



# **University College Dublin**

**Academic Council Committee on Quality**

**Annual Institutional Quality Report 2014-15**

**For**

**UCD Academic Council**

**UCD Quality Office  
January 2016**

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## 1. Introduction

*The European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (May 2015) states that at the heart of all quality assurance activities are the twin purposes of *accountability* and *enhancement*. Taken together, these create trust in the higher education institution's performance. A successfully implemented quality assurance system should provide information to assure the higher education institution and the public of the quality of the higher education institution's activities (accountability), as well as provide advice and recommendations on how it might improve what it is doing (enhancement). Quality assurance and quality enhancement are thus inter-related. They can support the development of a *quality culture* that is embraced by students, staff and management.

University College Dublin is committed to maintaining its academic standards and enhancing the quality, research, learning and teaching provision.

The professionalism and creativity of faculty and staff, individually and collectively, makes a vital contribution to the enhancement of provision, for example, through their attention to their students' experience as learners and to the development of their disciplines.

**For Students:** the University is committed to providing a high quality learning experience. The direct contribution that students make to this, through providing feedback, participating in quality assurance activities and suggestions is critical. Input from students is a key feature of our quality assurance and enhancement process: we need students to give us the student's perspective.

**For Staff:** the quality and commitment of faculty and staff are critical to maintaining and enhancing the high quality of research, learning and teaching. The University recognises that all faculty and staff are continuously reflecting upon and seeking to improve practice in all areas of our work to advance learning and teaching and research in their disciplines and the quality of the student learning experience. The UCD Quality Framework and the processes it encompasses – both formal and informal – are intended to be appropriate and proportionate vehicles to support reflection and enhancement and to capture and disseminate excellent practice.

## 2. Quality Review

### 2.1 Completed Quality Review 2014-15

As part of UCD's ongoing commitment to enhance the student experience, provide academically excellent programmes and support teaching and learning through the provision of high quality, reliable and user-friendly academic, administrative and student support services, the following units and programmes underwent quality assurance review by external Peer Review Groups during 2014-15:

#### Quality Reviews Completed in 2014-15

- UCD School of Veterinary Medicine
- UCD School of Mechanical & Materials Engineering
- UCD IT Services
- UCD Library
- UCD School of History & Archives
- UCD School of Philosophy
- UCD School of Mathematical Sciences

Statutory quality review is undertaken on a seven year cycle. UCD completed its second review cycle in 2014-15. In the seven year review period, 70 reviews have been completed, including eight reviews of collaborative programmes with overseas and home partners.

A list of internal and external reviewers who participated in UCD Quality Reviews during 2014-15 is set out in **Appendix 1**.

## **2.2 Quality Review schedule 2015-16**

The Quality Review Schedule for 2015-16 is set out below.

05 -08 Oct 2015	UCD School of Civil Engineering
<i>[13 – 15 Oct 2015</i>	<i>UCD School of Archaeology – Pilot Research Assessment]</i>
20 – 23 Oct 2015	UCD School of Law
24 – 27 Nov 2015	UCD International Office
30 Nov -03 Dec 2015	UCD Student Centre (Student Health, Counselling, Chaplaincy, Sports, SU Societies, & Bars)
07-10 March 2016	UCD School of Computer Science
29 March -01 April 2016	UCD School of Information & Communication Studies
12 – 15 April 2016	UCD School of Medicine
18 – 21 April 2016	UCD School of Architecture, Planning & Environmental Policy
18 – 21 April 2016	UCD Research & Innovation

The key stages of review includes: (i) the preparation of a self-assessment report by the unit/programme under review; (ii) a site visit by an external review group which produces a report with recommendations for enhancement; (iii) the unit reviewed then prepares a quality improvement plan which outlines how the unit will address each recommendation; and (iv) a formal progress review meeting is held approximately twelve months after the quality improvement plan has been approved.

## **2.3 Quality Improvement Plans (QIP)**

Follow-up is an integral part of the quality review process. The decisions on improvement, which are made in the follow-up to self-assessment and review, provide a framework within each unit can continue to work towards developing and fostering a quality culture in the University. Each unit under review is also required to implement the recommendations of the Review Group Report having regard to the resources available, or unless it would be unreasonable or impractical to do so.

The QIP usually takes the form of short summaries of the action taken/planned, to address each recommendation. If reasonable progress is not made to address the Review Group Report recommendations within the agreed timeframe, the matter will be referred to the Academic Council Committee on Quality (ACCQ) to determine what further action should be taken.

Approximately twelve months after the QIP has been accepted, each unit is required to prepare a progress report on the implementation of the QIP actions.

Upon receipt of the QIP Progress Report, the UCD Quality Office will convene a progress review meeting.

The progress review meeting will normally be chaired by the Registrar and Deputy President (or nominee) and will normally include a representative from the Quality Office, a member of the Academic Council Committee on Quality (ACCQ), and one of the UCD reviewers involved in the original unit review.

The meeting will consider the actions taken by the unit, and where appropriate, other University units, to address the Review Group Report recommendations. In addition, the Progress Review Group will agree further follow-up meetings as required. The aim is to confirm that all recommendations for improvement arising from the review process, have been or will be, dealt with appropriately, formally concluding the review process.

## 2.4 Review Group Report Recommendations

- (i) An analysis of the Review Group Report recommendations based on the last 11 completed quality improvement plan progress reports (2013-15), indicate that of a total of 704 recommendations for improvement, 683 (c97%) recommendations have either been fully addressed (c81%) or are work in progress (c16%). Further details of this analysis are set out in Appendix 2.
- (ii) Quality Review Group Report Recommendations (based on 2014-2015 published reports to date) are categorised below.

**Table 1: 2014-15 Quality Review Group Recommendations by Category**

2014-15 Review Group Recommendations by Category (*N=7)	Number of Recommendations	% Recommendations per Category
Human Resources & Staff Development	38	19.3%
Unit Org, Mgt & Admin	32	16.2%
University Supports, Space and Facilities	32	16.2%
Strategic Planning and Development	29	14.7%
T&L, Assessment, Curriculum	24	12.2%
Quality Assurance & Enhancement	10	5.1%
Collaborations & External Relations	9	4.6%
Finance/Budgets	8	4.1%
Workload management	6	3.0%
Research Activity	5	2.5%
Student Experience	4	2.0%
<b>Total recommendations</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The distribution of recommendations arising in each thematic category is broadly in line with the recommendation profile made in each review period since 2010.

This topline analysis of the distribution of recommendations in 2014-2015 Review Group Reports provides a broad overview – the categories listed are indicative and a number of recommendations could reasonably be reasonably be allocated to more than one category.

The Review Group Reports and associated Quality Improvement Plans are available at: [www.ucd.ie/quality](http://www.ucd.ie/quality).

As stated in section 2.3 above, the University monitors the implementation of the Review Group Report recommendations through the School/Support Unit Quality Improvement Plan (which is published alongside the Review Group Report) and a 12 month post review progress meeting involving the senior staff from the School /Support unit, the relevant College Principal/Vice President and the Registrar.

### 3. Who is involved in making UCD Quality Review Report recommendations for enhancement?

UCD Quality Reviews are carried out by review groups which include senior subject specialist reviewers from leading global higher education institutions and reviewers from UCD. It is UCD policy that the number of internal UCD members on a review group should not exceed the number of external reviewers.



The success of Irish higher education is due in part to a system with institutional autonomy at its core. The diversity of approaches in higher education can only be successfully judged using a system of peer review where reviewers understand this diversity of approach. Peer review allows senior staff from other institutions to play a role in ensuring that the quality of UCD's academic and support provision is not only maintained but is continually enhanced. Every six to seven years, as part of the Irish HE Quality Framework, UCD is also subject to an independent external institutional peer review, organised by Quality & Qualifications Ireland.

The participation of senior international faculty and staff in Quality Review Groups helps to benchmark UCD's provision against leading world institutions and also serves to promote UCD's profile globally. External members of UCD Quality Review Groups are generally drawn from within the top 1% of global higher education institutions (and/or subject rankings).

The following notes illustrate the profile of recent UCD Quality Review Groups.

#### 3.1 In the period September 2013 - September 2015, external reviewers came from the following institutions:

##### Universities – UK

##### Times Higher 2015 Ranking\*

	<u>UK</u>	<u>World</u>
University of Cambridge	1	5
University of Oxford	2	3
University of Durham	5	83
University of Warwick	7	103
University of York	14	113
University of Birmingham	17	148
University of Bristol	18	74
University of Edinburgh	21	36
University of Nottingham	23	171
University of Sheffield	26	121

King's College London	28	40
University of Manchester	28	52
University of Glasgow	30	94
Queen's University Belfast	31	[251-275]
University of Reading	37	[201-225]
University of Sussex	38	111
University of Essex	39	[301-350]
University of Dundee	49	[201-225]

### Universities – Rest of the World

#### **Times Higher 2015 World Ranking\***

Cornell University, USA	19
Washington University, USA	26
University of Texas, USA	28
University of Melbourne, Australia	33
University of North Carolina, USA	46
University of Leuven, Belgium	55
Leiden University, Netherlands	64
Purdue University, USA	102
Lund University, Sweden	119
Paris-Sud University, France	120

### Ireland

#### **Times Higher 2015 World Ranking\***

Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland **	[351 – 400]
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\*The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2014-15 list the leading global universities assessed against 13 performance indicators. Only the top 200 institutions are ranked individually. UCD was ranked [226-250] in 2015.

\*\*UCD's partner with Penang Medical College

### **3.2 External Review Group Members by geographical location and gender (Sept 2013 – Sept 2015)**

<u>(i) Country</u>	<u>Number of External Reviewers</u>	
UK	26	(63%)
Rest of Europe	5	(12%)
USA / Canada	6	(14%)
Australia	1	(2%)
Ireland	3	(7%)
Malaysia***	<u>1</u>	<u>(2%)</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>(100%)</b>

\*\*\* (Malaysian Medical Clinician (Chief of Surgery, Kuala Lumpur Hospital) who participated in the review of Penang Medical College)

Number of External Reviewers	42	(58%)
Number of UCD Reviewers	<u>30</u>	<u>(42%)</u>
<b>Total Number of Reviewers</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100%</b>

(ii) By gender, review group composition in the period September 2013 – September 2015 was:



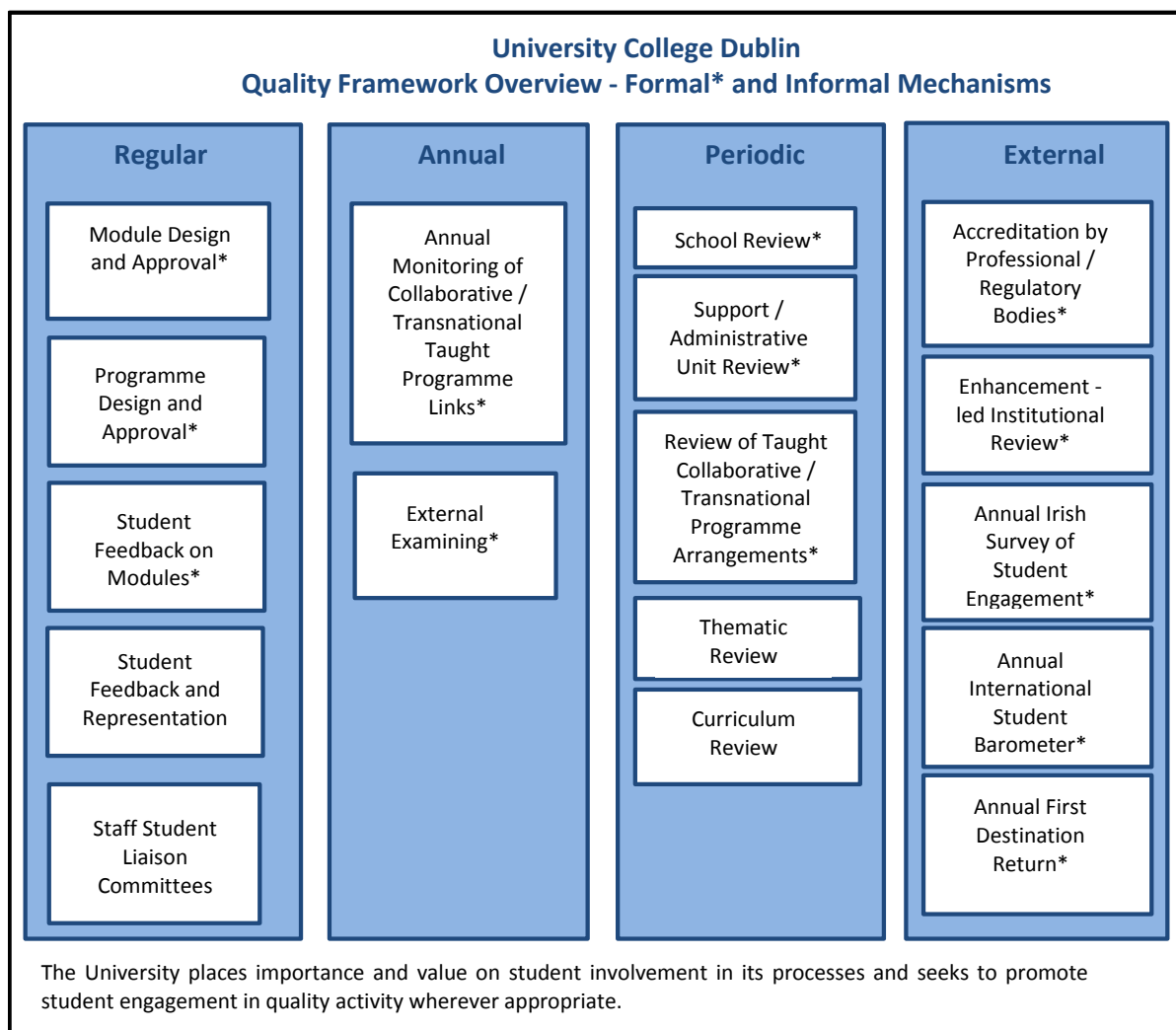
45% Female  
55% Male

#### 4. UCD Quality Framework

UCD’s Quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms are not restricted to formal periodic unit review. In accord with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (May 2015), UCD uses a range of formal and informal quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms. Figure 1 below presents a simplified overview of the University framework of quality assurance and quality enhancement formal and informal processes.

Three elements of the Framework are developed further below for illustrative purposes (see 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3): Student Feedback on Modules, Extern Examiner Reports, and First Destination Return.

**Figure 1: UCD Quality Framework Overview**





#### 4.1 UCD Student Feedback on Modules (SFM)

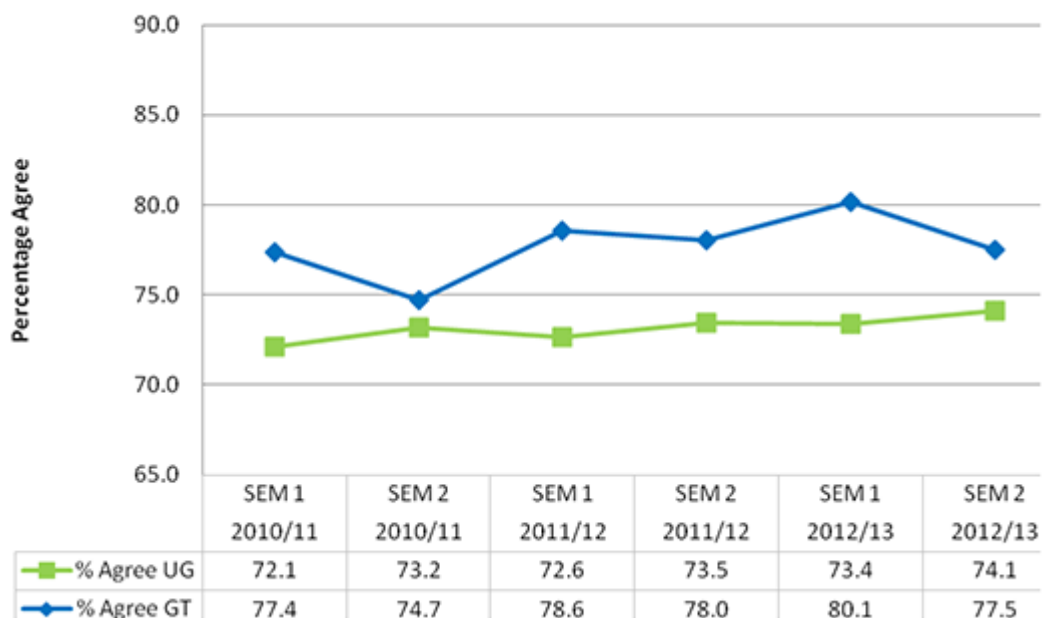
UCD operates an all-University, anonymous, on-line student feedback system to ensure that students are given a voice in the module enhancement process, part of UCD's evidence-based quality assurance of educational provision.

The enhancement focus emphasizes an active and reflective approach to identifying aspects of the module(s) which have worked particularly well, along with areas which may be developed further. Intended outcomes of the enhancement focus are pedagogic adjustments to future offerings of the module (e.g. adjustments to the design and delivery of the module) which seek to improve student learning.

Module enhancement allows for the regular and incremental updating of the educational design of modules for future offerings, to ensure that they continue to provide an appropriate academic challenge for students. The enhancement process makes explicit the academic judgments and pedagogic adaptations that staff customarily implement in keeping their modules current and relevant to students' learning needs and the goals of the discipline or subject. It is an important aid to making evidence-based decisions about the design and teaching of module(s) for the benefit of their students. From a user perspective, for example, students and funding agencies, it confirms the professional and deliberative approach that is taken by UCD faculty to develop and offer a high quality and engaging educational experience.

A positive trend has been identified from UCD Student Feedback on Modules over the last three years. A high-level analysis of the quantitative data gathered by SFM surveys shows a steady growth in student satisfaction with the quality of the learning experience in their modules.

**Q5 - Overall I am satisfied with this module: percentage agreed or strongly agreed 2010 - 2013**



## 4.2 Subject Extern Examiners in UCD

Extern Examiners play a vital role in assisting the University in fulfilling its obligations of assuring the academic standards and integrity of its modules. They carry out an important consultative and advisory function in supporting the development of modules as well as the enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment practices.

UCD has a total of 223 Extern Examiners who are drawn from Irish (15%), UK universities (70%), and other international universities (15%).

Extern Examiners are required to complete an annual report capturing their observations and recommendations. All reports are reviewed on behalf of the Academic Council by the Registrar and the Deputy Registrar, who provide feedback to each Head of School. The *UCD Extern Examiner Policy* states, in section 5.1 (i), that “*Extern Examiners shall visit the University at least once during each year of their term of appointment*”. It was noted from recent reports received that a number of Extern Examiners did not visit UCD during the reporting period. Site visits are a crucial aspect of the extern examining process. They provide the Extern Examiner with, among other things, the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of a programme or subject; the opportunity to discuss issues or explore possible future developments with the relevant UCD academic contacts; and to meet with students from the programme. The University is following this up with Schools to ensure that their Extern Examiners visit UCD once during an academic year.

The summary below provides an overview of examples of good practice, recommendations and any concerns as outlined in the Extern Examiner reports. In general, it was frequently noted that, across the University, the standard of UCD students and the work they produced was very high and compared favourably to the Externs’ home universities. A number of Externs commended the areas they were reviewing for the encouragement and support they provided to the students.

### Summary of issues arising from the Extern Reports

#### (A) Teaching and Course Content

The standard of teaching and teaching practices in UCD was favourably commented on, with some Externs stating that they would be adopting practices they had observed at UCD in their home universities. A number of Externs, however, emphasised the need to ensure that **module learning objectives, goals and outcomes** are made clear to the students and are also achievable. Consideration should also be given to the credit value and level of each module to ensure that it is appropriate. Greater co-ordination of content across modules within a stage, subject area or programme (e.g. Masters) should be considered, with a view to building upon learning achievements and removing duplication for students.

Externs highlighted the importance of making **Internships, Professional Work Experience and Clinical Placements** available to UCD students. They drew attention to the fact that these opportunities increase the **employability** of UCD students by equipping them with valuable real-world experiences. Externs also drew attention to the importance of developing guides for the hosts of these experiences to enable them to better challenge and assess the students while on placement. A number of Externs highlighted that the ‘best and the brightest’ students should be encouraged to **engage with research** or be involved in research projects as early as possible in their degrees, with a view to encouraging them to pursue a Masters or PhD within UCD at a later stage. Externs also commented on the importance of providing students with **generic writing skills**, i.e. the ability to write in a concise, coherent and relevant manner, and to also the opportunity to implement these skills.

## **(B) Assessment**

A number of externs commented on the **over-assessment** taking place in some modules in UCD. They recommended that each School should undertake an **annual review** of the assessment of the modules for which they are responsible, with a view to achieving better co-ordination and harmonisation. Some Externs expressed the desire to see a **broadening of assessment approaches** in the areas they were reviewing, taking into consideration that by implementing different types of assessment, different types of learners will be enabled to succeed. Externs highlighted that the **grading/marking approaches** in some areas were unclear, which, as a result, could cause confusion and uncertainty for students. Externs queried the possibility of providing students with **model sample answers**, with a breakdown of the grade/mark proportion for each section.

## **(C) Feedback**

The area of feedback was commented on by a number of Externs. Externs across the University remarked that the practice of providing feedback to students could be enhanced. They further highlighted the fact that feedback should be more **constructive, detailed, continuous** and provided in a more timely fashion to students so that they can take corrective measures and gauge their progression accordingly. Externs also suggested that **feedback on group projects** should also be provided.

## **(D) Extern Examiner Process**

It is important that Schools review their Extern Examiner reports and provide the University and the External Examiner with a formal response to them, outlining how they will address the recommendations that have been made or providing an explanation as to why they can't be implemented.

The University is following up on these issues with Schools.

## **4.3 First Destination Return (FDR)**

### **Purpose and background**

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) requires an annual return from every HEI in Ireland, of known destination data for a minimum of 60% of graduates who completed full time National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) awards the previous year. Survey questions are set by government and no changes may be made. UCD Career Development Centre has responsibility for carrying out the survey and returning data to the HEA and the staff work closely with colleagues in UCD Management Services and with the Director of Institutional Research, to deliver the survey within budget and on time. Data is submitted annually to the HEA by 31 July.

### **Data and Results**

At UCD, the Career Development Centre endeavours to achieve a minimum return of 60% across and within the graduate population. Achieving consistency within the population is problematic and a significant variation in programme return rates is evident. Therefore, care should be taken when interpreting the data. It should be noted that the statistics presented are expressed as % of the **KNOWN** population only and cannot be presented as an accurate view of UCD graduates as a whole.

Each March, the **First Destinations Survey** is administered to all award recipients who have successfully completed a full-time course in an NFQ qualification in the prior academic year.

For information, one data set from the FDR has been extracted in Table 2 below, which indicates an overall positive trend of UCD graduates gaining employment between 2011 and 2014.

**Table 2: First Destination by College**

% In Employment				
College	2011	2012	2013	2014
<a href="#">College of Arts and Humanities</a>	38%	42.90%	40.30%	46.7%
<a href="#">College of Business</a>	67%	68.50%	68.20%	75%
<a href="#">College of Engineering and Architecture</a>	53.70%	54.60%	59%	69.9%
<a href="#">College of Health and Agricultural Sciences</a>	81.10%	71.30%	73.80%	73.7%
<a href="#">College of Science</a>	42.60%	53%	51.10%	56.3%
<a href="#">College of Social Sciences and Law</a>	49.30%	50.10%	54%	57.1%

Representative examples of other quality enhancement initiatives ongoing across the University are set out in section five below.

## 5. Examples of UCD Quality Enhancement Initiatives

Quality and quality enhancement of UCD's educational and research provision, is the responsibility of all faculty and staff and is, therefore, an ongoing cross-institution activity. This Report can only provide a flavour of the range of quality enhancement projects and initiatives ongoing across UCD in any given year. But collectively, they serve to illustrate the commitment and professionalism of UCD faculty and staff to advance knowledge, to deliver programmes to high academic standards and always to strive to continuously enhance the UCD Student Experience.

A number of enhancement projects are outlined below.

### 5.1 Enhancing First Year: The First Year Experience



Entering university, whether directly from school or after a longer period away from education, brings very significant challenges for first-year students who need to become used to an educational

environment where they are expected to function as independent and self-motivated learners. Students also have to adapt more broadly to life in university, becoming part not only of their degree programme, but also joining other university groups in sports, societies and residential communities.

Because of the considerable changes faced by students, the educational and support structure of first year has a significant impact on how they will engage and succeed in their university life. These are a cohort of students who need to be taught and assessed within well-structured educational environments which acknowledge what encourages and what hinders their capacity to learn. Only then can they function as engaged, intelligent students, capable of reaching their potential.

In UCD the structure of first year is characterised by high levels of student support, both academic and non-academic, particularly in the first six weeks of the first semester.

Starting with Orientation week, students are introduced to the specifics of their programmes of study and the learning outcomes expected in each of their modules. For students, many of who are accustomed to an almost total focus on end-of-year exams, how they are assessed in this period may well be the most important determinant on their capacity to cope and flourish in higher education, and to successfully complete half of their modules before Christmas.

International research also indicates that assessment requirements are strong influences on the approach to learning adopted by students (Ramsden 2005). In particular being able to undertake short, well-designed assessments early in the first semester, followed by responsive feedback, gives students the required guidance as to how they are progressing and how they may need to adapt their learning behaviours in order to succeed.

## **5.2 Using E-pens for Teaching & Learning**

This project will trial and evaluate *Livescribe Smart-Pens* technology and the *Explain Everything iPad app* to explore applications of the technology which could enhance teaching and learning practices in UCD.

A *Smart-Pen* captures everything that you write and everything that is spoken. Recorded notes can be shared online, these files are known as PenCasts.

*Explain Everything* is an app which can be purchased for an Apple or Android device. It enables users to annotate, animate or narrate explanations and presentations. The application records everything on-screen from drawings, annotations, object movement while capturing audio. The recorded files can be shared online.



Project Goals:

The study aims to answer the following key questions:

1. How does the technology work?
2. How can the technology be potentially used in learning and teaching?
3. What are the challenges in using this technology?

4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of both technologies for student learning?
5. How effective are the technologies for improving the student learning experience?

The study will assist academics in making judgments about the value of and potential for incorporating E-pen technology in their module and will assist UCD in making informed decisions on how E-pens can be used campus-wide.

### 5.3 Enhancing Performance through a Competitive Team Tournament

In some scenarios, the time constraints of modularization have become an impediment to the successful achievement of learning outcomes. The latter has been noticed in structures-related civil engineering subjects where the nature of the material requires a maturation time in the student's mind before being fully understood. This project aims to develop highly efficient group activities that will help students to meet their learning outcomes in traditionally difficult subjects. A form of cooperative learning known as Team Game Tournament (TGT) is employed for this purpose. TGT enhances learning via the establishment of a tournament where the class is divided into teams that play against each other.



The principle behind TGT is that the success of a team lies on the success of the individuals composing the team. Therefore, team mates help each other and study more than individually because they care for them and for the team.

Project Goals:

1. To allow students to practise the material imparted in lectures and bring early awareness of potential difficulties,
2. To emphasize and meet learning outcomes (which the facilitator aligns with team goals when providing the rules for defining the questions in each game),
3. To encourage all students to learn and achieve the learning outcomes if they want their team to succeed. Given that “higher individual score = better team score”, students will like to contribute to the team and work harder.
4. To strengthen the role of the student as a team player, as students will help one another to improve the team performance,
5. To make the learning experience more enjoyable, given that students will see learning as ‘social’ instead of ‘isolated’.

The Innovative Approach:

Student learning and satisfaction are enhanced via a novel form of learning that uses competitive teamwork resembling the ‘Champions League’. *The competition combines the benefits of cooperative learning together with the high levels of engagement achieved by students in games and sports.* The class is divided into a number of small academically balanced teams that play against each other. A game between two teams consists of posing questions (one question per team player) to the opponent team and answering the opponent's questions. Students are held accountable for their own questions and answers, and also help and learn from their team mates as they want their team to win. Students are rewarded according to their individual performance as well as their team performance based on an overall classification. It has been noticed that the more games between

the teams, the more effective the team work and learning has become. The competition has been set up as the 'Champions League', but this could also be extended to any competition that would be engaging for particular student cohorts.

Results:

During the tournament, students have shown to be very focused and participative and no less importantly, they have enjoyed themselves. In the three modules under investigation, there are end-of-semester exams that represent 80% of the overall grade. As a result of the experience, the average exam score have increased by 7.9%, 5.1% and 4.8% in CVEN30150 (3<sup>rd</sup> year Elasticity), CVEN30020 (3<sup>rd</sup> year Analysis of Structures) and CVEN40150 (4<sup>th</sup> year Structural Analysis, Design and Specification) respectively, compared to the previous academic season.

Student feedback has been very positive.

#### **5.4 Using a Virtual Classroom to Support Part-time Business Students**



Module, BMGT3002D Undergraduate Dissertation, is a core module on the Bachelor of Business Studies (BBS) part-time programme. The programme is for mature students, with a number of years work experience. This module provides students with the opportunity to prepare a minor dissertation, involving some primary research. For the project, students were allowed to select their topic of interest from within the business curriculum. Students were exposed to each of the steps of the research process, including the development of a research proposal, reviewing the academic literature, constructing a research design, then collecting and analysing the data.

As these students have work experience, many had very good access to a work environment which serves as a research site for the project. These students were extremely self-directed in their approach and the design of this module was developed in consideration of the profile of the group.

Project Goals:

The module learning outcomes were for students to:

- Evaluate different research methodology approaches and identify the most suitable approaches in different situations.
- Conduct interviews and/or administer surveys for the purposes of research.
- Explore the key themes arising in the literature and to demonstrate how these themes are applicable in the chosen research site.
- Evaluate research findings and be able to identify the most relevant findings.
- Present a clear discussion of the main research findings and be able to put forward appropriate conclusions based on the findings.

Given the flexibility of the programme delivery, students were geographically dispersed across the country. A general class workshop was scheduled once a month to introduce the conceptual foundations of a particular stage of the research process which students were encountering at that time. While these sessions were scheduled on a just-in-time basis, it was felt that additional sessions could be of value and that such sessions should be delivered just prior to a project deadline. The

goal was to explore what technology might be employed to provide additional class support outside of the scheduled, monthly classes.

The Innovative Approach:

In addition to the appointment of a discipline-specific supervisor for the project, students attended a monthly research workshop. Three podcasts were prepared for key intervals of the research process which occurred between the classes. This provided students with the flexibility to manage the project in accordance with their own schedules and suited the self-directed nature of this module.

Two online additional workshops were then delivered at times when students traditionally required additional support and were not scheduled to attend class. One week prior to the deadline for the research proposal (and two weeks after the first class), a Collaborate session was delivered in the evening time to provide some general reminders on the proposal specification and also to address general queries. Collaborate, is the virtual classroom that is currently available in UCD which enables voice, video and text interaction between students and lecturers in a virtual classroom environment. This provided an online environment which allowed students to log in from any location which suited the part-time nature of this cohort, who would be otherwise challenged to attend an additional workshop on campus. A second online workshop was delivered two weeks prior to the draft submission of the project. It provided students with some general reminders regarding the preparation of the final submission and addressed the general queries. In both instances, many students had similar queries and benefitted from the opportunity to discuss these queries collectively.

Results:

The use of the additional online web sessions added greatly to the module experience. Attendance for the sessions was between 65%- 75%. The web sessions were scheduled at critical intervals for the development of the project when students were not scheduled to be on campus. The Collaborate technology provided an accessible learning environment at a time when many students would have been otherwise unable to attend a class session. As the sessions were timed around the time of a major project deliverable, students were focused in their approach and were able to maximize the opportunity for discussion of common topics collectively. The 'Collaborate' technology was user-friendly and the recording function allowed students to revisit the material covered as they needed. The online sessions provided a valuable resource and complemented the role of the project supervisor and the face-to-face class sessions.

## **5.5 UCD Fellowships in Teaching and Academic Development**

The Fellowships in Teaching & Academic Development are part of an institutional development structure to encourage a greater number of staff to focus on advancing University-wide enhancement in teaching and learning. The fellowships offer a mechanism to reward individuals for these contributions.

The fellowship scheme aims to identify and develop key academic staff with both the pedagogic expertise and the leadership capacity to effect transformational change in teaching, learning and assessment practices both in discipline-specific areas and thematically, across the institution.

The purpose of the Fellowship Theme (2014-15) was to: *examine the question of research-teaching linkages in the context of a high quality student learning experience at UCD; to develop a shared understanding of the linkages between research and teaching and, to identify policies and practical ways to support academic staff integrate and embed these dual objectives in their academic practice.*



As part of its vision of being a “leading international research-intensive university where excellence in education goes hand in glove with a commitment to research, scholarship, creativity and innovation”. UCD is committed to the twin goals of excellence in teaching and research.

The UCD Fellowships in Teaching & Academic Development provide the opportunity for academic staff to participate actively in advancing University-wide enhancement in teaching and learning through strategic policy/practice based research. Each cohort of Fellows addresses a strategic theme through the design and implementation of a multi-disciplinary group project.

## **6. ACCQ Quality Enhancement Work Projects**

From time to time, ACCQ will establish project groups to take forward strategic and/or procedural quality related initiatives to ensure, *inter alia*, that academic standards are assured and the student experience optimised. It is worth noting, that the Quality and Qualifications Ireland’s Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines (2015), has, as one of its underpinning principles - an expectation that institutional quality assurance processes, as well as academic provision and the student experience, be subject to continuous improvement. In addition, ACCQ has a key role in the oversight of quality assurance and enhancement within UCD, not least, to ensure that UCD meets its statutory obligations and is compliant with external requirements such as the Standards and Guidelines for Quality in the European Higher Education Area (2015) and the QQI Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes of Education & Training to International Learners (2015).

### A. Current Projects

1. Map UCD provision against the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes of Education & Training to International Learners (2015)
2. Map UCD provision against the revised Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for Quality in the European Higher Education Area (2015)
3. Establish an institutional register of UCD links with Professional/Regulatory Bodies

### B. Provisional Projects 2015-18

1. Review UCD’s internal quality review framework in the context of the revised QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines
2. Review UCD’s quality assurance and procedural framework for the approval, monitoring and review of taught collaborative provision
3. Develop a risk assessment tool to inform consideration of appropriate collaborative partner arrangements
4. Develop an institution-wide system for programme monitoring and review to meet the requirements of the ESG and QQI Core Statutory QA Guidelines

## 7. Conclusion

Overall, the outputs from UCD's quality assurance indicators (eg. Institutional Review, Periodic Peer Review Reports of Schools and Service Units and Extern Examiner Reports) confirm that UCD's educational provision is comparable to other leading global universities. External Peer Reviewers however, continue to acknowledge that State funding of UCD (and the Irish HE sector generally), continues to lag behind other comparable institutions worldwide. This investment deficit continues to present challenges to UCD, as it continues to deliver world-class education and research and a high quality student experience. In that context, the University recognizes that there is no room for complacency and will continue to reflect on its performance, and seek additional ways to make efficiencies, while further enhancing provision.

As reported in 2014, the Irish Higher Education quality environment remains in an unprecedented state of flux. In late 2014, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) issued a schedule and proposed work plan for the Irish Universities Association Director's of Quality Working Group. The plan set out the timetable for the developments of QQI quality assurance guidelines relating to the universities and their linked providers.

The engagements planned in the schedule with the QQI/university working groups were subsequently postponed by QQI. The schedule of work and associated timelines have been on hold pending internal restructuring in QQI and further clarification on a number of factors that impact upon the development and implementation of QQI quality assurance guidelines and the authorisation of the International Education Mark (IEM).

These issues arose as a result of follow-up to a December 2014 High Court case involving ACELS ( an English language recognition Scheme) and ACCQ, and immigration reform requirements developed by the Department of Justice and Equality. The court ruling has delayed the implementation of the IEM and the development of a range of quality assurance guidelines.

Provisionally, UCD's quality assurance framework will be subject to an independent external QQI Institutional Review in 2018-19. The Review, *inter alia*, will explore UCD's enhancement of quality in relation to impacts on teaching, learning and research, including, institutional innovations, alignment to UCD's mission and strategy and the quality-related performance of UCD relative to pre-specified quality indicators and benchmarks.

**University College Dublin**

**Quality Review Group Membership 2014-2015**

UCD School of Veterinary Medicine, 1-4 December 2014

- Professor Ewan Cameron, **University of Glasgow, UK**
- Professor David Argyle, **University of Edinburgh, UK**
- Professor David Croke, RCSI (Chair)
- Professor Aisling Reynolds-Feighan, School of Economics (Deputy Chair)

UCD School of Mechanical and Materials Engineering, 2-5 December 2014

- Professor Martin J. Corless, **Purdue University, Indiana, USA**
- Professor Solveig Melin, **Lund University, Sweden**
- Professor Michael Monaghan, UCD School of Agriculture & Food Science (Chair)
- Dr. Diane Payne, HoS, UCD School of Sociology (Deputy Chair)

UCD IT Services, 2-5 February 2015

- Dr Sean Duffy, Director of IT Services, **University of Birmingham, UK**
- Mr Ted Dodds, **CIO and VP, Cornell University, USA**
- Dr Gethin McBean, UCD School of Biomolecular and Biomedical Sciences (Chair)
- Mr Eamonn O'Neill, UCD Bursar's Office (Deputy Chair)

UCD Library, 23-26 February 2015

- Dr Joan Lippincott, **Coalition for Networked Information, Washington, DC, USA**
- Dr Jan Wilkinson, **University of Manchester, UK**
- Mr Jon Purcell, **University of Durham, UK**
- Professor Colin Scott, College Principal, UCD College of Human Sciences (Chair)
- Ms Sue Philpot, UCD College of Engineering & Architecture (Deputy Chair)

UCD School of Philosophy, 23-26 March 2015

- Professor Wayne Martin, **University of Essex, UK**
- Professor Tanja Staehler, **University of Sussex, UK**
- Professor Alex Evans, Head of UCD Agriculture (Chair)
- Dr Gerardine Doyle, UCD School of Business (Deputy Chair)

UCD School of History and Archives, 23-26 March 2015

- Ms Caroline Brown, **University of Dundee, UK**
- Professor Alvin Jackson, **University of Edinburgh, UK**
- Professor Katy Cubbitt, **University of York, UK**
- Dr Pierre Purseigle, **University Warwick, UK**
- Professor Frank McDermott, UCD School of Geological Sciences (Chair)
- Dr Martin McNamara, Head of UCD School of Nursing (Deputy Chair)

UCD School of Mathematical Sciences, 14-17 April 2015

- Professor Ivan Netuka, **Charles University Prague, Czech Republic**
- Professor Colin Sparrow, **University Of Warwick, UK**
- Professor Peter Green, **University of Bristol, UK**
- Professor Ciarán Ó hOgartaigh, UCD School of Business and Law (Chair)
- Dr Síofra Pierse, School of Languages & Literature (Deputy Chair)

**UCD Governing Authority**

**UCD Quality Office**

**Supplementary Paper to the Annual Institutional Quality Report (October 2015)**

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**Commentary on the Implementation of Quality Review Report Recommendations**

June 2015

## Report on the Implementation of Quality Review Report Recommendations

A formal meeting is held approximately 12 months after a school/unit quality improvement plan (QIP) has been accepted, to review progress in addressing review group report recommendations. The school or unit in question will prepare an updated QIP, which serves as the dialogue prompt for a meeting, normally with the Registrar and Deputy President, the Chair of the Review Group and a member of staff from the UCD Quality Office. The analysis of recommendations below is based on the last 11 completed quality improvement plan progress reports (2013-2015)

### Categories

1. Recommendations under the control of the School/Unit
2. Recommendations outside the control of the School/Unit
3. Recommendations requires additional funding

### Timescales

- A. Recommendations implemented within one year
- B. Recommendations to be implemented within two five years
- C. Recommendations which will not be implemented

### Recommendation

Category	1				2				3			
	A	B	C	Total in Category 1.	A	B	C	Total in Category 2.	A	B	C	Total in Category 3.
Implementation Timescale												
No. of Recommendations	482	70	6	558	65	31	10	106	22	13	5	40
% of Total Recommendations by Category	86%	13%	1%	100%	61%	30%	9%	100%	55%	33%	12%	100%

Of a total of 704 recommendations in the sample Quality Review Reports, 683 (c97%) recommendations have either been completed (c81%) or are work in progress (c16%). The remaining 16 recommendations (c3%) will not be acted upon, but may inform later discussions (eg. extend the Conferral Ceremony to Certificate and Diploma Awards).

If a unit, having considered a recommendation, decides that it would be inappropriate (or resources are lacking) to implement the recommendation, it will discuss the reasons for this with the relevant College Principal or Vice President. The reasons for not implementing a recommendation must be outlined in the initial Quality Improvement Plan, and accepted by the UCD Director of Quality and the Chair of the Review Group concerned.

The subject of the recommendations not to be implemented (in this sample) include: University car parking issues; single site location for Schools; HR issues constrained by current Government Directives on staff levels/employment; (eg. increase in staff levels constrained by employment control framework; reduce teaching load for new staff in Semester 1 – frustrated by impact of reduced funding and external regulatory controls for the appointment of new staff); budget challenges eg. increase subscriptions to e-journals.

It should be noted that none of the above issues are unique to UCD.