Student Reviewer Training Session 2021/22

Exercise One

SCENARIO
You are a Student Reviewer within a Quality Peer Review Panel for an academic unit of the university. Student reviewers usually receive a copy of the unit's Self-Evaluation Report a few weeks before the site visit (SER, henceforth). As a Panel member, you are required to critically read the SER to prepare for the Unit's Site Visit. In fact, at the first Panel's meeting, all Panel members are expected to share their main observations arising from their individual reading of the SER.
However, for this exercise, you have been given only an extract from a real anonymised SER.

TASK

As a student reviewer, prepare yourself for the first Panel Meeting. You need to:

1. <u>Critically read and analyse</u> the following anonymised excerpt taken from a unit's Self-Evaluation Report.
2. Write a <u>summary</u> of its contents.
3. <u>Concisely note</u> in bullet points:
   o Your <u>general impressions</u> about the <u>quality of the document's excerpt</u>;
   o Your <u>positive observations</u> on <u>quality aspects</u> of the unit's provision/structures/services/processes, arising from your reading of the SER's excerpt;
   o Individuated <u>issues/challenges</u> concerning <u>quality aspects</u> of the unit's provision/structures/services/processes, arising from your reading of the SER's excerpt;
   o <u>Quality aspects</u> that seem to <u>warrant further investigation/clarification</u> during the site visit.
   ➢ Please, **email in attachment** as a Word document assigned tasks 2 (summary) and 3 (sets of bullet points) to the attention of the Quality Enhancement Advisor at <u>sbrandi@ucc.ie</u>
   ➢
4. In preparation for the group discussion at Student Reviewer training, reflect on the given SER's excerpt, using the following questions as prompts:

   ➢ In your opinion, what are the main points of consideration <u>from a student perspective</u> arising from this excerpt?
   ➢ As a Student Reviewer, what questions/requests for clarifications would you ask unit's staff during the site visit on the basis of your reading of this SER's excerpt? (Think of <u>three</u>)

Specifically, consider the SER's mention that the unit has a wide range of student support arrangements to improve student experiences, as well as measures in place to close the feedback loop in response to students' suggestions/needs/requirements.

> ➤ Do you think the excerpt provides sufficient evidence for both assertions? Please, discuss and provide proof of your position by referring to the document itself.
> ➤ What questions could you ask the <u>Head of the Unit</u> to clarify any potential doubts?
> ➤ What question would you ask <u>students</u> at the meeting with students during the site visit?

Student Support and Feedback

4.8 The School has a range of mechanisms in place to support its students in their university studies and to gather feedback on the student experience. The School also has measures in place to close the feedback loop in response to any issues raised, and suggestions made, by students.

Personal Tutor Scheme

4.9 The School is committed to providing support to students, and to assisting all of them to access the many supports available to them in the School and across the wider University. The principal means by which the School provides this support is through the Personal Tutor Scheme. This scheme involves each new undergraduate student being assigned a personal tutor who is a member of the academic staff of the School. All academic staff are assigned a complement of 7-8 fulltime students each year and can expect to have approximately 20 tutees at any one time. The role of the Personal Tutor includes: acting as a contact point in the School for their tutees; encouraging tutees to be proactive in their engagement with both their personal tutor and the School more generally, to take responsibility for their education and to develop good study habits at an early stage; providing advice on study techniques, module choices, further education options and career opportunities; providing letters of reference as required; and providing information and access to supports and services available to students across the University including, for example the UCC Skills Centre and Student Health and Counselling.

Disability Support Officer

4.10 The School's Disability Support Officer is the key point of contact between the University's Disability Support Service (DSS) and the School. The Disability Support Officer works together with colleagues to ensure that reasonable accommodations are made on an annual basis for students registered with the DSS. Such supports include, for example, the specific provision of a lecture capture facility (using Panopto) for all students registered with DSS.

4.11 In addition to the various supports provided by the DSS at the University level, students who are registered with the DSS also receive individualised supports from the School Disability Support Officer, where necessary. Students who are struggling with ongoing issues, or who experience unexpected illness or injury during the academic year, can contact the Disability Support Officer. By liaising directly with the DSS, the Disability Support Officer will determine what supports can be put in place to enable these students to continue with their studies. The importance of maintaining the privacy of the students concerned is at the centre of this endeavour. It follows that no details concerning a particular student's circumstances are shared beyond the DSS and the School Disability Support Officer. Because of the nature and age of the building, there are some issues around accessibility of certain areas of the School for students (and staff) with physical disabilities and plans are in place, in consultation with the Building and Estates Office, to eliminate these barriers. A full audit of accessibility for all areas in the building is required.

Student Council

4.12 Established in the 2012/2013 academic year to replace the Staff Student Committee, the Student Council is made up of student representation from all degree programmes (undergraduate and postgraduate) and from all years. It is convened and chaired by the Head or their nominee (usually the Deputy Head). The Student Council provides student representatives with direct access to the Head of the unit. The Head is in a position to respond directly to any concerns raised about the School's programmes or, more specifically, matters relating to teaching, learning and examining, the library and other related matters. Key School administrative staff attend the meetings to assist in providing

responses to the students. The Student Council enables students to feed into both the running of the School and the determination of the School's future directions. It meets monthly during term time. Meetings can be requested outside of term time. The minutes of Student Council meetings, including any action points, are posted on the School noticeboard. The minutes are noted at School meetings. (The Council's terms of reference, and minutes of recent meetings, are in appendix 4A.)

Accessibility of School Staff to Students

4.13   The School prides itself on its longstanding, student-centred approach which is supported by measures that facilitate easy and fast access for students to staff, where necessary. The School has a range of measures in place to ensure that students know how to make contact with members of the academic and administrative staff. The most significant measures here include:

- All academic staff have designated office hours during term time. These hours are published to students. Outside of these hours, students are free to contact academic staff to set up an appointment. The recently redesigned School website includes contact details for all members of staff. The Head is available by appointment.

- In accordance with the University's *Guide to Examinations and Assessment for Staff and Students* (April 2019), academic staff in the School are available for consultation meetings with students following the relevant Examination Boards.

- The School's website presents essential information to current students in a clear, accessible and user-friendly format on the homepage, including a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section as well as 'Useful Links' to a wide range of services and supports across the University.
  The website also publicises current events and news items that are of relevance to students.

- Students are directed to the relevant Programme Director as the initial contact point for specific programme-related queries or concerns.

- The School communicates significant announcements via e-mail to all students using the Canvas VLE.

- Regular announcements concerning specific programmes and / or modules are made in class and / or via the Canvas VLE.

- The School is very active on social media with regular announcements and news stories on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

School Staff Engagement in Student Activities

4.14 Staff at the School support a wide range of student activities and initiatives on a regular basis. For example, staff frequently support events and other activities organised by the UCC Student *X* Society. Beyond these annual flagship events, staff contribute regularly as speakers or chairs at UCC Student *X* Society events and support and promote a wide range of careers events organised by students.
The School also plays an advisory role in relation to the *Cork Online X Review,* run by the Student *X* Society.

4.15 Beyond the Student *X* Society, staff contribute to other student initiatives including UCC Green Campus, among others.

Supporting careers events and providing career advice

4.16 Staff at the School promote and support a wide range of careers events for its students. Staff will regularly invite alumni and other guest contributors to the School to speak with students about various career options across a range of fields of *X* and beyond. In addition to the many placement and internship opportunities organised nationally by the School, its *X* Liaison Committee and *X* Co-ordinator work closely with the local professions to develop placement and internship opportunities for the School's students in Cork city and county. Staff engage regularly with a wide range of employers, including *X* firms. In addition, there is an increasing emphasis on trying to secure placements beyond Ireland.

4.17 The academic staff at the School are very well placed to advise students on a wide range of career options and to provide letters of reference, including for postgraduate opportunities. Staff at the School have extensive networks in Ireland, the EU and internationally. They are therefore in a strong position to put the students in direct contact with distinguished alumni, adjunct professors and others, with a view to getting the most up to date career advice as well as information on new and emerging opportunities in Ireland, the EU and beyond.

Closing the feedback loop in relation to Teaching and Learning

4.18 In accordance with University policy, academic staff are obliged to seek feedback from students for each of the modules they deliver. This feedback is designed to capture the students' experience of teaching and learning and any suggestions for improvement. Feedback may be collected in a variety of ways, including hard copy questionnaires distributed in class, and focus groups; additionally, the IT officer arranges for online surveys, and produces reports analysing the responses. The results of the questionnaires / surveys, together with a summary of the feedback received, and any steps taken in response to feedback, are communicated to the Head. It is also recommended that staff communicate a summary of the feedback received, and any steps taken in response to feedback, to the relevant class via the Canvas VLE.

Access

4.19 The School has an acknowledged reputation as a leader within the University in terms of promoting and providing non-traditional entry routes to the undergraduate study. Alongside the most traditional student entry route via the Leaving Certificate, multiple alternative entry routes have been developed. The Unit is a leader in UCC in the provision of second chance education opportunities, with up to 25 mature day student places offered annually across all undergraduate degree programmes. Separately, the *X* evening degree is the most successful programme of its kind in Ireland. In terms of making *X* accessible both on entry and in the course of completing the programme, the School has developed strong and effective partnerships with UCC student support offices including DARE, HEAR and the MSO, ensuring appropriate supports are provided for students with particular needs.

4.20 To address the issue of individual cases of student need, the School operates a fee concession scheme for registered students on the evening degree, providing financial assistance in the form of a contribution by the School towards a successful applicant's fees in any given academic year. In recent years the School has actively engaged with external parties and has secured significant, dedicated funding to increase the access to study *X* to under-represented and economically disadvantaged communities.