



University College Dublin

REVIEW GROUP REPORT

Periodic Quality Review

UCD School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice

June 2018

**Accepted by the UCD Governing Authority at its meeting of
12 December 2018**

Table of Contents

	Key Findings of the Review Group	3
1.	Introduction and Overview of UCD School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice	5
2.	Organisation and Management	9
3.	Staff, Facilities and Resources	11
4.	Teaching and Curriculum	13
5.	Research Activity	15
6.	Management of Quality and Enhancement	17
7.	Support Services	17
8.	External Relations	18
Appendix 1:	Summary of Commendations and Recommendations	
Appendix 2:	UCD School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice Response to the Review Group Report	
Appendix 3:	Schedule for Review Site Visit to UCD School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice	

Key Findings of the Review Group

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

Examples of Good Practice

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

- The management structures employed by the School during the merger period in 2015 significantly supported the effective transition from three different Schools, to a cohesive and coherent School that includes three separate disciplines.
- The School has very dedicated teachers as evidenced by the nomination of 14 faculty for UCD Learning and Teaching Awards.
- The School clearly has a committed team with excellent leadership from the Head of School.
- Undergraduate students feel supported and are positive about their experience in an academic and pastoral context within the School.
- The School has a wide range of research themes and activities with some areas of internationally excellent work.
- The School's NFQ level 7 diploma and certificate programmes are an excellent example of community outreach and strongly support University Strategic Objectives 5, 6 and 7.

Recommendations for Future Improvement

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

- The School, with the support of the College Principal, should develop a strategic vision for the next 5 – 10 years and begin this consultative process as soon as possible.
- As the School continues to develop, and to ensure unity of purpose and integration, consideration should be given to re-evaluation, re-organisation and reconfiguration of leadership roles in the School, including the roles of Director of Teaching and Learning, Director of Research, and Director of Graduate Studies.
- The School needs to explore opportunities to address the imbalance in the number of early-career and late-career faculty. The School could address this imbalance by considering external

recruitment at senior level. While the Review Group supports leadership development through internal promotion, it is not certain that the current UCD promotional process would deliver the required leadership in time to address the challenge posed by imminent retirements.

- A dedicated School Research Strategy should be created to consolidate areas of strength and identify areas of research priority.
- The activities of the research centres should be reviewed and aligned to the School Research Strategy in the context of scope, focus and activities of the School.
- Consideration should be given towards strengthening the Equality Studies Centre by exploring the synergies between equality research and housing research.
- The proposal for the creation of a third research centre (Centre for Welfare State Futures) should be postponed pending the outcomes of the review of centres and the development of the School's strategic plan.

1. Introduction and Overview of UCD School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice

Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a quality review of the School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, University College Dublin, which was undertaken on 5-8 March 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 Universities Act 1997 and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

The Review Process

1.4 Typically, the review model comprises four major elements:

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

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

The Review Group

1.5 The composition of the Review Group for the UCD School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice was as follows:

- Professor Michael Doherty, UCD School of Veterinary Medicine (Chair)
- Assoc. Professor Mary Casey, UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems (Deputy Chair)
- Professor Kenneth Nelson, Swedish Institute for Social Research, University of Stockholm
- Professor Vasilios Ioakimidis, Director, Centre for Social Work, University of Essex

A third external reviewer, Professor Hilary Sommerlad, Professor of Law and Social Justice, University of Leeds, contributed to the work of the Review Group by reviewing documentation provided, drafting preliminary comments, participating in a telephone conference during the site visit and drafting the Review Group Report. Unfortunately, due to flight cancellations because of bad weather, Professor Sommerlad was unable to attend the site visit at UCD.

1.6 The Review Group visited the School from 5-8 March 2018 and held meetings with School staff; undergraduate and postgraduate students; the SAR Co-ordinating Committee; other University staff, including the College Principal. The site visit schedule is included as Appendix 3.

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

Preparation of the Self-assessment Report (SAR)

- 1.8 Following a briefing from the UCD Quality Office, a Self-assessment Report Coordinating Committee (SARCC) was established. Members of the committee, in consultation with staff members and student representatives, drafted sections of the Self-assessment Report. Committee membership was as follows:

Committee Member	SAR Section
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof Michelle Norris – Professor, Head of School (Chair) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction and Context • Organisation and Management • Staff and Facilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof Bryan Fanning – Full Professor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of SWOT and Recommendations for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Ursula Barry – Associate Professor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of Quality and Enhancement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof Jim Campbell – Full Professor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Development and Review • External Relations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Nessa Winston – Associate Professor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Maureen Lyons – Research Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Valerie O’Brien – Assistant Professor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Naonori Kodate – Assistant Professor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Relations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Stephan Koeppel-- Assistant Professor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Development and Review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Karen Smith - Assistant Professor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching, Learning & Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Elizabeth Hassell – School Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and Facilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Margaret McDonnell – Student Representative 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael O’Higgins – Student Representative 	

The Report was proof-read and copy-edited by Dr Aideen Quilty.

- 1.9 The School Manager conducted an audit of all of the information required for the Self-assessment Report and compiled these data. The Co-ordinating Committee met in October and November 2017 and shared information outside these meetings via an online file sharing system. In addition, a dedicated meeting with students’ representatives on the co-ordinating committee was held in December 2017.

- 1.10 The quality review exercise was discussed at three school meetings attended by all faculty and staff between October and December 2017, as well as the administrative team meeting and the School Executive meeting in November 2017. The quality review was also discussed at four faculty/student meetings between October and November 2017.

The University

- 1.11 University College Dublin (UCD) is a large and diverse university whose origins date back to 1854. The University is situated on a large modern campus about 4 km to the south of the centre of Dublin.
- 1.12 The University Strategic Plan (to 2020) states that the University's mission is: "to contribute to the flourishing of Dublin, Ireland, Europe and the world through the excellence and impact of our research and scholarship, the quality of our graduates and our global engagement; providing a supportive community in which every member of the University is enabled to achieve their full potential".

The University is currently organised into six colleges and 37 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
- 1.13 As one of the largest universities on the island of Ireland, UCD supports a broad, deep and rich academic community in Science, Business, Engineering, Health Sciences, Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine, Arts, Law, Celtic Studies and Human Sciences. There are currently more than 26,000 students in our UCD campus (approximately 16,300 undergraduates, 7,800 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 Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice

- 1.14 The School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice was formed in September 2015, bringing together the former Schools of Social Justice and Applied Social Science. Currently the School has 32 members of staff and all except one member of School staff are based in the Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington and Agnes Maguire Buildings. The School's educational technologist post is shared with the School of Education.
- 1.15 The School hosts two research centres: the UCD Equality Studies Centre and Centre for Gender, Feminisms and Sexualities. The Director of the Geary Institute for Public Policy is a member of School staff and a large number of other School staff are fellows of the Institute.
- 1.16 The School offers a diverse range of academic programmes and delivers modules to a number of programmes at all levels, including:
- Bachelor of Social Science (B.Soc.Sc)
 - BCL with Law and Social Justice
 - Elective modules on the UCD Horizons programme
 - Master of Social Science (M.Soc.Sc) (Social Work)
 - MA in Gender Studies
 - MSc in Equality Studies
 - Graduate diplomas in Social Science, Gender Studies and Equality Studies
 - PhD in Social Policy
 - PhD in Social Work
 - PhD in Social Justice
 - The School contributes modules to programmes run by other schools:
 - Four modules to the Master of Public Policy (MPP) programme which is delivered in partnership with a number of Schools in the College of Social Sciences and Law
 - Two modules to the MSc (child protection and welfare) which is run in partnership with the Schools of Nursing and Health Systems and the School of Medicine.
 - The School also runs a comprehensive suite of NFQ level 7 diploma and certificate programmes, targeted at disadvantaged women, communities and groups which have low levels of participation in third level education. These focus on: women's studies, equality studies, social justice, drug and alcohol addiction policy and counselling.

2. Organisation and Management

- 2.1 The School underwent a significant merger in the last two and a half years and has managed this process well. The School strategic plan was appropriate for the transition and the representative and inclusive approach utilised was effective. At this stage in the School's lifecycle, and in the light of planned new developments in the School and University, there is now a need to develop a new School Strategic Plan.
- 2.2 The management structures employed by the School during the merger period significantly supported the effective transition from three different Schools, to a cohesive and coherent School that includes three separate disciplines. This structure includes a School Executive

comprising the Head of School, the three Heads of Subject, and the School Manager. The Heads of Subject are responsible for providing academic leadership in the disciplinary areas within the School, including responsibility for graduate programmes.

- 2.3 The School also has a number of committees, including a Research Committee and a Teaching and Learning Committee. School leadership roles related to these committees include Directors of Teaching and Learning, Research and Graduate Studies.

Commendations

- 2.4 It's a young school (under 3-years) and faculty and staff are commended on their commitment to the School, and to UCD; specifically, their continued commitment and achievement through the development of the School. A manifest collegial environment has been created at a time of restructuring.
- 2.5 The College Principal provided excellent support to the Head of School during the period of transition and continues to engage very positively with the School, encouraging its development.
- 2.6 The School worked and continues to work very hard to be inclusive.
- 2.7 A great deal has been achieved in a short time.
- 2.8 The School clearly has a committed team with excellent leadership from the Head of School.
- 2.9 There is good representation across the College of Social Sciences and Law.
- 2.10 The organisational management structure functioned well during the transition phase.

Recommendations

- 2.11 The School, with the support of the College Principal, should develop a strategic vision for the next 5 – 10 years and begin this consultative process as soon as possible.
- 2.12 As the School continues to develop, and to ensure unity of purpose and integration, consideration should be given to re-evaluation, re-organisation and reconfiguration of leadership roles in the School, including the roles of Director of Teaching and Learning, Director of Research, and Director of Graduate Studies.
- 2.13 Engagement in an “away day” would provide an excellent opportunity to support the review of both the organisational activities and the management of the School. In this context, the Review Group would recommend the following:
- 2.13.1 The School should clearly map out its current structures, processes and procedures. This could involve developing an organogram clearly indicating the interrelations

between the different entities of the School (management structures, committees, centres, disciplines).

- 2.13.2 Terms of Reference for key roles, which include transparency about duties and responsibilities and duration, should be identified and clearly communicated to all School staff.
 - 2.13.3 The School could avail itself of support from University units, for example, UCD Human Resources and UCD Agile, in these mapping and planning exercises.
- 2.14 The School should engage in active succession planning – consider the appointment of a Deputy Head of School as a route to succession planning and to alleviate some of the Head of School’s workload.

3. Staff, Facilities and Resources

Staff

- 3.1 As set out in section 1, the School has 32 members of staff comprising 24 full-time and two part-time faculty, three professional staff and four administrative support staff (including a school manager). Members of academic staff include two full professors, one professor, three associate professors, sixteen lecturers/assistant professors and one teaching fellow. Professional staff roles include a research manager, one part-time outreach director and a part-time educational technologist (shared with the School of Education). Two staff members and four faculty are within five years of retirement.
- 3.2 The gender balance of School staff is unusual within the institution in that while 50% of administrative staff are female and 50% are male, in terms of faculty 70% of staff are female. The seniority and age profiles of support staff within the School are relatively evenly distributed, however, the profile of faculty is distinctly unbalanced. 21 of the School’s 26 faculty members are early career (lecturer/ assistant professor and teaching fellow) and only two members of faculty (both male) are full professors.
- 3.3 This imbalance has been exacerbated by the Higher Education Employment Control Framework, introduced during the economic crisis in Ireland, which limited recruitment and promotion within the HE sector. There is some movement in this space which, along with the introduction of a new University promotion processes for both faculty and technical staff and the UCD Performance for Growth (P4G) staff development process, should support longer-term improvement in the School profile.
- 3.4 The School has been proactive in putting in place mentoring for early-career academics and ensuring that staff are able to avail themselves of learning and development opportunities. This development will be further strengthened by engagement with the P4G process which is currently being rolled out by the University. The School also has a comprehensive workload

allocation in place which appears to be liked by staff though there is room for greater transparency to capture the workload details of some roles.

Facilities

- 3.5 The School is based in the Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and Agnes Maguire Buildings on the Belfield campus. These two buildings currently meet the needs of the School and provide accommodation for all faculty and staff (with the exception of the educational technologist who is based elsewhere). Most of the School's postgraduate teaching and much of its outreach teaching takes place in these buildings along with *ad hoc* training courses, seminars and public events. The School also uses lecture rooms in other University buildings for some of its teaching activities.
- 3.6 As the School does not currently make its teaching rooms available to the wider University, it is responsible for the maintenance of the audio-visual facilities in its buildings. Other maintenance and safety supports are provided by UCD Estate Services and the UCD Safety, Insurance, Operational Risk and Compliance (SIRC) Office, however, the School does not appear to be familiar with some of the support provision available to it.

Resources

- 3.7 The School is currently operating effectively within its budget and in a short period of time it has reduced the budget deficit that was in place at the time of its merger. The majority of the pay budget funds core faculty and staff with a significant portion allocated to paying for occasional lecturers and practice teachers who supervise students on placement.
- 3.8 In order to support the development of the School, increased resourcing will be required. The School is currently considering ways that they can generate more income or reduce costs by taking advantage of potential educational and research synergies between the three disciplines in the School.

Commendations

- 3.9 There has been extraordinary effort and commitment by the School in managing the complexity around the teaching and administration of the various outreach, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.
- 3.10 The School has a very committed and effective administrative team.
- 3.11 The Review Group commends the Head of School and the School Executive Management Committee for reducing the budget deficit in a short period.
- 3.12 The School has attracted a number of ambitious and promising academics at early-career level which bodes well for its future sustainability.

Recommendations

- 3.13 The School needs to explore opportunities to address the imbalance in the number of early-career and late-career faculty.
- 3.14 The School could address this imbalance by considering external recruitment at senior level. While the Review Group supports leadership development through internal promotion, it is not certain that the current UCD promotional process would deliver the required leadership in time to address the challenge posed by imminent retirements.
- 3.15 The School needs to demystify UCD promotional process for early-career faculty (see also 7.5.3).
- 3.16 A clear pathway for promotion/career progression for support staff is required taking into account the potential impact on the School from the loss of organisational learning and memory if key administrative staff leave.
- 3.17 The School should consider opening teaching space to the wider University to encourage more social and academic interaction while fostering networking opportunities for staff and students. This would also address issues around IT and audio-visual replacement and maintenance.
- 3.18 In relation to gender balance, the School should consider engaging with UCD's Athena SWAN initiative.
- 3.19 The School could host information briefings from Support Services for all faculty and staff, perhaps during staff meetings, to improve familiarity with support provision available to staff individually and to the School.

4. Teaching and Curriculum

- 4.1 The School runs or contributes to a large number of programmes at Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) level 7, 8 and 9 levels (three level 7 outreach programmes, and three programmes each at undergraduate and graduate levels. The School also contributes to three external programmes at NFQ levels 8 and 9. The different programmes are designed and managed almost entirely as separate entities by the School's three disciplinary teams (Social Policy, Social Work, and Social Justice).
- 4.2 A School Teaching and Learning Committee was established in 2016/17 with representatives from each of the three disciplinary teams and outreach programmes. The grade distribution varies between modules and programmes (at undergraduate level partly reflects differences in entry qualifications and differences in the number of elective students across modules).
- 4.3 The School participated in a recent University-wide curriculum review. The School has also organised their own reviews of several programmes. The Social Work programme complies

with government regulations and is accredited every five years. The BSocSc (around 150 students) is subject for a major re-design (BSocSC: Social Policy and Sociology, with Social Justice as a full subject instead of being offered in elective modules).

Commendations

- 4.4 The Review Group was impressed with the energy and commitment of the academics involved in the delivery of the outreach programmes.
- 4.5 Teaching and learning excellence is manifest across the diverse menu of academic programmes at all levels.
- 4.6 The School has very dedicated teachers as evidenced by the nomination of 14 faculty for UCD Learning and Teaching Awards.
- 4.7 The Review Group commends the School for its dedicated recruitment and teaching of non-traditional students and participation in community engagement through outreach partnerships in teaching. The Review Group also commends the School for widening participation in the community, which also supports UCD strategic objectives.
- 4.8 Undergraduate students feel supported and are positive about their experience in an academic and pastoral context within the School.
- 4.9 Placements and internships are well managed and of good quality.
- 4.10 The Review Group commends the innovative use of the External Examiners in meeting the students and faculty.
- 4.11 The School has engaged positively with the challenges of running two BSocSc. programmes.
- 4.12 There are good examples of research-led teaching and learning in the School.

Recommendations

- 4.13 The School should develop a strategy to increase School participation in outreach programmes to ensure their sustainability.
- 4.14 The School needs to consider ways of achieving economies of scale in relation to curriculum development and module delivery (*inter alia*. blended learning, shared modules, teaching synergies, increased enrolment).
- 4.15 The School should consider the future viability of modules that have consistently low enrolment rates.
- 4.16 The School should review modules to reduce overlap in content.

- 4.17 The School should consider a more consistent approach to gathering student feedback such as the use of focus groups.
- 4.18 The School should consider more innovative student feedback methods, for example, the creation of one staff-student liaison committee for undergraduate students and one committee for postgraduate students.
- 4.19 The students were very keen to have guest lecturers by practitioners to gain insight into what it is like to work in the field ('a day in the life of').

5. Research Activity

- 5.1 The majority of faculty in the School are research active and the School is working hard to further develop the positive research culture that has been growing since its foundation. This includes encouraging and supporting grant applications by School academics, introducing an ambitious sabbatical leave policy in light of staff numbers, and actively engaging with the School Research Manager. Grant income mostly comes from Horizon 2020 and Irish Foundation Ireland. The current total number of PhD students is 26.
- 5.2 The importance of increasing interdisciplinary research in significant areas of national and global need is embedded in the School's Strategic Plan. This Plan's three broad goals are to increase the quantity and quality of research and associated grant income, to contribute to innovation in Irish society and to channel research activity through the School's existing research centres. The creation of this relatively young School by bringing together the three disciplines – social policy, social work and social justice facilitates this ambition as the School 'beds in'.
- 5.3 The School has research leaders and a strong tradition of conducting research which influences government policy. The social housing case study impact case study – following the economic crash of 2007-8 - is an excellent example of this research activity from the School's academics who communicate the research widely through their significant media presence.
- 5.4 The School hosts two research centres: the UCD Equality Studies Centre and Centre for Gender, Feminisms and Sexualities, and is considering developing a new research centre. The School also has close links to the UCD Geary Institute for Public Policy.

Commendations

- 5.5 The School has a wide range of research themes and activities with some areas of internationally excellent work.
- 5.6 A healthy number of PhD students for the size of the School.

- 5.7 There has been a remarkable improvement in the rate of research active academics as well as the quantity of research outputs.
- 5.8 The number of research applications has also increased.
- 5.9 It is commendable that the School has instigated a sabbatical leave policy.
- 5.10 The rejuvenation of the Centre for Gender, Feminisms and Sexualities by reviewing its focus and increasing its interdisciplinarity is to be commended.

Recommendations

- 5.11 A dedicated School Research Strategy should be created to consolidate areas of strength and identify areas of research priority.
- 5.12 The process of allocation of PhD students should be reviewed to ensure transparency and fairness, while maintaining rigorous academic standards.
- 5.13 The activities of the research centres should be reviewed and aligned to the School Research Strategy in the context of scope, focus and activities of the School.
- 5.14 Consideration should be given towards strengthening the Equality Studies Centre by exploring the synergies between equality research and housing research.
- 5.15 The proposal for the creation of a third research centre (Centre for Welfare State Futures) should be postponed pending the outcomes of the review of centres and the development of the School's strategic plan.
- 5.16 The School needs to closely consider the provision of innovative mentorship opportunity for early-career faculty to gain experience that will be recognised in their promotional ambitions. For example, having a meaningful individual research plan and flexibility in the allocation of PhD supervisor as to which academic is the dedicated primary supervisor.
- 5.17 The role and function of the School Research Committee needs to be clarified in relation to the overall vision of the School and research.
- 5.18 The School needs to map the actual and potential impact of sabbatical leave on the teaching and administrative workload of colleagues.
- 5.19 The School should explore ways of enhancing the value added by a more integrative and cross-disciplinary active research community of postgraduate students.
- 5.20 Consideration should be given to the introduction of empirical work as part of the research thesis at Master's level – notwithstanding the challenges of securing ethical approval.

6. Management of Quality and Enhancement

- 6.1 The School utilises a number of management and quality enhancement mechanisms to evaluate the quality of their output and the experience for their students including, *inter alia*, strategic planning; programme and module design and approval; curriculum review; engagement with external accreditation processes, student feedback; effective recruitment practices and, external examination.
- 6.2 It is apparent that this review was taken very seriously and the School engaged in a positive and constructive manner with this periodic quality review process. The documentation provided to the Review Group was excellent. The School endeavoured to be as inclusive as possible in their engagement with the review process, and their use of reflection on all issues worked well.

Commendations

- 6.3 The School has a diverse range of faculty and staff across a range of disciplines with different needs.
- 6.4 The Head of School has developed an inclusive management structure.
- 6.5 The Review Group commends the School for its engagement with the University periodic quality review process and the quality of its Self-assessment Report. Staff were engaged, enthusiastic, reflective and professional.
- 6.6 The School engages well with University quality mechanisms; for example, it has a robust external examiner system, to assure the academic standards of its modules and awards. The School's innovative approach of facilitating meetings between the External Examiners, students and faculty (see also section 4 above) is particularly commended.
- 6.7 Disciplines within the School fully engage with accreditation which is an important external validation of the quality of their educational programmes, the delivery of learning outcomes and vital for their student cohort.

Recommendations

- 6.8 The Review Group recommends that the School develop more flexible methods for closing the feedback loop and improve ways of communicating subsequent changes to students, tutors and staff.

7. Support Services

- 7.1 The School engages with a wide range of University support services and facilities, some provided by College, others centrally by the University. Feedback from the School on most of the support services was positive and service providers who met with the Review Group were

complimentary of their engagement with the School. There is, however, scope for the School to develop a greater understanding of some of the supports available to it, how these provisions can be accessed and to support, in particular, early-career faculty to gain a greater understanding of supports available.

Commendations

- 7.2 The School has strong and effective relationships with most support services in UCD.
- 7.3 The students were very positive about the support services at School and College level.
- 7.4 Staff involved in the provision of support services spoke very highly of the School.

Recommendations

- 7.5 The Review Group recommends that the School engage more actively with University support units by arranging for representatives from College and University support units to make short presentations at School meetings. This would increase School staff awareness of support provision within the University. Presentations could be invited from, for example:
 - 7.5.1 UCD Estate Services – to ensure that School staff are aware of how to access maintenance and security supports to address issues as they arise in the School (see also 3.6).
 - 7.5.2 SIRC – to ensure that the School is fully compliant with safety requirements, including fire safety.
 - 7.5.3 UCDHR – to help staff to better understand UCD promotion processes, P4G, mentoring and other supports available for staff.
 - 7.5.4 Career Development Centre – so staff understand career supports available for students, both undergraduate and postgraduate.

8. External Relations

- 8.1 The School takes an active interest in promoting outward and inward mobility of students, researchers and staff, as well as research collaboration within UCD, nationally and internationally.
- 8.2 The School engages with the Erasmus Exchange Programme and has successfully bid for Erasmus+ International Credibility Mobility (ICM) funding through its links with universities in Hong Kong and Japan. Other Erasmus partners include universities in Belgium, Finland, Malta, The Netherlands, Sweden, Spain and Italy. The School's Director of Internationalisation liaises with the School's partner universities, to ensure appropriate academic guidance to both incoming and outgoing students on these exchange programmes.

- 8.3 The School's Director of Internationalisation works with the University's International Office to support existing international links as well as identifying opportunities for new links. In addition, the School's Postgraduate and Marketing Manager actively promotes the School's postgraduate taught Masters programmes overseas.
- 8.4 Nationally, the School's curriculum development is informed in a number of ways by employers and other relevant external stakeholders. A Programme Advisory Board is in place, which meets three times a year to discuss the structure and content of the curriculum (both college based and practice learning). Their role also involves meeting with student cohorts to ascertain how the student views can contribute to curriculum development. The MSocSc (Social Work) Programme involves external lecturers who are experienced social workers, drawn from agency partners, to enhance the student learning experience.
- 8.5 The School's NFQ level 7 diploma and certificate programmes, targeted at disadvantaged women, communities and groups which have low levels of participation in third level education provide valuable educational experiences for participants; build links between the School, the University and marginalised communities; and provide students with a range of pathways to degree programmes. This activity also strongly supports the following UCD Strategic Objectives:
- Objective 5 - *to attract and retain an excellent and diverse cohort of students, faculty and staff*
 - Objective 6 - *to build our engagement locally, nationally and internationally*
 - Objective 7 - *to develop and strengthen our University community*

Commendations

- 8.6 Proactive public engagement through the Centre for Gender, Feminisms and Sexualities.
- 8.7 It is commendable to note the positive relationship between the School and employers and stakeholders.
- 8.8 The students have a high employability rate and the School has positive stakeholder engagement relationships.
- 8.9 There is an impressive array of international networks.
- 8.10 Academic staff are also active internationally in research networks, professional bodies, Erasmus + projects, all contributing to international awareness of the strength of UCD making it an attractive destination for international students and scholars.
- 8.11 The School's NFQ level 7 diploma and certificate programmes are an excellent example of community outreach and strongly support University Strategic Objectives 5, 6 and 7.

Recommendations

8.12 The School should examine the imbalance between the incoming and outgoing aspects of the Erasmus programme.

UCD School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice – Full List of Commendations and Recommendations

This Appendix contains a full list of all commendations and recommendations made by the Review Group for the UCD School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice 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)*

A. Organisation and Management

Commendations

- 2.4 It's a young school (under 3-years) and faculty and staff are commended on their commitment to the School, and to UCD; specifically, their continued commitment and achievement through the development of the School. A manifest collegial environment has been created at a time of restructuring.
- 2.5 The College Principal provided excellent support to the Head of School during the period of transition and continues to engage very positively with the School, encouraging its development.
- 2.6 The School worked and continues to work very hard to be inclusive.
- 2.7 A great deal has been achieved in a short time.
- 2.8 The School clearly has a committed team with excellent leadership from the Head of School.
- 2.9 There is good representation across the College of Social Sciences and Law.
- 2.10 The organisational management structure functioned well during the transition phase.

Recommendations

- 2.11 The School, with the support of the College Principal, should develop a strategic vision for the next 5 – 10 years and begin this consultative process as soon as possible.
- 2.12 As the School continues to develop, and to ensure unity of purpose and integration, consideration should be given to re-evaluation, re-organisation and reconfiguration of leadership roles in the School, including the roles of Director of Teaching and Learning, Director of Research, and Director of Graduate Studies.

- 2.13 Engagement in an “away day” would provide an excellent opportunity to support the review of both the organisational activities and the management of the School. In this context, the Review Group would recommend the following:
- 2.13.1 The School should clearly map out its current structures, processes and procedures. This could involve developing an organogram clearly indicating the interrelations between the different entities of the School (management structures, committees, centres, disciplines).
 - 2.13.2 Terms of Reference for key roles, which include transparency about duties and responsibilities and duration, should be identified and clearly communicated to all School staff.
 - 2.13.3 The School could avail itself of support from University units, for example, UCD Human Resources and UCD Agile, in these mapping and planning exercises.
- 2.14 The School should engage in active succession planning – consider the appointment of a Deputy Head of School as a route to succession planning and to alleviate some of the Head of School’s workload.

B. Staff, Facilities and Resources

Commendations

- 3.9 There has been extraordinary effort and commitment by the School in managing the complexity around the teaching and administration of the various outreach, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.
- 3.10 The School has a very committed and effective administrative team.
- 3.11 The Review Group commends the Head of School and the School Executive Management Committee for reducing the budget deficit in a short period.
- 3.12 The School has attracted a number of ambitious and promising academics at early-career level which bodes well for its future sustainability.

Recommendations

- 3.13 The School needs to explore opportunities to address the imbalance in the number of early-career and late-career faculty.
- 3.14 The School could address this imbalance by considering external recruitment at senior level. While the Review Group supports leadership development through internal promotion, it is not certain that the current UCD promotional process would deliver the required leadership in time to address the challenge posed by imminent retirements.

- 3.15 The School needs to demystify UCD promotional process for early-career faculty (see also 7.5.3).
- 3.16 A clear pathway for promotion/career progression for support staff is required taking into account the potential impact on the School from the loss of organisational learning and memory if key administrative staff leave.
- 3.17 The School should consider opening teaching space to the wider University to encourage more social and academic interaction while fostering networking opportunities for staff and students. This would also address issues around IT and audio-visual replacement and maintenance.
- 3.18 In relation to gender balance, the School should consider engaging with UCD's Athena SWAN initiative.
- 3.19 The School could host information briefings from Support Services for all faculty and staff, perhaps during staff meetings, to improve familiarity with support provision available to staff individually and to the School.

C. Teaching and Curriculum

Commendations

- 4.4 The Review Group was impressed with the energy and commitment of the academics involved in the delivery of the outreach programmes.
- 4.5 Teaching and learning excellence is manifest across the diverse menu of academic programmes at all levels.
- 4.6 The School has very dedicated teachers as evidenced by the nomination of 14 faculty for UCD Learning and Teaching Awards.
- 4.7 The Review Group commends the School for its dedicated recruitment and teaching of non-traditional students and participation in community engagement through outreach partnerships in teaching. The Review Group also commends the School for widening participation in the community, which also supports UCD strategic objectives.
- 4.8 Undergraduate students feel supported and are positive about their experience in an academic and pastoral context within the School.
- 4.9 Placements and internships are well managed and of good quality.
- 4.10 The Review Group commends the innovative use of the External Examiners in meeting the students and faculty.
- 4.11 The School has engaged positively with the challenges of running two BSocSc. programmes.

4.12 There are good examples of research-led teaching and learning in the School.

Recommendations

4.13 The School should develop a strategy to increase School participation in outreach programmes to ensure their sustainability.

4.14 The School needs to consider ways of achieving economies of scale in relation to curriculum development and module delivery (*inter alia*. blended learning, shared modules, teaching synergies, increased enrolment).

4.15 The School should consider the future viability of modules that have consistently low enrolment rates.

4.16 The School should review modules to reduce overlap in content.

4.17 The School should consider a more consistent approach to gathering student feedback such as the use of focus groups.

4.18 The School should consider more innovative student feedback methods, for example, the creation of one staff-student liaison committee for undergraduate students and one committee for postgraduate students.

4.19 The students were very keen to have guest lecturers by practitioners to gain insight into what it is like to work in the field ('a day in the life of').

D. Research Activity

Commendations

5.5 The School has a wide range of research themes and activities with some areas of internationally excellent work.

5.6 A healthy number of PhD students for the size of the School.

5.7 There has been a remarkable improvement in the rate of research active academics as well as the quantity of research outputs.

5.8 The number of research applications has also increased.

5.9 It is commendable that the School has instigated a sabbatical leave policy.

5.10 The rejuvenation of the Centre for Gender, Feminisms and Sexualities by reviewing its focus and increasing its interdisciplinarity is to be commended.

Recommendations

- 5.11 A dedicated School Research Strategy should be created to consolidate areas of strength and identify areas of research priority.
- 5.12 The process of allocation of PhD students should be reviewed to ensure transparency and fairness, while maintaining rigorous academic standards.
- 5.13 The activities of the research centres should be reviewed and aligned to the School Research Strategy in the context of scope, focus and activities of the School.
- 5.14 Consideration should be given towards strengthening the Equality Studies Centre by exploring the synergies between equality research and housing research.
- 5.15 The proposal for the creation of a third research centre (Centre for Welfare State Futures) should be postponed pending the outcomes of the review of centres and the development of the School's strategic plan.
- 5.16 The School needs to closely consider the provision of innovative mentorship opportunity for early-career faculty to gain experience that will be recognised in their promotional ambitions. For example, having a meaningful individual research plan and flexibility in the allocation of PhD supervisor as to which academic is the dedicated primary supervisor.
- 5.17 The role and function of the School Research Committee needs to be clarified in relation to the overall vision of the School and research.
- 5.18 The School needs to map the actual and potential impact of sabbatical leave on the teaching and administrative workload of colleagues.
- 5.19 The School should explore ways of enhancing the value added by a more integrative and cross-disciplinary active research community of postgraduate students.
- 5.20 Consideration should be given to the introduction of empirical work as part of the research thesis at Master's level – notwithstanding the challenges of securing ethical approval.

E. Management of Quality and Enhancement

Commendations

- 6.3 The School has a diverse range of faculty and staff across a range of disciplines with different needs.
- 6.4 The Head of School has developed an inclusive management structure.

- 6.5 The Review Group commends the School for its engagement with the University periodic quality review process and the quality of its Self-assessment Report. Staff were engaged, enthusiastic, reflective and professional.
- 6.6 The School engages well with University quality mechanisms; for example, it has a robust external examiner system, to assure the academic standards of its modules and awards. The School's innovative approach of facilitating meetings between the External Examiners, students and faculty (see also section 4 above) is particularly commended.
- 6.7 Disciplines within the School fully engage with accreditation which is an important external validation of the quality of their educational programmes, the delivery of learning outcomes and vital for their student cohort.

Recommendations

- 6.8 The Review Group recommends that the School develop more flexible methods for closing the feedback loop and improve ways of communicating subsequent changes to students, tutors and staff.

F. Support Services

Commendations

- 7.2 The School has strong and effective relationships with most support services in UCD.
- 7.3 The students were very positive about the support services at School and College level.
- 7.4 Staff involved in the provision of support services spoke very highly of the School.

Recommendations

- 7.5 The Review Group recommends that the School engage more actively with University support units by arranging for representatives from College and University support units to make short presentations at School meetings. This would increase School staff awareness of support provision within the University. Presentations could be invited from, for example:
- 7.5.1 UCD Estate Services – to ensure that School staff are aware of how to access maintenance and security supports to address issues as they arise in the School (see also 3.6).
- 7.5.2 SIRC – to ensure that the School is fully compliant with safety requirements, including fire safety.
- 7.5.3 UCDHR – to help staff to better understand UCD promotion processes, P4G, mentoring and other supports available for staff.

- 7.5.4 Career Development Centre – so staff understand career supports available for students, both undergraduate and postgraduate.

G. External Relations

Commendations

- 8.6 Proactive public engagement through the Centre for Gender, Feminisms and Sexualities.
- 8.7 It is commendable to note the positive relationship between the School and employers and stakeholders.
- 8.8 The students have a high employability rate and the School has positive stakeholder engagement relationships.
- 8.9 There is an impressive array of international networks.
- 8.10 Academic staff are also active internationally in research networks, professional bodies, Erasmus + projects, all contributing to international awareness of the strength of UCD making it an attractive destination for international students and scholars.
- 8.11 The School's NFQ level 7 diploma and certificate programmes are an excellent example of community outreach and strongly support University Strategic Objectives 5, 6 and 7.

Recommendations

- 8.12 The School should examine the imbalance between the incoming and outgoing aspects of the Erasmus programme.

**UCD School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice
– Response to the Review Group Report**

Our experience of the quality review process was a very positive one. We would like to thank the colleagues from the UCD Quality Review office for their support and the members of the Review Group for their very positive and constructive engagement with the School during their visit and for the very useful recommendations that they have made in their Quality Review Group Report.

We welcome the Review Group's endorsement of our activities through commendations and will carefully consider their recommendations for reforms and improvements during the Quality Improvement Planning process and discuss them at our School Committee meetings and meetings with students and partner organisations. We have formulated a plan to address the recommendations in the Quality Review Report, and many actions are already underway. We envisage that most of the remainder will be implemented during the 2018/19 academic year.

With specific reference to the prioritised recommendations identified by the Review Group, the School's initial proposals/comments are outlined below:

Priority Recommendation 1: The School, with the support of the College Principal, should develop a strategic vision for the next 5 – 10 years and begin this consultative process as soon as possible.

Response: This is a very useful and timely recommendation which we will implement during the 2018/19 academic year.

We have already started discussions about its content among the members of the School Management Team and on a preliminary basis with the Principal of the College of Social Sciences and Law. We will extend discussions to include all faculty and staff during the first semester of the 2018/19 session. We will appoint a committee to manage the process and organise an away-day to facilitate in-depth discussion of the new strategic vision document. We have had a very positive experience of drawing on support from HR to help us devise our current five-year plan and we will avail of this support again to help us with the preparation of this new plan.

Priority Recommendation 2: As the School continues to develop, and to ensure unity of purpose and integration, consideration should be given to re-evaluation, re-organisation and reconfiguration leadership roles in the School, including the roles of Director of Teaching and Learning, Director of Research, and Director of Graduate Studies.

Response: This is also a useful recommendation which we have already have taken measures to implement. We have extended membership of the School Management Team to include the Directors of Teaching and Learning, Research and Graduate Studies and also made some new appointments to these roles. During the first semester of the 2018/19 academic year, we will formally review these

roles, introduce job descriptions, and devise policies on the regular circulation of these posts and the operation of the associated school committees with a view to sharing leadership responsibility more widely among faculty and thereby supporting the emergence of a new generation of leaders.

Priority Recommendation 3: The School needs to explore opportunities to address the imbalance in the number of early-career and late-career faculty. The School could address this imbalance by considering external recruitment at senior level. While the Review Group supports leadership development through internal promotion, it is not certain that the current UCD promotional process would deliver the required leadership in time to address the challenge posed by imminent retirements.

Response: We agree that this is a top priority and also a significant challenge. To meet it we plan a two-pronged approach:

- Firstly, we will implement the Review Group's recommendations regarding support for the promotion of faculty at the associate professor grade. We will establish a committee in the first semester of the 2018/19 academic year to oversee this process and will incorporate mentoring as part of the University's Performance for Growth performance management system.
- We agree that the internal promotion process is unlikely to deliver sufficient numbers of senior faculty in time to address the challenge posed by imminent retirements and to fill emerging leadership gaps in the School. We have recently recruited a new faculty member at the associate professor grade and have initiated discussions with the Principal of the College of Social Sciences and Law about the possibility of filling more current and likely vacancies at this grade and more senior grades.

Priority Recommendation 4: A dedicated School Research Strategy should be created to consolidate areas of strength and identify areas of research priority.

Response: We have significantly improved our research performance in terms of both publications and grant capture in recent years and we agree that this is now an opportune time to devise a comprehensive research strategy. We will do this in the 2018/19 academic year and as part of this, we will review the supports provided by the School Research Manager. There is a danger that as our grant application rate has increased there is a danger that this critical role will become over-burdened and we need to ensure that this resource is strategically employed to achieve the School's key objectives.

Priority Recommendations 5, 6 and 7:

- The activities of the research centres should be reviewed and aligned to the School Research Strategy in the context of scope, focus and activities of the School.
- Consideration should be given towards strengthening the Equality Studies Centre by exploring the synergies between equality research and housing research.
- The proposal for the creation of a third research centre (Centre for Welfare State Futures) should be postponed pending the outcomes of the review of centres and the development of the School's strategic plan.

Response: We will take on board these recommendations and review the operations of the School's two research centres as part of the development of a research strategy. We agree that our energies should focus on supporting our two existing research centres and in particular re-energising the activities of the Equality Studies Centre rather than establishing a new research centre at this time.



Review Visit Timetable

UCD School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice

Monday, 5 – Thursday, 8 March 2018

Monday, 5 March 2018: Pre-Visit Briefing Prior to Site Visit NB DOES NOT INVOLVE THE SCHOOL

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 17.00-19.00 | RG meet in hotel to review preliminary issues and to confirm work schedule and assignment of tasks for the site visit – <u>RG and UCD Quality Office only</u> |
| 19.15 | Dinner hosted for the RG by the UCD Dean of Graduate Studies and Deputy Registrar |

Day 1: Tuesday, 6 March 2018

Venue: Room A201 Hanna Sheehy Skeffington Building

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|-------------|--|
| 08.30-08.55 | Private meeting of Review Group (RG) |
| 09.00-09.30 | RG meet with College Principal |
| 09.30-09.35 | Break |
| 09.35-10.15 | RG meet with Head of School and members of senior staff |
| 10.15-10.30 | Break |
| 10.30-11.15 | RG meet with College Finance Manager, College HR Partner and Head of School , to outline School's financial situation and resources |
| 11.15-11.30 | Tea/coffee break |
| 11.30-12.15 | RG meet with School support staff representatives |
| 12.15-12.45 | Break – RG review key observations and prepare for lunch time meeting |
| 12.45-13.45 | Working lunch (buffet) – meeting with employers and external stakeholders |
| 13.45-14.15 | RG review key observations |

14.15-14.45	RG meet UCD Programme Dean(s) and Head of CSSL Graduate School
14.45-15.00	Tea/coffee break
15.00-15.30	RG meet with Postdocs
15.30-15.35	Break
15.35-16.05	RG meet with School Outreach staff
16.05-16.20	Break – RG review key observations
16.20-17.35	RG meet with representative group of academic staff – primary focus on Teaching and Learning, and Curriculum issues.
17.35-17.45	Break
17.45-18.15	Tour of facilities
18.15	RG depart

Day 2: Wednesday, 7 March 2018

Venue: Room A201 Hanna Sheehy Skeffington Building

08.30-09.00	Private meeting of the RG
09.00-10.00	RG meet relevant UCD support service representatives
10.00-10.15	Break
10.15-11.15	RG meet with a representative group of postgraduate students (taught and research) and recent graduates (PG and UG)
11.15-11.30	RG tea/coffee break
11.30-12.30	RG meet with the School Research Committee (and other staff members nominated by the HoS)
12.30-12.45	Break - RG review key observations
12.45-13.30	Lunch – Review Group only
13.30-14.30	RG meet with representative group of undergraduate students
14.30-14.45	RG private meeting - review key observations

14.45-15.00	Break
15.00-15.45	RG meet with recently appointed members of staff
15.45-16.00	Break
16.00-17.00	RG meet with Head of School
17.00-17.15	Break
17.15-20.45	RG review key observations and begin preparing draft RG Report
20.45	RG depart

Day 3: Thursday, 8 March 2018

Venue: Room A201 Hanna Sheehy Skeffington Building

08.30-09.00	Private meeting of RG
09.00-10.30	RG continue preparing draft RG Report and feedback commendations/recommendations
10.30-10.45	Coffee
10.45-11.45	RG finalise first draft of RG Report and feedback commendations/recommendations
11.45-12.00	RG prepare for meeting with College Principal
12.00-12.15	RG meet with College Principal to feedback initial outline commendations and recommendations
12.15-12.25	Break
12.25-12.40	RG meet with Head of School to feedback initial outline commendations and recommendations
12.40-13.15	Lunch
13.15-13.30	RG prepare for exit presentation
13.30	Exit presentation to <u>all available staff of the unit</u> summarising the principal commendations/recommendations of the Review Group
14.00	Review Group depart