



**UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND, CORK**

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT/QUALITY ASSURANCE

PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT

COLLEGE OF MEDICINE & HEALTH

ACADEMIC YEAR 2009/10

Date: 24.11.09

PEER REVIEW GROUP MEMBERS

Name	Position/Discipline	University
Dr. Nicholas Busing	President & Chief Executive Officer	Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada, Ottawa, Canada
Dr. Maeve Conrick	Dean of Arts	University College Cork
Mr. John FitzGerald	Librarian & Director of Information Services	University College Cork
Professor Neva Haites	Head, College of Life Sciences & Medicine	University of Aberdeen, Scotland
Professor Cathal Kelly	Dean, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

TIMETABLE OF THE SITE VISIT

The detailed timetable is provided in Appendix A.

The timetable was satisfactory. The cooperation of the QPU in modifying the timetable to include a meeting with students and in reorganising the meetings with Schools staff is acknowledged.

PEER REVIEW

Methodology

Dr. Nicholas Busing was appointed as Chair of the Peer Review Group by the Group and Mr. John FitzGerald was appointed as Rapporteur. The Group acted as a single Group throughout the review and all members agreed to the final report.

Site Visit

The visit to the Brookfield Health Sciences Complex provided a useful opportunity to view the excellent quality of the College's physical accommodation.

Peer Review Group Report

All members contributed to the drafting process.

OVERALL ANALYSIS

The Peer Review Group wishes to record its appreciation to all of the staff of the College of Medicine & Health for their full cooperation with the review. The high quality of the documentation was matched by the highly motivated, committed, and talented team which the Peer Review Group encountered. Particular thanks are due to Professor Michael Berndt, Head of College, for facilitating the Peer Review Group's wide-ranging explorations and whose strong and visionary leadership is clearly a key asset to the College and the University.

The staff of the Quality Promotion Unit ensured that the review ran smoothly and effectively. Particular thanks are due to Dr. Norma Ryan for her attentive care and constructive advice at all times.

The Peer Review Group is very appreciative of the time afforded by the many senior UCC staff who met with the group. The Group is also very appreciative of the students who volunteered to meet with the group at such short notice.

This review was conducted of the College of Medicine & Health as an administrative unit as opposed to the larger eponymous academic entity comprising the five schools attached to the College and the related staff and student bodies. The external reviewers in particular would have appreciated being made aware at initial contact of the scope of the review as not extending to the wider entity.

Self-Assessment Report

- The SAR is generally a clear and well-presented assessment of the College.
- The SAR would have benefitted from inclusion of a prefatory description of the wider historical and organisational context for the College, its establishment and recent development.
- The absence of completed staff questionnaires (Appendix L) was noted. It was felt by the Peer Review Group that these could provide important information which would contribute greatly to the effectiveness of the review process. Staff were invited to complete this questionnaire on the final day of the review. Six returns were made and these were carefully considered by the Peer Review Group.
- The Review Group would have welcomed greater detail and specificity in the section entitled *Recommendations for Improvement* (p6). While it is acknowledged that the College is at an early stage in development, the depth of experience of the staff, allied to the information gathered in the benchmarking exercise, and the self assessment process itself, all provide a sound basis for more considered recommendations to be made to the Peer Review Group.

SWOT Analysis

- The SWOT is felt to be an excellent distillation of the key factors influencing the future development of the College.
- The areas were appropriately identified and found to be consistent with the findings of the Peer Review Group.
- The Peer Review Group noted the weaknesses identified and, where relevant, have made recommendations for improvement in the report.

Benchmarking

- While the selection of institutions for benchmarking was appropriate, the visits could have been more thorough if more time had been afforded to meet with the key personnel. Representatives on the Peer Review Group from both benchmarking institutions would welcome further opportunity for engagement.

A COMMENT OF THE PEER REVIEW GROUP ON THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE TIMING OF THE REVIEW

While undoubtedly a valuable exercise in assessing the success of the academic restructuring process, as far as the establishment of the College units is concerned, the review group feels that the University and the College would have benefitted more from a review conducted further into the development of the College when its structures, processes and plans would have been developed and tested to a greater degree.

FINDINGS OF THE PEER REVIEW GROUP

Unit Details

The unit is described in detail in the SAR, including the relevant governance structure, decision making processes and bodies.

- Some historical and contextual background to the College would have been useful.
- Future planning could include the development of detailed job descriptions and application of the PDRS.
- A comprehensive demographic profile of all aspects of the College's activities, including research, teaching, and learning could usefully have been provided.

Unit Planning and Organisation

- The organisation of the unit is clear with defined functions and relationships amongst staff and committees. The unit benefits from effective leadership and good

management. These factors facilitate effective decision making and a sense of inclusion amongst staff.

- The devolution of financial support via the Financial Analyst is particularly successful and serves as a model for other functions.
- The network of school managers, reporting and meeting with the College Manager, and then from her to the Academic Secretary, appears to be particularly effective.
- The committee structure of the College, which mirrors that within the University, seems to be an effective way of both communicating and informing management decisions.
- The draft Operational Plan provided during the review is an effective distillation of the key action points from the Strategic Plan.

Client/User Groups for the Unit

In addition to those listed in the SAR, the HSE is a major client. The Peer Review Group notes the ongoing work of the College in seeking to develop this relationship. Continuing to develop this relationship must remain a high priority.

It is noted that the College considers students to be clients of the Schools rather than the College. The Peer Review Group considers students also to have an important relationship with the College.

Service Standards

While it is acknowledged that this is a new unit, it is important that performance measurement and service standards be developed for all relevant College activities.

Staff Development

A staff development plan which addresses, *inter alia*, leadership skills, succession planning, and individual personal and professional development should be drawn up in liaison with the HR Partner and involving external providers where available. Particular attention is needed to ensure that emerging talented academic leaders across the Schools are properly nurtured.

Unit Budget

The College has an ambitious agenda. The SAR suggests that significant budget reductions will be applied in the future. The Peer Review Group is concerned that this will greatly curtail the ability of the College to achieve its goals.

Unit Co-ordinating Committee & Methodology employed in the preparation of the Self-Assessment Report

It is noted that all staff in the unit were directly involved in the preparation of the review. The Group acknowledged the merits of this approach and the contribution of each staff member.

The Peer Review Group was asked to comment specifically on the unit under the following headings:

Governance

The College rules provide a comprehensive governance framework which appears to work effectively in practice. However, appropriate risk management structures were not evident.

As the College structures evolve, the key accountabilities and responsibilities in the Registry, College and Schools need to be clarified.

Services

The unit provides a range of services to support the Schools. The Peer Review Group welcomes the recent appointments of College Manager, Director of Research, and College Financial Analyst. Client feedback suggests that these are successful appointments.

Staffing

Current staffing levels seem appropriate. The work of the College is greatly facilitated by the cooperative approach and ‘can-do’ attitude of the office staff. As the unit expands, staffing levels should be reviewed accordingly.

The Peer Review Group fully supports the appointment of the HR Partner. Staff development should be a priority for the HR Partner.

The requirement for dedicated IT skills to support areas such as web development should be considered.

While beyond the scope of this review, the Peer Review Group feels that further reductions in academic staff will impact on the quality of the teaching and learning environment and will limit the research opportunities. The current suspension of the promotions scheme is detrimental to the mission of the College.

Accommodation

The standard of physical environment is high and the current location is ideal. As the College expands, additional contiguous space will be needed.

Financing

The comparatively low level of funding granted to the Cork Dental School is inequitable. The Peer Review Group strongly supports the University in seeking a solution with the appropriate funding authorities.

Measures need to be taken to improve income generation and reduce the burden of RAM moderation. Mechanisms should be put in place to reward and incentivise income generation at department and individual level.

Communications

Communication upwards from the College to the University authorities appears to be excellent. Communication within the unit and with the Heads of School is very good. External communication to the wider student and schools community could be enhanced through the use of the College website and e-Newsletter.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Peer Review Group considered the recommendations for improvement made in the Self-Assessment Report by the College MH and have incorporated them in the following recommendations, as appropriate.

Governance

- The division of responsibilities between the College and the schools needs to be kept under constant review to ensure that the College continues to provide the right level and type of support.
- A risk management strategy for the College should be developed.
- A student-staff committee should be established in order to provide a forum to address issues which the students might wish to raise.
- The role of the Research Degrees Committee should be clarified.

Staff Development

- It is recommended that a staff development strategy for staff at all levels be produced and implemented.
- A leadership development programme should be developed, focussing on, for example, succession planning.
- Serious consideration should be given to establishing the post of HR Partner as a full-time post.

- Consideration should be given to the development of a role of Business Development Officer to assist in the identification of business and income generation opportunities.

Infrastructure

- A fully functioning HRIS is needed to support effective resource management.
- An effective MIS is needed. The College should actively participate in the Data Warehouse Project to ensure that the management information it needs will be delivered through this project.
- Space and technical expertise should be shared to a greater degree among the Schools. For example, the dedicated IT and Audio Visual support to the School of Nursing & Midwifery could be made available on a limited basis to the other smaller Schools.

School of Graduate Studies

- Consideration should be given to the Schools contributing staff time to support the work of the School of Graduate Studies.

Communication and Branding

- The Peer Review Group noted the importance of ensuring distinct identities for the School of Medicine and the College of Medicine & Health. Consideration should be given to reviewing the title for the College (e.g. College of Health Sciences).
- Details of staff profiles and roles should be provided on the College website.
- Signage should be updated to reflect the current College structures.

Measurement and Evaluation

- The College should put in place a plan to regularly measure its performance. Examples would be entry qualifications; number of students on programmes; international students; research funding; publication impact factors; programme delivery; peer review grant income; cross-programme research activities, quality of teaching, etc.

APPENDIX A
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE & HEALTH
PEER REVIEW GROUP SITE VISIT TIMETABLE

In Summary

- Monday 9 November: The Peer Review Group (Peer Review Group) arrives at the Kingsley Hotel for a briefing from the Director of the Quality Promotion Unit, followed by an informal meeting with staff members from the College of Medicine & Health.
- Tuesday 10 November: The Peer Review Group considers the Self-Assessment Report and meets with College staff, student and stakeholder representatives. A working private dinner is held in the evening for the Peer Review Group.
- Wednesday 11 November: The Peer Review Group meets with relevant officers of UCC. An exit presentation is given by the Peer Review Group to all members of the College. A working private dinner is held that evening for the Peer Review Group in order to finalise the report. This is the final evening of the review.
- Thursday 12 November: External Peer Review Group members depart.

Monday 9 November 2009	
18.30	Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group Briefing by Director of Quality Promotion Unit, Dr. Norma Ryan. Group agrees final work schedule and assignment of tasks for the following 2 days. Views are exchanged and areas to be clarified or explored are identified.
19.00 – 21.00	Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group
21.00 – 22.00	Informal meeting for members of the Peer Review Group, Head of College of Medicine & Health and College of Medicine & Health staff. <i>College of Medicine & Health Staff:</i> Professor Michael Berndt Dr Colman Casey Ms Aine Foley Ms Hilary Heaphy Ms Kathryn Neville Venue: Kingsley Hotel

Tuesday 10 November 2009

Venue: Tower Room 1, North Wing, Main Quadrangle

08.30 – 09.00	Convening of Peer Review Group
09.00 – 09.30	Professor Michael Berndt, Head, College of Medicine & Health
09.30 – 10.30	<u>College of Medicine and Health staff</u> Professor Michael Berndt (Head) Dr Colman Casey Ms Aine Foley Ms Hilary Heaphy Ms Niamh McGettrick Cronin Ms Ruth McGrath Barker Ms Kathryn Neville
10.30 – 11.00	Tea/coffee
11.00 – 13.00	<u>Private meetings for individual staff members</u> 11.00: Dr Colman Casey 11.15: Ms Aine Foley 11.30: Ms Hilary Heaphy 11.45: Ms Niamh McGettrick Cronin 12.00: Ms Ruth McGrath Barker 12.15: Ms Kathryn Neville
12.30 – 13.45	Working lunch
14.00 – 14.30	Visit to core facilities of the College, escorted by Professor Michael Berndt and Ms. Kathryn Neville, College Manager
14.30 – 15.00	Ms. Helen O'Donoghue, Human Resources, HR partner to College of Medicine & Health
15.00 – 15.30	Ms. Sandra Daly, General Manager, Health Service Executive South
15.30 – 15.50	Professor Finbarr Allen, Head, Dental School & Hospital Ms. Sheila Maguire, School Manager, Dental School & Hospital
15.50 – 16.10	Professor Anita Maguire, Head, School of Pharmacy Ms. Noreen Moynihan, School Manager, School of Pharmacy
16.10 – 16.30	Professor David Kerins, Head, School of Medicine Ms. Connie Mulcahy, School Manager, School of Medicine
16.30 – 17.10	Professor Fiona Gibbon, Head, School of Clinical Therapies Professor Eileen Savage, Deputising for Head of School of Nursing & Midwifery Ms Anne Lynch, Senior Programme Administrator, School of Nursing & Midwifery
17.10 – 17.45	Meeting with representatives of undergraduate and postgraduate students Shane O'Donovan, 3 rd year Medicine Jennifer Walsh, 3 rd year Medicine Emma Gleeson, PhD Student Sharon Kennedy, 4 th Year Nursing Studies Brigid Buckley, 4 th Year Nursing Studies
19.00	Meeting of Peer Review Group to identify remaining aspects to be clarified and to finalise tasks for the following day, followed by a working private dinner.

	Venue: Suite 1, Business Centre, Kingsley Hotel
Wednesday 11 November 2009	Venue: Tower Room 1
08.30 – 09.00	Convening of Peer Review Group
09.00 – 09.30	Professor Paul Giller, Registrar & Senior Vice-President
09.30 – 10.00	Meeting with staff from within the College of Medicine & Health Professor Julia Kennedy, School of Pharmacy Dr. John Sweeney, Senior Lecturer, School of Nursing & Midwifery
10.00 – 10.20	Ms. Sharon Jones, Academic Secretary
10.20 – 10.45	Professor Helen Whelton, Head, Graduate School, College of Medicine & Health
10.45 – 11.15	Tea/coffee
11.15 – 11.30	Mr. Cormac McSweeney, Finance Office
11.30 – 12.00	Professor Peter Kennedy, Vice-President for Research Policy & Support
12.00 – 12.30	Professor David Kerins, Vice-Head, College of Medicine & Health
12.30 – 12.45	Private meetings for individual staff members Mr Michael Hanna
12.45 – 13.30	Working lunch
13.30 – 17.00	Preparation of first draft of final report
16.30 – 17.00	Professor Michael Berndt, Head, College of Medicine & Health
17.00 – 17.30	Exit presentation to all staff, made by the Chair of the Peer Review Group, summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group.
19.00	Working private dinner for members of the Peer Review Group to complete drafting of report and finalisation of arrangements for completion and submission of final report. Venue: Suite 1, Business Centre, Kingsley Hotel