

School of Microbiology

Quality Improvement Plan

February 2017

FOR COMPLETION BY QEU	
Date of Peer Review visit: 6 th – 8 th April 2016	Link to Panel Report published on QEU website: https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/qualityenhancementunit/reports/sefs/PRGR-Microbiology.pdf

	Recommendations in order of priority	Proposed Objectives & Actions	Incorporating the Following Recommendations	Responsibility for Action	Resource Implications	Delivery Date	Measurement / Benchmarking
1.	<p>The School should form a Safety Committee which is chaired by a permanent member of the academic staff and has representatives from the technical staff, PhD students and Postdoctoral researchers.</p> <p>The terms of reference of the committee should include the oversight of general School</p>	<p>i) While the School is fully compliant with Health and Safety legislation, and is supported by a School Safety Office (Dr. John Morgan), the lack of a School Safety Committee to support this function will be included in the School's Risk Assessment &</p>	PRGR 1	Head of School & School Safety Officer	The Committee will be chaired by the existing School Safety Officer, Dr John Morgan.	i) October 2016	

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	safety and report to the School management team.	<p>communicated to the Head of College.</p> <p>ii) The School will establish a Safety Committee, to ensure continuing compliance with Health & Safety legislation and to increase awareness of safety issues, particularly among postgraduate students.</p> <p>Terms of Reference for the Committee will be developed following discussion at a School Meeting.</p> <p>The Committee will be chaired by the School Safety Officer, and membership will comprise members of academic & technical staff, as well student representation.</p>				ii) Academic Year 2017/2018	

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2.	<p>The School should engage external stakeholders in its undergraduate degree programmes and postgraduate education, where appropriate.</p> <p>The School has a long standing relationship with many of the stakeholders and the PRG were very impressed with the esteem in which the School, staff and degree programmes were held by external stakeholders. The stakeholders all expressed a willingness to be involved in the various programmes via provision of activities such as career advice and student placements. These stakeholders, many of whom are graduates of the School, are a valuable resource and the PRG recommend the School explore ways in which they can best employ their obvious goodwill for the mutual benefit of the students, programme and the stakeholders themselves.</p>	<p>The School values its relationship with our stakeholders, many of whom are past graduates of the School.</p> <p>External engagement is already a feature of the BSc Biotechnology programme, which commenced in 2016, and will implement this recommendation in a measured way for other programmes across the School.</p> <p>i) This will be formally discussed at a School meeting, once the first cycle of the BSc Biotechnology has been completed.</p> <p>ii) In the interim, an <i>ad hoc</i> advisory group will be convened before the start of the next academic year</p>	PRGR 2	Head of School & Programme Directors	NA	<p>i) September 2018</p> <p>ii) August 2017</p>	<p>i) The School will monitor the impact of external engagement on the BSc Biotechnology programme as the programme rolls out, with view to balancing the needs/wishes of external stakeholders while maintaining the integrity of the</p>

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							academic learning objectives for each programme.
3.	The School should, at the earliest opportunity, submit a formal succession plan to the College of SEFS. The plan should include new appointments (both early and mid-career) and address age and gender profile issues in a proactive manner.	<p>i) The School will include succession planning in its Strategic Plan for 2017-2022, for submission in Jan 2017.</p> <p>ii) Recruitment of talented staff and the provision of appropriate infrastructural and mentoring support is key to maintaining our international reputation.</p> <p>Our approach will be to secure a number of replacement and new appointments based on UCC funding (but fully justified on the basis of staff:student ratio, new initiatives and research needs) and externally sourced funding.</p>	SAR 1 PRGR 3	Head of School	Core funding for some of the posts will be sought, based on staff:student ratio.	<p>i) Strategic Plan submitted January 2017</p> <p>ii) Recruitment to commence in January 2017, with view to filling 2 x Lectureship posts in time for academic year 2017/2018. Remaining posts to be filled as the opportunity arises, but no later than academic year 2018/2019.</p>	

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		<p>We plan on recruiting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 x Lecturer in Biotechnology (replacement; immediate) • 3 x Lecturers in Microbiology (to support teaching and research cognate with School's interests; two of these will be new posts to be filled in 2017/2018 to bring staff FTE to a manageable level; one will be a replacement for a retirement in 2020); • Lecturer/Professor 2 in Immunology (joint with School of Medicine; to be filled in 2017) • SFI Professorship in Bioinformatics (in advanced discussions with candidate; 2018) • 3 x Technical Officers (one to bring complement to six; two to replace retirements in 2018). 					

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		The new phase of recruitment will provide the School with an opportunity to address issues around gender balance and a rebalancing of the distorted age profile of the current staff complement.					
4.	<p>The School should progress the proposed plan for centralised Teaching Laboratory facilities as a matter of urgency.</p> <p>This is essential for the maintenance and further development of a high quality CK402 programme. A formal plan, with appropriate costings, should be drawn up (with cognate Schools, if appropriate) and submitted to the relevant College authorities.</p>	<p>i) An elaborate infrastructure development plan (including costings) has been submitted to SEFS, to include accommodation for centralised teaching facilities for enhanced lab experience. This proposal has been submitted (following consultation with cognate Schools in SEFS) in the context of wider developments in SEFS. The School of Microbiology looks</p>	SAR 2 PRGR 4	Head of School	Significant and costed infrastructure proposal has been submitted to SEFS	i) January 2017	

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		<p>forward to playing a leading role in promoting this initiative.</p> <p>ii) In addition, a proposal for reconfiguration of existing lab facilities will be drafted in consultation with colleagues in SEFS and Buildings & Estates.</p>				ii) March 2017	
5.	<p>The School should continue with its development and introduction of innovative teaching approaches.</p> <p>The PRG is aware that this is resource dependent.</p>	<p>i) During the academic year 2016/2017, a new web-based, distance learning module is being rolled out (on a pilot basis) in the Cert in Dairy Technology. on a pilot basis.</p> <p>ii) The module will be reviewed at the end of the academic year, with view to offering additional online modules across other programmes in the School, where possible/practicable.</p>	PRGR 5	Head of School & Programme Directors	Resource provision is a very real and unavoidable issue, particularly in the light of the increases in student numbers.	<p>i) January 2017</p> <p>ii) Academic Year 2017/2018</p>	

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6.	<p>i) The School should take steps to embed the management of PhD students at School level, in addition to the affiliation of students with research groups and institutes.</p> <p>ii) The introduction of more flexibility in the choice of modules within the School's structured Ph.D. programmes should be a part of this process.</p>	<p>The School values the input of postgraduate students, and recognises that they are keen to participate more fully in School activities.</p> <p>i) Postgrad students have, in the past, been invited to participate (on an <i>ad hoc</i> basis) in School meetings, where appropriate; the School intends that this practice becomes established on a more formal basis.</p> <p>It should be noted that the Chair of the School's Graduate Studies Committee meets, on a formal basis, at least bi-annually with representatives of the Postgraduate Student Committee.</p> <p>ii) The Graduate Studies Committee undertakes to</p>	PRGR 6	Head of School & Chair of Graduate Studies Committee	N/A	i) academic year 2017/2018	

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		<p>develop additional modalities for improved interaction between the postgrad student body and the School.</p> <p>iii) The School has removed the requirement for PhD to take specified compulsory modules as part of their training programme, and now are able to avail of a range of elective modules on offer.</p>				<p>ii) academic year 2016/2017</p> <p>iii) academic year 2016/2017</p>	
7.	<p>The School should take steps to introduce some level of choice for students in the selection of the final year Honours project.</p> <p>This will have a significant impact on the student experience.</p>	<p>This recommendation will be considered by Teaching and Learning Committee and the 4th Year co-ordinator, with view to a full discussion at School Meeting level, particularly in the context of the ongoing review of the 4th Year curriculum. The intention is to design and implement (within resources) new fourth year research project</p>	PRGR 7		<p>This recommendation will require some consideration, as resources will be a factor.</p>	Academic year 2018/2019	

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		options, which will cater to students with a diverse range of planned career paths.					
8.	<p>The School should move away from complete reliance on formal lectures and final examinations primarily by introducing some element of continuous assessment.</p> <p>Again, this will impact positively on the student experience if carefully managed.</p>	<p>Significant elements of existing (postgraduate) programmes in the School of Microbiology have a continuous assessment (CA) component. The feasibility of increasing CA (within the tight framework of semesterisation) will be examined by the Curriculum Development and Teaching & Learning Committees, with a view to implementation across select undergraduate modules in the academic year 2018/2019.</p>	PRGR 8		There will be some resource implications in implementing this proposal	i) academic year 2018/2019	
9.	The College and University should find ways of rewarding the School's excellent achievement in research and	We will not contest this recommendation	PRGR 9		Significant resources will be required!		

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	teaching, including the recognition of individual staff contributions.						