# University College Dublin

**Periodic Quality Review**

**UCD School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy**

**November 2012**

Accepted by the UCD Governing Authority at its meeting on 26 March 2013

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## 1. Introduction and Overview of UCD School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy

### Introduction

1.1    This report presents the findings of a quality review of the School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy, University College Dublin, which was undertaken on 26-29 November 2012.  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 (e.g. Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2007).  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

- To 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 four major elements:

- Preparation of a self-assessment report (SAR)

- A visit by a review group (RG) that includes UCD staff and international external experts.  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.

1.5    The composition of the review group for the UCD School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy was as follows:

- Professor Orla Feely, UCD School of Electrical, Electronic and Communications Engineering (Chair)

- Dr Paul Ryan, UCD School of Business (Deputy Chair)

- Professor Clive Agnew, University of Manchester

- Professor Emily Talen, Arizona State University

1.6    The review group visited the school from 26 – 29 November 2012 and held meetings with school staff; undergraduate and postgraduate students; the SAR co-ordinating committee; other university staff, including the college principal; recent graduates and employers of graduates**.**  The site visit schedule is included as Appendix 2.

1.7    In addition to the self-assessment report, the review group considered documentation provided by the unit and the University during the site visit.

*Preparation of the Self-assessment Report*

1.8    The school established a self-assessment co-ordinating committee in accordance with the UCD Quality Office guidelines.

The members of the co-ordinating committee were Professor Zorica Nedović-Budić, Dr Gerald Mills, Dr Finbarr Brereton, Professor Peter Clinch, Ms Ruth Comerford-Morris, Dr Veronica Crossa, Dr Berna Grist, Professor Alun Jones, Dr Enda Murphy, Ms Clare Ni Cholmáin, Dr Mark Scott and Dr Jonathan Turner, with Dr Niamh Moore substituting for Dr Turner during his absence*.*

The co-ordinating committee met on a regular basis between the launch of the review process and the review site visit.  Extensive consultation was undertaken with school staff and stakeholders in preparing the SAR, and sections of the report were discussed through meetings, emails and one-to-one meetings. The writing of the report was a collective effort of the SAR co-ordinating committee in consultation with other school members. All staff were invited to discuss and comment on a draft report in September and contributed to the final draft which informed the discussion during the site visit and preparation of this report.

*The University*

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

1.10   The 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, innovation and excellence, 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 38 schools in seven colleges:

- UCD College of Arts and Celtic Studies
- UCD College of Human Sciences
- UCD College of Science
- UCD College of Engineering and Architecture
- UCD College of Health Sciences
- UCD College of Business and Law
- UCD College of Agriculture, Food Science and Veterinary Medicine

1.11   UCD supports a broad, deep and rich academic community.  There are currently more than 24,000 students (15,400 undergraduates, 6,900 postgraduates and 1,900 Occasional and Adult Education students) registered on university programmes, including over 4,600 international students from more than 120 countries.

*UCD School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy (GPEP)*

1.12   The school is one of ten located within the College of Human Sciences.  It was formed in 2005/06 and represents an amalgamation of previously-existing Departments of Geography, Regional and Urban Planning and Environmental Studies, the latter two having already amalgamated prior to the formation of the current School.

1.13   The school is located on both the Belfield and Richview sections of the UCD campus.

1.14   The school has large student numbers: around 1,000 at undergraduate level and close to 100 taught and research graduate students.

1.15   The school offers 2 undergraduate programmes – BA Geography (joint major) and BA Planning, Geography and Environment (PGE – single major); a suite of taught master's programmes in geography, urban studies, geopolitics and global economy; professional accredited master's degrees in regional and urban planning and environmental policy; research master's (MLitt and MSc) and PhD degrees.

1.16   The school is research active and has active research funding of over €6 million obtained from Irish and European sources.  It has participated in and led on the European FP7 collaborative 28-partner project *Transitioning toward Urban*

*Resilience and Sustainability*, and has also received funding from the Irish Implementation of the European Social Survey, the Irish Research Council, the European Spatial Planning Observation Network, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

1.17    The school has 18 permanent academic staff, eight postdoctoral research staff, a research manager, three administrative staff and one technical staff.

1.18    Some relevant statistics from the report and the site visit are included in the following tables:

**Staff Numbers 2008-2011**

| Category | Dec 11 FTEs | Dec 10 FTEs | Dec 09 FTEs | Dec 08 FTEs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Academic Total (on secondment/leave) | 18 (-2) | 20 (-2.5) | 18 (-1.5) | 21 (-1.5) |
| Administrative | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 5 |
| Technical | 1(12 month) | 2 | 2 | 2 |

**Minimum CAO Points for Entry into BA Programmes**

| Degree | 2012/13 | 2011/12 | 2010/11 | 2009/10 | 2008/09 | 2007/08 | 2006/07 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BA Geog | 355 | 355 | 365 | 360 | 350 | 345 | 350 |
| BA PGE | 355 | 385 | 385 | 415 | 435 | 440 | 410 |

**Student numbers:  BA Geography**
(Offered as a joint major with another social science, language or arts subject.  Students study three or four subjects in Stage 1 and two of these in Stage 2, which is split over two years.)

| Year | 2011/12 | 2010/11 | 2009/10 | 2008/09 | 2007/08 | 2006/07 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of students Stage 1 | 526 | 376 | 381 | 403 | 357 | 423 |
| No. of students Stage 2 | 527 | 498 | 451 | 386 | 452 | 440 |
| Completing Stage 2 | | 243 | 229 | 145 | 211 | 164 |

(not including elective places which account for on average an additional 30 students in each module at Stage 1 and 15 students in each module in Stage 2)

**Student numbers:  BA Planning, Geography and Environment**
(formerly BA Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy)

| Year | 2011/12 | 2010/11 | 2009/10 | 2008/09 | 2007/08 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of students Stage 1 | 19 | 22 | 26 | 34 | 20 |
| Progressing to Stage 2 | 16 | 24 | 17 | 30 | 36 |
| No. of students Stage 2 | 38 | 42 | 46 | 58 | 40 |
| Completing Stage 2 | | 18 | 29 | 28 | 24 |

**Student numbers: MA Geography**

(2011/12 data include MA Urban Studies and MA Geopolitics and Global Economy Streams)

| Year | 2012/13 | 2011/12 | 2010/11 | 2009/10 | 2008/09 | 2007/08 | 2006/07 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of students | 38 | 33 | 26 | 12 | 17 | 19 | 23 |


**Student numbers: Master of Regional and Urban Planning** (2-year MRUP; includes Accelerated from 2008) **and MSc Environmental Policy** (2012-13 only)

| Year | 2012/13 | 2011/12 | 2010/11 | 2009/10 | 2008/09 | 2007/08 | 2006/07 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of students | 40 (19 EP) | 24 | 43 | 56 | 64 | 71 | 79 |


**PhDs graduated**

| Year | 2012 | 2011 | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of students | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 4 |

**Number of current PhD students:  19**


## 2. Organisation and Management

2.1    The head of school chairs the school executive.  The executive is supported by a number of standing committees (research, teaching and learning, and graduate studies) and activity co-ordinators (e.g. international, professional outreach).

2.2    The school is well connected internally in UCD, with senior members of the school holding key positions in the management of programmes, the college and the wider university.

2.3    The Review Group strongly agree with the self-assessment report (SAR) that the school should capitalise on its distinctive position as a scientifically-based programme with a strong policy relevance. A theme identified by the SAR is the importance of "evidence-based policy", which is exactly at the heart of geography-planning integration. The Review Group were encouraged that the school is fully cognisant of this.

2.4    The Review Group had the impression, however, that the school needs to establish a clearer consensus around the opportunities that emerge from this distinctive interdisciplinary focus.  The Group did not receive consistent answers to some key questions: What is the school as a unit known for?  What is its mission and what are its core values?  How can the school best capture the different contributions made by the three subject areas?  How can it contribute to UCD cross-cutting themes such as energy and big data?

2.5    Clearly, there are significant opportunities offered by the merger of geography, planning and environmental policy. Across these fields internationally, scientific inquiry has been criticized for its reluctance to intervene in public policy and decision-making, while planning and environmental policy might be seen as too policy-oriented and applied, lacking attention to impacts that can be predicted by science. Integrating these fields within a single school provides the opportunity to address both of these criticisms. The bottom line is that to implement this vision

there is a need to be specific, both substantively and operationally. The Group found that the school had many of the right "pieces", but was lacking a strategic framework.

2.6     Many of the external challenges currently facing the school are related to broader global change. The construction industry has collapsed, and many associated units (internationally – not just in Ireland) are now riding out the downturn. Yet a recovery will eventually happen, and it will be important to ensure that the unit positions itself strategically to capitalise on the changed landscape and opportunities that will emerge from this recovery while simultaneously ensuring that it does not lose ground during the downturn.

## Commendations

2.7     The school is well organised, with a comprehensive committee structure centred around the school executive.

2.8     The head of school has adopted an inclusive approach to the management of the school, with transparency around meeting agendas and minutes, budgets and the workload allocation model. Her leadership was praised by many of those the Review Group interviewed. She is soon to step down from the headship, and the choice of successor is a very important one.

2.9     The school has a historically robust financial position, absorbing cuts in its budgetary position, and has proactively sought out opportunities to capture non-exchequer income through offering additional master's programmes as well as restructuring existing master's programmes to widen their attractiveness. In addition, the school has been successful in generating research income, and in recent years has generated approximately two thirds of the entire research funding in the College of Human Sciences.

2.10    Senior academic management roles in the school are sustained for three years before being rotated, thus making it easy for other units in the college to build and sustain relationships with the school.

2.11    The self-assessment report was a well-informed, self-critical and forward-looking appraisal of the school's current performance and actions required to enhance both teaching and research.

## Recommendations

2.12    The school needs to define its mission and future direction, drawing on the potential of all its component parts and the synergies between them. The Review Group believe a connection via the organizing power of a "space and place", scientific, policy-driven mission is very feasible. A stronger, more explicit and focused mission statement and set of goals are needed to strategically direct future development and find a way to fit the pieces of the unit together in a more synergistic way. Some initial steps might include the following:

   a. Take more careful stock of faculty resources; identify strengths and gaps; think about synergies among domains within the school and across the

University; and use this analysis to establish future hiring priorities.

b. Assess the contribution of the unit in advancing the state of the discipline/ profession and the position of its programmes relative to peer institutions.

c. Identify a set of specific goals for each programme and establish procedures for reviewing and updating those goals.

2.13    Moving forward will require a stronger consensus regarding the future direction of the school. Along with the analysis of synergies highlighted above, this will include an understanding of the balance between teaching and research, fully recognising the valuable contributions of every staff member. The Review Group recommend a facilitated retreat to discover the "heart and soul" of this unit, including a concerted effort to reconcile competing visions, to be followed by an implementation plan.

2.14    Alongside this school exercise, the college and University should recognize the key position of the school as a multidisciplinary spatial integrating unit capable of drawing together different schools and connecting to research institutes. The ability to foster integration has real implications, particularly the leveraging of external funding focused around interdisciplinary grants, where the school has had notable success.  The school has expressed the view that its multidisciplinary nature, from which much of its potential is derived, is not reflected in its budget allocation. This should be investigated.

2.15    The school workload allocation model is an important tool for the management of teaching, research and administrative workloads, and the school has been proactive in the development of this model.  However, the model needs to be refined further and operationalised.


## 3. Staff and Facilities

3.1    All students that the Review Group interviewed praised the staff of the school – academic, research, administrative and technical – commenting on their commitment, availability and support. Several staff members were named as being exceptional teachers. This view of a highly dedicated and committed staff was reinforced by comments from employers and staff from other disciplinary areas.

3.2    There has been a deterioration in numbers of academic, technical and support staff in recent years, with the school at the same time increasing its managerial contributions to programmes, college and university. This has been offset by the use of a relatively large number of postdoctoral research fellows in parts of the teaching programme and the deployment of temporary staff.

3.3    While acknowledging the impacts of financial pressures on recruitment and lack of promotion opportunities in recent years, the professionalism and commitment of the staff have been sustained. There is a view that, after paring down across various activities, further staff reductions would have noticeable impacts on research and teaching delivery.

3.4    Shortages in staff provision were identified by the school in Geographic Information Systems/Science (GIS) and Environmental Policy. It is possible to add to the list because of the small size of the school, and examples would be the vulnerability of

physical geography provision alongside curriculum gaps such as biogeography, social/cultural geography and urban design.

3.5    The facilities of the school are spread across two locations, in Belfield and Richview. Physical geography teaching is hampered by limited laboratory facilities, and GIS is likewise constrained, but good use is made of studio space in the Richview building

## Commendations

3.6    The Review Group heard repeatedly that the staff of the school are excellent, often going above and beyond normal expectations in terms of accessibility, helpfulness and service to the community.

3.7    The appointment of a research manager was strongly endorsed for both pre- and post-award support. The benefits could be evidenced by the substantial grant income generated by the school relative to other parts of the college.

3.8    Postgraduate students are provided with discipline-related study spaces and a working environment that facilitates a sense of identify and intellectual exchange.

## Recommendations

3.9    The Review Group accept that there are shortages in staff provision.  While recognising the realities of the financial climate, the Group supports the school's desire for recruitment and recommend that such recruitment should seek to enhance synergies within the school and build up a GPEP identity.

3.10   It is not appropriate for this review to attempt to dictate priorities for hiring – these should emerge from a strategic exercise within the school. However, the Review Group recommend that a position in the area of GIS should be given particular consideration. GIS is a key area of need across the University in which the school has a natural leadership position. It brings together the different school disciplines and it provides employable skills for graduates. It can generate revenue through consultancy, research grants and continuing professional development, while also being attractive to international students.  However it is currently vulnerable in terms of staffing (academic and support) and IT provision.  Without strong GIS the school will find it difficult to compete, especially in the US and China.

3.11   The school should initiate a formal practice of mentoring junior faculty and conveying a more unequivocal understanding of the expectations upon them.

3.12   Regarding facilities, the physical separation of geography from planning and environmental policy is a significant concern, particularly since it is the integration of these domains that lies at the heart of this unit's essential value and purpose. The school should be encouraged to seek out creative ways of addressing this separation. One idea would be to enlist the support of students, and seek their input on ways to improve the collaborative culture of the school.

3.13   Given the importance of GIS and spatial analysis, facilities in this area should be upgraded as a matter of urgency. The current server-based delivery of data and software is highly problematic, and should be addressed in a number of ways, such as the use of open source software and the resolution of licensing issues.  The Review Group suggest the formation of a sub-committee that includes students and

staff to examine ways of resolving this important problem. This should be a university-wide initiative, as units across the university expressed strong interest in GIS delivery.

3.14 The decline in administrative and technical support is a concern, particularly in a school where the disciplines are part-laboratory based, and results in under-utilisation of facilities for both research and teaching. The appropriate level of professional and administrative support should be reviewed where there are requirements for studio, IT and off campus work.

## 4. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

4.1 The key issues around teaching, learning and assessment arise from the challenging financial environment, pressure on recruitment, and management of staff workloads where there are high student:staff ratios and a wide range of course units and programmes.

4.2 At an average of 25:1 the student:staff ratio is somewhat above the institution's average, but this level of aggregation masks some areas (most notably in Geography) where the ratio is much higher and teaching is very stretched and has been pared down in response. There are threats to fieldwork and pressure on practical and studio teaching where workloads are more intensive.

4.3 The school teaches over 90 modules. Many of these recruit manageable numbers of students, with 30 to 45 common, but the core undergraduate modules can be populated with 200 to 400 students. The latter present significant challenges for teaching along with a heavy assessment and student support workload.

4.4 The workload allocation model, when fully operational, may help manage resources more effectively, but teaching innovation and diversification of delivery are unlikely to be realised where staff feel their existing commitments are increasing or their achievements are not recognised.

4.5 There does not appear to be a significantly adverse impact on the quality of teaching, as evidenced by student evaluation responses, student attainment and external examiner's reports, which note the challenges and are generally positive. There is however a concern that as paring down continues as a result of budget pressures combined with an expansion of postgraduate numbers, teaching quality will begin to suffer.

4.6 Across modules there is a diversity of assessment practices with summative and formative assessments. Assessment is often, though not always, dependent upon expected learning outcomes as specified in module outlines.

4.7 The course module information is detailed and reveals research-informed teaching and encouragement for students to engage with both texts and journal articles. Where programmes are accredited, the curriculum, teaching and assessment are coherent and balanced due to higher levels of prescription. The BA programme structure means that it is difficult to be clear about individual student workloads, although the geography pathway is clearly articulated.

4.8 At the undergraduate level there are differences between teaching delivery and curriculum identity across the three main discipline areas of geography, planning and environmental policy. At the master's level students had a strong sense of identity within their programme of study, but we found in our interviews little evidence of mixing across the discipline boundaries. This is a pity as numbers are sufficiently low for greater development of an interdisciplinary culture of learning. Planning discipline undergraduates had a strong sense of belonging, fostered by smaller classes, a common curriculum and dedicated teaching and studio spaces. Geography students found it more difficult to express any sense of identity.

4.9 All modules have stated learning outcomes with an emphasis upon knowledge and content. Module descriptions for students provide broadly the same information, including learning styles, course content, key readings and contact details, but there could be greater consistency. The course content shows a topical curriculum that is research informed, and students noted the use of academic journals to supplement high demand core texts.

4.10 Student workloads are standardised with the exception at level 1 where tutorials are provided. Teaching small groups of students at level 1 is essential to develop core academic literacy skills. It is a pity that resources do not permit the general continuation of small group teaching through later stages, although some modules do offer such opportunities.

4.11 Where workload can be uneven is through assessment. Assessment is diverse, which is laudable, but it is unclear whether there is a coherent policy providing a link between learning outcomes, assessment and module selection. As much undergraduate teaching is based on modules and not the programme, it is possible for students to encounter an imbalanced range of assessment types from summative written exams through to formative MCQs. Where programmes have been subject to accreditation there is greater consistency. A few master's modules rely on summative examination only, which is surprising at level 4, but the majority use a variety of formative assessment types. Diversity is good but laissez faire could lead to inequities of workload and embedding of academic skills without an assessment strategy.

**Commendations**

4.12 A huge amount of effort goes into student teaching, with an extremely strong ethos in support of education and a sense of common purpose that goes beyond module delivery.

4.13 Students are generally satisfied with their experiences and the quality of the education they receive.

4.14 Students find staff, both academic and support, to be accessible and approachable.

4.15 Staff have been adept at using appropriate technology to deliver their teaching. In particular, we were impressed with the creative use of Blackboard, Moodle and software instruction.

4.16 There is a strong sense of identity within undergraduate programmes in planning and all postgraduate programmes, enhanced by common learning and social spaces.

**Recommendations**

4.17   Frustrations were expressed by the school regarding staff shortages in some teaching areas.  Of the (small number of) problems identified by students in relation to teaching, almost all arose when special circumstances exposed the thin provision of teaching staff, and the solutions were sub-optimal.  The Review Group reiterate here our support for recruitment.

4.18   The school makes considerable use of post-doctoral and other temporary staff to provide teaching cover.  It should ensure that all such staff receive appropriate training and supervision.

4.19   Feedback to students should be improved, with a clear statement around the nature, quality and timing of this feedback. This is not to suggest that the quantity of feedback should be increased. Feedback needs to be timely, personalised and lead to improvement in student's work. Sometimes less (formative) assessment can lead to better quality feedback.

4.20   Consideration should be given to providing students access to greater guidance on the selection of option modules within the undergraduate degree programme, particularly in the final year of the large undergraduate BA Geography degree programme.

4.21   There should be a consistent approach to student workloads and assessment to ensure an equitable experience, along with clarification of opportunities for skills acquisition that informs student choice.


**5. Curriculum Development and Review**

5.1    Since the merger of the departments in 2005 there have been a number of curriculum reviews and resulting modifications in the programmes and modules on offer. In addition there are operational processes to review programmes and teaching, along with evidence of a culture of reflection and enhancement that is laudable.

5.2    In recent years curriculum change has responded to the compliance requirements of accreditation and the necessity to accommodate resource challenges through imposed reductions in budget rather than a vision for the future. Accreditation has been successful, for example for the BA (PGE) and MRUP, but recruitment is a challenge as several related industries and employers struggle in a harsh external financial environment.

5.3    The 2007/08 strategic plan identified a number of actions to enhance the student experience in the context of significant changes to the organisation of teaching within the school. The plan identified a number of areas for action, some of which have been realised through the expansion of taught master's degrees, links across master's programmes and training of research students. Areas awaiting implementation include preparation for the world of work, key skills across the curriculum such as fieldwork and GIS, support for students at stages 2 and 3, a research-led curriculum with a dissertation stream, summer internships, and recruitment of international students. Many of these will be revisited in recommendations, as they remain key elements of quality enhancement, but there are many challenges facing their implementation in the short term.

5.4　The school currently teaches over 90 modules across undergraduate and postgraduate programmes with only a modest amount of sharing between levels. Teaching takes place and the curriculum is organised across three disciplinary areas and two campus sites, which presents challenges for resource management, cohesion and identity. There is a rich mixture of theory and practice which should yield an innovative teaching environment. Some synergies have been found, for example around environmental policy and to a lesser extent GIS, but not all opportunities have been exploited. At a time of financial pressures it is not clear that teaching resources have been optimally deployed, although the workload allocation model permits greater transparency. Obstacles include pressure on external (research) income generation, split sites, requirements of accreditation and expansion of postgraduate teaching.

5.5　As an interdisciplinary school there are many curriculum opportunities to work in imaginative ways, for example in urbanism and sustainability. The BA Geography programme delivers most of the teaching in a coherent curriculum that reflects the school's three research clusters rather than a commitment to cover all sub-disciplines. In recent years effort has been focused upon the development of a number of intensively taught master's programmes, the MSc in Environmental Policy being a recent successful addition. This strategy of an expansion in master's teaching does provide additional income but is at odds with reports of stretched delivery of the undergraduate curriculum and raises questions over market demand and the future balance of the curriculum across the disciplines and between undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

5.6　The curriculum appears to be driven by content in many modules rather than development of skills and personal attributes. Employability is likely to become even more important in the future as students look for a competitive advantage. It will be important to provide opportunities for students to acquire and practice skills alongside developing their personal attributes and knowledge. With over 90 modules on offer there are opportunities for the curriculum to be rationalised but identifying the resources for innovation and revision is proving to be a constraint. There is a desire for greater international student recruitment and the abundance of modules presents a variety of options, but ventures in this direction will need to be built upon internationally recognised research strengths.

**Commendations**

5.7　The school delivers a wide and expanding portfolio of courses at a time of budget constraints, with a diversity of teaching and assessment practices.

5.8　The school has succeeded in significant and sustained recruitment of undergraduates, widespread provision of undergraduate service teaching and expansion of postgraduate recruitment.

5.9　There is a clear commitment to quality review and curriculum enhancement.

5.10　The school has shown innovation in developing new master's programmes, including new pathways in MA geography and the successful environmental policy programme.

5.11    There is a strong commitment to teaching students from across the college and university with a rich mixture of teaching based upon theory and practice.

5.12    Accreditation processes have been completed successfully, with strong links to employers for accredited programmes

**Recommendations**

5.13    Curriculum development appears to be operationally driven and not strategic. Again, it would be good for the school to be more forthright over what it is best known for and will be known for in the future, particularly for an international market. Examples might include international cities, sustainable urban design and environmental policy.

5.14    The school should look to deploy more effectively staff effort in delivery and assessment without sacrificing the student experience, perhaps through a focus of intensive teaching upon core parts of curriculum and use of teaching assistants as appropriate (with training). This may require some curriculum rationalisation and team-teaching, as currently a huge number and range of modules are offered by a small group of academic staff, which taxes resources, creates timetable difficulties and raises issues over student academic and intellectual development.

5.15    Postgraduate fees and international students are prime sources of non-exchequer income. Other universities have successfully internationalised accredited programmes, and the school should examine this as a first step to greater international recruitment in planning related courses.

5.16    However, any further expansion of the curriculum, for example in pursuit of international student recruitment, should be carefully costed, taking note of higher resource requirements for postgraduate teaching.

5.17    UCD's position as a research-intensive university should be reflected in the undergraduate curriculum, with staff research strengths reflected in the curriculum and opportunities for students to acquire and practice research skills. This has been noted by the school, but challenges are exemplified by summative assessment based on written examination, with limited opportunities for field and practical work. The undergraduate dissertation is an excellent opportunity for students to use and demonstrate research skills, and it could be re-introduced as an option while resources are constrained.

5.18    The diminution of fieldwork is regrettable but understandable. Every effort should be made to include opportunities for practice whether via fieldwork, laboratory teaching or studio work.

5.19    The importance of GIS – and its current under-representation in the curriculum – was mentioned repeatedly. There is a need to integrate GIS in the curriculum more broadly, not just as standalone modules, but as an organising framework for coursework. It could be used as a platform to address weaknesses in the curriculum, such as a lack of quantitative analysis taught to undergraduate geography students.

5.20    Employability of graduating students is important. There are strong links between the curriculum and potential employers for planning programmes but less so for geography. The curriculum should include reference to the development of employability (knowledge, skills, attributes) so that students consider these as they make curriculum choices.

5.21    Despite its interdisciplinary nature, the school has not yet realised all opportunities for the curriculum to be designed across school and university disciplines. In conversations it was evident that many of the opportunities were understood but faced disincentives around the RAM, budget and load transfer for service teaching. Any disincentives to teaching students across disciplinary boundaries should be investigated and removed where possible.


## 6. Research Activity

6.1     Research in GPEP covers a broad and topical range, including human and physical geography, urban and regional planning and environmental policy. Correspondingly, specific research output is organised into three clusters: cities, regions and spatial planning; environment: processes, change and policy; and geopolitics and the knowledge economy. These clusters link to master's programmes, incorporate university research themes of energy and health, and feature in at least four university research institutes.

6.2     The school has been working to nurture an upward trend in refereed publications and funded research. According to UCD KPIs, the percentage of research active staff in the school was 71.3% in 2011, rising from 65% in 2008. This is above the university average.

6.3     Research output in the form of publications has been good over the past several years, with 2011 being a particularly productive year for the unit (54 publications, including peer reviewed articles and reports as well as books and chapters). The school is ranked third in the college for total number of publications and number of publications per academic staff member. The recent loss of strong research-oriented staff will impact research output for the unit unless these positions are replaced.

6.4     The school is/has been affiliated with a number of UCD research institutes: Urban Institute Ireland, UCD Earth Institute; UCD Dublin European Institute and UCD Humanities Institute. These linkages have helped to improve the infrastructure necessary for increasing research productivity. The school has enhanced its research infrastructure by securing funds for an Itrax XRF Core Scanner, a new GIS lab, and upgraded facilities for PhD students and post-docs.

6.5     Staff often seemed divided on what the future direction of the school should be, polarizing around a "teaching first" vs. "research first" mission. This is a classic division in academia in recent times, as academic units around the globe now struggle to do more with less and redefine their mission to balance pedagogical and research goals that often seem in conflict.

**Commendations**

6.6     Many in the school are doing an exemplary job in securing research funding, with two thirds of the grant income in the college in recent years generated by this school. There is a culture of high productivity research, publication and external income generation that seems to be gaining in strength over recent years. This momentum should be recognised and capitalised on, with unequivocal recognition of the value of staff research.

6.7     The school's successful bid to host a Lincoln Institute of Land Policy event in October 2012 and an International Conference on Urban Climate in August 2012, as well as its success at being selected as the hosting unit for the joint ASCP/AESOP World Planning Congress to be held in July 2013, are very significant accomplishments and will increase its stature as an internationally recognized research unit.

6.8     The decision of the school to support a research manager position has paid obvious dividends in securing research income, and has relieved part of the burden on research-active academic staff.

6.9     Research leaders within the school have been notably outward-facing, informing policy nationally and internationally, communicating research results through seminar series and continuing professional development events, organising conferences, participating in editorial boards, etc.

6.10    The school has provided leadership in research and innovation within the University, at some cost to its academic capacity, with the University Vice-President for Innovation and college Vice-Principal for Research both on half-time secondment from the school.

6.11    The school has established a formal sabbatical policy and a visiting professorship programme.


**Recommendations**

6.12    The effort to define the future direction of the school should include the identification of cutting-edge research domains in which the school has competitive advantage. The presentation of three broad-based research clusters has the benefit of inclusivity but at the expense of focus.  Being internationally known for a few key research strengths would sharpen the profile of the school within the University, assist in its research interaction with other schools and institutes and help put the school on the map internationally.

6.13    Staff should be encouraged to target high impact journals. The calibre and quality of publication outlets is critically important for a unit attempting to attract international students and funding. The workload model should recognize the differences involved in publishing in high impact and high quality journals vs. other publication outlets. There should also be a clear distinction between peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed publication – the Review Group found this distinction somewhat muddled in some of the documents it reviewed.

6.14    The Review Group find the lack of appropriate overhead recovery particularly problematic and counter to the goal of increasing external revenue. The University

should provide tangible support related to overhead income generated by grants. There are now financial disincentives related to generating research income and these need to be resolved.

## 7. Management of Quality and Enhancement

7.1     The school has a number of mechanisms to monitor the quality of its academic programmes. These methods include external examiners' reports, formal student evaluation through the University module feedback system, staff-student committees and the school teaching and learning committee.

7.2     The school has regular programmatic reviews of all its programmes. Where there is a requirement for a formal accreditation process with a relevant professional body e.g. the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Irish Planning Institute, an annual programmatic review takes place through a Partnership Board with representatives drawn from UCD and the professional body.

### Commendations

7.3     There is evidence from the University module feedback system that, in general, there is a high level of student satisfaction with the quality of the modules delivered by the school.

7.4     The external examiner's reports have been broadly supportive of the quality of educational provision across the suite of school programmes.

7.5     Success in accreditation provides further evidence of quality and quality enhancement.

7.6     In 2010-11 the school undertook an internal teaching and learning audit via the UCD module enhancement process. This exercise was completed in the first instance by the module co-ordinator and subsequently reviewed by the teaching and learning committee.

7.7     The school is currently participating in an assessment re-design involving staff teaching level 1 modules across the suite of undergraduate programmes.

### Recommendations

7.8     The external examiners for geography in their most recent reports requested that the subject area respond in a more formal manner to their feedback. This process should be actioned and applied consistently across the school.

7.9     Staff-student committee meetings should handle more substantive matters and should meet more regularly, perhaps two times per semester. In order to get the students to better engage with the process, consideration should be given to giving students a role in setting the agenda for the meeting and taking the subsequent minutes for circulation. It is important that any potential issues should be raised at the level of the module co-ordinator in the first instance and only items not resolved at that level should be escalated up to the staff- student  committee. There should

also be a process for ensuring that recommendations made by the committee are actioned as appropriate.

## 8. Support Services

8.1     Units with which the school interacts on a regular basis include the College of Human Sciences Office; BA Programme Offices in the Colleges of Arts & Celtic Studies and Human Sciences; UCD Registry; the Bursar's Office; Procurement; the Library; Disability Support Services; IT Services; Human Resources; UCD Research; the International Office; Buildings & Services; Communications; and the President's Office.

### Commendations

8.2     In general, the school maintains excellent relationships and often works directly with staff from support units.

8.3     A particularly important support unit is the library, in both James Joyce and Richview locations, with whom the school has an excellent relationship.  While the library remains under substantial budgetary stress, a recent modest improvement in its ability to maintain book collections is welcomed.

8.4     The school reports strong support from the college structures: the college principal, the graduate school staff, the finance manager and the HR partner.

### Recommendations

8.5     General access to GIS software around campus is unsatisfactory. As part of its development of this area, the school should work closely with IT Services to arrange appropriate provision.

8.6     In seeking to identify and address opportunities for international recruitment, the school needs particular information and assistance. The current sense is that the International Office is not providing the initial information needed by a school of this size as it seeks to understand and access international markets. The identification of an International Office partner for the college would improve this interface, as should the filling of a marketing position within the college.

8.7     The school has noted some delays and rigidities arising at the interface with other units, such as HR. These were also noted by external stakeholders, for example in relation to the issuance of contracts and the documentation associated with hosting agreements. There should be frequent two-way communication between schools and support units that allows such problems to be identified and addressed.

## 9. External Relations

9.1     The school has research linkages and engagement within the University, e.g. through the Earth Institute, where the school provides leadership in the Policy and Economic cluster and Smart City and Infrastructure theme, and with the wider community,

through research publications, editorial boards, research funding acquisition, seminar series, etc.

9.2    The school is internationally active, with student and staff exchanges

9.3    The academic staff contribute to a range of national and international professional associations and public sector institutions e.g. Royal Irish Academy, Academia Europea, European Urban Research Association, Royal Town Planning Institute.


**Commendations**

9.4    The school already has a strong infrastructure seeking to leverage its international linkages. It has an international programmes group and an international programmes co-ordinator

9.5    The school has strong linkages to the profession, particularly in the planning subject area. This is enhanced by a well-established series of guest lectures from professional practice in the MRUP.

9.6    Employers interviewed were very positive towards the school and saw it as particularly outward looking.

9.7    The school is exploring the opportunity to develop joint programmes internationally in both the US and the Far East.

9.8    The school has taken steps to enhance its communication with external stakeholders. Its website has been reconfigured to enhance its information content, presentation and organisation. In addition, the school has introduced an annual newsletter to widen external awareness of the academic staff and their activities.


**Recommendations**

9.9    In the geography subject area in particular the school has limited information on destination and employment of its graduates. The Alumni Office might be leveraged better to gather such information.  Such data may provide a useful input into the marketing of the BA in geography programme in particular, given the dropping of geography as a compulsory subject in the Junior Certificate.

9.10   Given the twin effects of the current difficulties in the building and construction industry and also the removal of geography as a core subject at Junior Certificate level, the school could better leverage its own resources and work closely with the recruitment and admissions staff in the university to engage with secondary schools to profile itself.

9.11   The school should seek to enhance its communications with employers e.g. circulating its annual newsletter more widely, informing employers of recent hires and of the key skills and expertise within the school, as well as highlighting potential opportunities for enhancing research collaboration.  CPD events, though not necessarily a significant source of revenue, may potentially strengthen employer relationships, e.g. a GIS workshop for the Geography Teachers Association of Ireland.  There may also be an opportunity to hold an annual open day showcasing school activities, which could be captured online and placed on the school's website.

**10. Summary of Commendations and Recommendations**

(Please note that the paragraph references below refer to the relevant paragraphs in the report text)

**2. Organisation and Management**

**Commendations**

2.7      The school is well organised, with a comprehensive committee structure centred around the school executive.

2.8      The head of school has adopted an inclusive approach to the management of the school, with transparency around meeting agendas and minutes, budgets and the workload allocation model. Her leadership was praised by many of those the Review Group interviewed.  She is soon to step down from the headship, and the choice of successor is a very important one.

2.9      The school has a historically robust financial position, absorbing cuts in its budgetary position, and has proactively sought out opportunities to capture non-exchequer income through offering additional master's programmes as well as restructuring existing master's programmes to widen their attractiveness. In addition, the school has been successful in generating research income, and in recent years has generated approximately two thirds of the entire research funding in the College of Human Sciences.

2.10      Senior academic management roles in the school are sustained for three years before being rotated, thus making it easy for other units in the college to build and sustain relationships with the school.

2.11      The self-assessment report was a well-informed, self-critical and forward-looking appraisal of the school's current performance and actions required to enhance both teaching and research.

**Recommendations**

2.12      The school needs to define its mission and future direction, drawing on the potential of all its component parts and the synergies between them. The Review Group believe a connection via the organizing power of a "space and place", scientific, policy-driven mission is very feasible. A stronger, more explicit and focused mission statement and set of goals are needed to strategically direct future development and find a way to fit the pieces of the unit together in a more synergistic       way.       Some       initial       steps       might       include       the       following:

   a.   Take more careful stock of faculty resources; identify strengths and gaps; think about synergies among domains within the school and across the University; and use this analysis to establish future hiring priorities

   b.   Assess the contribution of the unit in advancing the state of the discipline/ profession and the position of its programmes relative to peer institutions.

    c.   Identify a set of specific goals for each programme and establish procedures for reviewing and updating those goals.

2.13    Moving forward will require a stronger consensus regarding the future direction of the school. Along with the analysis of synergies highlighted above, this will include an understanding of the balance between teaching and research, fully recognising the valuable contributions of every staff member. The Review Group recommend a facilitated retreat to discover the "heart and soul" of this unit, including a concerted effort to reconcile competing visions, to be followed by an implementation plan.

2.14    Alongside this school exercise, the college and University should recognize the key position of the school as a multidisciplinary spatial integrating unit capable of drawing together different schools and connecting to research institutes. The ability to foster integration has real implications, particularly the leveraging of external funding focused around interdisciplinary grants, where the school has had notable success.  The school has expressed the view that its multidisciplinary nature, from which much of its potential is derived, is not reflected in its budget allocation. This should be investigated.

2.15    The school workload allocation model is an important tool for the management of teaching, research and administrative workloads, and the school has been proactive in the development of this model.  However, the model needs to be refined further and operationalised.

## 3. Staff and Facilities

### Commendations

3.6    The Review Group heard repeatedly that the staff of the school are excellent, often going above and beyond normal expectations in terms of accessibility, helpfulness and service to the community.

3.7    The appointment of a research manager was strongly endorsed for both pre- and post-award support. The benefits could be evidenced by the substantial grant income generated by the school relative to other parts of the college.

3.8    Postgraduate students are provided with discipline-related study spaces and a working environment that facilitates a sense of identify and intellectual exchange.

### Recommendations

3.9    The Review Group accept that there are shortages in staff provision.  While recognising the realities of the financial climate, the Group supports the school's desire for recruitment and recommend that such recruitment should seek to enhance synergies within the school and build up a GPEP identity.

3.10    It is not appropriate for this review to attempt to dictate priorities for hiring – these should emerge from a strategic exercise within the school. However, the Review Group recommend that a position in the area of GIS should be given

particular consideration. GIS is a key area of need across the University in which the school has a natural leadership position. It brings together the different school disciplines and it provides employable skills for graduates. It can generate revenue through consultancy, research grants and continuing professional development, while also being attractive to international students. However it is currently vulnerable in terms of staffing (academic and support) and IT provision. Without strong GIS the school will find it difficult to compete, especially in the US and China.

3.11    The school should initiate a formal practice of mentoring junior faculty and conveying a more unequivocal understanding of the expectations upon them.

3.12    Regarding facilities, the physical separation of geography from planning and environmental policy is a significant concern, particularly since it is the integration of these domains that lies at the heart of this unit's essential value and purpose. The school should be encouraged to seek out creative ways of addressing this separation. One idea would be to enlist the support of students, and seek their input on ways to improve the collaborative culture of the school.

3.13    Given the importance of GIS and spatial analysis, facilities in this area should be upgraded as a matter of urgency. The current server-based delivery of data and software is highly problematic, and should be addressed in a number of ways, such as the use of open source software and the resolution of licensing issues. The Review Group suggest the formation of a sub-committee that includes students and staff to examine ways of resolving this important problem. This should be a university-wide initiative, as units across the university expressed strong interest in GIS delivery.

3.14    The decline in administrative and technical support is a concern, particularly in a school where the disciplines are part-laboratory based, and results in under-utilisation of facilities for both research and teaching. The appropriate level of professional and administrative support should be reviewed where there are requirements for studio, IT and off campus work.

## 4. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

**Commendations**

4.12    A huge amount of effort goes into student teaching, with an extremely strong ethos in support of education and a sense of common purpose that goes beyond module delivery.

4.13    Students are generally satisfied with their experiences and the quality of the education they receive.

4.14    Students find staff, both academic and support, to be accessible and approachable.

4.15    Staff have been adept at using appropriate technology to deliver their teaching. In particular, we were impressed with the creative use of Blackboard, Moodle and software instruction.

4.16    There is a strong sense of identity within undergraduate programmes in planning and all postgraduate programmes, enhanced by common learning and social spaces.

**Recommendations**

4.17    Frustrations were expressed by the school regarding staff shortages in some teaching areas.  Of the (small number of) problems identified by students in relation to teaching, almost all arose when special circumstances exposed the thin provision of teaching staff, and the solutions were sub-optimal.  The Review Group reiterate here our support for recruitment.

4.18    The school makes considerable use of post-doctoral and other temporary staff to provide teaching cover.  It should ensure that all such staff receive appropriate training and supervision.

4.19    Feedback to students should be improved, with a clear statement around the nature, quality and timing of this feedback. This is not to suggest that the quantity of feedback should be increased. Feedback needs to be timely, personalised and lead to improvement in student's work. Sometimes less (formative) assessment can lead to better quality feedback.

4.20    Consideration should be given to providing students access to greater guidance on the selection of option modules within the undergraduate degree programme, particularly in the final year of the large undergraduate BA Geography degree programme.

4.21    There should be a consistent approach to student workloads and assessment to ensure an equitable experience, along with clarification of opportunities for skills acquisition that informs student choice.

**5. Curriculum Development and Review**

**Commendations**

5.7    The school delivers a wide and expanding portfolio of courses at a time of budget constraints, with a diversity of teaching and assessment practices.

5.8    The school has succeeded in significant and sustained recruitment of undergraduates, widespread provision of undergraduate service teaching and expansion of postgraduate recruitment.

5.9    There is a clear commitment to quality review and curriculum enhancement.

5.10    The school has shown innovation in developing new master's programmes, including new pathways in MA geography and the successful environmental policy programme.

5.11    There is a strong commitment to teaching students from across the college and university with a rich mixture of teaching based upon theory and practice.

5.12 Accreditation processes have been completed successfully, with strong links to employers for accredited programmes

**Recommendations**

5.13 Curriculum development appears to be operationally driven and not strategic. Again, it would be good for the school to be more forthright over what it is best known for and will be known for in the future, particularly for an international market. Examples might include international cities, sustainable urban design and environmental policy.

5.14 The school should look to deploy more effectively staff effort in delivery and assessment without sacrificing the student experience, perhaps through a focus of intensive teaching upon core parts of curriculum and use of teaching assistants as appropriate (with training). This may require some curriculum rationalisation and team-teaching, as currently a huge number and range of modules are offered by a small group of academic staff, which taxes resources, creates timetable difficulties and raises issues over student academic and intellectual development.

5.15 Postgraduate fees and international students are prime sources of non-exchequer income. Other universities have successfully internationalised accredited programmes, and the school should examine this as a first step to greater international recruitment in planning related courses.

5.16 However, any further expansion of the curriculum, for example in pursuit of international student recruitment, should be carefully costed, taking note of higher resource requirements for postgraduate teaching.

5.17 UCD's position as a research-intensive university should be reflected in the undergraduate curriculum, with staff research strengths reflected in the curriculum and opportunities for students to acquire and practice research skills. This has been noted by the school, but challenges are exemplified by summative assessment based on written examination, with limited opportunities for field and practical work. The undergraduate dissertation is an excellent opportunity for students to use and demonstrate research skills, and it could be re-introduced as an option while resources are constrained.

5.18 The diminution of fieldwork is regrettable but understandable. Every effort should be made to include opportunities for practice whether via fieldwork, laboratory teaching or studio work.

5.19 The importance of GIS – and its current under-representation in the curriculum – was mentioned repeatedly. There is a need to integrate GIS in the curriculum more broadly, not just as standalone modules, but as an organising framework for coursework. It could be used as a platform to address weaknesses in the curriculum, such as a lack of quantitative analysis taught to undergraduate geography students.

5.20 Employability of graduating students is important. There are strong links between the curriculum and potential employers for planning programmes but less so for geography. The curriculum should include reference to the development of

employability (knowledge, skills, attributes) so that students consider these as they make curriculum choices.

5.21    Despite its interdisciplinary nature, the school has not yet realised all opportunities for the curriculum to be designed across school and university disciplines. In conversations it was evident that many of the opportunities were understood but faced disincentives around the RAM, budget and load transfer for service teaching. Any disincentives to teaching students across disciplinary boundaries should be investigated and removed where possible.

## 6. Research Activity

**Commendations**

6.6     Many in the school are doing an exemplary job in securing research funding, with two thirds of the grant income in the college in recent years generated by this school. There is a culture of high productivity research, publication and external income generation that seems to be gaining in strength over recent years. This momentum should be recognised and capitalised on, with unequivocal recognition of the value of staff research.

6.7     The school's successful bid to host a Lincoln Institute of Land Policy event in October 2012 and an International Conference on Urban Climate in August 2012, as well as its success at being selected as the hosting unit for the joint ASCP/AESOP World Planning Congress to be held in July 2013, are very significant accomplishments and will increase its stature as an internationally recognized research unit.

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7.7     The school is currently participating in an assessment re-design involving staff teaching level 1 modules across the suite of undergraduate programmes.

**Recommendations**

7.8     The external examiners for geography in their most recent reports requested that the subject area respond in a more formal manner to their feedback. This process should be actioned and applied consistently across the school.

7.9     Staff-student committee meetings should handle more substantive matters and should meet more regularly, perhaps two times per semester. In order to get the students to better engage with the process, consideration should be given to giving

students a role in setting the agenda for the meeting and taking the subsequent minutes for circulation. It is important that any potential issues should be raised at the level of the module co-ordinator in the first instance and only items not resolved at that level should be escalated up to the staff- student committee. There should also be a process for ensuring that recommendations made by the committee are actioned as appropriate.

## 8. Support Services

### Commendations

8.2      In general, the school maintains excellent relationships and often works directly with staff from support units.

8.3      A particularly important support unit is the library, in both James Joyce and Richview locations, with whom the school has an excellent relationship. While the library remains under substantial budgetary stress, a recent modest improvement in its ability to maintain book collections is welcomed.

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### Recommendations

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## 9. External Relations

### Commendations

9.4     The school already has a strong infrastructure seeking to leverage its international linkages. It has an international programmes group and an international programmes co-ordinator

9.5     The school has strong linkages to the profession, particularly in the planning subject area. This is enhanced by a well-established series of guest lectures from professional practice in the MRUP.

9.6     Employers interviewed were very positive towards the school and saw it as particularly outward looking.

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9.8     The school has taken steps to enhance its communication with external stakeholders. Its website has been reconfigured to enhance its information content, presentation and organisation. In addition, the school has introduced an annual newsletter to widen external awareness of the academic staff and their activities.


**Recommendations**

9.9     In the geography subject area in particular the school has limited information on destination and employment of its graduates. The Alumni Office might be leveraged better to gather such information. Such data may provide a useful input into the marketing of the BA in geography programme in particular, given the dropping of geography as a compulsory subject in the Junior Certificate.

9.10    Given the twin effects of the current difficulties in the building and construction industry and also the removal of geography as a core subject at Junior Certificate level, the school could better leverage its own resources and work closely with the recruitment and admissions staff in the university to engage with secondary schools to profile itself.

9.11    The school should seek to enhance its communications with employers e.g. circulating its annual newsletter more widely, informing employers of recent hires and of the key skills and expertise within the school, as well as highlighting potential opportunities for enhancing research collaboration. CPD events, though not necessarily a significant source of revenue, may potentially strengthen employer relationships, e.g. a GIS workshop for the Geography Teachers Association of Ireland. There may also be an opportunity to hold an annual open day showcasing school activities, which could be captured online and placed on the school's website.

**Appendix 1: UCD School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy Response to the Review Group Report**

The School of Geography, Planning & Environmental Policy is of the view that the quality review process has been a worthwhile and constructive exercise. The Quality Review Report is welcomed for its summary of the School's activities and issues, as well as for its insightful commendations and recommendations. These will form the basis for the School's improvement plan and in its consideration of future strategic developments. The School is hopeful that the Quality Review Report will lead to positive changes in resource allocation including incentivisation and promotion.

**Appendix 2:   Schedule for Review Site Visit to UCD School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy**

**Pre-Visit Briefing Prior to Site Visit**

| | |
|---|---|
| 17.15-18.45 | RG meet at hotel to review preliminary issues and to confirm work schedule and assignment of tasks for the site visit |
| 19.30 | Dinner hosted for the RG by the Registrar and Deputy President |

**Day 1: Tuesday, November 27**

**Venue: E005 Newman**

| | |
|---|---|
| 09.00-09.30 | Private meeting of Review Group (RG) |
| 09.30 – 10.15 | RG meet with College of Human Sciences Principal |
| 10.15-10.30 | Break |
| 10.30 –11.15 | RG meet with Head of School |
| 11.15– 11.30 | Tea/coffee break |
| 11.30 – 12.15 | RG meet with SAR Coordinating Committee |
| 12.15-12.45 | Break – RG review key observations and prepare for lunch time meeting |
| 12.45-13.45 | Working lunch (buffet) – meeting with employers (and/or other external stakeholders) |
| 13.45-14.15 | RG review key observations |
| 14.15-15.30 | RG meet with representative group of academic staff – primary focus on Teaching and Learning, and Curriculum issues. |
| 15.30-15.45 | RG tea/coffee break |
| 15.45-16.30 | RG meet with support staff representatives (e.g. administrative / technical etc) |
| 16.30-16.35 | Break |
| 16.35-17.05 | RG meet<br>UCD Programme Dean of Arts,<br>UCD Programme Dean of Social Science,<br>College of Human Sciences, Graduate Programmes VP |

17.05-17.15    Break

17.15-18.15    **Tour of facilities and meet with Heads of Subject (beginning in Newman)**
               - Geography, Newman
               - Environmental Policy, Richview
               - Planning, Richview

18.15          RG depart

**Day 2: Wednesday, November 28, 2012**

**Venue: E005 Newman**

08.45-
09.15          Private meeting of the RG

09.15-         RG meet University representatives from  the areas of Earth Institute, Library, Economics,
09.55          Archaeology, Landscape Architecture, Civil Engineering

09.55-         Break
10.10

10.10-         RG meet with a representative group of postgraduate students (taught and research) and recent
11.00          graduates (PG and UG)

11.00-         RG tea/coffee break
11.15

11.15-          RG meet with representative group of undergraduate students
12.15

12.15-         Break - RG review key observations
12.30

12.30-         Lunch – Review Group only
13.15

13.15-          RG meet with the School Research Committee
14.00

14.00-         RG private meeting - review key observations
14.15

14.15-         RG meet with College of Human Sciences Finance Manager and Head of School to outline School's
15.00          financial situation.

15.00-         Break
15.15

| 15.15-16.15 | RG meet with recently appointed members of staff |
|---|---|
| 16.15-17.15 | RG available for private individual meetings with staff |
| 17.15-18.00 | RG private meeting – review key observations/findings |
| 18.00 | RG depart |

**Day 3: Thursday, November 29 2012**

**Venue: E005 Newman**

| 09.00-09.30 | Review Group meet with Head of School of Architecture |
|---|---|
| 09.30-10.30 | Private meeting of RG |
| 10.30-10.45 | Break |
| 10.45-12.30 | RG continue preparing draft RG Report |
| 12.30-13.15 | Lunch |
| 13.15-15.30 | RG finalise first draft of RG Report and feedback commendations/recommendations |
| 15.30-15.45 | Break |
| 15.45-16.00 | RG meet with Head of School to feedback initial outline commendations and recommendations |
| 16.15 | Exit presentation to all available staff of the unit –summarising the principal commendations/recommendations of the Review Group |
| 16.45 | Review Group depart |