



University College Dublin

Periodic Quality Review

UCD Student Services

March 2009

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1. Introduction and Overview of UCD Student Services

Introduction

1. This Report presents the findings of a quality review of UCD Student Services, at University College Dublin. The review was undertaken in March 2009.

The Review Process

2. Irish Universities have collectively agreed on a framework for their quality review and quality improvement systems, which is consistent with both the legislative requirements of the Universities Act 1997, and international good practice. Quality reviews are carried out in academic, administrative and support service units.
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 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
 - 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.
4. Typically, the review model comprises four major elements:
 - Preparation of a Self-assessment Report (SAR)

- A visit by a Review Group (RG) that includes UCD staff and 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.

5. The composition of the Review Group for UCD Student Services was as follows:
 - Dr Kathleen Yorkis, Vice President for Student Affairs, Bentley University
 - Mr Arie Rosenzweig, Director of Sport, Tel Aviv University
 - Mr Con O'Brien, Vice-President for the Student Experience, University College Cork
 - Professor Maurice Boland, College Principal, UCD College of Life Sciences (Chair)
 - Dr Erik Lithander, UCD Director of International Affairs (Deputy Chair)
 - Mr Gary Moss, UCD Commercial Manager
 - Dr Majda Bne Saad, UCD School of Politics and International Relations
6. The Review Group visited the University on 3rd, 4th, and 5th March 2009 and had meetings with a range of Unit staff, University students and staff, including: Vice President for Students; the Student Services Co-ordinating Committee; a representative group of students from Sports Clubs and Societies; students who have used Health, Counselling, Chaplaincy or Student Adviser services; a representative group of recent graduates; a representative group of staff from Student Health Services, Student Counselling, UCD Chaplaincy, Student Advisers, UCD Sport, UCD Societies, Student Union Bars and Shops; UCD Buildings and Services, UCD Registry and a representative group of academic staff. A response from the unit under review has been attached at Appendix 1. The site visit schedule is attached as Appendix 2.
7. In addition to the Self-assessment Report, the Review Group considered a range of documentation provided by the Unit and the University. This included the UCD Strategic Plan as well as a range of student services promotional materials, annual reports etc.

Preparation of the Self-assessment Report

8. A committee was established to lead the required self-assessment: this committee was led by the Vice-President for UCD Student Services (VP for Students) and was comprised of the heads of each of the student service units that fall within the review. In addition, the committee had external involvement, from representatives of UCD Registry; UCD Buildings and Services; the President of the UCD Students' Union; and a consultant from Quality Education Development Ltd, which provided assistance to the committee and the VP for Students during the process. Additionally, the UCD Director of Quality was an active participant in the committee, especially during its early stages, providing guidance on the quality assurance process itself.
9. The Co-ordinating Committee met 8 times between 9 October 2008 and the review site visit.

The University

10. University College Dublin (UCD) is a large and diverse university whose origin dates back to 1854. The University is situated on an extensive, modern campus, about 4km to the south of the centre of Dublin.
11. The most recent University Strategic Plan (2005-2008) (a new plan is in preparation) states that the University's Mission is:

“to advance knowledge, pursue truth and foster learning, in an atmosphere of discovery, creativity, innovation and excellence, drawing out the best in each individual, and contributing to the social, cultural and economic life of Ireland in the wider world”.

The University is organised into 35 Schools in five Colleges;

- UCD College of Arts and Celtic Studies
- UCD College of Human Sciences
- UCD College of Life Sciences
- UCD College of Engineering, Mathematical and Physical Sciences
- UCD College of Business and Law

12. There are currently over 22,000 students registered on University programmes, including over 3,000 international students from more than 110 countries.
13. UCD's position as the largest of Ireland's universities has also given rise to the largest number of students coming from non-traditional backgrounds. UCD's New Era programme and mature students programmes have resulted in a large diversity in student background, which in turn has led to a need to ensure the creation of a positive Student Experience that reflects the wide range of students served.

UCD Student Services

Student Services within UCD

14. 'Student services' is a term that needs to be clearly defined for the purposes of this review. Arguably, it might be said that all activities within the University that are outside the classroom learning arena but impact upon students might come within the remit of the review. However, a decision was taken to limit the review to the various disparate student services that promote student welfare or student involvement in non-classroom learning activities and which fall under the authority of the VP for Students. Thus, the following units, falling as they do within the remit of the VP for Students, were included in the review:
 - Student Health Services
 - Counselling
 - Chaplaincy
 - Societies
 - Sports
 - Student's Union Shops and Bars
15. Other units such as Buildings/Facilities, Programme Offices and Registry Services were not included, even though they were consulted during the Review process. This is in no way to suggest that these units do not contribute to the overall Student Experience. They are however, constituencies within the broader Student Experience framework and operate on a parallel level, interacting with students in a number of ways.
16. One exception to the above approach, which was included in the Review, is the Student Advisers. They do not report to the VP for Students, but are rather attached to a particular School or College within the University and have reporting structures into the academic administration of those Schools. However, given the nature of the service provided by the Advisers and the degree of overlap and points of intersection with services provided by other units that are subject to this review, it was decided to include the Student Advisers in this process.
17. It is the expectation of the Review Group that any recommendations made in this Report will be worked on collaboratively between the units which were formally part of the review and those which were not.

The Student Experience Mission

18. In essence, the fundamental common mission of the units that together create the Student Experience is as follows:

To welcome, support, encourage, challenge, assist and develop every student at each stage of that student's journey through UCD.

19. This mission asks that UCD takes a proactive approach to examining the needs of an extremely diverse set of students, not least in an environment where the University has a strategic goal to further diversify the range of backgrounds (both domestic and international) from which it attracts students. Diverse students have diverse needs; some will require significant support, while others will require less support but will seek opportunities for personal growth which call for alternative forms of assistance.
20. A student's needs can be complex and frequently highly individual; in order to be in a position to respond effectively to those needs the University has developed a range of services and supports, some of which are unique in an Irish university context. The wide range of student supports and services that have been developed at UCD are an attempt to ensure that each student, regardless of background and personal situation, is facilitated in his or her journey of personal growth and discovery while at the University.
21. UCD sees its role as being to assist in the development of the whole individual. This challenges UCD to help its students to grow in a variety of aspects of their personality. UCD's ambition is that the Student Experience should see them develop:
- Knowledge
 - Skills
 - Friendship
 - Feeling that he/she can make a difference
 - Healthy lifestyle
 - Citizenship
 - Realisation of one's potential
 - Lifelong learning
 - Joy of sport
22. This review has been carried out with those characteristics in mind. Other circumstances that have been taken into account are the current challenging economic environment (the exact extent of which is unknown at the time of the writing of this Report) which will place further pressure on both the University and the students, and the increasingly competitive environment in which UCD is recruiting students. At the same time, students' expectations have evolved over the years, and the greater diversity on the campus means that they do not only demand more, but demand a broader range of services. Much in the way that UCD has made flexibility a cornerstone of its academic experience through the Horizons programme, so too must it embrace the notion of the Student Experience with flexibility and individual ownership in mind.

2. Planning, Organisation and Management

23. The VP for Students has broad responsibility for administrative units which impact student welfare and student involvement. The welfare component comprises student health services, counselling and the chaplaincy. Student involvement comprises sports, societies and the students' union bars and shops.

The VP also has a lead role in orientation and non-academic student discipline matters.

24. The Review Group noted that there was a degree of protectionism around the activities of the individual units considered under this review, even in areas of obvious complementarities with other units. Empathy for the activities of other units in contributing to the Student Experience has not yet matured. In light of the current reduction of resources available to the University, and an environment where more is expected for less, it is critical that units fully complement each other and work in a coherent and coordinated manner. This must be the motivation for a change in management practices.
25. The Student Services management structure outlined on page 103 of the Self-assessment Report, and explained to the Review Group during the course of this Review, appears appropriate to the current configuration of units. However, the interactions which the VP has with the heads of unit within this management structure are largely informal. There is no formal management team, nor is there a structured process through which the unit heads consider matters which have an overall influence on the student experience, such as the coordination of activities and resource allocation.

Commendations

- The energy and enthusiasm with which the VP for Students approaches his role is evident and wholly commendable. Much of this energy and enthusiasm appears to be shared by the heads of unit which report to the VP, as well as much of their staff.
- The VP for Students expressed a preference for a management style which is based on informal interaction and personal relationships. This approach appears to have been successful since the time of the current VP's appointment and there were no strong misgivings about this approach expressed by the heads of unit reporting to the VP during the course of this Review.
- The "UCD Community Symposiums" arranged on an ad-hoc basis by the VP for Students are appreciated by those who attend, and represent a useful vehicle for the discussion/communication of matters of general interest to the UCD community. However, they are not, in the view of the Review Group, an appropriate alternative to a formal management team. The current system could lead to inequality of resource allocation across the different sections and does not take advantage of the communal input into decision making process.
- Overall, the VP for Students and the Directors of units reporting to the VP demonstrate a high level of commitment aspiring to deliver a world class student experience at UCD. The student groups, including alumni, who met the Review Group, generally spoke very favourably of the quality of student life at UCD.

Recommendations

- In the interests of good management, improved coordination and greater coherency, a formal management structure should be put in place and operated by the VP for Students. The management committee should include, as a minimum, the VP for Students and the heads of the six units which report to him. The involvement of colleagues from Registry, the Commercial Office, UCD International and other administrative and academic units of UCD should be considered on a needs basis. Consideration should also be given to developing effective communications with the President of the Student Union.
- The Management Team should meet on a regular (perhaps fortnightly) basis, and meetings should be structured by formal agendas. Minutes, agreed responsibilities, action points and defined timelines should be recorded and followed up.
- The VP for Students' Management Team should have an active involvement in the annual budget allocation process and in the prioritisation of actions within the remit of the VP. Emphasis should be placed on finding collegial solutions which further promote collaboration across units, and the process should build upon the sense of common purpose achieved during the preparation of the Self-assessment Report.
- It would also be appropriate to hold quarterly or twice-yearly staff meetings which include all staff in the units reporting to the VP. This would be an opportunity to brief colleagues on the overarching objectives of the VP and how collaboration between units will yield better results. The President of the Student Union, as well as representatives from other associated units, should be invited to attend discussion around specific items in these meetings.
- A leadership development programme should be implemented for the heads of the units reporting to the VP for Students in order to build strategic planning, budgeting and teamwork capability within the Management Team.
- A clear and coherent UCD Student Experience Strategy should be developed and published in order to guide the activities of the VP for Students and his Management Team and which is consistent with and supportive of the University Strategic Plan. This strategy should have an overarching vision and its goals and objectives should be benchmarked to best national and international practice.
- An annual UCD Student Survey should be carried out in order to provide the basis for a continuous improvement of services which impact on the Student Experience. Both domestic and international students at undergraduate and postgraduate level should be included. This survey should not be limited to those services which report to the VP.
- The VP for Students should be responsible for ensuring the development of a strategy to market the services available to students; this is particularly

important in first year. Careful consideration should be given to extending and broadening the orientation/mentoring programme

- A new post of Senior Student Adviser / Coordinator should be considered, which would have responsibility for the coordination of the student advisers, student orientation, organisation of a student peer mentoring programme and oversight of information for new students.

3. Functions, Activities, Processes

UCD Sports

26. UCD has a long and distinguished tradition in fostering the enjoyment of sport among its students. The central role of sports in helping to shape UCD students as individuals and citizens is well recognised within the University, and the contribution of sports to the Student Experience is actively endorsed by the VP for Students and the rest of the senior management of UCD. Particular emphasis is placed on the value of the enjoyment of sports in helping students lead healthy, well-balanced lives.

Commendations

- UCD Sports is successfully achieving broad UCD student involvement in sports and physical activity, at both elite and recreational level.
- The high level of membership (8,500 students) in the 60+ sports clubs which make up the Athletic Union Council is an encouraging sign of student participation in physical activity on campus.
- The achievements of the UCD High Performance Centre in supporting UCD's elite athletes is impressive, and the performance of these athletes in national and international events reflect positively on UCD as an institution.
- UCD maintains an impressive range of top-quality sports facilities, and the addition of a 50-metre pool and new gym will place UCD's facilities among the finest in Europe. The information booth which displays the plans for the new building serves a significant educational and fund-raising role.
- UCD Sports Clubs indicate broad satisfaction with their activities and with their interaction with UCD Sports. The provision of high-quality coaching to UCD sports teams is specifically noted.
- The UCD 'Get in Gear' programme stands out as an excellent initiative aimed at broadening student involvement in a broad range of physical activity.
- The Unit has clearly defined plans and objectives and appears to have a strong team of highly dedicated professionals working under strong leadership from the Director of Sports.

Recommendations

- UCD Sports should continue to generate income from a variety of sources, thus further reducing its dependence on University funding in what will be an increasingly challenging economic environment.
- Every effort should be made to further increase the number of students participating in physical activity, and UCD sports clubs should be supported in efforts to broaden their user base.
- Further emphasis should be placed on the importance of good diet and nutrition, in addition to physical activity, in promoting good student health. To this end, the VP should initiate and support a close working relationship between UCD Sports, the Health Centre, Student Counselling Services and relevant research groups (e.g. Institute of Food and Health) in UCD Schools.
- Particular emphasis should be placed on the potential value of sports in helping international students at UCD to develop social networks. An “Introduction to Gaelic Games” programme based loosely on the “Get in Gear” programme should be piloted to engage with a broad group of international students.
- A formal UCD policy and procedure on extenuating circumstances relating specifically to students’ involvement in sports clubs at elite level should be developed. An evaluation should be carried out on the possible mechanisms for awarding academic credit to students who represent UCD in sports at elite level.
- UCD Sports should put in place dedicated programmes aimed at increasing UCD staff involvement in sports and physical activity.
- Every effort should be made to maintain/improve sporting facilities, such as tennis courts, to the highest possible standard and to be responsive to user needs and views in a proactive manner.
- A feasibility study should be carried out to consider the options for maintaining a pool of minivans/buses which can be made available at subsidised rates to UCD sports clubs which require transportation to compete outside of Dublin.
- An evaluation should be carried out on the potential implications of running the Sports Centre, including the new 50 metre pool, as a separate commercial entity to the University. Such a model could increase the incentive for better management, greater income generation and higher levels of investment in infrastructure.
- UCD should consider more actively using its elite athletes, and in particular those who have achieved international success, in student recruitment campaigns and other promotional purposes.

- Further to the completion of the new sporting facilities in late 2010, UCD should make every effort to capitalise upon Dublin's proximity to London and seek commercial and other advantages from the availability of competition-standard training facilities on the UCD campus which may be of value to teams preparing for the London Olympics.

Chaplains

27. The chaplaincy service within UCD provides a significant non academic support role to students. It involves meeting individual students and advising them on personal, social or spiritual matters. The chaplains operate within a network of referral, which incorporates the services of the Student Advisers and the Student Counselling Service.
28. The chaplaincy aims to respond on a daily basis to the various needs and demands of students in the following areas:
 - Bereavement and emergency
 - Advocacy role on behalf of students
 - Liaising with relevant units in UCD and communicating commonly experienced difficulties of students
 - Working with other units and as part of the team to ensure effective contribution to the development of UCD student support policy
 - Maintaining a 24/7 open door policy to students and staff
 - Assisting and encouraging students and staff to explore the faith dimension of their lives.

Commendations

- The chaplains are dedicated advocates for the wellbeing of all students at UCD, and the service that they provide is broadly appreciated and respected across the University by both students and staff, regardless of religious belief.
- The chaplains work well in tandem with the Student Advisers and the Student Counselling Service, and their presence on the campus at St Stephen's effectively provides a 24/7 student support service which is invaluable to at-risk students in the evenings and at weekends.
- The chaplains are responsive to a broad range of student needs, and have responded effectively to the increasing diversity of the student population – and hence the diversity of their needs – on the campus.
- The chaplains have established extensive links with external stakeholders such as local community groups, parishes and schools which further broaden the support networks available to UCD students.

- The contribution of the Chaplains to the provision of a welcoming environment to new international students and staff is particularly noteworthy.

Recommendations

- The chaplains, in collaboration with the Student Advisers and Student Counselling Service, should develop a formal protocol for referral and case history (see also pages 15 and 22 under Student Advisers and Student Counselling Service). Although the ad-hoc nature of the referral system has worked adequately to date, the likely increase in student need for these services in the coming years demands a more thorough record-keeping system.
- Improved tracking (within the confines of privacy laws) will assist the chaplains to monitor workload, and thus make the basis for well-informed fundraising and budgetary planning.
- The chaplains should continue working with the UCD International Office to assist international students to get in touch with support services for religions not currently represented in the chaplaincy. One possibility is a simple leaflet which describes the availability of churches, temples and mosques around Dublin.
- The chaplains should establish a strong rapport with the newly created Academic Council Campus Life Committee, and use this Committee to further issues which are of relevance to their work on the campus. Anticipated growth in the number of students' resident (2000) will put pressure on the chaplains living on campus.
- The chaplaincy should maximise the good collaborative and complementary work with other services to improve communication through:
 - Consultation with other stakeholders (students advisers, students health, counselling) to formalise their collaboration by creating a network (Student Wellbeing Network (SWN)). This dynamic group can meet monthly/bimonthly (at the start) with clear agenda agreed upon by all for the purpose of innovating best possible approaches to enhance the students experience in UCD. Chairing of each meeting should be rotated.
 - This Network will maximise the effectiveness of the units involved and will enhance the work and integrity of each unit.
- To achieve a UCD strategic vision of promoting the holistic development of the individual student, the chaplains should proactively participate in the process of introducing an overarching mechanism with responsibility for ensuring that co-ordinated, equitable service is available to all students.
- The Review Group detects a meaningful amount of overlap in some areas between the Chaplains, Advisers and Counsellors. This overlap needs to be

addressed to ensure that students are getting the best possible support without undue duplication.

Student Advisers

29. The Student Advisers service in UCD is unique amongst Irish universities. It was formally established in 2001 to provide easily accessible and relatively informal support for all students experiencing difficulties which impacted on their academic studies. There are currently 13 Student Advisers across UCD. This figure is in addition to Chaplains, who also hold the title of Student Advisers. The number of students which each Student Adviser is responsible for varies greatly.
30. The Student Advisers respond to a broad variety of demands and needs on a daily basis. Their involvement in impacting on the Student Experience includes:
 - Responding to problems of a personal nature (relationships and bereavement); emotional nature (stress, anxiety); financial, and academic (lack of motivation, queries regarding failed exams, re-sits/repeats)
 - Student Advisers refer students to relevant other UCD services (especially Student Counselling Services) as deemed appropriate
 - Involvement in Orientation programmes
 - Initiating and coordinating peer mentoring programmes
 - Their own website, with details on School websites, programme and Unit handbooks in addition to the production of leaflets.
31. The Student Advisers Co-ordinator's role is to convene regular meetings of the Student Advisory Network to share information, exchange ideas and offer support and to manage a two-way channel of communications between Student Advisers and other units/services within the University. The Coordinator is chosen from among the existing Advisers and is given a modest supplementary pay allowance to compensate for the additional work. The Coordinator does not have any line-management responsibilities vis-à-vis the other Advisers.

Commendations

- The Student Advisers are a well-established and much appreciated component of the student support system at UCD. Both UCD students and staff express their appreciation for the hard work and dedication demonstrated by the Student Advisers.
- The Student Advisers have drawn up a Code of Practice to guide their activities. This document is awaiting approval from the UCD Corporate and Legal Affairs Office and, once signed off, will be a powerful expression of UCD's commitment to student welfare.

- The existing mechanism of having a Student Advisers Coordinator works well to coordinate the activities of the Advisers, although it is recognised that the workload incumbent upon the Coordinator means that a significant amount of work has to be done outside regular office hours. It is unclear that the current salary supplement provided by the VP for Students is adequate to compensate for this additional workload.
- The support offered by the Student Advisers to UCD's international student community, specifically through the work of the International Student Adviser, is particularly noteworthy in light of the highly diverse and complex needs of UCD's growing community of international students.
- The Student Advisers have established effective links with a range of internal and external stakeholders and funding agencies.

Recommendations

- The Student Advisers, in collaboration with the Chaplains and Student Counselling Service, should develop a formal protocol for referral and case history (see also pages 13 and 22 under Chaplains and Student Counselling Service). Although the ad-hoc nature of the referral system has worked adequately to date, the likely increase in student need for these services in the coming years demands a more thorough record-keeping system.
- The Student Advisers should use the proposed annual Student Survey to guide their prioritisation and workload model.
- The Student Advisers should work with other complementary services (Chaplains and Student Counselling Service) to develop more effective communication and promotion strategies in order to increase student awareness of existing support mechanisms.
- A Peer Mentoring programme should be rolled out across all of UCD's Schools in order to provide students with information and informal support which will lessen the likelihood of them needing to require help from the Student Advisers. This preventative approach will benefit many students and also result in higher completion rates.
- In light of the future increase in the international student population at UCD, it is not feasible for one Student Adviser to provide adequate support for both the Medical Students and International Students. This role should be split, and the Student Adviser in the International Office should be given a leadership role in training and supporting all Student Advisers on how to deal with international student issues. As a consequence, all Student Advisers would play an active role in supporting the international students in their schools and programmes.
- The practice of having a Student Advisers Coordinator should be maintained.

- The Student Advisers should maintain their presence in all programmes and units and space should be available and visible.

Societies

32. There are more student activities on the UCD campus today than ever before, and the support given by the President and senior management to these activities is welcomed. However, the further development of student societies should be considered in the context of rising operating cost, a potential fall in financial support from SU bars, increasing maintenance cost and charges being levied by UCD for the use of space and weekend openings.
33. There is a clear message that student clubs and societies would resist an increased level of central University involvement in their activities. The concern was expressed that “pet projects” which are close to the heart of the University administration might/would receive greater support and assistance than others.

Commendations

- There is a strong and diverse society and club tradition at UCD, meeting the need of a diverse and growing student population.
- There is a strong “hands off” relationship with the societies and clubs with responsibilities clearly defined with a great deal of support and respect for the work of the unit manager.
- The “light touch” approach by UCD management is working well, as the drivers of these societies see themselves as self starters.
- The provision of guidance and training to help make the society activities more active, and to make their running more professional, is to be commended.

Recommendations

- Banner should be utilised as a management tool to help identify and to track patterns of usage by students throughout their time in UCD, and to aid in better understanding possible reasons for student non-engagement with clubs and societies.
- Although membership fees for UCD clubs and societies are currently modest and represent good value for money for students, consideration should be given to increasing membership fees to a level which better protects clubs and societies from the impact of falling revenues in Student Union bars and the likely consequences of the economic downturn. Membership fees should be mapped closer to the true cost of operating the service.
- In common with the other service providers included in this exercise, it is apparent that the societies need to publicise their events and activities more effectively. Consideration should be given to addressing this weakness by

using such mediums as a UCD-wide event calendar with an email alert system which allows users to specify the types of activities and events that they are specifically interested in.

- A single website which acts as a portal for all UCD Clubs and Societies should be developed.
- A great deal of work and training has been undertaken to help societies bring a more professional approach to their activities and this should be continued and intensified.
- To facilitate the transfer of one club or society administration to another, consideration should be given to preparing standard operating procedures (SOP) which act as a guide to running the society or club. The Societies Officer could prepare a template for clubs and societies to use. Succession planning is a key to the future success of these organisations.
- A survey of storage requirements for clubs and societies should be carried out, as a shortage of facilities to store equipment has been identified.
- In response to concerns about the cost of transport, an investigation might be undertaken regarding the feasibility of pooling the use and cost of a leased vehicle between all the clubs and societies.
- The division that has occurred in recent years between the Students Union and societies should be reflected upon and addressed in a common sense manner, particularly in the current economic climate and through this period of major change.

Students' Union, Shops and Bars Unit

34. Those associated with the provision of bar and shop services expressed their concerns that a number of issues were simultaneously impacting upon their ability to operate effectively. These include:
 - The impact of semesterisation and modularisation on patterns of student attendance and behaviour, and in particular students' ability to arrange their timetables to effectively allow for a 3.5 day week on campus.
 - The increased "commuter" element to campus life, compounded by students' increased ownership of cars, allowing them to leave the campus at will.
 - A tendency for students to bulk-buy alcohol in supermarkets for cost savings rather than visiting student bars, and the behavioural impacts of this.
35. These issues have impacted upon sales both in the bars and shops. When considered in the context of the requirement to offer seven day services with a five day customers base, this casts doubts upon financial feasibility and the organisation's continued ability to fund student activities.

36. The student bars are in a particularly difficult situation. UCD's policy against alcohol promotion, together with aggressive and inexpensive promotions by off-campus businesses, means that the student bars are struggling to appear competitive at a time when student attendance and behaviour patterns are reducing available demand for on-campus bars. Furthermore, large portions of UCD's increasing international student community do not engage with alcohol in the same way as domestic students traditionally do, and international students have a strong presence in on-campus accommodation.
37. The service providers expressed concerns that there was no formal structure in place to support and promote their operation to the UCD executive and student body, even though their operation is critical to the ongoing survival of the students union, societies and clubs.
38. The provision of these services face very serious challenges in a very difficult economic and operational environment, following our meeting with the unit staff, it is clear that they are fully aware of and actively addressing those challenges.

Commendations

- The unit offers a wide choice to students at reasonable prices and endeavours to meet the student's diverse needs in each major academic location.
- There is an awareness of the special needs of international students, and a willingness to meet these needs.
- The diversification into food catering as a mechanism to offset falling sales elsewhere, and to move away from the alcohol related sales, is a welcomed move.
- An acute awareness of the problems facing the team and a willingness to address the issues that were raised was noted.

Recommendations

- A change in approach will be necessary to overcome the financial and other challenges facing the Students' Union, shops and bars unit.
- It was clear that all parties, both user groups and service providers felt that there was an acute lack of awareness of the services that were available to the student body and that there were low levels of engagement. It is likely that student apathy, the commuter campus and poor communication all contribute to this.
- The Review Group recommends that consideration be given to establishing a new additional permanent post, such as a 'Students' Union Manager', whose responsibilities might include undertaking the necessary research and developing strategies and marketing campaigns to further promote the SU and its affiliated services. Furthermore, it was felt that such a post would

provide a greater level of continuity and support for incoming sabbatical officers and would act as a conduit for information for all other University support services.

- The needs of the Student Union shops and bars may be better served if they are linked to the Student Centre retail operations rather than to the Students' Union.
- Whether this proposal is adopted or not, the unit should work with the other commercial services to develop their thoughts in respect to meeting the needs of International, resident students and other potential purchasing groups. The ideas should be creative rather than simply based upon alcohol consumption.
- The unit should further consider broadening its customer base reaching out to staff, residents and part-time students through promotions, loyalty schemes and competitions.
- Although recent improvements to the Students' Union shop in the James Joyce Library building are welcome, and will no doubt lead to an increase in sales, it is recommended that the unit consider options for a full refurbishment and re-branding. The unit should aim to match best practice demonstrated by the leading Students' Union shops in Ireland and the UK.
- In light of its difficult financial circumstances, the Students' Union shop may need to partially rethink its approach to pricing, and in particular its involvement in very low-margin product ranges. An evaluation will need to be carried out to determine the extent to which a good service can still be provided to students despite the need to protect profits.
- A publicity campaign should be initiated which reminds students that money which they spend on campus gets reinvested in the University and in student activities.
- With all the problems that the unit faces, some current and some looming, the service will need to totally reinvent itself and must ask of itself the difficult questions: Can we afford to continue trading in this manner? Is it simply a matter of reducing the financial contribution to students activities to survive? Should we reduce our opening hours? How can we trade out of our predicament? And perhaps the most difficult, could a private operator through a shared profit scheme generate an improved return?

Student Health Services

39. UCD was the first Irish University to establish a Student Health Service (SHS). At the time, the mission was to deal with the threat of TB in the University residences. SHS currently offers a comprehensive set of medical services to care for the holistic needs of students. Historically SHS provided the combined services of medicine and counselling. In 2007 a Director of Counselling was hired and the decision was made to separate the two functions. A new facility is

under construction and in 2009 SHS will be moving to the new facility and Counselling will be remaining in the current location which is in the Student Services building.

40. SHS is highly utilised, with 17,833 consultations in 2008. A survey of users has indicated that there is a rate of 77% to 79% satisfaction to extremely high satisfaction with the overall quality of service and with the amount of time given during appointments.
41. SHS is funded from central UCD sources and students receive medical services without paying any additional money, except for special services including Sports Medicine and Travel Clinic. In the past two years, SHS has had significant budget reductions and more are anticipated due to the severe economic conditions. Staffing has been reduced and during term-time in excess of 30 students are turned away daily due to lack of capacity.

Commendations;

- The staff of SHS works well together as a team. They possess a vast array of expertise and they are very committed to providing outstanding health care services to UCD students.
- SHS aspires to provide comprehensive health care services that are in full compliance with the regulations, requirements, and professional standards of the Irish Medical Council, An Bord Altranais, ICGP, and the Medical Protection Society. The staff is professionally qualified in their respective areas.
- The staff is keenly aware of the unique and complex health care needs of a young adult population. They can clearly articulate the inter-relatedness of student behaviors and health, for example the relationship between alcohol and other drug abuse and health consequences.
- The move to a new, dedicated facility is welcomed and should lead to a better working environment and even greater levels of student satisfaction with the service.
- The professionalism of SHS is recognised and highly valued and regarded throughout the University community.
- SHS has generated an extensive list of strategic initiatives that could be provided should additional funding become available. This is a comprehensive list that also identifies the advantages of being able to offer holistic medical services within the context of the University community.
- The thoroughness and level of detail in the Student Health Centre's section in the Self-assessment Report is particularly noted.

Recommendations

- The demand for service is far outstripping the resources available. Students are turned away daily, placed on a waiting list and referred to outside providers. If possible, an increase in available hours especially at the peak times in the semester needs to be achieved. While staffing adjustments have been made to shift hours from out of term (December, March and Summer) to term time, additional staff changes may need to be made.
- The current provision of Health Services to the UCD student community should formally be recognised as inadequate. A formal feasibility study should be carried out to consider:
 - The likely impact of the introduction of a modest fee (€10-30) for a student appointment at the Health Centre
 - The likely impact of outsourcing the Health Centre functions to a private health provider
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 - The introduction of a dedicated, supplementary student levy specifically to support Student Health, Counselling and Student Advisory services
- Technology applications may provide improved efficiencies in medical records, scheduling, and record keeping, and should be used as extensively as practicable.
- Significant attention needs to be given to the orderly separation of Student Health Service and Student Counselling Service. Apparent tensions between these units need to be resolved.

Student Counselling Service

42. In 2007 the Student Counselling Service (SCS) became a distinct unit, having previously been incorporated with the Student Health Service. SCS provides psychological support and individual counselling to students, consultative service to college staff regarding students, and also promotes mental health and well-being. SCS activity areas include consultations, awareness raising, information provision, research, training, professional networking links and wider societal awareness.

Commendations

- The SCS provides a professional clinical service to the UCD student community, and its contribution to student welfare is recognised across the campus.
- The immediate attention which is given to urgent cases and referrals is particularly commended.

- The SCS has developed interesting public awareness campaigns on a small scale. The “Don’t drop out before you drop in” campaign is one example.
- The Student Counsellors have a good working relationship with the Student Advisers and with the Chaplains, even if the nature of this relationship is largely informal, and interactions are mostly ad-hoc.
- The SCS group seems to work well as a team and there is an obvious dedication to student wellbeing within it.

Recommendations

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- Although the split from the Student Health Service in 2007 was partially driven by a wish to differentiate the SCS from a medical service, the current tension between the SHS and the SCS is not productive and should be addressed as a matter of priority. The future move of the SHS to new facilities should be used as an opportunity to further clarify the roles and responsibilities of the two units and develop mechanisms for close, constructive collaboration.

4. Management of Resources

43. The issue of management of resources has been addressed in a number of different places throughout this review document. In summary, it is the view of the Review Group that more coordinated activity across the units reporting to the VP for Students, and especially through the establishment of a formal Management Team, would greatly contribute to the units’ ability to engage in sound resource management.

5. Quality Review/Enhancement Processes

44. The units under review recognise that they do, broadly speaking, not currently have the capacity to ensure continuous improvement, partially because of a lack of adequate management data. Some of the recommendations in this Report, such as the increased use of technology to track demand for student services, will help provide the sort of data needed. The various units have identified that the standardised use of KPIs would allow them to better evaluate performance and track usage and demand. The gradual introduction of KPIs, in a manner which is considerate to the requirements and specificities of each unit, is recommended.

6. Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

Strengths

- The Student Experience is firmly embedded into UCD institutional strategy.
- The passion and energy of VP for Students is apparent and widely recognised by stakeholders.
- Support for VP for Students by President and other UCD senior leaders.
- Dedicated and enthusiastic staff in all units engaged in Student Experience.
- World-class sports facilities, albeit under pressure from the growing size of the student population.
- Broadly speaking, the constituent units under the VP for Students appear to be functioning well as individual entities.
- Between the Chaplains, Student Advisers and Counsellors there is a well-established safety net for students at risk, and the current informal relationships between these groups has not yet led to any significant difficulties or shortcomings.

Weaknesses

- Lack of management habits and structures does not encourage collaboration across units.
- Ad-hoc and informal communication and management channels bring risk of unclear processes and heighten risk for mistakes in critical incidents.
- No formal referral system between units (such as Student Advisers and Counsellors), or the required technological infrastructure (i.e. an integrated client record management system).
- Modularisation and semesterisation have had unintended (and seemingly negative) consequences in terms of students' availability to engage in clubs, societies and sports.
- In a financial environment where new appointments are near impossible, the current model of Chaplains and Student Advisers embedded in Schools cannot realistically be rolled out to more Schools.
- The current coordination role as an add-on role for one Student Adviser.

Opportunities

- The completion of the new student facilities (pool, theatre, debating chamber, gym) will provide UCD with world-leading student facilities.
- The economic downturn may encourage a new age of volunteerism and student activism, which can be channelled into projects such as the Student Mentoring scheme.
- Students and staff broadly recognise the passion of the VP for Students, and are likely to be energised by future initiatives which he leads.

Threats

- Student engagement with VP for Students and his units could be undermined if students feel that the format of the “Student Experience” is being imposed upon them, or if the University appears to be taking credit for activities which are fundamentally student-run.
- The economic downturn is likely to put tremendous pressure on student support services which are already under-resourced.
- At a time when the University budget is under pressure, there may be a temptation to cut back in areas which may be perceived to be non-essential to the core functions of the University. Units such as UCD Sport would appear to be most at risk.
- There is a wide-spread suspicion of “additional managerial layers” among the units considered under this Review, which may prevent the introduction of greater efficiency and coordination among the group.
- If UCD staff morale deteriorates as the University comes under additional pressure in the coming years, this is likely to filter down to the Student Experience.
- KPIs and performance monitoring might be seen by some stakeholders as incompatible with the delivery of an effective Student Experience.
- The informal management and communication channels preferred by the VP for Students is heavily personality-dependent, which raises challenges for succession.
- Pressure on office space at UCD is putting the current effective “embedded” model of Student Advisers and Chaplains at risk.

10. Summary of Commendations and Recommendations

a. Planning, Organisation and Management

Commendations

- The energy and enthusiasm with which the VP for Students approaches his role is evident and wholly commendable. Much of this energy and enthusiasm appears to be shared by the heads of unit which report to the VP, as well as much of their staff.
- The VP for Students expressed a preference for a management style which is based on informal interaction and personal relationships. This approach appears to have been successful since the time of the current VP's appointment and there were no strong misgivings about this approach expressed by the heads of unit reporting to the VP during the course of this Review.
- The "UCD Community Symposiums" arranged on an ad-hoc basis by the VP for Students are appreciated by those who attend, and represent a useful vehicle for the discussion/communication of matters of general interest to the UCD community. However, they are not, in the view of the Review Group, an appropriate alternative to a formal management team. The current system could lead to inequality of resource allocation across the different sections and does not take advantage of the communal input into decision making process.
- Overall, the VP for Students and the Directors of units reporting to the VP demonstrate a high level of commitment aspiring to deliver a world class student experience at UCD. The student groups, including alumni, who met the Review Group, generally spoke very favourably of the quality of student life at UCD.

Recommendations

- In the interests of good management, improved coordination and greater coherency, a formal management structure should be put in place and operated by the VP for Students. The management committee should include, as a minimum, the VP for Students and the heads of the six units which report to him. The involvement of colleagues from Registry, the Commercial Office, UCD International and other administrative and academic units of UCD should be considered on a needs basis. Consideration should also be given to developing effective communications with the President of the Student Union.
- The Management Team should meet on a regular (perhaps fortnightly) basis, and meetings should be structured by formal agendas. Minutes, agreed responsibilities, action points and defined timelines should be recorded and followed up.

- The VP for Students' Management Team should have an active involvement in the annual budget allocation process and in the prioritisation of actions within the remit of the VP. Emphasis should be placed on finding collegial solutions which further promote collaboration across units, and the process should build upon the sense of common purpose achieved during the preparation of the Self-assessment Report.
- It would also be appropriate to hold quarterly or twice-yearly staff meetings which include all staff in the units reporting to the VP. This would be an opportunity to brief colleagues on the overarching objectives of the VP and how collaboration between units will yield better results. The President of the Student Union, as well as representatives from other associated units, should be invited to attend discussion around specific items in these meetings.
- A leadership development programme should be implemented for the heads of the units reporting to the VP for Students in order to build strategic planning, budgeting and teamwork capability within the Management Team.
- A clear and coherent UCD Student Experience Strategy should be developed and published in order to guide the activities of the VP for Students and his Management Team and which is consistent with and supportive of the University Strategic Plan. This strategy should have an overarching vision and its goals and objectives should be benchmarked to best national and international practice.
- An annual UCD Student Survey should be carried out in order to provide the basis for a continuous improvement of services which impact on the Student Experience. Both domestic and international students at undergraduate and postgraduate level should be included. This survey should not be limited to those services which report to the VP.
- The VP for Students should be responsible for ensuring the development of a strategy to market the services available to students; this is particularly important in first year. Careful consideration should be given to extending and broadening the orientation/mentoring programme
- A new post of Senior Student Adviser / Coordinator should be considered, which would have responsibility for the coordination of the student advisers, student orientation, organisation of a student peer mentoring programme and oversight of information for new students.

b. Functions, Activities, Processes

UCD Sports

Commendations

- UCD Sports is successfully achieving broad UCD student involvement in sports and physical activity, at both elite and recreational level.

- The high level of membership (8,500 students) in the 60+ sports clubs which make up the Athletic Union Council is an encouraging sign of student participation in physical activity on campus.
- The achievements of the UCD High Performance Centre in supporting UCD's elite athletes is impressive, and the performance of these athletes in national and international events reflect positively on UCD as an institution.
- UCD maintains an impressive range of top-quality sports facilities, and the addition of a 50-metre pool and new gym will place UCD's facilities among the finest in Europe. The information booth which displays the plans for the new building serves a significant educational and fund-raising role.
- UCD Sports Clubs indicate broad satisfaction with their activities and with their interaction with UCD Sports. The provision of high-quality coaching to UCD sports teams is specifically noted.
- The UCD 'Get in Gear' programme stands out as an excellent initiative aimed at broadening student involvement in a broad range of physical activity.
- The Unit has clearly defined plans and objectives and appears to have a strong team of highly dedicated professionals working under strong leadership from the Director of Sports.

Recommendations

- UCD Sports should continue to generate income from a variety of sources, thus further reducing its dependence on University funding in what will be an increasingly challenging economic environment.
- Every effort should be made to further increase the number of students participating in physical activity, and UCD sports clubs should be supported in efforts to broaden their user base.
- Further emphasis should be placed on the importance of good diet and nutrition, in addition to physical activity, in promoting good student health. To this end, the VP should initiate and support a close working relationship between UCD Sports, the Health Centre, Student Counselling Services and relevant research groups (e.g. Institute of Food and Health) in UCD Schools.
- Particular emphasis should be placed on the potential value of sports in helping international students at UCD to develop social networks. An "Introduction to Gaelic Games" programme based loosely on the "Get in Gear" programme should be piloted to engage with a broad group of international students.
- A formal UCD policy and procedure on extenuating circumstances relating specifically to students' involvement in sports clubs at elite level should be developed. An evaluation should be carried out on the possible mechanisms

for awarding academic credit to students who represent UCD in sports at elite level.

- UCD Sports should put in place dedicated programmes aimed at increasing UCD staff involvement in sports and physical activity.
- Every effort should be made to maintain/improve sporting facilities, such as tennis courts, to the highest possible standard and to be responsive to user needs and views in a proactive manner.
- A feasibility study should be carried out to consider the options for maintaining a pool of minivans/buses which can be made available at subsidised rates to UCD sports clubs which require transportation to compete outside of Dublin.
- An evaluation should be carried out on the potential implications of running the Sports Centre, including the new 50 metre pool, as a separate commercial entity to the University. Such a model could increase the incentive for better management, greater income generation and higher levels of investment in infrastructure.
- UCD should consider more actively using its elite athletes, and in particular those who have achieved international success, in student recruitment campaigns and other promotional purposes.
- Further to the completion of the new sporting facilities in late 2010, UCD should make every effort to capitalise upon Dublin's proximity to London and seek commercial and other advantages from the availability of competition-standard training facilities on the UCD campus which may be of value to teams preparing for the London Olympics.

Chaplains

Commendations

- The chaplains are dedicated advocates for the wellbeing of all students at UCD, and the service that they provide is broadly appreciated and respected across the University by both students and staff, regardless of religious belief.
- The chaplains work well in tandem with the Student Advisers and the Student Counselling Service, and their presence on the campus at St Stephen's effectively provides a 24/7 student support service which is invaluable to at-risk students in the evenings and at weekends.
- The chaplains are responsive to a broad range of student needs, and have responded effectively to the increasing diversity of the student population – and hence the diversity of their needs – on the campus.

- The chaplains have established extensive links with external stakeholders such as local community groups, parishes and schools which further broaden the support networks available to UCD students.
- The contribution of the Chaplains to the provision of a welcoming environment to new international students and staff is particularly noteworthy.

Recommendations

- The chaplains, in collaboration with the Student Advisers and Student Counselling Service, should develop a formal protocol for referral and case history (see also pages 15 and 22 under Student Advisers and Student Counselling Service). Although the ad-hoc nature of the referral system has worked adequately to date, the likely increase in student need for these services in the coming years demands a more thorough record-keeping system.
- Improved tracking (within the confines of privacy laws) will assist the chaplains to monitor workload, and thus make the basis for well-informed fundraising and budgetary planning.
- The chaplains should continue working with the UCD International Office to assist international students to get in touch with support services for religions not currently represented in the chaplaincy. One possibility is a simple leaflet which describes the availability of churches, temples and mosques around Dublin.
- The chaplains should establish a strong rapport with the newly created Academic Council Campus Life Committee, and use this Committee to further issues which are of relevance to their work on the campus. Anticipated growth in the number of students' resident (2000) will put pressure on the chaplains living on campus.
- The chaplaincy should maximise the good collaborative and complementary work with other services to improve communication through:
 - Consultation with other stakeholders (students advisers, students health, counselling) to formalise their collaboration by creating a network (Student Wellbeing Network (SWN)). This dynamic group can meet monthly/bimonthly (at the start) with clear agenda agreed upon by all for the purpose of innovating best possible approaches to enhance the students experience in UCD. Chairing of each meeting should be rotated.
 - This Network will maximise the effectiveness of the units involved and will enhance the work and integrity of each unit.
- To achieve a UCD strategic vision of promoting the holistic development of the individual student, the chaplains should proactively participate in the process of introducing an overarching mechanism with responsibility for ensuring that co-ordinated, equitable service is available to all students.

- The Review Group detects a meaningful amount of overlap in some areas between the Chaplains, Advisers and Counsellors. This overlap needs to be addressed to ensure that students are getting the best possible support without undue duplication.

Student Advisers

Commendations

- The Student Advisers are a well-established and much appreciated component of the student support system at UCD. Both UCD students and staff express their appreciation for the hard work and dedication demonstrated by the Student Advisers.
- The Student Advisers have drawn up a Code of Practice to guide their activities. This document is awaiting approval from the UCD Corporate and Legal Affairs Office and, once signed off, will be a powerful expression of UCD's commitment to student welfare.
- The existing mechanism of having a Student Advisers Coordinator works well to coordinate the activities of the Advisers, although it is recognised that the workload incumbent upon the Coordinator means that a significant amount of work has to be done outside regular office hours. It is unclear that the current salary supplement provided by the VP for Students is adequate to compensate for this additional workload.
- The support offered by the Student Advisers to UCD's international student community, specifically through the work of the International Student Adviser, is particularly noteworthy in light of the highly diverse and complex needs of UCD's growing community of international students.
- The Student Advisers have established effective links with a range of internal and external stakeholders and funding agencies.

Recommendations

- The Student Advisers, in collaboration with the Chaplains and Student Counselling Service, should develop a formal protocol for referral and case history (see also pages 13 and 22 under Chaplains and Student Counselling Service). Although the ad-hoc nature of the referral system has worked adequately to date, the likely increase in student need for these services in the coming years demands a more thorough record-keeping system.
- The Student Advisers should use the proposed annual Student Survey to guide their prioritisation and workload model.
- The Student Advisers should work with other complementary services (Chaplains and Student Counselling Service) to develop more effective communication and promotion strategies in order to increase student awareness of existing support mechanisms.

- A Peer Mentoring programme should be rolled out across all of UCD's Schools in order to provide students with information and informal support which will lessen the likelihood of them needing to require help from the Student Advisers. This preventative approach will benefit many students and also result in higher completion rates.
- In light of the future increase in the international student population at UCD, it is not feasible for one Student Adviser to provide adequate support for both the Medical Students and International Students. This role should be split, and the Student Adviser in the International Office should be given a leadership role in training and supporting all Student Advisers on how to deal with international student issues. As a consequence, all Student Advisers would play an active role in supporting the international students in their schools and programmes.
- The practice of having a Student Advisers Coordinator should be maintained.
- The Student Advisers should maintain their presence in all programmes and units and space should be available and visible.

Societies

Commendations

- There is a strong and diverse society and club tradition at UCD, meeting the need of a diverse and growing student population.
- There is a strong "hands off" relationship with the societies and clubs with responsibilities clearly defined with a great deal of support and respect for the work of the unit manager.
- The "light touch" approach by UCD management is working well, as the drivers of these societies see themselves as self starters.
- The provision of guidance and training to help make the society activities more active, and to make their running more professional, is to be commended.

Recommendations

- Banner should be utilised as a management tool to help identify and to track patterns of usage by students throughout their time in UCD, and to aid in better understanding possible reasons for student non-engagement with clubs and societies.
- Although membership fees for UCD clubs and societies are currently modest and represent good value for money for students, consideration should be given to increasing membership fees to a level which better protects clubs and societies from the impact of falling revenues in Student Union bars and

the likely consequences of the economic downturn. Membership fees should be mapped closer to the true cost of operating the service.

- In common with the other service providers included in this exercise, it is apparent that the societies need to publicise their events and activities more effectively. Consideration should be given to addressing this weakness by using such mediums as a UCD-wide event calendar with an email alert system which allows users to specify the types of activities and events that they are specifically interested in.
- A single website which acts as a portal for all UCD Clubs and Societies should be developed.
- A great deal of work and training has been undertaken to help societies bring a more professional approach to their activities and this should be continued and intensified.
- To facilitate the transfer of one club or society administration to another, consideration should be given to preparing standard operating procedures (SOP) which act as a guide to running the society or club. The Societies Officer could prepare a template for clubs and societies to use. Succession planning is a key to the future success of these organisations.
- A survey of storage requirements for clubs and societies should be carried out, as a shortage of facilities to store equipment has been identified.
- In response to concerns about the cost of transport, an investigation might be undertaken regarding the feasibility of pooling the use and cost of a leased vehicle between all the clubs and societies.
- The division that has occurred in recent years between the Students Union and societies should be reflected upon and addressed in a common sense manner, particularly in the current economic climate and through this period of major change.

Students' Union, Shops and Bars Unit

Commendations

- The unit offers a wide choice to students at reasonable prices and endeavours to meet the student's diverse needs in each major academic location.
- There is an awareness of the special needs of international students, and a willingness to meet these needs.
- The diversification into food catering as a mechanism to offset falling sales elsewhere, and to move away from the alcohol related sales, is a welcomed move.

- An acute awareness of the problems facing the team and a willingness to address the issues that were raised was noted.

Recommendations

- A change in approach will be necessary to overcome the financial and other challenges facing the Students' Union, shops and bars.
- It was clear that all parties, both user groups and service providers felt that there was an acute lack of awareness of the services that were available to the student body and that there were low levels of engagement. It is likely that student apathy, the commuter campus and poor communication all contribute to this.
- The Review Group recommends that consideration be given to establishing a new additional permanent post, such as a 'Students' Union Manager', whose responsibilities might include undertaking the necessary research and developing strategies and marketing campaigns to further promote the SU and its affiliated services. Furthermore, it was felt that such a post would provide a greater level of continuity and support for incoming sabbatical officers and would act as a conduit for information for all other University support services.
- The needs of the Student Union shops and bars may be better served if they are linked to the Student Centre retail operations rather than to the Students' Union.
- Whether this proposal is adopted or not, the unit should work with the other commercial services to develop their thoughts in respect to meeting the needs of International, resident students and other potential purchasing groups. The ideas should be creative rather than simply based upon alcohol consumption.
- The unit should further consider broadening its customer base reaching out to staff, residents and part-time students through promotions, loyalty schemes and competitions.
- Although recent improvements to the Students' Union shop in the James Joyce Library building are welcome, and will no doubt lead to an increase in sales, it is recommended that the unit consider options for a full refurbishment and re-branding. The unit should aim to match best practice demonstrated by the leading Students' Union shops in Ireland and the UK.
- In light of its difficult financial circumstances, the Students' Union shop may need to partially rethink its approach to pricing, and in particular its involvement in very low-margin product ranges. An evaluation will need to be carried out to determine the extent to which a good service can still be provided to students despite the need to protect profits.

- A publicity campaign should be initiated which reminds students that money which they spend on campus gets reinvested in the University and in student activities.
- With all the problems that the unit faces, some current and some looming, the service will need to totally reinvent itself and must ask of itself the difficult questions: Can we afford to continue trading in this manner? Is it simply a matter of reducing the financial contribution to students activities to survive? Should we reduce our opening hours? How can we trade out of our predicament? And perhaps the most difficult, could a private operator through a shared profit scheme generate an improved return?

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UCD Student Services Response to the Review Group Report

The units covered by this Report welcome the Review Group Report, and commit to considering its recommendations.

UCD strives to provide a Student Experience consistent with best practice. The review process allowed us the opportunity to identify and provide answers to the key questions that we must address if we are to continue to provide an excellent Student Experience. The Student Services personnel found all aspects of the process very challenging, but also highly informative and constructive.

We welcome in particular the endorsement given by the Review Group to many aspects of our activities and the significant commendations contained in the Report.

Our thanks go to all who participated in the process, especially members of the Review Group. We found that the Review Group brought a dedication and level of expertise that matched our commitment to providing a quality Student Experience for all UCD students.

The Review Group Report and the Quality Improvement Plan will be used to inform the strategic planning and guide UCD Student Services into the future.



Site Visit Schedule

UCD Student Services

Monday, 2 March – Thursday, 5 March 2009

Monday, 2 March 2009

Pre-Visit Briefing Prior to Site Visit

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| 18.30-19.30 | Review Group and Director of Quality <u>only</u> meet at hotel to review preliminary issues and to confirm work schedule and assignment of tasks for the following two days. |
| 20.00 | Dinner hosted by the UCD Registrar and Deputy President |

Tuesday, 3 March 2009

St Stephen's Chaplaincy

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| 09.00-09.30 | Review Group – private planning meeting |
| 09.45-10.30 | Meeting with UCD Vice-President for Students (including a 10 minute presentation) |
| 10.30-10.45 | Break |
| 10.45-11.30 | Meeting with Student Services Co-ordinating Committee |
| 11.30-11.45 | Break |
| 12.00-13.00 | Meeting with representative group of students from Sports and Societies |
| 13.15-14.15 | Working Lunch with representative groups of students who have used Health, Counselling, Chaplaincy or Student Adviser services – Brief meeting with Director of Quality (if required) |
| 14.15-14.45 | Break |
| 14.45-15.30 | RG meets with representative group from Student Health Services |
| 15.45-16.30 | RG meets with representative group from Student Counselling |

- 16.45-17.30 Meeting of Review Group **representative group of academic staff**
- 19.30 Private Dinner for Review Group (at hotel)

Wednesday, 4 March 2009
St Stephen's Chaplaincy

- 08.45-09.30 Review Group Meet
- 09.30-10.15 Review Group meets with **representative members from UCD Chaplaincy**
- 10.15-10.30 Break
- 10.30-11.15 Review Group meets with **representative members from Student Advisers**
- 11.15-11.30 Break
- 11.30-12.15 Review Group meets with **representative members from UCD Sport**
- 12.15-12.30 Break
- 12.30-13.30 Working lunch – Review Group meet with **representative group of recent Graduates** (including brief discussion with Director of Quality, if required)
- 13.30-13.45 Break
- 13.45-14.30 Review Group meets with **representative members from UCD Societies**
- 14.30-14.45 Break
- 14.45-15.30 Review Group meets with **representative members from SU Bars and Shops**
- 15.30-16.00 Break
- 16.00-17.15 **Tour of key Student Services Facilities** guided by UCD VP for Students and UCD Director of Student Counselling
- 17.15-17.45 Private meeting – Review Group
- 19.30 Private dinner for members of the Review Group (at hotel)

Thursday, 5 March 2009
St Stephen's Chaplaincy

- 08.45-09.30 Review Group Meet

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| 09.30-09.40 | Meeting with individual staff – 10 minute sessions (by request to the UCD Quality Office) |
| 09.45-10.10 | Review Group meets with representatives from UCD Buildings and Services |
| 10.15-10.40 | Review Group meets with representatives from UCD Registry |
| 10.45-11.00 | Break |
| 11.00-11.30 | Sweep up meeting with VP for Students |
| 11.30-13.00 | Review Group - preparation of first draft of Review Group Report |
| 13.00-13.45 | Working lunch for Review Group |
| 14.00-16.15 | Review Group - preparation of draft Report and exit presentation continues – and confirm arrangements for Report completion and deadlines |
| 16.30-17.00 | Exit presentation to all available staff of the Unit – 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 |
| 17.00 | Review Group departs |