



**University College Dublin**

**REVIEW GROUP REPORT**

**Periodic Quality Review**

**UCD School of Music**

**January 2021**

**Accepted by the UCD Governing Authority at its meeting of 9 September 2021**

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## **Key Findings of the Review Group**

The Review Group (RG) has identified several key findings in relation to areas of good practice operating within the UCD School of Music and areas which the RG would highlight as requiring improvement. The main section of the RG Report sets out all observations, commendations, and recommendations of the RG in more detail.

### **Examples of Good Practice**

The RG identified several commendations, in particular:

1. UCD School of Music is a small and highly committed staff and faculty team, including part-time and occasional lecturers. It includes passionate educators, several internationally esteemed researchers, and university level leadership of several performing groups. The School's considerable output spans books, articles, chapters, performing groups, performances, recordings, and musical works, as well as scholarly teaching, telling a story of engaged creativity and a lively and productive intellectual culture. The RG was impressed by the strong sense of community and collegiality within the School. The addition of two recent excellent junior faculty appointments is an encouraging note for the future. To spend time in the School, is to hear music playing, see open doors and experience a sense of staff-student-peer dialogue and exchange.
2. The UCD School of Music has reason to be proud of its student cohorts. The RG met with an impressive cross-section of students from first to final year undergraduate programmes, as well as masters and doctoral researchers. The RG observed at all levels not only pride and loyalty, but camaraderie and peer support. The School's students come from diverse musical and personal backgrounds and come across as well-rounded with a strong sense of identification with their subjects, and a searching approach to their field. The RG was particularly encouraged to witness the confidence and academic curiosity of early career undergraduates to imagine themselves as future masters and PhDs students and scholars. This struck the RG as a very tangible outcome of the scholarly curriculum and research environment the School seeks to provide. The physical presence of students on the music corridor, occupying informal spaces to study and connect, contributes strongly to the sense of community, place and belonging articulated by student respondents.
3. The UCD School of Music maintains a diverse, imaginative and inclusive curriculum offering a portfolio which appeals to different student cohorts. This inclusivism means that the School provides opportunities for novice and aspiring students of music theory, culture and performance, as well as skilled, experienced artists, technical or scholarly experts, and leaders across a range of musical or related fields. Students feel well served by the School academically and perceive the quality and range of modules they are facilitated to study positively. Students strongly noted the accessibility to them of staff in relation to their studies. The hosting of a suite of modules relating

to performing groups is particularly effective – supporting students, creating benefit for the School and amplifying performance in the University.

4. The visible and significant contribution of the performance ensembles benefits the culture and reputation of the School, University, and the wider community. From the Ad Astra Chamber Orchestra, UCD Choral Scholars, UCD Gamelan Orchestra, UCD Philharmonic Choir, and UCD Symphony Orchestra – to the UCD Composers Ensemble, Early Music Ensemble and UCD Traditional Music Workshop. It is notable that the performing groups are led from the UCD School of Music, and comprise students from all disciplines, ensuring co-curricular and music development opportunities for UCD students, university wide.
5. The School of Music is one of UCD's smallest Schools, and its service and impact extends well beyond its size. This includes the School's research, curricular and co-curricular contributions as noted, and extends to 'true enlargement of mind' for the community in terms of music performance, expertise and reputation. The School is also active in other forms of leadership and community building such as active representation on university committees, including Governing Authority. In the context of very significant constraints of size and budget, the extent of the School's contribution footprint is very commendable. The sense of exceptional leadership contribution from early career staff is particularly notable in the case of subject area head and across the performing groups.

### **Prioritised Recommendations for Improvement**

The full list of recommendations is set out in the main body of the report; however, the RG would suggest that the following be prioritised:

1. The current resourcing framework at the School means it is thinly spread and trying to provide a full service on lean staffing, financing and administrative support. The RG recognize the challenging financial backdrop, and this raises the need for increased strategic prioritisation. While the School is making strong efforts in relation to operational planning, RG found it difficult to get a clear sense in the SAR and related discussions of the School's long-term strategic priorities and intent. The RG recommends the following in relation to strategic planning and development:
  - a. Develop a strategic plan: it would serve the School to have strong internal dialogue about where it wants to be in the short, medium and long term - so that the resulting strategic priorities are strongly shared and actioned by all members of the School. This compass-setting will support the School and help it to consolidate its more detailed strategic ambitions relating to reputation, impact, programmes, staffing, student numbers and specialisations, as well as leadership and succession planning.
  - b. The School's portfolio of activities is extensive, and the RG was keen to tease out what distinguishes it on the national and international landscape and sets it apart from

competitors. It is beneficial to look across the positioning and activities of competitors on a national stage, as well as potentially, peer Schools of music internationally. Articulating the distinctive identity of UCD School of Music very clearly would be helpful in terms of student recruitment as well as guiding strategic focus, and decision making about programmes, curriculum and resource allocation, as well as day to day and operational decision making, communication with internal and external stakeholders and build buy in and support.

2. **Workload and Staffing:** The RG recommend that strategically, staffing, workload and workload distribution in the School need attention. An immediate priority is enhanced administrative support relating to the School's provisions for Performing Groups. With a number of colleagues carrying very heavy loads, there is an onus on the School to ensure all members of the School can reach their research impact potential. The RG recommend an open discussion in the School about parity of research support between earlier and more established members of staff and ensuring that everyone has the time they need to progress their research. If it cannot address workload distribution, the School may need to consider how it can reduce its workload commitments, to protect strategic priorities.
3. **Student Recruitment:** Due to the loss of direct entry arising from the Bachelor of Arts Humanities, the School finds it difficult to predict and sustain the volume of core music students. Nevertheless, some urgency and strategic clarity about numbers is important. A robust School discussion about target student numbers relating to Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Music, and Masters programmes, informed by market research, would be especially helpful.
4. **Opportunity Identification:** The relevance of the UCD School of Music to the University's new strategy is noteworthy, and there is a timely opportunity within UCD Strategy 2020-2024, specifically, the themes of 'Empowering Humanity' as well as values of 'creativity', and 'engagement'. The RG recommend the School consider conducting a needs analysis and build the case, to the extent it so decides, for strategic investment in its long-term development, as well as very tangible resourcing like research scholarships, composers in residence, instrument rental schemes and above all - rehearsal and performance spaces.
5. **Recognition of Research Outputs:** The recognition of non-standard forms of research output, particularly performance related, is critical for UCD School of Music and confirmation of steps in this direction by the College and the University are to be welcomed. We strongly recommend consideration of the definition of output for music put forward by the UK REF. This should be reflected in OBRSS, research leave, recruitment, recognition and promotion.

# 1. Introduction and Overview of UCD School of Music

## *Introduction*

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a quality review of the School of Music, University College Dublin, which was undertaken on 10-13 February 2020.

## *The Review Framework*

- 1.2 Irish Universities have collectively agreed a framework for their quality review and quality improvement systems, which is consistent with both the legislative requirements of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, and international good practice (e.g. Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015). Quality reviews are carried out in academic, administrative and support service units.

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

- To monitor the quality of the student experience, and of teaching and learning.
- To monitor research activity, including management of research activity, assessing the research performance in regard to research productivity, research income, and recruiting and supporting doctoral students.
- To identify, encourage and disseminate good practice, and to identify challenges and how to address these.
- To provide an opportunity for units to test the effectiveness of their systems and procedures for monitoring and enhancing quality and standards.
- To encourage the development and enhancement of these systems, in the context of current and emerging provision.
- To inform the University's strategic planning process.
- The output report provides robust evidence for external accreditation bodies.
- The process provides an external benchmark on practice and curriculum.

- To provide public information on the University's capacity to assure the quality and standards of its awards. The University's implementation of its quality procedures enables it to demonstrate how it discharges its responsibilities for assuring the quality and standards of its awards, as required by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

### ***The Review Process***

1.4 Typically, the review model comprises four major elements:

- Preparation of a self-assessment report (SAR)
- A visit by an RG that includes UCD staff and external experts, both national and international. The site visit normally will take place over a two- or three-day period
- Preparation of a review group report that is made public
- Agreement of an action plan for improvement (quality improvement plan) based on the RG report's recommendations. The University will also monitor progress against the improvement plan

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

### ***The Review Group***

1.5 The composition of the RG for the UCD School of Music was as follows:

- Associate Professor Maeve Houlihan, UCD College of Business (Chair)
- Associate Professor Claire Gormley, UCD School of Mathematics and Statistics (Deputy Chair)
- Professor Laudan Nooshin, City, University of London
- Professor Jeremy Dibble, Durham University

1.6 The RG visited the School from 10 – 13 February 2020 and held meetings with School staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students; graduates, external stakeholders, the SAR Co-ordinating Committee; other staff of the University. The site visit schedule is included as Appendix 3. All members of the Review Group participated in all discussions and meetings.

1.7 In addition to the Self-assessment Report, the RG considered documentation provided by the School and the University during the site visit.

- 1.8 The RG approached the review process, as a process of reflection with the UCD School of Music in consultation with its key stakeholders and a chance to highlight key strengths and recommendations to support its strategic thinking and ongoing development.
- 1.9 The RG would like to thank all members of this community for their openness and willingness to reflect. It has been a pleasure to witness the life of the School in this way.
- 1.10 This RG Report has been read and approved by all members of the Review Group.

### ***Preparation of the Self-assessment Report (SAR)***

- 1.11 Following a briefing from the UCD Quality Office, a Self-assessment Report Coordinating Committee (SARCC) was established by the School.
- 1.12 The SAR was prepared in the period February 2019 – January 2020. Staff were consulted during the process with specific aspects of the report discussed in various fora. The final draft report was developed by the SAR Co-ordinating Committee reflecting the various inputs with individual members taking responsibility for chapters of the report. All staff were invited to a meeting to discuss and comment on the final draft and to contribute to the final report.

### ***The University***

- 1.13 University College Dublin (UCD) is a large and diverse university whose origins date back to 1854. The University is situated on a large modern campus about 4 km to the south of the centre of Dublin.
- 1.14 The University Strategic Plan (2020 to 2024) states that the University's mission is: "to contribute to the flourishing of Dublin, Ireland, Europe and the world through the excellence and impact of our research and scholarship, the quality of our graduates and our national and global engagement; providing a supportive community in which every member of the University is enabled to achieve their full potential."
- 1.15 The University is currently organised into six colleges and 37 schools:
- UCD College of Arts and Humanities
  - UCD College of Business
  - UCD College of Engineering and Architecture
  - UCD College of Health and Agricultural Sciences
  - UCD College of Social Sciences and Law
  - UCD College of Science

- 1.16 As one of the largest universities on the island of Ireland, UCD supports a broad, deep and rich academic community in Science, Business, Engineering, Health Sciences, Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine, Arts, Law, Celtic Studies and Human Sciences. There are currently more than 26,000 students in our UCD campus (approximately 16,300 undergraduates, 7,800 postgraduates and 2,200 Occasional and Adult Education students) registered on over 70 University degree programmes, including over 6,300 international students from more than 121 countries. The University also has over 5,400 students studying UCD degree programmes on campuses overseas.
- 1.17 UCD's School of Music sits within the College of Arts and Humanities, as one of seven Schools:
- UCD School of Art History and Cultural Policy
  - UCD School of Classics
  - UCD School of English, Drama and Film
  - UCD School of History
  - UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore
  - UCD School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics
  - UCD School of Music

### **UCD School of Music**

- 1.18 UCD's School of Music is located on the third floor of Newman Building on the Belfield campus. The School avails of additional space across campus, for example Roebuck Castle practice rooms, for practice, rehearsal and performance.
- 1.19 The School's focus is musical research and the delivery of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching.
- 1.20 The School's specialisms include musicology and ethnomusicology.
- 1.21 The School offers a range of programme offerings including Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Music (BMus), BA Humanities Degree (BAH) Music, Film & Drama, Higher Diploma in Arts, Master of Music (MMus), Master of Literature (MLitt) in Music and Culture and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). Over forty taught modules are offered in a wide variety of subject areas.
- 1.22 Following restructuring of the Bachelor of Arts and Humanities degree, direct entry to music is offered through the Music, Film and Drama pathway. Students who wish to move to a pure music degree after completing the first year of the BA, may apply to transfer to the single subject BMus, subject to meeting the entry requirements. Alternatively, following completion of the three-year BA, there is the opportunity to add a BMus degree by studying for a further year, subject to attaining a Stage 2-3 GPA of 3.2 or higher in Music.

- 1.23 The School provides leadership and a home base for a dynamic range of professionally directed ensembles that serve the wider university community. In addition to the firmly established performing groups (UCD Choral Scholars, UCD Symphony Orchestra and UCD Philharmonic Choir), the UCD Gamelan Orchestra is the first of its kind in Dublin, while the Ad Astra Chamber Orchestra, Traditional Music Workshop, Early Music Ensemble, and Composer’s Workshop are each emerging/evolving in response to demand.

## 2. Organisation and Management

### *General Comments and Context*

- 2.1 The Head of School is appointed rotationally and supported by the School Executive, all full-time staff members, the School Administrator and all required committees.
- 2.2 The Head of School contributes across leadership, academic workload, management and college and university duties, and additionally as artistic director to the Ad Astra for Performing Groups, and to the UCD Symphony Orchestra. It is noted that the Head of School role is conducted at Assistant Professor level currently and carries a very significant workload.
- 2.3 The School is operating under very lean staffing and challenging financial constraints. A challenge of being at full stretch in both staffing and resourcing is that the School is under pressure to deliver, leaving less space for strategic thinking and decision making. The School is making good use of the strategic planning process, per its detailed operational reporting, but the RG found it difficult to get a clear sense of the School’s long-term ambitions and strategic priorities in the SAR and related discussions.
- 2.4 The School demonstrates a deep understanding of the distinctive features and needs of the creative and musical arts. The UCD performing groups embody engaged creativity and have the capacity to attract stewardship and support, in the same way as sports and other high-profile areas of student and co-curricular experience. The School is therefore well positioned to set out a confident platform, articulate its ambition and build alliances, while the University, through its strategy, is well positioned to draw on and support the School more directly.
- 2.5 It is also reasonable to consider that the School has the capacity and agency to attract wider support, or, as is its wish, to collaborate on a more comprehensive strategy to accommodate performance activities in UCD.

- 2.6 The School's portfolio of activities is extensive, and the RG was keen to tease out the theme of 'identity' with the School - what distinguishes it on the national and international landscape and sets it apart from competitors and the interface between academic strengths in the ethnomusicology, musicology and performance areas.
- 2.7 The RG noted key posts in the School were not replaced at a critical time. (see also section 3).
- 2.8 The restructuring of the BA Humanities has complex implications for undergraduate enrolments, whereby the School cannot directly control entry numbers and fee income. Common to many arts and cultural organisations, operations are expensive and access to funding and revenue is not always assured. Nevertheless, the School can and must be active in its destiny and set priorities around student recruitment and opportunities to increase revenue and strategic development in partnership with the University.
- 2.9 Work has been done on the production of an outstanding student video, which very effectively captures the student experience and support for musical development in the School. The School should seek additional liaisons with student recruitment and marketing and website support in relation to communicating with external audiences.
- 2.10 The UCD School of Music seems less visible than other Schools of Music in Ireland. While students at all levels were very articulate about the strengths of the School and are excellent at communicating this message, there are signs that many students are discovering the strength of the School when here rather than in advance. As such, current students are excellent ambassadors for the School as part of marketing outreach and targeted School visits, with a view to increasing enrolments and visibility of the School's programmes to potential incoming cohorts.
- 2.11 The SAR is a well written articulation of the School's current state however the RG see opportunity in the SAR for more focus on strategy and identity, as well as an opportunity to become more forward-looking, particularly in relation to recruitment and research.

### **Commendations**

- 2.12 The UCD School of Music reflects the University's values of collegiality and collaboration and engagement.
- 2.13 The School's professional stewardship of the Performing Groups offers a support service to students and staff from across all sectors and levels of the University and is very highly commended. In particular, the Performing Groups strongly contribute to the student experience, proffering an opportunity to develop both performance and a broad suite of transversal skills.

## **Recommendations**

- 2.14 It would be useful for the School to identify and track what benchmark schools are doing at a national and international level.
- 2.15 The distinctive identity of UCD School of Music more clearly would be helpful in terms of student recruitment as well as guiding strategic focus, and decision making.
- 2.16 The RG sees an opportunity for the College of Arts and Humanities and the University to increase the enabling environment for the UCD School of Music in key areas such as finance and development, staffing, marketing and student recruitment. The School would benefit from expanded strategic support as well as itself taking a proactive approach in relation to securing and improving its future.
- 2.17 In addressing priorities for student recruitment and revenue, it is important that everyone in the School has good knowledge and understanding of the revenue and expenditure of the School and particularly, the strategic priorities, a sense of the costs of running modules and fee income associated with student registrations.
- 2.18 It would be helpful for the School to articulate a strategy for student retention.

## **3. Staff and Facilities**

### ***General Comments and Context***

#### Staff

- 3.1 UCD School of Music has a permanent staff base of 10.12 FTE: one Full Professor, one Professor, one Associate Professor, six Assistant Professors, one full-time Administrator at Senior Executive level. There are also several non-permanent staff, including one part-time artistic director, three Occasional Lecturers and one Irish Research Council (IRC) Postdoctoral Fellow, four tutors and three adjunct professors. The School has a full-time administrator, an increase from .8 since the time of last review.
- 3.2 While there have been two excellent new junior appointments (Sept 2019), there has been no replacement of a professorial post to which the School is entitled (on budgetary grounds), a number of faculty are on leave, specific arrangements, or long-term secondment, and several key modules and roles are provided by occasional lecturers on a module or hourly paid basis.

- 3.3 While it is very pleasing that there has been an increase in faculty numbers since the last review, both faculty and administrative staff are working to capacity, and in many cases above capacity. Staffing will therefore continue to be a priority to fulfil the great potential that the School has.
- 3.4 The RG noted that the secondment of the Assistant Professor of Choral Conducting to the College Office. It will be important in terms of staffing capacity that the position is adequately replaced within the School, otherwise this will add additional pressure on an already small team of staff.
- 3.5 The RG also noted that a research leave rota is in operation which is welcome.
- 3.6 In terms of diversity and inclusion, one third of the faculty are female. The staff does not reflect much diversity beyond gender and international members of faculty (3). This may be something for the School to consider, particularly in view of what seems to be a relatively diverse student body in all senses and a strong widening participation footprint.
- 3.7 As one of the smallest Schools in the University, the School does not have the benefits of economies of scale of larger Schools. UCD School of Music contributes much to its students, the University and the wider community. Without the economies of scale of larger Schools, it needs strategic investment in resources, people, space and support in order to expand its impact and fulfil its potential.
- 3.8 As outlined in the prioritised recommendations, strengthening numbers and musical scholarship is important to enhance the School's resourcing position. This is challenged by the loss of direct entry to the BMus programme. It would be helpful for the School to articulate a strategy to retain students and to convert students from BA to BMus, and consider opportunities to draw BAH students towards music, for instance by offering modules that cross over with other subject areas such as film.

### Facilities

- 3.9 The SAR raises concerns over physical space and current facilities for music. With a view to growth, UCD School of Music needs refurbishment and particularly a new space for performance activities. Dedicated practice rooms were recently added to the provision, which is very welcome, although in multiple locations and at some distance. Improvement of the quality and proximity of rehearsal and practice facilities would improve the student experience.
- 3.10 Despite space challenges, the School has ensured social and workspaces for students in the department, including a room for PhD students, which greatly helps to contribute to the sense of community.
- 3.11 The School's aspirations towards more substantial facilities in the University, comparable with those in competitor institutions, should be supported, particularly in the context of the UCD Strategic 2020-24 – 'Build world class facilities and student amenities'. There are clear benefits to

the University in terms of public profile and there is a strong case to be made for this to be seen as a long-term investment, including a review of the School's stock of instruments.

### **Commendations**

- 3.12 A highly committed team of faculty and administrative staff, who are working at high levels of teaching, research and student support excellence.
- 3.13 The School has done very well to secure new Assistant Professors (one being under the centrally funded Ad Astra Fellowship Scheme), and in turn reduce the staff: student ratio.
- 3.14 Excellent use made of all available resources, despite constraints, which greatly helps to contribute to the sense of community.

### **Recommendations**

- 3.15 The RG recommends strongly that the School is supported to ensure it has its full complement of staffing. Key areas are leadership and the professorial chair, securing continuity for Director posts across each of the professionally led performance groups, including replacing the Assistant Professor of Choral Conducting, and as noted above, administrative support for the School Office and the ensembles.
- 3.16 The RG suggests that thought be given to how to ensure appropriate support for workload balance, research support and individual career development. This matters for all members of the School, with additional needs in the case of new faculty, Head of School, and faculty returning from leave.
- 3.17 The School should also continue to build its stock of instruments. It would perhaps be particularly appropriate for UCD to possess a harp, given its logo.
- 3.18 The School is due for its facilities to be refurbished in 2021 by UCD Estates and it would be important that this is undertaken in full consultation with the School's specific needs, based on research and best practice at benchmarked peer Schools internationally, to make optimal investment with regard to acoustics, recordings, and storage and preservation of musical instruments. It also should continue to ensure its valued inclusive approach to students in relation to study space.
- 3.19 The School consider opportunities to further engage with 'University for All' and embedding widening participation initiatives within its activities.

## 4. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

### *General Comments and Context*

- 4.1 The School has found itself in a challenging position over the last few years to adapt to changing programme structures, with different teaching, learning and assessment requirements. In general, this seems to have been implemented well, and there remain certain immediate challenges and others which require some forward planning (in conjunction with the School's 'strategy' over the next five years or more).
- 4.2 Music literacy continues to be a priority across the School due to variance of musical competences at entry level.
- 4.3 In general the School has been able to shape an imaginative and broad range of core and elective modules to suit each of the programmes (BA, BMus, BAH etc.) though this must have created some considerable pressure on staff time to maintain the curriculum.
- 4.4 It is noted that the dissertation has been dropped from the third year of the BA, although it was also noted that some students write a dissertation in their other subject of the BA programme. The School needs to create opportunity within the curriculum for stage three students to engage in independent rather than directed work.
- 4.5 The participation of home students in outward mobility via the ERASMUS programme struck the Review Group as having potential to grow.

### **Commendations**

- 4.6 It has been noted that the School has widened its methods of assessment from the more traditional means of essays and written exams. There appears to be a good deal of student satisfaction in the assessment process which is carried out with fairness and proportion.
- 4.7 In addition to the 'traditional' areas of teaching - musicology and ethnomusicology - the School is to be commended for introducing the ensemble performance element in which many students (from the School and university wide) have been able to participate both from an official curricular standpoint and also from one of musical satisfaction, not least where theoretical and academic music can be practice-based. The introduction of three general elective modules in Popular Music and Culture; Music in Ireland; Post-Truth, Politics and Music have been a welcome addition and feedback to the RG was very positive.
- 4.8 Students express appreciation for the accessibility to staff and in the range of different teaching methods.

## **Recommendations**

- 4.9 It would be strongly recommended that the dissertation remains a firm part of the final year in the B.Mus. syllabus.
- 4.10 Addressing the question of music literacy, it may be something for future planning, but the School may wish to consider the possibility of one-to-one instrumental or vocal tuition perhaps even in partnership with a conservatoire (such as TU Dublin Conservatoire or the Royal Irish Academy of Music). This is likely to have further student recruitment benefits.
- 4.11 The School should consider current impediments to student uptake on the ERASMUS programme and identify opportunities to support and grow outward student mobility.

## **5. Curriculum Development and Review**

### ***General Comments and Context***

- 5.1 The UCD School of Music maintains a diverse, imaginative and inclusive curriculum and students feel well served by the quality and range of modules they are facilitated to study.
- 5.2 With the present size of the staff, not all disciplines can be covered. For example, the RG noted the absence of a lecturer in composition.
- 5.3 As with Teaching and Learning, the School has had to implement important changes to embrace different student cohorts over the last few years. In general, this seems to have been done imaginatively though some challenges remain, mainly in connection with the wide disparity of musical competences at entry level. The BMus and MMus programmes have some room for growth and development and may require more 'visibility'.
- 5.4 The performance aspects of the curriculum have opened a lot of new opportunities while still retaining the options for some students who are not performance orientated.
- 5.5 While significant funding cuts implemented in 2009/2010 have been restored in small part, current funding levels are still half what they were in 2007.

## **Commendations**

- 5.6 The curriculum offers a wide and interesting range of courses which are taught well by the staff, and this is reflected by the satisfaction expressed by the students. This also reflects the ethic of research-led teaching within the School.
- 5.7 The School has implemented in a most imaginative way a practical element into the different modules which has clearly lifted the profile of the School and given the curriculum a sharper edge and a wider range of staff competences.
- 5.8 The School is to be commended for its regular monitoring of the curriculum and for implementing changes where they have been required (notably with the BMus).
- 5.9 As highlighted earlier in the report, the new appointments have provided a welcome expansion of available modules.
- 5.10 The School is to be commended for its production of some top-quality research as reflected in its publication record. In addition, it is heartening to see a strong PhD research community within the School.

## **Recommendations**

- 5.11 The School may wish, in the future, to consider the employment of at least an occasional lecturer in composition to cater for this aspect of the curriculum where there is a student demand. This could further open opportunities for students to compose works for student and the University ensembles.
- 5.12 The School may also wish to consider the replacement for the Professorship in theory/analysis specialist as part of the future strategy.
- 5.13 The School may wish to consider various creative means of addressing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (for example, multi-cultural and gender representation) within the curriculum.
- 5.14 The fluctuation of numbers for the BMus and MMus programmes is the source of some concern. The recommendation would be to persevere with the BMus (despite the present low numbers) and try to grow the programme more consistently. The possible introduction of performance lessons and composition teaching may help bolster BMus recruitment. We recognise that this is an additional cost burden, this would potentially be offset by increased student numbers. It is to be anticipated that the new 'Music and Culture' MMus will also give rise to expansion of postgraduate numbers.
- 5.15 The School may now wish to give more attention to the provision of the library resource (updating the range of books), with more participation from staff in ordering titles.

## 6. Research Activity

### *General Comments and Context*

- 6.1 The UCD School of Music has a strong academic team of active researchers, many with an international profile, and with strengths in musicology and ethnomusicology.
- 6.2 The School has significantly improved its research profile since the last review, further enhanced by new appointments and PhD student numbers. It was particularly good for the RG to meet the two recent early career appointments who will clearly be an excellent addition to the School and its research profile.
- 6.3 Whilst there is significant activity in performance, and much potential for this work to be articulated and framed as research, this is still under development at university level. There are indications from the University that they are planning to bring in changes that would recognise practice research as part of the OBRSS system. The College has also indicated support for articulation of the impact of performing groups in the workload and as research domains, and this is to be very welcomed.
- 6.4 Undergraduate students are encouraged to think about research and research issues early on. The students we met were well aware of the research activities of faculty, had attended research seminars and were clearly thinking about future study.
- 6.5 The SAR document includes plenty of evidence of research activity, both within the School and externally facing. It could be helpful for the School to formally articulate the approach to research leadership, research strategy, overall research culture, the link between research and teaching, PhD student support, and knowledge transfer activities. Whilst the overall research culture is strong, the School may benefit from a more strategic approach to its research activity.
- 6.6 Leading on from the above, whilst the overall list of publications since 2013 is impressive, the RG noted what seems to be an imbalance in the research profiles of individual members of the team. This may reflect the kinds of administrative/service roles that staff have taken on, as well as factors such as caring leave. Nevertheless, the disjuncture is quite noticeable and also has a gender dimension. This raised questions about (a) whether the admirable level of support for students is taking place at the expense of personal research development for some staff; (b) what support mechanisms are in place to ensure that staff who take on service roles and/or who take caring leave are able to maintain their research activity; (c) how the service roles are allocated.

- 6.7 The RG noted the University's sabbatical leave policy. It is important to ensure that staff can avail of this and to find a sustainable approach for the School; given the small size of the School and constraints on having more than one member of staff away at any one time.
- 6.8 The workload allocation seems to favour senior staff who already have strong research profiles. This has the potential to create an inconsistency across the School and has implications in terms of personal staff development, promotion prospects and, ultimately, retention.

### **Commendations**

- 6.9 This is a highly scholarly School, with research led teaching, research active staff, a team of diverse scholars with several internationally esteemed researchers. The recent junior appointments give hope for the future.
- 6.10 Students at all levels convey cognisance of the possibilities of their subject, a curiosity and sense of identifying questions, and for UG students the confidence to imagine themselves as future masters and PhD students and scholars.
- 6.11 The attendance of undergraduate students at the School's seminars and their involvement in the subsequent discussions and social events is admirable and supports an understanding of research in the School's undergraduate cohort.
- 6.12 The UCD School of Music has a strong ensemble performance culture which has the potential to contribute to the overall research culture, including in relation to impact work.

### **Recommendations**

- 6.13 It is essential that the College and the University create a means of recognition for non-standard forms of output, particularly performance related, as is intrinsic to music. We strongly recommend consideration of the definition of output for music put forward by the UK REF. This should be reflected in OBRSS, research leave, recruitment, recognition and promotion. It seems that the discussions on this have already begun at the University level, and it is imperative that UCD School of Music are involved in this discussion.
- 6.14 In parallel with this, we recommend that the School looks at examples of good practice elsewhere in relation to performance research (perhaps from the UK REF) to identify ways of framing current activities as research, and in particular articulating the research component of performance activities.
- 6.15 The RG recommends that the School adopts a more strategic approach to research activity, ideally a formal research strategy, led by a faculty member with dedicated responsibility for this, and that this will help address some of the issues above, including in relation to practice research and

research funding applications. We acknowledge that this will be an additional burden on an already-overstretched team, but we believe that it will provide focus and be seen favorably elsewhere in the University.

- 6.16 The School should consider how it supports the research activities of younger staff/those taking on service or with caring roles.
- 6.17 The School should consider drawing up a transparent sabbatical policy/rota going forward and ensure staff know when they are next due sabbatical leave.

## **7. Management of Quality and Enhancement**

### ***General Comments and Context***

- 7.1 The School and its stakeholders engaged thoroughly and enthusiastically with the quality review.
- 7.2 A culture of openness, transparency and collaboration is fostered by the close mixing of the staff and student bodies due to the small size and compact location of the School. These features in particular serve as an unofficial communication flow that facilitate management of quality and enhancement, in particular of curriculum, which is also officially addressed in trimesterly School meetings.
- 7.3 The School uses several approaches to evaluate the quality of the School's outputs, including external examiner reports and UCD's online student feedback system. Staff-student committee meetings occur typically once a trimester and involve a notably broad cohort of representative students.
- 7.4 Staff engagement with UCD Teaching and Learning programme offerings and the nominations for and winning of Teaching and Learning Awards is demonstrative of commitment to quality and enhancement of teaching and learning practice in the School.
- 7.5 External stakeholders commended the School on the quality, scale and reach of the School-supported UCD Performing Groups. Notably these groups are professionally led. The quality and array of transversal skills developed by the School in its students in both academic and performing aspects were also noted by external stakeholders who met with the RG.
- 7.6 Management of curriculum quality and enhancement is achieved through informal discussions and through a Head of School issued invitation to suggest new modules.

- 7.7 Current process for assurance of exam quality, grading and assessment places considerable burden on the Head of School. The RG recommend consideration be given to the potential of academic programme directorships within the School.
- 7.8 Undergraduate students spoke of high levels of faculty dedication particularly noting their approachability and willingness to communicate. Both in person and on feedback forms, students are generally very satisfied with their experience of taught modules. In particular, the research led aspect of the School's teaching was apparent through the students' testimonies.
- 7.9 Postgraduate students expressed a high level of satisfaction with their chosen master's or PhD programmes, and again noted the willingness of non-supervisors to support and discuss their research and interests. Doctoral students are monitored through Research Studies Panel meetings and transfer assessments in line with recommended University procedures. Challenges in populating Research Studies Panels given the School's small size was noted by the RG.

### **Commendations**

- 7.10 The responsiveness of the School administrator and the agile documentation of the School's processes are crucial resources which strongly contribute to the School's management of quality and enhancement.
- 7.11 The School is commended for its commitment to quality and enhancement of teaching and learning practice. (see also section 4).
- 7.12 The quality of the School's support for its students at undergraduate and postgraduate level is exceptional, enhanced by a welcoming, supportive and knowledgeable School Office, dedicated space for research postgraduate students and strong dedication to the Performing Groups.
- 7.13 The variety of assessment strategies recently introduced to account for varying learning styles is commendable and should continue to be encouraged. (see also section 4).

### **Recommendations**

- 7.14 Clarification of the role specification of the School Head of Teaching and Learning would streamline workloads and allow for a coherent portfolio of work developing the Teaching and Learning aspects of the School.
- 7.15 Processes to ensure exam quality should be broadened to include peer scrutiny of exam papers by colleagues (beyond the Head of School) and dual checking of exam results.

- 7.16 The RG recommends consideration be given to appointing an academic director for each degree programme, with each programme having oversight by its degree programme director at exam boards and in all aspects of programme stewardship.

## **8. Support Services**

### ***General Comments and Context***

- 8.1 The School avails of a wide variety of support services provided by the University and maintains good relationships with key partners including the Programme Office and the College Finance Manager.
- 8.2 The Library is a key support for the School's research activity. The replacement of the School Library liaison with a College level liaison has impacted the level of support, specifically on the collection of resources available for postgraduate students' and faculty members' research. The Library's recently initiated Books Curation Project should go some way to improve the current collection.
- 8.3 Staff noted good support from the UCD Research when preparing European grant applications, although also noted increased need given the increasing number of EU applications.
- 8.4 The School is responsible for the facilities in its own teaching areas. The nature, extent and suitability of space is vital for the teaching activities of the School and cultivates its community ethos. In the same way that labs are central in science, the fit-for-purpose nature of spaces for instruments and technology are essential to the UCD School of Music, and acquisition, replacement costs and maintenance of the required instruments and technologies (e.g. pianos, speakers) places a specific burden on the School finances and administrators, that might be more fully recognised and supported at the College and the University level.

### **Commendations**

- 8.5 The School has established and fostered good relations with a range of university supports and service providers and in turn plays a number of very active roles in the life of the University community.

## **Recommendations**

- 8.6 The absence of a School Library Liaison is regrettable and less convenient than the previous model. The School should endeavour to highlight the challenges they face in this regard at suitable college and university fora.
- 8.7 Recognition of the quality of the research and performance produced by the School requires stronger interaction and discourse between the School and the UCD Research. These discussions should consider the OBRSS and the Faculty Development Framework specifications.
- 8.8 Focused discussions should be held with the UCD Careers Network to assist in highlighting to students and potential students the array of career options available to them on completion of a School of Music degree, as well as the wide range of transversal skills developed by music students that makes them highly employable, as recognised by employers. The School's own alumni may be a key source of career mentoring and guidance for students directly and on the School's website.
- 8.9 The University and UCD Estates might take specific account of the specific impact of replacement costs and maintenance of the required instruments and technologies on the School finances and administrators.
- 8.10 Undergraduate and taught postgraduate student recruitment requires time and investment but should produce fruitful returns. Further work with the College marketing teams to improve visibility of the BA, BMus, BAH and MMus programmes both prior to arriving and on arrival to UCD is recommended.

## **9. Collaborative Educational Provision**

### ***General Comments and Context***

- 9.1 While the SAR had no comment on collaborative educational provision, the Review Group discussed the School's provision with staff during the site visit.
- 9.2 The School has student exchange partnerships with international schools however outward exchange is low.

### **Commendations**

- 9.3 The School is also networked into a wider community and plays an active role, for example in hosting conferences and journals internationally.

- 9.4 While term and longer exchanges are not a major feature of student experience in the School, there has been success with week-long exchanges for both students and staff.

### **Recommendations**

- 9.5 The School might increase dialogue with UCD Global about international exchange and student recruitment, as well as inbound study abroad opportunities, and vice versa, with a view to identifying opportunities to grow and diversify the student base and revenue streams. It is conceivable that the School could harness its ethnomusicology and other specialisms to attract specialist or more general international summer school audiences.

## **10. External Relations**

### ***General Comments and Context***

- 10.1 As highlights throughout this report, the School has a very wide range of external connections and activities across the University and outside, predominantly through the Performing Groups.
- 10.2 Members of the School foster and play leadership roles in a broad range of external activities including national and international learned societies, cultural institutions, serving on editorial and advisory boards and in external examiner roles.
- 10.3 The School has a strong and enthusiastic network of advocacy and support in its alumni base.

### **Commendations**

- 10.4 The School's stewardship, professional leadership and initiation of the University's Performing Groups is highly commendable, nourishing the student experience and providing society with an inimitable resource.
- 10.5 UCD School of Music curates a very appealing seminar series in Musicology that showcases the School's expertise to a wide audience.
- 10.6 The School is represented on, and currently chairs, the Council for Heads of Music in Higher Education. Inter-institutional collaboration of this nature is to be commended for embracing the strategic interdependence of the sector and the need for leadership.

## **Recommendations**

- 10.7 The School might consider the scope for mutual collaborations and partnerships with individuals and organisations in its alumni base and network – such as RTE Lyric, Music Network, National Concert Hall and other venues, with regard to student career mentoring, role modelling, advocacy and strategic partnership. Looking across Music School provision in Ireland and internationally, associations with, for example preeminent musicians, composers or groups, can prove mutually effective in forging distinctive identity and enhancing provision, profile and impact.

## UCD School of Music – Full List of Commendations and Recommendations

### 2. Organisation and Management

#### Commendations

- 2.12 The UCD School of Music reflects the University's values of collegiality and collaboration and engagement.
- 2.13 The School's professional stewardship of the Performing Groups offers a support service to students and staff from across all sectors and levels of the University and is very highly commended. In particular, the Performing Groups strongly contribute to the student experience, proffering an opportunity to develop both performance and a broad suite of transversal skills.

#### Recommendations

- 2.14 It would be useful for the School to identify and track what benchmark schools are doing at a national and international level.
- 2.15 The distinctive identity of UCD School of Music more clearly would be helpful in terms of student recruitment as well as guiding strategic focus, and decision making.
- 2.16 The RG sees an opportunity for the College of Arts and Humanities and the University to increase the enabling environment for the UCD School of Music in key areas such as finance and development, staffing, marketing and student recruitment. The School would benefit from expanded strategic support as well as itself taking a proactive approach in relation to securing and improving its future.
- 2.17 In addressing priorities for student recruitment and revenue, it is important that everyone in the School has good knowledge and understanding of the revenue and expenditure of the School and particularly, the strategic priorities, a sense of the costs of running modules and fee income associated with student registrations.
- 2.18 It would be helpful for the School to articulate a strategy for student retention.

### **3. Staff and Facilities**

#### **Commendations**

- 3.12 A highly committed team of faculty and administrative staff, who are working at high levels of teaching, research and student support excellence.
- 3.13 The School has done very well to secure new Assistant Professors (one being under the centrally funded Ad Astra Fellowship Scheme), and in turn reduce the staff: student ratio.
- 3.14 Excellent use made of all available resources, despite constraints, which greatly helps to contribute to the sense of community.

#### **Recommendations**

- 3.15 The RG recommends strongly that the School is supported to ensure it has its full complement of staffing. Key areas are leadership and the professorial chair, securing continuity for Director posts across each of the professionally led performance groups, including replacing the Assistant Professor of Choral Conducting, and as noted above, administrative support for the School Office and the ensembles.
- 3.16 The RG suggests that thought be given to how to ensure appropriate support for workload balance, research support and individual career development. This matters for all members of the School, with additional needs in the case of new faculty, Head of School, and faculty returning from leave.
- 3.17 The School should also continue to build its stock of instruments. It would perhaps be particularly appropriate for UCD to possess a harp, given its logo.
- 3.18 The School is due for its facilities to be refurbished in 2021 by UCD Estates and it would be important that this is undertaken in full consultation with the School's specific needs, based on research and best practice at benchmarked peer Schools internationally, to make optimal investment with regard to acoustics, recordings, and storage and preservation of musical instruments. It also should continue to ensure its valued inclusive approach to students in relation to study space.
- 3.19 The School consider opportunities to further engage with 'University for All' and embedding widening participation initiatives within its activities.

## 4. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

### Commendations

- 4.6 It has been noted that the School has widened its methods of assessment from the more traditional means of essays and written exams. There appears to be a good deal of student satisfaction in the assessment process which is carried out with fairness and proportion.
- 4.7 In addition to the 'traditional' areas of teaching - musicology and ethnomusicology - the School is to be commended for introducing the ensemble performance element in which many students (from the School and university wide) have been able to participate both from an official curricular standpoint and also from one of musical satisfaction, not least where theoretical and academic music can be practice-based. The introduction of three general elective modules in Popular Music and Culture; Music in Ireland; Post-Truth, Politics and Music have been a welcome addition and feedback to the RG was very positive.
- 4.8 Students express appreciation for the accessibility to staff and in the range of different teaching methods.

### Recommendations

- 4.9 It would be strongly recommended that the dissertation remains a firm part of the final year in the B.Mus. syllabus.
- 4.10 Addressing the question of music literacy, it may be something for future planning, but the School may wish to consider the possibility of one-to-one instrumental or vocal tuition perhaps even in partnership with a conservatoire (such as TU Dublin Conservatoire or the Royal Irish Academy of Music). This is likely to have further student recruitment benefits.
- 4.11 The School should consider current impediments to student uptake on the ERASMUS programme and identify opportunities to support and grow outward student mobility.

## 5. Curriculum Development and Review

### Commendations

- 5.6 The curriculum offers a wide and interesting range of courses which are taught well by the staff, and this is reflected by the satisfaction expressed by the students. This also reflects the ethic of research-led teaching within the School.
- 5.7 The School has implemented in a most imaginative way a practical element into the different modules which has clearly lifted the profile of the School and given the curriculum a sharper edge and a wider range of staff competences.
- 5.8 The School is to be commended for its regular monitoring of the curriculum and for implementing changes where they have been required (notably with the BMus).
- 5.9 As highlighted earlier in the report, the new appointments have provided a welcome expansion of available modules.
- 5.10 The School is to be commended for its production of some top-quality research as reflected in its publication record. In addition, it is heartening to see a strong PhD research community within the School.

### Recommendations

- 5.11 The School may wish, in the future, to consider the employment of at least an occasional lecturer in composition to cater for this aspect of the curriculum where there is a student demand. This could further open opportunities for students to compose works for student and the University ensembles.
- 5.12 The School may also wish to consider the replacement for the Professorship in theory/analysis specialist as part of the future strategy.
- 5.13 The School may wish to consider various creative means of addressing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (for example, multi-cultural and gender representation) within the curriculum.
- 5.14 The fluctuation of numbers for the BMus and MMus programmes is the source of some concern. The recommendation would be to persevere with the BMus (despite the present low numbers) and try to grow the programme more consistently. The possible introduction of performance lessons and composition teaching may help bolster BMus recruitment. We recognise that this is an additional cost burden, this would potentially be offset by increased student numbers. It is to be anticipated that the new 'Music and Culture' MMus will also give rise to expansion of postgraduate numbers.

- 5.15 The School may now wish to give more attention to the provision of the library resource (updating the range of books), with more participation from staff in ordering titles.

## **6. Research Activity**

### **Commendations**

- 6.9 This is a highly scholarly School, with research led teaching, research active staff, a team of diverse scholars with several internationally esteemed researchers. The recent junior appointments give hope for the future.
- 6.10 Students at all levels convey cognisance of the possibilities of their subject, a curiosity and sense of identifying questions, and for UG students the confidence to imagine themselves as future masters and PhD students and scholars.
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already-overstretched team, but we believe that it will provide focus and be seen favorably elsewhere in the University.

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## **7. Management of Quality and Enhancement**

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## **9. Collaborative Educational Provision**

### **Commendations**

- 9.3 The School is also networked into a wider community and plays an active role, for example in hosting conferences and journals internationally.

- 9.4 While term and longer exchanges are not a major feature of student experience in the School, there has been success with week-long exchanges for both students and staff.

### **Recommendations**

- 9.5 The School might increase dialogue with UCD Global about international exchange and student recruitment, as well as inbound study abroad opportunities, and vice versa, with a view to identifying opportunities to grow and diversify the student base and revenue streams. It is conceivable that the School could harness its ethnomusicology and other specialisms to attract specialist or more general international summer school audiences.

## **10. External Relations**

### **Commendations**

- 10.4 The School's stewardship, professional leadership and initiation of the University's Performing Groups is highly commendable, nourishing the student experience and providing society with an inimitable resource.
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### **Recommendations**

- 10.7 The School might consider the scope for mutual collaborations and partnerships with individuals and organisations in its alumni base and network – such as RTE Lyric, Music Network, National Concert Hall and other venues, with regard to student career mentoring, role modelling, advocacy and strategic partnership. Looking across Music School provision in Ireland and internationally, associations with, for example preeminent musicians, composers or groups, can prove mutually effective in forging distinctive identity and enhancing provision, profile and impact.

## UCD SCHOOL OF MUSIC – QUALITY REVIEW GROUP REPORT RESPONSE

Faculty and staff of the School of Music welcomed the opportunity to deliberate and report to the Quality Review Group and are extremely grateful to all members of the team for their high level of engagement.

The site visit was a particularly valuable exercise, with the in- person meetings – now seen in retrospect as something of a luxury – affording individuals a chance to focus on their primary concerns.

The panel was well informed and expressed genuine interest in the work that we carry out in the School. The result was a candid and sympathetic interaction between the panel, staff, students, graduates, and other stakeholders.

The Review Group should be commended for generating such an accommodating and constructive atmosphere during their brief time with us on site. We would like to consider the individual recommendations before summarising the approaches we have already begun to pursue and shall continue to pursue through the QIP process and beyond.

The following relates to the numbered points under **Prioritised Recommendations for Improvement** in the Review Group Report.

**Recommendation 1** The current resourcing framework at the School means it is thinly spread and trying to provide a full service on lean staffing, financing and administrative support. The RG recognize the challenging financial backdrop, and this raises the need for increased strategic prioritisation. While the School is making strong efforts in relation to operational planning, RG found it difficult to get a clear sense in the SAR and related discussions of the School's long-term strategic priorities and intent. The RG recommends the following in relation to strategic planning and development:

- a. Develop a strategic plan: it would serve the School to have strong internal dialogue about where it wants to be in the short, medium, and long term - so that the resulting strategic priorities are strongly shared and actioned by all members of the School. This compass-setting will support the School and help it to consolidate its more detailed strategic ambitions relating to reputation, impact, programmes, staffing, student numbers and specialisations, as well as leadership and succession planning.

- b. The School's portfolio of activities is extensive, and the RG was keen to tease out what distinguishes it on the national and international landscape and sets it apart from competitors. It is beneficial to look across the positioning and activities of competitors on a national stage, as well as potentially, peer Schools of music internationally. Articulating the distinctive identity of UCD School of Music very clearly would be helpful in terms of student recruitment as well as guiding strategic focus, and decision making about programmes, curriculum and resource allocation, as well as day to day and operational decision making, communication with internal and external stakeholders and build buy in and support.

**Response:** A clear theme that emerges throughout the RG report is a need for the School to nurture a distinctive identity via benchmarking exercises and strategic planning, which in turn impacts upon point 3 on student recruitment. This is a reminder that strategic thinking cannot succeed while centred on purely quantitative parameters (FTEs, retention rates, amount of external funding, etc), as content and quality also need to be addressed. It would be advantageous to determine what makes us stand out in both an Irish and International context and commence to develop a plan from there. This approach has already resulted in a successful rebranding of our MMus programme, now called *MMus Music & Culture*, which foregrounds the unique specialisms of our faculty while permitting an Irish focus. In 2020–21, we have eight students enrolled on this programme – our largest cohort for several years – four of whom are non-EU (from the US, China and Uruguay). It is clear that this deeply reflective process shall benefit all our degree programmes, and a similar review shall be applied in the coming months to the BA/BMus degrees, as part of an overall series of strategic planning meetings, which have not occurred in the School for around five years.

**Recommendation 2** Workload and Staffing: The RG recommend that strategically, staffing, workload and workload distribution in the School need attention. An immediate priority is enhanced administrative support relating to the School's provisions for Performing Groups. With a number of colleagues carrying very heavy loads, there is an onus on the School to ensure all members of the School can reach their research impact potential. The RG recommend an open discussion in the School about parity of research support between earlier and more established members of staff and ensuring that everyone has the time they need to progress their research. If it cannot address workload distribution, the School may need to consider how it can reduce its workload commitments, to protect strategic priorities.

**Response:** At this point, we should highlight what appears to be a misunderstanding in the report on the Secondment of the Assistant Professor of Choral Conducting which has now been extended to 2024. To clarify, the Principal of the College of Arts & Humanities is assigning the Assistant Professor of Choral Conducting as a lead on the College *Engaged Creativity Strategy*, with his duties at School level restricted to the two annual 5-credit *UCD Choral Scholars* modules and research input only. The School shall receive a €6k teaching buyout, which we had argued is inadequate for the potential contribution to curricular and administrative duties

of a full-time lecturer, but this arrangement was ultimately accepted.

Support for administration of the School's performing groups has been an ongoing concern, with the burden for all groups (not including the *UCD Choral Scholars*) sitting with individual directors and the School Manager. A document on how the other main groups (*Ad Astra Chamber Orchestra*, *UCD Composition Ensemble*, *UCD Gamelan Orchestra*, *UCD Philharmonic Choir*, *UCD Symphony Orchestra*) are funded and managed is currently being assessed by the UCD Registrar.

While further faculty appointments are unlikely at this time due to depressed revenues in the School, we have noted that there is currently no full-time Music Theorist/Analyst in any Irish university faculty. The desire to hire a composer has been assuaged by the creation of the *UCD Composition Ensemble* module by Dr Peter Moran, who also directs the *UCD Gamelan Orchestra*. And in recent days, a proposal to create a College Composer-in-Residence under the auspices of the *Creative Futures Academy* initiative has been approved, although the funding (€18k) is only being guaranteed for 2021, subject to review at the end of the current academic year.

**Recommendation 3** Student Recruitment: Due to the loss of direct entry arising from the Bachelor of Arts Humanities, the School finds it difficult to predict and sustain the volume of core music students. Nevertheless, some urgency and strategic clarity about numbers is important. A robust School discussion about target student numbers relating to Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Music and Masters programmes, informed by market research, would be especially helpful.

**Response:** Concerns about the unpredictability of student numbers has been exacerbated by the current pandemic situation. Music has been especially impacted thanks to measures that were designed to – and had succeeded in – generating higher enrolment figures, namely the creation of General Electives with a particular appeal to International Students (*Music in Ireland*, *Popular Music & Culture*) and the larger performing groups (*UCD Philharmonic Choir*, *UCD Symphony Orchestra*). The former has greatly suffered due to a massive decline in international student numbers and the latter because of specific gathering restrictions in the field of music performance, for example, just 45 students took the choir module in the Autumn Trimester, when figures for the previous four teaching trimesters were 120, 118, 88 and 98. These modules also suffered because of a directive introduced in 2019 stipulating that 1<sup>st</sup> year students could not take electives in the Autumn Trimester.

A realistic review of targets shall be central to our strategic planning meetings in the New Year. It is noted that perceptions of the School change after students have already joined, so communicating our strengths externally should be central to our recruitment plans.

**Recommendation 4** Opportunity Identification: The relevance of the UCD School of Music to the University's new strategy is noteworthy, and there is a timely opportunity within UCD Strategy 2020-2024, specifically, the themes of 'Empowering Humanity' as well as values of 'creativity', and 'engagement'. The RG recommend the School consider conducting a needs analysis and build the case, to the extent it so decides, for strategic investment in its long-term development, as well as very tangible resourcing like research scholarships, composers in residence, instrument rental schemes and above all - rehearsal and performance spaces.

**Response:** Several research themes and strategies at University and College level can be seen as relevant to the work of the School, and this is something that we are keen to harness. A case for strategic development and investment does need to be built, and this may occur in tandem with the proposed (though delayed) refurbishment of the School's teaching and office spaces. New Teaching Council guidelines, effective from January 2023, have isolated two areas that may require financial backing if the School's programmes are to remain compliant and relevant, namely Composition and Music Technology.

**Recommendation 5** Recognition of Research Outputs: The recognition of non-standard forms of research output, particularly performance related, is critical for UCD School of Music and confirmation of steps in this direction by the College and the University are to be welcomed. We strongly recommend consideration of the definition of output for music put forward by the UK REF. This should be reflected in OBRSS, research leave, recruitment, recognition, and promotion.

**Response:** The School is keen to embrace and promote non-standard forms of research particularly in the realm of performance – for recognition in the context of output, research leave and promotion. Partly driven by the *Engaged Creativity* Research Strand, there does seem to be an appetite for change, and a document on practice-based metrics was presented by the College of Arts & Humanities to the Vice-President for Research in May of this year.

Since the site visit in February, some recommendations were enacted almost immediately, notably the creation of an Undergraduate Programmes Director and a Graduate Programmes Director. These posts were wedded to existing College-level Committee roles, Teaching & Learning and Graduate Board respectively. Additional support for the School has been sought, particularly for its performing groups, and the School Administrator was successfully promoted to School Manager, following a Job-Sizing Framework application in April.

The School understands that a QIP is to be submitted in late March 2021, and discussions surrounding this shall involve most of the personnel who prepared the SAR. We are planning for a series of strategic meetings in the Spring to discuss issues such as focusing a clear School identity, student recruitment and retention, curriculum expansion, funding and resourcing, research, and workloads.



**Review Site Visit Timetable  
UCD School of Music**

**Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup>–Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2020**

***Pre-Visit Briefing Prior to Site Visit – Monday 10 February 2020***

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 17.00-19.00 | RG meet to review preliminary issues and to confirm work schedule and assignment of tasks for the site visit – <u>RG and UCD Quality Office only</u> |
| 19.30       | Dinner hosted for the RG by the UCD Registrar and Deputy President – <u>RG, UCD Deputy President and UCD Quality Office only</u>                     |

***Day 1: Tuesday 11 February 2020***

***Venue J307: Newman Building***

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>09.00-09.30</b> | Private meeting of Review Group   |
| <b>09.30-10.15</b> | Review Group to meet with College Principal Arts and Humanities Nominee |
| <b>10.15-10.30</b> | Break   |
| <b>10.30-11.30</b> | Review Group meet with Head of School                                   |
| <b>11.30-11.45</b> | Break   |
| <b>11.45-12.15</b> | Review Group meet with SAR Coordinating Committee                       |
| <b>12.15-12.30</b> | Review Group review key observations                                    |

<b>12.30-13.15.</b>	RG Working Lunch
<b>13.15-14.15</b>	Review Group meet with Directors of Performing Ensembles
<b>14.15-14.30</b>	Break – Review Group review key observations
14.30-14.50	RG Meet with School Administrator
<b>14.50-15.00</b>	Break – Review Group review key observations
<b>15.00-16.00</b>	Review Group meet with representative group of academic staff – primary focus on Teaching and Learning, Curriculum issues
<b>16.00-16.15</b>	Break
<b>16.15-17.00</b>	Review Group meeting with representative group of staff on Research
<b>17.00-18.00</b>	Tour of facilities
<b>18.00-18.15</b>	Review Group break for key observations
<b>18.15</b>	Review Group depart

## Day 2: Wednesday 12 February 2020

### *Venue J307: Newman Building*

09.15-09.55	Review Group meet relevant support service representatives.
09.55-10:10	Break
10.10-11.00	RG meet with a representative group of postgraduate students (taught and research) and recent graduates (PG and UG)
11.00-11.15	Break
11.15-12.15	Review Group meet with employers of graduates/external stakeholders.
12.15-12.20	Break
12.20 – 12.50	RG meet with HR Partner
12.50 – 13-00	Break – Review Group review key observations
13.00-14.00	Working lunch – RG meeting with representative group of undergraduate students
14.00-14.15	Review Group private meeting - review key observations
14.15-15.00	Review Group meet with College Finance Manager and Head of School to outline School's financial situation.
15.00-15.15	Break
15.15-16.00	Review Group meet with recently appointed members of staff
16.00 -16.10	Review Group private meeting - review key observations
16.10-16.30	Break and transfer for private meetings
16.30-17.30	Review Group available for private individual meetings with staff
17.30-18.00	Review Group private meeting – review key observations/findings
18.00	Review Group depart

**Day 3: Thursday 13 February 2020**

**Venue: J307: Newman Building**

<b>09.00-09.30</b>	Review Group continue preparing draft Review Group Report
<b>09.30-10.00</b>	RG meet with representative of Ad Astra Programme -Director, Ad Astra Academy for the Performing Arts
<b>10.00-11.00</b>	Review Group continue preparing draft Review Group Report
<b>11.00-11.15</b>	Break
<b>11.15-12.15</b>	Review Group continue preparing draft Review Group Report
<b>12.15-13.00</b>	Working lunch - RG and Quality Office representative
<b>13.00-13.30</b>	Review Group finalise first draft of Review Group Report and feedback commendations / recommendations
<b>13.30-13.45</b>	RG meet with College Principal Nominee to feedback initial outline commendations and recommendations
<b>13.45-15.15</b>	Review Group finalise first draft of Review Group Report and feedback commendations / recommendations
<b>15.15-15.30</b>	Break
<b>15.30-15.45</b>	Review Group meet with Head of School to feedback initial outline commendations and recommendations
<b>16.00- 16.20</b>	Exit presentation to all available staff of the unit summarising the principal commendations/recommendations of the Review Group
<b>16:30</b>	Review Group depart