



**University College Dublin**

**Summary Report of the Periodic Quality Review**

**Programme Review of overseas BSc degree programmes offered by  
the UCD School of Business in association with the  
National Institute of Business Management (NIBM) (Sri Lanka)**

**February 2011**

**Accepted by the UCD Governing Authority at its meeting on 22 June 2011**

## **1. Introduction and Overview**

### ***Introduction***

- 1.1 This summary report presents the findings of a quality programme review of the overseas BSc degree programmes offered by the UCD School of Business in association with the National Institute of Business Management (NIBM), Sri Lanka. The review was undertaken in December 2010, and the full Quality Review Report may be accessed at [www.ucd.ie/quality](http://www.ucd.ie/quality). The School response to the Review Group Report is attached as Appendix 1.

### ***The Review Process***

- 1.2 Irish Universities have collectively agreed a framework for their quality review and quality improvement systems, which is consistent with both the legislative requirements of the Universities Act 1997, and international good practice. Quality reviews are carried out in academic, administrative and support service units.
- 1.3 The purpose of periodic review is to assist the University to assure itself of the quality of each of its constituent units, and to utilise learning from this essentially developmental process in order to effect improvement, including:
- To monitor the quality of the student experience, and of teaching and learning opportunities
  - To monitor research activity, including: management of research activity; assessing the research performance with regard to: research productivity, research income, and recruiting and supporting doctoral students
  - To provide an opportunity for units to test the effectiveness of their systems and procedures for monitoring and enhancing quality and standards
  - To provide a framework within which the unit can continue to work in the future towards quality improvement
  - To identify shortfalls in resources and provide an externally validated case for change and/or increased resources
  - Identify, encourage and disseminate good practice – to identify challenges and address these
  - To provide public information on the University's capacity to assure the quality and standards of its awards. The University's implementation of its quality review procedures also enables it to demonstrate how it discharges its responsibilities for assuring the quality and standards of its awards, as required by the Universities Act 1997.
- 1.4 Typically, the review model comprises of four major elements:
- Preparation of a Self-assessment Report (SAR)
  - A visit by a Review Group (RG) that includes UCD staff and external experts, both national and international. The site visit normally will take place over a two or three day period.

- Preparation of a Review Group Report that is made public
- Agreement of an Action Plan for Improvement (Quality Improvement Plan) based on the RG Report's recommendations; the University will also monitor progress against the Improvement Plan

Full details of the review process can be found on the UCD Quality Office website: [www.ucd.ie/quality](http://www.ucd.ie/quality).

1.5 The composition of the Review Group was as follows:

Dr Mark Richardson, Head, UCD School of Architecture, Landscape and Civil Engineering (chair)

Ms Bronwyn Molony, UCD Deputy Director of Quality

Professor Bill Martin, School of Information Technology and Management, Swinburne University, Lilydale Campus, Melbourne (extern)

1.6 Review Group travelled to Columbo, Sri Lanka to discuss the collaborative agreement, programme curriculum and its delivery, and met with the Minister for Youth Affairs and Skills Development, the Chairman and Director General of NIBM, UCD Director of the Quinn School, NIBM staff involved in the programme delivery, relevant staff supporting the programme administration; current students; graduates and employers. The site visit details are attached as Appendix Two.

1.7 Further information and meetings were provided and/or requested during the site visit and these are listed in Appendix Three.

1.8 At the request of University College Dublin's University Graduate Programme Board (UGPB) the Review Group also reviewed the proposal from the UCD School of Business to extend the existing overseas MSc Business programmes to Sri Lanka, to allow for the provision of a postgraduate progression route for graduates of the BSc degree programmes.

1.9 In preparing the Self-assessment Report, the School and NIBM established a Self-assessment Co-ordinating Committee in accordance with the UCD Quality Guidelines.

### ***The University***

1.10 University College Dublin (UCD) is a large and diverse university whose origin dates back to 1854. The University is situated on a large, modern campus, about 4km to the south of the centre of Dublin.

1.11 The current University Strategic Plan (to 2014) states that the University's Mission is:

“to advance knowledge, to pursue truth and to foster learning, in an atmosphere of discovery, creativity, and innovation, drawing out the best in each student and contributing to the social, cultural and economic life of Ireland in the wider world”.

The University is organised into 35 Schools in five Colleges;

- UCD College of Arts and Celtic Studies

- UCD College of Human Sciences
- UCD College of Life Sciences
- UCD College of Engineering, Mathematical and Physical Sciences
- UCD College of Business and Law

1.12 As one of the largest universities in Ireland, UCD supports a broad, deep and rich academic community in Science, Engineering, Medicine, Arts, Celtic Studies and Human Sciences. There are currently over 22,000 students (14,000 undergraduates) registered on University programmes, including over 3,000 international students from more than 110 countries.

### ***Context of UCD School of Business/NIBM BSc Programmes***

1.13 Since 1996, the UCD School of Business has offered, in collaboration with NIBM, an undergraduate BSc degree programme. Initially, this was in the specialism of Management Information Systems and has now been developed to include additional specialisms in Management and Human Resource Management. The partnership is governed by a Collaborative Agreement which is valid until 31 December 2010 and will be reviewed following the outcome of this review. Roles and responsibilities of UCD and NIBM are clearly outlined with UCD having responsibility for curriculum design, academic and management aspects, and NIBM having responsibility for programme administration, facilities management and examination co-ordination.

1.14 The BSc programme offered is a three-year honours degree programme offered on a part-time basis and offered in three stages. Students are exempt from stage 1 based on their accredited prior learning and are admitted to stage 2. The programme may be completed in eighteen months subject to meeting the requirements of UCD's approved advanced standing qualifications. The curriculum is constructed around the central values of self-managed learning and reflection. Learning outcomes are clearly articulated for students. The curriculum is progressive, from one level to the next with appropriate underpinning for subsequent study. Students are provided with the knowledge and skills necessary to progress to further study.

### ***Follow-up to Quality Review***

1.15 Follow-up to Quality Review is an integral part of the review process. The decisions on improvement, which are made in the follow-up to self-assessment and review, provide a framework within which each unit can continue to work toward the goal of developing and fostering a culture of continuous quality enhancement. The School is currently finalising its Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), detailing how it proposes to respond to each recommendation set out in the Review Group Report. Upon the QIP being formally accepted by the University, there will be a progress review meeting held, approximately twelve months on, to review how the recommendations have been addressed.

### ***Commendations and Recommendations of the Review Group***

#### **A. UCD School of Business/NIBM Collaboration**

A.1 The Review Group noted the strong commitment from the UCD School of Business and NIBM staff to the programme delivery in Sri Lanka. A very positive and excellent working relationship was clearly evident to the Review Group and this was particularly apparent in the Group's discussions with students, graduates and employers.

A.2 The Review Group would in particular, commend NIBM and the Centre for Distance Learning on the following:

- The good working relationship and long history between them and the clear commitment expressed by both parties to the relationship
- The professionalism of staff in the Centre for Distance Learning and NIBM
- The opportunities to develop the degree programmes offered, in particular the MSc degree programme
- The Induction Programme along with Guides and documentation prepared for students

The recommendations of the Review Group are outlined as follows:

## **B ORGANISATION / MANAGEMENT**

B.1 Opportunities for increased collaboration have been identified by NIBM and UCD. There is a need to develop discussion at SMT level to realise the full potential of the collaboration.

B.2 The significant strategic developments at NIBM over the coming years require regular formal contact by the Dean of the UCD Business School with NIBM.

B.3 The next MOU should be put in place for a period of not less than 5 years to allow NIBM's strategic development to take place against appropriate planning horizons.

B.4 An effective working relationship exists between CDL and the NIBM Programme Office. However, increased communications would further benefit and develop this relationship. Formal records of meetings between NIBM and UCD School of Business should be maintained. This should include agenda, minutes and actions to be taken, and by whom.

B.5 Circulation of external examiner's reports to NIBM key staff needs to become a standard operating procedure.

## **C. DEVELOPMENT (Staff / Programme)**

C.1 There is an identifiable need to introduce master's degree level programme(s) to develop competencies and deep technical knowledge in specific areas for the students while enhancing the collaborative arrangement between UCD and NIBM to the benefit of both the undergraduate intake and the two institutions.

C.2 Consideration should be given to a form of recognising the ongoing commitment of UCD and NIBM to its talented student intake by the availability of a student award, for example a scholarship at Stage Level for the best performing student. The selected stage should be chosen to maximise the advantage of such an award to the student.

C.3 Regarding staff development, actions which would facilitate research collaborations between staff based in UCD Dublin and NIBM Colombo are recommended.

## **D. ADMISSIONS**

- D.1 Revise application, acceptance and registration process to embrace the benefits of existing hardcopy and online registration systems to reduce the complexity of the registration process.
- D.2 Revise the system in UCD of capturing the formal names of all students irrespective of length or number of names so that academic records, transcripts and graduation parchments fully reflect the formal names of the students.

## **E. TEACHING & LEARNING (DELIVERY)**

- E.1 Enhance student experience by changing the mode of delivery by visiting UCD lecturers (where practicable) to extend the number of weeks over which a module is delivered through a system whereby a lecturer would deliver two 30 contact hours modules concurrently rather than consecutively.
- E.2 Further develop the degree of interaction with students in module delivery by increasing the proportion of time used for project-based learning, teamwork exercises and verbal presentations.
- E.3 Blackboard – align procedures so that UCD version of Blackboard, as used in Belfield, becomes the preferred and sole tool used by students.
- E.4 Blackboard – enhance training on Blackboard to staff and students.
- E.5 Study guides, which are not always available for all modules, are of such importance in the context of the programmes that their timely availability should be assured through on-line availability at a specific time prior to module delivery.
- E.6 Assignment deadlines are not adequately co-ordinated leading to sub-optimal workload peaks and this should be avoided through better student workload planning by the Module Coordinators.
- E.7 Timely feedback on assignments needs to be enhanced to allow continuous assessment play its full role in the learning experience (in addition to its Assessment role) and this could be achieved via Blackboard and the possible introduction of MCQ tests in continuous assessment.
- E.8 Module feedback. There is a need to tailor the feedback questionnaire to the module. It is recommended that this be achieved by adoption of the UCD online module feedback system via Blackboard.

## **F. TEACHING AND LEARNING (CURRICULUM/PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT)**

- F.1 A strength of the programme identified by staff, students and employers was the appropriate mix of deep academic learning and development of key technical, I.T. and business skills. However some potential programme enhancements were identified.
- F.2 There is a need for some greater flexibility in curriculum design through feedback from locally-based module co-ordinators to key Dublin-based subject area leaders.
- F.3 The suggested need for more I.T. modules on the BSc M.I.S. pathway should be investigated and implemented if appropriate.

- F.4 The suggested need for more innovative modules in I.T. to reflect the strategic direction of Sri Lanka's niche areas in a global I.T. industry should be investigated and implemented if appropriate.
- F.5 The opportunities for offering online electives or options should be explored to allow some crossover between pathway modules to allow some tailoring of programme content to students' needs, building on the spirit and experience of the UCD Horizons initiative.
- F.6 There is a need to further enhance opportunities for practising presentation skills, despite the challenges of large class size, and to ensure maintenance of high standards of spoken and written English.
- F.7 The suggested need for a module on Creativity and Innovation to satisfy emerging market requirements should be investigated and, if appropriate, developed for the existing undergraduate programmes or proposed graduate programme(s) as appropriate.
- F.8 The need to enhance the place of research methods in the curriculum should be investigated and, if appropriate, developed for the existing undergraduate programmes or proposed graduate programme(s) as appropriate to their respective graduate attributes.
- F.9 Quality assurance in software engineering processes should underpin certain learning objectives in all relevant modules to emphasise a mindset of quality assurance in software development as an integral attribute of all graduates.
- F.10 Work placement should be part of the BSc. Programme.

## **G. ASSESSMENT**

- G.1 The checking system of exam script assessment and results sheets is commended as an example of best practice for all of UCD's programmes.

## **H. FACILITIES**

- H.1 We commend the overall facilities, their day-to-day management and their continual improvement.
- H.2 The Library resources have to meet specific peak demands and there is a continual demand for increasing the stock of multiple copies of referenced books. Satisfying this demand is difficult. Consideration should be given to alternative approaches, through joint planning by the Librarian and Module Co-ordinators, such as increasing the number of references to online resources. Greater liaison between the Librarian and Module Co-ordinators is recommended in respect of reading lists and use of online information.
- H.3 There is a need for UCD to enhance NIBM's access to Belfield-based online administrative systems where appropriate. A review should be undertaken of areas in which duplication of effort could be eliminated by providing access to common databases and customised software tools relevant to the collaboration. (e.g. online applications systems etc.).

## **I. CONCLUSION**

- I.1 In conclusion, the Review Group recommends that the current collaborative arrangement for the BSc programmes should continue and that a new agreement be drafted (taking into account the comments above) for a period not less than five years.
- I.2 Developments within NIBM, its close relationship with the Ministry, its understanding of the needs of the economy and the market, and the expansion of its provision over the coming years, provide opportunities for UCD to participate in and further strengthen a strong partnership through further programme developments such as the proposal for the development of MSc degree programmes.
- I.3 Note: Following the completion of the site visit the Chair of the Review Group communicated the separate recommendation of its brief to the Registrar on 20 January 2011. It recommended to the University Graduate Programme Board (UGPB) that the proposal to introduce the MSc Business degree in Management and MSc Business in Information Technology should proceed in 2011.

A copy of the full Review Group Report may be accessed from the Quality Office website: [www.ucd.ie/quality](http://www.ucd.ie/quality) .



## **Appendix 1**

### **UCD School of Business response to the Review Group Report**

The UCD School of Business welcomes the Quality Review Report. The recommendations in the Report will help the School and its Centre for Distance Learning to further develop and enhance its programme provision in Sri Lanka. The School's self-assessment report, the Review Group Report and the Quality Improvement Plan will help the School in planning and managing its future internationalisation activities. The development of UCD's programmes in Sri Lanka will also be guided by the School's objectives for the advancement of teaching practice and the maintenance of accreditation. In particular, it is essential that the coverage of suitably qualified teaching staff be maintained in line with the requirements of AACSB. The School would like to acknowledge, also, the support of his partner, the National Institute of Business Management, and its enthusiastic engagement through this quality assurance review process and we look forward to using the Quality Review Report as a means of further this important collaborative relationship.

## Appendix 2



### **Details of the Review Group Site Visit to National Institute of Business Management (NIBM), Sri Lanka**

#### **Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2010**

19.30-21.30      Review Group met with the UCD Director of Quinn Business School to review schedule for the following three days.

#### **Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2010**

**Venue: Board Room, Ministry of Youth Affairs**

09.30-10.00      Review Group met with  
  
Minister of Youth Affairs and Skills Development  
  
Secretary, Ministry of Youth Affairs

in the company of:

Director General NIBM  
Director, Productivity and Management Development, NIBM  
Director, Management Information Systems, NIBM  
UCD Director of Quinn Business School

**Venue: National Institute of Business Management, Colombo**

11.00-12.30      Review Group preliminary tour of facilities.

Afternoon/evening:      Review Group review documentation and discuss report, review preliminary issues and to confirm the work schedule and assignment of tasks for review

#### **Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2010**

**Venue: National Institute of Business Management, Colombo**

08.30-09.15      Review Group meeting with  
UCD Director of Quinn Business School  
Director PMD  
Director MIS  
Senior Consultant  
QA Auditor

09.30-10.15      Review Group meeting with Senior Management of NIBM  
Chairman NIBM

Director General NIBM  
 Director, Postgraduate Institute of Management  
 President ICASL  
 Chairman CIMA  
 Lecturer - University of Ruhuna  
 Sen. Vice Pres.- Dep: Finance Co-op of Ceylon Bank  
 Attorney at Law  
 Director PMD  
 Director MIS  
 Director HRM  
 Director Finance  
 UCD Director of Quinn Business School in attendance

- 10.30-12.00                    Review Group meeting with representative group of teaching staff and UCD Director of Quinn Business School
- 12.30-13.00                    Tours of relevant accommodation – administrative offices, teaching rooms, library, IT facilities, student social areas  
 Director PMD  
 Director HR  
 Director Finance  
 QA Auditor
- 14.00-15:00                    Review Group meeting with MIS and Management students from Batch 13 and 14.
- 15.00-16:00                    Review Group meeting with key Programme Staff  
 Director PMD  
 Director MIS  
 Director HR & Administration  
 Director Finance  
 Senior Consultant - PMD  
 Consultant - PMD  
 Assistant Exam Registor  
 Librarian  
 Assistant Director Programme - PMD  
 Programme Coordinator - MIS  
 Programme Coordinator - PMD  
 Programme Secretary - MIS  
 Programme Secretary - PMD  
 UCD Director of Quinn Business School
- 16.00-17.00                    Review Group review of files in Programme Office
- 17.00-17.45                    Review Group meeting with employers
- 17.45-18.30                    Review Group meeting with recent graduates from Batches 11, 9, 8 and 7

**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2010**

**Venue: National Institute of Business Management, Colombo**

- 09.00-10.00                    Private meeting of Review Group

10.00-10.30

Exit presentation by Chairman of Review Group to  
Chairman NIBM  
Director General NIBM  
Director, Productivity and Management Development, NIBM  
Director, Management Information Systems, NIBM  
UCD Director of Quinn Business School

## **Appendix 3**

### **Material considered by Review Group during site visit**

Student enrolments  
Evaluation forms  
Handouts  
Study Guides  
Module Descriptors  
Student Appeals  
Module Assignments  
Lecturer contracts  
Students Forms  
Student Payment Forms  
Advertisements  
UCD Correspondence  
Lecturer information  
Transfers/medicals  
Master documents  
Exam papers  
Lecturer schedules  
Programme Examination Board Reports  
Sample exam scripts from BSc in Management/HRM – Managing Change  
Sample exam scripts from BSc in MIS – Database and Information Resource Management  
Sample exam scripts from BSc in Management/HRM – MIS  
Sample exam scripts from BSc in MIS – EComm Infrastructure  
Sample exam scripts from BSc in MIS - MIS

### **Additional Material/visits Requested**

As the site visit timetable was tight the Review Group visited NIBM and toured the facilities on the day prior to the commencement of their visit.