



EUA/HEA/IUQB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

University College Dublin Progress Report - September 2005-March 2006

The major areas of significant progress during the reporting period relevant to the institutional review are:

1) UCD Academic Restructuring

The new streamlined academic structures at UCD were implemented on 1st September 2005 so that the university is now organised into five Colleges, with significant devolved responsibilities to oversee the management and development of their 35 constituent Schools. These new structures operated successfully during the reporting period. The Principals of College, as well as being the senior academic officer for the College, are also members of the Senior Management Team. A monthly forum of Heads of School with the Senior Management Team ensures effective communication and debate on significant strategic issues. The successful implementation of these new structures has important implications for the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the academic and administrative activities of the universities.

2) UCD Horizons

A cohort of over 4,000 students enrolled to the first year of a fully modular, semesterised credit accumulation curriculum, branded as UCD Horizons. The key achievements included.

- All students registered and enrolled to their module portfolio on-line with dedicated telephone support.
- All students were afforded additional flexibility and choice within their curriculum, including the freedom to choose up to two (of twelve) modules as elective modules.
- All modules were accompanied by detailed module descriptors (available on-line) based on a learning outcomes approach.
- Significant incremental progress was made in the introduction of aligned and alternative assessments.
- A new grading and grade-point average system was introduced for first year students in all programmes.
- A successful semester 1 examination diet was delivered, and grades returned accurately and on time early in the second semester.

- Separate formal reviews of semester 1 enrolment showed very high levels of student satisfaction and staff commitment but also reported significant increases in administrative workload and flaws and inefficiencies within the system which are now being addressed.

The success of this first phase of modularisation led to a decision to accelerate completion of its implementation. The curriculum for all stages of most programmes has now been described in a modular format for implementation in September 2006.

3) Graduate Schools

Given the importance of postgraduate education and research and the development of the 4th level, UCD has established five Graduate Schools, one in each of its five Colleges. The Graduate Schools were established in January 2006, and have planned significant changes in taught and research postgraduate provision at UCD. Proposals and implementation plans have been put in place for the following, with implementation beginning in September 2006.

- Modularisation of taught postgraduate courses, including full implementation of ECTS credit structures, the NQAI qualifications framework, and other aspects of the Bologna process.
- The development of the structured PhD programmes.
- Reform of supervision arrangements for research doctoral students.
- Simplification and devolution of administrative processes supporting postgraduate activity.

IN TERMS OF MISSION

- 1) *"When formulating the new strategic plan, consider carefully how to position UCD for its specific role in Ireland, eg taking into consideration the disciplinary balance of the university, the type of higher education to be provided, and shifting the balance from undergraduate to postgraduate, adult and international education."*

The UCD Strategic Plan 2005-2008 has been developed and agreed, and is now being implemented. The recommendations of the review were taken into account in the preparation of the strategic plan. The formation of Graduate Schools represents a significant development in a shift from undergraduate to postgraduate education.

IN TERMS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- 1) *"Increase the capacity of the Centre for Teaching and Learning in its existing core functions and also in developing a more important research component, to enable UCD to identify and build on best practice."*

The staffing of the Centre for Teaching and Learning has been stabilised at three full time academic staff. The objective for the next reporting period is to increase the links between the Centre for Teaching and Learning and the Academic Policy and Programmes Development Unit of the Registrar's Office and with the proposed institutional research function.

- 2) *"Use the recent experience from a number of academic units in undertaking comprehensive curricula reviews and introducing new teaching and learning approaches to foster such activities on a wider basis across the university."*

The completion of the UCD Horizons modularisation process has included a significant programme of curricular reform, including further focus on learning outcomes and aligned assessment approaches. This has built upon previous curricular review processes.

- 3) *"Encourage a renewed focus on the outcomes of the learning process, not just on the teaching inputs, across all units."*

The entire undergraduate curriculum at UCD is now described in a modular format, with clear learning outcomes for each module.

- 4) *"Ensure that the modular structure and ECTS are introduced rapidly and coherently across the entire university."*

A modular structure, fully described in terms of ECTS credits and Bologna/NQAI levels has been prepared and will apply to all undergraduate programmes and 80% of postgraduate programmes from September 2006.

- 5) *"Implement a common approach across the institution for the student evaluation of courses."*

The Teaching and Learning Board have considered a number of approaches to student evaluation of courses. A considered analysis has led to the conclusion that a simplistic approach involving the widespread use of standardised student feedback questionnaires is not valuable. The Teaching and Learning Board with input from international experts are developing a more comprehensive model with a view to piloting a university approach in the Spring semester 2007.

IN TERMS OF RESEARCH

- 1) *"Articulate UCD's policies regarding research more clearly and develop a coherent research management system."*

The Research Management System project has begun its implementation phase with three specific workstreams.

- i. RMS01 Research portal and researcher profiles (personal web pages)
- ii. RMS03 Research grants database
- iii. RMS04 Research administration process redesign

2) *"Increase the number of research students and fellows."*

UCD has engaged in significant capacity building to underpin the recruitment of research students and fellows including:

- The establishment of UCD Graduate Schools.
- Significant marketing and recruitment activity at postgraduate level.
- A greater awareness of researcher needs in UCD Human Resources policy and procedure.

A project has been established to review and redefine the researcher career structure at UCD.

3) *"Encourage better cooperation with the dynamic Irish and international industrial activity in the immediate hinterland of UCD."*

The Vice President for Innovation and Corporate Partnerships is engaged in an ongoing programme to building stronger links with industrial partners. Notable achievements include:

- The further development of Nova UCD and Belfield Innovation Park.
- The formal establishment of specific university-industry linkages including a bio-therapeutic drug discovery unit established by Wyeth Research at the UCD Conway Institute.

4) *"Link the monitoring and evaluation initiatives for the new research institutes to the university-wide QA/QI process."*

A specific review of Research Institutes has been launched. They will then be mainstreamed into the university quality processes.

IN TERMS OF GOVERNANCE

1) *"Explore options for adapting both the size and composition of the Governing Authority, in order to provide the university with more suitable strategic direction and oversight."*

There is no further action on this recommendation over that reported in the last period.

2) *"Ensure an effective and functional Academic Council in order to provide an effective and timely academic governance counterbalance to the executive management team."*

There is no further action on this item over that reported in the last period.

- 3) *"Use the QA/QI process and results, together with an increased institutional research capacity, to support strategic planning and actions."*

The outputs of the corporate information project have been used for the 2006/07 academic and financial planning cycle. The Director of Strategic Planning is developing proposals for annual and multi-annual integrated quality, planning and review cycles. A Director of Institutional Research is to be recruited reporting to the Director of Strategic Planning.

- 4) *"Entrust greater responsibility to the deans for a variety of academic and management issues, including QA and QI across each faculty."*

The current academic planning cycle and the proposed quality, planning and review cycle involve significant responsibilities being delegated to Principals of Colleges and Heads of School.

- 5) *"Use both input and output measures when developing a new resource allocation model."*

The current iteration of the Resource Allocation Model is largely input-driven and was used in 2005 to guide the 2005/06 budget. An administrative review of the RAM and its impact in 2005/06 has highlighted areas for attention. An academic review is planned for June-August 2006, which will further develop the RAM for the 2006/07 budget planning cycle.

- 6) *"Monitor students and other mobility not only in terms of incoming persons but also UCD students and staff going abroad for periods of study or work"*

This is planned under the UCD Corporate Information Project.

IN TERMS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

The successful academic restructuring of UCD, the recruitment of a Director of Strategic Planning, the forthcoming recruitment of a Director of Institutional Research and filling of the vacant post of Director of Quality places UCD in a position to develop an integrated approach to quality, planning, institutional research, evaluation and enhancement.

The first iteration of this integrated planning and review cycle will operate in 2006/07 and a definitive approach will be in place in 2007/08.

The integrated cycle will address issues raised by the review such as:

- Ownership of quality assurance and enhancement issues by Schools and Colleges.
- Connection of School, College and institutional review.
- The alignment of management information, institutional research, quality and planning.
- Links between quality reviews and institutional planning.
- The need for ad-hoc review, internal consultancy or academic audit.
- The involvement of students, external peer reviewers and other external stakeholders.