



**University College Dublin**

**Quality Improvement Plan**

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UCD Student Experience

March 2010

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## **1. Introduction**

UCD is committed to creating an environment in which every student, independent of their culture, physical and mental health, and financial circumstances, has the ability to learn, interact, and partake in a way that enables them to develop to their full potential, and to graduate from UCD with the knowledge; skills, understandings, and values that will allow them lead society forward.

Upon undertaking the Quality Review process in 2009, a committee was established to lead the required self-assessment: this committee was led by the Vice-President for UCD Student Services (VP for Students) and was comprised of the heads of each of the student service units that fall within the review. This committee then met on several occasions upon receipt of the Review Group Report to produce this Quality Improvement Plan. The recommendations relating to each Unit have then been dealt with in sequence.

The Units responsible for the UCD Student Experience appreciated all who were involved in the Quality Review. This document outlines the plans and confirms the Units commitment to implementing the recommendations contained in the Quality Review Report.

Note: The Student Advisers, while not directly within the governance of the VP for Students, are a key component of the UCD Student Experience.

## **2. Recommendations for Improvements – Follow-Up Action Taken and/or Planned**

**CATEGORY 1:** Recommendations concerning academic, organisational and other matters which are entirely under the control of the unit

### **Planning, Organisation and Management**

#### **Category 1(a)**

##### **Recommendations already implemented**

**Recommendation 1:** In the interests of good management, improved coordination and greater coherency, a formal management structure should be put in place and operated by the VP for Students. The management committee should include, as a minimum, the VP for Students and the heads of the six units which report to him. The involvement of colleagues from Registry, the Commercial Office, UCD International and other administrative and academic units of UCD should be considered on a needs basis. Consideration should also be given to developing effective communications with the President of the Student Union.

**Action Planned:** The VP for Students has established the Student Experience Management Executive. The composition of this group is: VP Students, Director of UCD Sports, Director of UCD Health Service, Director of UCD Counselling Service, HR Partner, Head Chaplain, Coordinator of Student Advisers, UCD Society Officer, Student Union Administrative Officer, Administrator to the VP Students, and the President of the UCD Student Union. The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the group took place in August 2009 and continue to occur since then as outlined in Recommendation 2, below. The terms of reference for this group include taking responsibility for all management and financial/budget issues that govern the relevant units. Additional attendees from other relevant administrative and academic units are asked to attend on a need basis eg staff from the UCD Finance Office has attended to discuss budgetary matters. The presence of the UCD Student Union President on the committee has aided in ensuring effective consistent communication and feedback with the Students Union.

**Recommendation 2:** The Management Team should meet on a regular (perhaps fortnightly) basis, and meetings should be structured by formal agendas. Minutes, agreed responsibilities, action points and defined timelines should be recorded and followed up.

**Action Planned:** Currently the Management Team schedules the next meeting from the current meeting, which is found to be working well and suiting the needs of the team. The time interval is flexible and depends on academic calendar, and urgency of issues, however the time interval is never more than 3 weeks. The agenda for meetings is circulated in advance, and contains standard issues which are discussed at each meeting eg Budget Updates, HR briefing, etc., as well as relevant matters at the time. Minutes, action points and defined timelines are produced and circulated to all members. Additional projects are also allocated, for example, the recent proposal for a student insurance scheme. It is felt that this format and structure is suiting the operational need of the team at present, and will be reviewed at the end of 2010.

**Recommendation 3:** The VP for Students' Management Team should have an active involvement in the annual budget allocation process and in the prioritisation of actions within the remit of the VP. Emphasis should be placed on finding collegial solutions which further promote collaboration across units, and the process should build upon the sense of common purpose achieved during the preparation of the Self-Assessment Report.

**Action Planned:** The agenda for the meetings of the Management Committee covers all items relating to the units. These include financial budgeting and periodic review of expenditure against budgets. Comprehensive and frank discussions are encouraged. The context is always that the common sense of purpose is the quality of the experience that UCD students obtain.

**Recommendation 4:** It would be appropriate to hold quarterly or twice-yearly staff meetings which include all staff in the units reporting to the VP. This would be an opportunity to brief colleagues on the overarching objectives of the VP and how collaboration between units will yield better results. The President of the Student Union, as well as representatives from other associated units, should be invited to attend discussion around specific items in these meetings.

**Action Planned:** Meetings of all staff involved in Student Experience are scheduled for twice a semester. These meetings will be used to build community, coordinate activity and to discuss issues that relate the UCD Student Experience. These meetings will build on the experience of "Symposium" meetings that were held twice a semester over the past 3 years. The meetings for this group took place in November and December 2009, and February 2010. Further meetings are scheduled for March and May 2010.

**Recommendation 5:** A new post of Senior Student Adviser / Coordinator should be considered, which would have responsibility for the coordination of the student advisers, student orientation, organisation of a student peer mentoring programme and oversight of information for new students.

**Action Planned:** The post of coordinator of Student Advisers was filled in September 2009 for a 1 year period. The post holder will be part of the Student Experience Management Executive, and will play a vital role in the coordination of services offered to UCD students.

## **Category 1(b)**

### **Recommendations to be implemented within one year**

**Recommendation 6:** A leadership development programme should be implemented for the heads of the units reporting to the VP for Students in order to build strategic planning, budgeting and teamwork capability within the Management Team.

**Action Planned:** The Management Team supports this recommendation and will work with UCD HR to identify a suitable training programme.

**Recommendation 7:** A clear and coherent UCD Student Experience Strategy should be developed and published in order to guide the activities of the VP for Students and his Management Team and which is consistent with and supportive of the University Strategic Plan. This strategy should have an overarching vision and its goals and objectives should be benchmarked to best national and international practice.

**Action Planned:** As part of the development of the University Strategic Plan to 2013, units within Student Experience have discussed and identified their strategic goals and objectives. It is anticipated that these will be developed into a standalone strategic plan for the UCD Student Experience in March of 2010.

**Recommendation 8:** The VP for Students should be responsible for ensuring the development of a strategy to market the services available to students; this is particularly important in first year. Careful consideration should be given to extending and broadening the orientation/mentoring programme

**Action Planned:** The importance of informing students of the support services available to them is appreciated by all. Continuous improvement reviews take place annually to improve the quality and impact of the orientation and peer mentoring programmes. The 1<sup>st</sup> year committee meets once a month and focuses on the issues that relate to 1<sup>st</sup> year students. Advanced plans are in place for the start of the academic year 2010/2011.

The web will be used as a means of informing students of the services available. The Vice president's regular email will also be used as a means of keeping students informed.

### **Category 1(c)**

#### **Recommendations to be implemented within five years**

**Recommendation 9:** An annual UCD Student Survey should be carried out in order to provide the basis for a continuous improvement of services which impact on the Student Experience. Both domestic and international students at undergraduate and postgraduate level should be included. This survey should not be limited to those services which report to the VP.

**Action Planned:** Full support for this recommendation is given by the Students' Management Team. At present UCD Registry survey students after registration and orientation. The results of this survey inform the Management Committee. It is intended to extend this survey to a regular student satisfaction survey involving all students and covering all services. It is expected that this survey will commence in January 2011.

### **Category 1(d)**

#### **Recommendations which will not be implemented.**

All recommendations will be implemented.



## **UCD Sports**

### **Category 1(b)**

#### **Recommendations to be implemented within one year**

**Recommendation 10:** UCD Sports should continue to generate income from a variety of sources, thus further reducing its dependence on University funding in what will be an increasingly challenging economic environment.

**Action Planned:** Income has been increased in '08/'09 by 30%. New initiatives include the management and operation of lifestyle courses which include yoga, pilates, circuits etc. The targeting and hosting of sports education programmes is also contributing to this increase. The sports centre continues to market aggressively the utilisation of the facilities particularly at off peak times to generate additional revenue e.g. Saturday am club, courses/parties at the climbing wall, school holiday time camps etc. Monitoring of our income/expenditure for each specific sport (e.g. squash, climbing wall, summer camps etc) is carried out on a monthly basis on a spreadsheet. This spreadsheet shows clearly how each area/activity is performing relative to previous occasions. We also review with all staff, at the conclusion of each project, the outcomes and the performance of each one.

**Recommendation 11:** Every effort should be made to further increase the number of students participating in physical activity, and UCD sports clubs should be supported in efforts to broaden their user base.

**Action Planned:** The introduction of the 'boot camp' programme and the reduction of prices for fitness classes have resulted in further increases in student participation. UCD clubs are active in the orientation process at UCD and all 1<sup>st</sup> year students are introduced to sports/recreation activities during their tour of the campus. All 1<sup>st</sup> year students as part of the Presidents welcome are addressed by the Director of Sport and encouraged to get active in recreation/sport activities while at UCD. The international orientation, new era, mature students, disability services events all include sport promotion. All UCD sports clubs received disability awareness training in '09. UCD Sports week was held on campus for the first time in September 2009. Organised by the AUC, Sports week ran from Sept 28<sup>th</sup> to Oct 4<sup>th</sup> inclusive and all UCD clubs were encouraged to run specific introductory, new member or open training sessions during the week. Events were promoted through Student Recruitment, the UCD Events Calendar and UCD Sport. The AUC also continues to organise and

manage the Sports Expo (September) and Refreshers Day (January) each year on behalf of all UCD Sports Clubs.

**Recommendation 12:** Further emphasis should be placed on the importance of good diet and nutrition, in addition to physical activity, in promoting good student health. To this end, the VP should initiate and support a close working relationship between UCD Sports, the Health Centre, Student Counselling Services and relevant research groups (e.g. Institute of Food and Health) in UCD Schools.

**Action Planned:** The UCD Sport 'Get in Gear' (GIG) programme works in partnership to offer nutritional webinars to all participants. This UCD Institute of Food and Health deliver a student based newsletter as part of GIG. Sport at UCD is partnered with the UCD Health Promotion Committee in a number of initiatives – Osteoporosis awareness Day, Irish Heart Foundation and Nutritional Health Foundation. UCD Sport is currently endeavouring to establish a closer working relationship with the UCD Health Centre, student counselling service and the UCD Institute for Sport and Health. The GIG co-ordinator and the UCD Health service staff have agreed a procedure whereby students who present with health issues and/or stress related conditions will be advised of support/advice services available through Get in Gear programmes. UCD Health Centre, student counselling service and the UCD Institute for Sport and Health have agreed to partner UCD Sport and Get in Gear through on going (daily e-mails, meetings, end of term reviews etc) contact between both parties

**Recommendation 13:** Particular emphasis should be placed on the potential value of sports in helping international students at UCD to develop social networks. An "Introduction to Gaelic Games" programme based loosely on the "Get in Gear" programme should be piloted to engage with a broad group of international students.

**Action Planned:** In November '09 an event took place through the UCD International Office for UCD International students to participate in Gaelic Games. Plans to organise additional events to establish social networks for international students are at an advanced stage. Refresher day in Jan/Feb '10 will be targeting international students specifically to become involved in activities and recreational events that have an Irish cultural flavour including Gaelic Games.

**Recommendation 14:** A formal UCD policy and procedure on extenuating circumstances relating specifically to students' involvement in sports clubs at elite level should be developed. An evaluation should be carried out on the possible mechanisms for awarding academic credit to students who represent UCD in sports at elite level.

**Action Planned:** Preliminary meetings have taken place between UCD Sport and UCD academic secretariat to establish a formal procedure as a matter of urgency. The policy which has been drafted is awaiting approval by the UCD Academic Council (1 year). The proposal for the awarding of academic credits to students who represent UCD Sport at Elite level is to be progressed by the office of the Vice President for the Student Experience.

**Recommendation 15:** UCD Sports should put in place dedicated programmes aimed at increasing UCD staff involvement in sports and physical activity.

**Action Planned:** UCD Sport will continue to market and promote a wide variety of opportunities for UCD staff members to engage in exercise, recreation and wellness on campus. Currently UCD staff can use the campus sports facilities at a reduced rate and also join UCD sports clubs. It is intended to continue to roll out additional programs for all of the UCD community including UCD staff. UCD HR and UCD Sport are collaborating to provide a UCD staff 'Get in Gear' as soon as possible.

**Recommendation 16:** Every effort should be made to maintain/improve sporting facilities, such as tennis courts, to the highest possible standard and to be responsive to user needs and views in a proactive manner.

**Action Planned:** Every effort is made to work closely with the college finance office and the college buildings office to improve and maintain UCD sports facilities. This includes strategic planning for the provision of additional and new facilities at UCD. The new extension to the existing UCD Student Centre is underway and when completed in 2011 will add significantly to the UCD Sport, Recreation and Leisure infrastructure for all stakeholders. In particular, the new extension will include a 50m pool, gym, cinema, theatre, debating chamber, health centre, and catering outlets.

**Recommendation 17:** A feasibility study should be carried out to consider the options for maintaining a pool of minivans/buses which can be made available at subsidised rates to UCD sports clubs which require transportation to compete outside of Dublin.

**Action Planned:** A review will be undertaken of the expenditure undertaken in '08/'09 by UCD clubs on bus hire to ascertain the total costs incurred by clubs. The Central Transport Office at UCD have been contacted to ascertain their position on the purchase, staffing, maintenance and insurance of vehicles for club use. Please also see Recommendation 36.

**Recommendation 18:** An evaluation should be carried out on the potential implications of running the Sports Centre, including the new 50 metre pool, as a separate commercial entity to the University. Such a model could increase the incentive for better management, greater income generation and higher levels of investment in infrastructure.

**Action Planned:** Currently underway

**Recommendation 19:** UCD should consider more actively using its elite athletes, and in particular those who have achieved international success, in student recruitment campaigns and other promotional purposes.

**Action Planned:** UCD Sport currently liaises with the UCD Communications Office and UCD Student Recruitment to maximise the profile internally and externally of our Elite Athletes. It is anticipated that this will be further enhanced with the introduction of the Elite Athlete Entry to UCD in 2010. Testimonials are also included on the UCD Sports Website, Student Prospectus and UCD Sports Guide.

**Recommendation 20:** Further to the completion of the new sporting facilities in late 2010, UCD should make every effort to capitalise upon Dublin's proximity to London and seek commercial and other advantages from the availability of competition-standard training facilities on the UCD campus which may be of value to teams preparing for the London Olympics.

**Action Planned:** A brochure titled 'London 2012 – UCD Training Venue – has been designed and printed. This brochure was created in consultation with the Olympic Council of Ireland, the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, The National Aquatics Centre and has been distributed to all member delegations of the International Olympic Committee. Follow up contacts are ongoing in an attempt to secure bookings by a variety of countries that would avail of the superb facilities at the UCD campus.

**Category 1(d)**

**Recommendations which will not be implemented.**

All recommendations will be implemented.

## **Student Counselling Service**

### **Category 1(b)**

#### **Recommendations to be implemented within one year**

**Recommendation 21:** The Student Counsellors, in collaboration with the Chaplains and Student Advisers, should develop a formal protocol for referral and case history. Although the ad-hoc nature of the referral system has worked adequately to date, the likely increase in student need for these services in the coming years demands a more thorough record-keeping system.

#### **Action Planned:**

The Student Counselling team has always enjoyed and valued their work with Student Advisors and Chaplaincy and the supportive, if informal, network of communication with these colleagues on behalf of students.

In order to progress the standardization of referral systems amongst these separate but allied services, it was decided to organize meetings to discuss more formal referral and feedback procedures and the implementation of such systems.

#### **Implementation:**

Two meetings between Student Counselling, Chaplaincy and Student Advisors took place at which standardization of referral and feedback protocols were discussed in detail and future practices were decided upon. Student Counselling reviewed and revised its *student referral form* which is a form provided to other services to complete when they wish to refer a student about whom they are concerned to Student Counselling. This new form was submitted to the Student Advisors and Chaplains for discussion.

The meetings also afforded the opportunity for current referrals practices to be examined, communication systems with which all the services were satisfied to be retained, best practice to be explored and future directions to be decided upon. The response to critical incident and crisis intervention were also discussed.

Agreement was reached about how referral urgency and priority would be communicated to the Student Counselling team by Student Advisors and Chaplains, how general referrals would be made to the Student

Counselling Service and the feedback procedures to referrers that Student Counselling would adopt in the future.

In summary an agreed system of inter-service referral and feedback was finalized and is now being implemented.

**Recommendation 22:** Although the split from the Student Health Service in 2007 was partially driven by a wish to differentiate the SCS from a medical service, the current tension between the SHS and the SCS is not productive and should be addressed as a matter of priority. The future move of the SHS to new facilities should be used as an opportunity to further clarify the roles and responsibilities of the two units and develop mechanisms for close, constructive collaboration.

**Action Planned:**

The Directors of Student Counselling and Student Health agreed to meetings on a monthly basis for the purpose of coordinating their activities, clarifying their individual and joint clinical roles and responsibilities and developing new clinical referral and feedback procedures between their services.

**Implementation:**

The Directors of the Student Health Service and The Student Counselling Services have jointly developed a referral protocol, a system of prioritizing referrals to each other and of providing formal and informal clinical feedback. A system of referral to psychiatry has also been decided upon. Meetings between Directors take place on a monthly basis.

Additionally new access to the team meetings has been instigated whereby the Directors of each service, or their nominees, are invited to participate at some portion of each other's team meetings to provide information and to afford discussion and feedback on any practice or procedural issues that arise. The Student Counselling Service has always valued and continues to value clinical exchange with their medical and nursing colleagues. It has welcomed these additional opportunities for coordination of service provision to students.

In summary implementation of the recommendation with regard to communication mechanisms has been implemented.

**Category 1(d)**

**Recommendations which will not be implemented.**

All recommendations will be implemented.



## **Chaplains**

### **Category 1(b)**

#### **Recommendations to be implemented within one year**

**Recommendation 23:** The chaplains, in collaboration with the Student Advisers and Student Counselling Service, should develop a formal protocol for referral and case history (see also pages 15 and 22 under Student Advisers and Student Counselling Service). Although the ad-hoc nature of the referral system has worked adequately to date, the likely increase in student need for these services in the coming years demands a more thorough record-keeping system.

**Action Planned:** The chaplains, student advisers and counselling services have met and set in motion the implementation of a formal protocol for the referral of students. It is planned that the meetings of the joint services will take place monthly. The chair for these meetings rotates between all the units. Any member can itemise in advance an agenda point for discussion. A case history section is also integral to such meetings. This also obviates any danger of repetition in terms of the assistance offered by the different services.

In line with the recommendations, the referral form has been renewed and it outlines the reasons for referral, and indicates the level of urgency concerning the particular case. Records are kept of emergencies and contact is kept with the different services should this be within the remit of the different situations encountered. This is naturally within the context of all the usual norms of professional confidentiality.

**Recommendation 24:** Improved tracking (within the confines of privacy laws) will assist the chaplains to monitor workload, and thus make the basis for well-informed fundraising and budgetary planning.

**Action Planned:** At the chaplains weekly meetings there are debriefings about current student cases. Within this forum chaplains can discuss matters arising and seek advice about the necessity for referral etc. In the context of student emergencies on campus the chaplains, student advisers and counselling services work in tandem. 'Post factum' there is a debriefing session and a record is kept of the salient points of the particular case and the actions carried out.

Fundraising only takes place usually in the context of the Student Welfare Fund. This fund assists students who encounter unforeseen financial difficulties. Chaplains, student advisers, the student union welfare officer and

the vice-president for students have been successful during this semester in running different projects to raise funds to help students in financial difficulty. This is within the university and outside it too.

The Student Welfare Fund went through a very successful EU audit process. This affords us increased knowledge and tracking with regard to student needs.

**Recommendation 25:** The chaplains should continue working with the UCD International Office to assist international students to get in touch with support services for religions not currently represented in the chaplaincy. One possibility is a simple leaflet which describes the availability of churches, temples and mosques around Dublin.

**Action Planned:** The chaplains have already published a multi-faith directory. It outlines contact details for all the main Christian churches, Jewish Synagogues, the Hindu temple, Buddhist centre, Sikh community, Baha'i centre and the local Mosques. There is also a link-up to this information on the website: [www.ucd.ie/chaplaincy](http://www.ucd.ie/chaplaincy). The directory has been circulated around the university and placed at reception desks etc.

**Recommendation 26:** This committee has been instituted and two meetings have already taken place since the commencement of the semester. A chaplain sits on the committee and has already given an updating to the committee about the Student Welfare Fund. The increase in student demand in these difficult economic times was discussed. It is hoped that representations can be made from the ACCLC to the university on the increasing needs in this area. The chair of the committee is affording each service the opportunity to make a brief presentation at the meetings. The chaplaincy plans to make a presentation on its current role but also the challenges that the growth in student numbers poses. Another growth area for challenge and development is the whole issue of internationalisation. A third meeting is planned in the new semester. At this forthcoming meeting the university alcohol policy will be reviewed and a practical implementation plan will be promoted.

**Action Planned:** This committee has been instituted it is hoped to work in collaboration with it.

**Recommendation 27:** The chaplaincy should maximise the good collaborative and complementary work with other services to improve communication through: Consultation with other stakeholders (students advisers, students health, counselling) to formalise their collaboration by creating a network (Student Wellbeing Network (SWN)). This dynamic group can meet monthly/bimonthly (at the start) with clear agenda agreed upon by

all for the purpose of innovating best possible approaches to enhance the students experience in UCD. Chairing of each meeting should be rotated.

**Action Planned:** As detailed in Recommendations 21 and 23, monthly meetings of the various services that support the student experience have been planned. The chair for these meetings rotates between all the units.

**Recommendation 28:** This Network will maximise the effectiveness of the units involved and will enhance the work and integrity of each unit.

To achieve a UCD strategic vision of promoting the holistic development of the individual student, the chaplains should proactively participate in the process of introducing an overarching mechanism with responsibility for ensuring that co-ordinated, equitable service is available to all students.

**Action Planned:** The chaplaincy has proactively participated in contributing to the holistic development of students. On Friday 13 Nov 2009, for example, about thirty members of the Chaplains Network at Third Level (CN3) and guests (UCD Student Advisers and Counsellors) gathered at St. Stephen's chaplaincy for a day of reflection on (i) the psychosocial benefits of religious practice and young adults and (ii) a vision for chaplaincy in contemporary society. The CN3 network is on a national level and its membership is inclusive of all the Christian churches.

The chaplains invited student advisers, members of the counselling services and all members of the Student Experience Management Executive to attend. The UCD Professor of Psychiatry and Consultant at the Mater hospital spoke on the first topic, based on her recently published research on religious practice.

In the afternoon, the Archbishop of Dublin shared with the whole group his vision of education and the role of chaplains and other professionals in the area. There was an open dialogue afterwards. This is seen as an initiative in terms of the achievement of the overall strategic vision of UCD in terms of a holistic education.

It is planned to hold similar events twice a semester from January 2010.

**Recommendation 29:** The Review Group detects a meaningful amount of overlap in some areas between the Chaplains, Advisers and Counsellors. This overlap needs to be addressed to ensure that students are getting the best possible support without undue duplication.

**Action Planned:** The decrease in staff numbers and resource limitations lessens the risk of duplication. The danger now is that student support is being eroded by financial arguments.

However, through the regular meetings of the SEME, the groups will assess the best method to avoid duplication, maximise effectiveness, and ensure value for money. The outcomes of these discussions will form part of the SEME annual implementation plan.

**Recommendation 30:** To achieve a UCD strategic vision of promoting the holistic development of the individual student, the chaplains should proactively participate in the process of introducing an overarching mechanism with responsibility for ensuring that co-ordinated, equitable service is available to all students.

**Action planned:** Since the commencement of the semester the chaplains have initiated meetings with the other services. The *raison d'être* of these meetings is to introduce a consultation process in which the holistic development of the student can be reflected upon. These meetings have also been opened up to other university chaplaincy services. Members of the Student Experience Management Executive attended as did student advisers and staff from the student counselling services. These occasions are seen as an initiative in terms of the achievement of the overall strategic vision of UCD in terms of a holistic education.

## **Societies**

### **Category 1(b)**

#### **Recommendations to be implemented within one year**

**Recommendation 31:** Banner should be utilised as a management tool to help identify and to track patterns of usage by students throughout their time in UCD, and to aid in better understanding possible reasons for student non-engagement with clubs and societies.

**Action Planned:** Initial contact has taken place with Registry. Further meeting to take place Spring 2010 with Registry and IT Services to develop Banner in this way. Hardware to be purchased Summer 2010 for an agreed number of societies to trial the application entry 2010/2011. Evaluation Winter 2010, roll out of full scheme 2011.

**Recommendation 32:** In common with the other service providers included in this exercise, it is apparent that the societies need to publicise their events and activities more effectively. Consideration should be given to addressing this weakness by using such mediums as a UCD-wide event calendar with an email alert system which allows users to specify the types of activities and events that they are specifically interested in.

**Action Planned:** UCD Events Calendar up and running and populated by society activities from Winter 2009. Review and evaluation to take place Summer 2010 followed by roll out of full service academic year 2010/2011.

**Recommendation 33:** A single website which acts as a portal for all UCD Clubs and Societies should be developed.

**Action Planned:** This will be now implemented through the UCD web address for the academic year 2010/2011.

**Recommendation 34:** A great deal of work and training has been undertaken to help societies bring a more professional approach to their activities and this should be continued and intensified.

**Action Planned:** Society training 2010 to be broadened and spread over a longer period where necessary. CPD initiatives offered from academic year 2010/2011.

**Recommendation 35:** To facilitate the transfer of one club or society administration to another, consideration should be given to preparing

standard operating procedures (SOP) which act as a guide to running the society or club. The Societies Officer could prepare a template for clubs and societies to use. Succession planning is a key to the future success of these organisations.

**Action Planned:** Codes of Practice drafted and supplied from 2009. Additional frameworks and guides to be developed and all on offer for academic year 2010/2011.

**Recommendation 36:** In response to concerns about the cost of transport, an investigation might be undertaken regarding the feasibility of pooling the use and cost of a leased vehicle between all the clubs and societies.

**Action Planned:** Transport Office, Safety Office and Campus Management fully briefed Winter 2009. Evaluation/testing procedures to be agreed Spring 2010. Self drive minibus access to correctly registered/tested clubs/societies academic year 2010/2011.

**Recommendation 37:** The division that has occurred in recent years between the Students Union and societies should be reflected upon and addressed in a common sense manner, particularly in the current economic climate and through this period of economic change.

**Action Planned:** Full cooperation and support will be given to ensure that a correct relationship exists between the Student Union and the Societies.

It is confirmed that a review by the Vice-President for Students was undertaken in January 2010. This review concluded that the current relationship between both parties is respectful, cordial and effective. Both parties are committed to maintaining this relationship in the future. The Vice-President for Students will keep a watchful eye to ensure that all relationships are productive and consistent with the common goal of supporting the UCD Student Experience.

**Recommendation 38:** Although membership fees for UCD clubs and societies are currently modest and represent good value for money for students, consideration should be given to increasing membership fees to a level which better protects clubs and societies from the impact of falling revenues in Student Union bars and the likely consequences of the economic downturn. Membership fees should be mapped closer to the true cost of operating the service.

**Action Planned:** The Finance Committee of the Societies Council will review the fees charged by the various societies. This review will identify any anomalies that might exist. A phasing implementation of any

suggested fee increase will take place. This phasing will have regard for the current economic pressure on students.

**Category 1(c)**

**Recommendations to be implemented within five years**

**Recommendation 39:** A survey of storage requirements for clubs and societies should be carried out, as a shortage of facilities to store equipment has been identified.

**Action Planned:** Additional storage space provided in Student Centre Autumn 2009. Storage space and additional facilities planned into new Student Centre, opening academic year 2011/2012.



**Category 1(d)**

**Recommendations which will not be implemented.**

All recommendations will be implemented.

## **Student Health Services**

### **Category 1(a)**

#### **Recommendations already implemented**

**Recommendation 40:** The demand for service is far outstripping the resources available. Students are turned away daily, placed on a waiting list and referred to outside providers. If possible, an increase in available hours especially at the peak times in the semester needs to be achieved. While staffing adjustments have been made to shift hours from out of term (December, March and Summer) to term time, additional staff changes may need to be made.

**Action Taken:** The service recognises that the demand on the service significantly outstrips resources available, and this continues to raise significant issues for students and staff. With regard to the recommendation to further adjust hours - from less busy times to peak times - this is now at maximum capacity. All medical and nursing staff have contracts which involve working more in term time and less out of term. In 2009, the service closed for half days in July, and further such closures are envisaged in summer 2010. The only possible further adjustment would be to close completely over the summer, which would not be safe practice. There are significant medico-legal issues in closing a primary care medical service completely for a prolonged period. There could be liabilities, for example, if an abnormal result came in when the service was closed. If the decision was made to close for a number of weeks over the summer, we could not become part of the General Medical Service, thus losing potential income.

The team will revisit the issue and review the possibility of closing for individual full days, where consistent with safe practice and medico-legal advice. We will continue to focus most of the resources on term and exam time. It is helpful that staff are happy to further adjust their hours to facilitate term time working and maximise time off in summer.

Increased resources (doctor, administrative and nursing) are essential to provide an increase in available clinical time, at peak times.

**Recommendation 41:** The current provision of Health Services to the UCD student community should formally be recognised as inadequate. A formal feasibility study should be carried out to consider:

- The likely impact of the introduction of a modest fee (€10-30) for a student appointment at the Health Centre
- The likely impact of outsourcing the Health Centre functions to a private health provider
- The introduction of a universal insurance scheme for students at UCD
- The introduction of a dedicated, supplementary student levy specifically to support Student Health, Counselling and Student Advisory services

**Action Taken:**

The options for funding the service have been explored by the Vice President, the Board of Management, the Senior Management Team, the Students Union and the staff of the Student Health Service. The Director provided the Review Group with a document on the advantages and disadvantages of the various funding options in Appendix 1 in the Self-assessment Report. A decision was made to opt for the charging model.

**Charging:** A charge has been introduced for consultations with nurse, doctor and Psychiatrist. However as the budget has been reduced by a corresponding amount it has not been possible to provide an increased service.

**Insurance Scheme:** A project team has been established with a view to introducing a UCD Student Primary Care Insurance Policy for September 2010.

**Outsourcing:** This would involve making staff redundant and attempting to source a service for students in a situation where there is a significant shortage of general practitioners.

**Levy:** A levy has the advantage of not involving upfront charges for most services and is the preferred option of staff in the Student Health Service.

**Recommendation 42:** Technology applications may provide improved efficiencies in medical records, scheduling, and record keeping, and should be used as extensively as practicable.

**Action Taken:** New computer software had been installed to ensure optimal efficiencies within the Student Health Service. We have installed Practice Manager system in the practice and a self check pod which allows patients to check themselves when they have an appointment thus reducing the workload on administration.

**Recommendation 43:** Significant attention needs to be given to the orderly separation of Student Health Service and Student Counselling Service. Apparent tensions between these units need to be resolved.

**Action Taken:** Both the Director of the Student Health Service and the Student Counseling Service are committed to providing a collaborative service to students. The following initiatives have been implemented:

1. Directors of each service to meet on a regular basis, every 2/3 weeks.
2. Representative of SCS to come to designated part of SHS team meetings.
3. Representative of SHS to attend designated part of SCS meetings.
4. Directors to draw up standard referral procedures for referral between the two teams and arrange feedback on referrals.
5. Directors will take other measures as appropriate.

## **Students' Union, Shops and Bars Unit**

### **Category 1(b)**

#### **Recommendations that will be implemented within 1 year**

**Recommendation 44:** A change in approach will be necessary to overcome the financial and other challenges facing the Students' Union, shops and bars.

It was clear that all parties, both user groups and service providers felt that there was an acute lack of awareness of the services that were available to the student body and that there were low levels of engagement. It is likely that student apathy, the commuter campus and poor communication all contribute to this.

**Action Planned:** All stakeholders of the university are aware of the need to commercialise the assets of the university. This commercialisation must have regard for the needs of the student as customers and users of the various services. Ongoing discussions are taking place with regard to ensuring that the correct balance is maintained.

With specific regard to low levels of awareness and engagement by the student body to tackle this a promotional, marketing and information campaign will be undertaken from September 2010 at key points during the academic year – start of each semester, the start of each exam session, this campaign will utilise in store promotion, campus newspapers, campus radio station, web-sites and e-mail communications with the emphasis being on explaining: Who we are, what we do, where we are, what services are available, and showing how the student can interact and participate.

**Recommendation 45:** The needs of the Student Union shops and bars may be better served if they are linked to the Student Centre retail operations rather than to the Students' Union.

Whether this proposal is adopted or not, the unit should work with the other commercial services to develop their thoughts in respect to meeting the needs of International, resident students and other potential purchasing groups. The ideas should be creative rather than simply based upon alcohol consumption.

**Action Planned:** How best to commercialise the assets of the university is part of an ongoing project involving the UCD Bursar, UCD VP for

Development, and the VP for Students. The shops and bars at present work both formally and informally with other entities on campus for mutual benefit and pursue business opportunities as they arise, they stand ready to join with and develop formal relationships with the University and other like minded players to ensure that they are catering for and meet the needs of undergraduate, post graduate, international students and the growing number of our students that now reside on campus.

To further progress this, formal meetings will be arranged with the key players in these areas – International students office, student residences, graduate studies office, sports office, commercial office, to establish and to develop existing relationships and to ensure that we are catering for the diverse needs of our student body and campus visitors and to anticipate likely trends in these specific strands of student campus life.

**Recommendation 46:** The unit should further consider broadening its customer base reaching out to staff, residents and part-time students through promotions, loyalty schemes and competitions.

**Action Planned:** This matter is always under review and ongoing and imaginative and creative ideas are being developed to promote and develop and deepen our reach and response to the needs of the University community. In response to this recommendation a key marketing initiative will be planned for the start of term in September 2010. This initiative will in particular concentrate on developing a loyalty card/reward card scheme, which will serve to both maintain and hopefully grow our customer base whilst also providing invaluable customer data.

**Recommendation 47:** In light of its difficult financial circumstances, the Students' Union shop may need to partially rethink its approach to pricing, and in particular its involvement in very low-margin product ranges. An evaluation will need to be carried out to determine the extent to which a good service can still be provided to students despite the need to protect profits.

**Action Planned:** These shops have always served two purposes (1) to generate revenue whilst also (2) providing the full range of products that students need at the keenest possible prices. In light of this it would undermine a core purpose not to stock certain items that are needed by our student customers even if they are low margin items. While maintaining this policy, additional products will be sourced which will attract a higher margin to the shops.

Bus tickets and mobile phone top-ups are prime examples of this difficulty, both products have very low margins, 5% or less, but both products are very important to our student customers, failure to stock either of these

items may well lend to student customers shopping elsewhere for these products which would run the risk of us losing the ancillary sales, the bar of chocolate, the can of minerals that they may buy at the time of purchase of the low margin products. We are constantly on the lookout to secure high margin products and drive a very hard bargain with the suppliers we have recently switched supplier for pre-packed rolls and sandwiches a high margin item and have seen a welcome increase in sales for these products, we have also in recent times expended our hot beverage operation again a high margin product and again with success.

**Recommendation 48:** A publicity campaign should be initiated which reminds students that money which they spend on campus gets reinvested in the University and in student activities.

**Action Planned:** While ongoing marketing campaigns are undertaken, new publicity campaigns both in the outlets themselves and through the strategic use of Student media will be organised, with a particular emphasis on the start of each semester, highlighting the link between monies spent on campus and the funding of student activities.

Particular light will be shone on the capitals fund, which is funded by surplus funds from the students club, it provides over €100K a year for capital equipment for our clubs and societies and concert. Examples will be given – new boats for Boat Club, new equipment for Drama Soc, floodlights for G.A.A Club etc. By demonstrating where the money goes and what it achieves a greater sense of ownership can be created improving campus morale, similarly it is planned to show how the revenue generated by the Students' Union operations funds, entertainment activities, welfare and advice services for example.

**Recommendation 49:** With all the problems that the unit faces, some current and some looming, the service will need to totally reinvent itself and must ask of itself the difficult questions: Can we afford to continue trading in this manner? Is it simply a matter of reducing the financial contribution to student activities to survive? Should we reduce our opening hours? How can we trade out of our predicament? And perhaps the most difficult, could a private operator through a shared profit scheme generate an improved return?

**Action Planned:** Clearly this is a complex and sensitive issue. Wide ranging discussions will need to take place between all the interested parties and all relevant stakeholders to ascertain what is in the best interests of the Students' Union and the University.

The model that has and does exist throughout Ireland and the UK is for the Students' Union to run its own outlets and this is the rule rather than

the exception. Whilst of course the operation must be further professionalized and enhanced and developed the ethics of the organisation enables it to respond quickly and flexibly to the needs of its student customers a response not necessary readily available from a private operator or symbol group their primary focus being on profit maximisation. This is not therefore a straightforward simple “either or” situation but one that requires much thought and consideration.



## **Category 1(c)**

### **Recommendations that will be implemented within 5 years**

**Recommendation 50:** Although recent improvements to the Students' Union shop in the James Joyce Library building are welcome, and will no doubt lead to an increase in sales, it is recommended that the unit consider options for a full refurbishment and re-branding. The unit should aim to match best practice demonstrated by the leading Students' Union shops in Ireland and the UK.

**Action Planned:** Active consideration is given to this recommendation. While funding issues are a current constraint, especially in light of the continuing recession, it is anticipated that the necessary work will be possible within the next 3-5 years. In the interim, a series of site visits to the best operators in the Republic and in the U.K in this field will be organised to see what is achievable and to look at best practice in operation and to discuss the avoidable pitfalls and to estimate realistic timelines for such remodelling, its cost and impact on turnover and profit. Consideration is also being given to the idea of exclusivity for particular product ranges such a move will need to be carefully analysed and researched, how do you assess the value of exclusivity to a particular supplier and cost it accordingly, what damage do you do to your brand by deliberately not stocking the full range of products be it chocolate or minerals we need to look at the experience of similar organisations both here and in the UK and learn all relevant lessons.

**Recommendation 51:** The Review Group recommends that consideration be given to establishing a new additional permanent post, such as a 'Students' Union Manager', whose responsibilities might include undertaking the necessary research and developing strategies and marketing campaigns to further promote the SU and its affiliated services. Furthermore, it was felt that such a post would provide a greater level of continuity and support for incoming sabbatical officers and would act as a conduit for information for all other University support services.

**Action Planned:** Due to current financial position, this is not possible for the short to medium term. The recommendation will be kept under review as part of the long-term strategy for the unit, it is estimated that the cost of such a post, both for salary and operating costs, would be of the order of 40,000 to 50,000 euro per annum, until such additional funding comes on stream it will not be possible to allocate such additional duties and responsibilities to existing staff due to their current workload.

## **Student Advisers**

### **Category 1(a)**

#### **Recommendations already implemented**

**Recommendation 52:** The practice of having a Student Advisers Coordinator should be maintained.

**Action Implemented:** A Coordinator for Student Advisers was appointed in October 2009.

**Recommendation 53:** The Student Advisers should maintain their presence in all programmes and units and space should be available and visible.

**Action Implemented:** Student advisers value their location and identification within Schools/Programmes. They are committed to continuing this practice. Student Advisers would value the implementation of Recommendation Category 1(a) (See Planning Organisation and Management section) – namely the appointment of a Senior Student Adviser. While recognising the limitations of the current economic climate they will nevertheless continue to keep this aspiration to the forefront of their planning.

## **Category 1(b)**

### **Recommendations to be implemented within one year**

**Recommendation 54:** The Student Advisers, in collaboration with the Chaplains and Student Counselling Service, should develop a formal protocol for referral and case history (see also pages 13 and 22 under Chaplains and Student Counselling Service). Although the ad-hoc nature of the referral system has worked adequately to date, the likely increase in student need for these services in the coming years demands a more thorough record-keeping system.

**Action Planned:** Joint meetings between Student Advisers and Counsellors, Student Health and Chaplain/Student Advisers are now being held twice /semester. The main focus of these meetings is to develop an effective communication and promotion strategy.

Access to the counselling service for students can be either through self-referral or through referral by either the chaplains or student advisers. A referral form has now been amended and agreed during consultations at the Combined Services meetings. The UCD Counselling Service has also agreed to alert the student adviser or chaplain in question in the event of a referred student failing to keep the first appointment. This system will allow follow-up of the student and encouragement to reconnect with the services.

Student Advisers are currently in discussions with MSU with a view to implementing a common database system which would facilitate the collection of appropriate statistics and which in the future could facilitate the sharing of information with other support services while having regard to the potentially sensitive nature of some records. A sub-committee of the Student Advisers Network have held three meetings with MSU. This sub-committee has reported back to the Student Advisers Network regular meeting at which amendments to the database were suggested and the SAN are awaiting confirmation from MSU that the pilot database is ready for testing. The Student Advisers are planning to have an agreed data collection system in place for the start of the academic year September 2010.

**Recommendation 55:** A Peer Mentoring programme should be rolled out across all of UCD's Schools in order to provide students with information and informal support which will lessen the likelihood of them needing to require help from the Student Advisers. This preventative approach will benefit many students and also result in higher completion rates.

**Action Planned:** The Peer mentoring programme will be continued in those Schools already participating and it is planned to introduce the programme to all incoming undergraduate Medicine and Biomedical Sciences students in September 2010; discussion is ongoing regarding appropriate peer mentor training dates to take account of the very heavy workload for the Student Adviser with responsibility for International students at Orientation time

Discussions are underway with the current Student Advisers in Arts & Human Sciences to devise a support system for Arts students in the absence of the appointment of an additional Student Adviser for Arts. ; Such an appointment is seen as essential in order to deliver the type of peer mentoring programme available to all other new entry students.

**Recommendation 57:** The Student Advisers should work with other complimentary services (Chaplains and Student Counselling Service) to develop more effective communication and promotion strategies in order to increase student awareness of existing support mechanisms

**Action Planned:** Student Advisers, chaplains and the counselling service work together on a number of committees across campus with a view to promoting awareness of the services available. As an example, there is participation by all three strands on the Please Talk committee. This is chaired by the Student Union Welfare Officer and provides a forum for collaboration between student-led services and UCD staff. Student Advisers are conducting a number of workshops under the “Please Talk” banner both in cooperation with professionals from the other services and with the SAN members. Student Advisers are very active on the Health Promotion Committee, which is tasked with promoting healthy lifestyle options among staff and students. There are currently two student advisers on this committee. They have been instrumental in promoting healthy eating habits among students through the Healthy Cooking competition and the publication of the UCD cookbook the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of which will be published in time for Orientation 2010.

The SAN have formulated plans for a joint poster/leaflet to be discussed at the next Combined Services meeting in April 2010 – the aim of which will be to promote awareness of the support services available in UCD.

### **Category 1(c)**

#### **Recommendations to be implemented within five years**

**Recommendation 58:** The Student Advisers should use the proposed annual Student Survey to guide their prioritisation and workload model.

**Action Planned:** Student Advisers currently use all information available to them such as exit interviews with withdrawing students and conclusions of the 2008 Report on Student Retention to inform decisions regarding supports for students. They will be happy to draw on the results of the proposed Student Experience Survey in order to inform their plans for service delivery

### **Category 1(d)**

#### **Recommendations which will not be implemented.**

**Recommendation 59:** In light of the future increase in the international student population at UCD, it is not feasible for one Student Adviser to provide adequate support for both the Medical Students and International Students. This role should be split, and the Student Adviser in the International Office should be given a leadership role in training and supporting all Student Advisers on how to deal with international student issues. As a consequence, all Student Advisers would play an active role in supporting the international students in their schools and programmes.

**Reason:** Responsibility for the duties of International Student Adviser lies with the International Office and as such requires the input of the management of that office. Currently the Student Adviser for International students does liaise with the other student advisers where appropriate. It is recognised that the dual role of Medicine and International Student Adviser is an onerous one but in the current financial climate consider that they will have to meet the needs of all students from existing resources.

**CATEGORY 2:** Recommendations concerning shortcomings in services, procedures and facilities which are outside the control of the unit

All recommendations have been addressed in Category 1

### **3. Prioritised Resource Requirements**

The Quality Review Group is conscious of the financial circumstances surrounding the University. The Group intends optimising use of its resources in a way that will minimise the impact on the quality of the Student Experience. The Group intends to undertake various “value for money audits” in the units to ensure that the limited money available is allocated and spent in an effective manner.

The Group does not expect additional resources. However, it does recognise the need to maintain resourcing equality with other parts of the University.