University College Dublin

Quality Improvement Plan

_____

School of Sociology

November 2013

_____

Introduction

The Review Group visited the School from 25-28 March 2013.

The School of Sociology received the Review Group's report from the UCD Quality Office on 7 May 2013.

A Quality Improvement Committee convened by Professor Tom Inglis, Deputy Head of School, drafted this Quality Improvement Plan. Allowing for summer holidays and sick leave, this was completed within approximately twelve weeks of receiving the Review Group's report.

The Quality Improvement Committee included the following members:

Prof. Siniša Malešević, Head of School of Sociology (2011-2014)
Prof. Tom Inglis, Deputy Head of School (2011-2014)
Dr Aogán Mulcahy, Director of Graduate Programmes
Dr Sara O'Sullivan, Director of Teaching and Learning
Dr Andrea Hess, Director of Research and Innovation
Ms Veronica Barker, School Manager

Structure of the body of the report

Responses to recommendations contained in the Review Group Report are set out below in a table format below, adhering to the structure of the Review Group Report. The 6 sections are:

- Organisation and management
- Staff and facilities
- Teaching learning and assessment
- Research Activity
- Management of quality enhancement
- External relations

Categories of recommendations

There are three categories of recommendations include in the Review Group Report as follows:

1. Most recommendations made by the Review Group are procedural. They concern **academic, organisational and other matters which are entirely under the control of the School of Sociology,** and most have been or will be implemented.

2. **A small number of recommendations concern shortcomings in services, procedures and facilities which are outside the control of the School of Sociology.** For these, the School has invited responses from the relevant units, including: the College of Human Sciences (CHS), the Office of the Registrar & Deputy President and others.

3. A very small number of **recommendations concern inadequate staffing, and/or facilities which require recurrent or capital funding**. A list of the School of Sociology's prioritised resource requirements (staff and space) arising from the quality review is given at the end of this report.

Timescale

The timescale for implementing the response to each recommendation is indicated by a letter placed in the right hand column. These letters indicate the following timescales:

A.   Recommendation already implemented
B.   Recommendations to be implemented within one year
C.   Recommendations to be implemented within five years
D.   Recommendations which will not be implemented

SUMMARY OF SCHOOL OF SOCIOLOGY PRIORITIES ARISING FROM THE QUALITY REVIEW PROCESS

Planning

The School of Sociology will devise a strategic plan within the next 12 months. The plan will focus in particular on priorities in the areas of

- Management
- Staff development
- Research
- Teaching
- Communications
- Space

Management

The School will appoint an Advisory Board and hold an Annual Planning Day meeting. The new School Strategic Plan will recommend changes in the management structure of the School to reflect those recommended by the Review Group.

Staff development

Staff will be supported to develop their research programmes, and their research/teaching/contribution profiles to enhance their competitiveness for promotion. A range of strategies will be used to do this including informal mentoring, workload management, sabbatical rota etc.

Research

The School's priority is to develop incentives and support mechanisms to enable academic staff to attain funding to increase their research activity and to develop an internal system that promotes and sustains a culture of high-quality publications.

As part of the Strategic Plan, the School will develop an ethos which will include a number of research programmes in which it specialises. It is intended this ethos will enhance the opportunities to develop interdisciplinary research clusters, and make links with international research consortia to increase opportunities for bidding for large national and international research grants.

The School will increase its research output and profile by encouraging staff to publish with collaboratively and, in particular, with graduate students. Staff will be encouraged to lodge published material in the University Research Repository.

The School will develop a proposal to recruit a professor (with a good track record of research grants and publications) in an area consistent with the School's ethos and research plan.

Teaching

An effort will be made to recruit more students, particularly from non-EU backgrounds, into the School's graduate programmes, particularly the new MSocSc programmes and the new MA in Irish Studies.

The School will continue to maintain and develop the excellent reputation and large numbers of students it obtains in its undergraduate programme.

Communications

The School has appointed a member of its academic staff as Director of Communications. One of his main tasks will be evaluate and redesign the School website with following goals in mind:

- Increase the profile of the School's research

- Attract PhDs, postdocs, and potential research partners

- Attract non-EU students (especially from North America) into the School's graduate programmes.

Space

The School will continue to lobby for better space and facilities. The priority is that the School is in one location, as opposed to being spread out across four different locations. The School sees the Joyce/Newman project as a major opportunity to achieve this.

Report	PRG Recommendation	Category	School Response	Timescale
	ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT			
2.9	. . . the Review Group recommends that the School develop a new strategic plan, which provides a realistic vision for the future. The Review Group also recommends that the School develop an Advisory Board to whom the School can then present its vision, seeking advice and recommendations etc. The Review Group advises that the School re-visit its strategic plan and establish an Advisory Board as soon as possible and that the terms of reference for the Advisory Board should focus on helping the School develop and implement its vision for the future.	1	• The School is re-developing its Strategic Plan and the updated Plan will reflect the RG recommendations. • The School has organised a number of Planning Day Meetings. The first of these will be informed by its re-developed Strategic Plan. • Subsequent Planning Day Meetings will revolve around assessing and developing policies and practices to implement the Strategic Plan. • The School will appoint an Advisory Board in 2013-14. It has been decided that the Advisory Board will comprise five representatives including sociologists, other academics and non-academic professional sociologists. Members will be appointed for a three-year term. The Terms of Reference and proposed membership of the Advisory Board will be agreed at the School meeting scheduled for 8 November. • The terms and references of the Advisory Board will include, *inter alia*, representatives attending the School Annual Planning Day Meeting.	B
2.10	The School should set aside time to come together to agree its future vision and direction and mechanisms to work together towards achieving it key goals. This requires strong leadership and active buy-in to this process from all staff members so that they collectively and individually take ownership of the agreed vision.	1	The School Executive Committee will have the responsibility of drafting a new School Strategic Plan. The Plan will be presented to the staff at its meeting on 8 November 2013 for consideration and agreement. Feedback from that meeting will be considered before the Plan is finalised. It is expected that the final Plan will be circulated to all staff in January 2014.	B

2.11	. . . The Review Group recommends that the School completes a review of the purposes of each committee and how they can be most utilised, to not only consider the operational and day to day activities of the School, but also its future strategic directions. The development of a new agreed vision for the future will help in this regard. This review should include the agreement of terms of reference for each committee.	1	The School Strategic Plan, which is currently being re-developed, will involve a complete review of the Management and Organisation systems within the School. Particular attention will be given to committee structures, line management and communication. To facilitate the committee review and to improve the effectiveness of internal School communications, a senior member of School academic staff has assumed the role of School Director of Communications from 1 September 2013.	A/B
2.12	The School acknowledges that it would be faced with additional pressures if any of its administrative staff leave their current post; the Review Group recommends that the School should therefore have contingency plans in place which can be implemented quickly if this is to arise.	1/2/3	The School has further considered the options currently available to them in respect of issues that would arise should one of the members of the administrative team leave or become ill (long-term). The School is constrained in its ability to develop a contingency plan by current National Employee Control Framework policies regarding recruitment which constrain the University's ability to replace staff members. If the restrictions or bans on recruitment continue, in the event that administrative staff are not replaced, if required, academic staff would have to take on more administrative responsibilities. This would have a significant impact on the ability of the School to deliver its teaching and research obligations. The University, through HR, could consider developing a policy to deal with the loss of administrative staff, such as creating a pool of "floating" staff assigned to Colleges for the purpose of temporary relief to Schools to alleviate absences, such as long term illness, maternity leave etc. The School will discuss this option with the College HR Partner. The School will continue to keep this under review.	B/C
2.13	The Review Group recommends that the School re-evaluates these (undergraduate and graduate staff-student liaison) committees, and re-introduces them if they no longer exist,	1	The School had an excellent record in this area which fell into abeyance with the modular structure. The Teaching and Learning Committee will review the representation of students at all levels in	B

	and re-invigorate them so that students are more aware of them if they are indeed still currently in place.		semester 1 of the current academic year. Discussions about possible formats for the committees are also currently underway with the Student Union Human Sciences Convenor, who has made the effective use of staff-student committees one of her priority issues for this year. One likely outcome would be the reestablishment of an Undergraduate and Postgraduate committee chaired by the School Head of Teaching and Learning and scheduled twice a semester from January 2014.	
2.14	The Review Group recognises the difficulties of co-location and agrees a single site location would be beneficial to the School, in particular for developing an *esprit de corps* amongst staff and students (in particular graduate students). The School should be proactive in its discussions with the College in what spaces it would like to have within the newly developed buildings. While these are obviously aspirational at this stage, the School is most likely to benefit from any new developments if it plays an active role in the planning and implementation phases of this significant project.	2	The School has long argued for the consolidation of its office space. The continued dispersal of staff and PhD students (some of whom are located in the SSRC, on the 5th floor of the Library Building) is a source of on-going frustration, and during recent meetings with the coordinating committee of the Joyce/Newman Project, School representatives repeatedly argued that consolidation of every School should be one of the core goals of the initiative, including the specific consideration that PhD space should be included as part of this. While staff will continue to press vigorously for this outcome, ultimately addressing this issue is dependent on decisions taken at University level. The School has written to the UCD Buildings Operation Manager the Newman/Joyce Project Director and the CHS College Principal regarding this recommendation. The response from the CHS College Principal was that the Newman-Joyce project is proceeding with initial concept designs having been provided by the architects. He indicated that the needs of the School and, in particular, the imperative to co-locate, were being incorporated into the planning of the project from the outset. The School took part in the planning meetings held with the architectural team from Scott Tallon Walker on 4 and 7 November and presented its space requirements in the proposed new complex.	C

2.15	The workload policy developed by the School has also been adopted by other schools within the College. While the Review Group commends the School for developing a workload model, it would appear that in practice this policy is not implemented effectively. Staff submit annual workloads to the Head of School, but there appears to be no system in place to deal with staff who might be over and/or under performing in particular areas. The Review Group recommends that the policy be re-visited, in light of how it is implemented within the School.	1	The present system – of staff doing a self-assessment of their workloads which is then evaluated and discussed with the Head of School at a personal meeting – will be reviewed, particularly in light of the proposed advent of an agreed College wide model. It will remain the responsibility of the Head of School to allocate tasks in conformity with an overall balance for each staff member and overall within the school between research (40), Teaching (40) and Administration (20). The task is to maintain the quality of the School's teaching, research and administration while ensuring that all members carry an equal workload. The issue of balancing research output with teaching and administrative duties will be addressed at our meeting on 28 November.	B
	STAFF AND FACILITIES			
3.13	Locating staff within a tighter space is crucial to establishing a School brand, identity and sense of place. Priority should be given in the University's Master Plan for future allocation of space to ensuring that the current dispersal of School of Sociology staff across separate floors and buildings is remedied.	2	The School welcomes recognition of the severe effects that bilocation of staff and graduate students has on the identity and morale of all concerned. The School continues to lobby at every opportunity on this issue. It recognises however that little progress may be made until the Joyce/Newman complex is completed. See also 2.14.	C
3.14	Academic staff should be provided with on-going and enhanced mentoring to support development of their careers and to provide guidance about promotion.	1	The School recognises the crisis in morale that results from lack of promotion opportunities. It is intended to create an informal, organic group that addresses the specific problems of increasing research output. The issue of low morale will be addressed at our meeting on 28 November and staff will be advised to make use of the mentoring supports provided by UCD HR.	B
3.15	Post-doctoral students and PhD students felt there could be more emphasis placed on career and publication opportunities. While support and advice is available at a	1/2	The graduate studies committee will review the current level of information provision and supports available, and will specifically consider how to optimise the availability and promotion of career and	A/B

	University level, the School should explore how to develop this advice at a School level, including publicising more effectively what is available.		publication opportunities/advice. The School has redesigned its seminar series to ensure greater participation by graduate students. See 4.19.2. One of the tasks of the Director of Communications is to increase the profile of the School, particularly its research and publications. In the first year of his appointment (2013-14), he will investigate ways of increasing the School profile, including engaging with support available from UCD Communications, the College of Human Sciences, UCD Library and UCD Research. A Meeting has been set up with the Deputy Head of Academic Services, UCD Library, to demonstrate how staff publications can be included in the Research Repository.	
3.16	The Review Group recommends that the School develop a long term strategy for dealing with up-coming retirements and lack of senior academics in the School. This includes discussing and planning for who will take over when the current Head of School's term of office is completed.	1	The School Progression Plan is in place. The current Head of School will step down as HOS for 2014/15 and it has been agreed among the staff that the current deputy HOS will take his place for one year. It has also been agreed that the School will apply to the Budget Review Committee to have an appointment made at professorial level, commencing in September 2015, to replace the new Head of School the current deputy HOS who is retiring in early 2016.	B
3.17	The University should evaluate how it communicates new central initiatives to administrative staff involved in the front line implementation of changes. The Review Group also recommends that the University explore ways to enable less senior administrative staff to meet collectively with administrative staff in other Schools and Colleges to discuss and reflect on implementation of central initiatives.	2	The School recognises the enormous progress that has been made improving administrative procedures across the university. We welcome, however, recognition of the unevenness of support systems and the stress and inconvenience this causes staff, particularly administrative staff. See 7.5.2. and 7.5.3. below about meeting held on 4 November.	C

3.18	As the University continues to explore the establishment of interdisciplinary posts, proper structures should be put in place to support this. In particular, promotion structures for someone who works across two colleges should be developed, so that they are not disadvantaged.	2	The School welcomes recognition of this issue which has been a particular source of concern in relation to one member of School academic staff. Initial contact has been made with the Head of the other School concerned and a more detailed meeting will take place early in 2014 when the staff member returns from leave. After this meeting it is intended to discuss the matter with HR.	C
3.19	Staff raised serious concerns about the impact of the introduction of car parking fees. This will be in the region of €1,000 per annum for staff. This decreases staff morale and may have a significant impact on student numbers. The Review Group strongly recommends that the University reconsider this development.	2	The School welcomes the recommendation of the Review Group and recognises that the cost to staff is an unacceptable burden. The School referred the recommendation to UCD Buildings & Services and their response is set out below: The UCD Buildings Operations Manager indicated that the proposal regarding parking fees were being reviewed and updated on an on-going basis and the regular updates are available at http://www.ucd.ie/building/code/traffic.html.	C
	TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT			
4.14	The plan of the School to improve their financial situation by enlarging the number of Master programmes has been debated thoroughly. While the Review Group is not against the policy of offering additional Master programmes, we recommend that the School consider, in the first place, counselling the best undergraduate students and encouraging them to continue studying sociology at the Masters level. The School should also seek College and University support for marketing those programmes to prospective students.	1	There has been significant review and development of our Masters programmes in recent years in an effort to maximise our student intake. In our on-going efforts to increase recruitment, we have already contacted the best of our students through targeted communications and encouraged them to apply for our graduate programmes.

The College recently appointed a Marketing and Communication Manager and the School has already had a meeting with her to discuss how to optimise our programme marketing. We will use this continuing dialogue to consider how to be as proactive and effective as possible in our marketing activities. In recognition of the importance of promoting and marketing our programmes and activities, the School has appointed a Director of Communications. He | A/B |

			will be working specifically at enhancing our website and devising strategies for keeping it maintained on a regular basis.	
4.15	It is the understanding of the Review Group that the School of Sociology has proposed to the College and the University that they be given the autonomy to remodel the fee system according to particular conditions for sociology students. The Review Group recommends that, at least on an experimental basis, the School is allowed to make use of a fee system based on accumulated credits or to lower the fee to attract more part-time students.	2	The School will continue to discuss with the Principal of the College of Human Sciences and the Bursar how best to ensure that fee levels are optimal to maximise student recruitment, but we note the university's reluctance to allow school's to act unilaterally on this issue.	B
4.16	The Review Group recommends that the productive collaboration between the School of Sociology and the School of Mathematics to provide statistical literacy to Sociology majors and Sociology Master programmes should be continued and, if possible, to be expanded. Given the present composition of the staff it does not seem possible to go further and develop a Master programme in Social Science Methods but the Review Group would like to encourage the School to start considering this development in the not too distant future.	1/3	The School's graduate studies committee will specifically consider the possibility of (a) jointly developing its modules in quantitative methods in conjunction with the School of Mathematics, and (b) developing a Masters programme in research methods. In relation to this latter recommendation though, it is likely that this would require agreement with a number of Schools and is obviously dependent on the availability of staff resources and appropriate modules. While the School could contribute modules on Advanced Quantitative and Qualitative Methods, such a Masters degree could only be successful with collaboration not just with the School of Mathematics, but with the School of Applied Social Science and Politics and perhaps other Schools.	B
4.17	The Review Group recommends that the School start developing ideas for joint Master programmes, both within UCD but also beyond, nationally and internationally. It is the understanding of the Review Group that all staff members are encouraged to participate in international "invisible colleges" and the School should develop at least one UCD and one international joint study programme, in	1/3	The School already contributes to joint programmes in Irish Studies and Diaspora Studies within UCD, and to the Joint European Masters in Integration and Social Cohesion. We consider possible new programmes on an on-going basis, and the graduate studies committee will consider this recommendation specifically in the coming year. However, particularly in light of the staffing situation and the recent development of new programmes within the school,	B

	consultation with the relevant UCD support units, for example, UCD Academic Secretariat, UCD Bursar's Office, UCD Corporate and Legal Affairs Office and the UCD Quality Office. The international programme could approach European funds for financial resources.		the potential for further new initiatives is resource-limited.	
4.18	There is scope, on several levels, to improve the experience of PhD students in the School. The PhD Committee should review current practices and procedures, paying particular attention to the following:			
4.18.1	The Review Group recommends that the allocation of supervisors be made more transparent. Under the current system, some students are concerned that they have not been assigned to the most appropriate supervisors.	1	Generally supervisors are assigned by the Head of School on the basis of a recommendation from the graduate studies committee. Often a prospective student discusses their proposal with a staff member with relevant expertise in advance of making a formal submission, and often this involves them asking that staff member to help them develop their proposal and to supervise their research. In those circumstances, the graduate studies committee tends to approve that arrangement. In other cases, a student may apply but without having discussed supervision with any staff member. In those circumstances, if the student is admitted, the proposal is circulated among staff members and expressions of interest in supervising the student are requested. The School graduate studies committee and the Head of School would then consider who to appoint as supervisor, taking into account staff members' research expertise, workloads, and other relevant factors. The graduate studies committee will consider the specific issue of allocation of supervisor to see if the process can be enhanced, and how it can be communicated most effectively.	B
4.18.2	The involvement of School staff in collective work with the PhD students should be increased effectively and	1	The School has already considered changes to the structure of school seminars, including the specific issue of how to ensure greater	A/B

		sustainably. The School organises Roundtable seminars for the PhD students and, last year, the PHD students organised a series of seminars on the theme Critical Issues in Irish Society Network (CIISN). The Review Group recommends that the School organise regular research seminars, where the PhD students can present their on-going work and get feedback from as many staff members as possible. The participation of, on average, at least half of the staff should become the norm. Given the highly esteemed plurality of the School's staff, such a seminar will become, within a very short period of time, a unique selling point of the School's PhD programme.		participation by PhD students. In support of this, in 2013/14 the School seminar series will include the specific arrangement of a PhD student serving as respondent to a staff member's paper. The PhD roundtable includes PhD students presenting their research to their peers, and the School will also encourage more PhD students to present their own research in the School seminar series in the next academic year.	
4.18.3	PhD students should be encouraged to produce articles for journals while working on their PhD and staff members should be encouraged to publish together with their PhD students. Aligned to this, the Review Group recommends that the format of the PhD theses should be reconsidered, moving, where possible, from a monograph format to a more open format, probably stopping short of a cumulative model.	1	Students are strongly encouraged to start publishing their research while working on their PhD, and students and staff are also encouraged to jointly publish, and in several cases have already done so. Over the past year the PhD roundtable included a seminar specifically on publishing and professional development, and further information sessions are provided at college/university level. The graduate studies committee will specifically consider ways in the next year in which to promote and support publishing activity, although we note that the greater pressures that PhD students face in terms of university requirements to complete their thesis in a timely manner, and further financial/time pressures due to the fact that many students tutor and/or work in other part-time jobs. The graduate studies committee has agreed to consider alternative thesis formats, and a draft policy outlining possible procedures should by circulated for discussion within the school by the start of the next academic year.	A/B

4.18.4	Concern was expressed by students about some supervisors not being as available or approachable as others and, on some occasions, feedback from supervisors was not constructive, which has a negative impact on student morale. It would appear also that some Doctoral Studies Panels (DSPs) are more effective than others; again it is recommended that the role and implementation of DSPs within the School is re-visited.	1	The School recognises that difficulties can arise in the relationship between students and supervisors, including over the quality or tone of the feedback provided. When those situations arise, the school tries to resolve the situation informally through mediation. However the university also provides guidelines for dealing with such conflicts if needed (*Code of Practice for Conflict Resolution for Supervisors and Graduate Research Students*). Procedures for addressing such matters will be re-circulated to all staff and research students. The graduate studies committee has been updating and revising procedures on various issues over the past year. DSP guidelines are currently being revised at college level. The School has an input in this process through its membership of the College's Graduate School Board. The activities and proposals of the Board are reported to and considered by the School at its Committee Meetings, that is the Graduate School Committee (GSC), the Executive and Staff meetings. The School GSC has decided to wait until that process has concluded and then consider the revised guidelines. The new guidelines will be circulated to all staff and research students as they become available, including specifying how regularly such meetings should be held and what procedures should be followed.	B
RESEARCH ACTIVITY				
5.14	The review group (RG) suggests that the School should be more proactive in exploiting opportunities for synergies between staff research interests in the School with those in other cognate schools and the wider University.	1	Some cooperation is already happening, for example with School of History, the School Politics, the Geary Institute and the SSRC. However, punctual or sporadic communication could be extended to full collaboration on joint projects, particularly in relation to Horizon 2020. We will meet with colleagues from other College of HS schools in the working group "Culture, Economy and Society" on September 27 but also engage with other planned College of HS research activities.	B/C

5.15	The School is well place to make a strong contribution to at least one of the major themes identified by the University in relation to Culture, Economy and Society.	1	The School is open to engaging with and making a strong contribution to the theme Culture, Economy and Society. The theme of Culture Economy and Society and other suggested themes and the School's contribution to them will be discussed at the School's Research Day meeting on the November 7.	B
5.16	The School already has broad themes including Health, Well-Being and Society and War and Conflict Resolution. These and other themes could be more proactively identified along with ways in which these 'individual' themes could be incorporated within broader thematic approaches to developing a School wide approach to research. These and other themes could be set widely enough to incorporate individual and collective research interests.	1	Apart from Health and Immigration, the School has already identified two other themes it intends to develop: Crime, Violence and Conflict and Cultural Sociology. The School continues to revise its existing programmes and develop new ones. At this stage it is too early to come to definite conclusions. While there was some interest in the recently introduced Cultural Sociology MA there were not enough applicants to run the programme. The new MA in Irish Studies, which the School has developed with the School of History was more successful and had six new entrants. The situation and the developments have to be monitored over the next academic year.	B/C
5.17	The School could develop a more strategic vision and policy around broadening research collaboration, strengthening internal and external networks and ensuring that these are consistent with the strategic research vision of the wider University.	1	The School will attempt to develop this vision in a long-term strategic plan, a draft of which will become available after the discussions and deliberations at the next School Research Day (7 November).	B
5.18	The Research Committee should take the lead in developing a long-term strategic research plan, supporting the development of research themes, identifying collaborative research opportunities, ensuring support for early/mid-career researchers and providing advice and support on research grant opportunities and management.	1	One of the major items on the agenda for the meeting on 7 November will be to identify, describe and implement strategies to increase research collaboration both among the School's academic staff, current and former PhD students, and with academics in other institutions. This will require both structural elements – the establishment of clusters, rewards systems and so forth – and organic methods such as reading and writing groups.	B/C

5.19	The School should prepare a five-year plan for research output in relation to grants and publications including providing formal supportive mechanisms to enable staff to meet these aims.	1	It is intended to have a draft ready for the Research Day Meeting on 7 November.	B
5.20	The School should review the School's research web page to ensure that it highlights the breadth and depth of the School's research endeavours, along with its links with other schools and colleges.	1	Some of the work has already been done but that effort was only partly given credit by the Review Group (research interests and selected publications of all School members, Research paper series, research seminars). Steps have been taken to make further progress on the School's website, particularly in relation to research. We have arranged a meeting with the new Human Sciences Liaison Officer to discuss lodging material with the University's Research Repository. The new School Director of Communications will work with the manager of Marketing and Communications in the College of Human Sciences to develop proposals to enhance the School website and its profile.	A/B
5.21	The School should continue to promote its high-profile seminar series bringing in local, national and international scholars but also develop a School based seminar series where staff and postgraduates present their research.	1	There are four speakers arranged for this semester's research seminar series and the RG's recommendations have been taken on board. Half of the research seminars for next semester will include staff and postgraduate seminars and presentations.	A/B
5.22	The School should explore models to free up staff for research activity. This could include the School's sabbatical system and condensing teaching into one semester. This should be considered in line with the School's workload policy.	1	We have already discussed this in meetings leading up to the visit of the RG. A detailed plan will be a part of the 5-year research plan (see also 5.19).	B/C
5.23	Conference funding is essential to building up research networks and should be protected for academic staff and postgraduate students.	1/2/3	This is not fully within the School's responsibility since travel money is mostly allocated centrally through the individual conference allowance: extra monies are sometimes available through the School budget. However, the School has made efforts and will continue to	A/B/C

			make efforts to support individual staff members and PhD students to attend conferences where they can present their work. The School has written to the Registrar and is awaiting a response.	
5.24	Staff should continue to pursue their strategies for publishing with PhD students.	1	As part of a developing an inclusive, supportive and organic method of improving research output, it is intended to develop a reading - writing group among staff. It is envisaged that once established, membership will be extended to include graduate students.	B
5.25	The Dynamics Lab inter-disciplinary research group provides evidence of success in developing links between researchers and academics at different points in their careers and the model could be developed along other research themes.	N/A	While the School recognises the work of the Dynamics Lab and takes note of its excellent work and will continue to support it, the highly sophisticated and specialised quantitative methods they use and the links they have established are not an appropriate model for the School.	D
MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY ENHANCEMENT				
6.8	Working with the Deans of Social Science and Arts, the School should agree mechanisms to evaluate undergraduate and graduate programmes. This should include a regular review of learning outcomes (for programmes and modules), programme fitness for purpose, and programme viability and include feedback and feed forward opportunities for staff and students.	2	The School welcomes this recommendation and looks forward to working with the Deans of Arts and Social Science on this. A review of Stage 1 of the BSoc Programme was undertaken in 2012-13 as part of the Assessment Redesign Project led by the Dean and seems like a useful model to roll out to the BA Programme and to Stage 2. The School has been in contact with both Deans and plans to meet with them in January 2014 to discuss how this roll out could be achieved.	C
6.9	The School should review the role of the staff-student liaison forum and mechanisms established for the representation of student views and the prompt identification of student concerns across all programmes	1	The School welcomes this recommendation. This matter is being addressed by the School Head of Teaching and Learning and following consultations with current students, there are plans to reconstitute the staff-student liaison forum in September 2013.	A
6.10	Ensure effective mechanisms are in place for School staff to review module outcomes, through the grade approval	1/2	The School welcomes this recommendation. This matter is being addressed by the Head of School and the Director of Assessment and	A/B

	process.		new procedures are being developed in consultation with the External Examiner. As a first step, in May 2013 a new system was introduced whereby module coordinators with higher than average failing rate were contacted and asked to review all fail grades. This system will be reviewed by the Undergraduate Committee in September.	
SUPPORT SERVICES				
7.5	The School operates well within the wider College and University structures. However, there are a number of areas where the School feels it would be better able to perform its duties if there were changes to particular University procedures. These recommendations are therefore for the University to consider:	2	The Head and Deputy Head of School together with members of the School Administration staff met with the Director of UCD Registry, the Director of Administrative Services and the Communications Officer (UCD Registry) on 4th November 2013 to discuss relations and communications between the School and UCD Registry. A number of issues were addressed and Registry were commended by School staff for the recent creation of a calendar of Registry related activities and deadlines. The School agreed to provide further feedback on the calendar. It was also agreed that it would be useful to establish a liaison committee with representatives for various schools from different colleges that would provide information and feedback about the needs and interests of Schools in relation to Registry and vice versa. The suggestion from the School to provide group training sessions for on-line applications was noted by Registry.

The School will review progress in 12 months. | N/A |
| 7.5.1 | The timing of communications from central University administrative units often comes at very busy times for School administrators (e.g. start of semester, exam period etc.). It would be beneficial to the School if the University considers the timing of such communications. | | | N/A |
| 7.5.2 | Similarly, different units within the University ask for information back from schools at the same time; and with deadlines from different units set at similar times, this makes it difficult for staff to meet these. The establishment of a centralised calendar of deadlines for various tasks would help identify bottlenecks, address these if possible, and if, not the early communication of these to schools would help in staff planning. Examples of deadlines raised by administrative staff include – undergraduate prospectus, module enhancement information, module descriptor | 2 | See 7.5 and 7.5.1 above. | N/A |

	forms, structure updates, timetabling, transfer of CA grades from Blackboard to Gradebook, Gradebook grade entry and closure etc.			
7.5.3	Sometimes administrative staff are sent information on new strategies, policies, procedures etc. for which they have had no active input. More collaboration and input with administrative staff in schools would benefit both the University and the School.	2	With regard to IT, the College School is in the process of establishing a College School IT Committee (yet to be confirmed). The School has contacted the College Principal to request that the establishment of links between the IT Committee and CHS Schools be added to the terms of reference of the committee. The School will review progress in 12 months.	B/C
7.5.4	It would be useful if both formal and informal communication channels were developed for graduate administrative staff across schools and colleges within the University.	2	The School welcomes this recommendation. A couple of years ago there was a postgraduate administrators networking meeting initiated by the College's Director of Graduate Studies This provided a very valuable forum for sharing information and problem solving. As a new Director, he has recently been appointed it is an ideal time to recommend re-establishing this. The School would also like to see a similar networking forum for undergraduate administrators and will contact the Principal of both the College of Human Sciences and Arts & Celtic Studies. The School will liaise with both College Principals and HR Partners to explore potential ways of addressing this recommendation. The meetings will be scheduled for January/February 2014.	B/C
	External Relations			
8.7	The RG recommends the establishment of an Advisory Board (see Recommendation 2.9).	1	This is already being implemented. See 2.9 above	A/B

8.8	The School should develop a strategy with regard to getting access to EU funds by following closely the emerging new EU scheme Horizon 2020.	1	The School recognises the importance of obtaining EU funds. One of the priorities of the Innovation and Scholarship Committee will be to identify strategies by which staff members, either individually or collectively, can become involved in research networks that are fundamental to obtaining such funds. The timeline for this will be addressed at our Research Day meeting on 7 November.	B/C
8.9	There are two levels of funding available for sociology: the bottom up basic research oriented European Research Council (ERC) and the wide spectrum of "calls" published by the European Commission. With regard to the ERC the School does not need to get additional counselling - detailed information is available at http://erc.europa.eu/. Whether staff members of the School think of them as candidates for Advanced Grants depends on their own self-evaluation. On the level of Starting Grants (for researchers of any nationality with 2-7 years of experience since completion of PhD) the School should develop a strategy to select potential candidates to apply for such a grant within the next five years. The College and/or UCD should offer incentives for potential applicants.	1/2	The Research, Innovation and Scholarship Committee will identify potential applicants and encourage them to apply. The School recognises the importance of the College/University providing incentives for potential applicants. The timeline for this will be addressed at our Research Day meeting on 7 November.	B
8.11	With regard to the call system of European funds, the School needs counselling and the College and/or UCD are encouraged to offer the School this support.	3	The School welcomes this initiative. The School has written to the Programme and Support Manager for EU Research and to the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation (VPRI), CHS to discuss how this might be best achieved. The College VPRI has responded and has indicated that a workshop addressing this issue is scheduled to take place in September 2013. The School will address the issue more fully at a Research Meeting on 7 November.	N/A
8.12	Since EU funds are highly competitive School's staff should be credited even if not finally successful in getting funded and a scheme should be developed for continued	1	The School has accommodated and given credit to staff members who obtain external funding. It is anticipated that the recognition and accreditation of obtaining external funds will be included in the	B

	application afterwards.		proposed College workloads model. The Executive Committee of CHS are in the process of finalising a College workloads model.	
8.13	The School should explore how it can make better linkages with its alumni. The College should explore the potential establishment of College-wide alumni relationships, with a role in tracking graduates.	1	This will be one of the items to be discussed with the new Advisory Board at our forthcoming Planning Day meeting.	B
8.14	The School should explore the potential to introduce work-based placements in various fields and internships for its students.	1/2	The School had such schemes in the past and has examined the possibility of introducing similar ones, particularly for graduate students. The main difficulty is the amount of administration required. Even if suitable placements could be identified and found, the School would need to be sanctioned a half-time administrative post to organise and implement such a scheme.	B

Prioritised Resource Requirements

Appointments

3.16   The Review Group recommends that the School develop a long term strategy for dealing with up-coming retirements and lack of senior academics in the School. This includes discussing and planning for who will take over when the current Head of School's term of office is completed.

Response to Recommendation 3.16 – see page 10

Prof. Siniša Malešević and Prof. Tom Inglis met with Prof. Brian Nolan, Principal of CHS, to discuss this matter. It was agreed that a meeting would be arranged with the Registrar and the Bursar to discuss this matter. In advance of this meeting, a detailed proposal regarding future appointments will be developed by the School which will include costs of making appointments at different levels.

Professorial and College Lecturer Appointment Costs:

Associate Professor scale: €70,566 - 93,128 (6 points)
College Lecturer scale: €43,475 - €65,922 (7 points)
Plus
10.75% employer's PRSI
10.00% employer's pension contribution
€4,500 maximum relocation costs