



University College Dublin

**Review Group Member Feedback on
UCD Quality Assurance Processes 2013-15**

UCD Quality Office

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UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

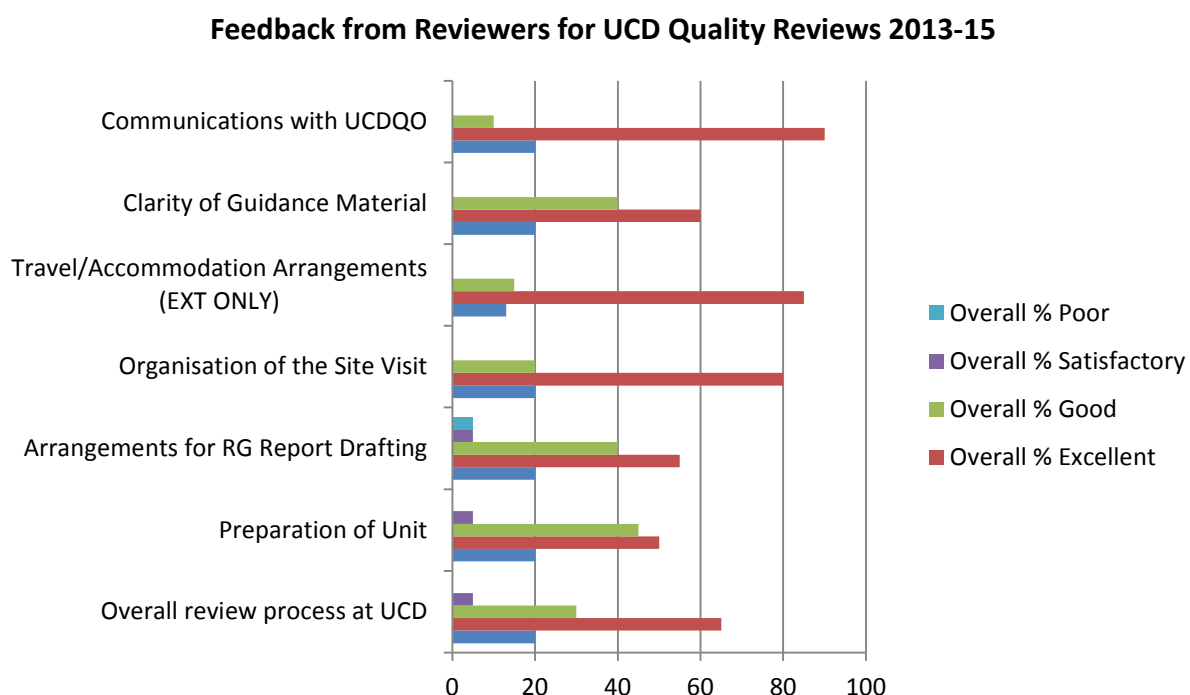
FEEDBACK ON QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES 2013-15

As part of its own quality assurance procedures, the UCD Quality Office routinely seeks both formal and informal feedback about the internal UCD Quality Assurance procedures, in order to refine and continuously improve the University's procedures for quality review of UCD units.

A short survey was sent to all reviewers, both internal and external to UCD, who had participated in quality reviews completed during the 2013-2015 period. A total of 26 surveys were circulated, from which there were 20 responses (77%), with a higher response rate from external reviewers.

Overall reviewer feedback was positive. Figure 1 below sets out responses on all of the key areas on which feedback was sought. As illustrated, areas such as communication, clarity of guidance material, organisation of the site visit, and the overall review process were positive. In the case of arrangements for drafting of the Review Group (RG) Report and preparation of the unit under review, whilst feedback was positive, a minority of reviewers indicated that these were 'satisfactory' or 'poor'. Feedback on travel arrangements and accommodation was only sought from external reviewers, and 85% of respondents reported their experiences as 'excellent'.

Figure 1



As in previous feedback questionnaires, reviewers were invited to provide general comments on the process and, if any aspect was considered to be poor, to indicate why and provide suggestions as to what actions could improve the issue. Reviewer comments and planned actions to address the issues raised are outlined below.

An update on progress on planned actions in response to feedback received from 2012-13 Review Group Members is attached as Appendix 1.

Feedback on Internal/External Chair

Feedback was sought on the perceived independence of the Review Group and whether the process would be enhanced by having an external Chair. All reviewers reported that the review groups, as constituted, were independent and impartial. Responses to whether reviewers thought that the independence and impartiality of the process would be enhanced by having an external Chair were more varied. 55% indicated that they did not think the process would be enhanced by the use of an external Chair, 20% responded that it would enhance the independence and impartiality of the RG, while 25% were unsure.

Reviewer Comments

Reviewers were invited to provide comments on ways that the review process at UCD could be improved and general feedback on the quality review process at UCD.

- *I received the review material very shortly before visit*. I would have liked more time to review the material before the visit. *(late submission of material by unit under review)*
- *Overall, everything worked very well. Also the guidance was ok but felt at first very extensive. It was, before the site visit, somewhat unclear about the extent of different evaluation sub-tasks that were my individual responsibility. However, the discussions over the precise comments were very useful. It was very good that the report was formulated at the site so that additional discussions concerning all parts could take place with all review group members. It is helpful to have a local Review Group Chair who is familiar with the University.*
- *The main problem is the writing of the report once the review group departs. Anything that would help them to write it before they depart would be really useful.*
- *The whole process was professionally organised by the Quality Office, and the School that was reviewed took the process very seriously and was exceptionally helpful throughout. Having an internal UCD chair has the advantage of allowing a UCD member of staff get an intimate view of how another UCD unit works, and can bring that knowledge back to his/her own school/unit.*
- *The whole review worked extremely well, with excellent support from the UCD Quality Office. The panel worked in a friendly and coherent manner, and enough time was given to meet a range of staff and students, and to discuss our views. The Chair was also excellent.*
- *Well organised, transparent operation. Great support and an honest and authentic process.*
- *We found there were some serious issues in the School that needed addressing almost by chance. If we had had conversations in a different order then we could have wasted much of the week.*

Somehow, some guidance of what to look for would have been helpful. It would not have affected our impartiality.

- Overall, I thought the review was extremely well done and the advance materials were thorough and helpful. The only shortcoming I would point to was the allocation of time during the on campus visit. We probably had a bit too much time with unit staff, a bit too little with other stakeholders, and very little time for team discussion during the two-day interview cycle. I acknowledge that the allocation of time probably varies from one review to another, so this comment may not be applicable to the process itself. Overall, great job.*
- The RG Report drafting was done on our own machines, which worked fine - not sure there is a more effective process. Clearly much time and effort had been spent in preparing. My suggestions would be for the unit to (i) have a more critical self-reflection, and (ii) a developed view about what they wish to get out of the review - in effect using the Review to advance. The expectation that all Unit staff members would meet the panel is unrealistic, and probably reduces the time of the RG to reflect, discuss and to probe in specific areas. It may be helpful to consider a pre-meeting/call with the RG to shape the programme/schedule, in line with tentative/preliminary thoughts. I found our internal RG Chair helpful, and provided local context and background which might not be possible with an external chair. I suspect it also probably helps with owning and progressing the conclusions and recommendations after the Review.*
- The review process is excellent and was managed impeccably by the UCD Quality Office. The School was very well prepared for review and impressed the Panel.*
- A focus on the final RG report throughout was critical to a good review.*
- This was a very well organised review. I think this was also due to the excellent chair that we had for the process who was incredibly experienced and very personable.*
- I found the process to be excellent and educational (for me, although that was not the objective of course). In some ways, coming from [a different discipline], I was limited in what I could contribute. The parameters used to judge the productivity of individuals/units are different between 'the Arts' and 'Sciences'. I would suggest, trying to align the panel members (not just the externs) to the area.*
- I thought that the process worked well, and that the review group was impartial even though the chair was an UCD faculty person. It would certainly very well organised by the Quality Office. The process did, however, seem to put the department under a lot of pressure, and there might be ways of lessening that for academics whose main plight was that they were already under a lot of pressure. As an external reviewer, it was a very interesting process and a welcome opportunity to see another department at close quarters. It would have been interesting to know how the department and the College have responded to the report that we submitted, and whether there have been any positive outcomes from it.*

- *The drafting process took much, much too long. The external reviewers did their part on time, however. The required format of the report was a repetitious straightjacket, and led to something that was much blander than I would have liked.*
- *A very positive experience, which I was glad to have done. The only difficulty arose over the withholding tax which is not under UCD's control in any case. The hurdles one has to jump over to reclaim that are just too many to be bothered with.*
- *As someone not from Ireland, I didn't have a good sense beforehand about some of the university-wide issues and structures (or how UCD fits in with other universities nationally). I learned a lot about these things during my time at the review, from the two team members internal to UCD, but some materials on this prior to the visit would've been helpful.*

UCD Quality Office response to feedback from 2013-14 Review Groups:

It was noted that feedback themes were similar to those identified from reviewers in 2010-2011 and 2011-2012. In order to address the feedback, the UCDQO will:

- continue to emphasise the need for units to focus on analysis rather than description when drafting their self-assessment reports.
- keep under review the site visit timetable, time allocated to meetings, stakeholder groups and the order in which stakeholders meet with the RG.
- monitor the impact of the Quality and Qualifications Act (2012) and the new national quality framework being developed by Qualifications and Quality Ireland. The UCD Quality Framework and procedures will be reviewed in response to sectoral changes.
- keep other aspects of the quality review process under continuous review.

Follow-up on actions planned by the UCD Quality Office in response to feedback received from 2012-13 Review Group Members

- Following feedback from the 2011-12 review groups, recommendations in the UCD Institutional Review (2010-11) and discussion with Qualifications and Quality Ireland, UCD piloted the use of an external chair for a small number of reviews in the 2011-2014 period. Feedback did not indicate that the process was improved by the use of an external chair. The matter will be kept under review.

As outlined above, the UCDQO included a question on the 2013-15 feedback survey to elicit reviewers' opinions on whether an external chair would enhance the impartiality of the review group. The feedback and reviewer comments supported the continued use of an internal chair. The UCDQO will continue to keep this under review.

- The UCDQO will continue to emphasise the need for units to focus on analysis rather than description when drafting their self-assessment reports.

Sample illustrative Report exemplars have been developed for units undergoing review. To further support units taking an analytical approach to their self-assessment reports, the UCD Quality Office has engaged further with other units at UCD who provide supports for units undergoing review, including, UCD Human Resources, UCD Library, UCD Research Office, UCD Teaching & Learning and UCD Institutional Research. Additional data reports have been developed through the UCD central automated reporting system, the UCDQO website has been updated to provide additional information about the supports available and this information is emphasised when meeting with self-assessment report co-coordinating committees. .

- The UCDQO will review the site visit timetable, time allocated to meetings, stakeholder groups and the order in which stakeholders meet with the RG.

The UCDQO reviewed and updated the indicative timetable provided for units undergoing review. It was noted that the running order (and composition) of some meetings is dependent on staff/stakeholder availability. The UCDQO will continue to keep timetables under review.