



EUA/HEA/IUQB SECTORAL REVIEW

University College Dublin Progress Report - April 2005-March 2006

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.

The EUA Review of Quality Assurance in Irish Universities came at a most opportune time for UCD, facing as it did the development of a new strategic plan, from which flowed a transformative academic restructuring, a fundamental reform of the undergraduate curriculum with the introduction of a fully modular credit accumulation curriculum, and the consolidation and development of postgraduate education with the launch of the UCD Graduate Schools.

Organisation and Planning of the QA Process

The centrality of robust strategic planning, and the key role of QA in this process, has been clearly articulated to the heads of all units.

The review of strategic plans, and the evaluations which inform them, is a central step in the proposed integrated planning cycle, with input from the Senior Management Team and President. The President, supported by the Senior Management Team, clearly retains overall responsibility for strategy, planning and

quality. The central responsibility for evaluation of units remains with that unit and its Head.

Self Assessment Phase

A number of changes are being phased in with regard to the self-assessment phase so that this phase will:

- be enhancement-led
- involve all stakeholders, internal and external, especially students
- last no more than 12 weeks
- be grounded in the university strategic plan and emerging internal and external threats and opportunities
- address the role of university services in supporting academic units
- acknowledge and attempt to integrate other evaluations such as accreditation

Peer Review Phase

The guidelines for peer review groups will be revised to emphasise:

- the enhancement-led approach
- a broad view of quality

The composition of peer review teams is now adapted to the circumstances of the unit under review and the emphasis on enhancement and international benchmarks. The choice of peer reviewers for units of UCD is now independent of the unit of review.

Quality Improvement

The recommended changes in the quality improvement phase will be built into the next cycle of review.

Strategic Governance and Management

UCD is addressing issues such as the scheduling of evaluations, linking quality and planning cycles, and reviewing groups of cognate units as part of the development of an integrated quality and planning cycle.

There have been a number of reviews of university-wide issues, including:

- Enrolment to the modular curriculum
- The process of semesterised assessment
- Teaching and Learning infrastructure

A number of further reviews are planned, including:

- The governance of research institutes
- The provision of adult and continuing professional education
- The provision of repeat and re-sit examinations.

A Director of Strategic Planning has been appointed, and recruitment for the position of Director of Institutional Research and Director of Quality are planned. These individuals will be expected to act as a team, delivering an integrated quality and planning cycle underpinned by high-quality information and research.