



University College Dublin

Quality Improvement Plan

School of Education

March 2012

1. Introduction

The site visit for the review took place from Monday 24th to Wednesday 26th of October (2011) inclusive. Immediately on receipt of the final draft of the QR report, the entire staff of the unit devoted the morning of Tuesday December 13th 2011 to a detailed analysis of the report, correcting errors of fact, discussing the recommendations and determining in a provisional manner the priority to be attached to the recommendations, and the identification of QIP committee members. The QIP committee met for an extended meeting on January 9th 2012, extensive discussion of the recommendations ensued, and a strategy for drafting of the plan put in place, shared among the membership. A further meeting of the committee took place on Wednesday January 18th where the initial draft was discussed, followed by further refinements. An additional meeting of the Quality Improvement Committee was held on 22nd February 2012. The Draft was then circulated to all staff for detailed discussion and comment at a full staff meeting on Thursday March 8th and finalised subsequent to the meeting. (Members of the committee included: Ciaran Sugrue (HoS), Chair, Lorraine Heffernan, Joyce Senior, William Kinsella, Lizbeth Goodman, Dr. Deveril, and Conor Galvin, while there was commitment also to drawing on the expertise of other colleagues at various points during the drafting and refining process).

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

6.20 The RG recommends that the School consider ways of seeking funding for postdoctoral students/contract researchers as a means of further developing the research culture/activity. For example, final year doctoral students could be encouraged to collaboratively write research bids in which they are named as researchers. There is potential here for academic staff to learn from the practices of SMARTlab.

Action taken: This is already being undertaken by SMARTlab and will be extended to the planning of the Research Committee and incorporated into its strategic plan. (It should be noted however, that the vast majority of PhD students are part-time and thus not in a position to avail of research opportunities).

Category 1(b) Recommendations to be implemented within one year

2.15 The RG recommends that the School develop a comprehensive 5-10 year strategic plan, with agreed implementation goals and timelines, as soon as possible. The involvement of all School staff in this process will also enhance the development of a shared vision for the School.

Action Planned: The School Executive to spearhead this process; initial outline to be discussed with all staff. In March 2012 the Committee will begin this process.

2.16 The RG recommends that a School Research Committee and Teaching and Learning Committee should be reconstituted, with appropriate leadership from academic staff given responsibility as Heads of Research, and Teaching and Learning, respectively.

Action Planned: Immediate appointment/ selection of chairs of both these committees, followed immediately by selection of committee membership. To be completed by March 2012, following consultation by HoS.

2.17 The School Executive has a relatively large membership that rotates each year. The membership of the School Executive should be re-examined with a view to streamlining the committee and improving its decision-making effectiveness.

Action Planned: The existing executive committee is not as large as indicated above. Following the appointment of chairs of research and teaching and learning, chairs will be included in executive as ex officio members (to be completed by end of March, 2012).

2.18 The School has experienced a significant degree of change over recent years, including changes in structure, changes in senior management, a change in location and the addition of SMARTlab. This degree of change provides clear challenges to the maintenance of a shared vision across all staff. A coherent plan for SMARTlab's integration into the activities of the School needs to be drawn up as a matter of urgency.

Action Planned: This process will be ongoing, and coordinated by the HoS and Director of SMARTlab, and updated regularly through staff meetings, consistent with University perspectives on the nature and appropriateness of the relationship in terms of autonomy/ integration.

2.20 The School's largest programme, the PDE, is moving to a two-year format with effect from 2014, as a result of a change in National strategy for post-primary teacher education. This will likely place large additional resource demands on the School. The School should play a proactive role in designing a distinctive new PDE programme offering whilst ensuring that the College and wider University is made aware of the likely resource implications of this change.

Action Planned: PDE planning committee is actively working on the new programme and this plan/ resource implications will be disseminated to College Finance Office etc.

to gain institutional support for its implementation (June 2012 contingent on further clarification on policy by the Teaching Council).

- 4.13 The Teaching Council's Accreditation Report proposes that external examiners be deployed in the context of the assessment of school placement on the PGDE. The School's Action Plan proposes to introduce this in 2014. The Review Group recommends that this be brought forward to the earliest possible date, preferably 2012.

Action Planned: Selection process under active consideration; will be in place for the beginning of the next academic year—September 2012-'13. (HoS, Programme Director in consultation with colleagues).

- 4.14 A review of roles of those staff involved in the PDE programme would be valuable. While the deployment of 90 non-core staff, which includes many practising teachers, clearly provides very well focused professional support for the students, it would be worth considering, as the new 2-year programme is introduced, whether the numbers of people involved could be reduced so that an increasingly systematic approach to their training and development could be provided.

Action Planned: Review of current staffing/ costs undertaken by Programme Director, in consultation with HoS and in light of current budgetary constraints, while availing of the opportunity of a 2-year PDE to rethink roles and responsibilities (completed by June 2012 contingent on further clarification on policy by the Teaching Council).

- 4.15 There is an urgent need to increase administrative support for the PDE (we understand this is forthcoming), not least to ensure that academic staff are not overburdened by such work, in order to undertake their required research activity.

Action Planned: Half-time position advertised in February 2012; to be filled as soon as possible. A case for additional support to be made in the context of the 2-year PDE (Course Director/ in collaboration with HoS).

- 5.13 The initiation of a two-year PDE (replacing the current one year PGDE) should be taken as an opportunity for a major review of the programme, incorporating a series of discussions with stakeholders and further developing a distinctive UCD model of the post-primary teacher. The research insights of the academic staff can provide a significant input into a model of teacher as lifelong learner and enquiring professional. The School should be encouraged to continue to support reflective practice and 'teacher as researcher' orientations in the programme in spite of the recent changes in NFQ level that have been decreed. Indeed there may well be scope for staff who work on this programme to undertake programme related research that could be carried out at relatively low cost but would potentially generate outputs of international significance.

Action Planned: Pursued in the context of 2-year programme, as part of a strategic research plan including clusters—developed by the Research Committee and Teaching and Learning Committee in consultation with course director (Dec. 2012).

5.15 Although the current programme is very strong, this review should also take cognisance of the current developments in teacher education provision such as the distance learning part-time approach taken by other providers.

Action Planned: This work in relation to the PDE is ongoing to be completed in June 2012.

5.16 In relation to the doctoral provision, the Review Group recommends the development of an increasingly strategic approach to recruitment of research students so that the strength of research clusters can grow.

Action Planned: To be dealt with by the Research Committee (see 6.17 below).

5.19 Two strands of existing MA provision that have been developed at least in part as a positive response to external opportunities and aspirations are the MA/Diploma (Global Classrooms) and the MA in Mentoring. The former of these appears to have been provided to support Irish teachers to undertake short-term work in the context of developing countries. The latter is an outcome from the mentoring pilot scheme that was based in the School of Education. The mode of delivery of both programmes is unusual and they might both be reviewed to consider their on-going fit to the academic frameworks of UCD and the School.

Action Planned: These programmes are currently under review and the review will be completed by May 2012. Responsibility for this will rest with the Head of School.

6.15 The School would benefit from becoming more ambitious in its research planning and developing a long term strategic research plan with a vision of the research culture and activity of the School in 5 and 10 years time. In this respect the Review Group recommends that the School organises its research around research clusters/themes and incorporates doctoral students into the clusters/themes.

Action Planned: Undertaken by the Research committee; a short, medium and long-term plan developed by December 2012.

6.17 A Director of Research should be appointed, from among the academic staff. This appointment would be key, along with the Research Committee, in leading the development of a long-term strategic research plan; supporting the development of research clusters/themes; identifying collaborative research opportunities within the College of Human Sciences and the University; ensuring support for early career researchers; capitalising on support from the University in terms of both grant application and administration of grants; supporting staff in fulfilling research commitments; making recommendations about research leave and developing international networks. Such a person would be expected to identify new research

opportunities and work with the Head of School to ensure that the School has the capacity to bid for such opportunities.

Action Planned: Director of Research already appointed. This work will be undertaken by the Research committee; a short, medium and long-term plan developed by December 2012.

6.19 Further integration of doctoral students, including doctoral students from SMARTlab into the research life of the School, would be beneficial. For example a regular seminar programme for academic staff and doctoral students could help in this respect.

Action Planned: The Directors of doctoral programmes will discuss further collaboration and exchange possibilities for students and staff, for autumn 2012.

6.23 The School should consider whether it could exploit the strength of the PDE programme in terms of research, through for example developing a “teacher as researcher” programme.

Action Planned: Pursued in the context of 2-year programme, as part of a strategic research plan including clusters—developed by the Research Committee in consultation with course director (Dec. 2012).

7.14 Measures relevant to staff morale and the working environment, including reviews of internal communications, decision-making processes and budgetary processes, should be considered under the quality management/enhancement criterion.

Action Planned: These matters to be kept under review by School Executive and its various committees and by having ‘morale/ communication’ as a regular and ongoing item on the agenda of staff meetings.

7.15 The School needs to articulate a clear vision and identity that encompasses both the tradition of excellence in professional education and the newer developments and potential of interdisciplinary research and innovation.

Action Planned: Will be developed as part of strategic planning by September 2012 and thereafter kept under review as other strategic planning is undertaken and completed. Coordinated by HoS, and Chairs of Committees in consultation with Programme Directors.

7.16 The RG encourages the School to be proactive in developing and articulating business cases to the senior management of the University for developments that will attract non-exchequer income while also enhancing the quality of education and research.

Action Planned: Executive Committee undertake coordination of this task in light of developments at College level, and the wider financial environment.

7.17 The appointment of Heads/Directors of Teaching and Research would be helpful in quality management and enhancement.

Action Planned: The existing executive committee is not as large as indicated above. Following the appointment of Chairs of Research and Teaching and Learning, Chairs will be included in executive as ex officio members (to be completed by end of March, 2012). In addition, a Chair of Graduate Studies has also been appointed to map with College structures.

7.18 Succession planning, and a short, medium and long-term development plan, should be described in the new strategic plan currently in development.

Action Planned: Undertaken in phases, initially a review of existing staffing, length of service remaining, and of existing capacity and the necessity for new/ emerging expertise, with particular attention to new PDE requirements as a priority as well as a review of programmes. Increasing income streams to leverage possible appointments.

8.9 The School should actively liaise with the Library in order to facilitate timely identification of resource shortcomings impacting on student service. Information from this process should then be escalated to College level and beyond in order to provide visibility on the pressures currently being imposed on Library funding.

Action Planned: The School will maintain an active dialogue with the designated liaison person from the library through the Chairs of Committees.

9.17 An internationalisation strategy should be prepared. It is recognised that while many opportunities exist, resource constraints will likely require the prioritisation of a subset of these for strategic development.

Action Planned: The School Executive will consider this issue and will further develop its international profile and produce an Internationalisation Proposal.

9.18 Efforts should be made to increase, in a managed way, the number of international students in the School's graduate programmes.

Action Planned: See 9.17 above.

9.19 The School should consider what opportunities exist for collaboration with colleagues in the College of Human Sciences.

Action Planned: Over the next 3-5 years, we expect to further enhance the existing set of synergies and to extend the focus of our work in both teaching and research. The Teaching and Learning and Research Committees will consider this as part of their brief.

Category 1(c) Recommendations to be implemented within five years

5.20 The long-term strategic planning that should be undertaken will need to be informed by a careful review of competing provision elsewhere in the island of Ireland as well as internationally. It will also benefit from increasing international networking by core members of staff, in both professional and academic networks. The College and University environments should also facilitate the possibility of significant development in inter-disciplinarity and also of inter-professional activity.

Action Planned: Existing and additional collaborations will be extended in the next 3-5 years to provide networking opportunities and interdisciplinary programmes and modules with appropriate College and University support as suggested above.

6.16 In the long term the RG recommends that the School consider broadening its focus of research (for example research on early years education) whilst recognising its current strength of research in teacher education, the psychology of education and special educational needs. The broadening of focus should exploit the opportunity for synergy between the research of the School and SMARTlab. This broadening of focus should, however, be done on a managed basis and in relation to a strategic research vision.

Action Planned: Over the next 3-5 years, we expect to further enhance the existing set of synergies (not all of which are captured in the above recommendation) and to keep the focus of our work in both teaching and research under review.

Category 1(d) Recommendations which will not be implemented

None.

CATEGORY 2: Recommendations concerning shortcomings in services, procedures and facilities which are outside the control of the unit

Category 2(a) Recommendations already implemented

None.

Category 2(b) Recommendations to be implemented within one year

3.13 The School, with the University, could beneficially review the systems for staff induction and ongoing training to make sure there is maximum communication between colleagues and uptake of opportunities available.

Action Planned: This concern will be brought to the attention of the relevant units in the University, and ongoing support will be provided through PMDS, HR and internally in the School.

4.16 Consideration should be given to improving accessibility of Library and other resources. In some respects this may be about improving communication between the Library and students. However the question of access to professional resources and the availability of a space for workshop activities and materials development (see also Section 3) need urgent attention.

Action Planned: Programme Directors and module coordinators will maintain an active dialogue with the designated liaison person from the library through the Chairs of Committees. Additionally, the School Executive will investigate possible alternative uses of the planned Resource Room in the Roebuck courtyard.

5.17 Doctoral students working within SMARTlab who transferred into UCD are currently temporarily registered on generic doctoral programmes at UCD, pending the full approval of the distinctive practice-based programme by UCD. It is to be hoped that the due processes of validation can be completed as a matter of urgency, so that students have full confidence in the standing of the award for which they originally signed up.

Action Planned: The School, College and University are all involved in ongoing collaborative efforts to resolve this situation as quickly as possible, to everyone's satisfaction. SMARTlab is obliged to keep the School informed on progress on an ongoing basis. There is no generic doctoral programme to which these students are registered. Doctoral students working with SMARTlab are currently registered to the Structured PhD in Education programme.

5.18 The discussions and developments already underway concerning the interplay between SMARTlab and the School should be built upon to find creative ways of expanding the range of activity. This may well require some of the core School staff to revise the balance of their commitments and for SMARTlab to ensure that the some of the resources that arise from such expansion are used to facilitate this.

Action Planned: There are ongoing discussions at School, College and University level about how the nature of the synergies and the sharing of resources can best be shared.

6.18 The Head of School should allocate a budget to support research activity that would include support for research themes/clusters, seed-corn funding, attendance at international conferences and invitation of international scholars. The amount required would be relatively small, but could be important in supporting academic staff at a time when there is a block on both promotions and appointments.

Action Planned: This issue is currently under active consideration by the HOS and the College Principal and College Finance Manager.

Category 2(c) Recommendations to be implemented within five years

None.

Category 2(d) Recommendations which will not be implemented

None.

CATEGORY 3: Recommendations concerning inadequate staffing, and/or facilities which require recurrent or capital funding

Category 3(a) Recommendations already implemented

None.

Category 3(b) Recommendations to be implemented within one year

3.8 The School should review the allocation of space in Roebuck in order to create facilities for full and part-time doctoral students and space for part-time members of staff. Use of hot-desking space could be beneficial in providing for the needs of part-time staff while maximising space available for full-time staff/doctoral students.

Action Planned: Re-design of post-grad room to accommodate up to 6 or 7 postgraduate students has been initiated. Refurbishment is contingent on funding. Responsibility for action will be Head of School and Chair of Research Committee.

3.10 The books, journals and other media located in the resources room, currently some distance from the main offices in Roebuck, and closed since the retirement of the School Librarian, should be integrated into the library collection as appropriate. A new communal workspace should be created in Roebuck. Such a workspace would allow for groups of students and staff to work collaboratively together and access digital resources.

Action Planned: This matter will be discussed with the library and an appropriate resolution sought, resources permitting. This discussion to take place immediately.

3.12 The School's website should be reworked to publicise more effectively the research work of colleagues, to include the work of doctoral students. Training for staff in this area may be required.

Action Planned: Discussion of the recommendation particularly its resource implications and the necessity for ongoing support and professional development - to be kept under review by the School Executive.

5.14 There are likely to be significant staffing and resource implications of the introduction of this two-year programme. UCD will need to support this provision, possibly as an exceptional case, that has to attract exceptional treatment at this time of resource constraint.

Action Planned: Discussion with the College of Human Sciences, Finance Manager and HR Department ongoing.
Responsibility for action will be Head of School and Director of PDE programme

6.21 The School should prioritise the presentation of its research and the impact of its research in a more strategic and coherent manner to the outside world, and in particular through the website.

Action Planned: See 3.12 above.

8.8 Recruitment of an additional full-time administrator is required as a matter of urgency, specifically to support the PDE.

Action Planned: A part-time administrator post has been advertised. Discussion with HR in the context of the two year PDE is ongoing. Responsibility for action will be Head of School and Director of PDE programme

Category 3(c)

Recommendations to be implemented within five years

2.19 The non-pay budget funds 152 teaching/teaching practice staff whose work is essential to the running of the School. Any reduction in this budget would have immediate negative consequences on the ability of the School to maintain its programme portfolio – particularly the PDE programme. It is essential that the School seek to protect these staff (and the associated budget).

Action Planned: Discussion with College Finance Manager, College Principal and Head of School ongoing in the context of reduced core funding.

3.9 As there is only one classroom and one seminar room in the School's building in Roebuck, most of the School's teaching takes place in the Newman Building, which is some distance from staff offices in Roebuck. This is not optimal either in terms of efficient use of staff time, or in ensuring that students can access staff out of class. The current facilities do not provide dedicated space for part-time staff or any space for research students. The integration of

SMARTlab into the School has further increased the pressure on the School's physical facilities. The impending move of the School of Law from Roebuck may open up an opportunity to expand the School's physical footprint. As part of the strategic planning process, the School needs to clearly articulate a 'facilities plan' to encompass the physical requirements for all its teaching and research activities over the duration of the strategy.

Action Planned: Discussion of facilities ongoing and kept under review. Responsibility for action will be Head of School, Prof. Lizbeth Goodman and School Executive Committee

3.11 Long-term strategic planning for future staffing, which takes into account the need to expand the research activities of the School, is essential.

Action Planned: This will be part of School's Strategic Plan
Responsibility for action will be the Research Committee.

4.17 The introduction of new approaches to professional learning such as the video project mentioned above should be revisited with an emphasis on continuing development and sustainability of successful practices.

Action Planned: This is to be considered as part of the Curriculum Planning in February 2012 and the planning of the two year PDE programme.
Responsibility for action will be Programme Director to be completed in June 2012. This is to be considered subject to available resources.

4.18 There is scope for greater deployment of innovative technologies in providing learning experiences for students across the full range of programmes. Blackboard is used successfully but does have limitations of accessibility. It would be beneficial for the experiences of SMARTlab to be shared across the School, for example in the deployment of assistive technologies in learning and in the development of blended learning approaches.

Action Planned: This is to be considered by the Teaching and Learning Committee.

5.21 Again in the longer term and recognising current financial constraints as well as constraints deriving from the national teacher education policy context, consideration could be given to the development of further curricular specialist expertise within the core School staffing, as well as to the development of greater activity in sectors other than post-primary, possibilities including early years, primary, further and higher education.

Action Planned: New programmes already available will address a number of these areas (starting September 2012).

6.22 The School should consider formally benchmarking its research against the research of similar Schools of Education, through for example collaboration with similar schools that are recognised for their international research excellence. Identifying the characteristics of the schools that could be reference points for benchmarking would be an important part of the process.

Action Planned: This matter to be discussed and progressed by the Research Committee.

7.12 Enhanced mechanisms for tracking and maintaining contact with alumni through a database would be valuable in documenting first destination and career pathways of graduates, thus generating statistics valuable for quality management and enhancement.

Action Planned: Discussion with UCD Alumni to be arranged by November 2012
Responsibility for action will be Head of School and Programme Directors and administrative personnel.

7.13 The establishment of procedures for measurement and management of research quality (such as benchmarking with other Schools of Education, canvassing views of external stakeholders etc) should be implemented.

Action Planned: See 6.22 above.

9.20 A method of tracking not only the first destination, but also the career trajectories, of graduates should be developed. This would bring benefits in terms of improved external visibility, student recruitment, and highlight potential for internal and external synergies.

Action Planned: See 7.12 above.

Category 3(d) Recommendations which will not be implemented

None.

3. Prioritised Resource Requirements

- 4.13 The Teaching Council's Accreditation Report proposes that external examiners be deployed in the context of the assessment of school placement on the PGDE. The School's Action Plan proposes to introduce this in 2014. The Review Group recommends that this be brought forward to the earliest possible date, preferably 2012.

This is an additional expenditure that necessitates payment of an external fee in addition to travel and subsistence that will be more than the usual Extern fee since it will necessitate travel to schools to observe student teachers (and this will be in addition to the more typical Extern expenditure. Additionally, some of the work will need to be carried out in the first and second semesters, necessitating two periods of 'fieldwork' per annum

- An annual expenditure of €4,000 is expected

- 4.15 There is an urgent need to increase administrative support for the PDE (we understand this is forthcoming), not least to ensure that academic staff are not overburdened by such work, in order to undertake their required research activity.

A half-time position has been created and is about to be filled. To move this to a full-time position, an additional 15-20K per annum will be required.

- 5.13 The initiation of a two-year PDE (replacing the current one year PGDE) should be taken as an opportunity for a major review of the programme, incorporating a series of discussions with stakeholders and further developing a distinctive UCD model of the post-primary teacher. The research insights of the academic staff can provide a significant input into a model of teacher as lifelong learner and enquiring professional. The School should be encouraged to continue to support reflective practice and 'teacher as researcher' orientations in the programme in spite of the recent changes in NQF level that have been decreed. Indeed there may well be scope for staff who work on this programme to undertake programme related research that could be carried out at relatively low cost but would potentially generate outputs of international significance.

- This will necessitate ring fencing a proportion of the school's annual budget to support this research:
- A target of €20,000 is envisaged.

- 3.8 The School should review the allocation of space in Roebuck in order to create facilities for full and part-time doctoral students and space for part-time members of staff. Use of hot-desking

space could be beneficial in providing for the needs of part-time staff while maximising space available for full-time staff/doctoral students.

- A figure of €10,000 at a minimum is necessary to furnish the graduate room appropriately.

3.10 The books, journals and other media located in the resources room, currently some distance from the main offices in Roebuck, and closed since the retirement of the School Librarian, should be integrated into the library collection as appropriate. A new communal workspace should be created in Roebuck. Such a workspace would allow for groups of students and staff to work collaboratively together and access digital resources.

The School resource centre was vacated to create studio space for SMARTlab. The content of the resource centre was relocated to a room in Roebuck castle (previously occupied by the School of Law), at a cost of €47,000. There are two aspects to the recommendation—relocate the existing resources to the Library, and then furnish the ‘new’ centre as a workspace:

- Relocation of existing resources- €20,000
- Furnishing of workspace- €28,000

4.17 The introduction of new approaches to professional learning such as the video project mentioned above should be revisited with an emphasis on continuing development and sustainability of successful practices.

- We are already working on this issue for the coming year. With relatively modest resource injection, this can be developed further. It will also necessitate the purchase of appropriate a research software package with access for staff and students to enable this facility to be developed, particularly from a research/ reflective practice perspective
- Purchase of additional video recording equipment- €4,000
- Software site licence- €5,000 per annum