



Organisational Structure

6.1

THE URGENT NEED FOR ACADEMIC RESTRUCTURING

External reviews of UCD (CRE Institutional Review 1998; EUA Institutional Review 2003; HEA/EUA/IUQB Quality Review 2004; WAG Report 2004) have repeatedly asserted that the division of the academic community into an excessively large number of Faculties and Departments:

- Is a major impediment to academic collaboration, performance and progress;
- Results in significant duplication of academic effort and inhibits innovation in the teaching arena;
- Is a barrier to interdisciplinary research and limits the capacity to launch major research initiatives or attract large research grants;
- Limits sabbatical and research leave opportunities;
- Complicates and diffuses administrative effort and expertise and thereby limits the effectiveness of both UCD's academic and administrative staff;
- Prevents effective communication and decision making;
- Limits the capacity for multi-annual strategic and financial planning;
- Dissipates valuable resources;
- Impairs UCD's ability to brand effectively and its ability to raise funds effectively from the private sector.

The unnecessary and counter-productive complexity of our organisation is also an issue of internal debate, was a major theme in the cross-Faculty strategic planning dialogue, and was examined by a specific task group on

academic structures. Several themes emerged repeatedly during this dialogue that further supported the views of external review teams. The artificial subdivision of broad disciplines into multiple Departments and Centres, sometimes located in different Faculties, clearly presents barriers to innovation and collaboration in teaching and research, and leads to duplication of resources, structures and effort. Small Departments are often inadequately resourced, and the small complement of staff may not be able to provide adequate mentoring, induction and guidance for new staff or graduate researchers.

The proliferation of Departments makes it difficult to arrive at consensus or make decisions while adequately consulting at Head of Department level, isolating Heads of Department and individual academics from the decision-making structures of the university, with resultant lack of clarity on policy and objectives. While Departments have autonomy to operate within their own budgets, their ability to influence major decisions on resource allocation and staffing is limited. These factors lead to a disconnect between the strategic direction of individual Departments and the Strategic Plan of the university as a whole.

The future of the university, its impact on Irish society and its international standing requires a resolution of this issue, so that individual academic units are effective, empowered and resourced to act with common purpose to achieve agreed objectives. In short, UCD's academic structures urgently require revision and refinement if the objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan 2005-2008 are to be realised.

UCD will move to an academic structure where the School replaces the Department as the fundamental academic unit, and these Schools are organised into a smaller number of Colleges. It is not possible or desirable to prescribe an ideal number of Colleges and Schools to be established as a result of the restructuring process, as they are to be formed for academic rather than administrative reasons. However, the external commentators consulted and the various models explored suggest that the optimum structure would have fewer than 40 Schools and four to six Colleges.



6.2 PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA GUIDING THE RESTRUCTURING PROCESS

SCHOOLS REPLACE DEPARTMENTS AS THE CORE ACADEMIC UNITS WITHIN COLLEGES

In response to the urgent need for academic restructuring highlighted above, UCD will move to a model in which the fundamental academic unit will be a School, a community of staff and students with common goals, a shared perspective, a common disciplinary ethos and approach, led by a head who is appropriately resourced to manage the unit and who has influence in the decision-making processes of the university. The School will be managed by the Head of School working with a School Executive. The School should give individual academics and students a strong sense of identity, and be large enough to be well recognised in the wider community. It should have clear responsibilities with regard to support and welfare of students and staff.

Several principles should guide the formation of Schools. These include:

- The primary objective of any change in structures should be to deliver improvements in research, teaching, learning and student life;
- Existing Departments should be merged to form a School only where there is genuine disciplinary coherence or potential synergies between the Departments;
- A School should ordinarily be large enough to achieve critical mass in teaching and research, yet not so large as to reduce the sense of identity and belonging or prevent effective management by the Head of School;
- Schools should ordinarily be large enough to warrant a well-developed and efficient administrative and

support structure and career development programmes for academic, administrative and technical staff.

The decision to form a School from existing Departments or Schools will be based on the following criteria:

- Current national and international standing and trajectory based on student profile and research output, with due regard for the history of the discipline and previous levels of development and investment;
- Critical mass of world-class scholars and/or clear opportunities and plans to create critical mass;
- Common ethos and approach and shared objectives;
- Alignment with Ireland's social, cultural and economic objectives;
- Quality, ambition, and feasibility of the School strategic development plan.

Schools will be responsible for the design, delivery and assessment of modules which contribute towards degree programmes and in some cases for the delivery of entire programmes within a broader College framework.



Schools will be the primary academic home for the vast majority of staff, and may host the research activities of lone scholars or clusters of researchers, and/or conduct some or all of their research activity within or in collaboration with Research Institutes.

SCHOOLS ARE DEVELOPED AND STRENGTHENED THROUGH INSTITUTIONAL INVESTMENT AND SUPPORT

Schools will encapsulate academic areas that are priorities for development at UCD. The university will support the development of Schools in particular by assisting them in obtaining external funds (from public and private sources) for research and teaching. It is envisaged that, with the support of their College and the university, Schools will agree multi-annual resourcing plans (human, financial and physical) with the university, put in place realistic and realisable strategies for their own development, and then act autonomously and creatively within the agreed framework. One important benefit accruing from the formation of larger units will be the ability to formulate clear goals for staff recruitment, a key factor in the future development of any academic unit.

PRESERVATION OF DISCIPLINES WITHIN SCHOOLS

While some Schools will accommodate only one discipline or subject area, many will bring together academic staff working in cognate or related disciplines. The identity and integrity of these disciplines will be preserved in two ways. The standing and development of a discipline of value to the university should be supported by ensuring that each discipline has at least one Professor. The School Executive should be representative of the disciplines or subjects contained within the School. The subject leader may or may not be a Professor, and is appointed by the College with the assent of the School, for a period of up to five years.

COLLEGES AND THEIR ROLE

The College, as the largest academic unit, should comprise academic staff in broadly cognate disciplines working together to deliver a portfolio of teaching and research programmes and who are supported by a critical mass of administrative staff with expertise in academic management, information systems, accounting and financial management, strategic planning, communications, alumni relations and fundraising. The College will be led by a Principal and College



Executive, including all Heads of School and other appropriate representatives. They will be highly autonomous and have significant devolved authority, within the university's broader policy framework, that will include delivery of academic programmes, staff recruitment, development and promotion, and managing the routine and strategic resource allocation to Schools. A major role of the College will be to act as strategic umbrella body binding together a group of cognate and related Schools, assuring the quality of their educational and research programmes, facilitating their good management and strategic planning, and leading strategic initiatives involving consortia of Schools.

ADMINISTRATIVE, TECHNICAL AND SUPPORT STAFF

The proposed academic restructuring has important consequences for administrative, technical and support staff, and for the relationship between central administrative services and Colleges and Schools. Academic restructuring will be accompanied by a detailed implementation plan to ensure that reporting relationships, working conditions and career development opportunities for all staff are respected. The opportunity will be taken to increase the effectiveness of administrative processes, and to ensure that central administrative services effectively underpin and support the activities of Colleges and Schools.

6.3 ROLE OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH INSTITUTES AND CENTRES

RESEARCH INSTITUTES

Interdisciplinary research collaboration and high-quality graduate programmes will be further facilitated through UCD's major Research Institutes. These Institutes will be characterised by a critical mass of research scholars working on related or the same broad themes, supported by state-of-the-art technology where relevant and by the administrative resources necessary to support internationally competitive masters and doctorate research programmes. Whereas Schools will be the primary academic home of academic staff, researchers can apply for membership of an Institute under a workload framework agreed with the Head of School and Institute Director. Indeed well-resourced high-profile Research Institutes should be valuable recruitment tools with which to attract high-quality scholars and students to UCD. Research Institutes may also serve as the primary academic home for scholars during the first years after their recruitment to UCD when their salary is funded primarily from Institute or external funds.



STRUCTURED DOCTORAL PROGRAMMES

If UCD is to enhance its intake of high-quality research masters and doctorate students, it is essential that structured programmes are established across the university that offer students, as a matter of routine, a cutting-edge structured taught component, a high-quality mentored research experience, and career guidance. These programmes will be hosted by a major Research Institute, by a College or by a consortium of Schools.

RESEARCH CENTRES

Research Centres will be research clusters which will ordinarily reside within UCD's major research institutes or may be located within a College or School. They are designed to promote interdisciplinary research in a focused theme or programme, usually on a smaller scale than, or forming part of the activities of, a Research Institute. The establishment of a Research Centre may also be used to concentrate and incubate research efforts in a new or emerging area. A clear set of procedures and criteria for the establishment, support and where necessary, winding down and closure of Research Centres is required.