



University College Dublin

Periodic Quality Review

UCD School of Psychology

April 2012

Accepted by UCD Governing Authority at its meeting on 11 December 2012

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Appendix One: UCD School of Psychology's Response to the Review Group Report

Appendix Two: Schedule for Review Site Visit to UCD School of Psychology

1. Introduction and Overview of UCD School of Psychology

Introduction

- 1.1 This Report presents the findings of a quality review of the UCD School of Psychology, at University College Dublin (UCD), which was undertaken in April 2012. The School response to the Review Group Report is attached as Appendix One.

The Review Process

- 1.2 Irish Universities have collectively agreed a framework for their quality review and quality improvement systems, which is consistent with both the legislative requirements of the Universities Act 1997, and international good practice (e.g. Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2007). Quality reviews are carried out in academic, administrative and support service units.

- 1.3 The purpose of periodic review is to assist the University to assure itself of the quality of each of its constituent units, and to utilise learning from this essentially developmental process in order to effect improvement, including:

- To monitor the quality of the student experience, and of teaching and learning opportunities
- To monitor research activity, including: management of research activity; assessing the research performance with regard to: research productivity, research income, and recruiting and supporting doctoral students.
- To provide an opportunity for units to test the effectiveness of their systems and procedures for monitoring and enhancing quality and standards
- To provide a framework within which the unit can continue to work in the future towards quality improvement
- To identify shortfalls in resources and provide an externally validated case for change and/or increased resources
- To identify, encourage and disseminate good practice
- To identify challenges and address these
- To provide public information on the University's capacity to assure the quality and standards of its awards. The University's implementation of its quality review procedures also enables it to demonstrate how it discharges its

responsibilities for assuring the quality and standards of its awards, as required by the Universities Act 1997.

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

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

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

1.5 The composition of the Review Group for the UCD School of Psychology was as follows:

- Professor Ian Somerville, UCD School of Geological Sciences (Chair)
- Dr Síofra Pierse, UCD School of Languages and Literatures, (Deputy Chair)
- Professor Peter Halligan, School of Psychology VCO, Cardiff University
- Professor Margaret Harris, Department of Psychology, Oxford Brookes University

1.6 The Review Group visited the School from 11-13 April 2012 and held meetings with School staff, University students and staff, including the Head of School; College Principal; Programme Dean, SAR Co-ordinating Committee; School academic staff; School Research Committee; School support staff; postgraduate students, taught and research; undergraduate students and Library representatives. The Review Group also had an opportunity to meet with individuals and small groups of staff. The site visit schedule is included as Appendix 2.

1.7 In addition to the Self-assessment Report, the Review Group considered documentation provided by the School, College Office and the University during the Site Visit.

Preparation of the Self-assessment Report

- 1.8 The School set up a Self-assessment Co-ordinating Committee (SACC). No detail on membership or methodology for producing the SAR was provided within the report. Further details were provided by the School during the site visit.

The University

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

- 1.10 The University Strategic Plan (to 2014) states that the University's Mission is:

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

The University is organised into 38 Schools in seven Colleges;

- UCD College of Arts and Celtic Studies
- UCD College of Human Sciences
- UCD College of Science
- UCD College of Engineering and Architecture
- UCD College of Health Sciences
- UCD College of Business and Law
- UCD College of Agriculture, Food Science and Veterinary Medicine

- 1.11 As one of the largest universities on the island of Ireland, UCD supports a broad, deep and rich academic community in Science, Engineering, Medicine, Veterinary, Arts, Celtic Studies and Human Sciences. There are currently more than 24,000 students (15,400 undergraduates, 6,900 postgraduates and 1,900 Occasional and Adult Education students) registered on University programmes, including over 4,600 international students from more than 120 countries.

Context of the Review

UCD School of Psychology

- 1.12. The School of Psychology is the largest (in terms of students) of the seven Irish Universities/Colleges offering primary degrees (BA & BSc) in Psychology. The School was the first in Ireland to offer a professional psychology course (H-Dip Psych, 1958) and also a pioneer in postgraduate training for clinical psychology (1977). Following

major restructuring of the University in 2005, the Department of Psychology amalgamated with the Centre for Disability Studies to become one of ten Schools within UCD College of Human Sciences.

- 1.13. In common with all other Schools in the University, the RG were made aware that the School of Psychology and the University are currently facing significant challenges relating to funding as substantial budget cuts are implemented. The economic situation is expected to continue to be challenging in the future. Employment control measures introduced by the Government include limiting promotions and recruitment, and universities have also implemented salary cuts.
- 1.14. In 2011/12 the School of Psychology offered 67 modules, comprising 36 undergraduate modules within the BA Psychology Degree and 31 modules as part of the post-graduate programme. The modules are aligned closely with UCD's Strategic Plan to 2014, 'Forming Global Minds'. All permanent academic staff are research active and involved in undergraduate teaching. Most academic staff teach subjects closely connected with their research interests.
- 1.15. The School's strategy outlined in their 4-year plan (2011-2014) envisages continued growth in undergraduate and postgraduate FTEs. The School recently (2011) introduced a Masters in Psychological Science, which was fully subscribed and contributes significantly to the number of postgraduate FTEs. The School currently offers modules each year across five levels of study amounting to approximately 2500 module places each year. As the School's modules are very popular, this presents a challenge for staff who want to maintain the quality of experience for single honours psychology students, while meeting the university-wide demand. Although the large undergraduate BA /H-Dip programme of some 300 students returns a consistent RAM surplus for the College, servicing the additional teaching requirements (including plans to double the capacity of the D. Psych. Sc. programme from 18 to 36) has resulted in a challenge for the School to maintain the agreed professional body (PSI) requirement to maintain a designated staff-student ratio for accreditation.

Self-assessment Report

- 1.16. The Self-Assessment Report did not fully comply with the Quality Assurance guidelines. It lacked many key details, such as a budget plan, staff structure and age profile, a clear detailed and coherent strategic plan, and information on curriculum development and review. Also, it is recommended that when establishing the Self-Assessment Coordinating Committee (SACC), representatives of *all* key academic staff groups, as well as technical and administrative personnel, and a postgraduate research student representative are invited to participate by the appointed chair of the committee. It is also recommended that all members of the SACC should be identified by name in the SAR, as well as those members in positions of responsibility in the School mentioned anonymously in the SAR.

2. Organisation and Management

Commendations

- 2.1. The School is to be commended for its strong sense of identity and collegiality, with several academic staff linked to more than one research group. There is also good communication and *esprit de corps* among staff members.
- 2.2. The School has maintained an increase in its student FTEs and consistently returns RAM surplus. Also, the School has recently introduced a highly successful Masters in Psychological Science, which is fully subscribed.
- 2.3. Despite the fact that the School has suffered significant staff reductions in the last number of years, the University recently awarded the School two new College Lecturer Posts.

Challenges affecting current Organisation and Management

- 2.4. There will be emerging issues of staffing levels and workload challenges in the medium term. The age profile of academic staff is flat and contains a strong gender imbalance. Recent retirements in the School have led to an increased workload for academic staff. In contrast, the technical staff age profile is more favourable due to relatively recent appointments of young staff in the IT sector. Planning for future recruitment in all categories needs to be considered in the context of a medium- to long-term view of the School's evolution towards being one of Europe's premier Schools of Psychology.
- 2.5. Requirements- including the maintenance of a minimum staff-student ratio, coverage of core agreed areas of Psychology, and intensive research training- will continue to be a priority. This will place considerable demands on staff with areas of expertise in the required core areas; laboratory and other research training resources; staff with specialist training in research methodology; technical staff associated with research laboratories; administrative resources and library resources.
- 2.6. The Review Group noted the concerns expressed in the SAR about the School being located in several different sites, and the possibility of overcrowding in laboratories and research rooms, as the School continues to expand.
- 2.7. The suggestion of reactivating the University's plan for recruiting a Chair in Cognitive and Behavioural Neuroscience -supported by the previous College Principal- was highlighted in the SAR and Strategic Plan (2011-2014). In preparation, the School has

plans to establish a Centre for Cognitive and Behavioural Neuroscience (CCBN), which demonstrates the School's commitment to advancing research in this thematic area. The School considers that recruitment of a new Professor in this influential field, given the synergies with TCD's School of Psychology and Institute of Neuroscience, would serve as a catalyst for growing high impact research outputs, securing collaborative research grants with TCD, and developing attractive new graduate programmes.

- 2.8. The School views the four research groups outlined in the SAR as somewhat "fluid or porous entities", constructed around shared interests and goals, and as such open to future developments and collaborations.
- 2.9. The Review Group notes that for a highly-productive, research-active School, the number of senior academic staff positions (especially Associate Professors) held in the School of Psychology appears quite low. The School needs to be aware of the potential difficulties and risks associated with staff retention, particularly experienced College Lecturers and Senior Lecturers at the top of their salary scales, who have not been promoted in the last decade.

Recommendations

- 2.10. The Strategic Plan (2011-2014) requires revision and should summarize the current strengths/future expansion needs against potential challenges (e.g. High level SWOC analysis –strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/challenges). The School needs to articulate a clear vision and identify a strategy that encompasses both the tradition of excellence in research-led teaching and the newer developments and potential for interdisciplinary research and innovation. This should include specifying realistic targets (KPIs –key performance indicators) and appropriate benchmarks with close comparators for targeted student recruitment, research income and outputs and in the context of the School's ambition to become one of Europe's premier Schools of Psychology.
- 2.11. The Review Group considered the case made by the School for recruiting a Professor in Cognitive and Behavioural Neuroscience to enhance the school profile, build stronger links with TCD, and achieve critical mass in the growing area of cognitive and behavioural neuroscience. Given previous attempts to recruit at this level (in 2006, UCD advertised the position as part of its thematic recruitment strategy, but subsequently withdrew) and current challenges presented by the funding cutbacks within the university, the RG suggested that a more realistic alternative would be to aim for a Senior Lecturer position. In addition to bringing a new research focus that could contribute to the research of several current staff and research groupings, a new member of staff would contribute to raising the teaching and research profile of the School and also improve the SSR. Alternatively, the School might consider recruiting a younger person at College Lecturer grade, in this or another strategic

field in Psychology (e.g. area of Youth Mental Health) well positioned to attract philanthropic and future national funding.

- 2.12. It is suggested that the apparent need for co-location of all operations in the School in a single site while desirable, was not necessary. The RG saw no major problems in working on different floors in the Newman Building, as it provided ample opportunities for regular staff meetings. The RG noted that the working environment in the laboratories, research rooms and administration office appeared noticeably improved following recent refurbishment.
- 2.13. It is recommended that the School needs to undertake some restructuring of its committees. Membership of the School's Management Committee should be broadened to include representatives of all research groups involved in making strategic decisions about the development of the School and School planning. Also there should be more flexibility in the time allocated for such meetings.
- 2.14. The Review Group recommend that for the School to better promote its research interests, profile, and recruitment of undergraduate and postgraduate students (especially international students), it should be permitted (by the University) greater flexibility to employ more imaginative and creative innovative designs on the School's website. At present the University's template is too restrictive and inhibits such changes to be made. The School should be encouraged and facilitated in trying to incorporate research and lab-based material on their website.
- 2.15. The current workload model adopted by the School of Psychology and agreed in 2009 by the School comprises a '4/4/2' distribution, where staff allocate approximately 40% of their time to teaching, 40% to research and 20% to administration. The RG felt that the current workload model was too constraining and did not allow for an optimal balance between research, teaching and administration. The University currently has 3 workload planning models in use and the RG recommend adopting a more pragmatic points-based model, one which is already commonly adopted throughout the College.

3. Staff and facilities

Staff Profiles

3.1. *Academic Staff*

The number of staff is relatively small (17) compared to other institutions with similar research and teaching profile in Psychology. Moreover, the age profile is flat, with the average age in the early 50s, although two recent appointments have lowered the average age to the high 40s. There is also a lack of senior qualified academics in the School, with only two Professors. The lack of promotions in recent years has clearly influenced staff morale and appears out of keeping with the profile

of comparator Schools of Psychology in Ireland. Given the absence of promotion opportunities at present, the School and College should look at alternative ways to value and assist staff. The RG recommends that measures be taken to support Lecturers in their preparation for application to promotion in the University, including ongoing mentoring.

3.2. The current Staff-Student ratio has grown from 13 in 2008/9 to 20 in 2010/11 (Total RAM Student FTE/Academic staff FTE) - a move that appears to create a challenge for the School as this is the maximum accreditation ratio as recommended by the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI). This appears to have arisen for several reasons: (i) staff reductions in the last number of years (e.g. the retirements/departures of two professors and three lecturers), (ii) introduction of UCD Horizons programme, where undergraduate programmes can draw modules from different colleges and schools, and (iii) the growing popularity of Psychology as elective modules from the wider university programmes. However, the Review Group notes the appointment of two additional academic staff in 2011/12.

3.3. Academic staff are able to cover all key areas of the PSI curriculum. Excellent use is made of graduate students who act as demonstrators, to support practical classes, and tutorial assistants. However, there does not appear to be a systematic provision of training in teaching for new members of staff or postgraduates.

3.4. *Technical Staff*

The School benefits from having two skilled and dedicated IT experts who handle all specialist computer programming needs of staff and students working in the laboratories. Also, the School has a Laboratory Manager (part time) who is responsible for organising and operating the undergraduate laboratory practicals and training postgraduate demonstrators.

3.5. *Administrative Staff*

The school has a comparatively small but efficient administrative support, who undertake a high work load of administrative duties, servicing both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the School, thereby freeing up academic staff to carry out other activities. However, there are work space issues that need to be resolved if they are to maintain their high productivity and enable the most effective pattern of working. In addition, the School has a placement Clinical Co-ordinator (part time) for the Doctoral programme in Psychological Science.

3.6. *Research Staff*

Currently there are only two postdoctoral researchers in the School.

3.7. *Gender Balance*

The gender balance of the Staff is uneven, with a stronger representation by women (75%), compared to the UK, where women comprise a small majority (56%) among academic Psychologists. Moreover, the last two appointments in the School were

both women. Student intake however is similar to other Schools with women historically dominating by a ratio of 3:1.

School Facilities

3.8. *Overview*

Concern was expressed in the SAR about the location of the School of Psychology in three different locations as well as a general pressure on space. The tour of the School undertaken during the Review revealed that the space was being used very effectively and that it was in good order. The separate areas of the School were relatively close together and all located in the same general area within the Newman building. There did appear to be sufficient space for the current research and teaching needs of the School, although it was noted that there was little space for further expansion.

Commendations

- 3.9. Academic staff work productively and cohesively to achieve high-quality teaching and research. Excellent use is made of postgraduate students to support teaching.
- 3.10. School facilities for teaching at both undergraduate and postgraduate level are being used effectively and care has been taken to make the teaching and learning spaces attractive for students.

Recommendations

- 3.11. The current staff-student ratio needs to be addressed and should be carefully monitored to ensure that it meets the standard set by the PSI.
- 3.12. Academic staff should be provided with ongoing mentoring to support the development of their careers and to provide guidance about promotion. Where appropriate, mentoring could be provided from other members of the College who are not members of the School of Psychology.
- 3.13. New members of academic staff should be given the opportunity to undertake a formal qualification in teaching, in line with institutions in the UK.
- 3.14. All postgraduates who assist in teaching should receive appropriate training.

4. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Overview

- 4.1. Both the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes attract high quality students who achieve at a high level. Performance in examinations is of a very high standard, commensurate with the high level of the student intake. Meetings with students confirmed that they are highly motivated and very enthusiastic about the School. They feel that staff are accessible and supportive.
- 4.2. The School teaches a very large number of modules in comparison to other Schools in CHS with similar numbers of undergraduate and postgraduate students. There are currently 36 undergraduate modules and 31 at postgraduate level. Students welcomed the wide choice that this provided but the RG was concerned that this extensive provision placed a very heavy teaching load on individual members of academic staff.
- 4.3. There was no separate section on curriculum development in the SAR. Meetings with staff suggested that there is no formal mechanism for reviewing the currency of the curriculum.
- 4.4. Meetings with students reinforced the concern expressed in the SAR about the lack of formative feedback. Students also reported that staff would offer detailed feedback if this was requested on an individual basis, but stated their preference for more detailed written feedback to be offered as standard, perhaps through the use of a one-page pro forma sheet.
- 4.5. The School has a high number of postgraduate research students who are of excellent quality. Although there are clear review processes for confirmation of the registration for a PhD, there does not appear to be an annual review process for postgraduate research students.

Commendations

- 4.6. The School delivers high-quality teaching and has highly motivated and high-achieving undergraduate and postgraduate students.
- 4.7. Students are very positive about their experience within the School and they feel highly supported by the staff.
- 4.8. The recent Masters in Psychological Science has been a very successful and positive addition to the programmes being offered by the School.

Recommendations

- 4.9. The School should review the number of modules currently offered with a view to significantly reducing this number, thereby reducing the amount of time being spent on teaching.
- 4.10. Where appropriate, the amount of formative feedback provided to students should be increased. This could be provided by use of a structured feedback sheet, indicating areas of strength and areas for improvement.
- 4.11. An annual review process for postgraduate research students should be introduced.
- 4.12. An annual review of the currency of the curriculum should be introduced.

5. Research Activity

- 5.1. The School has a strong research track record that places it second in its discipline within Ireland. This is impressive given the comparatively small number of staff and current teaching workload. Over the past 5 years the School has been able to secure substantial funding from several national funding agencies, but still needs to attract significant international /European funding at a time of shrinking national funding.
- 5.2. There is evidence that teaching programmes are informed by research and that there is a good synergy between academic staff's personal research and their teaching.
- 5.3. The School has established collaborative links with colleagues in the UCD Geary Institute, the Centre for Equality Studies and the Institute for Sport and Health. At a national level, the School continues its productive research links with the Trinity College Institute for Neuroscience (TCIN).
- 5.4. Conscious of the University priorities, the School has identified ways in which its research intersects with the 3 of the 4 major research themes of the University.
- 5.5. The School has increased its international research networking, through presentations at international conferences, involvement in European projects, membership of European and American research networks and the hosting of international symposia and conferences.

Commendations

- 5.6. The School of Psychology is well positioned to make a significant contribution to research and research training in the College of Human Sciences and more widely in Ireland and internationally.

- 5.7. The School's research is distinguished by its collective expertise in applied areas of research having direct relevance for promoting optimal health and societal gain.
- 5.8. The School is commended for the increase in research activity over the past 5 years and in particular the number of scholarly publications. Evidence from quantitative indices such as the *Web of Knowledge* show an impressive increase in the School's publication trajectory over the past five years - second only to TCD in terms of number of papers, impact and average citations per paper.
- 5.9. In 2011, the School was one of only *two* Schools of Psychology in Ireland (the other being Trinity College, Dublin) to be ranked in the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Top 100 Departments/Schools of Psychology in the world.
- 5.10. The School remains a national leader in delivering the flagship doctoral programme in Clinical Psychology.
- 5.11. School staff have been productive in obtaining external research funding to support their scholarly activity (€2.5 million over the past five years). This research income has been received through an increasingly competitive success, both nationally and internationally.
- 5.12. The RG was impressed by the strength of the PhD programme, the activities of the School in creating a strong research community of doctoral students (including the setting up of the Distinguished Scholar Award) and, in particular, for having developed an explicit policy on publishing with graduate students, which is available on the School website.

Recommendations

- 5.13. Despite the recession, the School would benefit from a more ambitious, long-term strategic research plan covering the next 5 years. In this respect, the Review Group recommends that the School should focus in attaining critical mass in sustainable research fields and organise its research around "real" research clusters/themes that incorporate doctoral and post- doctoral students into the clusters/themes activities.
- 5.14. Given the relatively small number of FT staff and one of largest number of postgraduate students in Ireland (N=95) for its discipline, the RG recommends that the School consider better ways of incorporating doctoral /Masters students into the research life of the School, as a way of further growing the research culture/activity. This to include regular seminar programmes for academic staff and research students covering both content-specific themes, but also seminars with other cognate Schools with a view to seeking funding for postdoctoral students and preparing the groundwork for potential collaborative research bids.

- 5.15. Whilst recognising current strengths in Clinical, Cognitive, Social and Developmental areas in Psychology, the RG recommends that the School could better exploit opportunities for synergies between these research areas and those of other cognate Schools engaged in applied research in CHS (e.g. Education and Applied Social Science); other relevant Colleges (e.g. Health Sciences) and, finally, Trinity College's School of Psychology and TCIN. This broadening of interdisciplinary and collaborative focus should, however, be done on a managed basis and where the opportunities provided are consistent with the emerging strategic research vision of the School and College.
- 5.16. A Director of Research should be appointed who, in addition to chairing the Research Committee, would be key to driving the development of a long-term strategic research plan; supporting the development of research clusters/themes; identifying collaborative research opportunities; ensuring support for early career researchers, and capitalising on and securing support from the University, in terms of both grant application and administration of grants.
- 5.17. The current Research Committee should be subdivided into two committees: (i) Postgraduate Studies Committee (responsible to the College of Human Sciences' (CHS) Graduate Studies Board and chaired by the Head of Postgraduate Studies in the School), and (ii) a separate Research Committee that in addition to monitoring the development of staff research activity and researcher development should regularly engage in external national/ international research benchmarking using bibliographic tools and with a view to demonstrating how the School contributes to delivering the University's key performance targets (KPI's).
- 5.18. The School should begin to track its progress in relation to research output, and funding obtained, and prepare, as part of a 5-year strategy, targets in relation to each of these headings. This strategy should be discussed, further developed and reviewed annually at Management Committee level. This activity should also be tied into a College-wide process. To facilitate more transparent School and individual research career progress awareness, the School is encouraged to ensure that all staff research profiles are kept up-to-date, through RMS. In addition, academic staff members can employ one of several free author identification systems (e.g. Researcher ID tagged to the staff member's web page) that publically provide a credible index of research outputs and collective citations.
- 5.19. A priority for the future, in line with the University's strategic research goals, is the recruitment of additional funded post-doctoral researchers.
- 5.20. Given greater flexibility (autonomy) for developing the School web page, the School should endeavour to prioritize the presentation of its research and the impact of its research in a more strategic and coherent manner to the outside world. A Public Engagement committee should be formed to encourage, co-ordinate and develop the public-facing presentation of the School.

- 5.21. The School should continue to host a high-profile research seminar series, bringing in local, national, and international scholars to promote the School's research culture.
- 5.22. Given the ambition to be a Premier European School and the University's membership of *Universitas 21*, the School is encouraged to exploit more collaborative links with like-minded Schools/ departments in this consortium.

6. Management of Quality and Enhancement

- 6.1. The School of Psychology places great importance on achieving high standards in all of its scholarly activities.
- 6.2. In line with University policy, the School uses a range of systems and procedures for assuring and enhancing staff development, academic standards and the quality of its programmes and modules. These mechanisms include: module evaluation; external examiner reports; programme/course advisory committees; a student-staff committee and engagement with the University's PMDS system.
- 6.3. With regard to staff, the School has implemented the University's 'Performance Management Development System' (PMDS) and the 'Skills and Career Development Planning' for post-doctoral researchers.
- 6.4. Several of the School's programmes, being professional, are subject to regular review and accreditation by the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI). The most recent re-accreditation was October 2010 for the UG degree and February 2011 for the D. Psych. Sc. These run for periods of 5 and 4 years respectively.
- 6.5. The SAR did not formally describe Curriculum Development.

Commendations

- 6.6. The School is clearly highly regarded by current students, graduates and employers, and the School's efforts over the past 5 years have clearly had a positive influence on prospective students choosing programmes and modules offered by the School, over those offered elsewhere.
- 6.7. In addition to external examiner feedback, the D. Psych Sc. operates a Course Advisory Committee (CAC) that reviews overall standards with reference to the report from the External Examiner and the overall organisation, management and funding of the programme. The Committee meets twice a year. The School's other graduate programmes do not have formal advisory committees.

Recommendations

- 6.8. Strategic planning processes, in the short- and medium-term, will be crucial in determining how well the quality of education and research can be maintained in the face of future budgetary constraints.
- 6.9. Postdoctoral researchers raised concerns about the quality of some of the training provided, within the University. This will need to be addressed at university level.
- 6.10. The School needs to take proactive steps to address the low response rate by students to online surveys' feedback on modules and also programme feedback.
- 6.11. The Review Group recommends that more support be provided for newly-appointed academic staff (a mentoring programme) and that postgraduate students should be provided with their own handbook.
- 6.12. The Review Group also recommends that:
 - an annual monitoring process should be introduced to track the progress of all research students.
 - an annual review of all staff activity and performance should be implemented to provide an opportunity for individual reflection and mentoring and school workload updates. In addition, a sabbatical leave rota should be reactivated to facilitate and enhance research opportunities.
 - formative feedback should be provided for all student assignments.
- 6.13. Succession planning with regard to a medium- and long-term development plan, (including rotational period as HOS) should be described when revising the strategic plan.
- 6.14. Student feedback expressed concern at the lack of opportunity or guidance for professionally-related or work-based placement at undergraduate level. The School should explore, creatively, a range of options for work-based learning suited to the School's outreach and community/ employer engagement (e.g. professional placements / short-term internships, work shadowing, volunteering).
- 6.15. The School needs more qualitative information on UG and PG destinations and student volunteering. Enhanced mechanisms for tracking and maintaining contact with alumni through a database would be valuable in documenting first destination and career pathways of graduates, thus generating statistics valuable for quality management and enhancement.
- 6.16. In addition to deriving more quantifiable student destination outcome data, it would be useful to include on the School's web page: (i) illustrations of posts secured by past students, and (ii) a selection of graduate comments e.g. "what the students say" regarding both UG/PG degree programmes, thereby illustrating the range and

importance the School attaches to students' feedback, employment and employability skills.

- 6.17. Given the plan to grow the international student UG market – and current challenging home market opportunities for graduates – it would be important to ascertain and publicise where PSI accreditation has equivalence outside Ireland.

7. Support Services

- 7.1 The School is generally pleased with the level of support it receives for its scholarly, management and administrative activities from a wide range of UCD units.
- 7.2 The Library has traditionally established designated specialist support staff as subject liaison persons. To help with compilation of the SAR, the Library provided rigorous bibliometric analysis of research output and impact.
- 7.3 The School highlighted the negative impact that major cutbacks in library funding have already had on basic services, such as the purchase of new textbooks and subscriptions to electronic journals.
- 7.4 Academic staff appreciate the services provided by UCD Research, but would like greater freedom to develop and style their own web pages.

Commendations

- 7.5. The Library holdings are praised at staff, graduate and undergraduate level. The SAR group engaged with Library staff to develop the bibliometric analysis. Such interaction and analysis had a positive influence within the School in demonstrating the collective impact of School publications and also as a tool for individual ongoing self-assessment.
- 7.6. The Review Group found evidence of close working relationships between administrative and academic staff to help the day-to-day management demands of the busy School and within the wider university framework.
- 7.7. The Administrative staff add to a general sense of 'belonging' expressed by undergraduate students. This perception is fostered by additional pastoral touches such as Level One start-of-year lunch introducing staff and students.
- 7.8. Buildings and Services were involved in 2009 in the renovation of Labs. Evidence of an ongoing maintenance programme means the facilities appear in relatively good shape and present well. The study pods for graduate (M.Litt and PhD) students in the Postgraduate study room are impressive and welcoming.

Recommendations

- 7.9. The University needs to provide rewards for hard-working and dedicated staff to maintain levels of input in the absence of promotions and /or similar incentives. A robust cross-College mentoring system would help assist academics to focus and thrive in difficult circumstances while also providing an opportunity to explore cross-School (interdisciplinary) research interests.
- 7.10. Significant problems have been experienced with recruiting research assistants and postdoctoral researchers in the current recessionary climate, due in part to the HEA embargo on employing staff. The University needs to display greater flexibility and to insist on the same with close funding partners.
- 7.11. Formal training and development of teaching skills should be offered by the University to all postgraduates, especially lab demonstrators.
- 7.12. Postdoctoral researchers need to be offered greater support at University level to develop a range of generic skills (e.g. in Statistics).
- 7.13. The University needs to encourage and facilitate University-wide collaborations by enabling greater social interaction of colleagues between cognate subject areas, Schools and Colleges.
- 7.14. The risk of future library budget cuts is likely to have a detrimental impact on School /College activities, from undergraduate level upwards, but particularly with regard to the volume and quality of research outputs. This will need to be addressed at University level.
- 7.15. Administrative staff may require further retraining and office space could be better redesigned to improve the current working environment.
- 7.16. There is little evidence of University-based pastoral care and proper institutional Induction for International students joining the School. As International student numbers are expected to grow, such a framework becomes more important.

8. Contributions, External Relations and Social Impact

- 8.1. The School identifies staff contributions to external relations on three levels: academic staff are remarkably active on committees at College and University level, and have also successfully organised public lectures; staff are active nationally on editorial boards and within the Psychological Society of Ireland; on an international scale, staff act as external examiners and are widely engaged in journal editing, reviewing and publishing.

- 8.2. The PSI provides formal accreditation for the School's UG and PG degree programmes. Completion of the accredited degree confers eligibility for graduate membership of the PSI.
- 8.3. Staff research has resulted in significant social impact including shaping policy and decision-making across a wide spectrum of Irish life.
- 8.4. Many staff are also leaders in professional practice in Psychology in Ireland.

Commendations

- 8.5. The D. Psych. Sc. Clinical Psychology programme is an internationally recognised course and a good example of research-driven collaboration with the wider multidisciplinary health service community. It currently functions extremely well despite a highly volatile HSE environment.
- 8.6. The School has high social impact as a result of its significant external engagement with policy-makers and key players in the area of national Mental Health and social policy, including the government's child protection agenda. The School also has a strong media profile.
- 8.7. The School provides evidence of strong external links, both nationally and internationally, including significant programme links and exchanges developed at the level of D.Psych.Sc: links with Canada, UK, USA & Australia.
- 8.8. The School displays evidence of willingness to free up undergraduate places for international (non-EU) students. Future increases in staff recruitment might allow these places to be in addition to, rather than instead of, current places, staff-student ratio permitting.

Recommendations

- 8.9. The School needs to provide a clear map of its external collaborators for students, staff and University management.
- 8.10. Few undergraduates currently engage with Erasmus/Socrates exchange programmes. The Review Group identified room for greater internal promotion of the BA International degree given the current rates of unemployment nationwide. Currently, European exchange links with the School appear relatively low beyond key UK centres.
- 8.11. Although a volunteering ethos is strong amongst final year undergraduates, there is no formal development or exploitation of the potential vocational aspect of volunteering by the School. Networks of links could give undergraduates practical

experience in the field and greatly enhance the future attractiveness of the BA in Psychology at UCD.

- 8.12. Current UCD structures should provide greater incentives regarding the benefits of cross-disciplinary and cross-School research. This type of activity does not appear to be explicitly rewarded or promoted by current University FTE operating structures (e.g. if colleagues are not named as P.I.'s on grant applications then the time investment is not justified by the eventual partial impact). A possible strategy for building and facilitating cross-disciplinary research would involve ensuring that the mentoring system suggested above actively involves colleagues from across the CHS.
- 8.13. About 80% of UK Psychology graduates find careers in occupations other than professional psychology. No such data exists at present for Irish graduates. The School is currently unable to provide information on graduate destinations, which means that there is no evidence to demonstrate the diversity of vocational benefits from the UCD degree or facility to develop potential alumni networks. This might be remedied for current student cohorts by launching a simple call via Facebook, but a more formal approach (similar to that used throughout the UK and suggested above under Quality) could involve College or School administrative staff following up all graduates. Creation of such a network/data base would provide a rich profile of graduate employment for future (international) applicants and be useful for mentoring clinical and educational placements.
- 8.14. The School has appointed a number of visiting/ adjunct staff in recent years to initiate/ foster links with other cognate disciplines and professionals. The Review Group recommends extending, growing and marketing this engagement further and, in particular, using the flexibility to customise the school web page as an opportunity to publically profile adjunct/visiting staff members -all of which would further enhance the School's national and international standing in a mutually beneficial manner.

9. Summary of Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations

- 9.1. The School of Psychology has a hard-working, highly-motivated and dedicated staff displaying strong collegiality.
- 9.2. The School delivers high-quality teaching and has highly motivated and high-achieving undergraduate and postgraduate students.
- 9.3. Excellent use is made of postgraduate students to support teaching.

- 9.4. The School has an important societal, clinical and educative impact including outreach programmes and student volunteering.
- 9.5. The School has grown its student FTEs and consistently returns RAM surplus for the College.
- 9.6. The School has recently introduced a highly successful Masters in Psychological Science which is fully subscribed.
- 9.7. The School of Psychology is well positioned to make a significant contribution to research and research training in the College of Human Sciences and more widely in Ireland and internationally.
- 9.8. The School provides evidence of strong external links, both nationally and internationally.
- 9.9. Despite the fact that the School has suffered significant staff reductions in the last number of years, the success of the School has been recognized by the recent awarding by the University of two new Lecturer Posts.
- 9.10. The Clinical Psychology unit within the School merits special commendation as an exemplar of a cohesive group combining teaching and research with a national and international profile.
- 9.11. Recent and ongoing renovation of labs and office space has provided a high quality teaching and learning environment.

Recommendations

- 9.12. The School needs to be aware of the potential difficulties and risks associated with staff retention, particularly experienced College Lecturers and Senior Lecturers at the top of their salary scales, who have not been promoted in the last decade.
- 9.13. The Strategic Plan (2011-2014) should summarise current strengths/future expansion needs against potential challenges (e.g. High level SWOC). This should include specifying realistic targets (KPIs) and relative benchmarks with close comparators with regard to targeted student recruitment, research income and outputs and in the context of the School's ambition to become one of the premier European Schools of Psychology.
- 9.14. The RG suggests that a realistic aspiration for future recruitment would be to aim for a Senior Lecturer position. In addition to bringing a new research focus that could contribute to the research of several current staff and research groupings, a new member of staff would contribute to raising the teaching and research profile of the School and also improve the staff-student ratio.

- 9.15. The RG recommend that the School should be encouraged and facilitated in trying to incorporate research and lab-based material on their website.
- 9.16. The RG felt that the current workload model was too constraining and did not allow for an optimal balance between research, teaching and administration. The University currently has 3 workload planning models in use and the RG recommend adopting a more pragmatic points-based model, one which is already commonly adopted throughout the College. This should provide more flexibility and help avoid potential staff “burnout”.
- 9.17. An annual review of all staff activity and performance should be implemented to provide an opportunity for individual reflection and mentoring and school workload updates, as well as to discuss career development.
- 9.18. The School will need to seriously consider reviewing the breadth of the current teaching programme with a view to substantially reducing the number of modules offered and maintaining the staff-student ratio required by the professional body, the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI). An annual review of the currency of the curriculum should be introduced.
- 9.19. Formative feedback should be provided for all student assignments.
- 9.20. Despite the recession, the School would benefit from a more ambitious, long-term strategic research plan covering the next 5 years. In this respect, the Review Group recommends that the School should focus in attaining critical mass in sustainable research fields and organise its research around “real” research clusters/themes that incorporate doctoral and post- doctoral students into the clusters/themes activities.
- 9.21. The School should endeavour to prioritize the presentation of its research and the impact of its research in a more strategic and coherent manner to the outside world. A Public Engagement committee should be formed to encourage, co-ordinate and develop the public-facing presentation of the School.
- 9.22. The School needs to undertake some restructuring of its committees, and consider appointing a Director of Research to drive the development of a long-term strategic research plan.
- 9.23. It is strongly recommended that the School develop more links with other Schools within the College, other colleges in UCD, and TCD, and seek more international opportunities and collaborative research projects.
- 9.24. The Review Group recommends that more support be provided for newly-appointed academic staff (mentoring programme), postdoctoral researchers (development of range of skills) and postgraduate students (handbook, formal training and

development of teaching skills). New members of academic staff should be encouraged to undertake a formal qualification in teaching.

- 9.25. An annual monitoring process should be introduced to track the progress of all research students.
- 9.26. The School needs to reactivate its sabbatical leave rota in line with College practice. This can now be realistically entertained, with the arrival of two new academic staff members and given the proposed reduction in the number of modules taught.
- 9.27. Student feedback (BA 3rd year) expressed concern at the lack of opportunity or guidance for professionally-related or work-based placement. There is compelling evidence from the UK that structured work experience has clear competitive career advantages for many graduates. The School should explore a range options for work-based learning best suited to the School's outreach and community engagement (e.g. professional placements (3rd Year)/ short-term internships, work shadowing, volunteering).
- 9.28. The School needs more qualitative information on UG and PG destinations and student volunteering. Such information would be useful when demonstrating the "employability" and social value of UCD Psychology graduates and could provide critical marketing information when distinguishing the UCD School.
- 9.29. One of the limiting factors for the ambition to be a premier European School of Psychology, is the amount of earned income that the School has responsibility for. The School needs to identify creative strategies for securing additional and diverse streams of funding, including working with other Schools in the College and University on joint income-generating initiatives. It seems likely that initiatives to secure new additional funding will be greatly incentivized if the College and School can agree an equitable share regarding the proportion of new income that can be allocated for the discretion of the earning School.
- 9.30. The School is better served by making meaningful comparisons of different output-related metrics with Psychology Schools in Ireland, UK and in particular benchmark itself against TCD.
- 9.31. Library budget cuts will have a detrimental impact on School and College activities related to both teaching and research. Library funding must be prioritized at University Level.
- 9.32. The School needs to provide a clear map of its external collaborators for students, staff and University management.

Appendix One:

Response by the UCD School of Psychology to the Review Group Report

The School of Psychology welcomes this Quality Review Report. In particular the School notes that many of the achievements arising from its Strategic Plan to 2014 are commended within the report, specifically:

- 2.16. The introduction of a highly successful Masters in Psychological Science, which is fully subscribed.
- 3.10 The quality of the School's facilities for teaching both undergraduate and postgraduate students
- 4.6. The high quality teaching delivered by the School and the highly motivated and high-achieving undergraduate and postgraduate students.
- 5.7 The School's expertise in applied areas of research having direct relevance for promoting optimal health and societal gain.
- 5.8 The increase in research activity over the past 5 years and in particular the number of scholarly publications, based on evidence from quantitative indices such as the *Web of Knowledge*.
- 5.10 The role of the School as a national leader in delivering the flagship doctoral programme in Clinical Psychology.
- 5.12 The development of an explicit policy on publishing with graduate students, which is available on the School website.
- 8.6 Recognition that the School has high social impact as a result of its significant external engagement with policy-makers and key players in the area of national Mental Health and social policy, including the government's child protection agenda.

The School will be considering how to address each of the recommendations over the next few months with the aim of preparing a Quality Improvement Plan.

Appendix Two

Review Visit Timetable

UCD School of Psychology, 10 – 13 April 2012

Tuesday, 10 April 2012

- 17.15-18.45 Review Group (RG) and Deputy Director of Quality meet at hotel to review preliminary issues and to confirm work schedule and assignment of tasks for the following three days.
- 19.30 Dinner hosted for the RG by the Registrar and Deputy President

Day 1: Wednesday, 11 April 2012

Venue: F209, Newman Building

- 09.00-09.30 Private meeting of Review Group
- 09.30 – 10.15 RG meet with College Principal, College of Human Sciences
- 10.15-10.30 Break
- 10.30 –11.15 RG meet with Head of School
- 11.15 – 11.30 Tea/coffee break
- 11.30 – 12.15 RG meet with SAR Coordinating Committee
- 12.15-12.45 Break – RG review key observations and prepare for lunch time meeting
- 12.45-13.45 Working lunch (buffet) – meeting with staff
- 13.45-14.15 RG review key observations
- 14.15-15.30 RG meet with representative group of academic staff – primary focus on Teaching and Learning, and Curriculum issues.
- 15.30-15.45 RG tea/coffee break
- 15.45-16.30 RG meet with support staff representatives (e.g. administrative / technical etc)

16.30-16.35	Break
16.35-17.05	RG meet UCD Programme Dean of Arts
17.05-17.15	Break
17.15-18.15	Tour of facilities
18.15	RG depart

Day 2: Thursday, 12 April 2012

Venue: F209, Newman Building

08.45-09.15	Private meeting of the RG
09.15-09.55	RG meet, Librarian and Coordinator of analysis of Psychology publications and Associate Librarian
09.55-10.10	Break
10.10-11.00	RG meet with a representative group of postgraduate students (taught and research) and recent graduates (PG and UG)
11.00-11.15	RG tea/coffee break
11.15-12.15	RG meet with the School Research Committee (and other staff members nominated by the HoS)
12.15-12.30	Break - RG review key observations
12.30-13.15	Lunch – Review Group only
13.15-14.00	RG meet with representative group of undergraduate students
14.00-14.15	RG private meeting - review key observations
14.15-15.00	RG meet with Professor Alan Carr and the D.Psych.Sc. team
15.00-15.15	Break
15.15-15.40	RG meet with recently appointed members of staff
15.50-16.10	RG meet with post-doctoral researchers

16.15-17.15 RG available for private individual meetings with staff

17.15-18.00 RG private meeting – review key observations/findings

18.00 RG depart

Day 3: Friday, 13 April 2012

Venue: F209, Newman Building

09.00-09.30 Private meeting of RG

09.30-10.30 RG preparing draft RG Report

10.30-10.45 Break

10.45-12.30 RG continue preparing draft RG Report

12.30-13.15 Lunch

13.15-15.30 RG finalise first draft of RG Report and feedback commendations/recommendations

15.30-15.45 Break

15.45-16.00 RG meet with Head of School to feedback initial outline commendations and recommendations

16.15 Exit presentation to all available staff of the School outlining the principal commendations/recommendations of the Review Group

16.45 Review Group depart