



University College Dublin

REVIEW GROUP REPORT

Periodic Quality Review

UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore

September 2019

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

Table of Contents

Key Findings of the Review Group	3
1. Introduction and Overview of UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore	5
2. Organisation and Management	8
3. Staff and Facilities	11
4. Teaching, Learning and Assessment	14
5. Curriculum Development and Review	16
6. Research Activity	19
7. Management of Quality and Enhancement	21
8. Support Services	22
9. Collaborative Educational Provision	24
10. External Relations	26
Appendix 1: UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore Summary of Commendations and Recommendations	
Appendix 2: UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore Response to the Review Group Report	
Appendix 3: Schedule for Review Site Visit to UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore	

Key Findings of the Review Group

The Review Group (RG) has identified a number of key findings in relation to areas of good practice operating within the School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore (SICSF), and also areas which the RG would highlight as requiring improvement. The main section of this Report sets out all observations, commendations and recommendations of the RG in more detail. An aggregated list of all commendations and recommendations is set out in Appendix 1.

Examples of Good Practice

The RG identified a number of commendations; in particular:

- The organisation and management of the School has been transformed since its last quality review. This is reflected in the new committee structure, improved communications, and strong leadership. The current Head of School has played a key role in overseeing these changes, supported by faculty and a highly professional administrative and support staff.
- The School is particularly open to new ideas, has a dynamic profile, and is at the cutting edge in terms of outreach with its use of digital technologies and social media. The re-development of the School's physical facilities - with renovated office spaces, up-to-date technology, and exhibition area in Block A - has created a vibrant space for staff and students that showcases the distinctive identity of the School.
- The School continues to deliver scholarship and research-led teaching of the highest order across the broad spectrum of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore. The breadth of this offering must be cherished and supported as the curricular provision continues to develop. Appointments of specialist technical and administrative staff have been significant in nurturing the positive environment now evident within the School. Impressive progress has been made on the development of a shared vision across these discipline areas; a process that will continue to be important going forward.
- The assimilation of Irish Studies within the School adds a welcome new dimension to the curriculum and offers significant potential in terms of global engagement and international student recruitment.
- The School is uniquely positioned as a steward of extremely valuable cultural assets – in the form of cultural artefacts, knowledge and skills - that are of significant national and international importance. The inscription of the Irish Folklore Commission Collection (in essence most of the National Folklore Collection holdings) on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register, for instance, is an extraordinary accolade.

Prioritised Recommendations for Improvement

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

- The School should now adopt a renewed focus on articulating its proposed strategic development for the next planning cycle. In particular, issues that merit specific consideration include succession planning, emerging priority areas for scholarship, internationalisation strategy, and the relationship with the National Folklore Collection and other collections.
- The School should, in collaboration with the College of Arts and Humanities and the broader University, explore further opportunities to develop and leverage its important role as a steward of national cultural assets.
- There is a need to protect, with senior appointments as current faculty retire, the key traditional areas of expertise, on which the reputation of UCD in Irish Language and Literature, Folklore and Celtic Studies (especially Old Irish) has rested for generations.
- The University should be sensitive to the distinctive nature and value of the scholarly contributions of the School's disciplines. In particular, it is important to be attentive to the cultural effects of the practices and language used in promoting specific forms of research 'productivity' University-wide, and the associated dangers of marginalising important areas of scholarship.
- The School should, in collaboration with the College and the University, look again at mechanisms for managing staff workloads and fostering career development opportunities, particularly for junior staff.

1. Introduction and Overview of UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore

Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a quality review of the School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore (hereinafter referred to as SICSF), University College Dublin, which was undertaken on 19-22 November 2018. The School 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 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 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 RG for the UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore was as follows:

- Professor Séamas Kelly, UCD College of Business (Chair)
- Associate Professor Deirdre Healy, UCD School of Law (Deputy Chair)
- Professor Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, University of Notre Dame, USA (Extern)
- Dr Malachy Ó Néill, Ulster University, UK (Extern)

1.6 The RG visited the School from 20 – 22 November 2018 and held meetings with School staff; undergraduate and postgraduate students; graduates, employers, the SAR Co-ordinating Committee; other University staff, including the Principal of the College of Arts and Humanities, and the Associate Dean of Arts and Humanities. 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 This Report has been read and approved by all members of the Review Group.

Preparation of the Self-assessment Report (SAR)

1.9 Following a briefing from the UCD Quality Office, a Self-assessment Report Coordinating Committee (SARCC) was established by the School.

1.10 The SAR was prepared in the period January 2018 – October 2018. 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.

1.11 The Review Group noted the high level of engagement by the School in preparing their self-assessment report and evidenced during the site visit.

The University

1.12 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.

1.13 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 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

1.14 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.

UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore

- 1.15 UCD's SICSF is located in the John Henry Newman Building on the Belfield campus.
- 1.16 SICSF is one of seven schools in the College of Arts and Humanities.
- 1.17 The School contains four subject areas, each of which has its own head of subject: Modern Irish (the research field of the majority of staff), Folklore, Celtic Civilisation and Irish Studies. This represents a change since the last External Review, when Linguistics was still one of the School subjects and Irish Studies was not. Additionally, two other units are located within the School, each with its own director who is a staff member of the School: the Teanglann, a language teaching unit that provides major support for student learning; and Lárionad de Bhaldraithe, established to provide graduate programmes in advanced Irish language skills such as translation and editing.
- 1.18 The School has 18 staff members: one Full Professor, one Professor, four Associate Professors, seven Assistant Professors (five of these are on the 'below the bar' scale), one Teaching Fellow, the Director of An Teanglann, an Educational Technologist, the School Manager, and an Executive Assistant. The School also has a number of hourly-paid Occasional Lecturers and Tutors who support the undergraduate teaching programme.

2. Organisation and Management

General Comments and Context

- 2.1 The organisation and management of the School appears to have been transformed since the previous review in 2012. In particular, the new committee structure and policies around research leave and workload management seem to have clarified expectations and improved communication within the School. While the number of

committees might appear excessive for a school of this size, the new structure seems to be working very well in practice. The Head of School deserves enormous credit for her successful oversight of such important changes.

- 2.2 The School is served by a highly professional administrative and support staff, which includes the School Manager, Executive Assistant, Educational Technologist, and the Director of the Teanglann. These people do outstanding work on behalf of students, academic staff, and the broader University. In particular, the energy and commitment that has been invested in exploring promising new modes of engaging with students and other stakeholders - e.g. social media and internationalisation - has been very impactful. Moreover, these people exhibit a deep loyalty and commitment to the School and its mission. The School is extraordinarily lucky to have such capable and committed staff who fulfil such vital roles so skilfully. Crucially, all are graduates of the School and speak fluent Irish, thus ensuring that Irish can remain a working language of the School. There should be concerns, however, as to the sustainability of the workloads of key staff, and thought should be given as to how further support and career progression opportunities might be provided to them.
- 2.3 The School appears to be well positioned and respected within the broader College of Arts and Humanities. The Head of School seems to have an excellent relationship with the College Principal, and one of the assistant professors has recently been appointed as the Vice-Principal, Global Engagement, for the College. Another assistant professor has just been elected by her peers across the University to represent them on the University's Governing Authority. Moreover, the School seems to have excellent relationships with colleagues in the James Joyce Library, the National Folklore Collection, and Bord na Gaeilge, UCD.
- 2.4 The distinctive organising mission of the School is clearly set out in the SAR – “creating and informing future understanding of national and international identity while preserving and enhancing the understanding of tradition, heritage, language, culture and literature.” This looks like a helpful articulation of the *raison d'être* of the School and something that might usefully guide its future development. The mission, thus articulated, also points to the important role the School can play within the broader University and society at large.
- 2.5 Although there does seem to be good clarity about the broad mission of the School, and an energy to match this, the RG would have liked to have learned more about plans for its future strategic development. Key questions remain in relation to the continued development of the four subject areas, succession planning and future recruitment, and approaches to internationalisation. Given how much has been achieved in recent years in improving the internal organisation and operational management practices of the School, the time may now be right to shift the emphasis slightly towards its broader strategic development. In particular, there may be opportunities to create a narrative around custodianship of national cultural assets, skills and expertise, and to reflect on what this demands in terms of resources - e.g. protecting subject areas that have strategic importance in terms of the cultural and intellectual capital with which they are associated. The National Folklore Collection

and other archives, and the expertise that needs to be preserved and developed around these, could play a vital role in promoting 'brand UCD.' It might be possible to work with the UCD Development Office/UCD Foundation to explore opportunities for philanthropic support. It should also be said that the internationally important task of editing and publishing Irish manuscripts, of which the largest repository is in the Royal Irish Academy, depends completely on the skills taught in a small number of universities, of which UCD is to the fore.

Commendations

- 2.6 The School's staff - academic and administrative - is to be commended for its energy, dedication and effort in improving so much about the organisation and management of the School since the last review.
- 2.7 The Head of School is to be commended for her leadership, commitment, and collegiality in overseeing the development of new structures and practices that have contributed to cultivating an effective and dynamic School environment that engages staff and students.
- 2.8 The new committee structures, and recently developed policies around workload management and research leave, seem to be working well.
- 2.9 The organising mission of the School is clearly articulated.

Recommendations

- 2.10 The RG recommends that more attention be devoted to managing the workload of staff, particularly more junior academics and support staff. Moreover, thought should be given to facilitating career progression opportunities that are commensurate with the contributions that individuals are making. The broader University has an important role to play in finding solutions to address these issues.
- 2.11 The RG recommends that time be set aside for more formalised and focused strategic conversations around the future development of the School and the relative prioritisation of different areas. In particular, these conversations should encompass the continued development of important academic specialties, succession planning for the Head of School, policies and priorities around internationalisation, and opportunities around the National Folklore collection and other national cultural assets.

3. Staff and Facilities

General Comments and Context

A. Staff

- 3.1 UCD has changed rapidly in the course of the last number of years and so has its external environment. One might see this as a particular challenge for the School (and for the fields of Irish language and literature and Celtic Studies in general), with the most prestigious areas of its expertise traditionally concentrated in a corpus of medieval, early modern and modern manuscript texts of national and international importance. At a time when the humanities are less appreciated than they have ever been, humanities institutes and schools inevitably must be proactive in identifying new research areas, both in responding to new imperatives and in order to protect their traditional fields of expertise.
- 3.2 As well as in Modern Irish, UCD also has a distinguished tradition in the fields of Old Irish, Celtic Studies and Irish Folklore. The creation of the School by amalgamating the departments of Modern Irish, Irish Folklore, Old Irish and Welsh starkly highlighted a disparity in student numbers by subject. The corresponding drop in staff numbers in the smaller subjects has led to a loss of identity, prestige - since they have lost senior professorships - and of international contacts. This raises concerns about the on-going capability of the School to teach students the necessary skills in these research fields.
- 3.3 The University itself has suffered reputationally from the diminished status of these subjects, Old Irish above all. The smaller subjects have predominantly late career staff members. In a few years, unless new appointments are made, there will be no one left to teach Old Irish, Welsh and Scottish Gaelic in UCD, which would draw the curtain on the University's long and distinguished tradition in Celtic Studies.
- 3.4 In the subject of Modern Irish, there is a good mix now of early and late career staff, but there is also a significant divide in research interests, with most of the expertise in the traditional research areas - in which UCD has an exceptional reputation - invested in staff members who will retire in a few years. It seems, in fact, that among the School staff are two very different cohorts, in terms both of stage of career and of research interests, that seem to a large extent disconnected from each other. Without new appointments in the traditional research areas, the School will have a very different research profile in the near future. Succession planning is crucial and urgent if the School is to maintain its strengths in the years ahead. There is also an urgent need to appoint more senior people to advocate for their subjects and to provide academic leadership in them. Senior appointments in folklore, dialectology, Old Irish, Early Modern/Modern Irish and Welsh should be made to replace staff who have recently left or will retire in the coming years.
- 3.5 Maintaining a balance between traditional core research areas and new fields on the one hand, and between traditional research publication and new forms of

dissemination of research results on the other, is a challenge that the Head of School has met with judicious appointments. Succession planning is needed to ensure that this balance is maintained into the future.

- 3.6 The School has been innovative and very successful in identifying opportunities for growth and has appointed four new staff members since 2015. Irish Studies is a clear attraction for visiting students, especially from North America, and was recently re-located within the School. The appointment of a lecturer in Modern Irish with responsibility for Irish Studies is a smart investment in this area.
- 3.7 The establishment of Lárionad de Bhaldraithe has allowed for the development of specific expertise and skill sets. Its MA Scríobh agus Cumarsáid na Gaeilge is at the centre of its activities, with specialisms in translation, law and translation, and journalism. The current director of the centre is a specialist in translation. This emphasis is wise in the context of an external climate that offers great opportunities in the field of translation - arising especially from the Official Languages Act of 2003 and from the expiry of the derogation of Irish as an official working language of the EU in 2022.
- 3.8 The new BCL Law with Irish (which came on-stream in 2017) depends to a significant extent on this same expertise, with the director of Lárionad de Bhaldraithe being the point person for the School.
- 3.9 The appointment of two other staff members is similarly aimed at new opportunities; an educational technologist (the first in the College) and a school administrator charged with events and marketing have both raised the School's profile on social and other media to an impressive level. The School is particularly open to new ideas, has a dynamic profile, and is at the cutting edge in terms of outreach and the use of digital technologies and social media.
- 3.10 A major achievement of the folklore staff is the inscription of the Irish Folklore Commission Collection on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.
- 3.11 The School has a satisfactory gender balance in the academic staff, and a good mix of early-, mid- and late-career scholars. There has, however, been a significant drop in the number of Full Professors since the last review. (So far as we can tell, there were at least four Full Professors in 2012. There is now only one.) Newer appointments have been predominantly female. There is an excellent atmosphere of collegiality and camaraderie in the School, characterised by openness and communication, and staff morale appears to be very good. There is an excellent rapport with students, and staff in their student advisory role have been highly praised.
- 3.12 The high public profile enjoyed by the School reflects very well on the staff and the broader university. This, however, has been hard won; staff — not least the Head of School, but also support and junior staff — have taken on onerous workloads. There is a danger of burnout. While the new School workload model aims to address this issue, it remains a concern. There is a place here for senior academics to mentor younger scholars in managing the various demands on their time and energy as their

career develops. A mentoring scheme is unlikely to be a panacea, however, given the challenges posed by broader structural changes within the academy – e.g. deteriorating staff-student ratios, increasing administrative demands, and a growing culture of work intensification.

- 3.13 Support staff do not have the clear pathways for career advancement of academic staff. Promotion for them must be sought in the wider university, yet their expertise in the Irish language is essential to the work of the School and, indeed, to their own professional identities.
- 3.14 Recent academic appointments have been at the low end of the scale, which is demoralising for well-qualified individuals, undermining motivation, and also making retention a concern; a well-qualified staff member appointed ‘below the bar’ five years ago was recently lost to a better-paid position abroad. It should be possible to allow for rapid progression above the bar for suitably qualified staff, out of a sense of fairness to the individuals and in the best interests of the University in retaining talented staff.

B. Facilities

- 3.15 The School has benefited from the refurbishment of Block A in the Newman Building. Planned in consultation with the staff of the School, the refurbishment has been a resounding success. With offices for the Head of School, administrators and most of the staff, it also has a dedicated space for graduate students and tutors, and work pods for student study. One enters the School passing a bust of Douglas Hyde, the first professor of Modern Irish in UCD, and a display case with research materials and original documents, juxtaposing a revered academic tradition with the contemporary feel of the suite, and creating an attractive and vibrant space that helps to build the School’s distinct identity. The University should be congratulated for the superb standard of this renovation. It is recommended that Block B, in which the School has facilities, should soon be refurbished as well. An important part of those facilities is the Teanglann, which is a major resource for language teaching in the School and which contains the Seomra Caidrimh, a common room for Irish speakers that is very popular both with students and staff.

Commendations

- 3.16 The dynamic profile of the School and its culture of camaraderie and collegiality.
- 3.17 Gender balance and the good mix of early-, mid- and late career staff.
- 3.18 Innovative appointments in new areas of research, digital technologies and outreach.
- 3.19 The development of a vibrant space that builds and exhibits the distinctive identity of the School.

- 3.20 The Seomra Caidrimh and the Teanglann are excellent resources for promoting the School's mission among students and the wider university community.

Recommendations

- 3.21 That senior appointments be made in folklore, dialectology, Old Irish, Early/Modern/Modern Irish and Welsh as staff retire so that UCD can retain its traditional pre-eminence in these fields and at the same time meet its obligations with regard to custodianship of national heritage.
- 3.22 That further steps be taken to protect and nurture junior and support staff – e.g. career pathways, workload management, mentoring, and space for research - and to facilitate suitably qualified junior academic staff in rapidly progressing beyond the bar.
- 3.23 That the refurbishment of School facilities be extended to Block B and the Teanglann.
- 3.24 The School should monitor the staffing situation on an ongoing basis and consider recruiting at least one additional support staff member, resources permitting.

4. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

General Comments and Context

- 4.1 A strong commitment to excellence in teaching, learning, and assessment is central to the vision of the School, which is manifested in the day-to-day experiences of the staff and students therein. There is a wide range of exemplars of good practice across each of the disciplines that contribute to the diverse offering of the School. The overall educational experience is enhanced through excellent learning support mechanisms and the provision of a learning environment that is multi-faceted, holistically rich, and student-centred.
- 4.2 The traditional interdisciplinary make-up of the School has been further enhanced with the assimilation of the Irish Studies provision. This initiative has not only provided a vital additional income stream but has added an extra dimension to the language and folklore strengths of the area. It also means that there is a welcome language focus to the Irish Studies offering.
- 4.3 This change in the constitution of the School might warrant a reconsideration of the School name at some point in the future, in order to maximise the positive message associated with this multifaceted provision.

Commendations

- 4.4 Significant efforts have been made to create learning and teaching spaces that accentuate the identity of the discipline and its unique heritage within the context of UCD. The display of elements of the National Folklore Collection alongside the bust of Douglas Hyde in the entrance space make an immediate statement as to the ethos of the School.
- 4.5 There is strong engagement by staff with a new community of learners and providing an impressive balance with traditional scholarship. The social media dimension ensures the School's connectivity with a wider constituency, offering a vibrant, welcoming approach to the future of cultural stewardship that is not superficial or vacuous.
- 4.6 The commitment of staff to excellent pedagogy - both traditional and modern - is abundantly clear. Learning technologies are employed effectively to enhance the learning experience, while text-based scholarship is also fostered in an appropriate manner.
- 4.7 Best practice in collaborative learning is epitomised by the study pods in the School hub. Every effort has been made to provide an optimal environment that is conducive to learning.
- 4.8 There is clear evidence of a positive staff-student learning partnership, nurtured both formally and informally, to ensure a high-quality learning experience for all. In particular, the additional support provided by the Director of An Teanglann and the School Manager/Administrator are examples of best practice that could be replicated at other institutions.
- 4.9 The emphasis placed on learning outcomes and overall student experience is very well received. There were some compelling testimonies from students and very favourable comparisons with cognate areas.
- 4.10 Extensive efforts have been made to ensure equitable teaching and assessment allocations via the inception of a School-specific workload model. This also supports the culture of research-led teaching, providing sabbatical opportunities for staff across the School.
- 4.11 The School's moderation policy might be considered unusual and somewhat ahead of the game. This admirable approach is having a positive impact on the assessment experiences of students in the School.
- 4.12 External examiners in the School are international scholars in their respective fields - an approach which is in line with the recommendations of the last report and which enhances institutional reputation.

Recommendations

- 4.13 The completion of Block B is in line with the impactful environment of the already refurbished areas of the School. The provision of excellent learning spaces is key to the continued upward trajectory of the learning experience in this area.
- 4.14 Some future consideration might be given to the School name in light of the recent re- alignment of Irish Studies with this area and the development of Celtic civilisation.
- 4.15 Further development and implementation of the School-specific workload model might continue to nurture the culture of equity and transparency that has been effectively instilled.

5. Curriculum Development and Review

General Comments and Context

- 5.1 The School has undergone a period of significant change since the last QA review, with a number of staff members retiring and the appointment of new personnel. While this has resulted in the loss of extensive experience and significant expertise in specific areas, the addition of new members of staff has enabled the curriculum to develop in new directions. Moreover, new recruits have brought alternative skillsets and an obvious dynamism to the School.
- 5.2 The incorporation of Irish Studies within the School has proved to be a significant success in terms of international student recruitment figures and their associated financial impact. This has been achieved while preserving the traditional ethos of the School, with Irish as the lingua franca for the majority of operations. This is important given the national and international profile of the School.
- 5.3 The School continues to deliver teaching and scholarship of the highest order across the broad spectrum of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore. The breadth of this offering must be cherished and supported as the curricular provision continues to develop, facilitated in future by specialist appointments in both teaching and research. Appointments of specialist technical and administrative staff have been significant in nurturing the positive environment now evident across the School. Ensuring that a shared vision exists across these discipline areas is essential going forward, and impressive progress is already evident in this regard.
- 5.4 The national and international reputation of the Irish language and folklore provisions within the School has been further enhanced through the adoption of collaborative pedagogy and work-based learning. These co-exist alongside traditional text-based scholarship and archival activity. The internship opportunities afforded to students,

in particular those with the European Commission, offer a richly practical experience as part of taught programmes.

- 5.5 The language-specific curricula incorporate best practice in traditional and new pedagogy, leveraging digital technologies to provide a rich learning environment, whether classroom-based or via virtual learning environment. The continued emphasis on time spent in the Gaeltacht as part of the core curriculum is also praiseworthy.
- 5.6 While the diversity in linguistic capacity of school-leavers continues to present challenges for institutions across this sector in bridging the gap for new students and managing their transition to tertiary level, the growth of the Irish-medium sector both North and South presents both new challenges and opportunities.
- 5.7 The continued delivery of less widely taught aspects of Celtic languages and civilisation are in keeping with the School's pre-eminent position in this area.

Commendations

- 5.8 The provision of excellent research-informed teaching in key areas across the broad spectrum of course offerings, thus sustaining specialist research and scholarship through their utilisation in taught programmes. That the learning and teaching environment is enhanced by the cyclical granting of research sabbaticals (and subsequent dissemination to peers) is also commendable.
- 5.9 The assimilation of Irish Studies within the School adds a welcome new dimension to the curriculum and offers significant potential in terms of global engagement and international student recruitment.
- 5.10 Previous concerns with regard to language-specific modules in each semester of the Nua-Ghaeilge programme have been addressed satisfactorily, ensuring continuity in the language acquisition and enhancement experience of students throughout their course of study.
- 5.11 The comprehensive application of new pedagogies is commendable, ensuring curriculum renewal is appropriate to industry and sectoral requirements. The ingenuity in creating internship opportunities, both at home and abroad, is reflective of the commitment of staff to excellence in student experience and graduate employability.
- 5.12 The retention of traditional strengths in Folklore, Old Irish, Welsh, and Celtic civilisation provides vital pathways for postgraduate and doctoral research projects for BA graduates in the School. Such strands are crucial for ensuring that graduates have a range of specialisms at their disposal when considering postgraduate research options.

- 5.13 The incorporation of student and employer feedback in the curriculum renewal process is reflected in the revised syllabus - e.g. a language-specific module is now delivered in each semester of the BA Modern Irish.
- 5.14 Continued investment in, and recruitment of, key staff is necessary to facilitate curriculum reform and an increased emphasis on digital learning. The added value of the Educational Technologist to the learning experience extends to the upskilling of academic staff and the online visibility of the School and discipline.

Recommendations

- 5.15 It is vital that the School should seek to preserve its multilingual approach to Celtic Studies which provides vital context to the Irish and Folklore provisions, not to mention the international significance of this approach since the assimilation of Irish Studies. The danger of a further narrowing of the Celtic offering in traditional areas (Welsh, Breton and Scottish Gaelic language and literature) must be countered through appropriate staffing and perhaps via the future rotation of scholars and scholarship with partner institutions. The fostering of the international and cosmopolitan dimensions of the Celtic Studies curriculum must continue.
- 5.16 There remains (since the previous Quality Review) a certain sense of autonomy of the disparate units within the School. While significant steps have been taken (including the co-location of staff) the forthcoming physical changes to Block B may present an additional opportunity to bring together all staff across the School in a synergistic manner. This could further improve the collaborative approach to curriculum development and promote additional inter-disciplinarity in this area.
- 5.17 The need to stretch students who already possess an exceptionally high level of linguistic capacity at the start of the programme was articulated in some student feedback. This might be addressed through greater utilisation of the research specialisms of staff in the School, encouraging students to engage in aspects of textual scholarship at an earlier stage in undergraduate study.
- 5.18 The challenge of teaching Irish in the current context (from ab initio, to Gaelscoil product, to highly competent native speaker) is admirably embraced at present. The role of the Educational Technologist and the Teanglann are both vital in this regard, while the Seomra Caidrimh provides a pivotal social dimension in this space. The place of language tuition at the core of the curriculum should continue in order to ensure that graduates continue to be industry ready.
- 5.19 Although challenges remain around the Gaeltacht residential experience, it is vital that this element of the Irish language curriculum is retained and developed insofar as possible. Work-based learning opportunities in Gaeltachts might play a more extensive role in this going forward, while a Gaeltacht semester is currently being considered by other institutions. The cognitive benefits of this immersive experience far outweigh the associated financial constraints and challenges.

- 5.20 While there is good evidence of healthy interaction with employers and the Irish language sector, it is vital that such engagement is sustained in conducting future curriculum renewal to ensure that specific public-sector and industry needs (e.g. editorial capacity for An Gúm etc.) are addressed in learning outcomes and graduate qualities. Alignment of taught programmes and graduate qualities to ensure readiness for work in translation, broadcasting, and editorial sectors (e.g. the MA Scríobh agus Cumarsáid) are impressive and provide an exemplar for other programmes.

6. Research Activity

General Comments and Context

- 6.1 Since the 2012 Review, the School has established a School Research Policy and a Research Leave Rota for each member of the academic staff to take a semester's leave. The institution of research seminars by staff returned from research leave has been reported as being very helpful in disseminating research results and encouraging debate within the School.
- 6.2 There is an active School Research Committee, chaired by the School's Research and Innovation Officer, who represents the School at College level on matters of research and innovation and organises a research seminar in the School each semester.
- 6.3 The School has been innovative in planning and disseminating its research internally and externally in novel ways. Its involvement in research and outreach activities associated with the Decade of Commemorations is highly commendable. Public engagement includes the traditional seminar series 'Ó Thrácht go Twitter' and annual or bi-annual lectures dedicated to Douglas Hyde, Osborn Bergin, Máirtín Ó Cadhain and Bo Almqvist. The annual Conference on Folklore and Ethnology has become the key event in Ireland in this field. The School recently led a major international conference on the Global Irish Diaspora (in collaboration with the Clinton Institute and the School of Archaeology). The School is central to a lot of new research plans in the College to do with topics such as migration and diaspora.
- 6.4 The staff of the School carry out research in an exceptionally wide range of fields. Research covers areas such as the study of medieval, early modern and modern literature and the editing and publication of manuscript texts – a key strength of the School now and in the past – as well as dialectology, folklore and popular culture, Scottish Gaelic and Welsh language and literature, cultural history, translation studies, journalism, sport history, art criticism, and so forth. In many of these research areas School staff have built up unrivalled expertise and are without peer, publishing work of international significance. Research output is high: since 2014, publications include 13 books or edited volumes (with five in progress or forthcoming), 75 book chapters and journal articles and 156 other publications. Considering that in the School there are thirteen academic staff, this is very satisfactory.

- 6.5 There is evidence to suggest that the research metrics (and associated language) used by the University may impact negatively on the research practices, culture and achievements of some School staff. For instance, the emphasis on ranked journal articles and research grants as proxies for research 'productivity' may marginalise the work of scholars whose main research activity involves the editing of texts.
- 6.6 The School has been quite successful in securing funding from external sources that include the Government/HEA and IRC. Strategic thinking has played a commendable role in this regard, especially with the School's active contribution to Decade of Centenaries events.

Commendations

- 6.7 A productive research culture in both traditional and growth areas.
- 6.8 An innovative School research policy.
- 6.9 In many key research areas School staff have built up unrivalled expertise and are at the top of their fields.
- 6.10 New pedagogical and social media outreach activities have helped to disseminate the research of the School to much wider audiences.
- 6.11 Successful securing of research funding.

Recommendations

- 6.12 Protect, with senior appointments in these areas as current faculty retire, the key traditional areas of expertise, on which the reputation of UCD in Irish Language and Literature, Folklore and Celtic Studies (especially Old Irish) has rested for generations.
- 6.13 The School should continue to ensure there are resources and supports for all academic staff members to carry out research (e.g. internal and external mentoring of staff, workload management, support for staff in developing research networks and profile.) The University should help in this regard: the small allowance provided for research travel, for example, hardly promotes a vigorous research culture.
- 6.14 The University should be sensitive to the distinctive nature and value of the scholarly contributions of the School's disciplines. In particular, it is important to be attentive to the cultural effects of the practices and language used in promoting specific forms of research 'productivity' University-wide, and the associated dangers of marginalising important areas of scholarship.
- 6.15 Formally acknowledge the special relationship that exists between the School and the National Folklore Collection and the Dialect Archive.

7. Management of Quality and Enhancement

General Comments and Context

- 7.1 Issues of quality and enhancement appear to figure very prominently within the work culture of the School. There is evidence of sustained organisational innovation in recent years and the atmosphere within the School has a very vibrant and progressive feel to it. Many of the issues relating to the management of quality and enhancement have been highlighted elsewhere within this document, and significant progress has been made in this area since the last QA review. Perhaps the most important challenge now is to capitalise on the great energy and effort invested in recent years, with a view to sustaining the positive culture that has been cultivated. Moreover, it is vital to ensure that there is clarity about the strategic priorities of the School so that this energy is invested prudently.

Commendations

- 7.2 The seriousness with which the School has engaged with the findings of the last Quality Review does all involved great credit.
- 7.3 The new moderation policy, and the provision of training support for tutors, illustrates the seriousness with which the quality and enhancement of teaching and learning are taken.
- 7.4 The new committee structure appears to have significantly improved communication within the School. The Teaching and Learning Committee and Staff-Student Committee provide valuable fora for ongoing curriculum review. There appear to be strong connections with external stakeholders and alumni. There is also a School Research Officer and Research Committee in place.
- 7.5 There is evidence of good, productive, ongoing dialogue between School staff and students. Students described feeling part of a community and found staff very open and approachable.
- 7.6 The School has proactively engaged with the recent University-wide Curriculum Review and Enhancement.
- 7.7 The School appears to take feedback from its four subject external examiners very seriously, with formal actions taken to address issues that are highlighted by them.

Recommendations

- 7.8 It may be timely to devote some more attention to mechanisms for encouraging ongoing conversations about the broader strategic direction of School - specifically in areas such as academic recruitment, succession planning, development of disciplines, and internationalisation.

8. Support Services

General Comments and Context

- 8.1 The School has excellent relationships at College and university level with units such as UCD Research, UCD Library and the Humanities Institute to name but a few. The College Principal is particularly supportive of, and engaged with, the School's activities. Staff also feel well-supported by the UCD Library and actively engage with Library support services, as evidenced by the Library's involvement in the 'Seoda Scripte' exhibition, for example.
- 8.2 There are sufficient structures in place to support current School activities and student learning. The atmosphere within the School is collegial and it was clear that both staff and students are passionate about their work and feel a sense of loyalty to the School.
- 8.3 Support staff within the School are excellent. They are clearly committed to the School and prepared to go above and beyond to ensure its success. However, the Review Group was concerned about the risk of burnout, particularly as the activities of the School continue to expand and workloads continue to increase. A related issue concerns the lack of progression routes for some key support staff within the School.
- 8.4 On the recommendation of the previous quality review, the School established a committee structure comprising 13 committees, a welcome development which has provided greater structure and clarity around roles and responsibilities. The position of educational technologist was also introduced on the recommendation of the last Quality Review and has facilitated a range of innovations across teaching and learning activities in particular; for instance, training videos for staff and students and in-house workshops.
- 8.5 The facilities within the School offer excellent academic and pastoral supports to students, particularly the dedicated language spaces provided by the Teanglann and Seomra Caidrimh. The Seomra Caidrimh, which was described as the 'heart' of the School, is used effectively to develop language skills and foster social interaction. The School also engages in staff-student fora and there is a web-based student hub to help students feel part of the academic community. Many staff members also provide pastoral care to students on an informal basis.
- 8.6 The School has put in place a range of strategies to promote student retention. For instance, staff run Results Advisory Sessions to deal with extenuating circumstances

and participate in College-level Subject Advisory sessions to discuss student progression. The School also has Year 1 and Year 2-3 coordinators who report on students who have failed modules.

- 8.7 The School provides a range of supports for student tutors, including a dedicated room in which to work and meet students. Training sessions are also provided and tutors are encouraged to take the UCD Tutors' module (which awards credits).
- 8.8 While students feel very well-supported within the School, a number of issues were raised around career skills, grading criteria and language training for tutors. Additionally, there are currently no supports in the UCD Library Writing Centre for students working through Irish, which has the potential to disadvantage such students compared to other UCD students.

Commendations

- 8.9 The School's healthy relationships with colleagues across UCD ensures that it is well-supported in its activities. The School's excellent working relationship with the College Principal deserves particular mention.
- 8.10 The Review Group was impressed by the work ethic, dedication and creativity of support staff within the School. Their work has enhanced the School's activities in many areas, most notably in the areas of educational technology, marketing and communication, and language skills.
- 8.11 The appointment of an educational technologist is particularly commendable and has ensured that technology is embedded within the teaching and research activities of the School.
- 8.12 The School's commitment to creating a student-centred learning environment and providing pastoral care to students is impressive. The success of these efforts is evident in the strong sense of community experienced by both staff and students.
- 8.13 Another particular strength is the appointment of special coordinators to deal with students who have failed modules, an initiative that is likely to aid student retention and progression.

Recommendations

- 8.14 It is recommended that the School, in conjunction with the College and University, devise career progression routes for support staff; for instance, identifying and facilitating training and development opportunities to support long-term career goals and identifying potential career paths, ideally within the School itself or alternatively within UCD.

- 8.15 The establishment of an Irish Hub is under consideration and it is recommended that this proposal be explored further, resources permitting.
- 8.16 While existing student supports are excellent, it is recommended that the School consider additional avenues to provide students with career skills training/guidance as well as feedback on grading decisions. Opportunities to provide tutors with additional language training should also be explored.
- 8.17 Although UCD has a shared space policy, it is recommended that An Teaglann be preserved as a dedicated space for the Irish language.

9. Collaborative Educational Provision

General Comments and Context

- 9.1 Given its multi-disciplinary ethos, a commitment to collaborative educational provision is vital to the School's success. The School is performing very well in this regard, which has created challenges as well as opportunities. In particular, it is vital that all such activities are adequately resourced and financially viable into the future.
- 9.2 The number of formal partnerships/exchange arrangements with European universities has increased substantially in recent years and the School has developed informal partnerships with other universities, including some in the USA. A number of these informal partnerships are currently being formalised. International student numbers are beginning to increase, and staff and students are participating in exchanges via Erasmus and other funded schemes.
- 9.3 Following the last Quality Review, it is now standard practice to appoint international external examiners for doctoral theses.
- 9.4 Staff are involved in a range of innovative research collaborations within the University and beyond, including joint seminars, funding applications and exhibitions as well as co-authored works and media engagement.
- 9.5 Examples of collaborative educational provision include the School's assumption of responsibility for the multi-disciplinary Irish Studies programmes in 2015 and the new joint Law with Irish degree, established in 2017. Some challenges have arisen in relation to the management of timetabling and assessment deadlines across multiple Schools and Colleges, though this is a common issue across the University.
- 9.6 The School has also established a number of innovative collaborative educational activities with external stakeholders, most notably a government-funded internship/work placement scheme which is open to students on selected MA programmes and which offers a wide range of placement types. One example of good

practice in this area was the delivery of a skills-based module by an employer/internship provider as part of the course curriculum.

- 9.7 The School plans to increase staff and student mobility in the coming years. Several barriers to increasing staff and student mobility came to light during discussions, including language proficiency and the lack of appropriate English language courses overseas (though these issues are arguably not unique to this School). Students in particular felt that more detailed information about specific Erasmus opportunities (e.g. module choices) would be helpful.
- 9.8 Collaborative educational activities are extremely beneficial to the School but are also resource intensive. While the School is currently managing the workload associated with these activities, there is a risk that significant increases in internship and/or Erasmus numbers will unduly burden staff.

Commendations

- 9.9 The development of the student placement/internship scheme for selected MA students is commendable. The scheme is well-structured, effectively integrated into the curriculum, attractive to employers and students, and well-monitored.
- 9.10 The School also makes good use of visiting, adjunct and external academic staff to facilitate collaborative educational practices. For instance, visitors are asked to deliver public lectures and engage in research supervision.
- 9.11 A member of staff has recently been appointed as the Vice-Principal of Global Engagement, which will ensure that the School has a key role in developing the internationalisation strategy at College level and has the potential to enhance the School's knowledge base and skills in this area.

Recommendations

- 9.12 It is recommended that the School develop a coherent internationalisation strategy to ensure that resources are focused on the most promising partnership opportunities.
- 9.13 Relatedly, it is recommended that the School develop a strategic policy around staff and student mobility to ensure that resources are targeted at high-quality opportunities that have the potential to enrich the academic life of the School.
- 9.14 It is recommended that the staffing situation be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that collaborative educational activities remain adequately resourced and financially viable.

- 9.15 It is important to ensure that internships are as beneficial to the employer as the student, and it is recommended that students are equipped with the requisite skills to work in the partner organisations as part of their coursework.

10. External Relations

General Comments and Context

- 10.1 The School is outward-looking and has developed extremely positive and productive working relationships with internal and external stakeholders. However, concerns were expressed about the recent transfer of the National Folklore Collection from the School to the Library, which has created a sense of loss and uncertainty about the future of the Collection. The Review Group acknowledges these concerns but also recognises that the transfer creates new opportunities, including the chance to conserve the collection in line with best practice in the field.
- 10.2 Nevertheless, the transfer of the National Folklore Collection means that relationships with the Library will have to be nurtured more carefully into the future. The custodianship of these internationally important heritage collections remains a wider UCD responsibility to a large extent dependent on the skills, expertise and experience of members of the School, for whom they provide a key research focus. The custodianship of other important national heritage collections (e.g. the Mícheál Ó Cléirigh Institute in UCD, the National Museum of Ireland, Country Life and the Royal Irish Academy) also depends on the training that the School, one of the select few such institutions in the country, provides.
- 10.3 As a valuable and important national collection, the National Folklore Collection could be used more effectively as a promotional tool for the School, College and University. The materials posted on the Dúchas.ie website are extremely useful in this regard but there is scope for increasing the accessibility and visibility of the National Folklore Collection within the Library as well as through public exhibitions (permanent or temporary). Efforts are currently underway to digitise and create a permanent space for the National Folklore Collection within UCD.
- 10.4 The School regularly holds high-quality and impactful events and many of these events are collaborative in nature; for instance, the School led the global Irish Diaspora Congress in 2017 in collaboration with the UCD Clinton Institute and the School of Archaeology.
- 10.5 Teaching and research activities are disseminated through a variety of outlets; for instance, the School uses innovative technologies, such as Soundcloud, to promote its work. The School also seems to be taking full advantage of the Decade of Centenaries to enhance its outreach activities and generate opportunities for collaboration.

- 10.6 The School's bilingual website is engaging, informative and accessible. Most notably, it contains Soundcloud recordings of guest lectures and a daily 'video snippet' to celebrate Bliain na Gaeilge which can be viewed by worldwide audiences.

Commendations

- 10.7 The School's strong relationships with internal stakeholders have created opportunities for innovative collaborative work with the Library and Special Collections in particular. A notable highlight is the inscription of the Irish Folklore Commission Collection to the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.
- 10.8 The School actively engages with key external stakeholders in academia, the Government and the media as well as with prospective employers and the general public. It was clear from discussions with alumni and employers/partners that the School is held in high regard.
- 10.9 The creative and varied dissemination strategies employed by the School are highly commendable, particularly the use of technology to support and promote research and teaching activities as well as the Irish language.
- 10.10 The School is also to be commended for its high-quality and impactful events, particularly the newly established Hyde lecture series.
- 10.11 The School's continued engagement in commemoration events since 2016 and the launch of Bliain na Gaeilge in 2018 is commendable and has contributed to the profile and reputation of the School.

Recommendations

- 10.12 While positive relationships currently exist between the School and Library in respect of the National Folklore Collection, the Review Group recommends that this relationship be formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding.
- 10.13 It is recommended that the School, in collaboration with the Library and the University, explore opportunities to source philanthropic donations to support the digitisation and conservation of this valuable collection. It is the Group's view that the National Folklore Collection be re-housed in an appropriate setting as a matter of urgency.
- 10.14 There is scope to further promote the research being conducted by staff, particularly through the technological resources available to the School; for instance, internal staff seminars could be uploaded to Soundcloud.
- 10.15 While the School has established avenues for communicating with alumni, it is recommended that a proactive and strategic policy around alumni engagement be

developed to increase their connection to and engagement with the School and other graduates.

- 10.16 Space permitting, the School might explore ways to encourage greater use of the Seomra Caidrimh by other Irish speakers within the University (including staff), as a means of building a broader community.

UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore – Full List of Commendations and Recommendations

This Appendix contains a full list of commendations and recommendations made by the Review Group for the UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore, 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)*

2. Organisation and Management

Commendations

- 2.6 The School's staff - academic and administrative - is to be commended for its energy, dedication and effort in improving so much about the organisation and management of the School since the last review.
- 2.7 The Head of School is to be commended for her leadership, commitment, and collegiality in overseeing the development of new structures and practices that have contributed to cultivating an effective and dynamic School environment that engages staff and students.
- 2.8 The new committee structures, and recently developed policies around workload management and research leave, seem to be working well.
- 2.9 The organising mission of the School is clearly articulated.

Recommendations

- 2.10 The RG recommends that more attention be devoted to managing the workload of staff, particularly more junior academics and support staff. Moreover, thought should be given to facilitating career progression opportunities that are commensurate with the contributions that individuals are making. The broader University has an important role to play in finding solutions to address these issues.
- 2.11 The RG recommends that time be set aside for more formalised and focused strategic conversations around the future development of the School and the relative prioritisation of different areas. In particular, these conversations should encompass the continued development of important academic specialties, succession planning for the Head of School, policies and priorities around internationalisation, and opportunities around the National Folklore collection and other national cultural assets.

3. Staff and Facilities

Commendations

- 3.16 The dynamic profile of the School and its culture of camaraderie and collegiality.
- 3.17 Gender balance and the good mix of early-, mid- and late career staff.
- 3.18 Innovative appointments in new areas of research, digital technologies and outreach.
- 3.19 The development of a vibrant space that builds and exhibits the distinctive identity of the School.
- 3.20 The Seomra Caidrimh and the Teanglann are excellent resources for promoting the School's mission among students and the wider university community.

Recommendations

- 3.21 That senior appointments be made in folklore, dialectology, Old Irish, Early/Modern/Modern Irish and Welsh as staff retire so that UCD can retain its traditional pre-eminence in these fields and at the same time meet its obligations with regard to custodianship of national heritage.
- 3.22 That further steps be taken to protect and nurture junior and support staff – e.g. career pathways, workload management, mentoring, and space for research - and to facilitate suitably qualified junior academic staff in rapidly progressing beyond the bar.
- 3.23 That the refurbishment of School facilities be extended to Block B and the Teanglann.
- 3.24 The School should monitor the staffing situation on an ongoing basis and consider recruiting at least one additional support staff member, resources permitting.

4. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Commendations

- 4.4 Significant efforts have been made to create learning and teaching spaces that accentuate the identity of the discipline and its unique heritage within the context of UCD. The display of elements of the National Folklore Collection alongside the bust of Douglas Hyde in the entrance space make an immediate statement as to the ethos of the School.
- 4.5 There is strong engagement by staff with a new community of learners and providing an impressive balance with traditional scholarship. The social media dimension

ensures the School's connectivity with a wider constituency, offering a vibrant, welcoming approach to the future of cultural stewardship that is not superficial or vacuous.

- 4.6 The commitment of staff to excellent pedagogy - both traditional and modern - is abundantly clear. Learning technologies are employed effectively to enhance the learning experience, while text-based scholarship is also fostered in an appropriate manner.
- 4.7 Best practice in collaborative learning is epitomised by the study pods in the School hub. Every effort has been made to provide an optimal environment that is conducive to learning.
- 4.8 There is clear evidence of a positive staff-student learning partnership, nurtured both formally and informally, to ensure a high-quality learning experience for all. In particular, the additional support provided by the Director of An Teaglann and the School Manager/Administrator are examples of best practice that could be replicated at other institutions.
- 4.9 The emphasis placed on learning outcomes and overall student experience is very well received. There were some compelling testimonies from students and very favourable comparisons with cognate areas.
- 4.10 Extensive efforts have been made to ensure equitable teaching and assessment allocations via the inception of a School-specific workload model. This also supports the culture of research-led teaching, providing sabbatical opportunities for staff across the School.
- 4.11 The School's moderation policy might be considered unusual and somewhat ahead of the game. This admirable approach is having a positive impact on the assessment experiences of students in the School.
- 4.12 External examiners in the School are international scholars in their respective fields - an approach which is in line with the recommendations of the last report and which enhances institutional reputation.

Recommendations

- 4.13 The completion of Block B is in line with the impactful environment of the already refurbished areas of the School. The provision of excellent learning spaces is key to the continued upward trajectory of the learning experience in this area.
- 4.14 Some future consideration might be given to the School name in light of the recent re- alignment of Irish Studies with this area and the development of Celtic civilisation.

- 4.15 Further development and implementation of the School-specific workload model might continue to nurture the culture of equity and transparency that has been effectively instilled.

5. Curriculum Development and Review

Commendations

- 5.8 The provision of excellent research-informed teaching in key areas across the broad spectrum of course offerings, thus sustaining specialist research and scholarship through their utilisation in taught programmes. That the learning and teaching environment is enhanced by the cyclical granting of research sabbaticals (and subsequent dissemination to peers) is also commendable.
- 5.9 The assimilation of Irish Studies within the School adds a welcome new dimension to the curriculum and offers significant potential in terms of global engagement and international student recruitment.
- 5.10 Previous concerns with regard to language-specific modules in each semester of the Nua-Ghaeilge programme have been addressed satisfactorily, ensuring continuity in the language acquisition and enhancement experience of students throughout their course of study.
- 5.11 The comprehensive application of new pedagogies is commendable, ensuring curriculum renewal is appropriate to industry and sectoral requirements. The ingenuity in creating internship opportunities, both at home and abroad, is reflective of the commitment of staff to excellence in student experience and graduate employability.
- 5.12 The retention of traditional strengths in Folklore, Old Irish, Welsh, and Celtic civilisation provides vital pathways for postgraduate and doctoral research projects for BA graduates in the School. Such strands are crucial for ensuring that graduates have a range of specialisms at their disposal when considering postgraduate research options.
- 5.13 The incorporation of student and employer feedback in the curriculum renewal process is reflected in the revised syllabus - e.g. a language-specific module is now delivered in each semester of the BA Modern Irish.
- 5.14 Continued investment in, and recruitment of, key staff is necessary to facilitate curriculum reform and an increased emphasis on digital learning. The added value of the Educational Technologist to the learning experience extends to the upskilling of academic staff and the online visibility of the School and discipline.

Recommendations

- 5.15 It is vital that the School should seek to preserve its multilingual approach to Celtic Studies which provides vital context to the Irish and Folklore provisions, not to mention the international significance of this approach since the assimilation of Irish Studies. The danger of a further narrowing of the Celtic offering in traditional areas (Welsh, Breton and Scottish Gaelic language and literature) must be countered through appropriate staffing and perhaps via the future rotation of scholars and scholarship with partner institutions. The fostering of the international and cosmopolitan dimensions of the Celtic Studies curriculum must continue.
- 5.16 There remains (since the previous Quality Review) a certain sense of autonomy of the disparate units within the School. While significant steps have been taken (including the co-location of staff) the forthcoming physical changes to Block B may present an additional opportunity to bring together all staff across the School in a synergistic manner. This could further improve the collaborative approach to curriculum development and promote additional inter-disciplinarity in this area.
- 5.17 The need to stretch students who already possess an exceptionally high level of linguistic capacity at the start of the programme was articulated in some student feedback. This might be addressed through greater utilisation of the research specialisms of staff in the School, encouraging students to engage in aspects of textual scholarship at an earlier stage in undergraduate study.
- 5.18 The challenge of teaching Irish in the current context (from ab initio, to Gaelscoil product, to highly competent native speaker) is admirably embraced at present. The role of the Educational Technologist and the Teanglann are both vital in this regard, while the Seomra Caidrimh provides a pivotal social dimension in this space. The place of language tuition at the core of the curriculum should continue in order to ensure that graduates continue to be industry ready.
- 5.19 Although challenges remain around the Gaeltacht residential experience, it is vital that this element of the Irish language curriculum is retained and developed insofar as possible. Work-based learning opportunities in Gaeltachts might play a more extensive role in this going forward, while a Gaeltacht semester is currently being considered by other institutions. The cognitive benefits of this immersive experience far outweigh the associated financial constraints and challenges.
- 5.20 While there is good evidence of healthy interaction with employers and the Irish language sector, it is vital that such engagement is sustained in conducting future curriculum renewal to ensure that specific public-sector and industry needs (e.g. editorial capacity for An Gúm etc.) are addressed in learning outcomes and graduate qualities. Alignment of taught programmes and graduate qualities to ensure readiness for work in translation, broadcasting, and editorial sectors (e.g. the MA

Scríobh agus Cumarsáid) are impressive and provide an exemplar for other programmes.

6. Research Activity

Commendations

- 6.7 A productive research culture in both traditional and growth areas.
- 6.8 An innovative School research policy.
- 6.9 In many key research areas School staff have built up unrivalled expertise and are at the top of their fields.
- 6.10 New pedagogical and social media outreach activities have helped to disseminate the research of the School to much wider audiences.
- 6.11 Successful securing of research funding.

Recommendations

- 6.12 Protect, with senior appointments in these areas as current faculty retire, the key traditional areas of expertise, on which the reputation of UCD in Irish Language and Literature, Folklore and Celtic Studies (especially Old Irish) has rested for generations.
- 6.13 The School should continue to ensure there are resources and supports for all academic staff members to carry out research (e.g. internal and external mentoring of staff, workload management, support for staff in developing research networks and profile.) The University should help in this regard: the small allowance provided for research travel, for example, hardly promotes a vigorous research culture.
- 6.14 The University should be sensitive to the distinctive nature and value of the scholarly contributions of the School's disciplines. In particular, it is important to be attentive to the cultural effects of the practices and language used in promoting specific forms of research 'productivity' University-wide, and the associated dangers of marginalising important areas of scholarship.
- 6.15 Formally acknowledge the special relationship that exists between the School and the National Folklore Collection and the Dialect Archive.

7. Management of Quality and Enhancement

Commendations

- 7.2 The seriousness with which the School has engaged with the findings of the last Quality Review does all involved great credit.
- 7.3 The new moderation policy, and the provision of training support for tutors, illustrates the seriousness with which the quality and enhancement of teaching and learning are taken.
- 7.4 The new committee structure appears to have significantly improved communication within the School. The Teaching and Learning Committee and Staff-Student Committee provide valuable fora for ongoing curriculum review. There appear to be strong connections with external stakeholders and alumni. There is also a School Research Officer and Research Committee in place.
- 7.5 There is evidence of good, productive, ongoing dialogue between School staff and students. Students described feeling part of a community and found staff very open and approachable.
- 7.6 The School has proactively engaged with the recent University-wide Curriculum Review and Enhancement.
- 7.7 The School appears to take feedback from its four subject external examiners very seriously, with formal actions taken to address issues that are highlighted by them.

Recommendations

- 7.8 It may be timely to devote some more attention to mechanisms for encouraging ongoing conversations about the broader strategic direction of School - specifically in areas such as academic recruitment, succession planning, development of disciplines, and internationalisation.

8. Support Services

Commendations

- 8.9 The School's healthy relationships with colleagues across UCD ensures that it is well-supported in its activities. The School's excellent working relationship with the College Principal deserves particular mention.
- 8.10 The Review Group was impressed by the work ethic, dedication and creativity of support staff within the School. Their work has enhanced the School's activities in

many areas, most notably in the areas of educational technology, marketing and communication, and language skills.

- 8.11 The appointment of an educational technologist is particularly commendable and has ensured that technology is embedded within the teaching and research activities of the School.
- 8.12 The School's commitment to creating a student-centred learning environment and providing pastoral care to students is impressive. The success of these efforts is evident in the strong sense of community experienced by both staff and students.
- 8.13 Another particular strength is the appointment of special coordinators to deal with students who have failed modules, an initiative that is likely to aid student retention and progression.

Recommendations

- 8.14 It is recommended that the School, in conjunction with the College and University, devise career progression routes for support staff; for instance, identifying and facilitating training and development opportunities to support long-term career goals and identifying potential career paths, ideally within the School itself or alternatively within UCD.
- 8.15 The establishment of an Irish Hub is under consideration and it is recommended that this proposal be explored further, resources permitting.
- 8.16 While existing student supports are excellent, it is recommended that the School consider additional avenues to provide students with career skills training/guidance as well as feedback on grading decisions. Opportunities to provide tutors with additional language training should also be explored.
- 8.17 Although UCD has a shared space policy, it is recommended that An Teaglann be preserved as a dedicated space for the Irish language.

9. Collaborative Educational Provision

Commendations

- 9.9 The development of the student placement/internship scheme for selected MA students is commendable. The scheme is well-structured, effectively integrated into the curriculum, attractive to employers and students, and well-monitored.
- 9.10 The School also makes good use of visiting, adjunct and external academic staff to facilitate collaborative educational practices. For instance, visitors are asked to deliver public lectures and engage in research supervision.

- 9.11 A member of staff has recently been appointed as the Vice-Principal of Global Engagement, which will ensure that the School has a key role in developing the internationalisation strategy at College level and has the potential to enhance the School's knowledge base and skills in this area.

Recommendations

- 9.12 It is recommended that the School develop a coherent internationalisation strategy to ensure that resources are focused on the most promising partnership opportunities.
- 9.13 Relatedly, it is recommended that the School develop a strategic policy around staff and student mobility to ensure that resources are targeted at high-quality opportunities that have the potential to enrich the academic life of the School.
- 9.14 It is recommended that the staffing situation be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that collaborative educational activities remain adequately resourced and financially viable.
- 9.15 It is important to ensure that internships are as beneficial to the employer as the student, and it is recommended that students are equipped with the requisite skills to work in the partner organisations as part of their coursework.

10. External Relations

Commendations

- 10.7 The School's strong relationships with internal stakeholders have created opportunities for innovative collaborative work with the Library and Special Collections in particular. A notable highlight is the inscription of the Irish Folklore Commission Collection to the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.
- 10.8 The School actively engages with key external stakeholders in academia, the Government and the media as well as with prospective employers and the general public. It was clear from discussions with alumni and employers/partners that the School is held in high regard.
- 10.9 The creative and varied dissemination strategies employed by the School are highly commendable, particularly the use of technology to support and promote research and teaching activities as well as the Irish language.
- 10.10 The School is also to be commended for its high-quality and impactful events, particularly the newly established Hyde lecture series.

- 10.11 The School's continued engagement in commemoration events since 2016 and the launch of Bliain na Gaeilge in 2018 is commendable and has contributed to the profile and reputation of the School.

Recommendations

- 10.12 While positive relationships currently exist between the School and Library in respect of the National Folklore Collection, the Review Group recommends that this relationship be formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding.
- 10.13 It is recommended that the School, in collaboration with the Library and the University, explore opportunities to source philanthropic donations to support the digitisation and conservation of this valuable collection. It is the Group's view that the National Folklore Collection be re-housed in an appropriate setting as a matter of urgency.
- 10.14 There is scope to further promote the research being conducted by staff, particularly through the technological resources available to the School; for instance, internal staff seminars could be uploaded to Soundcloud.
- 10.15 While the School has established avenues for communicating with alumni, it is recommended that a proactive and strategic policy around alumni engagement be developed to increase their connection to and engagement with the School and other graduates.
- 10.16 Space permitting, the School might explore ways to encourage greater use of the Seomra Caidrimh by other Irish speakers within the University (including staff), as a means of building a broader community.

UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore Response to the Review Group Report

The School of Irish Celtic Studies and Folklore would like to express our sincere thanks to the External Review Group for generously agreeing to assist the School with our Quality Review Process. The School was formerly known as the School of Irish, Celtic Studies, Irish Folklore and Linguistics which was formed as part of the UCD restructuring in 2005 which saw an amalgamation of the subject departments in the School title into a larger School structure. It is a multidisciplinary school which has expanded into new areas over the last four years (since 2015). This came about primarily as a result of changes in the structure of the School with Linguistics moving to the School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics and the School of Irish Celtic Studies and Folklore taking responsibility for Irish Studies in 2015. Irish Studies was approved as a subject in 2015 and as a result of the restructuring of this discipline the College Executive approved that Irish Studies will now remain within the School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore with no further rotation within the College. At undergraduate and postgraduate level there is an increased emphasis on research in this area with specific focus on Irish Studies in a global context.

The School welcomes the observations, commendations and recommendations taking particular note of the commendation referring to the transformation of the School since its last Quality Review. This reflects the ethos of the School at present with a cohesive collaborative approach which is inclusive and mindful of the diversity within our disciplines and staffing cohort. While maintaining the integrity of all four disciplines is a priority the nature of these disciplines has opened many opportunities for interdisciplinary research, teaching and outreach activities which have been to the benefit of the overall working of the School. The recognition of the increase in the use of modern technologies in many guises is also welcomed as this has been pivotal in the creation of an enhanced public space.

The acknowledgement of the high level of national and international academic scholarship in the broad spectrum of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore is especially welcome as a School which is and has been an international leader in all of these fields with a strong tradition of scholarship with specific skills and expertise in all of these areas. Furthermore the potential that Irish Studies has added to the School's course provision and research in an international context in particular has been developed with vision and strategic planning since 2015 with much input from all staff. It is satisfying to see that this vision and leadership which involved a considerable investment of time, expertise and teamwork at School and College level was specifically noted in the feedback from the Committee.

The Committee recognise the School's unique position as a steward of extremely valuable cultural assets – in the form of cultural artefacts, knowledge and skills - that are of significant national and international importance. The School accepts that this is a cornerstone which boasts a strong tradition rooted in culture and heritage hailing from the sixth century to present day. The space in the UCD environs has been enhanced in the physical space the School now occupies and the ideology which it presents is now visible as the unique Irish element of UCD. This will always create added value in an Irish university with a strong

external global focus creating an inclusive milieu for all. The Review Committee emphasised the distinct wealth of research material available on campus. The positive and ongoing collaboration with UCD Special Collections and Archives, and the National Folklore Collection is central to research, teaching and outreach activities and we appreciate the support of this continued cooperation.

In response to the prioritised recommendations for improvement by the Review Group the School's initial responses are below:

Prioritised Recommendations for Improvement

1. **Recommendation:** The School should now adopt a renewed focus on articulating its proposed strategic development for the next planning cycle. In particular, issues that merit specific consideration include succession planning, emerging priority areas for scholarship, internationalisation strategy, and the relationship with the National Folklore Collection and other collections.

Response: The School looks forward to adopting a renewed focus on articulating its proposed strategic development for the next planning cycle. Consideration of succession planning has already been initiated with the College Principal and will be further informed by discussion at School meetings and the School Executive. Emerging priority areas for scholarship and internationalisation strategy will be guided by staff input and workshops. Meetings with relevant stakeholders and archival directors will be used to explore the possibilities with UCD research resources/ archives/special collections and the ongoing collaboration with the National Folklore Collection is already being reviewed to maximise the link between the School and the Collection.

2. **Recommendation:** The School should, in collaboration with the College of Social Sciences & Law and the broader University, explore further opportunities to develop and leverage its important role as a steward of national cultural assets.

Response: The School appreciates this recommendation to examine and enhance the added value of these resources as unique cultural assets in the wider context of the University. The School agrees fully and accepts the custodial role it has in the context of the national cultural resources and welcomes the opportunity for further consultation with the wider University community.

3. **Recommendation:** There is a need to protect, with senior appointments as current faculty retire, the key traditional areas of expertise, on which the reputation of UCD in Irish Language and Literature, Folklore and Celtic Studies (especially Old Irish) has rested for generations.

Response: The School concurs with the need to protect the senior appointments on which the reputation of UCD in Irish language and literature, Folklore and Celtic Studies (especially Old Irish) has rested for generations. Since the Review two appointments have already been made via the Central Applications Scheme, one in

Early Irish/ Celtic Civilization and one in Modern Irish with an ERC grant in the School. The recent appointment of an international scholar to Folklore has also been confirmed and this will enhance opportunities for lecturers in these disciplines to plan strategically while releasing time for research activities to increase promotion opportunities in the School. It is also encouraging to note that the Chair in Modern Irish will be filled in 2020 thus protecting the esteemed academic standing of the discipline of Modern Irish. The strategic planning process outlined in Recommendation 1 will include the founding principle of protecting senior appointments.

4. Recommendation: The University should be sensitive to the distinctive nature and value of the scholarly contributions of the School's disciplines. In particular, it is important to be attentive to the cultural effects of the practices and language used in promoting specific forms of research 'productivity' University-wide, and the associated dangers of marginalising important areas of scholarship.

Response: The School welcomes this focus on University support for the distinctive nature and value of the scholarly contributions of the School's disciplines, the cultural effects of the practices and language used in promoting specific forms of research 'productivity' University-wide. The School will plan a meeting with senior management and research to discuss this in the context of protecting the disciplines and avoiding marginalisation. School disciplines have been very proactive in engaging in interdisciplinary research and teaching activity to enhance the outward inclusive vision of the School. The School recognises and appreciates this observation from the Review committee highlighting the need for awareness from the University to ensure that the scholarly contribution of the unique cultural value of its disciplines is rewarded and reflected in University policies and structures.

5. Recommendation: The School should, in collaboration with the College and the University, look again at mechanisms for managing staff workloads and fostering career development opportunities, particularly for junior staff.

Response: The School concurs fully with this recommendation which will be part of the Strategic planning alongside the implementation of the P4G process. While some measures have been implemented recently, the workload model and research rota, for example, possible structured mentoring for junior staff will be assessed. New initiatives have also been announced by HR which will help the assessment of development career progression of administrative and support staff. These will be evaluated in the context of University job families and the implementation of new structures to recalibrate some duties for academic and professional staff. The School will meet with relevant UCD management and HR to discuss the best way forward in this.

UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore

Quality Review Site Visit: 19-22 November 2018

TIMETABLE

Pre-Visit Briefing prior to site visit – Monday 19 November 2018	
17.00-19.00	RG meet to review preliminary issues and to confirm work schedule and assignment of tasks for the site visit – RG and Quality Office only
19.30	Dinner hosted for the RG by the UCD Registrar and Deputy President
Tuesday, November 2018	
09.30-10.00	Private meeting of Review Group (RG)
10.00-10.45	RG meet with Head of School
10.45-11.15	Break
11.15-12.15	RG meet with SAR Co-ordinating Committee
12.15-12.45	RG review key observations and prepare for meeting with students
12.45-13.45	Working lunch with representative group of undergraduate students
13.45-14.15	RG review key observations
14.15-15.30	RG meet with representative group of academic staff- primary focus on Teaching and Learning, and Curriculum
15.30-15.45	RG break
15.45-16.30	RG meet with College Finance Manager and Head of School to outline School's financial position
16.30-16.35	Break
16.35-17.05	RG meet UCD Programme Dean
17.05-17.15	Break
17.15-18.15	Tour of facilities
18.15 -	RG review day and depart
Wednesday, 21 November 2018	
08.45-9.15	Private meeting of RG
9.15-10.00	RG meet relevant support services representatives

10.00-10.20	Break
10.20-11.00	RG meet with representative postgraduate students (taught and research, recent graduates (PG and UG) and post doctorates
11.00-11.15	RG Break
11.15-12.15	RG meet with School Research Committee
12.15-12.30	RG review key observations
12.30-13.30	Lunch – RG meet with employers and external stakeholders
13.30-14.00	RG meet with the University Librarian
14.00-14.15	RG review key observations
14.15-14.45	RG meet with support staff representatives (Admin, technical
14.45-15.00	Break
15.00-15.30	RG meet with recently appointed members of staff
15.30-16.00	RG meet with College Principal, College of Arts and Humanities
16.00-16.15	Break
16.15-17.15	RG available for private individual staff meetings, by request
17.15-18.00	RG private meeting and review key observations
18.00-	RG depart
Thursday, 22 November 2018	
09.000-09.30	Private meeting of RG
09.30-10.30	Optional meeting with HOS/clarification of any outstanding issues
10.30-10.45	Break
10.45-12.00	RG continue draft RG report
12.00-12.30	RG finalise first draft of RG report and preparation of commendations/recommendations
12.30-13.15	Lunch
13.15-13.30	RG meet with College Principal to feedback initial outline commendations and recommendations
13.30-13.45	RG meet with Head of School to feedback initial outline commendations and recommendations
14.00-15.00	Break
15.00	Exit presentation to all staff of unit
15.30	RG depart