



**University College Dublin**

**Programme Quality Review Report**

- (i) UCD BAgrSc Dairy Business Degree (Stage 3)**
- (ii) Teagasc Professional Diploma in Dairy Farm Management (Level 7)  
(Validation Proposal)**

**December 2012**

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## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
1. Introduction	3
2. Background	3
3. The Partner	4
4. Programme Site – Kildalton College	8
5. Programme Site – MoorePark Research Centre	9
<b>UCD BAgrSc DAIRY BUSINESS DEGREE (STAGE 3)</b>	
6. Delivery of Stage 3	10
7. Assessment	12
8. Staffing	13
9. Programme Finance – Income & Expenditure	13
10. Programme Management & Quality Assurance	13
11. Feedback from Students	15
12. Facilities	15
13. Student Information & Support	16
<b>PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA IN DAIRY FARM MANAGEMENT</b>	
14. Diploma	16
15. Admissions	17
16. Programme Design & Delivery	17
17. Staffing	18
18. Programme Finance – Income & Expenditure	18
19. Programme Management & Quality Assurance	19
20. Facilities	20
21. Marketing& Advertising	20
<b>GENERAL</b>	
22. General Issues	20
23. Conclusion	22
24. Aggregated List of Recommendations	23
25. Next Steps	26

## 1. Introduction

This report considers collaborative arrangements between University College Dublin (UCD) and Teagasc (the Agriculture and Food Development Authority of Ireland) to offer a **Teagasc Professional Diploma in Dairy Farm Management** (Level 7) [validation is sought from UCD] and **contribute to the delivery (Stage 3) of the UCD award - BAgrSc Dairy Business degree.**

Under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, a 'designated awarding body' i.e. UCD, is legally required to review the quality assurance procedures of a 'linked provider' i.e. Teagasc, where an award in respect of a programme of education of the 'designated awarding body' is delivered by the 'linked provider'.

**Note: Validation, for the purpose of this report, is the process whereby UCD judges that a programme of study developed and delivered by another institution/organisation, is of an appropriate quality and standard to lead to an award of the University.**

## 2. Background

In November 2011, UCD and Teagasc entered into a legal Agreement to:

- Formalise and strengthen the existing collaboration between the two Parties to deliver education, research, technology and innovative programmes for a competitive and sustainable farming and agri-food industry with national and international applications
- Enhance the scientific and technical leadership of the Parties in order to underpin the international competitiveness, growth and development of the agricultural sector
- Provide world-class education for agricultural students
- Deliver world-class basic and applied research programmes in key areas of relevant to the development of Irish agriculture and the food industry
- Generate greater efficiencies and effectiveness in the use of publicly funded resources in agricultural research, education and technology transfer

The Operating Principles of the partnership include:

- Collaboration in strategic planning for agriculture related education and research
- Sharing of research and other staff and of physical resources
- **Joint education, training and skills enhancement programmes**
- Provision for the exchange of research and teaching personnel between the Partners with appropriate recognition for career development

### **The Quality Review Process for Collaborative Partnerships**

The Review Group made two site visits to Teagasc where the above programmes are delivered:

- **17 October 2012 – Moorepark Research Centre, Fermoy, Co Cork**

- **29 November 2012 – Kildalton College, Piltown, Co Kilkenny**

The Review was conducted by the following reviewers:

- Dr Karen King (Chair), Queen’s University Belfast, Institute of Agri-Food and Land Use
- Dr Joe Brady, UCD Dean of Arts and member of the UCD Academic Council Committee on Quality
- Dr Roy Ferguson (Deputy Chair), UCD Director of Quality

The purpose of the programme review and site visit to the collaborative partner sites was to assist the University to assure itself of the quality and standards of its own provision and provision validated by UCD, delivered on off campus locations – namely to ensure:

- (i) programmes meet the requirement for the relevant award and are of the appropriate standard;
- (ii) resources in relation to staff, library, IT and teaching facilities are appropriate to allow the delivery of the programmes to the required standard;
- (iii) appropriate quality assurance mechanisms are in place to ensure the operation of the programmes at the required standard.

The Review Group met with UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science and Teagasc staff, including the Programme Dean, UCD Academic Programme Co-ordinator, Teagasc College Principal (Kildalton), Teagasc Programme Co-ordinators (Moorepark and Kildalton), Teagasc Head of Curriculum Development and Standards, and Teagasc Head of Centre, Moorepark. The Review Group also met with a representative group of final year UCD students from the BAgrSc Dairy Business programme.

In addition to the site visit meetings, the Review Group considered a range of documentation, including: programme specifications and module descriptors, examination papers, quantitative data (e.g. student numbers, student progress, financial etc); Quality Assurance arrangements, summary staff CVs and information on the Teagasc T&L infrastructure.

**Note:** Upon UCD Programme Board acceptance of this report, a short Follow-up Action Plan should be prepared by the UCD/Teagasc Programme Team(s) outlining how each of the report recommendations are being (or proposed to be) addressed. The follow-up report should be considered by the UCD Programme Board (and ACCQ) and the appropriate bodies in Teagasc.

### **3. The Partner**

#### **Teagasc**

Teagasc – the Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority – is the national body providing integrated research, advisory and training services to the agriculture and food industry and rural

communities. It was established in September 1988 under the Agriculture (Research, Training and Advice) Act, 1988.

The organisation is funded by State Grant-in-Aid under the National Development Plan 2007 to 2013; fees for research, advisory and training services; income from national and EU competitive research programmes; and revenue from farming activities and commodity levies.

Around 75% of Teagasc's yearly budget comes from the Irish exchequer and EU funding, with the balance generated from earned income. Some 40% of the budget is devoted to research, with the remainder split half and half between advisory and education services.

### **Profile of Teagasc and the Teagasc Education Programme**

The Teagasc mission statement as stated in the Teagasc Foresight Report 2030 is:

*'To support science based innovation in the agri-food sector and wider bio-economy that will underpin profitability, competitiveness, sustainability'.*

Under its establishment Act, Teagasc is required to provide or procure the delivery of education to the agricultural sector. The organisation is unique in combining agricultural research, advice and education functions.

Teagasc operates under five core programme areas:

- Animal and Grassland
- Crop, Environment and Land Use
- Food
- Rural Economy and Development
- Education

Teagasc incorporates six major research centres, four colleges and three linked private colleges, twelve regional education centres and a national network of farm advisory offices.

### **Further Education Courses Offered**

There are seven colleges in the Teagasc education network. Four colleges are Teagasc owned and are located at:

- Ballyhaise, Co Cavan
- Clonakilty, Co. Cork

- College of Amenity Horticulture (COAH), National Botanic Gardens
- Kildalton College, Co Kilkenny

Three colleges in the Teagasc network are privately owned:

- Franciscan Agricultural College, Mountbellew, Co. Galway
- Gurteen Agricultural College, Ballingarry, Co Tipperary
- Salesian Agricultural College, Pallaskenry, Co Limerick

Teagasc offer fulltime further education award programmes in the following:

- *Agriculture Level 5 and 6*: Ballyhaise, Clonakilty, Kildalton, Gurteen, Mountbellew and Pallaskenry Colleges
- *Horticulture Level 5 and 6*: College of Amenity Horticulture, Botanic Gardens and at Kildalton College
- *Equine Level 5 and 6*: Kildalton College
- *Forestry Level 5 and 6*: Ballyhaise College

In addition to college courses, part time education programmes and distance learning options for Agriculture Levels' 5 and 6, are provided at 12 Teagasc Regional Education Centres. These further education programmes are all accredited by FETAC (now QQI).

Teagasc also offer short courses both accredited and non-accredited for adult learners and industry.

### **Higher Education Involvement**

Teagasc colleges and private agricultural colleges are education partners with a range of higher education institutions including: AIT, CIT DKIT, GMIT, ITT, LIT, WIT and with DCU and UCD. Teagasc are education providers to approximately 14 higher education programmes.

Teagasc also has a major involvement in postgraduate training at Masters and PhD level with a number of HE institutions (including UCD), with some 180 graduates pursuing PhD programmes at any one time.

### **Education Participation**

There were almost 1500 first year enrolments in Teagasc further education and Teagasc linked higher education courses at Teagasc/linked private agricultural colleges for the 2012/13 academic

year. Over 3,500 learners participate annually in accredited training programmes delivered by Teagasc.

### **Education Staff Profile**

There are approximately 100 teachers, researchers and technicians in the Teagasc College network. There are a further 23 Education Officers located at twelve Regional Education Centres. All teaching staff are required to have as a minimum a Level 8 degree in a relevant discipline. When and where necessary, arrangements are made for education staff to participate in certificate programmes in the area of teaching/pedagogy.

Both Teagasc research staff at Moorepark and teaching staff at Kildalton College, directly input into the **UCD BAgrSc in Dairy Business** and the **Teagasc Professional Diploma in Dairy Farm Management**.

### **Teagasc Curriculum Development and Standards Unit (CDS)**

Teagasc has a dedicated Curriculum Development and Standards unit. This unit has broad responsibility for a range of functions including:

- External programme verification (authentication) and results approval for all FETAC (now QQI) award programmes run by Teagasc
- Course standardisation across colleges/centres
- Programme development and submission to FETAC (now QQI) for validation. Development of detailed module descriptors for all FETAC accredited programmes
- Development of course materials (workbooks) and other resource materials (DVDs)
- Provision of Moodle support to programmes where required
- Staff training and workshops
- Education performance and productivity indicators including end of course learner satisfaction survey analysis
- Arranging systematic programme evaluation through the Teagasc Evaluation Unit
- Co-ordinating a pilot Whole College Evaluation approach

The Review Group **recommend** that Teagasc consider identifying an additional function for the CDS, regarding HE providers, for example, *“to provide quality assurance and other functions as required to meet validation and other QA requirements of collaborative HE institutions.”*

## Teaching and Learning Approaches

Teagasc adopts a range of teaching approaches to facilitate learning, which include – standard classroom and practical skills training approaches, placement on host farms, demonstration of commercial farm units at colleges, utilising a network of Teagasc Education Benchmark Farms and promoting discussion group approaches in advanced certificate programmes.

For programmes such as the BAgrSc in Dairy Business and the Professional Diploma in Dairy Farm Management, Teagasc research facilities (e.g. Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Moorepark) allow Teagasc to enhance the student learning experience and facilitate access to current agricultural research.

For the Professional Diploma in Dairy Farm Management, Teagasc staff at Kildalton College will also have a significant input in to programme delivery ensuring that learners have access to Teagasc's education, research and knowledge transfer perspectives.

Teagasc provides accredited further education and training for the land based sector from Levels 4 to 6. Teagasc also partners with six Institutes of Technology and Dublin City University in the provision of higher education programmes from L7 to L8. Teagasc also partners with UCD in the delivery of modules for the BAgrSc in Dairy Business (L8), the MAgrSc in Innovation Support (L9) Walsh Fellowship Programme and in PhD (L10) programmes.

#### 4. Programme Site – Kildalton College

Kildalton College is situated in the village of Piltown, Co Kilkenny. Kildalton is the largest agricultural college in the country. It is a leading provider of training in Equine Studies, Machinery, Agriculture and Horticulture. Close links have been developed with the local Institute of Technology in Waterford (WIT) to make it a progressive learning facility in the South East. Over 500 students are currently registered on courses at Kildalton College. Kildalton College offers a wide range of further education and higher level courses in agriculture, horticulture and equine studies.

Courses aim to equip students with the key skills and knowledge required across the land based sector. Students attending Kildalton College get the opportunity to learn in a practical supportive environment and gain work in home and overseas placements.

#### Facilities

Kildalton College has modern facilities. In September 2009 a new wing to Kildalton College was opened by the Minister for Agriculture, Brendan Smith. Educational facilities now include numerous spacious class rooms, two science labs, 4 computer rooms, design studio, auditorium and student recreation facilities with WiFi.

- *Accommodation*  
85 students (male and female) can be accommodated in single rooms at Kildalton College.

- *Student Welfare*  
Student welfare is important to the college. The college welfare team oversees the welfare policy with emphasis on mentoring and student support. Through the welfare team, students can also avail of support and counselling services if required.
- *Kildalton Mentoring System*  
Each student is assigned a dedicated tutor at the start of the academic year. This tutor is responsible for supporting the academic performance and general well-being of students while they are at Kildalton College. This system helps students to quickly settle into Kildalton College and give them a chance to discuss any difficulties which arise.
- *Literacy & Numeracy*  
Student development incorporates individual help for students in need of numeracy and literacy supports. Students can be offered one to one tutor support in association with Word Aid (N.A.L.A).
- *Kildalton Clubs and Societies*  
Student development is a vital part of the college in Kildalton. Students are invited to participate in a wide range of activities, for example: sports, community activities, social events and Equine Club.

## **5. Programme Site - MoorePark Research Centre**

Moorepark Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre has played a vital role in the development of the Irish dairy industry. The Irish Government established Moorepark in 1959. Since then it has been the focal point of Irish research into all aspects of dairy production and carries national responsibility for all aspects of dairy production research.

The continuing role of Dairy Production Research at Moorepark is to anticipate the production needs of a rapidly changing farming environment, and to provide dairy producers with new and adapted technologies to improve competitiveness and efficiency.

The major development, which is associated with Moorepark dairy production research, is based on low cost production based on maximum use of grazed grass.

Moorepark Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre has developed a research strategy to provide knowledge necessary to progress in anticipation of major structural changes, which will take place on Irish dairy farms over the next ten years.

### **Moorepark Research Programme**

The role of the Dairy Research Programme is to increase the competitiveness of the dairy industry through scientific research and to do so in a manner compatible with food quality and safety, the environment and animal welfare requirements.

The Centre is engaged in a number of areas of research. Staff work collaboratively on specific research issues based in the following 5 areas:

- Animal Research Programme
- Grassland Research Programme
- Environment Research Programme
- Economics and Rural Research Programme
- Organic Farming Research Programme

## **BAgrSc DAIRY BUSINESS DEGREE**

### **6. Delivery of Stage 3**

The UCD BAgrSc degree is a four-year degree programme designed to provide students with an important combination of scientific, technical and business skills which will further the development of the dairy industry in the years to come.

Students will study at UCD in Stages / Years 1, 2 and 4. Stage 3 includes pre-placement orientation at Kildalton Agricultural College, Piltown, Co Kilkenny, six months Professional Work Experience placement, with opportunities to work in New Zealand between July and December – the peak times of the country’s dairying year, and residential study at Teagasc Moorepark Research Centre, Fermoy, Co. Cork.

Stage one combines a range of business, science, mathematics and technology related modules delivered from across the University. Introductory Chemistry, Animal Biology and Evolution and Cell and Plant Biology modules provide students with the necessary scientific foundations. The business and technology related modules offered by the UCD Quinn School of Business and the UCD School of Biology and Environmental Sciences.

In Stage two, students build on this scientific base by taking a wide range of modules from relevant applied sciences such as Animal Reproduction, Animal Breeding, Dairy Production and Animal Nutrition. Other modules will further build on business and communication skills including Written Communications, Managing Employee Relations and Business Management. Options exist to increase the number of business modules taken in Stage 2 and also to study Agri-Environmental Issues and Policy.

In the final Stage (4), students undertake a range of business and science modules such as Food and Agribusiness Strategy, Leadership and Change Management, Farm Business Management, Advanced Dairy Production, Grass and Forage Production and Entrepreneurial Management.

At Stage 3 (the focus of this report), UCD students undertake a pre-placement orientation programme at Teagasc, Kildalton College (this has been reduced from 5 weeks to 4 weeks in 2012/13) and after placement (usually in New Zealand), the students complete Semester 2 at Moorepark, where they are exposed to the latest technology and research from the programmes there, delivered by the Teagasc Research and Knowledge Transfer staff. Students also benefit from occasional guest speakers from the industry and/or related fields. The cohort size in 2011-12 was 16.

At module and programme level there is both a Teagasc and UCD coordinator.

The modules are:

- Technical management of a dairy farm (pre-placement orientation programme at Kildalton College) 10 credits
- Farm placement 20 credits

And five modules delivered at Moorepark:

- Grassland and Cow Nutrition 5 credits
  - Dairy Systems 5 credits
  - Genetics and Reproduction 5 credits
  - Herd Health and Milk Quantity 5 credits
  - Project Module 10 credits
- 
- 30 credits

The Review Group explored, in response to student comments, with the Teagasc/UCD Programme Team whether the current Stage 3 might better be offered at Stage 4 (i.e. with all of the UCD components completed). There was a clear view held by the programme team that Stage 3 was the appropriate time in the programme for these activities at this time and the Review Group was satisfied that this was the case. However, the Review Group identified advantages in these components being at the higher level/in the final year, where a stronger research/innovation element could be included as preparation for graduation and **recommend** that the Teagasc/UCD Programme Team periodically review the appropriateness of structuring the Teagasc component and placement at Stage 3.

The Review Group accepted that the credits awarded to these modules were a fair reflection of the time demands on the students

## 7. Assessment

Overall, the Review Group considered that the assessment process as applied by the UCD/Teagasc programme team was fit for purpose and operating as intended. The Teagasc programme team prepare examination papers and model solutions for modules in collaboration with UCD staff which are referred to the Extern Examiner for comment/approval, as per the normal process at UCD. There is a reasonable balance between formative and summative assessment.

The Review Group confirmed that the assessment methods and outcomes reflected the appropriate standard.

As part of the project module, students visit “Mentor Farms” over the semester, focusing on various issues, including grazing technologies, herd health protocol, fertility records/breeding and profit monitoring/cost control. At the project end, a report is prepared by each student, and Teagasc staff provide interim feedback to students on their draft reports. Students also make a presentation to all the farmer mentors, Teagasc staff, as well as guest speakers and the other UCD students.

The Review Group were satisfied with the mechanisms in place to select, brief and debrief the mentor farmers and the level of support that was available to students completing the project module.

All students from the first cohort through Moorepark, progressed to the final year at UCD.

Students reported that they received prompt, helpful feedback on assessments and that lecturers were accessible. Students were aware of UCD online module survey mechanisms, however, as with the wider UCD student body, they were less than enthusiastic about completing the survey, although no particular reason was given for this. Students also confirmed that they considered the programme structures to be coherent.

Extern Examiners for the programme are subject to the same appointment and reporting procedures as those for on-campus UCD provision. The University retains central control of the appointment process for extern examiners.

The Review Group noted that an Extern Examiner had identified a variance in the assessment mechanisms described in a module descriptor and the assessment mechanisms actually used in the classroom. Currently the modules are described in UCD Curriculum Management system, which is regarded by the Review Group as appropriate. However, there is a need to ensure that the module descriptors, especially in relation to assessment, reflect what is actually delivered. The Programme Team are aware of this issue and are addressing it.

No use is currently made of Blackboard, either to provide module information or to provide content nor it is used in facilitating learning. The Review Group recognises that there are technical and administrative difficulties in providing access to UCD Blackboard by relevant Teagasc staff. However, to ensure a consistent student experience with all modules, it is **recommended** that UCD/Teagasc

explores the possibility of facilitating relevant Teagasc staff to have access to the UCD Blackboard system.

Although, as yet, only a small cohort of students has completed the programme, the Review Group discussed the student outcomes with the UCD/Teagasc Programme Team. Not all students performed well and the Review Group was anxious to explore whether it was believed that there were any systemic issues involved. However, the Review Group was reassured that the grades reflected the normal range of student ability and engagement, a view reflected in comments from the students. Consideration of outcomes will form part of the usual module enhancement process.

## **8. Staffing**

The Review Group discussed the arrangements for staffing with the UCD and Teagasc Programme Teams, and reviewed the CV's of Teagasc staff teaching on the programme. The Review Group concluded that there are effective measures in place to review the quality of staff teaching on the programme and that staff were generally well qualified to deliver Stage 3.

## **9. Programme Finance – Income and Expenditure**

The Review Group noted the financial information supplied in the supporting documentation. The Review Group **recommends** that the School of Agriculture and Food Science with Teagasc, continues to monitor income/expenditure financial arrangements on a regular basis.

## **10. Programme Management and Quality Assurance**

The programme approval and review process for taught collaborative partnerships is set out in the UCD Programme Development, Approval and Review Framework (PDARF), namely:

- it is a peer review and evidence-based process
- key documentation describes the provision/partnership
- the review usually involves a 1-2 day site visit by a review group to meet staff and students and review resources and the general teaching/learning/student environment

Teagasc has its own curriculum development and standards unit (CDS) (see section 3 above) which is responsible for all programme development/review and the quality assurance of training provision in the organisation (other than HE provision which is undertaken in conjunction with the HE partner). Prior to the establishment of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (which subsumed FETAC *et al*), Teagasc awards were accredited by FETAC, which required an ongoing programme evaluation process to be in place. The Teagasc CDS unit carries out annual informal/formal programme reviews. Teagasc adheres to the UCD quality assurance processes for the BAgrSc programme, and is represented on the UCD Programme Board.

Since 2009, when the BAgrSc programme link was established, the relationship between the two organisations had been fostered through substantial formal and informal contact at management and programme level. From discussions with the Teagasc/UCD Programme Team it is evident that joint meetings have provided opportunities to discuss specific programme issues, including the curriculum, teaching and learning methods and student issues. The coordinated approach to capitalising on liaison visits for monitoring purposes is identified as a positive feature of this relationship.

The importance of monitoring the programme and the progress of student cohorts was clearly recognised by the Programme Team.

The Review Group acknowledges the hard work and excellent working relationship between Teagasc and UCD Programme Teams, and the many informal meetings that take place to develop and enhance the programmes.

It was clear to the Review Group that a high level of personal commitment and collaboration between UCD and Teagasc had been central to the development and implementation of the programme. However, the Review Group felt that there was a future risk in this in that personnel will change over time. Therefore it is **recommended** that UCD/Teagasc should document what the key quality assurance mechanisms are for the BAgrSc including:

- how new staff are inducted and supported who will teach on the programme
- how extern examiner reports, feedback from students etc are gathered and used
- how related quantitative data is used e.g. student progress information
- procedures for quality assurance and reporting within the collaborative organisations and so on

While it is recognised that Teagasc has robust procedures for programme quality assurance and that they follow those of UCD (for the BAgrSc), the Review Group **recommend** that the UCD/Teagasc Programme Team ensure that the modules are subject to the same module enhancement processes as is the case with modules delivered in UCD.

It is also **recommended** that formal notes/minutes of UCD/Teagasc liaison meetings are maintained by the UCD co-ordinator.

In accord with UCD PDARF procedures, the Review Group **recommend** that a formal brief annual review of the collaborative arrangement take place, bringing together, for example, student feedback, extern examiner reports, student progression data, etc. and a short report prepared, highlighting key issues discussed and identifying proposed changes to be introduced to modules and/or the programme for the following year. The Report should be submitted to the University Undergraduate Programme Board and the Academic Council Committee on Quality and the equivalent bodies at Teagasc.

## **11. Feedback from Students**

The Review Group met a representative group of UCD students (without UCD/Teagasc staff present) who had attended Teagasc Moorepark for their Semester 2, Third Year of the BAgrSc Dairy Business Programme. The Review Group sought to gather feedback on the student experience and the operation of the partnership. This was the first student cohort who had completed this stage.

The Review Group found that UCD/Teagasc mechanisms for student representation and the gathering of student feedback were fit for purpose and operated as intended. There was clear evidence that students' views were important to the partners and that action was taken in response to matters raised.

From discussions with students (and separately with staff) and examination of relevant documentation, the Review Group formed the view that the partnership with Teagasc was characterised by a high level of staff-student interaction and that, taken together, the formal and informal feedback systems provide a strong, supportive framework for students on the programme. There was evidence of student views feeding into the partnerships in formal quality assurance mechanisms.

Students whom the Review Group met, expressed satisfaction with the arrangements for them to provide feedback to Teagasc and UCD, on their experience of the programme of study and considered that both institutions were responsive to matters that they raised informally and through formal mechanisms.

The Review Group discussed the transition arrangements for transfer from UCD to Teagasc with the students who had progressed in 2011-12, who confirmed that the process worked well and that no significant problems had been experienced.

The students did however, consider the Kildalton pre-placement orientation programme to be too long. They suggested that it either be shortened or that they be given a heavier workload.

The Review Group discussed the Kildalton programme with Teagasc/UCD staff and noted that it had been reduced from 5 to 4 weeks for the 2012-13 student cohort. There was discussion around the appropriateness of the 10 credit load for the pre-placement orientation component and how it was assessed. The Review Group **recommend** that the orientation be included as an integral part of the Farm placement module, (increasing to 30 credits) rather than as a separate module of 10 credits.

It is **recommended** that the Kildalton pre-placement orientation programme be kept under review.

## **12. Facilities**

Students at Moorepark are accommodated in a large portacabin facility which includes a teaching space and individual study stations with modern computers at each (approximately 25) - wireless connectivity is also available. Students had access to both UCD and Moorepark electronic and library resources. The quality of electronic access to UCD was considered to be good. The Review Group

considered the existing facilities as adequate. The Review Team saw advanced plans to develop a new teaching and learning facility for students on the Moorepark site, which will include lecture theatres, Conference Room, breakout areas etc. The estimated completion date is early 2014, with a projected preliminary cost in the region of €4 million.

### **13. Student Information and Support**

Students are provided with information about their studies at Teagasc through websites, programme handbooks and meetings with staff. In the meeting with students and the Review Group, the students confirmed that the information that they received had been accurate and sufficient to allow them to make informed decisions about Stage 3 studies/placements.

The University expects students on collaborative programmes to have access to academic guidance and personal support of an equivalent standard to those available to its campus based students. While the Review Group was generally satisfied with the level of academic support that was available to students, the students felt, and the Review Group agreed, that support for students with personal issues might be enhanced, if a member of Teagasc staff (not involved in teaching), was formally established as a liaison/pastoral support person and that this person is fully briefed on the range of supports available to UCD students and on how best to access them. While it was recognised that this is already occurring informally, the Review Group would **recommend** that this position be formalised as soon as possible, to ensure that students have access to academic guidance and pastoral support, similar to students on the Belfield site.

## **PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA IN DAIRY FARM MANAGEMENT**

### **14. Diploma**

**The Diploma is a Teagasc programme and validation of the programme is sought from UCD.** The first cohort of students registered on the programme in September 2012.

Currently, UCD does not have a specific programme validation proposal pro-forma, hence, the standard UCD programme proposal pro-forma was used. Features of the Diploma include:

- The proposed programme will incorporate taught modules whilst the students are undertaking an extended period of Professional Work Experience (internship) on Teagasc approved Host Farms.
- The Professional Work Experience [PWE] element will provide students the opportunity to assimilate and apply commercial dairy farm management skills at an advanced level and to directly integrate the learning from the taught course modules into the PWE in an ongoing basis.
- Given the forecasted substantial output expansion in Irish farming arising from EUA milk quota abolition and National FH2020 targets; there will be an increased demand/opportunities for commercial dairy farm managers.

- It is proposed that the programme will be delivered by Teagasc as a UCD validated programme, as the programme level (7) cannot be validated by FETAC (now QQI) who validate programmes up to level 6.

## 15. Admissions

Entrants to the Diploma must have achieved a FETAC Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Agriculture (ACA) or a Level 6 Higher Certificate in Agriculture (HCA) (or equivalents of these) or a major agricultural award above Level 6.

Students will apply directly to Teagasc through nominated Agricultural Colleges (Kildalton College, Ballyhaise College, and Clonakilty College), and UCD will not be involved in application administration or processing. Students will be registered as students of the nominated Teagasc Colleges.

## 16. Programme Design and Delivery

### Curriculum Pedagogy

The Review Group was satisfied that there was an overall coherency to the curriculum pedagogy. The Review Group found that the programme Learning Outcomes were clearly articulated in the programme documentation. The programme is designed to address the needs for future professional dairy farm managers, and the curriculum is so constructed to develop the managerial expertise and capacity of future dairy farm managers.

The programme will be based on four modules:

• Dairy Production Technology	10 Credits
• Dairy Farm Management	5 Credits
• Growing Your Dairy Business	5 Credits
• Dairy Professional Work Experience	10 Credits
	<hr/>
	30 Credits

Whilst recognising the credit loading for a Professional Diploma, the Review Group **recommend** that a mechanism is found to recognise the experiential learning taking place during the work placement. This may be accommodated for example, by the inclusion of the time and location of work placements on the Diploma certificate awarded on successful completion.

## Curriculum Delivery

The programme will incorporate two years professional work experience on approved 'progressive' dairy farms, with the option for overseas placement. In year one, students on placement will be required to participate in monthly discussion group meetings led by a Teagasc facilitator.

As part of the process of matching students to mentor farms, a profile of each student is prepared (including experience of farm type/size/location). Prospective Mentor Farmers are invited to indicate their interest in supporting students in this capacity. Teagasc select mentor farms following: survey data, discussion groups and induction days with the farmers. Teagasc staff then, using their knowledge about both student and farmer, match students to farms in a judged 'best fit' manner. The matching process appears to be effective, however, the Review Group **recommend** that the programme team consider documenting the process of matching students to mentor farms (e.g. bullet point the key stages involved) in a short paper.

The programme will also incorporate approximately six weeks of class contact modules. These modules will be delivered as one-day, two-day and five-day courses. Delivery methods will include:

- Class lectures
- Workshops
- Practical field sessions
- Field trips
- Designated conferences
- Projects and assignments

Students will be expected to use relevant computer applications and software as part of their studies and professional work experience, and a variety of assessment strategies will be used in assessing modules.

The Review Group believe that it would be desirable for the University to consider the possibility of systematically sharing across collaborative partners, appropriate information/resources relating to best practice in learning, teaching and assessment.

## 17. Staffing

The Review Group discussed the arrangements for staffing with the UCD and Teagasc Programme Teams, and reviewed the CV's of Teagasc staff teaching on the programmes. The Review Group concluded that there are effective measures in place to review the quality of staff teaching on the programme and that staff were generally well qualified to deliver the Diploma.

## 18. Programme Finance – Income and Expenditure

The Review Group noted the financial information supplied in the supporting documentation. The Review Group **recommends** that the School of Agriculture and Food Science with Teagasc, continues to monitor income/expenditure financial arrangements on a regular basis.

## 19. Programme Management and Quality Assurance

It was noted that the joint Teagasc/UCD Working group, set up to develop the programme would evolve into the Programme Management Team.

The joint UCD-Teagasc Programme Management Team will:

- oversee programme design, delivery and quality assurance
- oversee assessment and progression within the programme
- oversee the academic welfare of students participating in the programme
- ensure annual and periodic review takes place as required

The programme outcomes will also subject to an evaluation by the Teagasc Evaluation Unit.

A Steering Group also exists which includes Teagasc and UCD staff, as well as industry stakeholders. It is important that these be recognised as different entities with distinct functions and the Review Group **recommends** that Terms of Reference, membership and reporting lines are established for both the Programme Management Team and the Steering Group.

The Review Group noted the measures applied by both the UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science and Teagasc, to assess the quality of the programmes.

Teagasc has a dedicated Curriculum Development and Standards Unit (CDS), which is responsible for ensuring that Teagasc training and educational provision meets the needs of students, the agricultural industry and awarding institutions/bodies quality assurance processes.

Student Satisfaction Surveys are undertaken annually. Annual Education Metrics and Productivity Analysis are revised annually by the Teagasc Senior Management. The Teagasc CDS unit carries out annual informal/formal reviews of programmes and revises module descriptors and programme specifications as necessary.

The Teagasc Education Forum (education stakeholders) meets twice per year. The Teagasc Curriculum Development and Standards Unit meets approximately 6 times per year to monitor programme issues – with feedback provided to Teagasc College Principals.

All further education awards delivered by Teagasc are approved and reviewed under FETAC protocols. Teagasc implements the relevant QA processes of their partner higher education providers and participates in the relevant programme boards and other QA systems – in this case UCD's.

It was noted that Teagasc is currently in the process of introducing a pilot 'Whole College Evaluation' system.

The Professional Diploma in Dairy Farm Management (Level 7) was subject to the Teagasc quality review process, and received approval evidenced by the 'Memorandum of Implementation', issued by the Teagasc Curriculum Development and Standards Unit.

In the absence of any current policy, the Review Group **recommend** that the University should develop a policy framework to guide the extent to which it exercises direct control over the quality assurance aspects of the management of validated programmes. The Review Group also **recommend** that the Programme Management Team prepare a short annual report on the operation of the programme in the preceding year, for the UCD University Undergraduate Programme Board and ACCQ and Teagasc equivalent bodies.

## **20. Facilities**

The Review Group commend the overall facilities, their day-to-day management and their continual improvement.

## **21. Marketing and Advertising**

It was noted that:

- Teagasc will develop the programme promotion and advertising strategy in consultation with UCD
- The programme will be jointly branded
- Teagasc will be responsible for funding programme promotion and advertising costs
- The programme will be promoted and advertised nationally with joint branding
- The programme will be profiled in the Teagasc Career Prospectus and in the brochures of the participating Teagasc colleges. All references will be under the joint branding banner
- The programme will be profiled by the UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science

The Review Group noted some inconsistencies in how the programme was presented in the range of advertising documents. The Review Group **recommend** that an agreed approval protocol is put in place to ensure that marketing and advertising material is consistent and accurate and approved in accord with institutional (both Teagasc and UCD) requirements.

## **GENERAL**

### **22. General Issues**

In the course of discussions with the joint Teagasc/UCD Programme Team, a number of general issues were raised relating to both programmes, that the Review Group **recommend** that consideration be given to:

## A. Policy/Regulatory Matters

Can a UCD award be made to students on a UCD validated programme who are not registered as UCD students (as is the case for the Diploma)?

## B. Documenting Procedures

The Review Group noted that the relationship between UCD and Teagasc was characterised by a high level of excellent staff interaction. The Review Group, while recognising the benefit of the various interpersonal communications/conduits, **recommend** that it would be beneficial to have a formal succinct written record for both programmes, of, *inter alia*, the key inter-institutional contacts, key milestones/dates on the programme calendar e.g.

- key contact staff
- student induction dates
- monitoring mechanisms
- examination/assessment approval dates/submission deadlines
- placement periods etc

## C. Agreement

The Review Group reviewed the extant Memorandum of Co-operation (signed November 2011) between Teagasc and UCD, aimed at formalising and strengthening the existing collaboration between the two organisations. This Memorandum, however, was at institutional level and made no reference to the Professional Diploma in Dairy Management, nor to the Teagasc contribution to the delivery of Stage 3 of the BAgrSc Dairy Business. The Review Group **recommend** that a Memorandum of Agreement be drawn up as a matter of urgency, for both programmes, detailing, *inter alia*:

- Roles and Responsibilities of each partner
- Programme management
- The Structure of the programme/modules
- Quality Assurance arrangements including validation review
- Dispute resolution and partnership termination
- Time period that the Agreement is in force

The UCD Quality Office will provide assistance to the Programme Management Team in the preparation of the legal Agreement.

#### **D. Financial Arrangements**

The Review Group was provided with high level Income/Expenditure information relating to the UCD/Teagasc partnership programme arrangements. The Review Group **recommend** that summary financial information and related processes (e.g. how/when will payments be made) are provided in an appropriate schedule to the Programme Agreement (see paragraph C above). The College Finance Director (and UCD Bursar's Office, as appropriate) should maintain ongoing oversight of financial arrangements relating to these collaborative programmes.

### **23. Conclusion**

The Review Group noted the strong commitment from the UCD School of Agriculture and Food Sciences and Teagasc staff to the programme. The Review Group concluded that the collaborative arrangement between UCD and Teagasc was a positive development for both organisations. Academic standards were secure and the quality of the learning opportunities was suitable to the nature of the provision. The Review Group identified the following features of good practice:

- The strong and genuine partnership evident in the development/operation of the programme
  - The enthusiasm with which the students are received by Teagasc staff and the efforts employed in providing a high quality education experience.
  - A commitment to varied forms of learning and assessment, building on the strengths of both organisations
  - The comprehensive academic support available to students at UCD and Teagasc
  - The coordinated approach to capitalising on liaison visits for monitoring purposes
- (i) On the basis of scrutiny of documentation and meetings with staff and students, the Review Group concluded that UCD and Teagasc has exercised effective management of the **BAGrSc Dairy Business (Stage 3)** collaborative link, and that it be approved for a period of five years, subject to a Programme Agreement being prepared and signed. A formal review of the operation of the programme should take place before the Agreement expires.
- (ii) It is recommended that the **Professional Diploma on Dairy Farm Management** is validated by UCD as an NFQ level 7 award, subject to a Programme Agreement being prepared and signed, and that it be **reviewed in 4 years** (i.e. after two student cohorts have completed the programme).

## 24. Aggregated List of Recommendations

### BAgrSc

- 24.1 The Review Group explored, in response to student comments, with the Teagasc/UCD Programme Team whether the current Stage 3 might better be offered at Stage 4 (i.e. with all of the UCD components completed). There was a clear view held by the programme team that Stage 3 was the appropriate time in the programme for these activities at this time and the Review Group was satisfied that this was the case. However, the Review Group identified advantages in these components being at the higher level/in the final year, where a stronger research/innovation element could be included as preparation for graduation and recommend that the Teagasc/UCD Programme Team periodically review the appropriateness of structuring the Teagasc component and placement at Stage 3.
- 24.2 To ensure a consistent student experience with all modules, it is recommended that UCD/Teagasc explores the possibility of facilitating relevant Teagasc staff to have access to the UCD Blackboard system.
- 24.3 It is recommended that UCD/Teagasc should document what the key quality assurance mechanisms are for the BAgrSc including:
- how new staff are inducted and supported who will teach on the programme
  - how extern examiner reports, feedback from students etc are gathered and used
  - how related quantitative data is used e.g. student progress information
  - procedures for quality assurance and reporting within the collaborative organisations and so on
- 24.4 While it is recognised that Teagasc has robust procedures for programme quality assurance and that they follow those of UCD (for the BAgrSc), the Review Group recommend that the UCD/Teagasc Programme Team ensure that the modules are subject to the same module enhancement processes as is the case with modules delivered in UCD.
- 24.5 It is also recommended that formal notes/minutes of UCD/Teagasc liaison meetings are maintained by the UCD co-ordinator.
- 24.6 In accord with UCD PDARF procedures, the Review Group recommend that a formal brief annual review of the collaborative arrangement take place, bringing together, for example, student feedback, extern examiner reports, student progression data, etc. and a short report prepared, highlighting key issues discussed and identifying proposed changes to be introduced to modules and/or the programme for the following year. The Report should be submitted to the University Undergraduate Programme Board and the Academic Council Committee on Quality and the equivalent bodies at Teagasc.

- 24.7 The Review Group recommend that the orientation be included as an integral part of the Farm placement module, (increasing to 30 credits) rather than as a separate module of 10 credits.
- 24.8 It is recommended that the Kildalton pre-placement orientation programme be kept under review.
- 24.9 While the Review Group was generally satisfied with the level of academic support that was available to students, the students felt, and the Review Group agreed, that support for students with personal issues might be enhanced, if a member of Teagasc staff (not involved in teaching), was formally established as a liaison/pastoral support person and that this person is fully briefed on the range of supports available to UCD students and on how best to access them. While, it was recognised that this is already occurring informally, the Review Group would recommend that this position be formalised as soon as possible, to ensure that students have access to academic guidance and pastoral support, similar to students on the Belfield site.
- 24.10 The Review Group recommends that the School of Agriculture and Food Science with Teagasc, continues to monitor income/expenditure financial arrangements on a regular basis.

### Professional Diploma

- 24.11 Whilst recognising the credit loading for a Professional Diploma, the Review Group recommend that a mechanism is found to recognise the experiential learning taking place during the work placement. This may be accommodated for example, by the inclusion of the time and location of work placements on the Diploma certificate awarded on successful completion.
- 24.12 The Review Group recommend that the programme team consider documenting the process of matching students to mentor farms (e.g. bullet point the key stages involved) in a short paper.
- 24.13 The Review Group believe that it would be desirable for the University to consider the possibility of systematically sharing across collaborative partners, appropriate information/resources relating to best practice in learning, teaching and assessment.
- 24.14 The Review Group recommends that the School of Agriculture and Food Science with Teagasc, continues to monitor income/expenditure financial arrangements on a regular basis.
- 24.15 It is important that these [*the joint UCD-Teagasc Programme Management Team and the Steering Group*] be recognised as different entities with distinct functions and the Review

Group recommends that Terms of Reference, membership and reporting lines are established for both the Programme Management Team and the Steering Group.

- 24.16 The Review Group also recommend that the Programme Management Team prepare a short annual report on the operation of the programme in the preceding year, for the UCD University Undergraduate Programme Board and Academic Council Committee on Quality and Teagasc equivalent bodies.
- 24.17 The Review Group recommend that an agreed approval protocol is put in place to ensure that marketing and advertising material is consistent and accurate and approved in accord with institutional (both Teagasc and UCD) requirements.

#### General Issues relating to both programmes

24.18 The Review Group, while recognising the benefit of the various interpersonal communications/conduits, recommend that it would be beneficial to have a formal succinct written record for both programmes, of, *inter alia*, the key inter-institutional contacts, key milestones/dates on the programme calendar e.g.

- key contact staff
- student induction dates
- monitoring mechanisms
- examination/assessment approval dates/submission deadlines
- placement periods etc

24.19 The Review Group recommend that a Memorandum of Agreement be drawn up as a matter of urgency, for both programmes, detailing, *inter alia*:

- Roles and Responsibilities of each partner
- Programme management
- The Structure of the programme/modules
- Quality Assurance arrangements including validation review
- Dispute resolution and partnership termination
- Time period that the Agreement is in force

24.20 The Review Group recommend that summary financial information and related processes (e.g. how/when will payments be made) are provided in an appropriate schedule to the Programme Agreement. The College Finance Director (and UCD Bursar's Office, as appropriate) should maintain ongoing oversight of financial arrangements relating to these collaborative programmes.

#### Other Issues to be considered/addressed by UCD

24.21 The Review Group recommend that Teagasc consider identifying an additional function for the CDS, regarding HE providers, for example, *“to provide quality assurance and other functions as required to meet validation and other QA requirements of collaborative HE institutions.”*

24.22 In the absence of any current policy, the Review Group recommend that the University should develop a policy framework to guide the extent to which it exercises direct control over the quality assurance aspects of the management of validated programmes.

24.23 Can a UCD award be made to students on a UCD validated programme who are not registered as UCD students (as is the case for the Diploma)?

#### **25. Next Steps**

Upon UCD Programme Board acceptance of this report, a short Follow-up Action Plan should be prepared by the UCD/Teagasc Programme Team(s) outlining how each of the report recommendations are being (or proposed to be) addressed. The follow-up report should be considered by the UCD Programme Board and ACCQ and the appropriate bodies in Teagasc.