



Quality Review Plan: UCD School of Biology and Environmental Science

Quality Improvement Plan

SBES
7TH November 2014

Introduction

The School of Biology and Environmental Science is pleased to present the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), in response to the Quality Review visit to the School in March 2014. The School Executive convened on the 8th of September in order to assess, in detail, the Review Group's recommendations and comments. The School Executive comprises Prof. Jeremy Simpson (Head of School), Dr. Evelyn Doyle (Deputy Head of School and Head of Teaching & Learning), Prof. Fiona Doohan (Head of Research and Innovation), Dr. Tamara Hochstrasser (Chair of Safety Committee) and Dr. Catherine Nolan (Head of Postgraduate Students). Following this meeting, a first draft of QIP was created and forwarded to the School Advisory Board (SAB) on the 2nd October. The School Advisory Board comprises Dr. Tasman Crowe (Chair), Dr. Jon Yearsley (Academic Representative), Dr. Carl Ng (Academic Representative), Prof. Jenny McElwain (Academic Representative), Ms. Silvia Dolan (Technical Representative), Ms. Sarah Murtagh (Administrative Representative), Dr. Wuu Soh (Post Doc Representative), Mr. Kenan Hanzic (Post Grad Rep) and Ms. Tara Dirilgen (Post Grad Rep). The SAB considered the first draft of the QIP at a meeting on the 8th October and submitted their suggested amendments and proposals back to the School Executive on the 15th of October. Once the QIP was amended, a second draft was sent to the all staff members within the School of Biology and Environmental Science with a request for contributions. On the 5th November the School Executive considered all contributions from the School and again adjusted the final draft of the QIP.

As indicated in the initial response, the School welcomes the Quality Review Process, and gratefully acknowledges the work and positive contributions of the Review Group. We believe implementation of the QIP will further enhance the profile and output of the School of Biology and Environmental Science, underlining its essential role in pursuing integrative biology in Ireland and beyond.

Prof. Jeremy C. Simpson
Head of School of Biology and Environmental Science

Categories

1. Recommendations concerning academic, organisational and other matters which are entirely under the control of the unit
2. Recommendations concerning shortcomings in services, procedures and facilities which are outside the control of the unit
3. Recommendations concerning inadequate staffing, and/or facilities which require recurrent or capital funding

Timescale

- A. Recommendation already implemented
- B. Recommendations to be implemented within one year
- C. Recommendations to be implemented within five years
- D. Recommendations which will not be implemented

| Chapter 2: Organisation and Management | | | | |
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| | RG Recommendation | Cat | School Response | Timescale |
| 2.1 | The Review Group recommends that the School rethinks the constitution and roles of the School Management Group and the School Executive, and the delegation of responsibility from its senior academic managers to the entire academic community. The School should endeavour to line up the nomenclature of its management units with that of the College, so that, for example, 'School Executive' becomes the local equivalent of 'College Executive'. | 1 | The School has now amended its management structure in order to improve communication and clarity around decision making, and to promote wider representation from the different communities across the School. As recommended, the former School Management Group has now been retitled as the School Executive, which for the first time also includes the chair of the School Safety Committee (see point 2.21). SBES has created a new School Advisory Board (SAB), which is composed of staff and students at all levels from across the School, and this group meets four times a year and brings items to the next School Executive. The Executive then considers these on a point-by-point basis, and actions are then reported back to the entire School via email. This process will ensure that all representative groups have the opportunity to have their suggestions enacted. | A |
| 2.2 | The Review Group recommends that the School Safety Committee be given that same representation as the three other committees in the School. | 1 | SBES fully endorses this suggestion, and the chair of the School Safety Committee now sits as a full member of the School Executive. | A |

| | RG Recommendation | Cat | School Response | Timescale |
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| 2.3 | The Review Group recommends a strict adherence to the principle of fixed-term administrative roles within the School for academic staff members, and transparency in how those roles are allocated. | 1 | Significant administrative roles taken by academic staff need to be considered in relation to the School's workload model. This model is due to be revisited in the coming months, and this can be linked to a discussion around the appropriate length for administrative roles. The outcome of these discussions will allow the School to create a clear policy around these roles, and their method and terms of appointment. | B |
| 2.4 | The Review Group recommends that the School reviews the efficacy of the current distribution of technical staff to research areas and makes adjustments as needed where practicable. | 1 | The School agrees that this item needs careful consideration. Due to the imminent relocation of staff and resources to both Science East (teaching) and the Earth Institute, any required adjustments will be considered on completion of this process. | B |
| 2.5 | The Review Group recognises both the common ground and the areas of divergence between SBES and the School of Biomolecular and Biomedical Sciences (SBBS). It recommends strongly <i>to the College</i> that a working group be convened, in consultation with the College Principal, to consider structures through which natural synergies between the Schools and their constituent subject-areas might be marshalled more effectively. | 2 | SBES is supportive of this recommendation, and this point has been brought to the College Principal and the College Associate Dean for Taught Programmes. As a first step to consolidate the activities of the two Schools, a joint MSc programme (MSc Biological and Biomolecular Science by Negotiated Learning) has been developed, and has just been approved by the University. At the heart of the proposal is the notion that this MSc programme is delivered 50:50 by the two Schools. Representatives from the two Schools have also recently met to discuss the of harmonisation of Stage 2 undergraduate structures, thereby working towards a more clear structure for students. | B |
| 2.6 | The Review Group recommends, <i>as a matter of urgency</i> , that the School create a calendar of meetings in tandem with the reorganisation of its structures; the burden of minute-taking on administrative staff should be recognised. | 1 | This has been fully enacted. The new member of the School administrative staff has prepared and circulated to all staff a complete calendar of events and meetings for the entire academic year. | A |

| | RG Recommendation | Cat | School Response | Timescale |
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| 2.7 | The Review Group recommends, <i>as a matter of urgency</i> , the establishment of principles and mechanisms of communication both vertically and horizontally within the School. It suggests that, for example, dedicated email addresses (such as that now possessed by the Head of School) are used to carry certain types of information so that important communications are not 'missed'. | 1 | The lines of communication within the School have been significantly improved. The 'head.sbes' email address is now managed by the new School Administrator and is the address used to convey important information relevant to all staff in the School. Horizontally, the same administrator transfers information across peer groups. A weekly School newsletter has also been re-established, and this conveys general information about upcoming events, seminars, PhD vivas, job opportunities and other School news. It is also planned that certain editions of the newsletter will carry information on publications from the School | A |
| 2.8 | The Review Group recommends that the School considers the value of social media as a means of communicating with its students. | 1 | The School is considering this suggestion. Currently implementing this recommendation is difficult due to the ongoing shortfall in the number of administrative staff in the School, as a dedicated administrator is needed to coordinate such activity. Once the structure of the administrative staff has become settled, the feasibility of this will be investigated. | B |
| 2.9 | The Review Group recognises the huge – unreasonable, even – burden carried by the School's non-academic support staff, and acknowledges how critical that staff's sense of duty is to the operation of the School. The Review Group also recognises, then, that the lack of cover leaves the School extremely exposed. The Review Group recommends that the School persists with requests to the UCD Budget Review Committee (BRG) and/or the College to expand its non-academic staff, and encourages the School to use this Report as supporting documentation of the need. | 3 | The School acknowledges the support from the Review Group around this issue, and will continue to lobby at College and university level for budget to first maintain and then expand its support staff. | C |

Chapter 3: Staff and Facilities

| | RG Recommendation | Cat | School Response | Timescale |
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| 3.1 | Relocation of SBES staff to Science East and the Earth Institute should be managed carefully to avoid excessive loss of integrity and identity of SBES. | 1 | The School has now successfully completed the transfer of its teaching facilities to Science East. Although some minor issues were encountered initially, the general feeling about this move is extremely positive. SBES is at a critical phase with respect to the relocation of staff to the EI. The HoS has met with the Director of the EI to discuss this, and in particular the accessibility of SBES students to staff who will be based in the EI. The School plans to be more proactive in terms of organising joint coffee meetings and seminars to ensure that all SBES Staff are fully engaged with the EI. | B |
| 3.2 | Space should be identified for a tearoom facility to promote informal communication of news and ideas amongst School members. This would also facilitate the introduction of more social events to promote staff interactions. | 3 | Although the relocation of several staff to the Earth Institute will release significant space in Science West, the current financial position of the School makes the redevelopment of such space unlikely. The School feels, in the short-term at least, that improved communication and idea exchange could be enhanced by activities such as research and seminar days. The logic of making significant investment in the physical space in Science West is not clear while the situation regarding the expected wider renovation of the entire building is under consideration. If this does go ahead, the School would argue for such space to be included in the design. | C |
| 3.3 | Formal procedures should be instigated for staff induction and mentoring (including postdoctoral research staff). | 1 | The School has prepared an induction pack for new staff members, and a 'buddy/mentor' is assigned to new staff during their initial weeks in the School. This is currently being rolled out with new staff. | B |
| 3.4 | Succession planning for senior technical staff should be initiated. | 1 | The roles of the technical officers and mechanisms to ensure the continued transfer of their skills will be addressed. This is also very much influenced by the move of some staff to Science East (see point 2.23). | B |

| | RG Recommendation | Cat | School Response | Timescale |
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| 3.5 | A representative of the postdoctoral research staff should be invited to join the School Research Committee, and post-docs might also be supported in establishing a 'Post-doc Forum' for discussion of issues relevant to them, perhaps mediated by a younger member of academic staff who would provide a conduit to SBES management (e.g. at regular staff meetings). | 1 | The addition of a post-doctoral researcher to the School's Research Committee has been implemented. The School only has a modest number of post-doctoral staff, so rather than create a forum for this specific community it is felt that they should be better integrated with the academic staff. This is being facilitated by more regular meetings with the HoS, having representation on the newly formed SAB, and by encouraging them to attend School meetings. | A |
| 3.6 | Some form of informal accreditation by SBES of the supervisory/teaching roles of postdoctoral staff is recommended, to support their career development. | 1 | The School feels very strongly that it needs to better acknowledge the very valuable role played by post-doctoral staff in teaching. It has been agreed that all post-doctoral staff will be given a template in which they record any lectures, tutorials, laboratories etc. to which they contribute. These will be countersigned by their respective PI, and at the end of each year (and/or contract), the School will issue a statement detailing these compiled activities. It is hoped that this will be a valuable piece of supporting documentation that the post-doctoral staff can use in their CV and when applying for jobs. | B |
| Chapter 4: Teaching, Learning & Assessment | | | | |
| 4.1 | SBES's policy to grow its overseas PGT numbers is at a sensitive stage but has real momentum. The Review Group feels that any College or University resources for the improvement of delivery and support of teaching provision should be prioritised for administrative support for PGT programmes – this is an urgent requirement in SBES. | 2 | SBES has raised this issue at College level and will continue to pursue this. | C |

| | RG Recommendation | Cat | School Response | Timescale |
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| 4.2 | The Review Group recommends that SBES develops an Action Plan arising from the SWOT analysis of undergraduate programmes contained in the SAR (Appendix 4.10). Although the identified weaknesses are rather broad, the Review Group acknowledges the SBES has a clear view of the strategic relevance of these weaknesses. | 1 | SBES has already commenced development of an Action Plan based on the SWOT analysis. Academic staff met for 2 days in June 2014 to discuss Teaching, Learning and Assessment issues that arose during the SWOT analysis. The discussion mainly centred on more immediate weaknesses such as branding of degrees, stage 1 modules and the need to have a more integrated view of core skill development in undergraduates. The T&L committee will work during the coming academic year to develop a more defined Action Plan and 2 days in June 2015 have already been scheduled for a meeting of academic staff to discuss the implementation of the plan. | B |
| 4.3 | SBES undergraduate and PGT students have a strong sense of engagement with their courses, but are less linked within and across their peer-groups. The undergraduates have resolved this issue by using social media to discuss course and programme issues. However, the PGTs are more isolated, probably because of the short time-frame of the course, their smaller cohort, and their cultural 'distance' from the UCD system. The Review Group recommends that PGT students are explicitly captured in the SBES's new communications strategy. | 1 | The School has begun to implement a strategy to improve communication across all cohorts within the School. The new School administrator has introduced a weekly newsletter, which is circulated to all academic, technical, administrative and research staff and PhD students in SBES. As a consequence of the impending move of some staff to the Earth Institute, the School is expected to have office space (a common reading area) for the PGT students. The effects of this on student engagement will be monitored. From December 2014, the newsletter will also now be circulated to PGT students. | B |
| 4.4 | There is scope to improve the connectivity within SBES's PhD community as well as the way Doctoral Studies Panels (DSPs) interact with PhD students. The current system requires individually timetabled meetings where the student is reviewed <i>via</i> an oral presentation. If these presentations were delivered in timetabled symposia that were immediately followed by DSP meetings there would be better temporal organisation of DSPs. The PhD community would therefore have better oversight of degree trajectories and expectations and of SBES's research breadth and approaches. As with other recommendations in this document, a defined School social space would amplify the desired outcomes (see also 3.15). | 1 | A system of scheduled DSP and STA meetings has been introduced for all new and continuing PhD students in SBES. These meetings will take place at 3 specific times during the year and all staff and students have been informed of the dates for 2015 and 2016 already. The School also plans to have a specific set of seminars for PhD students to coincide with upcoming Viva's and DSP's. We have also moved the onus of organising these meetings from the student to the supervisor. We plan to review the success of these changes after an appropriate time period. | A |

Chapter 5: Curriculum Development & Review

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| | RG Recommendation | Cat | School Response | Timescale |
| 5.1 | The SWOT analysis (SAR Appendix 4.10) did not explicitly identify the perceptions of Science undergraduate that (i) stage 1 SBES module content overlaps with Leaving Certificate material and (ii) that statistics/research methodology should be introduced much earlier in the curriculum. The School's review of its course content should therefore also (a) ensure revised stage 1 SBES modules deliver new material that is more challenging and engaging, and (b) ensure the delivery of statistical training so it is embedded in the core of the curriculum rather than as a "bolt-on" for project work at the end of the degree. | 1 | During the 2 day T&L meeting in June 2014 (see point 4.11) a committee was set up to review stage 1 biology modules delivered into the Science programme and the teaching of statistical analysis & core skills. Lecture and practical content of stage 1 modules has been updated and now uses new and exciting aspects of biology to illustrate core concepts. These modules will be rebranded and updated further when module descriptors for the 2015-16 academic year open. In the 2015-16 academic year a module will be introduced into the stage 3 programme that will cover experimental design and statistical analysis, much of which is now covered in stage 4. The credits associated with stage 4 research project will be increased to 20 and this module will contain material relating to statistical analysis. It is hoped that this approach will embed core concepts into the degree programmes in SBES. There will need to be continued review of the effect of these changes, with perhaps it taking 2-3 years for them to fully refined. | C |
| 5.2 | An assessment should be made of the overlap between the Leaving Certificate Biology course and what is taught in First Year. This may help the School to develop further modules that appeal to the modern science student. | 1 | This is underway. At the 2 day T&L meeting in June 2014 (see point 4.11), a committee was set up to review and revise stage 1 biology modules to make them more attractive to the modern science student without compromising scientific content. These modules will be reviewed throughout the year via targeted focussed groups of students, on-line feedback and assessment of student performance and engagement. Results will be discussed at the T&L meeting in June 2015 and module content/delivery amended as necessary. | B |
| Chapter 6: Research Activity | | | | |
| 6.1 | SBES Research Committee should develop its research strategy on a rolling basis, identifying new areas of science for future investment (including <i>Horizon 2020</i> opportunities) and new infrastructure requirements, and it should establish an Impact Strategy for the School. | 1 | The new School head of Research & Innovation took up appointment in September 2014. The research strategy will be modified on a rolling basis, being subject to an annual review to ensure that (i) areas for future investment and growth areas are identified and supported, (ii) infrastructure requirements are identified and such needs addressed as best possible within the School budget limitations, and (iii) impact strategy is incorporated and implemented. | B |

| | RG Recommendation | Cat | School Response | Timescale |
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| 6.2 | A clear programme of skills-development for technical staff should be put in place, to support both research and teaching initiatives and to ensure currency. School management might wish to consider rotation of technical support staff between research groups. | 1 | The diversity of disciplines within SBES means that some skills are highly specialised and not easily transferable across teams, whereas other skills are more generic. The School research committee will review the existing competencies within the School for the purpose of maximising the use of the valuable technical resources that we have, and to identify training needs where relevant. The School is committed to supporting additional training for technical staff as appropriate. See also points 2.23 and 3.17 with respect to the physical relocation of staff. | B |
| 6.3 | SBES should consider holding 'Research Away-days', to promote research planning, information dissemination and celebration of scientific highlights. | 1 | Research away days will be considered as a component of events that deal with other school activities, including teaching. These events will promote research planning and information dissemination. The reintroduction of the SBES newsletter also provides a platform for publicising research achievements. | B |
| 6.4 | The University should examine whether the UCD Research Office and the UCD Research Finance Office are adequately resourced to support research activity, especially in the face of likely numerous applications to <i>Horizon 2020</i> programmes. | 2 | This is an issue that is currently being considered at university level. UCD Research has recently being reconstituted and has a new VP. The School research committee will invite UCD Research to visit the School and inform members of the new structures. Research finance support is severely lacking post-award and this will be raised at College and university level. | B |
| 6.5 | The School could develop a more strategic vision and policy around broadening research collaboration, strengthening internal and external networks and ensuring that these are consistent with the strategic research vision of the wider University. Given some common interests and research application of underpinning technology with SBBS, the Review Group suggests that there is value in discussing how best to maximise collaboration and share research support between the two Schools. | 1 | In line with the recent development of the new university strategic plan, the School (and College) will also be developing specific plans to align with those at University wide level. There is poor visibility of current research collaboration outside the School. The collaboration between SBES and SBBS will be investigated at theme level; but in addition SBES has research linkages with the School of Agriculture and Food Science, and the School of Mathematical Science. With SBBS, there are obvious linkages with the Cell and Molecular Biology Theme, the Ecology and Evolutionary Biology theme, but less so with the research themes focussed on Environment and Plant Science. Greater interaction between the two Schools at research level is also consistent with recommendation 2.24. | B |

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| 6.6 | The College of Science might establish a cross-School register of equipment and facilities, and make this available to staff and research students, e.g. on the UCD intranet, to promote information flow and new research collaborations. | 2 | This will initially be carried out at School level, and is pertinent with respect to the imminent relocation of SBES staff to the Earth Institute. An equipment inventory already exists for the Conway Institute and a similar approach is currently being developed for the Earth Institute. The formation of a College inventory will be discussed at the College Research and Innovation Board. | B |
| 6.7 | The School should review regularly its research web page to ensure that it highlights the breadth and depth of the School's research endeavours, along with its links with other schools and colleges in and beyond UCD. | 1 | The School webpage will be an invaluable conduit for the Impact Strategy component of the School's Research Strategy. The new School administrator has begun to make changes to the School website, and over the next year we plan to use this to highlight our research strengths and successes. | B |
| 6.8 | The School should review its DSP system, and provide more opportunities for postgraduate students to present their work to a broad audience (e.g. through a Postgraduate Research Day, or Postgraduate Seminar Series). The postgraduate students might like to play a major role in organising this. | 1 | The DSP system has been modified to make it more streamlined for both staff and students (see point 4.13). The existing annual postgraduate seminar day affords students the opportunity to present their work, but the School recognises that there is scope to improve the student opportunities through more thematic seminar series and poster displays. These possibilities will be investigated as part of the research strategy being developed, but are likely to include the requirement that PhD students present a short seminar (open to all the School) prior to either their second DSP of year one, or prior to their STA meeting. | B |
| 6.9 | The School should explore models to free up staff for more research activity. This could include a review of the School's sabbatical system, through provision of funding or managing teaching timetables (e.g. restricting to semester for that year). This should be considered in line with the School's workload policy. | 3 | The School has made significant advances in recent months to modify the teaching such that more staff contribute to the larger modules, thus enabling greater flexibility with respect to staff teaching timetables. The issue of a sabbatical system needs further discussion at College level, but clearly is dependent on adequate financial resources being made available such that teaching duties can be covered. The School is also developing a more structured approach to the use of post-doctoral staff in terms of teaching engagement (see point 3.6) | C |
| 6.9b | The University might review its policy on placing a higher proportion of grant overheads back into the School. | 2 | There has been a recent increase in the amount of grant overheads being returned to Schools, although lobbying to further increase the proportion should be continued. | C |

Chapter 7: Management of Quality and Enhancement

| | RG Recommendation | Cat | School Response | Timescale |
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| 7.1 | The School should explore ways to improve the response rate to their online module feedback surveys, perhaps, seeking input from UCD Teaching & Learning and the UCD Director of Institutional Research. | 1 | It is noted that this is only partially within the control of the School - as response rates depend on student willingness to participate. However, a uniform approach by academics to communicate the importance of the feedback could improve the response. For example module descriptors could reflect action taken as a result of previous student feedback. A communication regarding how to give responses to student feedback will be prepared and circulated early in 2015. | B |
| 7.2 | The School should review the role and composition of the staff-student liaison forum and other mechanisms established for the representation of student views and the prompt identification of student concerns across all programmes, including the taught masters programmes. Consideration should be given to supplementing such activities with annual focus groups with a wide cohort of student participants. | 1 | A meeting of programme coordinators will be organised to exchange experience and develop best practice guidelines. Postgraduate students are now represented on the School Advisory Board. | B |
| 7.3 | The School should establish a forum where students on different courses can meet and communicate with each other. | 2 | The breadth of life science degree programmes offered by UCD Science potentially makes it difficult for students to communicate across programmes. However, the Biological Student Society was recently re-established, and this may provide an avenue for this to occur. | A |
| 7.4 | The School should consider ways to close the 'feedback loop' to students by updating them in outcomes arising from student feedback. The School should engage with UCD Teaching & Learning and the UCD Director of Institutional Research to explore ways that feedback to students could be provided. | 1 | Please refer to the response to recommendation 7.19. | B |
| 7.5 | The School should liaise with UCD Teaching and Learning to develop a plan for the future training of teaching assistants to match the School's teaching requirements. | 2 | A tiered system of demonstrator training will be implemented, whereby postgraduate students who successfully engage in training activities will be formally recognised and given a higher rate of pay (senior demonstrators). The College and wider university have not seemingly embraced the concept of widespread use of teaching assistants. This will be brought to the College for discussion. | C |

| | RG Recommendation | Cat | School Response | Timescale |
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| 7.6 | The School should continue to engage in its approach to School research planning. | 1 | All research theme leaders need to re-establish a regular meeting schedule for research themes. The meetings should be scheduled on the new School calendar and may be aligned with major calls for proposals. See also response to point 6.19. Motivation could also be increased by encouraging staff to make bids at research theme level for any funds (eg. OIP) that becomes available. | B |
| 7.7 | The School should be supported by the University to hire new academic staff to strategically important and high impact research areas. | 3 | The hiring of new academic staff is fundamentally linked to the financial situation of the School and College; however, when positions are granted the School places significant weighting of candidates on their research areas and output. | C |
| Chapter 8: Support Services | | | | |
| 8.1 | Appropriate induction programmes need to be established to adequately inform both new and established members of the School of the supports and services that are available. Engagement should be mandatory and recorded appropriately. | 1 | See response to point 3.16. A recording system for engagement still needs to be introduced. | B |
| 8.2 | An assessment of administrative support needs to be performed within the School and within support units of the University to highlight where support systems are failing due to lack of personnel. External to the School, UCD HR, UCD Research and UCD Finance were highlighted. The outcomes of this assessment the needs to be raised at School, College and University level. | 2 | An assessment of administrative support needs with respect to units outside of the School will be performed. The outcomes of this assessment can then be raised at College and university level. | C |
| 8.3 | The distribution of technical support requires discussion at School level. There were discrepancies between the opinions of the academic staff and the technical staff as to how technical staff are allocated, and to the fairness of this procedure. | 1 | See responses to points 2.23, 3.17 and 6.20. | B |
| 8.4 | The HR Partner should attend a sufficient number of School meetings to become known and be more accessible to all staff. The role of the HR Partner needs to be understood by all members of staff. | 1 | The SBES HR partner will be invited to attend School meetings, at least annually, in order to update SBES staff on the role of HR and any policy changes. | B |

| | RG Recommendation | Cat | School Response | Timescale |
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| 8.5 | As part of School meetings, representatives of the UCD wide services could be invited to provide short informative updates on supports available to the School. | 1 | Representatives of UCD-wide services will be invited to attend School meetings as appropriate, to provide informative updates on supports available to the School. | B |
| 8.6 | The University should implement a round of internal promotion for technical and administrative staff <i>as a matter of urgency</i> . | 3 | This recommendation is beyond the control of the School but has its full support | D |
| 8.7 | A succession plan for technical staff needs to be established and the School should be supported in replacing retiring technical staff. | 1 | See response to point 3.17. | B |
| 8.8 | An official system should be developed to record the support that the postdoctoral fellows and PhD students provide to the training of undergraduates, MSc students and other PhD students. | 1 | See response to point 3.19. | B |
| Chapter 9: External Relations | | | | |
| 9.1 | The School should develop a strategy for securing EU funds by following closely the calls for <i>Horizon 2020</i> . | 1 | See response to point 6.19. | B |
| 9.2 | While it will not be appropriate for all SBES staff (because of the nature of their work), a strategy should be developed to increase engagement with stakeholders (industry, environmental agencies etc.), which should lead to increased impact of SBES research, increased project funding and increased opportunities for graduate employment. | 2 | The College has recently established a working group, with representation from every School, to explore how better engagement with external stakeholders can be achieved. This is likely to have more impact through organisation at College rather than School level. | B |
| 9.3 | The School might explore how it can make better linkages with its alumni. The College should explore the potential establishment of College-wide alumni relationships, with a role in tracking graduates. | 2 | This issue has been previously discussed at College level, but may need raising again. Improvement in alumni relations is likely to be more effective if this can be administrated at College rather than School level. | B |

Priorities for Resource Requirements

1. Appointment of a Teaching Fellow / increase in number of hourly paid demonstrators

Recommendation 4.10: *SBES's policy to grow its overseas PGT numbers is at a sensitive stage but has real momentum. The Review Group feels that any College or University resources for the improvement of delivery and support of teaching provision should be prioritised for administrative support for PGT programmes – this is an urgent requirement in SBES.*

Comments: The School is currently refreshing its teaching programme, is carefully examining its post-graduate offering, and particular emphasis is placed on higher interaction with the students, for example through increased use of workshops. This requires additional staff resources, and ideally staff who can be flexible in terms of duties. Teaching Fellows potentially provide this, as they can deliver lectures, participate in lab classes, hold workshops / tutorials and administrate modules. Such an additional resource would have benefit across the entire School at multiple levels, including contribution to research activities. An alternative option is to increase the number of hourly paid staff, although this option would offer less continuity. The additional salary cost of a Teaching Fellow would be ca. €42,000 per annum.

2. Renovation of B109 Science West

Recommendation 3.15: *Space should be identified for a tearoom facility to promote informal communication of news and ideas amongst School members. This would also facilitate the introduction of more social events to promote staff interactions.*

Recommendation 4.13: *There is scope to improve the connectivity within SBES's PhD community as well as the way Doctoral Studies Panels (DSPs) interact with PhD students. As with other recommendations in this document, a defined School social space would amplify the desired outcomes (see also 3.15).*

Comments: The School occupies a variety of space of highly variable quality. Importantly the School has no communal 'coffee room', and only has a single seminar room under its own timetabling control. This room (B109 Science West) currently serves as the only room for the School to easily host events and external speakers, but is of a very poor quality and is in urgent need of renovation. The School would therefore like to prioritise the renovation and modernisation of this seminar room in Science West. SBES would greatly benefit from a better designed modern seminar room to hold lunch time seminar series, to hold School meetings, and hosting of informal events such as MSc student welcome and postgraduate seminar day. Renovations should be carried in such a way that the room would be flexible, for example also acting as a communal room for social events, in turn providing a focal point for School activities. Such an area would assist the School in promoting interactions between staff now bi-located between Science East and Science West. The renovations proposed include painting the room, laying new flooring, purchase of new window blinds, purchase of new tables and chairs and the purchase and installation of a large white board and AV facilities. The estimated costs are €80,000.

3. Appointment of an Engagement Liaison Officer

Recommendation 2.27: *The Review Group recommends that the School considers the value of social media as a means of communicating with its students.*

Recommendation 2.28: *The Review Group recognises the huge – unreasonable, even – burden carried by the School’s non-academic support staff, and acknowledges how critical that staff’s sense of duty is to the operation of the School. The Review Group also recognises, then, that the lack of cover leaves the School extremely exposed. The Review Group recommends that the School persists with requests to the UCD Budget Review Committee (BRG) and/or the College to expand its non-academic staff, and encourages the School to use this Report as supporting documentation of the need.*

Recommendation 9.12: *While it will not be appropriate for all SBES staff (because of the nature of their work), a strategy should be developed to increase engagement with stakeholders (industry, environmental agencies etc.), which should lead to increased impact of SBES research, increased project funding and increased opportunities for graduate employment.*

Recommendation 9.13: *The School might explore how it can make better linkages with its alumni. The College should explore the potential establishment of College-wide alumni relationships, with a role in tracking graduates.*

Comments: As recognised by the review group, the non-academic staff carries a huge workload, with little flexibility to expand the functionality, engagement and outreach of the School. The School would greatly benefit from the creation of a new non-academic post whose responsibility would be to assist in all aspects of the School’s engagement with industry, governmental bodies, alumni and other stakeholders. The additional salary cost of an Executive Assistant to carry out this role would be ca. €31,000 per annum.