



University College Dublin

Quality Improvement Plan

UCD Teaching and Learning

February 2014

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1. Introduction

The Review Group, chaired by Professor Muiris O'Sullivan, visited in May 2013 and the final Review Group Report (RGR) was issued in October 2013. UCD Teaching & Learning welcomes the RGR, and is pleased to note the Review Group's endorsement of: the Unit's accurate self-analysis; the expertise and commitment of staff; the range of achievements given the size of the Unit and its role in supporting the transition towards a focus on student learning.

Throughout the course of the Review, engagements with the Review Group were positive and stimulating. The Unit is very grateful to the Review Group for their considered evaluation of the Unit's activities and its supportive advice on continuing the development of an excellent service for the future.

The Unit has begun the process of implementing those recommendations of the Review Group within its control. It also looks forward to working with the Registrar, Deputy Registrar for Teaching and Learning and the wider University on the implementation of those recommendations, mainly pertaining to institutional governance of teaching and learning and space, which require senior management commitment to be realised.

The Quality Improvement Plan was drafted in November-December 2013 by Áine Galvin, Head of Unit and Elizabeth Noonan, Chair of the Quality Steering Committee, in collaboration with all staff of the Unit. The draft plan was discussed at Unit meeting on 16 December 2013 and again on 13 January 2014. A final version of the Plan was circulated to all staff for comment on 20 January 2014.

Approach taken to the Quality Improvement Plan

UCD Teaching & Learning approached the Quality Review process as a significant opportunity to hone its evolving strategy and service orientation. A significant amount of the Unit's preparatory work was directed towards the identification of a strategic SWOT to underpin engagement with the Review Group and to inform the development of Unit strategy post-review, activity which has been on-going and is reflected in this Quality Improvement Plan.

The over-arching recommendation (8.14) of the Review Group was that UCD Teaching & Learning establish as a matter of urgency a clear cut strategy for its services and operations. The Review Group also articulated a set of major enabling recommendations (8.15 – 8.18 & 2.19) in relation to the future strategy of the Unit. The remaining recommendations within the Review Report are specific implementation aspects of the major recommendations.

Taking account of the Review Group's strong emphasis on strategy development, the Unit has described in the QIP its priority actions in relation to the major recommendations (8.14-18 & 2.19) and cross-referenced these to incorporate the remaining recommendations which are aspects of implementation. It is anticipated that this approach will provide a strategic and comprehensive view of the progress of the Unit in taking forward the recommendations of the Review. As a supplement to the QIP, a statement of the mission and objectives of the Unit which will form the basis of its strategy and activities is appended.

2. Recommendations for Improvement – Follow-up Actions Taken and/or Planned

Categories:

- 1 – in the control of the Unit
- 2 – not in the control of the Unit
- 3 – requires additional funding

Timescale:

- A – already implemented
- B – implemented within one year
- C – implemented within five years
- D - Ongoing

Overall Strategic Recommendation	Related Quality Review Recommendations	Quality Improvement Actions (<i>Timescale</i>)	Category
<p>8.14 – Formulate as a matter of urgency a clear-cut strategy that (i) relates to the University’s strategy for teaching and learning, (ii) addresses clearly the focus, balance and integration of UCD T&L research activities and services, and (iii) ensures that the teaching and learning of UCD students are at the core of the Unit’s strategy, with students involved in the planning and implement of initiatives.</p>	<p>2.13 – same as 8.14 2.14 – Well-structured strategy days with external facilitation can be extremely beneficial. 2.15 & 7.12 – Reframe role and purpose of Unit around continuous cycle of T&L improvement at UCD, placing the collation and analysis of institutional data at the heart of scholarly research in T&L and linking this in turn to design, implementation and evaluation of key initiatives. 7.13 – The identity of the Unit needs to be established separately from that of Deputy Registrar for Teaching and Learning to whom it reports. 2.16 – Align Unit strategy to staff titles and day-to-day responsibilities. 2.17 – Identify major Unit objectives and match existing staff activities and projects to these. 4.11 – Proactively link educational quality enhancement activities directly to University’s Education Strategy. 4.14 - Create strong networks with students across the University, ensuring their involvement in all aspects of the Unit’s services, from design to implementation to review. Expressions of this</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the assistance of an external facilitator, a clear mission statement and objectives for the Unit has been developed (see appendix 1). The mission statement is oriented towards a programmatic focus for teaching and learning enhancement, whereby activities are centred on improving holistically the quality of UCD programmes and the quality of the student learning experience in an evidence-based manner. (A) • Proactively engage in the consultation process for the University Strategic Plan, as a parallel and related strategic process. (B) • Implement and disseminate the Unit strategy within UCD, coupled with annual strategy monitoring and review process to evaluate how effectively strategic goals, objectives and targets are being achieved. (B) • Regularly report to the Registrar and Deputy Registrar for T&L against the goals and objectives set-out in the strategy. (B) • Systematically review and use student feedback data from a variety of sources (e.g. SFM, ISSE, International barometer) to guide the focus and delivery of services. (B) • In the immediate term all strategic projects will include a student input. (A) 	<p>1</p>

	<p>approach would include for example: (i) Student involvement on the Teaching and Learning Advisory Board (ii) Occupancy of a physical location and space that promotes greater interaction between students and the activities of UCD T&L.</p> <p>5.9 – Formulate clear research strategy for the Unit, ensuring that the T&L research strategy is closely linked to development of initiatives at UCD and the teaching and learning strategy of UCD.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the next Education Strategy is articulated, levels of student involvement in the Unit’s work will be appraised and extended. (B) • A student representative has been invited to join the Academic Board of Studies for the accredited programmes. (A) • Identify and implement priority research themes for the Unit, aligned with the Unit’s Strategy and UCD’s Education Strategy. Review all research outputs against these themes quarterly. (B+D) 	
<p>8.15 – In practice, prioritise the alignment of teaching and learning activities including academic development, strategic projects and individual research to the strategic objectives of the Unit, driving: (i) A continued shift from individual agenda to systemically integrated agenda across multiple levels: individual, disciplinary, institutional, external (ii) The development of a leadership role in any activity related to teaching and learning within the University, such as e-learning, physical space, universal design/access, curriculum design and internationalisation.</p>	<p>3.14 – Establish a set of objectives aligned to University’s strategic Plan, which are broad enough to incorporate all of the T&L annual initiatives and stable enough to be used for a number of years. Reframe these activities in terms of level of impact or influence, i.e. impact on the practice of individual lecturers; schools or disciplines; university-wide; field of higher education.</p> <p>3.15 –Articulate an objective for each level of impact and sort current activities in relation to their intended level of impact. Review balance of current activities across the levels.</p> <p>7.14 – Impact of Unit could be improved through increased focus on strategic projects which involve large numbers of staff/entire Units, rather than continuing focus on one-to-one interactions.</p> <p>3.16 – T&L should have a leadership role in any activity relating to teaching and learning within the University (as per 8.15 ii).</p> <p>3.19 & 7.15 – Increase discipline-specific teaching approaches as distinct from generic teaching approaches for greater impact.</p> <p>3.22 & 7.16 – Map T&L system closing dates with</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-level objectives have been developed (see appendix 1), reflecting a clear shift from individual to School/Programme/whole institution initiatives and approaches. (A) • Adopt a research-informed and evidence-based approach to all aspects of the Unit’s work, systematically drawing on institutional data to guide the delivery of its services. (B) • Develop a holistic curriculum development, review and re-design methodology which is scalable and adaptable to variety of learning and programme delivery contexts. (B) • Map all elements of the annual work programme by level of impact (institutional, School/discipline, individual) and alignment with priority themes (First Year; E-learning; Quality Enhancement and Evaluation). (A+D) • Offer ‘just in time’ support and services to Schools/Programmes –aligned with academic timetable and demands. Examples of this include a new initiative to support Schools who are preparing for Quality Review and focused workshops on curriculum design and assessment to coincide with annual module descriptor/curriculum review dates. (A+D) • The work of the Unit will reflect specific disciplinary 	<p>1</p>

	<p>academic term dates and schedule events around the academic timetable.</p>	<p>approaches through showcases, resources and mobilising networks within and across disciplines. (B)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as a conduit for emerging disciplinary groups as part of the planned work of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning. (C) • Actively seek to influence and inform to key policies relating to teaching and learning and student experience, through informed expertise, guidance resources and participation in relevant policy and oversight groups. (B) 	
<p>8.16 - Focus on balancing the use of resources so that the quality enhancement activities of most value to UCD students are prioritised, emphasising strategic projects that move the University from teaching to learning as distinct from individually prioritised work. A small service Unit implementing a key university-wide mission does not have the luxury of indulging personal research interests over broader university strategy.</p>	<p>2.22 – same as 8.16 3.17 – Clarify the pioneering role of UCD T&L by ensuring that initiatives spearheaded by the Unit, such as Student Feedback on Modules, are transferred as soon as possible to their appropriate home elsewhere in the University. 3.20 - The well regarded accredited programmes in UTL are resource intensive and currently have a relatively small sphere of influence. These should be reviewed and incentivised so that it is more appealing to wider teaching community. 3.21 – Consideration should be given to the location of academic oversight of the accredited programmes delivered by UCD T&L. 4.12 – Establish a clear rationale to prioritise the direction and scope of its educational quality enhancement activities. 5.11 – Balance the Unit’s research resources, moving away from individual research solely for the benefit of the career of the individual academic to a collective research output for the wider benefit of students & staff at UCD.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a range of qualitative and quantitative indicators of quality, in consultation with UCD Institutional Research, as a basis for assessing and prioritising quality enhancement activities of most value to the university. (B) • Prioritise initiatives that have the potential to impact on whole institution – current examples include Blackboard Project; Module Descriptor project. (A) • Lead in a review of the Student Feedback System, with a view to articulating an institutional policy and governance mechanism for mainstreaming this system. (B) • Commission an external review of our existing professional development provision (including accredited programmes, non-accredited workshops and OER/T&L resources), having regard to the outcomes for UCD students and staff, and the inputs in terms of resources and academic oversight. (B) • The Unit’s current research priorities are: eLearning; programmatic approaches to student learning; evaluation of our Professional Programmes in University Teaching & Learning. (A) 	<p>1</p>

<p>8.17 – In order to achieve better integration, the physical relocation of all UCD T&L staff to a central location in the University should be prioritised, enabling Unit staff to work more closely together on a daily basis and increasing their visibility to students and staff. Associated with this relocation, a collaborative and inclusive physical space should be created in and around UCD T&L where students and staff can work and be encouraged to share their experiences of teaching and learning at UCD (a T&L version of the Global Lounge model).</p>	<p>2.18 – as per 8.17 6.12 – Communication strategies need to be developed to engage the silent majority who are not already connected with the Unit or its projects. In this context greater visibility within the University community should be reflected in the physical location of the Unit: (i) the Unit facilities and location should reflect its importance to the University; (ii) the location should be clearly branded and welcoming, encouraging colleagues to drop-on; (iii) the ‘front of house’ should include resource area with hardcopy materials for colleagues to browse as well as displays profiling the work of the Unit; (iv) materials need to continue to be branded in a consistent manner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part of UCD T&L was relocated to a central University location in the past 2 years. Placing their office at a main entrance to the Newman building has raised their profile and visibility. Efforts to ensure full co-location of the unit will continue but the current constraints on University finance needs to be recognised. (C) <p>Interim measures to improve the visibility of our current offices include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large poster display boards and LCD screen mounted on the external wall of the Newman Office profiling different aspects of the work of the Unit. (A) All hard copy, electronic, web-based and communications materials will continue to be branded in a consistent manner. (A) 	<p>2 & 3</p>
<p>8.18 - Proactively work on establishing a vitalising alumni network of champions across the University, who can learn from each other across colleges, schools and disciplines. Create strong networks with students in developing initiatives in areas such as curriculum development, assessment practices and spatial design. Likewise be proactive in</p>	<p>2.21 – Build capacity in challenging financial times by: (i) developing a secondment programme that enables innovators in T&L from across the University to work in the Unit for specified periods to time conducting research, developing and offering modules/seminars, in line with university and Unit strategy; (ii) establish a network of champions to assist as instructors/facilitators; (iii) examine the possibility of hiring graduate students to contribute to a range of initiatives currently undertaken by Unit staff; (iii) cultivate a strong network with colleagues in</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A School Heads of Teaching & Learning network has been established to bring together an important group of school-based leaders to work collaboratively with the Unit to enable the achievement of teaching & learning priorities at school and university levels. (A) Develop a network of champions in an online forum drawing on alumni, Fellows, award winners and ‘innovators’ to facilitate sharing of good practice. (B) Actively participate in the activities of new National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning to continually build engagement with peers in T&L units nationally, through U21 Education Innovation Group and existing connections to extend relations with peers internationally. (A) 	<p>1</p>

<p>building a strong network with colleagues in similar T&L Units in Ireland and abroad.</p>	<p>similar T&L units in Ireland and abroad, using these networks to help in enabling research funding and research dissemination, and to share ideas and practices with the Unit and wider university community. (also 5.12)</p> <p>6.13 – Use forums/networks of interested colleagues to promote of Unit, share best practice and develop critical mass for initiatives:</p> <p>(i) Champions/advocates are crucial at local level to engaging school members with strategic projects and multiplying the impact;</p> <p>(ii) School-level champions need to be supported through networks and acknowledged a playing an important role.</p> <p>6.10, 6.16 to 6.18 – Communicate the role, function, and products of the unit. Raising the profile of the Unit needs to take place across the University, e.g. consider annual “Celebration of Teaching Week”. Use complementary (mainstream) opportunities to promote T&L activity to new audiences.</p> <p>6.19 –Each strategic project should have a specific section in the project plan detailing how the target community will engage in the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate a Student Learning project to highlight and respond to the student perspective. (B) • Create and promote the “Inspiring Learning” video series featuring students and staff showcasing teaching innovations and demonstrating their impact on learning. The series will draw on networks of students and the growing network of school-based champions. (B) • Continue to add to the multi-media ‘Showcase’ section of the website which shares innovative practice from across the schools/disciplines. (D) Redevelop the page in line with advances in multi-media technology. (B) • Develop a network of alumni through activities including: presentation ceremonies for graduates of the professional programmes; (B) invitations to special events and the online forum. (D) • On-going meetings with VPTL's and ADTLs. (D) • Develop a systematic approach to student engagement in curriculum design and review of the Professional Programme in University Teaching & Learning. (C) Students’ Union rep will join the Board of Studies from AY13/14. (A) • Establish an annual ‘teaching/learning’ week/event to profile the activities and services of the Unit and share best practice examples from across the university.(B) • Establish an in-house community of researchers into teaching and learning. (B) • Staff and students are invited to input into projects where design of systems, procedures and/or practices feature (e.g. Blackboard module structure). (D) • Information about ongoing projects and project outcomes is disseminated to staff via the T&L website and all-staff newsletter.(D) • Calls for participation in strategic projects are issued to 	
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		academic staff (e.g. Blended Module Design Project). In these instances, members of the target community can also be members of the project team. (D)	
<p>8.19 – Increase transparency by developing a school-focused marketing and communications plans utilising local champions. Advocate the recognition of teaching as a counter to the perception that it is not a valid route to promotion. Disseminate research output from UCD T&L to the wider University to enhance student-centred learning.</p>	<p>6.14 & 6.15 – School-based approach to marketing (to complement an all-staff umbrella approach) to:</p> <p>(i) engage with HoS and identify school/discipline needs</p> <p>(ii) identify previous projects that have benefited the school</p> <p>(iii) identify champions/advocates within the school</p> <p>(iv) Offer dedicated school based solutions.</p> <p>6.11 – Marketing activity should primarily focus internally.</p> <p>3.18 - Advocacy for recognition and rewarding of teaching, and address the perception that teaching activities are not valued in general and particularly in the promotion process. Key actions to include:</p> <p>(i) Continuation of T&L fellowships and awards</p> <p>(ii) Explicit recognition of teaching achievements through practical initiatives from Senior Management (e.g. annual dinner or reception to celebrate those who have demonstrated commitment/achievement)</p> <p>4.13 & 5.10 – Make the Unit’s research results transparent and relevant within the University. Clear dissemination plan of all research outputs from Unit.</p>	<p>• Schools have been offered customised development programmes in line with their needs, (e.g. Preparation for Quality Review) (A)</p> <p>• High-impact school-based projects (e.g. Assessment ReDesign; Curriculum Mapping) are continuing. (D)</p> <p>• Develop the Client Relationship Management system to facilitate identification of champions in schools and inform outreach. (B)</p> <p>• Renew efforts to include a link to the Teaching & Learning website from the UCD homepage to highlight the parity of esteem in which Teaching and Research are held in line with the National Education Strategy. (B)</p> <p>• Marketing activity will continue to be primarily focused internally. (D)</p> <p>• A 2014 Training and Development Survey (with specific focus on eLearning) will be issued, acted upon and shared. This will increase transparency. (B)</p> <p>• Initiate a new round of Fellows for 2014-15. (B)</p> <p>• Regularly release and promote new teaching resources on the website as an output from research into teaching (D)</p> <p>• Develop a new webpage “Research into Teaching” to advise and encourage staff to research and publish on teaching. (B)</p> <p>• Explicit dissemination of the Unit’s research outputs in UCD Connect and other communication channels. (B)</p>	<p>1</p>

<p>2.19 - Establish a <i>Teaching and Learning Advisory Board</i> in order to: (i) Improve critical mass by drawing on available advisory resources including current students, champions of teaching and learning amongst university staff and possibly some external advisors (ii) Help identify and address broader policy issues related to teaching and learning in UCD (referenced again in Section 8)</p>	<p>2.20 - The precise terms of reference and membership of this board are a matter for the University leadership. However, the board requires greater focus, more power, increased vibrancy and a more consistent calendar of meetings than the existing Committee. Guidelines for consideration: (i) The role of the board is to provide a broad-based academic forum for the development and implementation of T&L strategy both within the Unit and across the University, aligning the activities of the Unit with university and national higher education strategy; (ii) The board should include relevant representatives of the University leadership and Academic Council so that its decisions can be implemented in areas beyond the control of UCD T&L; (iii) It should also include student representatives, the leadership of UCD T&L as well as those leading significant T&L initiatives in colleges and schools; (iv) Representation from Adult, Access and Continuing Professional Education as well as UCD International and other key administrative and support Units as appropriate is also recommended; (v) Serious consideration should be given to the involvement of external members; (vi) Depending on the University's oversight arrangements at a given time, the board should be chaired by the Registrar or the Deputy Registrar for T&L.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under revised University management structures (announced in January 2014), an Education Strategy Group will be established as a sub-group of UMT. The Group will be chaired by the Registrar – terms of reference and membership to be clarified over the coming weeks. 	<p>2</p>
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3. Prioritised Resources Requirements

The only recommendation which requires additional resources that the unit cannot provide is co-location of all staff to a central location in the university.

Efforts to ensure full co-location of unit staff will continue but require senior management commitment to be realised. It is currently not possible to cost this recommendation as the matter is beyond the control of the unit.

Appendix 1

UCD Teaching and Learning

Mission:

To have measurable impact on the quality of taught programmes and the quality of the student educational experience at UCD.

Objectives

1. To develop a clear framework by which the institution understands the quality of its programmes and the student experience

As a result, UCD T&L will establish a "balanced scorecard" approach based on key enhancement data, both qualitative and quantitative to guide the delivery of its services and support to schools and programmes.

2. To establish an enabling portfolio of continuous professional development opportunities for all academic staff, which will have an impact on the quality of student learning

As a result, UCD T&L will ensure that all academic staff can access a range of relevant accredited, non-accredited and ongoing professional development provision to support the development of their teaching skills and expertise.

3. Develop a holistic curriculum development, review and re-design methodology which is scalable and adaptable to a variety of learning and programme delivery contexts

As a result, UCD T&L will develop a customisable curriculum development model to facilitate the design and review of programmes however they are delivered, as well as the capacity to address the enhancement of particular thematic areas including assessment redesign, student engagement and the embedding of UCD graduate attributes.

4. To contribute actively to key policies and initiatives related to teaching and learning and the student experience

As a result, UCD T&L will seek to influence, inform and shape the development of key policies and initiatives through participation in policy groups, and providing a research informed contribution to the establishment of policies and initiatives for UCD staff and students.