Conor Healy, CEO, Cork Chamber of Commerce - Ms Tina Neylon, Co-ordinator, Lifelong Learning Festival - Mr Kieran McCarthy, City Councillor - Dr Gerard O'Callaghan, CEO, South Infirmary - Mr Michael Delaney, Vice-President Development, CIT - Mr Michael Dowling, Chair, UCC-Teagasc Alliance
13:15 - 14:00	Private Review Team meeting and lunch	
14:00 - 15:00	Up to eight senior members of staff with current operational responsibility for the provision of student support in Teaching and Learning; the Student Experience; Information Services; and other student facing services	- Ms Margot Conrick, Head, Information Services, UCC Library - Mr Seamus McEvoy, Head, Student Careers Service, former member QPC - Ms Marita Foster, International Student Office - Ms Mary MacDonald, Records & Examinations Office - Ms Claire Dunne, PASS Co-ordinator - Ms Olive Byrne, Access Officer - Mr Mark Poland, Director, Buildings & Estates - Mr Michael Farrell, Corporate Secretary (and Head of HR)
15:00 - 15:15	Private Review Team meeting	
15:15 - 16:00	Senior academic staff currently leading for the University on the Student Experience and Teaching and Learning together with six key academic and/or support staff identified (three for each area) by them to meet the reviewers	- Prof Grace Neville, former VP Teaching & Learning - Dr Bettie Higgs, Co-Director, Ionad Bairre - Dr Michael Byrne, Head, Student Health - Mr Paul Moriarty, Head, Student Counselling & Development Unit, Member QPC - Ms Jennifer Murphy, Admissions Officer and former Project Manager, NAIRTL
16:00 - 16:15	Private Review Team meeting	
16:15 - 17:00	Up to eight academic and development staff leading on the development of assessment and learning outcomes	- Dr Declan Kennedy - Ms Eleanor Fouhy, Head, Academic Programmes Development Office - Dr John McCarthy, School of Applied Psychology - Mr Daniel Blackshields, School of Economics - Dr Francis Burke, School of Dentistry (CM&H)
17.00 - 19.00	Private Review Team meeting	

MAIN REVIEW VISIT - TIMETABLE

DAY 4: THURSDAY 13 DECEMBER 2012

TIME	MEETING WITH	NAMES
8:15 - 8.30	Arrive UCC. Orientation. Meeting of Review Co-ordinator and UCC Contacts Reviewers reading documents	- Dr David Cairns - Review Team member - Dr Norma Ryan, UCC Review Co-ordinator
8.30 - 9.00	The President	- Dr Michael Murphy, President
9.00 - 10.00	President, Registrar & Vice-President for External Relations	- Dr Michael Murphy, President - Prof Paul Giller, Registrar - Mr Trevor Holmes, VP External Relations
10.00 - 12:00	Review Team discussion of findings and agreement of content of the Chair's feedback to the University	
12:00 - 12:30	Chair's presentation of the Reviewers' outline findings and recommendations	- Dr Michael Murphy, President - Prof Paul Giller, Registrar & Senior VP - Dr Norma Ryan, UCC Review Co-ordinator - Prof Ken Higgs, Acting Director, QPU - Ms Orla Lynch, QQI - Dr Bettie Higgs - Prof Fan Hong, QPC - Mr Paul Moriarty, QPC - Mr P.J. O'Brien, QPC - Mr Niall McAuliffe, QPC - Mr John O'Callaghan, QPC & GB - Mr Trevor Holmes, UMTS - Mr Eamonn Sweeney, UMTS - Mr Seamus McEvoy, UMTS - Dr Michael Byrne, UMTS
13:00	End of visit – Reviewers depart	

OVERVIEW OF THE IRIU PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

Following its establishment, QQI and its Executive continue to operate in line with the requirements of the IUQB Memorandum of Association, 2006. On-going engagement via external review and annual monitoring processes, previously undertaken by IUQB, transitioned into the new body QQI, in accordance with Section 84 of The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012:

> *(2) Where a previously established university has established quality assurance procedures under section 35 of the Act of 1997, and those procedures were in force immediately before the coming into operation of section 28, then, on that coming into operation, those procedures shall continue in force as if they had been established under that section and this Act shall apply accordingly.*

> *(3) A review under…..(b) section 35(4) of the Act of 1997,*

> *which is in the process of being conducted, shall……. be a review for the purposes of that section and this Act shall apply accordingly.*

Up to the commencement of the 2012 Act, universities were required under Section 35 of The Universities Act 1997 to establish and implement procedures for quality assurance and, more relevantly to the IRIU, to arrange for a review of the effectiveness of internal procedures "from time to time and in any case at least every 15 years". These reviews of effectiveness were designated in The Universities Act as the responsibility of the individual governing authorities. In this way, the autonomy permitted in the organisation of internal reviews was complemented by accountability. In 2002, the governing authorities of all seven universities authorised the establishment of the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) and delegated to the IUQB the function of arranging regular reviews of the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures, which are institutional in their scope.

In 2004-05, the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) jointly commissioned the European University Association (EUA) through its Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) to undertake the first cycle of external reviews of the seven Irish universities. The resulting sectoral report, published in April 2005, found "*the systematic organisation and promotion of quality assurance at the initiative of the universities themselves*" as being "*unparalleled in any other country in Europe, or indeed in the United States or Canada*". The reviewers deemed the system "*to strike the right tone and combination of public interest, accountability, and university autonomy. It encourages a greater focus on quality and improvement than some systems worldwide, while at the same time being less intrusive than some other systems in Europe*". The report concluded that it was, however: "*time to move to a new phase*" that "*should build on the existing system, linking it more closely to strategic management and feeding its outputs into the on-going development of the universities, individually and collectively*".

In October 2006, after consultation with the universities, it was agreed that a second cycle of institutional reviews would be initiated in 2009/10. The Institutional Review of Irish Universities (IRIU) process was approved for publication by the IUQB Board in March 2009. By the end of this rolling cycle of reviews, independent reviewers will have confirmed whether Irish universities are operating in line with the requirements of (i) Section 35 of The Universities Act, 1997, and are (ii) consistent with the Part 1 requirements of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2009 (the ESG).

IRIU METHOD

The aims and objectives of the IRIU method are:

- to operate an external review process consistent with The Universities Act, and the Part 2 Standards outlined in the ESG

- to support each university in meeting its responsibility for the operation of internal quality assurance procedures and reviews that are clear and transparent to all their stakeholders, and which provide for the continuing evaluation of all academic, research and service departments and their activities, as outlined in The Universities Act, incorporating the Part 1 ESG Standards

- to provide evidence that each university continues to engage with national, European and international guidelines and standards, particularly in accordance with the Bologna process

- to support institutional strategic planning and ownership of quality assurance and enhancement to operate as part of the Framework for Quality in Irish Universities

- to support the availability of consistent, robust, and timely information on the effectiveness of quality assurance and enhancement processes operating within Irish universities

- to provide accountability to external stakeholders in relation to the overall quality of the system and thereby instil confidence in the robustness of the IRIU process.

There are four elements to the IRIU method:

- Element 1: Institutional Self-Assessment Report (ISAR)

- Element 2: The Review Visit(s) – Planning Visit and Main Review Visit

- Element 3: Review Report

- Element 4: Institutional and Sector Level Follow-up

Institutions can expect to undergo an IRIU normally every six years. The schedule for the second cycle of institutional reviews (2009/10 – 2012/13) is published on the IUQB website and was developed in consultation with each Irish university and approved by the IUQB Board in June 2009.

THE REVIEW TEAM

The recruitment of national and international experts to the IRIU Register of Reviewers is conducted biannually. Each team of reviewers is selected by the IUQB Board from the Register of Reviewers based on the reviewer's ability to demonstrate current or recent experience in at least three of the seven criteria categories published in the IRIU Handbook. Reviewers are trained, deployed and paid on a per review basis. IRIU Reviewers are not IUQB or QQI employees. As part of the nomination and selection process, reviewers sign to confirm any conflicts of interest. Additionally, universities have an opportunity to comment on the proposed composition of their Review Team in advance of deployment to ensure there are no conflicts of interest in the proposed Review Team, and thus the IUQB Board will ensure that an appropriate and entirely independent team of reviewers is selected for the institution being reviewed. The IUQB Board has final approval over the composition of each IRIU Review Team.

The IRIU Review Teams will normally consist of:

- two international reviewers (one of which will also act as Review Chair)
- an Irish reviewer
- a student representative
- a representative of external stakeholders
- a co-ordinating reviewer

REVIEWER TRAINING AND DEPLOYMENT

Each Review Team will receive institutionally specific training in advance of deployment. The purpose of reviewer training/briefing is to ensure that all reviewers:

- understand the social, cultural, economic and legal environment that Irish universities are operating within
- become familiar with the Framework for Quality in Irish Universities
- understand the aims and objectives of the IRIU process as well as the key elements of the method
- understand the statutory requirements placed on Irish universities in relation to quality, as outlined in The Universities Act and the ESG
- understand their own roles and tasks and the importance of team coherence and delivering a robust, evidence-based report in a timely manner

REPORTING

In the interests of equity and reliability, the Review Team's findings and recommendations presented in the review reports will be based on recorded evidence. In line with ESG guidelines, the Team will be asked by the IUQB Reviews Manager or QQI Review and Enhancement Manager on the final day of the Main Review Visit

to confirm that the review procedures used have provided adequate evidence to support the Team's findings and recommendations on the university's procedures and practices in relation to:

- its fulfilment of its statutory requirements, which includes the:

- regular evaluation of each Department/Faculty and any service provided by the university by persons competent to make national and international comparisons on the quality of teaching and research and the provision of other services at university level

- assessment by those, including students, availing of the teaching, research and other services provided by the university

- publication of findings arising out of the application of those procedures

- implementation of any findings arising out of the evaluation having regard to the resources available to the university

- its consistency with the Part 1 Standards of the ESG

- operating in line with national, European and international best practice

- identifying and enhancing good practice in the management of quality assurance and enhancement

- identifying issues for further development in relation to the management of quality assurance and enhancement

Two review reports arise from the IRIU - a brief non-technical summary report and a full review report for specialist audiences. Both reports are prepared by the Co-ordinating Reviewer and are signed off by the Chair following consultation with all Review Team members. The university will be given five weeks in which to comment on factual accuracy and if they so wish, to provide a 1-2 page institutional response to the report that will be published as an appendix to the review report. Each IRIU report will be formally signed off and approved formerly by the IUQB Board and now by the QQI Board once satisfied that the review process was completed in accordance with published criteria. Reports will be published by QQI thereafter. In accordance with Section 41 of The Universities Act, 1997, QQI will submit review reports to the Minister.

FOLLOW-UP

One year after the Main Review Visit, the university will be asked to produce a follow-up report (incorporating the institutional action plan), normally submitted alongside the Annual Institutional Report (AIR) and discussed as part of the Annual Dialogue (AD) meeting with QQI (formerly with the IUQB). Within the report, the university should provide a commentary on how the review findings and recommendations have been discussed and disseminated throughout the university's committee structure and academic units, and comment on how effectively the university is addressing the review outcomes. The report should identify the range of strategic and logistical developments and decisions that have occurred within the institution since the review report's publication. Institutions will continue to have flexibility in the length and style of the follow-up report but should address each of the key findings and recommendations that the reviewers presented. The follow-up report will be published by QQI.

If an IRIU Review Team identifies in its review report what it considers to be significant causes of concern, particularly in relation to the institution's fulfilment of its statutory requirements (in accordance with the IUQB's Memorandum of Association, 2006), QQI will consult with the university in question to agree an immediate action plan to address the issue(s) of Review Team concern, including the time frame in which the issue(s) will be addressed. The university will report to QQI every six months on progress against the action plan for the duration of the plan. Where QQI considers that progress in implementing the action plan is inadequate, QQI may, in consultation with the university and the HEA, intervene to secure a revision or acceleration of the plan, or to arrange a further review visit, ideally involving most or all of the original Review Team.

At the end of this second cycle of reviews, QQI will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the IRIU process, as part of an organisational commitment to actively contribute to the broader enhancement of a culture of quality across the Irish higher education sector and as required by Part 3 of the ESG.

ROLE OF QQI

Following its establishment, QQI and its Executive continue to operate in line with the requirements of the IUQB Memorandum of Association, 2006. On-going engagement via external review and annual monitoring processes, previously undertaken by IUQB, transitioned into the new body QQI, in accordance with Section 84 of The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012. At the commencement of the 2012 Act, Section 35 of the Universities Act 1997 was repealed whereby the external quality assurance of the universities, performed previously by IUQB, became the responsibility of the new body established under the 2012 Act.

UNIVERSITY RESPONSE TO THE IRIU

University College Cork (UCC) welcomes the publication of the IRIU Institutional Review Report on the external evaluation of the University which was carried out in December 2012. We wish to thank the Peer Review Team for its professionalism, level of engagement with the University and the constructive manner in which it went about its task. We warmly welcome the Report's recognition of UCC as, '…a fine University of high repute that is working energetically to serve the needs of its region and Ireland'. We also welcome the recognition of '… the significant part UCC plays in the intellectual, educational and commercial life of its home city, the region and Ireland as a whole.'
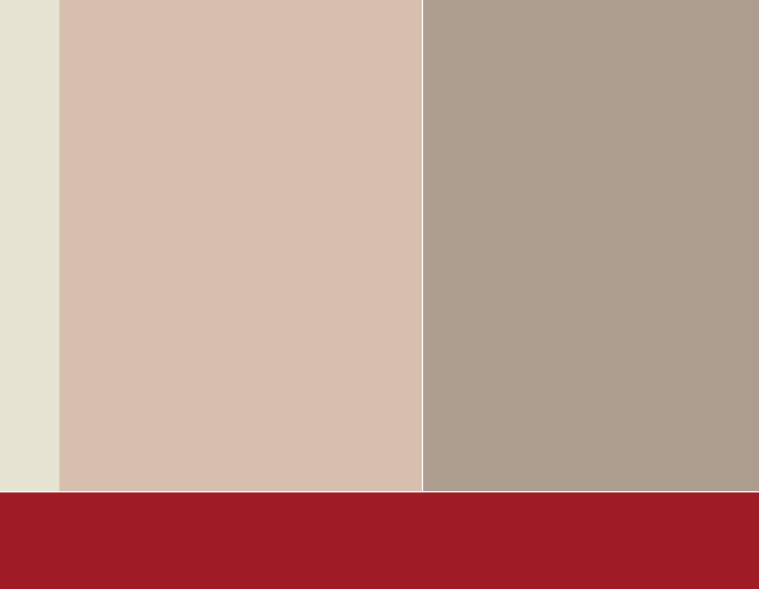
Corroboration of UCC's high level of support for student learning, achievements in the delivery of research-led teaching and of the high quality of the UCC student experience is gratifying. These have also been recognised internationally through the 2012 International Graduate Insight Group survey of over 200,000 international students from 238 universities, which ranked the University's student support services and facilities amongst the best internationally and which voted the UCC campus the safest in Ireland and one of the safest in the world.

UCC welcomes external recognition of its work, in particular the commendations for processes such as the SWOT analysis, carried out as part of our Quality Review Process and the 'exemplary' conduct of the Research Quality Review. This provides us with evidence of our capacity for self-reflection and we will seek to build this capacity further as we consider the report and the recommendations it contains.

Indeed, the IRIU process and the opportunity for self-reflection it afforded to UCC were invaluable. UCC also welcomes the opportunity to consider and engage with the recommendations made by a group of external peers. It will do this carefully and is pleased that some of these recommendations highlight processes that the University had already decided to scrutinise; for example, as we move into the last year of our current cycle of Quality Reviews, the recommendations contained in the report on the current strengths and opportunities around this process will provide a useful template for our future development.

We welcome the recognition in the report of the progress made in areas such as strategic planning since the last external review in 2005 and confirmation that we fulfil statutory requirements, that our quality assurance and improvement arrangements are consistent with the *Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area* and that we are cognisant of and engage with national, European and international best practice.

The report will be of significant value to UCC over the coming months and years as the University further evolves its processes for quality assurance and improvement. We will put together an action plan which will allow us to track progress against each recommendation and which will feed into other University planning processes. We are confident that, within the framework of the report's endorsement of our current processes, we can use this opportunity to further improve the University's performance.

QQI

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