



University College Dublin

Periodic Quality Review

UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science

November 2013

Accepted by the UCD Governing Authority at its meeting on 18 February 2014

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Appendix One: UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science Response to the Review Group Report

Appendix Two: Schedule for Review Site Visit to UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science

1. Introduction and Context of UCD Agriculture and Food Science

Introduction

- 1.1 This Report presents the findings of a quality review of UCD Agriculture and Food Science, at University College Dublin (UCD), which was undertaken in November 2013.

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, international good practice (e.g. Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2007) and informed by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. 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 and informed by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

- 1.4 Typically, the review model comprises of four major elements:

- Preparation of a Self-assessment Report (SAR)

- A visit by a Review Group (RG) that includes UCD staff and external experts, both national and international. The site visit normally will take place over a two or three day period
- Preparation of a Review Group Report that is made public
- Agreement of an Action Plan for Improvement (Quality Improvement Plan) based on the RG Report's recommendations; the University will also monitor progress against the Improvement Plan

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

- 1.5 The composition of the Review Group for the UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science was as follows:
- Professor Gerard Fealy, UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery & Health Systems (Chair)
 - Dr Marie Clarke, UCD School of Education (Deputy Chair)
 - Professor John J. Kennelly, Dean, Faculty of Agricultural, Life & Environmental Sciences, University of Alberta
 - Professor Mike Gooding, Head, School of Agriculture, Policy and Development, University of Reading
- 1.6 The Review Group visited UCD from 18–21 November 2013 and held meetings with School staff on an individual or group basis, student and staff representatives from across the University, employers and external stakeholders. The site visit schedule is included as Appendix 2.
- 1.7 In addition to the Self-assessment Report and its appendices, the Review Group considered documentation, provided in hard copy by the School during the Site Visit.

Preparation of the Self-assessment Report

- 1.8 UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science established a Self-assessment Co-ordinating Committee in accordance with the UCD Quality Office Guidelines. The members of the Co-ordinating Committee were representative of School staff across the various sections. The members of the Co-ordinating Committee were:
- Professor Alex Evans, Head of School and SAR Chair
 - Professor David McHugh
 - Dr Aine Ni Dhubhain
 - Dr Amalia Scannell
 - Dr Barry McMahon
 - Dr John Browne
 - Dr Michael Wallace
 - Ms Moya Ryan
 - Mr Gerry Looby
- 1.9 The Co-ordinating Committee (SARCC) met regularly during the preparation of the SAR and the preparation of the report was a collective responsibility by the SARCC in consultation with other School members. All staff had an opportunity to contribute to the report through School meetings, emails and one-to-one meetings, and discussing and/or commenting on a

report draft. The final SAR draft was circulated to all School staff for comment prior to its finalisation.

The University

1.10 University College Dublin (UCD) is a large and diverse university whose origin dates back to 1854. The University is situated on a large, modern campus (133 hectare), about 4km to the south of the centre of Dublin.

1.11 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

1.12 As one of the largest universities on the island of Ireland, UCD supports a broad, deep and rich academic community in Science, Business, Engineering, Health Sciences, Agriculture, Veterinary, Arts, Law, Celtic Studies and Human Sciences. There are currently more than 24,000 students in our UCD campus (approximately 15,500 undergraduates, 8,000 postgraduates and 2,000 Occasional and Adult Education students) registered on over 70 University degree programmes, including over 6,100 international students from more than 121 countries. The University also has over 5,400 students studying UCD degree courses on campuses overseas.

1.13 The University is a national leader in research funding, and has established five major interdisciplinary research themes that match Ireland's needs and current global challenges. These are Agri-food; Culture Economy & Society; Health; Information, Communications and Computing; Energy and the Environment.

1.14 The University accounts for over 30% of international students within the Irish education sector, over 25% of all graduate students and almost 28% of all doctoral enrolments across the seven Irish Universities.

UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science

1.15 The UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science is one of two schools within the College of Agriculture, Food Science and Veterinary Medicine.

1.16 The current School structure was established in 2011, having been part of the large School of Agriculture, Food Science and Veterinary Medicine since 2005 and following an extensive

management re-structuring within the University. Prior to 2005 the School operated as the Faculty of Agriculture.

- 1.17 The School currently operates under its School Plan 2011-14 and supports the overall University strategy outlined in its strategic plan *Forming Global Minds*.
- 1.18 The School delivers 12 undergraduate and 12 postgraduate programmes that cover the complete food chain from on-farm production to food science and human nutrition with closely linked areas of horticulture, forestry, rural development, equine science, and agri-environmental science.
- 1.19 The School is unique within the Irish University sector offering the degrees of Bachelor of Agriculture Science and Masters of Agricultural Science. It also offers degrees of BSc, MSc, MSc(Agr) and PhD. Degree programmes awards are offered at NFQ levels 8-10.
- 1.20 There is strong demand for entry to the School's programmes and this is reflected in the standard entry route which caters for school leavers and is points based (CAO). The School also provides non-standard entry routes of Mature, Access and Disability of approximately 10%, entry at stages 2 or 3 via other completed programmes, or via UCD's Ad Astra Academy.
- 1.21 The School is research active and driven by three of the key research themes from UCD's Research strategy, namely Agri-Food; Health; and Energy and Environment.
- 1.22 The School has strong links externally with the agriculture and food industry in Ireland which has enhanced teaching, supported resources for research and increased growth in the commercialisation of research.
- 1.23 The School is based in a number of locations, including the Agriculture & Food Science Centre, which houses the majority of the School's staff in the Agribusiness and Rural Development, Animal and Crop Science, and Environment and Sustainable Resource Management sections, and also contains the School Office and Programme Office. The Food Science & Nutrition Section of the School is located in Science Centre South and in the Food Science annex building. The School also occupies some offices and shared laboratory space in the UCD Veterinary Sciences Centre. The School has two research facilities: the Lyons Research Farm, a facility shared with the School of Veterinary Medicine, and the Rosemount Environmental Research Centre, located on the Belfield campus and jointly shared with the School of Biology and Environmental Science. The teaching and research facilities comprise a mix of new state-of-the-art facilities, notably at Science South, and more dated facilities at the Agriculture & Food Science Centre. The Lyons Research Farm is a large mixed farm that acts as a research facility for farm-related research and is also used for the delivery of undergraduate teaching.

Methodology

- 1.24 Prior to the site visit the Review Group considered the activities of the School as defined in the Self-assessment Report (SAR) and its appendices. During the three-day site visit, meetings were held with the UCD Registrar and Vice President, the College Principal, the Head of School & Dean of Agriculture, the SAR Committee, associate deans and section heads, members of staff, including, academic, administrative and technical, and

representatives of undergraduate and postgraduate students and some post-doctoral fellows. Individual meetings were also held with the School Strategy and Development Manager, the College Finance Officer, the UCD Head of Buildings and Services and the Liaison Librarian to the School. The Review Group also met with a group representing key stakeholders from industry, some of whom were former graduates of the School and the Group also held a conference call with a senior representative of Teagasc. Walking tours were undertaken to the Lyons Research Farm, the Rosemount facilities and the various buildings and related infrastructure that support the School's education and research programmes at the Belfield campus. The site visit provided the Review Group with the opportunity to evaluate and verify the data outlined in the Self-assessment Report and its supplementary volume and to explore and discuss aspects of School structures, processes and practices. All members of the Review Group participated in all discussions and meetings. This Report has been read and approved by all members of the Group.

- 1.25 At the exit presentation the Review Group provided an overview of their initial findings, comments, commendations and recommendations.
- 1.26 The Self-assessment Report provided a good overview of the School, its core activities and its constituent units and resources. It also offered clear insight into the workings of the School and the extent and variety of its activities and responsibilities. A set of appendices was provided as a supplement, along with additional data provided by the School in the meeting room. Overall the documentation provided a comprehensive and clearly written SAR report and the SAR Committee is to be commended for the quality of the main document and supplementary documents, including the very helpful complementary tables, graphs and appendices. The SWOT analysis contained in the SAR was clear and the recommendations for improvement were grounded in the analysis. The report covered all the required areas as set out in the relevant guidelines and contained the critical information, including information on how the School benchmarks itself against referent international schools. The SAR provided comprehensive evidence of the School's performance in relation to quality improvement since the previous quality review in 2000 and it drew attention to the issues and challenges in ensuring quality in the future. In this way, the SAR report provided the basis for a focused site visit by the Review Group.
- 1.27 The Review Group met highly experienced and dedicated staff from within the School and the wider University and also with key external stakeholders, as set out above. The meetings were conducted in an open manner and all participants who met the Review Group were provided with opportunities to contribute to the discussions. In the event, the great majority of individuals who met the Review Group contributed. The meetings were conducted in a purposeful and focused way, their general tone was informal, and views were expressed which spoke of good practices, but also some areas that presented challenges for the School.
- 1.28 A clear overview of the methodology undertaken in writing the SAR was presented to the Review Group. The members of the SAR Committee drafted individual sections of the SAR Report and its supplementary documents, and the School Strategy and Development Manager took overall responsibility for editing the document. All staff were invited to comment on the initial draft of the report and contributed to the final draft. During the site visit, all staff who were interviewed indicated that they were familiar with the Report
- 1.29 The Review Group met with a group of undergraduate students from across several programmes. The students discussed their experiences of teaching and learning, work

placement experience, the School resources and facilities and their wider experiences as undergraduate students at UCD. The undergraduate students conveyed a strong sense of identity as 'Ag Science' students and spoke of the closeness and shared identity of their student community, which was expressed in much part through activities associated with the Agricultural Science Society (AgSoc).

- 1.30 The Review group also met with a group of postgraduate students, which included graduate research students, recently graduate doctoral students and students undertaking graduate taught courses. The group spoke about their experiences of studying as postgraduates, including their experiences of the resources and facilities to support their learning and research activities
- 1.31 The Review Group noted the current fiscal climate and diminishing resources both financial and human resources in parallel with increasing student numbers. It was noted that the number of UCD staff has reduced by 8% during the period 2008–12 combined with an increase in student intake.
- 1.32 The review process was clear to the Review Group, including the place of the review within the overall development of the School and the Group was greatly supported in the site visit by the UCD Quality Office and the School Office.
- 1.33 The following chapters present the Review Group's comments on its findings in relation to the Report and the relevant site visit meetings. This includes an overview of the present status and core aspects of the School's activities under each heading. The Report also covers how well the aims and objectives of the School are fulfilled having regard to existing available resources. It points to examples of good practice and also where there are resource limitations and the School's plans for improvement. The Report also identifies the extent to which the School is aligned with the University's strategic objectives and structures.

2. Organisation and Management

Comment

- 2.1 The School is one of two constituent schools of the UCD College of Agriculture, Food Science and Veterinary Medicine. Within this structural arrangement it has the status of an 'executive school'. This status confers a degree of independence on the School in matters of budgetary control, although this independence is conditional, since key budgetary decisions are mediated through a number of central committees, including the Budgetary Review Committee (BRC) and also the UCD Bursar. In matters of governance and strategy and operational management, the School also appears to be largely independent of the College. The relationship between the School and the College is one in which the College Principal has a light touch approach.
- 2.2 The School's internal governance and management structures consist of key committees and leadership roles associated with the School's major functional areas, such as the major undergraduate and graduate taught programmes and research and innovation, and four major disciplinary fields or 'sections'. The Head of School, who also holds the position of Dean of Agricultural Sciences, has overall responsibility for the strategic and operational management of the School, but manages the operational elements through a system of

delegated authority and responsibility to three associate deans and four section heads. The associate deans are responsible for the strategic aspects of their respective areas of responsibility, viz. teaching and learning, research and innovation and international programmes, and the Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning is also responsible for academic governance of programmes at the level of the School.

- 2.3 For operational and line management purposes, the School is divided into four sections, which closely map to the four pillars of Production Agriculture, Agri-Business, Agri-Environment and Food Science & Human Nutrition. Each section has a clear role in the planning, management and delivery of the School's education, research and innovation programmes. Academic and research staff are associated with a particular section for the purpose of teaching and research. The section heads appear to operate to facilitate communication between the various sections and the Head of School.
- 2.4 The Head of School is also supported by a Strategy and Development Manager, who is responsible for strategic and operational management, including ensuring that the School Plan is put into operation. In addition, the role involves an element of horizon scanning, which involves advising the Head of School on key developments in the external environment and generating new business for the School. In practice the role involves collating and assimilating information from the various sections and units and communicating these to the Head of School. The School also has a Marketing Manager who is responsible for internal and external communications, including promoting and marketing the School to its constituency of prospective students.
- 2.5 The School is currently operating under the *School Plan 2011–2014*, which provides the basis for School decisions regarding activities and developments in the areas of teaching and research, with a particular focus on how the School's key activities are impacting on society and the economy. The School Plan is based on the University's strategic goals of growing and developing graduate education, strengthening and enhancing academic disciplines and programmes, and internationalising the student experience. The Plan is developed and operated with reference to the School Financial Plan 2012/13–2016/17.
- 2.6 The School is operating within a difficult external macro-economic environment, in which the Government has imposed a series of annual cuts to the overall budget assigned to the higher education sector in Ireland. It is anticipated that cuts to overall budgets will continue in the medium term. Within this difficult fiscal milieu, the School budget is based on two parallel systems of accounting and budgetary control, the Resource Allocation Model (RAM) and the Controllable Surplus Target. The RAM model determines how the School balances its income and expenditure and provides a basis for planning and budgeting. The Controllable Surplus Target model is a specific tool with which the University Bursar manages budget cuts within the School; in practice, the School may offset budgetary cuts by allocating 75 per cent of any annual increases in non-Exchequer income against its controllable surplus. Assuming that additional non-Exchequer income is generated, this method provides for a reduction in the amount of the budget cut.
- 2.7 The School budget is developed by the Head of School, in consultation with the School Strategy and Development Manager and the College Finance Officer. In matters of spending, the final decision on aspects of the budget, notably staff recruitment, rests with the University Budgetary Review Committee.

- 2.8 The Review Group noted the absence of an explicit workload model and the need for the School to consider its development with respect to the high staff workload and the wide range of module offerings.

Commendations

- 2.9 The School has an explicit governance structure, along with internal management and administrative arrangements for strategic oversight and operational management of its key activities and functions, notably academic programmes and research and innovation. The organisation of the School in four distinct sections suggests areas of distinct disciplinary activity that require both strategic planning and development and operational management. The structures provide the School with a framework with which to ensure the required oversight and leadership of key functional areas.
- 2.10 The School is currently operating a RAM surplus, which provides a greater level of flexibility when negotiating on the Controllable Surplus Targets and permits the School to undertake strategic recruitment that addresses vacancies and supports the development of new taught master's programmes that will provide new non-Exchequer revenue streams in the future.
- 2.11 The fact that the Head of School is also the Dean of Agricultural Sciences is a positive aspect of School governance, since it provides the basis of good leadership for both School programmes and the advancement of the discipline of Agricultural Science and its associated sub-disciplines. Evidence proffered during the site visit pointed to the School having a high level of confidence in and satisfaction with the leadership provided by the Head of School.
- 2.12 The School is constituted by a mix of disciplinary fields related to agriculture and food science and this broad multidisciplinary character of the School represents a strength for both the School and the wider University, in that it provides opportunities for cross-disciplinary synergies and collaborations in both teaching and research. While each discipline within the School has a strong sense of its own identity, the sum of all disciplines is what contributes to the distinct UCD 'Agriculture and Food Science' brand.
- 2.13 Staff associated with the various sections within the School demonstrate a strong commitment to their respective sections, as evidenced in extensive undergraduate and taught graduate provision, graduate research training, high performance in securing research funding, and high-impact outputs and innovations.

Recommendations

- 2.14 Agriculture and food science are significant growth areas in the national economy and represent major drivers of economic recovery and they thus have critical strategic importance in the wider national context. Accordingly, the School must be adequately resourced, so that it is best positioned to respond to and be proactive in the external environment and industry associated with agriculture, food and related areas.
- 2.15 Given the strategic importance of agriculture and food science to the national economy, and notwithstanding the macro-economic context of fiscal retrenchment, the University should consider a mechanism to enable the School to have a high degree of autonomy and control over its own affairs in matters of planning and development. One such mechanism would be to provide a more direct line of communication between the Head of School and the

University Management Team Executive, particularly in matters related to budgetary planning. This could enable the School to re-invest some of its surplus income in key targeted areas that are of critical and of strategic importance to both UCD and Ireland Inc.

- 2.16 The School should review its current governance arrangements in relation to the roles of associate deans and subject head, with the aim of ensuring a more dynamic governance and management system of governance, so that decision-making process could transcend sectional boundaries, where warranted.
- 2.17 In the light of the strategic national importance of agriculture and food science, the School should examine the current nature and composition of the School Executive to ensure that all sections of the School work to a common purpose and achieve greater cohesion.
- 2.18 Succession planning for the major leadership roles within the School, notably the Head of School, section heads and associate deans, is critical to the on-going success of the School. In this regard, the School should develop a succession planning strategy that will identify those individuals who will take on leadership roles in the medium term.
- 2.19 The Review Group recommends that the School should consider developing a workload model that meets the needs of the School.

3. Staff and Facilities

Comments

- 3.1 As the Self-assessment Report points out, the reduction in academic staff associated with budget cuts has resulted in significant gaps in the academic staff complement of the UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science. The funding cuts have coincided with a period of rapid growth in undergraduate student numbers and in research productivity and quality, thus posing a significant challenge to maintaining the upward trajectory in research that has been achieved over the past decade. Indeed, there is a real concern that, unless declining exchequer support can be replaced by other revenue sources, the quality of undergraduate education and research productivity will decline for the foreseeable future.
- 3.2 The plan to offset declining government support is to increase revenue generation, primarily by targeting international undergraduate students and developing a suite of taught masters' programmes. This is certainly a logical approach but there are other options to build capacity that have not been fully explored. Specifically, there is an opportunity to build capacity through a closer collaborative model with other universities and, in particular, with Teagasc. The Self-Assessment Report shows significant funding from Teagasc that appears to be primarily in support of graduate students through the Walsh Fellowship Programme. A more seamless working relationship with Teagasc could be one mechanism to help fill the identified gaps in certain disciplinary areas. The Report makes reference to the signing of an agreement with Teagasc, but there is no specific mention that building on the current relationship with Teagasc would be another mechanism to achieve the desired depth in the some disciplinary areas. From the SAR it is clear that there are many joint publications with Teagasc staff, but this is not reflected in a formal strategy to build on current collaboration. In light of the number of Walsh Fellows, it is surprising that only one Teagasc scientist is listed as an Adjunct staff member. There should also be potential for increased collaboration with University College Cork in the Food Science area.

- 3.3 Agriculture and food has been identified as an important growth sector of the Irish economy which creates increased demand for research and innovation, as well as for human resources. This provides an excellent framework for future success, however future success will require appropriate investment in human resources and infrastructure that will prove challenging in the current difficult economic climate in Ireland.
- 3.4 The SAR makes reference to integrating contract staff into the structure of the School. It is not clear what is intended here. By their nature one would expect post-doctoral fellows (PDFs) to be transient, as a post-doctoral position is a step along the road to a full-time academic appointment, and for the School to take measures to ensure that they feel that the work that they do is valued.
- 3.5 In the current fiscal climate, promotional opportunities for academic staff are limited. The impact on staff morale and retention are a cause for concern.

Commendations

- 3.6 The School is to be commended on achieving substantial increases in student numbers and research output while at the same time experiencing reductions in academic and support staff associated with a significant reduction in exchequer funding. The metrics for the School are very good, relative to average values for UCD and relative to international peer institutions. The marked increase in scientific publications per FTE over the past decade is particularly impressive and this enhanced research performance has been achieved while maintaining the School's quality undergraduate programmes.
- 3.7 In addition to the positive comments above, the data on completion rates at the undergraduate level and graduate level are very impressive and certainly not many institutions internationally are able to match completion data presented by the School.

Recommendations

- 3.8 The focus on revenue generation to mitigate the impact of government funding cuts is commendable. However, revenue generation needs to be balanced against the additional workload associated with a particular revenue generation strategy. Revenue generation appears to be primarily focussed on increasing enrolment in existing taught masters and the development of new taught masters to attract international students. To generate this new revenue requires investment in new academic positions. It is not clear whether these new academic positions will fill the current gaps in disciplinary areas identified in the SAR. If the new recruits to support the taught masters are in areas other than where there are existing gaps, it will not solve the challenge of having sufficient depth in priority research areas.
- 3.9 It is recommended that the focus on taught masters be carefully reviewed in the context of ensuring that the academic staff recruited to support taught masters also contribute to filling the current disciplinary gaps arising from the School's inability to fill vacant positions in recent years. Academic positions filled through revenue generation should be focussed on areas of strategic importance that support the research priorities of the School. This would allow the School to strengthen its offering of graduate-level courses for its PhD programmes and thesis-based masters. These graduate-level courses could then be repackaged to allow the offering of taught masters that are congruent with the research strength of the School. This approach should allow the School to have greater ability to manage the workload

associated with taught masters so that it does not end up having a significant negative impact on overall research productivity.

- 3.10 The School has a very good track record in terms of the quality of undergraduate programmes. Recruiting full fee paying international students into these programmes is worth considering as such students could be accommodated without the need for developing new modules, as for taught masters. A comparative analysis of the business model for taught masters and increasing international undergraduate students would be useful to guide decision-making.
- 3.11 The School has built an impressive collaborative relationship with Teagasc, based on the number of Walsh Fellows that are funded at UCD. This collaborative relationship has been an important contributor to the enhanced research output over the past decade. In light of this track record, it is notable that only one Teagasc scientist is identified as an Adjunct appointment at the School. The current relationship with Teagasc could be strengthened by building an institutional collaborative framework on the current collaborative model. The recent agreement with Teagasc appears to be intended to capitalize on the opportunity to build capacity through a closer collaborative model. The SFI project currently under development is a good example of what should be a win-win for both institutions as they strive to maintain, or build capacity, under challenging economic circumstances. A closer working relationship with Teagasc should also allow UCD to fill some of the existing gaps in their ability to deliver undergraduate programmes.
- 3.12 Although research support has been strong, there appears to be untapped opportunity to expand industry and EU funding. Provided an appropriate model is in place for the flow of overhead back to the School, this provides another opportunity for revenue generation.
- 3.13 A more formal mentoring programme for new academic staff is recommended so that new recruits are positioned to achieve their full potential. A combination of individual mentoring by experienced staff coupled with a formal School mentoring programme is likely to be most effective.
- 3.14 The SAR makes reference to integrating contract staff into the structure of the School. It is not clear what is intended here. By their nature one would expect post-doctoral fellows (PDFs) to be transient, as a PDF position is a step along the road to a full-time academic appointment, and for the School to take measures to ensure that they feel that the work that they do is valued.
- 3.15 As funding has declined it appears that the complement of support staff has suffered disproportionate cuts. The School is encouraged to review the academic-support staff ratio to ensure that the current model optimizes overall productivity of academic staff in terms of teaching and research.
- 3.16 Quality research and teaching programmes require appropriate facilities and infrastructure to be internationally competitive. Clearly the facilities in the Agriculture building and at Lyons Estate do not measure up that of many peer institutions. Upgrading of these facilities is an important investment that will position the School to continue to be globally competitive in teaching and research.

4. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Comment

- 4.1 The school is the custodian of well-respected and widely-known brands. The educational positioning of the school is auspicious given the current international emphasis on food security and sustainable use of resources and, in particular, the national priorities for the land-based industries.

Commendations

- 4.2 The current students and the graduates of the School reflected very well on the efforts of the staff.
- 4.3 It is acknowledged that a great deal of good will, collegiality and commitment to student development had contributed to improved student recruitment, and entry grade levels, despite very significant budgetary and resource constraints.
- 4.4 Students, particularly the undergraduates, were very positive about their experiences at UCD.
- 4.5 Employers were clear about the quality and value of UCD graduates in the land-based and food sectors. Employers also recognised the distinctiveness of the UCD graduate, and recognised that this was partly due to the emphasis on programmes maintaining a science-based approach.
- 4.6 The Professional Work Experience (PWE) programme was praised strongly by students and employers alike.
- 4.7 The facilities and staff at UCD Lyons Research Farm provided a high quality, and highly-valued, educational experience. This is despite the infrastructural deficits referred to in paragraph 3.16.

Concerns

- 4.8 It is highly unlikely that quality of provision can be sustained in the context that the School is delivering 362 modules with an academic staff complement of 58.
- 4.9 There appeared to be poor student engagement, commonly expressed as poor attendance rates, on many modules. Unless addressed in a serious manner, student engagement issues are likely to worsen as class sizes increase.
- 4.10 The 'traditional' lecture remains the dominant form of teaching, and there was apparently poor use of more modern educational instruments. For example, more Web-based methods, and other forums to encourage student-student and student-educator interactions could be employed. The discussion with students indicated that teaching was conducted largely through the lecture method and laboratory tutorials and farm-based practical experience and instruction; they indicated that they were not generally exposed to teaching methods involving the use of blended learning and IT-based pedagogical methods.

Recommendations

- 4.11 Review the School's module portfolio, to ensure that teaching provision more appropriately reflects the staff resource available as defined in a stated workload model.
- 4.12 Ensure efficiency of provision (across programmes, school sections, and provision in related schools) whilst acknowledging the constraints imposed by accreditation and different educational modes (distance learning, CPD provision, etc.).
- 4.13 Evolve more student-centred learning techniques, encompassing modern pedagogic developments and Web-based approaches.

5. Curriculum Development and Review

Comment

- 5.1 Much that has been covered under Section 4. *Teaching, Learning and Assessment* above is also relevant to Section 5. There is a clear structure for curriculum review, with the Curriculum Review Committee's input to the Programme Board. The staff of the School has been very active in engaging in the strategy to deliver more post-graduate taught (PGT) programmes, to assist in the imperative to increase non-Exchequer income. The new PGT provision may well assist in the resilience of the School, by diversifying markets and income streams. Six new PGT programmes have been made available for 2013 or 2014 entry.

Commendations

- 5.2 Students and employers rated the programmes highly, with acknowledgement from both sectors that the programmes provided the relevant competency and transferable skills.
- 5.3 New members of academic staff were often associated with module and course development, with good opportunities and support from more established colleagues and subject Heads.
- 5.4 Overall, the School appeared to be responsive and dynamic with respect to new course development.

Concerns

- 5.5 It appears that much taught provision has been defined by legacy, bottom-up approaches and organic development. Much of this is inevitable and also of benefit. However, it is possible that provision is not necessarily the most efficient and strategic for the School and University perspectives; modules could become too specifically associated with Sections, or even just components of sections.

Recommendations

- 5.6 The School should ensure course and module provision are aligned with School strengths and research interests

- 5.7 The School should develop a more strategic approach to international engagement, consistent with overall strengths and priorities of the School

6. Research Activity

Comments

- 6.1 The big challenge for the College, and for UCD overall, will be to maintain performance achieved in recent years at a time of markedly reduced government funding. Indeed the most recent data appear to indicate, not surprisingly, that the reduced funding is already having a negative impact in research output. The primary strategy to deal with the budget cuts is to increase revenue through offering an array of taught master's programmes. A number of questions arise: To what extent is this strategy going to detract from the research enterprise of the School? Will this focus result in the School being less research intensive and, as a result, will the clock be turned back on the progress made in recent years?
- 6.2 The success of a revenue generating strategy will also require greater certainty from the University regarding the funding formula for the proportion of increased revenue flowing back to the School. In the absence of clear guidelines on the distribution of new revenue, there is limited incentive to pursue novel revenue generation opportunities. The Report does mention that some academic staff are planning to focus on research as a way to increase revenue while, at the same time, enhancing research productivity. Depending on the business model, this strategy would appear to be well aligned with the overall goal of a research-intensive School. In the absence of data on policies regarding indirect costs of research, it is not clear how increased research revenue would provide funding to support building academic capacity, other than in increased contract positions.
- 6.3 About 50% of undergraduate students go on to pursue graduate programmes. This is surprisingly high. A number of questions arise: To what extent does it reflect the current economic situation in Ireland? What were the comparable numbers during the boom years of the early and mid-2000s? It would be interesting to see data on the number of students going abroad to pursue graduate degrees; for example, has there been a decline in the proportion of students who go abroad for PhD programmes? It appeared that a relatively high proportion of recently-recruited academic staff had obtained two or more degrees from UCD. This is an area worth monitoring to ensure an appropriate mix of 'home grown' and external hires.

Commendations

- 6.4 The growth in research activity over the past 10 years is truly impressive. The metrics relating to refereed publications, research funding and impact of research look very good relative to UCD overall, as well as relative to peer institutions globally. Presumably this remarkable performance reflects greater investment in research during the 'Celtic Tiger' years, as well as a UCD strategy to become a research-intensive university. Regardless, the School's performance over the past 10 years is indeed remarkable and it is well positioned to take advantage of the growing importance of agriculture and food as an engine of the Irish economy.

Recommendations

- 6.5 This review team supports the measures outlined in the Conclusions and Recommendations section of Chapter 6 of the SAR. Providing a supportive environment for research and taking measures to address the underlying reasons as to why some academic staff have relatively low productivity seems wise indeed. The extraordinary productivity of some academic staff is also worth reviewing in some detail as to the factors that contribute to that productivity.
- 6.6 The balance between teaching and research needs to be monitored in the context of the emphasis on taught masters. The modules developed to support taught masters should ideally be in areas that also provide graduate-level courses to PhD students. Indeed, ideally the courses should be developed to support thesis-based graduate programs and then repackaged to provide taught masters in areas of demand internationally.
- 6.7 If taught masters are considered essential as revenue generators, and it is not possible to align these modules to areas of research priority, then consideration should be given to having a separate teaching stream for academic staff who are recruited to support this revenue generating model. In the absence of such a teaching stream, these academic staff are likely to be disadvantaged, in terms of promotion and career advancement.
- 6.8 As previously mentioned, strengthening the current collaborative model with Teagasc appears to have potential as a mechanism to deepen disciplinary strength in areas of strategic importance.

7. Management of Quality and Enhancement

Comment

- 7.1 The School has demonstrated a commitment to the management and enhancement of quality in the areas of research and administrative support. The School is fortunate to have an appointment that has responsibility for strategic planning. Students are represented on committees in the School.

Commendations

- 7.2 The presence of a strategic planning officer in the School is to be commended.
- 7.3 The financial planning and support processes are very good. There is clear evidence of planning with reference to research development in the School.

Recommendations

- 7.4 There is a need for more engagement at a wider staff level with reference to strategic planning and operational development.
- 7.5 There is a need for clearer communication with all staff with reference to future strategic development and priorities.

- 7.6 More emphasis on evaluation and planning with reference to teaching and learning is required.
- 7.7 A teaching and learning day should be introduced on an annual basis in the School.

8. Support Services

Comment

- 8.1 The administrative structures at School and Programme Office level are very efficient and effective. The Programme Office has been innovative in its approach to streamlining approaches to issues such as extenuating circumstances and its system has been adopted across the wider university. The work of the Programme Office was also acknowledged when it won the President's Teaching and Learning Award for the mid semester review.
- 8.2 Students are supported from the time of orientation, through to graduation and there was a strong emphasis on student support and services. The student completion rates are very high.
- 8.3 It is clear that the administrative and academic staff view their interactions in a holistic way with reference to the work of the School.

Commendations

- 8.4 There are excellent support structures for students and there is an orientation, support and retention committee that meets frequently to explore issues.
- 8.5 There is genuine commitment to the development of approaches to make the processes surrounding assessment more flexible and efficient.
- 8.6 The administrative systems and supports are very well organised.
- 8.7 The representation of administrative staff on the School Executive is very important in the context of strategic development of the School.

Recommendations

- 8.8 The regulation of administrative contractual positions from temporary to full-time permanent is a priority in order to provide certainty around administrative support for programmes at School and Programme Office level.
- 8.9 The provision of structured mentoring within the School for new staff and research hires at postdoctoral level is a priority area.
- 8.10 There is a need for an in-School structured mentoring support programme with reference to curriculum development, teaching and assessment and general governance issues.

9. External Relations

Comment

- 9.1 The School has appointed an Associate Dean for Internationalisation. The School is involved in exchange programmes with the JYA programme in the US, Science without Borders in Brazil and is working with a number of Chinese institutions. The numbers of international students are growing and the School works closely with the university with reference to the development of international links.
- 9.2 Employers commended staff on their readiness to attend meetings convened by employers to discuss their areas of expertise. The recent SFI application process with Teagasc and UCC is an excellent example of collaboration.

Commendations

- 9.3 Employers speak very highly about the technical competencies of the graduates from the School, which was considered excellent.
- 9.4 The School is to be commended on the support that it provides for international students, in terms of support meetings and focus groups and seeking to assess their needs as they progress during the programme.

Recommendations

- 9.5 Relationships with employers have been developed and nurtured by individual academics. The management of external relations with employers requires a more structured approach at School level to ensure that national visibility is retained.
- 9.6 The opportunities for greater collaboration between Teagasc and the School should be further explored and acted upon. For example the possibility of establishing more adjunct appointments for Teagasc personnel might be an important mechanism for greater collaboration.
- 9.7 There is considerable variability across programmes in the provision of professional work experience, with some placements lasting three months and others lasting nine months; this variability needs to be addressed as does the credit weighing and assessment levels for this element of the programme.
- 9.8 The appointment of an Educational Technologist to support online course development and existing online provision should be a priority for a School.
- 9.9 There is a need to develop a structured internationalisation plan that is School focussed.

10. SWOT Analysis – Overall Analysis and Recommendations for Improvement

Comment

- 10.1 In its SAR Report the School presented an honest and insightful SWOT analysis that was consistent with the evidence provided elsewhere in the SAR document, in the supporting

documents and in the evidence proffered in the course of meetings and discussions with the various stakeholders during the site visit.

- 10.2 Overall, the SWOT analysis demonstrates that the School recognises its particular strengths in the areas of funded research and research outputs, the relevance of its education and training programmes to the national economy and the strong currency of its programmes, in terms of employment opportunities in the fields of agriculture and food science and related parts of the economy. The School's strong performance in the areas of funded research, graduate training, dissemination and research impact and innovation and commercialisation are especially noteworthy. As we noted above, the broad multidisciplinary character of the School represents one of its strengths, in that it provides opportunities for cross-disciplinary synergies and collaborations in both teaching and research. Additionally, the educational positioning of the school is most favourable given the current international emphasis on food security, sustainable use of resources and, in particular, national priorities for the land-based industries. The UCD 'Agriculture and Food Science' brand is therefore a strength which should be recognised and built on. Our discussions with students and with industry stakeholders attest to the importance of this brand for continuing to attract prospective students and for growing research and innovation opportunities.
- 10.3 In its SWOT analysis, the School pointed to a number of weaknesses, including: high staff workloads; the impending loss of staff members of long service and experience, including technical support staff; a deficiency in critical mass in some disciplines; and an ageing teaching and research infrastructure, particularly in the Agriculture and Food Science Centre and the Lyons Estate farm. The absence of an explicit staff workload model was also identified as a weakness during the site visit. There is also the potential inherent weakness of a very high number of taught modules and the associated concern as to how the quality of provision could be sustained in the face of such a high number. While the SWOT analysis did not make a connection between staff workload, the absence of an explicit workload model and the apparently high number of modules, the Review Group highlighted the connection during the site visit and the School appeared to accept the connection. Additionally, there was the concern that the suite of courses and modules might not be aligned with School's strengths and research interests.
- 10.4 The SWOT analysis identified several opportunities for the School including the resurgence of agriculture and food science in the national economy, the new research funding that is heralded in Horizon 2020 and Joint Programming Initiative and the new opportunities for collaboration that are presented in the industrial and commercial sectors. While research support has been strong, there appears to be untapped opportunity to expand industry and EU funding. In the course of the site visit, the Review Group pointed out that the current relationship with Teagasc could be strengthened by building an institutional collaborative framework on the current collaborative model. The recent agreement with Teagasc presents a real opportunity for building capacity through a model of even closer collaboration. Strengthening this collaborative model with Teagasc would seem to present a potential mechanism for deepening disciplinary strength in areas of strategic importance. We suggest that establishing more adjunct appointments for Teagasc personnel might be an important mechanism for grasping this opportunity for collaboration.
- 10.5 The SWOT analysis identified a number of threats for the School. These included the emergence of greater competition from other higher education institutions that have begun to develop agriculture and food science, the ongoing threat from reduced funding for higher education from central government and the threat to quality of educational provision that

may exist if there is a mismatch between student numbers and staff resources. In addition, the Review Group has also highlighted the threat that the restricted promotional opportunities for academic staff can have on staff morale and retention. The Review Group also suggested that the success of a revenue generating strategy will require greater certainty from the Centre regarding the funding formula for the proportion of increased revenue flowing back to the School. In the absence of clear guidelines on the distribution of new revenue, there is limited incentive to pursue novel revenue generation opportunities.

11. Summary of Commendations and Recommendations

This chapter contains a summary of all commendations and recommendations made by the Review Group for the School of Agriculture and Food Science and should be read in conjunction with the specific section. *(Please note that the paragraph references below refer to the relevant paragraphs in the report text)*

Organisation and Management

Commendations

- 2.9 The School has an explicit governance structure, along with internal management and administrative arrangements for strategic oversight and operational management of its key activities and functions, notably academic programmes and research and innovation. The organisation of the School in four distinct sections suggests areas of distinct disciplinary activity that require both strategic planning and development and operational management. The structures provide the School with a framework with which to ensure the required oversight and leadership of key functional areas.
- 2.10 The School is currently operating a RAM surplus, which provides a greater level of flexibility when negotiating on the Controllable Surplus Targets and permits the School to undertake strategic recruitment that addresses vacancies and supports the development of new taught master's programmes that will provide new non-Exchequer revenue streams in the future.
- 2.11 The fact that the Head of School is also the Dean of Agricultural Sciences is a positive aspect of School governance, since it provides the basis of good leadership for both School programmes and the advancement of the discipline of Agricultural Science and its associated sub-disciplines. Evidence proffered during the site visit pointed to the School having a high level of confidence in and satisfaction with the leadership provided by the Head of School.
- 2.12 The School is constituted by a mix of disciplinary fields related to agriculture and food science and this broad multidisciplinary character of the School represents a strength for both the School and the wider University, in that it provides opportunities for cross-disciplinary synergies and collaborations in both teaching and research. While each discipline within the School has a strong sense of its own identity, the sum of all disciplines is what contributes to the distinct UCD 'Agriculture and Food Science' brand.
- 2.13 Staff associated with the various sections within the School demonstrate a strong commitment to their respective sections, as evidenced in extensive undergraduate and taught graduate provision, graduate research training, high performance in securing research funding, and high-impact outputs and innovations.

Recommendations

- 2.14 Agriculture and food science are significant growth areas in the national economy and represent major drivers of economic recovery and they thus have critical strategic importance in the wider national context. Accordingly, the School must be adequately resourced, so that it is best positioned to respond to and be proactive in the external environment and industry associated with agriculture, food and related areas.
- 2.15 Given the strategic importance of agriculture and food science to the national economy, and notwithstanding the macro-economic context of fiscal retrenchment, the University should consider a mechanism to enable the School to have a high degree of autonomy and control over its own affairs in matters of planning and development. One such mechanism would be to provide a more direct line of communication between the Head of School and the University Management Team Executive, particularly in matters related to budgetary planning. This could enable the School to re-invest some of its surplus income in key targeted areas that are of critical and of strategic importance to both UCD and Ireland Inc.
- 2.16 The School should review its current governance arrangements in relation to the roles of associate deans and subject head, with the aim of ensuring a more dynamic governance and management system of governance, so that decision-making process could transcend sectional boundaries, where warranted.
- 2.17 In the light of the strategic national importance of agriculture and food science, the School should examine the current nature and composition of the School Executive to ensure that all sections of the School work to a common purpose and achieve greater cohesion.
- 2.18 Succession planning for the major leadership roles within the School, notably the Head of School, section heads and associate deans, is critical to the on-going success of the School. In this regard, the School should develop a succession planning strategy that will identify those individuals who will take on leadership roles in the medium term.
- 2.19 The Review Group recommends that the School should consider developing a workload model that meets the needs of the School.

Staff and Facilities

Commendations

- 3.6 The School is to be commended on achieving substantial increases in student numbers and research output while at the same time experiencing reductions in academic and support staff associated with a significant reduction in exchequer funding. The metrics for the School are very good, relative to average values for UCD and relative to international peer institutions. The marked increase in scientific publications per FTE over the past decade is particularly impressive and this enhanced research performance has been achieved while maintaining the School's quality undergraduate programmes.
- 3.7 In addition to the positive comments above, the data on completion rates at the undergraduate level and graduate level are very impressive and certainly not many institutions internationally are able to match completion data presented by the School.

Recommendations

- 3.8 The focus on revenue generation to mitigate the impact of government funding cuts is commendable. However, revenue generation needs to be balanced against the additional workload associated with a particular revenue generation strategy. Revenue generation appears to be primarily focussed on increasing enrolment in existing taught masters and the development of new taught masters to attract international students. To generate this new revenue requires investment in new academic positions. It is not clear whether these new academic positions will fill the current gaps in disciplinary areas identified in the SAR. If the new recruits to support the taught masters are in areas other than where there are existing gaps, it will not solve the challenge of having sufficient depth in priority research areas.
- 3.9 It is recommended that the focus on taught masters be carefully reviewed in the context of ensuring that the academic staff recruited to support taught masters also contribute to filling the current disciplinary gaps arising from the School's inability to fill vacant positions in recent years. Academic positions filled through revenue generation should be focussed on areas of strategic importance that support the research priorities of the School. This would allow the School to strengthen its offering of graduate-level courses for its PhD programmes and thesis-based masters. These graduate-level courses could then be repackaged to allow the offering of taught masters that are congruent with the research strength of the School. This approach should allow the School to have greater ability to manage the workload associated with taught masters so that it does not end up having a significant negative impact on overall research productivity.
- 3.10 The School has a very good track record in terms of the quality of undergraduate programmes. Recruiting full fee paying international students into these programmes is worth considering as such students could be accommodated without the need for developing new modules, as for taught masters. A comparative analysis of the business model for taught masters and increasing international undergraduate students would be useful to guide decision-making.
- 3.11 The School has built an impressive collaborative relationship with Teagasc, based on the number of Walsh Fellows that are funded at UCD. This collaborative relationship has been an important contributor to the enhanced research output over the past decade. In light of this track record, it is notable that only one Teagasc scientist is identified as an Adjunct appointment at the School. The current relationship with Teagasc could be strengthened by building an institutional collaborative framework on the current collaborative model. The recent agreement with Teagasc appears to be intended to capitalize on the opportunity to build capacity through a closer collaborative model. The SFI project currently under development is a good example of what should be a win-win for both institutions as they strive to maintain, or build capacity, under challenging economic circumstances. A closer working relationship with Teagasc should also allow UCD to fill some of the existing gaps in their ability to deliver undergraduate programmes.
- 3.12 Although research support has been strong, there appears to be untapped opportunity to expand industry and EU funding. Provided an appropriate model is in place for the flow of overhead back to the School, this provides another opportunity for revenue generation.
- 3.13 A more formal mentoring programme for new academic staff is recommended so that new recruits are positioned to achieve their full potential. A combination of individual mentoring

by experienced staff coupled with a formal School mentoring programme is likely to be most effective.

- 3.14 The SAR makes reference to integrating contract staff into the structure of the School. It is not clear what is intended here. By their nature one would expect post-doctoral fellows (PDFs) to be transient, as a PDF position is a step along the road to a full-time academic appointment, and for the School to take measures to ensure that they feel that the work that they do is valued.
- 3.15 As funding has declined it appears that the complement of support staff has suffered disproportionate cuts. The School is encouraged to review the academic-support staff ratio to ensure that the current model optimizes overall productivity of academic staff in terms of teaching and research.
- 3.16 Quality research and teaching programmes require appropriate facilities and infrastructure to be internationally competitive. Clearly the facilities in the Agriculture building and at Lyons Estate do not measure up to that of many peer institutions. Upgrading of these facilities is an important investment that will position the School to continue to be globally competitive in teaching and research.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Commendations

- 4.2 The current students and the graduates of the School reflected very well on the efforts of the staff.
- 4.3 It is acknowledged that a great deal of good will, collegiality and commitment to student development had contributed to improved student recruitment, and entry grade levels, despite very significant budgetary and resource constraints.
- 4.4 Students, particularly the undergraduates, were very positive about their experiences at UCD.
- 4.5 Employers were clear about the quality and value of UCD graduates in the land-based and food sectors. Employers also recognised the distinctiveness of the UCD graduate, and recognised that this was partly due to the emphasis on programmes maintaining a science-based approach.
- 4.6 The Professional Work Experience (PWE) programme was praised strongly by students and employers alike.
- 4.7 The facilities and staff at UCD Lyons Research Farm provided a high quality, and highly-valued, educational experience. This is despite the infrastructural deficits referred to in paragraph 3.16.

Recommendations

- 4.11 Review the School's module portfolio, to ensure that teaching provision more appropriately reflects the staff resource available as defined in a stated workload model.
- 4.12 Ensure efficiency of provision (across programmes, school sections, and provision in related schools) whilst acknowledging the constraints imposed by accreditation and different educational modes (distance learning, CPD provision, etc.).
- 4.13 Evolve more student-centred learning techniques, encompassing modern pedagogic developments and Web-based approaches.

Curriculum Development and Review

Commendations

- 5.2 Students and employers rated the programmes highly, with acknowledgement from both sectors that the programmes provided the relevant competency and transferable skills.
- 5.3 New members of academic staff were often associated with module and course development, with good opportunities and support from more established colleagues and subject Heads.
- 5.4 Overall, the School appeared to be responsive and dynamic with respect to new course development.

Recommendations

- 5.6 The School should ensure course and module provision are aligned with School strengths and research interests
- 5.7 The School should develop a more strategic approach to international engagement, consistent with overall strengths and priorities of the School

Research Activity

Commendations

- 6.4 The growth in research activity over the past 10 years is truly impressive. The metrics relating to refereed publications, research funding and impact of research look very good relative to UCD overall, as well as relative to peer institutions globally. Presumably this remarkable performance reflects greater investment in research during the 'Celtic Tiger' years, as well as a UCD strategy to become a research-intensive university. Regardless, the School's performance over the past 10 years is indeed remarkable and it is well positioned to take advantage of the growing importance of agriculture and food as an engine of the Irish economy.

Recommendations

- 6.5 This review team supports the measures outlined in the Conclusions and Recommendations section of Chapter 6 of the SAR. Providing a supportive environment for research and taking measures to address the underlying reasons as to why some academic staff have relatively low productivity seems wise indeed. The extraordinary productivity of some academic staff is also worth reviewing in some detail as to the factors that contribute to that productivity.
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- 6.7 If taught masters are considered essential as revenue generators, and it is not possible to align these modules to areas of research priority, then consideration should be given to having a separate teaching stream for academic staff who are recruited to support this revenue generating model. In the absence of such a teaching stream, these academic staff are likely to be disadvantaged, in terms of promotion and career advancement.
- 6.8 As previously mentioned, strengthening the current collaborative model with Teagasc appears to have potential as a mechanism to deepen disciplinary strength in areas of strategic importance.

Management of Quality and Enhancement

Commendations

- 7.2 The presence of a strategic planning officer in the School is to be commended.
- 7.3 The financial planning and support processes are very good. There is clear evidence of planning with reference to research development in the School.

Recommendations

- 7.4 There is a need for more engagement at a wider staff level with reference to strategic planning and operational development.
- 7.5 There is a need for clearer communication with all staff with reference to future strategic development and priorities.
- 7.6 More emphasis on evaluation and planning with reference to teaching and learning is required.
- 7.7 A teaching and learning day should be introduced on an annual basis in the School.

Support Services

Commendations

- 8.4 There are excellent support structures for students and there is an orientation, support and retention committee that meets frequently to explore issues.
- 8.5 There is genuine commitment to the development of approaches to make the processes surrounding assessment more flexible and efficient.
- 8.6 The administrative systems and supports are very well organised.
- 8.7 The representation of administrative staff on the School Executive is very important in the context of strategic development of the School.

Recommendations

- 8.8 The regulation of administrative contractual positions from temporary to full-time permanent is a priority in order to provide certainty around administrative support for programmes at School and Programme Office level.
- 8.9 The provision of structured mentoring within the School for new staff and research hires at postdoctoral level is a priority area.
- 8.10 There is a need for an in-School structured mentoring support programme with reference to curriculum development, teaching and assessment and general governance issues.

External Relations

Commendations

- 9.3 Employers speak very highly about the technical competencies of the graduates from the School, which was considered excellent.
- 9.4 The School is to be commended on the support that it provides for international students, in terms of support meetings and focus groups and seeking to assess their needs as they progress during the programme.

Recommendations

- 9.5 Relationships with employers have been developed and nurtured by individual academics. The management of external relations with employers requires a more structured approach at School level to ensure that national visibility is retained.
- 9.6 The opportunities for greater collaboration between Teagasc and the School should be further explored and acted upon. For example the possibility of establishing more adjunct appointments for Teagasc personnel might be an important mechanism for greater collaboration.

- 9.7 There is considerable variability across programmes in the provision of professional work experience, with some placements lasting three months and others lasting nine months; this variability needs to be addressed as does the credit weighing and assessment levels for this element of the programme.
- 9.8 The appointment of an Educational Technologist to support online course development and existing online provision should be a priority for a School.
- 9.9 There is a need to develop a structured internationalisation plan that is School focussed.

Appendix One: UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science Response to the Review Group Report

The UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science welcomes the Quality Review Group Report. We would like to thank the Review Group for the considerable time and effort that they have committed to the review process. The School's Self Assessment Report and the Review Group Report will provide valuable input for the School's Quality Improvement Plan and form the basis for the next iteration of the School's Strategic Development Plan

Appendix Two: Schedule for Review Site Visit to UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science

DAY 1: TUESDAY NOVEMBER 19

Venue: Board Room/UCD Agriculture & Food Science Centre

08.30 - 09.00	Private meeting of Review Group (RG)
09.00 - 09.30	RG meet with Principal, College of Agriculture, Food Science and Veterinary Medicine
09.30 - 10.00	RG meet with Head of School
10.00 – 10.45	Visit Rosemount Environmental Research Centre
10.45 - 11.30	RG meet with Head of School and senior staff members
11.30 - 11.45	Tea/coffee break
11.45 - 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 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
15.45-16.10	RG meet with administrative staff
16.10-16.35	RG meet with technical staff
16.35-17.05	RG meet Head of School and Heads of Sections
17.15-18.15	Tour of facilities – Ag & Food Science Centre, Science Centre South, Vet Science Centre
18.15	RG depart

DAY 2: WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 20th

Venue: Board Room/UCD Agriculture & Food Science Centre

07.45-10.15	Visit Lyons Farm, Co Kildare
10.30-11.15	RG meet with recently appointed members of staff

11.15-11.30	RG review key observations
11.30-11.45	UCD Buildings Officer
11.45-12.00	UCD Library representative
12.00-12.15	Break
12.15-13.00	RG meet with the School Research & Innovation Committee, Postgraduate Education Committee (Research) and a representative group of Research Funded Staff
13.00-13.15	Break - RG review key observations
13.15-14.00	Lunch – Review Group only
14.00-14.45	RG meet with representative group of postgraduate students (taught + research) and recent graduates (PG and UG)
14.45-15.00	Break - RG review key observations
15.00-15.45	RG meet with representative group of undergraduate students
15.45-16.00	Break
16.00-16.45	RG meet with College Finance Manager, Head of School and Strategy & Development Manager to outline the School's financial situation
16.45-17.30	RG available for private individual meetings with staff
17.30-18.00	RG private meeting – review key observations/findings
18.00	RG depart

DAY 3: THURSDAY NOVEMBER 21

Venue: Board Room/UCD Agriculture & Food Science Centre

08.45-09.15	Private meeting of RG
	Telephone conference with Teagasc representative
09.15-10.00	RG available for private individual meetings with staff
10.00-10.30	(Optional) RG meet with Head of School and/or specified University staff to clarify any outstanding issues <u>or</u> begin preparing draft RG Report
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 <u>all available staff of the unit</u> – usually made by an extern member of the Review Group (or other member of the Group, as agreed) summarising the principal commendations/recommendations of the Review Group
16.45	Review Group depart