

Department of Food Business & Development

Peer Review Group:

Professor A. Flynn, Department of Food & Nutritional Sciences, UCC (Chair)
 Professor F. Powell, Department of Applied Social Studies, UCC
 Mr. N. M. Sisk, Registrar of Friendly Societies, Ireland
 Professor M. Haines, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, UK

Brief description of conduct of site visit

The site visit was conducted over 2.5 days from 3rd to 5th March 2002 and included meetings with

- i) Head and staff of the department as a group and individually
- ii) Representatives of undergraduate and postgraduate students
- iii) Representatives of employers and past graduates
- iv) Professor A. Hyland, VP
- v) Professor B. Harvey, VP for Research Policy & Support
- vi) Professor C. Daly, Dean, Faculty of Food Science & Technology
- vii) Professor S. Green, Dean, Faculty of Commerce

and visits to departmental and library facilities in UCC.

An exit presentation of the principal findings of the Peer Review Group was made to staff of the department in the afternoon of the second day.

Description of Department of Food Business & Technology

Head of Department: Professor D. Lucey

No. of Staff: 14 academic staff (11 permanent full-time, 2 contract full-time, 1 contract part-time) and 4 administrative staff (2 permanent full-time, 1 contract full-time, 1 contract part-time)

Location of Department: O’Rahilly Building

Degrees/Diplomas offered: BSc, MSc, Diplomas, PhD

No. of students: In 2000/02 the Department had 79.91 U/G FTEs and 53.90 P/G FTEs, distributed as follows:

Commerce	Engineering	Food Science & Technology	Science
24.74	0.58	106.17	2.33

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Ev'g	JYA	Socrates	Total U/G	Diploma	M Taught	M Research	PhD	Total P/G
7.00	15.08	21.25	22.50	10.08	0.83	3.17	79.91	20.83	15.07	12.00	6.00	53.90

Mission Statements

“**The overall mission of the Department of Food Business & Development** is to promote, through its educational, research and outreach activities, the development and continuing effectiveness of Ireland’s food businesses, with particular emphasis on the well-being of indigenous agriculture, the sustainability of rural and local development, the central role of co-operatives of all kinds (including credit unions) and the promotion and support of industries rooted in the communities of Ireland.”

“**The educational mission of the Department of Food Business & Development** is to develop and offer multidisciplinary programmes designed to equip undergraduate, post-

graduate and post-experience learners with the business and technical skills required to provide effective leadership to Ireland's food, co-operative and community businesses."

Centre for Co-operative Studies

"The mission of the Centre for Co-operative Studies is to promote, through its research, consultancy and educational activities, the continued development of the co-operative movement, as an effective, sustainable, locally-owned and democratically-controlled sector of the economy, designed to address the urgent needs and problems of the community."

Aims & Objectives

- To develop and implement educational, research and outreach programmes which promote and enhance the development and effectiveness of Ireland's food businesses, with particular emphasis on the well-being of indigenous agriculture, the sustainability of rural and local development, the central role of co-operatives of all kinds (including credit unions) and the promotion and support of industries rooted in the communities of Ireland.
- To provide its **Students** with
 1. an integrated understanding of the food chain;
 2. the tools and frameworks to understand the functioning of businesses and organisations, including co-operatives, within society;
 3. an ability to analyse how co-operative and conventional businesses impact on relationships within the food chain;
 4. an ability to analyse how co-operatives & other community-based organisations impact on rural development;
 5. state of the art business knowledge of the various Food sectors;
 6. an ability to analyse the requirements for sustainable development;
 7. a critical awareness of issues related to poverty reduction & social inclusion;
 8. the opportunity for personal development;
 9. a challenging environment that expands students critical faculties;
 10. an ability to work as part of a team and enhance interpersonal communication skills.
- To provide its **Staff Members** with
 11. the opportunity to develop and pursue their research and teaching interests within the departmental mission area;
 12. an environment conducive to excellence in teaching and research;
 13. the opportunity to work within research and teaching teams both within the department and in external inter-disciplinary teams;
 14. opportunities to work with leading international research organisations;
 15. maximum job satisfaction and prospects of career advancement.
- To contribute to the **University** by:
 16. enhancing the positioning of UCC's reputation, both nationally and internationally, as a centre for innovation and excellence in Food, Co-operative Organisation and Rural Development;
 17. attracting external funding for research and teaching activities;
 18. developing & implementing quality, accredited distance education programmes;
 19. enhancing the interaction between the university and the business sector and civil society;
 20. making UCC the University of choice for students considering careers in Food Business, Co-operatives of all kinds and in Rural Development.
 21. encouraging its staff to participate in College administration through faculty and committee activities
- To contribute to **Society** by:
 22. enhancing the welfare and prosperity of Irish society through outreach educational programmes, and public good research and consultancy;
 23. making university education accessible at all levels and in all communities throughout Ireland;

24. within an increasingly global economy, maintaining bio-diversity in the field of organisational forms;
25. making broader contributions to the goals of international development through involvement in international public good research and development activities.

General Comment on Quality Review

The reviewers found the self-assessment report to be very comprehensive and that it addressed all of the relevant areas. There is an open and consultative approach to management and evidence of active planning involving all staff. There is a considerable administrative workload associated with the many activities of the Department and Centre. There is a flexible and mutually beneficial interaction between the Department and the Centre.

There is a relatively large number of academic programmes with ongoing review and development of new programmes. There is a significant teaching and administrative workload, which is likely to grow with the development of new programmes. The reviewers found that there is general satisfaction among students with the quality of the BSc in Food Business and of its delivery. There is evidence of ongoing curriculum review, with student feedback taken into consideration. External examiner reports are positive. The BSc in Food Business is an innovative programme involving a mix of business and technology, and it has been strengthened by the recent inclusion of a six-month work-placement in industry. The undergraduate projects are considered a very valuable learning experience and have received very significant external recognition and awards for excellence. Deficiencies in access to computer facilities have been outlined.

The Department encourages quality research by all staff leading to publications. The majority of academic staff have significant research activity, with a steady output of research papers and reports (many published in house, but externally peer reviewed, as part of a long-established tradition of the agricultural economics/business discipline), plus papers in peer-reviewed journals. Much of the research is of importance to the support of community, regional and national development, including many high-profile research contracts for EU and government.

Progress on Recommendations for Improvement

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report – Oct. '03
That workloads of academic and administrative staff be managed to ensure quality of teaching and research is maintained.	QPC endorsed recommendation and noted that it is a matter of good practice that workloads be identified and managed to ensure maximum efficiency in all departments. In particular the QPC expressed concern that adequate time would be allowed for research by academic staff.	The Department recognises the increasing workload demands that the new programmes (including distance education) has brought. The Department will seek to enhance the administrative support for the programmes by recruiting additional administrative support. In addition much of the routine work will be allocated to student help. The additional burden of the evening and Saturday workloads (in the distance education programmes) will also be taken into consideration.
That the Department should continue to work towards increasing student FTEs	QPC endorsed recommendation and suggested the Department consider the possibility of changing the name of the Department having regard to the	The Department does have relationships with other Commerce departments and with Process Engineering but none of these lead to significant increases in FTEs.

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report – Oct. '03
	<p>marketing possibilities. The Department was also asked to consider possible strategic alliances with other departments in the Faculty of Commerce.</p>	<p>The Department is very concerned about the current model for calculating student FTEs. Teaching 10 credits to First Commerce students \cong 25 FTEs, the same as supervising 25 PhD students with no equivalence in workload.</p> <p>The Department has proposed a new undergraduate degree programme in “Development” and is currently going through the course approval process in the Faculty of Commerce. Issues of the title of the degree have arisen which must be addressed urgently by the Department and the Faculty of Commerce.</p> <p>The Department has also successfully launched the MBS (Food Marketing).</p> <p>It should be remembered that the Department is also teaching 130-140 FTEs in the distance education programmes, and that this important activity is not included in any picture of activities derived solely from on-campus FTE comparisons.</p>
<p>In Postgraduate programmes greater emphasis should be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interactive teaching; - regular personal supervision for research projects; - training in research methodology 	<p>QPC endorsed recommendation and noted that the Department is already planning to implement it.</p>	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>The Department seeks to maximise opportunities for interactive teaching, where appropriate. A log is now being kept of date/time and topic of all meetings with postgraduates.</p>
<p>Further development of research is desirable in areas of importance to support of community, regional and national development.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed; for action by Department</p>	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>In the period October '02 – March '03 the Department brought in €198,868 of the total of €236,088 earned by the 7 departments (Economics, Accounting & Finance, Management & Marketing, Government, MIS, Commerce Faculty and FBD) in the Faculty of Commerce (~84%). This total does not include the substantial sums allocated to the Department through the Dean of the Food Science & Technology Faculty for participation in the Department of Agriculture and Food Projects.</p>
<p>Staff should be encouraged to take sabbatical leave to develop research.</p>	<p>SEDC committee of AC and HR Committee are currently discussing conditions for leave, in particular leave of absence</p>	<p>The Department is doing everything to encourage staff to apply for sabbatical leave while recognising it is not always easy for individuals to arrange.</p>

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report – Oct. '03
	for academic purposes. Perhaps clarification of conditions for leave, etc. may assist staff and the Department. The committee noted the willingness of the Department to facilitate leave where possible.	The Dean of Commerce and the Department are concerned about the change in ambience of the sabbatical leave scheme which (in their view) ought to be regarded as a central focus in academic staff development.
Staff should be encouraged to publish more in international journals	Recommendation strongly endorsed; for action by Department	Implemented. An increasing number of departmental articles are being accepted by international journals. A contract has been signed with Oak Tree Press for a series of five books in co-operative/social studies.
That the issue of inadequate access to computer and related facilities for students be addressed	QPC noted that this issue arises in all reviews. There is no easy solution and the problems of ageing computer equipment is increasing college wide while resources are becoming scarcer.	Implemented. The Department secured significant funds from the University and from the retailing Programme offered by the Department to re-equip the computer laboratory to an appropriate standard. The Department and Dean of Commerce would also support the need for additional open-access PCs within O'Rahilly Building.
That the Department be associated with the Faculty of Food Science & Technology for budgetary purposes.	The QPC agreed that action on this recommendation be deferred pending discussions between the Head of Department and the Dean of Commerce.	Currently the funding allocations are inequitable. The Department of FBD is central/essential to the development and enhancement of business education in UCC. Strategic discussions are planned between the Head of Department and the Dean of the Commerce Faculty for this term. A report will be made to the QPC in due course. Funding arrangements must take account of the Department's major role in two faculties.
The University should consider the implications for postgraduate education and training arising from the reduction in FTE weighting for PG students	The QPC noted that the weighting of PG students as 1 rather than 3 is a matter of policy and mirrors the HEA policy and practice. The university cannot unilaterally change the practice. However the university is actively considering means of resource allocation that are not based solely on FTEs.	See comment under recommendation 4 above. There are serious implications for strategic planning in academic departments with the current resource allocation model which considers weighting of PG students as 1 rather than a larger weighting.
The university should develop a coherent policy on distance learning.	The QPC endorsed the recommendation and referred this to the SNCDC of AC for	The SNCDC is actively working on this. A workshop was held in October 2003 and a report is planned for faculties and

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	initial consideration, recommending that input from the Department among others be sought.	Academic Council. Financing of distance education programmes by Government and by the University will have significant implications for the future of such programmes.
That the library budget be increased from 4% to 6%	The QPC noted that the library budget is under active consideration by the Deans-EMG currently. The QPC commented that departments should be considering the purchase of research journals from research income rather than from the core library budget.	The Department is currently using some of its own research funds to enhance the meagre funding available from the University for library resources.
The university should review the fee structure for non-EU PG students	The QPC noted that this issue is under active consideration currently.	Comment from Department: There is some confusion currently about the nature and implementation of the decision to charge 150% of EU fee to students from developing countries.

The Department also submitted a detailed list of some 50 publications (international journal articles, books accepted for publication and conference papers) published / accepted for publication since the review.