



University College Dublin

REVIEW GROUP REPORT

Periodic Quality Review

UCD Human Resources

April 2019

Accepted by the UCD Governing Authority at its meeting of 25 June 2020

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Key Findings of the Review Group

The Review Group has identified a number of key findings in relation to areas of good practice operating within the Unit and areas which the Review Group would highlight as requiring improvement. The main section of this Report sets out all observations, commendations and recommendations of the Review Group in more detail. A consolidated list of all commendations and recommendations is set out in Appendix 1.

Examples of Good Practice

The Review Group identified a number of commendations, in particular:

- Excellent working relationships and coherent teams are evident within UCD HR, along with strong leadership provided by the Director. This has enabled transformation of the structure and organisation of the unit, and the introduction and implementation of new initiatives with major impact across the University.
- The RG commends the unit for the way in which it has embraced and delivered against the HR strategy. The progress made in such a relatively short space of time is very impressive.
- Major change programmes and new initiatives have been implemented in the face of continuing resource constraints from the Employment Control Framework (ECF).
- The Culture and Engagement agenda has clearly been successful and was recognised as such across all user groups.
- There was a very broad welcome for EDI initiatives.

Recommendations for Future Improvement

The full list of recommendations is set out in Appendix 1, however, the Review Group would suggest that the following be prioritised:

- In view of continuing resource constraints, there may be a need to evaluate how the balance between strategic and operational workloads are managed, along with the capacity of the Unit to support strategic initiatives while maintaining operational excellence. Further consideration of innovative ways of providing temporary capacity, such as the development of rotating internships, is warranted.
- There has been and continues to be a significant investment in CORE HR (the HRIS) and it is unclear whether the return on this investment is being fully realised. A more robust and prioritised programme of process improvements which ensures the HRIS is being optimised is

recommended, in conjunction with the move to V27. There are clearly quick wins to be gained here (e.g. staff expenses and annual leave booking) before moving on to the more transformational activity around resourcing and talent management.

- The ability to produce data analytics, presented in an easy to understand way is now a requirement of any HR function, but is often a skill missing in HR units. Consideration should be given as to how UCD could resource this activity, provided to the University.
- HR should look to set up mechanisms to ensure that regular quantitative and qualitative feedback is sought annually, and actioned where possible, in relation to the key operational services, such as resourcing, provided to the University.

1. Introduction and Overview of UCD Human Resources

Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a quality review of UCD Human Resources, University College Dublin, which was undertaken between 18 – 21 February 2019. The Unit response to the Review Group Report is attached as Appendix 2.

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 in order 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 with 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 Universities Act 1997 and 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 a review group (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.

The Review Group

1.5 The composition of the Review Group for UCD Human Resources was as follows:

- Professor Grace Mulcahy, UCD School of Veterinary Medicine (Chair)
- Mr. Andrew Myler, UCD Registry (Deputy Chair)
- Mrs. Pamela Milne, Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, University of Dundee
- Mr. Paul Boustead, Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, University of Lancaster

1.6 The Review Group visited the Unit between 18 – 21 February 2019 and held meetings with Unit staff; the SAR Co-ordinating Committee and other University staff. The site visit schedule is included as Appendix 3.

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

Preparation of the Self-assessment Report (SAR)

1.8 Following a briefing from the UCD Quality Office representatives, a Self-assessment Report Coordinating Committee (SARCC) was established within UCD HR with representatives from

each functional area within the unit. The Director, HR Partners, acted as Chair, and a Project Manager from within the group was also appointed.

- 1.9 The group met weekly, and worked with UCD Agile as part of the SOAR analysis during preparations for the report. Sub-groups were convened to undertake specific tasks, as necessary. The SARCC Chair kept the HR SLT briefed during their bi-weekly meetings. All staff within the unit were kept informed on all matters related to the Quality Review through a specific HR QR website, and at meetings of each Directorate. All staff participated in the SOAR analysis, and were invited to provide comment and feedback on the draft SAR.
- 1.10 Input from users of HR services was obtained using a variety of methods including Interviews, focus groups and surveys. The SARCC also sought benchmarking information from a range of external organisations.

The University

- 1.11 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.
- 1.12 The University Strategic Plan (to 2020) 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 global engagement; providing a supportive community in which every member of the University is enabled to achieve their full potential".

The University is currently organised into six colleges and 37 schools¹:

- 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

- 1.13 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

¹ This reflects the University structure from September 2015.

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.

UCD Human Resources

1.14 The Unit supports the UCD Mission by providing a supportive community in which every individual is enabled to achieve their full potential. Work is organised under four strands:

- Transforming Service and Partnership
- Enhancing a Performance Culture
- Developing Talent
- Becoming a University and Employer of Choice.

1.15 The Unit is located on the second floor in Roebuck Offices, at the periphery of the Belfield Campus. HR Partners, however, are assigned to and are located with the Units with which they work. Roebuck Offices, although located within an old building, have refurbished spaces which are well-designed and fit for purpose. The accommodation includes large open-plan workspaces as well as a small number of individual offices, a bookable “Big Ideas” room and a kitchen area. The HR Helpdesk is located adjacent to the offices.

1.16 At the point the self-assessment document was submitted, there were 63.27 FTE employed in the unit, 76% of which are permanent. The majority of staff have specific HR qualifications, and 31% of staff are male. The age profile of the Unit is such that 70% of staff are between 30-49 years of age. Staff are organised within four Directorates:

- Culture and Engagement
- HR Partners
- HR Service
- People Development and Organisation Effectiveness

1.17 The Head of each Directorate, as well as the Director of UCD HR, comprise the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), and the PA to the Director acts as Secretary to the SLT. The Head of the Unit sits on the University Management Team. The Unit provides services according to the Ulrich model², with specialists within each Directorate complemented by a team of HR partners assigned to academic and professional services units across the University.

² (1997). *Human Resource Champions: The Next Agenda for Adding Value and Delivering Results*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

General Comment/Context

1.18 The Unit has over the past three years undergone a restructuring and has also been pivotal to introducing a number of major University-wide initiatives, which are described elsewhere in this report. Significant recognition of the achievements of UCD HR has come through awards from CIPD for Ireland's Best HR Team and for UCD's Gender Identify and Recognition Policy, in February 2019. In delivering on these major developments over the last three years, UCD HR has successfully embraced and managed major change. The Unit recognises, accordingly, that consolidation and embedding of these changes will be a feature of the next period. However, further institutional initiatives, such as Faculty 500, will also demand specific additional effort from the Unit.

Commendation

1.19 UCD HR is commended for providing a very clear description of the methodology used in compiling the SAR, and for meticulous preparation for the review process.

2. Planning, Organisation and Management

Comments

2.1 UCD HR's Strategy 2016-2020 *Growing through People*, approved by the University Management Team (UMT), sets out how the HR team implements the University's People agenda, in support of its overall mission.

2.2 The HR Strategy aims to enable every employee of the University to reach their full potential while supporting a number of key University objectives including

- Attracting and retaining an excellent and diverse cohort of students and employees;
- Developing and strengthening our University community;
- Adopting governance, management and budgetary structures which enable the vision;
- Overcoming financial, human resource management and other external constraints

2.3 The key areas of focus required to deliver the strategy are summarised as

- Transforming Service and Partnership;
- Enhancing a Performance Culture;
- Developing our Talent;
- Becoming an Employer and University of Choice

2.4 A programme of work mapped to these four areas comprises 38 projects has been developed. These cover projects such as Job Families Framework, the HR Helpdesk, Resource Consultants (Transforming Services and Partnership); Leadership and People Manager Development Programme, Aurora Leadership Programme, Induction for new Heads of School (Developing our Talent); rollout of P4G (Enhancing a Performance Culture); internal enhanced collaborations such as HR team events, brown bag lunches, and external collaborations such as employee engagement events (Becoming an Employer and University of Choice).

- 2.5 Governance and management of HR strategy implementation involves the Human Resources Leadership Team (HRLT) acting as a steering group. This group receives reports every two weeks on progress against objectives, and the Director reports quarterly to the UMT. The Director also attends meetings of the Governing Authority, and the Finance, Remuneration and Asset Management Committee (FRAMC), as required.
- 2.6 For major initiatives, including Performance for Growth (P4G) and Job Families, specific steering groups with representatives from across the University are convened.
- 2.7 The HR Partners (HRPs) support leaders and managers across the University in the implementation of the HR Strategy, in the context of the diversity of local cultures in the units to which they are deployed, and communicate feedback to UCD HR.
- 2.8 Members of UCD HR participate in a wide range of University committees, working groups and relevant external networks.
- 2.9 During the three years prior to this quality review the Unit has undergone significant organisational change and delivered on major strategic initiatives while also maintaining routine services to the university community.
- 2.10 UCD HR, similar to other operational Units across the University, continues to face operational challenges such as budgetary restrictions, recruitment challenges, the impact of the Employment Control Framework, GDPR, and availability and cost of housing in Dublin.

Commendations

- 2.11 Excellent working relationships and coherent teams are evident within UCD HR, along with strong leadership provided by the Director. This has enabled transformation of the structure and organisation of the unit, and the introduction and implementation of new initiatives with major impact across the University.
- 2.12 There is clear alignment of the HR strategy with University objectives, enabled by the Director's membership of the UMT.
- 2.13 There is a general acknowledgement that the new HR organisational structure and modes of service delivery have provided a better user experience. The "Hub and Spoke" model, with HRPs deployed across the University, is highly valued by Heads of Academic and Professional Service Units.

Recommendations

- 2.14 In view of continuing resource constraints, there may be a need to evaluate how the balance between strategic and operational workloads are managed, along with the capacity of the unit to support strategic initiatives while maintaining operational excellence. Further consideration of innovative ways of providing temporary capacity, such as the development of rotating internships, is warranted.

- 2.15 There would be value in clarifying the exact KPIs of UCD HR, in describing the metrics to be used in progressing towards the University of Choice/Employer of Choice ambition, and in further explaining the organisation and functions of HR in “plain English” to the University Community.
- 2.16 The RG recommends that the University consider convening a HR Sub-Committee of the Governing Authority to examine HR practice, systems and processes in place and to ensure open, fair and transparent decision-making in the HR space. This would strengthen governance of the HR Strategy and provide a separation between governance and leadership on certain matters, in order to ensure both support for and challenge of the strategy.

3. Functions, Activities and Processes

General comments

- 3.1 Overall the unit has clearly made significant progress on several fronts in a relatively short period of time. It was clear from the feedback and data obtained as part of the review that the HR Strategy has been advanced at a good pace and the overall perception of the value being added by HR has improved significantly.
- 3.2 The unit has reorganised itself to deliver the strategy and in doing so created capacity to support institutional transformation (e.g. through Performance 4 Growth, job families etc).
- 3.3 Overall the comments received from users of HR services indicated that the effectiveness of the unit had improved very significantly since the last review in 2011. Process improvements and system innovations have supported this change. There was still a sense that more could be achieved in relation to individual employee communications to remove the perception of a HR “black hole”.
- 3.4 The HR Helpdesk received positive comments in terms of responses to email and telephone queries. There was mixed feedback about whether periodic face to face HR helpdesk surgeries/sessions in a more central location on campus should be considered in the short term pending any planned relocation of the unit.
- 3.5 It was evident that the unit is increasingly becoming data and information rich but there is a clear desire to see more innovation and effort in relation to the extrapolation and interpretation of data, particularly in support of the HR Partner (HRP) and client interface. The provision of HR data analytics capacity would be useful in supporting many aspects of the unit’s workplan as well as facilitating integrated data analytics with other units.
- 3.6 There were several comments made about the efforts made by HR to canvass opinions and feedback through surveys and broader engagement mechanisms. These efforts were welcomed, but at the same time there was a cautionary note about survey fatigue and ensuring that feedback collected was being acted upon in a visible way (closing the feedback loop).

- 3.7 There was a clear sense of a culture of professional development and growth being propagated by HR, which was evidenced by increasingly well-attended and evaluated programmes and training interventions.

Commendations

- 3.8 UCD HR is commended on its recent CIPD awards which reflect a cumulative and sustained effort by the overall Unit.
- 3.9 The RG commends the unit for the way in which it has embraced and delivered against the HR strategy, and the progress made in such a short space of time is very impressive.
- 3.10 Revisions and improvements made to the Faculty Promotions Process have been very well-received and have helped in building confidence and esteem with the UCD academic community.
- 3.11 The utility of the Culture and Staff Engagement survey is clearly apparent. Various different members of the UCD community cited how they valued the opportunity to express their views through the survey and there was an overall sense that the data obtained was being used to inform the further implementation of the HR Strategy.
- 3.12 The quality and relevance of the overall staff development offering was also consistently cited as an area of good practice and of great value to UCD staff. Heads of School in particular felt they had excellent support upon entry to their roles and that the induction and training was valuable.
- 3.13 Whilst some elements of the overall resourcing and recruitment process could still be improved, the improvements made by the HR Leadership Team through the introduction of Resourcing consultants are commended.
- 3.14 The Unit is commended for its approach to communication and the transparency of information and policies provided to the University community.

Recommendations

- 3.15 There has been and continues to be a significant investment in CORE HR (the HRIS) and it is unclear whether the return on this investment is being fully realised. A more robust and prioritised programme of process improvements which ensures the HRIS is being optimised is recommended, in conjunction with the move to V27. There are clearly quick wins to be gained here (e.g. staff expenses and annual leave booking) before moving on to the more transformational activity around resourcing and talent management.
- 3.16 It was clear that there is a wide range of training and development being delivered, often from different units across UCD, in addition to HR. It was unclear, however, what the total spend and offering was on a *per capita* basis. It is recommended that as part of the overall P4G

programme consideration is given to consolidating the delivery of training and development via a central portal/mechanism.

- 3.17 The addition of expertise in data analytics to the HR team would be of value in terms of planning future strategy. The option of having a pool of staff with general administrative capability, but not necessarily specific HR qualifications, to cover some operational areas, could also be considered.
- 3.18 The RG recommend that SLAs should be reviewed to ensure they meet business needs, for example, in relation to time to hire and seamless set-up for new entrants.
- 3.19 More structured and consistent engagement with the staff unions, not only in relation to the introduction of major initiatives, is recommended.
- 3.20 Whilst process improvements have been made in recruitment and resourcing more broadly there was a clear sense that UCD colleagues desire an enhanced service (particularly in preparation for the Faculty 500 initiative). It is recommended that a more detailed review of the University's current and future requirements from the resourcing team is undertaken. In addition, clarity and an articulation of the role of the HRP versus the Resourcing Consultant may be helpful.
- 3.21 As part of UCD's ambitions to be an employer of choice, there was feedback that more could be done to ensure a consistent corporate level induction (augmented by local induction). As part of this approach to 'onboarding' consideration should be given to whether there are some core mandatory training modules (e.g. GDPR, Health and Safety and Dignity and Respect at Work) that should form part of the overall package.
- 3.22 Consideration should also be given to the exit process, including mechanisms for obtaining feedback and a prescribed handover routine.
- 3.23 The imminent upgrade of CORE HR presents an opportunity to agree and articulate a deliberate programme of process improvement.
- 3.24 Building on the excellent feedback on the Faculty Promotions Framework, it is recommended this is now taken to the next stage and a piece of work is undertaken to clearly map the diverse career trajectories available to progress to the higher academic ranks. This should include consideration of the more systematic use of 'career mentors'.
- 3.25 Consideration should be given in the short term regarding how the help desk could be optimised and supplemented by face to face sessions/periodic 'clinics' pending any planned relocation of the overall unit.

4. Management of Resources

General comments

- 4.1 In order to deliver on UCD strategy, including major developments such as Faculty 500, there was an acknowledgement of the need to invest in HR. However, there is also a tension between providing additional resources and the need to absorb budget cuts.
- 4.2 A significant proportion (24%) of the HR team are on temporary contracts, particularly in less senior grades. This results in a high staff turnover with clear consequences for service provision, for example in resourcing.
- 4.3 It was acknowledged by the HR team that there were challenges regarding the resource aligned to the recruitment process and hence the standard of service provided. This was backed up by comments from the service users. The resource model was described as a 'low cost model with no bells and whistles'. Concern was expressed regarding the candidate experience when competing in a global market and the unit's ability to properly support the Faculty 500 project.
- 4.4 Resource constraints are manifested more acutely in the face of additional strategic projects, for example in the restructuring of student service.
- 4.5 The HRPs were hugely appreciated and valued. However, there was consistent feedback that they are spread too thinly. Some of the larger areas felt that they required more than one HRP given the size of the units being supported, and there was a lack of clarity in some areas around the expectations of the HRP role.
- 4.6 The amount per staff member spent by UCD HR specifically on people development was €84 Euros (from the centrally held budget of €205,000).
- 4.7 It was noted that while there was the ability to access large amounts of data from the HR system, HR did not have the resource to produce reports and analyse the data. The data metrics produced by HR regarding its own activity was snap-shot data for any one year, and trend analysis was not prominent.
- 4.8 The HR website is not always up to date and users commented that it was possible to find different versions of the same policy. It was also noted that on occasion changes were made without those being communicated to stakeholders.

Commendations

- 4.9 The re-organisation of HR has been well-received with much better alignment of resource than previously was the case. The investment made in the professionalisation of the unit is evident.

- 4.10 The investment of resources in the people development training programme and other more bespoke training programmes were highly praised and well received.
- 4.11 Major change programmes and new initiatives have been implemented in the face of continuing resource constraints from the Employment Control Framework (ECF).

Recommendations

- 4.12 The unit is encouraged to ensure that HR resources are aligned to best effect and consider whether resources are appropriately assigned to both strategic and operational tasks.
- 4.13 Together with UMT, UCD HR should review the requirement for additional temporary resources to deliver on strategic initiatives, such as Faculty 500.
- 4.14 Given the clear value placed on the HR Partner role and the pivotal role these posts play in the delivery of the strategy across UCD, consideration should be given to whether a small number of additional HR Partners are required.
- 4.15 A review of the budget aligned to development and training should take place. In addition, the RG felt that the integration of other training activities, delivered by other Units, should be considered, which could bring about efficiencies.
- 4.16 The ability to produce data analytics, presented in an easy to understand way is now a requirement of any HR function but is often a skill missing in HR units. Consideration should be given as to how UCD could resource this activity.
- 4.17 Ensure that the HR web site is intuitive in relation to where information can be found and is kept up to date.

5. User Perspective

General comments

- 5.1 The review group met with user groups representing the various staff stakeholder groups in UCD. Faculty, UMT, Heads of School, Support staff, Research staff and Heads of Support Unit took part in feedback sessions. The various groups engaged fully with the review group and constructive dialogue was a consistent theme across the visit.
- 5.2 A consistent positive perspective about UCD HR as a unit that attempts to work with and for their respective staff cohorts, emerged during the site visit. The ambition of the HR strategy was acknowledged and an appreciation of the effort required by HR in rolling out the major work programmes was voiced throughout, particularly by management cohorts. The

improving clarity and professionalisation brought about by the HR strategy was commended. There was also a strong recognition of the helpfulness of individual staff members right across HR by colleagues who required assistance in a myriad of tasks and issues.

- 5.3 A theme of continuous improvement was noted by users with a number of groups commenting on the improvements in some operational tasks and service areas. The Post Authorisation Form (PAF) process and the UCD helpdesk single point of contact are two examples mentioned by groups that point to this. There was also significant praise for the Faculty Promotions process.
- 5.4 Recruitment and resourcing received a broad spectrum of constructive comment from users. This was in line with the SAR commentary.
- 5.5 The Culture and Engagement initiatives of the Unit were positively received, as were the developments in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).
- 5.6 The feeling of connectedness to, and understanding of HR strategy, differed across the groups consulted. A sense of having input to the formation of the overall strategy and the individual work programmes differed depending on each group's position within UCD. Management groups were broadly satisfied in relation to the level of consultation and their role in relation to implementation of the HR strategy, while some staff groups felt there was still a communications deficit, and a lack of clarity in respect of some elements of the strategy. A number of stakeholders commented on the size of the workplan undertaken in a short time period by HR, and how that affected the communications and general momentum of rolling out the change programme. The long lead-in times for P4G and the Job Families Framework were noted as negative by some user groups.
- 5.7 P4G was an area of concern for a significant number of groups consulted during the site visit. There was a feeling of detachment from some groups, with non-management groups most vocal about these concerns. A feeling of top-down pressure, gender imbalance of reviewers, availability of budget to address training needs and lack of recognition and reward linked to the process are examples of some of the concerns voiced. User groups felt that to ensure the sustained success and embedding of P4G as a positive recurring opportunity for staff will take continued effort and resource allocation by HR.
- 5.8 The Hub and Spoke structure of the unit, with HR Partners locally situated in conjunction with central operational units was very positively regarded. The HR Partners came in for particular praise right across the spectrum of users.
- 5.9 Most users utilised the HR helpdesk via e-mail and telephone contact, rather than in person.
- 5.10 It was clear from a number of different users that there were inconsistencies in how and when leave, particularly Annual leave and other locally sanctioned leave, was being recorded.

Commendations

- 5.11 The Culture and Engagement agenda has clearly been successful and was recognised as such across all user groups.
- 5.12 There was a broad welcome for EDI initiatives.
- 5.13 There was unequivocal support for the HR Partner model and there was a great deal of positive feedback; leaders and managers cited how the HRPs had been a lifeline and had provided support in terms of both strategy and operational delivery.
- 5.14 The HR helpdesk has improved the service to staff as acting as a single point of contact and removing workload for staff in having to identify key staff in HR to complete transactions.
- 5.15 Communications from HR to users have improved significantly.
- 5.16 The Leadership and People Management programmes were identified as benefitting users who had undertaken the training.
- 5.17 Outreach by HR to stakeholder groups on policy formulation and change was seen as improving.

Recommendations

- 5.18 The RG recommends that further clarity is provided on the strategic and operational responsibilities of HR Partners and where these start and end. It is clear there is huge demand from users on HR partners but it is unclear if there is an understanding by users of the boundaries of the role.
- 5.19 There is an opportunity to provide an increased focus on mentoring for staff at a number of career points across all cohorts. Early stage academics and Faculty/Staff with leadership ambitions are suggested as points of focus.
- 5.20 Leadership and People Management development and exposure should be made available to staff with career ambitions to take up a management role as well as those who carry out a management role currently.
- 5.21 HR should look to set up mechanisms to ensure that regular quantitative and qualitative feedback is sought annually, and actioned where possible, in relation to the key operational services such as resourcing, it provides to the University.
- 5.22 The HR website should be reconfigured with the help of users who need to access service and policy information.

5.23 HR should review access for users to the CORE HR system to enable the recording of leave, as other CORE HR customers in the sector have done. More local systems access, enabled by a consistent underpinning operational procedure, to be exercised across UCD would seem to benefit users as well as providing up to date management reporting in this area.

UCD Human Resources – Full List of Commendations and Recommendations

This Appendix contains a full list of all commendations and recommendations made by the Review Group for UCD Human Resources and should be read in conjunction with the specific chapter above. *(Please note that the paragraph references below refer to the relevant paragraphs in the report text)*

1. Introduction and Overview of UCD Human Resources

Commendation

- 1.19 UCD HR is commended for providing a very clear description of the methodology used in compiling the SAR, and for meticulous preparation for the review process.

2. Planning, Organisation and Management

Commendations

- 2.11 Excellent working relationships and coherent teams are evident within UCD HR, along with strong leadership provided by the Director. This has enabled transformation of the structure and organisation of the unit, and the introduction and implementation of new initiatives with major impact across the University.
- 2.12 There is clear alignment of the HR strategy with University objectives, enabled by the Director's membership of the UMT.
- 2.13 There is a general acknowledgement that the new HR organisational structure and modes of service delivery have provided a better user experience. The "Hub and Spoke" model, with HRPs deployed across the University, is highly valued by Heads of Academic and Professional Service Units.

Recommendations

- 2.14 In view of continuing resource constraints, there may be a need to evaluate how the balance between strategic and operational workloads are managed, along with the capacity of the unit to support strategic initiatives while maintaining operational excellence. Further consideration of innovative ways of providing temporary capacity, such as the development of rotating internships, is warranted.
- 2.15 There would be value in clarifying the exact KPIs of UCD HR, in describing the metrics to be used in progressing towards the University of Choice/Employer of Choice ambition, and in

further explaining the organisation and functions of HR in “plain English” to the University Community.

- 2.16 The RG recommends that the University consider convening a HR Sub-Committee of the Governing Authority to examine HR practice, systems and processes in place and to ensure open, fair and transparent decision-making in the HR space. This would strengthen governance of the HR Strategy and provide a separation between governance and leadership on certain matters, in order to ensure both support for and challenge of the strategy.

3. Functions, Activities and Processes

Commendations

- 3.8 UCD HR is commended on its recent CIPD awards which reflect a cumulative and sustained effort by the overall Unit.
- 3.9 The RG commends the unit for the way in which it has embraced and delivered against the HR strategy, and the progress made in such a short space of time is very impressive.
- 3.10 Revisions and improvements made to the Faculty Promotions Process have been very well-received and have helped in building confidence and esteem with the UCD academic community.
- 3.11 The utility of the Culture and Staff Engagement survey is clearly apparent. Various different members of the UCD community cited how they valued the opportunity to express their views through the survey and there was an overall sense that the data obtained was being used to inform the further implementation of the HR Strategy.
- 3.12 The quality and relevance of the overall staff development offering was also consistently cited as an area of good practice and of great value to UCD staff. Heads of School in particular felt they had excellent support upon entry to their roles and that the induction and training was valuable.
- 3.13 Whilst some elements of the overall resourcing and recruitment process could still be improved, the improvements made by the HR Leadership Team through the introduction of Resourcing consultants are commended.
- 3.14 The Unit is commended for its approach to communication and the transparency of information and policies provided to the University community.

Recommendations

- 3.15 There has been and continues to be a significant investment in CORE HR (the HRIS) and it is unclear whether the return on this investment is being fully realised. A more robust and prioritised programme of process improvements which ensures the HRIS is being optimised is recommended, in conjunction with the move to V27. There are clearly quick wins to be gained

here (e.g. staff expenses and annual leave booking) before moving on to the more transformational activity around resourcing and talent management.

- 3.16 It was clear that there is a wide range of training and development being delivered, often from different units across UCD, in addition to HR. It was unclear, however, what the total spend and offering was on a *per capita* basis. It is recommended that as part of the overall P4G programme consideration is given to consolidating the delivery of training and development via a central portal/mechanism.
- 3.17 The addition of expertise in data analytics to the HR team would be of value in terms of planning future strategy. The option of having a pool of staff with general administrative capability, but not necessarily specific HR qualifications, to cover some operational areas, could also be considered.
- 3.18 The RG recommend that SLAs should be reviewed to ensure they meet business needs, for example, in relation to time to hire and seamless set-up for new entrants.
- 3.19 More structured and consistent engagement with the staff unions, not only in relation to the introduction of major initiatives, is recommended.
- 3.20 Whilst process improvements have been made in recruitment and resourcing more broadly there was a clear sense that UCD colleagues desire an enhanced service (particularly in preparation for the Faculty 500 initiative). It is recommended that a more detailed review of the University's current and future requirements from the resourcing team is undertaken. In addition, clarity and an articulation of the role of the HRP versus the Resourcing Consultant may be helpful.
- 3.21 As part of UCD's ambitions to be an employer of choice, there was feedback that more could be done to ensure a consistent corporate level induction (augmented by local induction). As part of this approach to 'onboarding' consideration should be given to whether there are some core mandatory training modules (e.g. GDPR, Health and Safety and Dignity and Respect at Work) that should form part of the overall package.
- 3.22 Consideration should also be given to the exit process, including mechanisms for obtaining feedback and a prescribed handover routine.
- 3.23 The imminent upgrade of CORE HR presents an opportunity to agree and articulate a deliberate programme of process improvement.
- 3.24 Building on the excellent feedback on the Faculty Promotions Framework, it is recommended this is now taken to the next stage and a piece of work is undertaken to clearly map the diverse career trajectories available to progress to the higher academic ranks. This should include consideration of the more systematic use of 'career mentors'.

- 3.25 Consideration should be given in the short term regarding how the help desk could be optimised and supplemented by face to face sessions/periodic 'clinics' pending any planned relocation of the overall unit.

4. Management of Resources

Commendations

- 4.9 The re-organisation of HR has been well-received with much better alignment of resource than previously was the case. The investment made in the professionalisation of the unit is evident.
- 4.10 The investment of resources in the people development training programme and other more bespoke training programmes were highly praised and well received.
- 4.11 Major change programmes and new initiatives have been implemented in the face of continuing resource constraints from the Employment Control Framework (ECF).

Recommendations

- 4.12 The unit is encouraged to ensure that HR resources are aligned to best effect and consider whether resources are appropriately assigned to both strategic and operational tasks.
- 4.13 Together with UMT, UCD HR should review the requirement for additional temporary resources to deliver on strategic initiatives, such as Faculty 500.
- 4.14 Given the clear value placed on the HR Partner role and the pivotal role these posts play in the delivery of the strategy across UCD, consideration should be given to whether a small number of additional HR Partners are required.
- 4.15 A review of the budget aligned to development and training should take place. In addition, the RG felt that the integration of other training activities, delivered by other Units, should be considered, which could bring about efficiencies.
- 4.16 The ability to produce data analytics, presented in an easy to understand way is now a requirement of any HR function but is often a skill missing in HR units. Consideration should be given as to how UCD could resource this activity.
- 4.17 Ensure that the HR web site is intuitive in relation to where information can be found and is kept up to date.

5. User Perspective

Commendations

- 5.11 The Culture and Engagement agenda has clearly been successful and was recognised as such across all user groups.
- 5.12 There was a broad welcome for EDI initiatives.
- 5.13 There was unequivocal support for the HR Partner model and there was a great deal of positive feedback; leaders and managers cited how the HRPs had been a lifeline and had provided support in terms of both strategy and operational delivery.
- 5.14 The HR helpdesk has improved the service to staff as acting as a single point of contact and removing workload for staff in having to identify key staff in HR to complete transactions.
- 5.15 Communications from HR to users have improved significantly.
- 5.16 The Leadership and People Management programmes were identified as benefitting users who had undertaken the training.
- 5.17 Outreach by HR to stakeholder groups on policy formulation and change was seen as improving.

Recommendations

- 5.18 The RG recommends that further clarity is provided on the strategic and operational responsibilities of HR Partners and where these start and end. It is clear there is huge demand from users on HR partners but it is unclear if there is an understanding by users of the boundaries of the role.
- 5.24 There is an opportunity to provide an increased focus on mentoring for staff at a number of career points across all cohorts. Early stage academics and Faculty/Staff with leadership ambitions are suggested as points of focus.
- 5.25 Leadership and People Management development and exposure should be made available to staff with career ambitions to take up a management role as well as those who carry out a management role currently.
- 5.26 HR should look to set up mechanisms to ensure that regular quantitative and qualitative feedback is sought annually, and actioned where possible, in relation to the key operational services such as resourcing, it provides to the University.

- 5.27 The HR website should be reconfigured with the help of users who need to access service and policy information.
- 5.28 HR should review access for users to the CORE HR system to enable the recording of leave, as other CORE HR customers in the sector have done. More local systems access, enabled by a consistent underpinning operational procedure, to be exercised across UCD would seem to benefit users as well as providing up to date management reporting in this area.

UCD Human Resources – Response to the Review Group Report

The task of developing the Self-assessment Report was a valuable reflective exercise, which facilitated UCD HR to review its position from several perspectives, highlight and confirm our strengths and opportunities, identify areas of good practice and evaluate our weaknesses and challenges in a systematic way. The Review Group Site Visit was a positive and constructive experience. We welcome the endorsement of the Review Group for our activities through commendations and will carefully consider the recommendations during the Quality Improvement Planning process.

There was a high level of engagement from all staff categories, both in compiling the Self-assessment Report and in interacting with the Review Group during the site visit. UCD HR wishes to thank the Review Group for their time, expertise and constructive comments, both at the visit and in their helpful Report.

We have begun our planning process to address the recommendations in the Quality Review Report allied with our strategic planning cycle, and many actions are already under consideration. With specific reference to the prioritised recommendations identified by the Review Group, our initial proposals/comments are outlined below:

- (i) **Recommendation A:** In view of continuing resource constraints, there may be a need to evaluate how the balance between strategic and operational workloads are managed, along with the capacity of the Unit to support strategic initiatives while maintaining operational excellence. Further consideration of innovative ways of providing temporary capacity, such as the development of rotating internships, is warranted.

Proposal/Comment:

In the context of a recently challenging budget process the HRLT have reviewed what is achievable from a resource perspective in balancing the demands of the strategic and operational, approximately 90% of all resources are aligned to meeting the exacting standards for operational day to day delivery, with the balancing 10% more focused on the strategic, the HRLT have established principles against which new/additional workload requests are assessed and where taken on prioritised aside existing workload.

- (ii) **Recommendation B:** There has been and continues to be a significant investment in CORE HR (the HRIS) and it is unclear whether the return on this investment is being fully realised. A more robust and prioritised programme of process improvements which ensures the HRIS is being optimised is recommended, in conjunction with the move to V27. There are clearly quick wins to be gained here (e.g. staff expenses and annual leave booking) before moving on to the more transformational activity around resourcing and talent management.

Proposal/Comment:

V27 of Core HR is due to go live end of June 2019. Optimisation workshops have been held in each area for the purposes of exploring new features in V27. It is our intention post go-live to prioritise and plan for the implementation of key features to ensure optimisation of functionality over the next 1 to 3 years, ensuring that where there are 'quick wins' these occur within the early stages of implementation.

- (iii) **Recommendations C:** The ability to produce data analytics, presented in an easy to understand way is now a requirement of any HR function, but is often a skill missing in HR units. Consideration should be given as to how UCD could resource this activity, provided to the University

Proposal/Comment:

It is clear that there is a requirement for data analytics optimisation, utilising the rich data from Core to support decision making in the University. This skill-set does exist within the HRIS team however the 2.5 FTE HRIS resources are fully engaged in other prioritised projects in the short to medium term. It is also recognised that IT Services have equally articulated the need for investment in data analytics expertise across the university to support core business. As a first step, HR intend to partner with IT Services to scope the broader university requirements further and develop a business case for consideration by UMT.

- (iv) **Recommendations D:** HR should look to set up mechanisms to ensure that regular quantitative and qualitative feedback is sought annually, and actioned where possible, in relation to the key operational services, such as resourcing, provided to the University.

Proposal/Comment:

Resourcing Consultants engage regularly with Hiring Managers and other key stakeholders such as the HR Partners to gather feedback on the service provided by Resourcing. This is a mix of formal and informal feedback. In light of the recommendation from the Quality Review Group above, Resourcing are planning to develop a more structured approach to seeking feedback from Hiring Managers.

It is envisaged that monthly meetings may still be appropriate in some areas particularly where the volume of activity is high. It is also proposed that regular meetings between the Resourcing Consultant and the Hiring Manager (and HRP if appropriate) will be scheduled for other areas to ensure a more proactive approach rather than the current reactive mode. These may be quarterly rather than monthly and will focus on building relationships and addressing operational activity.

Outside of these regular operational meetings, it is planned to set up a series of annual reviews with key stakeholders. The objective being to gather both quantitative and qualitative feedback as recommended by the Quality Review Group. These meetings would also allow key stakeholders to share:

- Any significant changes expected in their area where HR Services may need to provide support.
- What worked well in the past year/what processes or support needs to be reviewed.
- Concerns/Issues.
- Suggested changes, items for consideration.

HR Services will also use this opportunity to share information on any proposed changes, process improvements, policy updates etc. The feedback above would be of particular benefit as part of the annual planning cycle for HR and will inform the priority given to various projects on the roadmap.

Appendix Three



UCD Human Resources

18-21 February 2019

Site Visit Timetable

Monday, 18 February 2019 - Pre-Visit Briefing Prior to Site Visit

- 17.00 - 19.00 RG meet at hotel to review preliminary issues and to confirm work schedule and assignment of tasks for the site visit – **RG and UCD Quality Office only**
- 19.30 Dinner hosted for the RG by the Deputy President, Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Registrar or nominee - **RG, UCD Deputy President and UCD Quality Office only**

Day 1: Tuesday, 19 February 2019

Venue: Room 209, Roebuck Offices

- 09:00 - 09:15 Review Group (RG) arrive
- 09.15 - 10.15 RG meet with Director of Human Resources
- 10.15 - 10.30 Private meeting of Review Group (RG)

10.30 - 11.30	Meeting with HR Leadership Team (HRLT)
11.30 - 11.45	Tea/coffee break
11.45 - 12.25	HR Services (<i>Including members from Resourcing, Operations, HRIS & Pensions</i>)
12.25 – 12.40	Private meeting of Review Group (RG)
12.40 - 13.20	HR Partners (<i>Members Supporting a variety of areas across UCD</i>)
13.20 - 14.00	Lunch – RG only
14.00 – 14.45	HR People Development & Organisation Effectiveness (<i>Members from people Development, Organisation Promotions & Grading</i>)
14.45 - 15.00	Private meeting of Review Group (RG)
15.00 - 15.45	HR Culture & Engagement (<i>Includes Members from Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Employee Relations and Engagement</i>)
15.45 - 16.00	RG tea/coffee break
16.00 - 16.45	Meeting with user groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unions
16.45 - 17.15	Visit to core facilities of the unit
17.15 - 18.00	Meeting of Review Group to identify any remaining aspects to be clarified and to finalise tasks for the following day

18.00 RG depart

Day 2: Wednesday, 20 February 2019

Venue: Room 209, Roebuck Offices

08.45 - 08.45 Private meeting of the Review Group (RG)

09.15 – 10.00 Meeting with individual staff – (Boardroom, Roebuck Castle) 10-minute sessions
(by request to QO)

10.00 - 10.15 Private meeting of Review Group (RG)

10.15 – 11.00 Meeting with user groups

- Faculty (*includes variety of grades and service length*)

11.00 - 11.15 RG tea/coffee break

11.15 - 12.00 Meeting with user groups

- UMT

12.00 - 12.15 Private meeting of Review Group (RG)

12.15 - 13.15 Meeting with user groups

- Head of School

13.15 - 14.00 Lunch – Review Group (RG) only

14.00 - 14.45 Meeting with user groups

- Staff (*Includes variety of grades and service length*)

14.45 - 15.00 Private meeting of Review Group (RG)

15.00 -15.45 Meeting with user groups

- Research (*Includes variety of grades and service length*)

15.45 – 16.00 RG tea/coffee break

16.00 - 17.00 Meeting with user groups

- Heads of Unit / Managers

17.00 - 17.30 Meeting of Review Group to identify any remaining aspects to be clarified and to finalise for the following day

17.30 RG depart

Day 3: Thursday, 21 February 2019

Venue: Room 209, Roebuck Offices

09.00 - 10.15 Private meeting of Review Group (RG)

10.15 - 11.00 (Optional) Further meetings with University and /or Unit staff as required and / or RG begin work on first draft of Review Group Report

10.45 - 11.00 RG tea/coffee break

10.45-12.30 Preparation of draft Report and exit presentation continues

12.45 - 13.30 Working lunch for Review Group

13.30 - 14.30 Preparation of draft Report and exit presentation continues

- 14.30 - 15.00 RG meet with Head of Unit to feedback initial outline commendations and recommendations
- 15.30 (Off Site) **Exit presentation** to all available staff of the unit – usually made by an extern member of the Review Group (or other member of the Group, as agreed) summarising the principal commendations / recommendations of the Review Group
- 16.00 Review Group depart