

## QUALITY REVIEW FOLLOW-UP MEETING

### ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES PROGRAMMES (BSc ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE & BSc ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES)

#### **Introduction**

A meeting to discuss progress made in implementing recommendations for improvement arising from the review of the Environmental Sciences programmes was held on 6 November 2007.

Present: Professor Patrick Fitzpatrick, Head, College of Science, Engineering and Food Science  
Dr Debbie Chapman, Director, BSc Environmental Sciences Programmes  
Dr Norma Ryan, Director, Quality Promotion Unit  
Ms Deirdre O'Brien, Administrator, Quality Promotion Unit

#### **Abbreviations**

*PRG: Peer Review Group*

*VP: Vice-President*

*QPC: Quality Promotion Committee*

*QIP: Quality Improvement Plan*

*HR: Human Resources*

*QP: Quality Promotion*

*SEFS: Science, Engineering & Food Science*

<b>PRG Recommendation</b>	<b>QPC Recommendation</b>	<b>Follow-up Meeting Nov '07</b>
Both programmes should be integrated within a supportive environment in the context of University restructuring.	Endorsed.  The QPC supported this recommendation and referred it to the Registrar & VP for Academic Affairs and the Director of Quality Promotion for action.	Ongoing  The Head of College is confident that University restructuring will benefit the environmental programmes as their new School will inevitably provide a context for support and a 'home' for the programmes.  The BSc Environmental Studies (evening degree) programme has been restructured and is with Faculty for consideration.
There is a need for strong academic leadership at a senior level to lead academic programmes in environmental sciences.	Recommendation endorsed.  QPC referred this recommendation for consideration and action by the Head of College of SEFS. The QPC considered that the issue of how leadership is put in place should be considered as a part of the overall planning and strategic policies of the College. The QPC also noted that there are proposals underway for formation of a School of Environmental Sciences and that such a School may form a natural home for these programmes.	Ongoing  The Head of College is in agreement, in principle, with the recommendation and funding is being sought for this position.
Additional staff resources are required to support the co-ordination and administration of	QPC recommended that this issue be addressed within the new structures in the College of SEFS	Partially implemented  The Executive Assistant has become a full-time member of

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the programmes.	and together with all other demands on the available resources.	staff. The possibility of creating two separate full-time Directors for the BSc Environmental Science and BSc Environmental Studies will be considered in the context of the planned new School.
The unsatisfactory working conditions and the limited opportunities for career development of the programme Director/Co-ordinator and Executive Assistant should be specifically and urgently addressed.	The QPC noted and welcomed that the unsatisfactory working conditions have been addressed since the review.  QPC noted that there are well-documented and transparent academic and administrative career structures in UCC, and furthermore that such issues are likely to be more readily addressed if the programmes become the responsibility of a School, as referred to above.	Partially implemented and ongoing  The issue of working conditions has been addressed with the provision of a suitable programme office within the Department of ZEPS.  The issue of career development is outstanding. The Head of College has acknowledged the difficult position of staff at the present time.
A suitable programme office/student resource area which would allow co-location of administrative support and co-ordination for the programmes should be provided.	The QPC noted and welcomed the implementation of this recommendation.  The QPC also noted that the excellent accommodation now housing the Department of ZEPS and including space for the Director and administrative support for the programmes, were provided with the assistance of money from the Tyndall National Institute.	Implemented  A suitable programme office has been provided.
There is an immediate (i.e. before the start of the next academic year) need for a strategic plan for the development of both programmes which addresses the recommendations as well as a number of other issues, including:  1. how to increase student intake (both programmes)  2. to explore the possibility of a separate entry stream for the BSc Environmental Science)  3. to explore the wider use of e-learning in the BSc Environment Studies (while maintaining a reasonable level of staff-student contact) and to explore sources of	Strongly endorsed.  The QPC stressed that it is important that the strategic planning process in the College of SEFS provides a context for planning for these and other programmes offered by the College.	Ongoing  A Strategic Plan will be developed in a School context and will await restructuring. An Advisory Board has been constituted for the evening degree programme; however, there is no Advisory board for the day degree programme.  1. This will be reassessed in the new School context.  2. Will await restructuring.  3. The resources and the experience to implement e-learning are not available at the moment, distance learning will be on the agenda of the programme in the immediate

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<p>funding available for such initiatives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. to consider improved support for the needs of adult learners (BSc Environment Studies)</li> <li>5. to consider awarding credit for prior learning in the BSc Environment Studies</li> <li>6. ongoing curriculum development and review, including external input (both programmes)</li> <li>7. to explore outlets for graduates of the BSc Environmental Science, including postgraduate research in cognate areas, including the Environmental Research Institute</li> <li>8. to develop further interaction with local industry/agencies and programme graduates (both programmes)</li> <li>9. to develop interactions with the Environmental Research Institute (e.g. through undergraduate research projects for the BSc Environmental Science)</li> </ol>		<p>future.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Some improvements have been made, the lectures now take place in the Enterprise Centre; feedback has been improved; new regulations implemented for continuous assessment.</li> <li>5. There is currently no system for accredited prior learning, this is a university wide problem.</li> <li>6. A focussed review and revision of curriculum has been done. Contact hours and learning outcomes have been reviewed.</li> <li>7. Information sessions have been scheduled for third year students regarding postgraduate options.</li> <li>8. Dr Chapman will contact the work placement officer for the College of SEFS to discuss the possibility of work placements for students.</li> <li>9. The Advisory Board will discuss.</li> </ol>
<p>The University should address the issue of recognition and remuneration of evening teaching by academic staff with a view to identifying and implementing best practice in this area.</p>	<p>The QPC considered this recommendation very carefully, recognising that there are many different practices both within UCC and nationally regarding the recognition and rewarding of evening teaching.</p> <p>The QPC recommended that the issue be considered by the HR Committee with a view to bringing forward recommendations as to how the issue should be addressed.</p>	<p>Not implemented</p> <p>This remains an urgent issue for the future of the Programme.</p>