University College Dublin

Quality Improvement Plan

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School of Art History & Cultural Policy

April 2010

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Contents

1. Introduction

The Review Group visited the School from 5th to 8th October 2009. The Quality Improvement Committee comprises Professor Kathleen-James Chakraborty, Dr John Loughman, Pat Cooke, Carla Briggs and Ruth Musielak.

The committee welcomed the Review Group's assistance in mapping our strategies for improvement. This document outlines our plan for implementing their recommendations, which we will do with the assistance of an Implementation Committee. In some cases there are changes that can be made immediately, in some cases they now become strategic goals, to be achieved across the course of the calendar year. Others rely on the cooperation of other parts of the University and are unlikely to be realized until the budget situation improves. Finally, there are a small number, which we do not intend to implement for reasons that are spelled out quite clearly below.

2.   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS – FOLLOW-UP ACTION TAKEN AND/OR PLANNED

CATEGORY 1: RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING ACADEMIC, ORGANISATIONAL AND OTHER MATTERS WHICH ARE ENTIRELY UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE UNIT

CATEGORY 1(A)
RECOMMENDATIONS ALREADY IMPLEMENTED

1.   **Recommendation:**
2.9 Over 50% of staff members hold key responsibilities at any given time. These responsibilities place heavy administrative pressure on the academic staff and present a challenge for their efforts to deliver on aspects of research. The School should consider incorporating the Teaching and Learning role with that of 'Programme Co-ordinator' into a single role. This would facilitate the rotation of roles in a manner that would reduce administrative burden in the long term. The School might also reconsider the need for stage co-ordinators.

Action taken:
The Review Group recommends that the teaching and learning role and the programme co-ordinator be combined. We endorse this recommendation, not least because this is the usual case; the duties had temporarily devolved on two different members of the academic staff only because the person who usually does them was on academic leave. We will retain the stage co-ordinators, despite the administrative burden they pose, because we believe that this facilitates monitoring of the most vulnerable undergraduate students.

2.   **Recommendation:**
2.11 At present, a high proportion (22%) of the modules are delivered by occasional lecturers. Although the Review Group found no evidence of concern amongst students relating to the quality of these lectures, the School should establish mechanisms to monitor the quality of such lectures on an on-going basis. The Review Group recommends that when the opportunity arises, the School should consider alternatives such as the appointment of adjunct lecturers or part-time permanent lecturers.

Action taken:
The 22% of our modules delivered by occasional lecturers includes three different groups of people, all of whom make a key contribution to our programme, particularly in the absence of new academic staff positions. The first group are highly qualified experts on particular topics who give an occasional lecture within a module delivered by a member of our staff. The second group deliver entire modules without temporary appointments. While these are the chief cause of concern, in fact we select them carefully. Many have long-term relationships with the University, and all have appropriate academic credentials (either terminal degrees or strong records of scholarly publication or appropriate professional experience). Finally, there are those with temporary appointments. We welcome the recommendation that we appoint part-time permanent lecturers, but we do not think that the adjunct title, which at UCD is an honorary one without pay, would be appropriate in these cases. We will, however, be nominating more people from the

cultural sector for adjunct status, not least so that they can serve on doctoral panels.

We monitor the performance of all lecturers in the delivery of our programme through teaching evaluations and through frequent informal contact with those delivering them. The majority of "occasional lecturing" has actually been done by highly qualified staff on one-year contracts. These contract lecturers have considerable teaching experience and have already achieved distinction in their fields. Such extensive replacement teaching has been necessary only because permanent members of academic staff have obtained research funding to take longer research leaves than they would otherwise have been granted. The Review Group recommended that we continue to apply for such funding which, if we are successful, means that there will be a perpetual need for occasional lecturers.

3.   **Recommendation:**
3.12 The School should appoint a member of academic staff to liaise with the library to ensure that purchases of holdings are consistent with the School's priorities.
Action taken:
The Slide Curator is in place as the School's Library liaison and that relationship is working well from both School and Library perspectives. The School proposes to continue with this arrangement.

4.   **Recommendation:**
4.17 The School should build on and explore additional interdisciplinary linkages with other schools within the College (such as French, Archaeology, Celtic Studies) as well as outside the College (Geography, Architecture.) This can be done through shared modules, team-teaching and joint membership on dissertation panels.
4.18 The School should collect and analyse data on recruitment, retention and attrition of students to a greater degree.
4.19 The School should encourage staff to engage with College/UCD Teaching and Learning initiatives and awards.
Action taken:
All of these recommendations are being implemented. We added a shared module this semester to the MA, which was taught by a lecturer from the UCD School of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Civil Engineering, which will be offered again next year. Academic staff serve on doctoral panels in a number of different Schools and our own doctoral panels are a useful tool for encouraging collaboration with colleagues from across the University and with other appropriate institutions in the city. The Programme Coordinator collected meticulous statistics on Level 1 performance at the end of last autumn semester that demonstrated that, although we had some problems with retention, they were much smaller than those of the BA programme as a whole. We recently nominated one of our lecturers for a College Teaching award.

5.   Recommendation:

6.8 The School needs to think more fully about its strategic position within the College and University and, in particular, how it might capitalise on the Global Ireland research theme adopted by UCD.

Action taken:

We continue to work within the Global Ireland research strand, but also welcome the emergence of alternatives to it that will more completely encompass what we do. We are aggressively competing for funds, often in collaboration with other Schools, within the existing strand.   Our participation in the new major in Irish Studies will be an important step towards developing better links with the Global Irish research theme. During the last year we have secured funding from the Humanities Institute of Ireland and college research strands for guest lectures, and from the NUI for the publication of an edited book arising out of a conference sponsored by one of these strands.

6.   Recommendation:

6.9 The School needs to develop additional research partnerships with external units such as the National Gallery of Ireland, Chester Beatty Library and other arts and cultural institutions.

Action taken:

There is no formal structure for research partnerships with the cultural institutions nor, to the best of our knowledge's, do any universities anywhere in Europe or North America have them with any non-university museums. Nonetheless, we have made significant progress in this regard over the past several years and will continue to work hard to do better. The appointment in March 2010 of the Professor of Art History to the board of the Chester Beatty Library is a step in this direction. So is the module to be offered next fall that is keyed to a special exhibition that will be on view at the National Gallery of Ireland. An MA module to be offered in the spring will focus on detailed investigation of several sites owned by the Office of Public Works and will be taught in close collaboration with their staff.

7.   Recommendation:

6.10 The teaching load should be re-examined in order to place equal priority upon research output.

Action taken:

The new workload model brought in the fall of 2009 addresses the importance of research by awarding points for both grant applications and, more crucially, for scholarly publications of various types.

8.   Recommendation:

6.11 Although grant funding is very competitive, School staff need to pursue opportunities vigorously, and try to write support for postdoctoral appointees and graduate student support into the grant proposals.

Action taken:

We welcome the suggestion that we compete more aggressively for funding for doctoral students and will continue to do so. The Professor of Art History recently applied for an ERC grant that, if successful, would fund four doctoral students. The academic staff worked quite closely this year with a number of candidates for

IRCHSS doctoral fellowships to help them prepare strong applications. It is, however, becoming more rather than less difficult to get funding, especially for doctoral students, now that academic staff can no longer apply to the IRCHSS. Moreover, the increasingly onerous reporting requirements of the IRCHSS and of the RIA are taking more and more time away from research for those who have such grants.

9.   Recommendation:
7.6 A large proportion of lectures are provided by occasional lecturers. The School should introduce a formal method to monitor the quality of lectures provided by occasional lecturers.
Action taken:
We have already addressed the issue of occasional lecturers under point 2 above. We would reiterate that we have already introduced student evaluations in all modules. The Head of School plays an active role in monitoring the progress of new staff.

CATEGORY 1(B)
RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE IMPLEMENTED WITHIN ONE YEAR

1.   Recommendation:
1.20 The School needs to agree and articulate its mission in art history and cultural policy education and research. This should form the basis for agreement on the School's education and research priorities for the coming years. For example, the School needs to address questions such as whether the School should further expand its programme content and research in Asian, Islamic Art, non-western art or enhance its focus on Irish and western art.
1.21 The School needs to be much more articulate about why students should come to UCD to study art history. That leads to a sense of focus for their curriculum. How does the School distinguish itself from others? How are its graduates distinct from those of other schools?
Action planned:
The report suggests that the School could spell out its intellectual mission and the relationship of its art history programme to that of other universities in Ireland and abroad more clearly. We welcome this suggestion and a committee will be formed to develop a mission statement in consultation with other members of staff that that clarifies our purpose and our distinctiveness. It will meet over the course of the autumn 2010 semester and develop its recommendations by the end of that term. Once the statement is prepared, we can work to communicate its conclusions to our students and to the larger Irish art history community in part through its prominent publication on our web site and in part more informally.

2.   Recommendation:

2.10 The role of tutor within the structure of the School should be clarified, including tutors' responsibility to run modules and also their remuneration. In addition, the School might consider introducing the role of teaching assistant.

Action planned:

This recommendation will be positively addressed by enhancing the experience of the tutors, particularly those that teach "studies" modules. We will work UCD Teaching and Learning on this. Tutors and the Studies modules are crucial to our delivery of the high-quality small group teaching that is one of the strongest parts of our undergraduate programme, and we seek to train and support them well. The remuneration of tutors is in accordance with University rates – these have recently been reduced.

3.   Recommendation:

2.12 The School has an open door policy, which is to be commended. However, in a School delivering a large number of modules with a small staff, dedicated office hours displayed on staff doors during term time may protect time without compromising the sense of community that exists within the School.

Action planned:

All of the academic staff have office hours that are listed on their course booklets. We will ensure that these are now also posted on all office doors by the start of the next academic year. We will continue as well to maintain the traditional open door policy.

4.   Recommendation:

7.8   Greater consultation with students has been identified by the School as an area for development. The Review Group welcomes this and encourages the School to develop concrete plans for formal mechanisms to enable the student body to have an input into School processes, e.g. staff student consultative committee. Students at all levels, from undergraduate to doctoral level, should be represented within student participation mechanisms.

Action planned:

We will set up a formal student group at the start of the new academic year and consult with them at least once a semester.

CATEGORY 1(C)
RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE IMPLEMENTED WITHIN FIVE YEARS

1.   Recommendation:

3.14 The RG feels that the teaching load and the number of modules being delivered should be re-examined.

Action planned:

We hope that the implementation of our workload model will address the issues raised in this recommendation.   We will continue to monitor this issue carefully over the next five years.

2.   **Recommendation:**

3.17 Formal mechanisms to support mentoring for academic and non-academic staff should be introduced.

Action planned:

The University is introducing formal mechanisms for the mentoring of junior staff, which we will implement next year. Over the next five years, we will monitor whether more formal processes need to be put in place for all members of staff and the Head of School and the Professor will work diligently in their absence to offer appropriate advice.

3.   **Recommendation:**

6.7   In establishing its own performance for research outputs the School should identify valid peers and relevant outputs.

Action planned:

We will work to develop a list of peer institutions and to encourage closer ties with them and to prepare documents on discipline-specific research outputs standards to use as necessary within the University in relation to promotion cases and procedures. This can be accomplished in tandem with the development of a mission statement.

4.   **Recommendation:**

7.5   The School should develop a tailored programme of training of tutors to tutoring specifically in Art History.

Action planned:

We will work with the UCD Teaching and Learning to improve the training of tutors. We will also work to more formally develop apprenticeships in which academic staff and experienced tutors work more closely with new tutors. Furthermore we will develop a formal information booklet regarding visual resources, e-resources, teaching tools at the School for the tutors to accompany the information currently communicated to tutors by year and module co-ordinators.

5.   **Recommendation:**

7.7   It is a challenge for a small school to deliver a large number of modules, while also supporting an increasing number of graduate students. There may be consequences in terms of maintaining and enhancing quality in all areas. The School needs to prioritise its activities and consider ways to deliver a sufficient number of modules to meet the needs of its programme.

Action proposed

We welcome the recognition of the difficulties of staffing such a dynamic program. Until we are able to hire more staff, we cannot implement doctoral modules, as we would like to do.

6.   Recommendation:

8.7 There is scope to develop the Erasmus network to include visiting staff and postgraduates, with a view to establish an international 'peer group'.

8.8 The School should explore opportunities to develop more international research collaborations – formalise existing links and start to generate traffic. The School might want to take advantage of the University's interest in China, India and the United States, all areas of emerging interest within the School.

Action planned:

We had one Socrates visitor last year from an Erasmus partner, and we work over the next five years to facilitate more such exchanges. We have already engaged with the International Office with a view to identifying our needs and advancing our international efforts. We look forward to making progress in this area with support and assistance from the International Office. The Professor of Art History has been appointed to the Academic Council's Internationalization task force.

7.   Recommendation:

9.9   Existing collaborations, which have been given a new energy and urgency in the last couple of years, now need to become more systematic and strategic. There seems to be openness to this from both sides.

9.10   With enhanced collaboration, there is an opportunity for the School to establish itself firmly as one that engages meaningfully and fruitfully with museums, institutions and the broader cultural sector. This is in keeping with the School's vision of undertaking research that reaches a wider audience and which includes exhibitions and catalogues. It also gives an added validity to the proposed Museum Studies Masters. Furthermore, new or redeveloped partnerships bring the possibility of leveraging different kinds of funding – for example, education, cultural heritage, environment etc. and also private/corporate sponsorship

Action planned:

We are constantly expanding our relationship with this sector. Next year we will offer an MA module in collaboration with the Office of Public Works. There does not seem to be any hope of additional public or private funding in the immediate future, and when we have sought private funding in the past the University administration has stood in our way. We are not involved in the current capital campaign, except through Global Ireland's presence in the Gateway Centre.

8.   Recommendation:

8.13   The School's strong international expertise – particularly with Dutch and Italian art – could be translated into a series of formal connections with international universities and institutions.

Action planned:

We will attempt to build better ties with our Dutch counterparts both through Erasmus and through research collaborations. Past experience with Italian universities has been less successful, as the difference between the two academic systems is substantially greater.

9.   Recommendation:

8.14   The School should consider the use of more adjunct positions – there seems to be a willingness from the arts, culture and heritage sector. It might also be useful to form an advisory board of cultural 'leaders' who would play a collective 'adjunct' role.

Action planned:

We will work to identify appropriate candidates for both adjunct positions and an advisory board.

10.   Recommendation:

8.15   Overall, the School should assert its character as a small, dynamic unit with a wide spread of connections at every level – within the University, within the cultural sector in Ireland, within European academia and with selected partners worldwide.

Action planned:

We will continue to do our best to "assert our character as a small, dynamic unit with a wide spread of connections at every level" and thank the Review Group for this description of us. In particular we will seek to maintain our reputation for good pastoral care of students, for excellence in research, for bringing the results of that research into the classroom, for working closely with colleagues from across the University, and for public outreach to the larger community of those engaged and interested in art history in Ireland.

CATEGORY 1(D)

RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED

N/A

CATEGORY 2: RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING SHORTCOMINGS IN SERVICES, PROCEDURES AND FACILITIES WHICH ARE OUTSIDE THE CONTROL OF THE UNIT

CATEGORY 2(A)
RECOMMENDATIONS ALREADY IMPLEMENTED
N/A

CATEGORY 2(B)
RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE IMPLEMENTED WITHIN ONE YEAR

1.   Recommendation:
3.11 Library support for students and staff access to borrowing privileges at other institutions should be re-evaluated. The Review Group also recommends a re-evaluation of the library resources dedicated to holdings.
Action planned:
We will work with the Library to formalize relationships with Trinity College Dublin and the National College of Art and Design that would allow our undergraduates to use these collections. We also liaise with them to achieve continued funding for the publication of new monographs across all of the areas that we teach.

2.   Recommendation:
5.5   The School should further explore the use of pre-requisites to create a clearer pathway for Art History students through the BA programme.
5.6   The School should identify strategic partners within the College to enhance the opportunity and pathways for its graduates. For example exploiting the new BA CAO grid system could explicitly identify pathways in Art History and a language.
5.7   Programme goals and pathways should be communicated actively to students in an accessible format.
Action planned:
A great deal of this is more the responsibility of the BA programme board, and we will forward these recommendations to them. They are engaged in an overhaul of the entire BA, which may render some of these points moot.

CATEGORY 2(C)
RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE IMPLEMENTED WITHIN FIVE YEARS

1.   Recommendation:
3.13 The Library should also take on a more active role as a repository for all digital resources, including images.
Action planned:
The interest of the University Library in the collection and preservation of digital resources has recently increased enormously, and the Slide Curator has worked quite closely with them on these on-going efforts. She has participated in the IVRLA

and in our PRTLI bid. We anticipate redefining her role and upgrading its status to reflect the changes in her position.

2.   Recommendation:

8.12 The School should aim to become the visible face of art within UCD, in relation to UCD's existing collection and its policies of curating, display and acquisition.

Action planned:

The curator of Newman House has responsibility for the University's art collection. The School has contributed to the development of the collection through its involvement with the Visual Arts Committee. Recent collaboration between the School and the curator of Newman House resulted in the production of the UCD Sculpture Trail booklet for which two graduates of the 2008 class carried out the research. We will continue to maintain this liaison.

CATEGORY 2(D)

RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED

N/A

CATEGORY 3: RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING INADEQUATE STAFFING, AND/OR FACILITIES WHICH REQUIRE RECURRENT OR CAPITAL FUNDING

CATEGORY 3(A)
RECOMMENDATIONS ALREADY IMPLEMENTED
N/A

CATEGORY 3(B)
RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE IMPLEMENTED WITHIN ONE YEAR

1. Recommendation:
3.9 As a matter of urgency, the School should seek to make a key strategic appointment to the recent vacancy as soon as it is possible.
8.11 The School needs to reassert its expertise and track record in Irish art and architecture. Clearly a new appointment is vital to this, but so too is a strategy of reaching out to galleries and institutions focussing on contemporary art, with a view to contextualising and enriching the understanding of that work.

Action planned:
We strongly concur with the recommendation that we be authorized to make an appointment to the vacant position with an expert on early modern architecture who will be able to supervise research on eighteenth-century Irish buildings.
Such an academic staff position, that includes responsibility for teaching Ireland's rich Georgian architectural heritage, is central to our efforts to strengthen our reputation in the teaching of Irish art and architecture. University-wide collaborations with the National College of Art and Design would address much of our deficit in the area of contemporary art, although there is also much that we can do on our own in this field, not least through forging stronger ties with the Arts Council.

2. Recommendation:
3.10 Library facilities fall short of what is required, even for an undergraduate teaching institution. The shortcomings of the library collection are affecting activities of the School at every level from undergraduate teaching to research, and are universally commented upon as being a hindrance to excellence. Engagement with printed text and images is central to all the School's core activities. The School needs to argue for the resources to achieve this. In this, it should find allies and make common cause.

Action planned:
We welcome the description of the inadequacy of the library. While there has been a sudden surge in library funding since the report was issued, we do not expect this to be a permanent improvement. We will send copies of this report to University Librarian, and to the Head of Library Academic Services (Humanities & Social Sciences) and the School's Liaison Librarian and will continue to work with them to identify priorities for this and subsequent funding in an effort to address this recommendation.

CATEGORY 3(C)
RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE IMPLEMENTED WITHIN FIVE YEARS

1.   **Recommendation:**
3.15 The School should identify dedicated space with IT access for PhD students.
Action planned:
We would love to be able to locate dedicated IT space for all of our doctoral students within the School. In the meantime, they are able to compete for space within the HII. Those who are unsuccessful are eligible for carrels in the library and for hot-desk space within the Newman Building. We will incorporate this recommendation into our space planning requests. It may be possible to provide some of this space within a remodelled digital slide library.

2.   **Recommendation:**
3.16 The School has two part-time administrative staff. While both staff members perform at a high level, the Review Group suggests that additional support may be required to support the Art History subject and that locating administrative staff in a single office may better serve the School in the longer term.
Action planned:
We welcome the report's recommendation of additional administrative support for art history. The current half-time administrator is due to retire at the end of 2011. It is urgent that she be replaced, or our School office will be forced to close. Replacing her by elevating the School's second half-time administrator would enable us to consolidate the administration of the School into a single office, which is large enough to accommodate a part-time (say 25%) administrator as well.

3.   **Recommendation:**
3.18 The RG recommends that consideration should be given to the co-location of all staff offices in order to consolidate the sense of School identity, which is especially important for undergraduate students. The Françoise Henry library and digital image facilities perhaps could be fruitfully co-located to make room for further office space.
Action planned:
We welcome the recommendation of co-located space and will forward this to those engaged in space planning. While the slide library is outmoded, we hope that the space can be reconfigured to address new digital needs, such as providing scanning facilities to students preparing oral presentations. An impending and substantial bequest to the reading room from the estate of the late Prof. Michael McCarthy suggests that this facility needs more rather than less space.

4.   **Recommendation:**
6.6 Research facilities (principally the Library) are insufficient even to support undergraduate research (See Facilities section above).
Action planned:
As already mentioned, we will be forwarding copies of the QA report to the library.

CATEGORY 3(D)
RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED
    N/A

3.   PRIORITISED RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

This section should only contain a list, prioritised by the Quality Improvement Committee, of recommendations outlined in the Review Group Report, which require additional resources. The planned action to address each recommendation with an estimate of the cost involved should also be included:

1.   A position for a historian of early modern architecture who can teach the architecture of Georgian Ireland.

2.   Better Library resources

3.   An systematic overhaul of our facilities to include co-located offices for all academic staff with appropriate aural privacy, expanded book stacks for the reading room, and the adaptive re-use of the slide library to serve new digital needs.