

University College Dublin

Quality Improvement Plan

School of History

30/11/2015

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1. Introduction

The site visit of the Review Group was conducted 24-26 March 2015. The final draft of the RG report was communicated to the School of History on 11 June 2015. The initial response from History was submitted on 29 June. At the beginning of the current Academic Year (2015-2016), a Quality Improvement Committee consisting of Dr Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin (Head of School), Dr Lindsey Earner-Byrne (Deputy Head) and Ms Kate Breslin (School Administrator) was formed to oversee the production of the Quality Improvement Plan. Individual sections of the plan were considered and responses formulated at the various relevant sub-committees of the School and these were then collated by the Quality Improvement Committee. Quality Review was a standing item on the agenda of the School meeting throughout the semester and a draft of the full Quality Improvement Plan was submitted to a full meeting of the School on 1 December 2015.

2. Recommendations for Improvements – Follow-Up Action Taken and/or Planned

CATEGORY 1:

Recommendations concerning academic, organisational and other matters which are entirely under the control of the unit

Category 1(a)

Recommendations already implemented

Recommendation 2.33: Challenges in relation to equable distribution of workloads should be addressed at School level, specifically in relation to the distribution of teaching and administrative loads among junior and more senior staff. Whilst the Review Group acknowledges that the more senior staff are likely to have important additional responsibilities at the College and University level, it is important that they continue to shoulder an equable teaching load within the School.

Action taken: In conjunction with the Director of T and L and the School Manager, the Head of School, taking cognisance of completed workload models, has reviewed the teaching and administrative allocation of all staff according to the premise that all members of staff, with the exception of staff members in the first three years of their contract, should be expected to shoulder equivalent teaching and administrative loads across the span of a semestrial leave cycle within the unit (seven semesters). This will be done annually when the syllabus for the coming year is being finalised and allocations of offices and examinations are made.

Recommendation 2.34: Better mentoring of all staff, in particular of recently appointed and mid-career staff should be undertaken at both the School and College level.

Action taken: Mentors have been appointed for all new staff within the unit. These are senior figures but not necessarily working in the same area of research. Concerning mid-career staff, certain reservations have been raised by experienced staff at College Lecturer level and the School is currently exploring ways of instituting a robust system which would allay anxieties. Among the issues noted in the report are the lack of senior female staff who could act as mentors for the women working in the unit. The School has therefore approached a number of senior female academic Professors from outside the unit who have agreed to act as mentors for female staff if they wish to make use of this opportunity. The School is also considering instituting an informal system of peer mentoring.

Recommendation 2.36: The Head of School should, with reference to the relevant statutes and the appropriate separation of academic and management functions, review how decision-making is undertaken in the school; in particular the role of the School Committee in decision making as distinct from its statutory advisory function should be reviewed.

Action taken: This review has been undertaken and discussed at the School Meeting and all members of the School have been distributed with the relevant Statute.

Recommendation 2.37: The School should ensure that a comprehensive summary of all deliberations and decisions are captured in meeting minutes and that these are kept in the School Office as a record of decisions, to ensure transparency and to aid in succession planning.

Action taken: This has been done not merely for the School Meeting but also for the Executive, Research, Teaching and Learning, Graduate, Finance and Staff-Student Committee meetings.

Recommendation 2.40: The School's Strategic Plan is currently being re-drafted, reflecting the requirements of the University's recently announced Strategic Plan. It was unclear to the Review Group that the School currently has a sufficiently robust mechanism to drive ongoing strategic planning and succession planning. The School Executive should therefore meet more regularly to ensure that the School's Strategic Plan becomes a relevant 'living' document and not merely a paper exercise in satisfying University demands.

Action taken: Regular meeting of the School Executive is part of that committee's newly constituted frames of reference. The revision of the Strategic Plan of the unit will be the subject of dedicated meetings of the executive in each academic year.

Recommendation 2.42: The School should seek opportunities to strengthen its links with the Humanities Institute and the Clinton Institute. Significant benefits could accrue, particularly in relation to the experience of Visiting Professors and the School's postgraduate and postdoctoral research staff.

Action taken: The School has attempted to build close relationships with both Institutes. The Head of School and Professor Maurice Bric sit on the management committee of the Clinton and have used this forum to discuss shared priorities with the Institute Director. Arising from this the School has entered into email contact with one of the Institute's invitees, Professor Donald Pease, about forging closer links of student and staff exchange with Dartmouth College. In order to pursue this objective, the School co-funded a visit by Dr Fiachra Byrne to Dartmouth. The School has liaised closely with the new temporary director of the Humanities Institute and a School member, Dr Catherine Cox, has been appointed to the Institute's management committee and the School has hosted recent seminars on behalf of the Institute.

Recommendations 2.43-48: These recommendations relate to Archives which is no longer part of the School of History.

Recommendation 2.49: Despite the separation of the Archives from the School, it is essential that the connection between Archivistics and Archives is maintained and strengthened. In particular, the Archivistics students need to maintain their access to collections stored in the Archives but more generally the Group would recommend that staff explore whether any joint projects are feasible.

Action taken: The Head of School and the Head of Subject, Archivistics Dr Elizabeth Mullins, have worked closely with Carmel O'Sullivan, Assistant Librarian, UCD James Joyce Library, who currently has overall responsibility for the curatorial service, to ensure that the needs of Archivistics students are met in the context of the new administrative arrangements which have come into effect. The Library has been highly receptive towards the School and cordial in its management of the repository throughout this process. In terms of joint projects, the School anticipates that the forthcoming appointment of a new Principal Archivist will offer the best opportunity for exploring this aspect of the recommendation.

Recommendations 2.50-53: These recommendations relate to the strategic direction of the archive which is no longer linked to the School of History.

Recommendation 3.21: That the School thoroughly and actively update its Strategic Plan, with a view to identifying a clear set of ranked strategic priorities for appointments.

Action taken: The School has produced an entirely new Strategic Plan for the period 2015 until 2020 and the executive committee in its annual review of this document in the second semester of the teaching year will rank strategic priorities for appointments.

Recommendation 3.22: That the School continue to strive for greater transparency in its governance structures.

Action taken: This has been done in terms of the recording and storage of minutes for each major committee of the School and in terms of the committees' frames of reference. The Head of School will detail to the School Meeting the grounds on which appointments have been made to administrative roles, particularly those which allow members to sit on College boards.

Recommendation 3.23: That the School utilises the School Executive more fully as a strategic planning tool.

Action taken: The School Executive's role in strategic planning has been built into its frames of reference, with at least one dedicated meeting a year to this subject.

Recommendation 3.24: The School should formalise mentoring for early career colleagues and introduce mentoring for mid-career colleagues.

Action taken: See response to recommendation 2.34.

Recommendation 3.25: That the temporary lectureship in archivistics be made permanent.

Action taken: This has been achieved.

Recommendation 3.26: That the School and University regularise the relevant contractual relationships of colleagues to ensure an ongoing provision in key areas of modern Irish history, particularly relevant part-time permanent colleagues and those on contracts of indefinite duration.

Action taken: This has been achieved. One colleague on a contract of indefinite duration has successfully applied for tenure and a full-time permanent contract has been organized for another colleague previously employed in a part-time permanent capacity.

Recommendation 3.27: That the School move to fill the post of Principal Archivist, shortly to be vacated through retirement.

Action taken: This is now a matter for the Library but plans are in hand to fill this post.

Recommendation 3.28: That the School consider pursuing additional administrative support.

Action taken: The School has received permission to use the money which previously supported half of the Archives Officer's salary to fund a half time administrative position for two years. Unfortunately, both the recommended candidate and the reserve candidate for this post following a recruitment and interview process subsequently proved ineligible. The School is currently however employing an additional administrator on an hourly paid basis which has resulted in a significant expansion of support within the office for the unit's activities. The School intends to re-advertise the part-time position shortly.

Recommendation 3.30: That the University assume responsibility for the redundancy payments outstanding at the end of the temporary contracts of eligible postdoctoral researchers as these pose a considerable challenge to the financial well-being of the School.

Action taken: This has been achieved. The University has committed 10,000 euro for the current academic year and the new system of payment will address this problem in the longer term.

Recommendation 5.19: The Review Group encourages the School to gather more evidence on the link between curriculum development and retention before any further changes to the undergraduate provision are considered.

Action taken: The School has initiated an intensive retention programme and will collect and analyse the data which this yields before undertaking any further curriculum changes to promote retention at undergraduate level.

Recommendation 5.23: Likewise, the Review Group wishes to underline the risk involved in having successful programmes highly dependent upon staff on temporary contracts. The Archivistics programme is but one such example, as it relies on a four-year assistant lectureship. Similarly, core BA and MA programmes can only be sustained and consolidated through the resolution of outstanding contractual oddities.

Action taken: The school believes that through the conversion of two four-year contracts to permanent appointments, the provision of a permanent full time lecturing post to replace a part-time permanent contract and the achievement of tenure by another colleague that this situation has been addressed. In all eight posts were approved in the School in 2015, seven academic and one administrative.

Recommendation 5.24: While the review group was impressed by the provision of Medieval Studies modules, the College should ensure that the School's overall administrative and pedagogical contribution is appropriately resourced.

Action taken: The School acknowledges that the College's sanctioning and the subsequent filling of the permanent post in Medieval History has made a major contribution to addressing this recommendation.

Recommendation 6.8: As a matter of urgency, the University should take responsibility for the redundancy payments outstanding at the end of the temporary contracts of eligible postdoctoral researchers as these pose a considerable challenge to the financial well-being of the School (see also 3.30).

Action taken: This has been resolved.

Recommendation 6.11: The School has recently implemented mentoring for new staff and the Research Committee should consider the possibility of widening research mentoring to more established staff. It should also consider introducing a lighter workload for early career researchers.

Action taken: A wide process of consultation on this recommendation was instituted at Executive, Research and School Meeting level. On foot of this process, the School supported the idea that staff be invited to contact the Research Officer or the Research Committee for advice or support on any matter concerning research, research leave, or grant applications. In addition the School has established a bank of past grant applications by its members to assist colleagues in the preparation of future grant proposals. The School has also made a major commitment to to the university's Gender and Diversity initiative, establishing its own local committee and sending four delegates to recent university workshops on this issue. The

Deputy Head of School was appointed to the University Committee as the nominee of the College Principal. The decision has been taken that early career researchers should enjoy a lighter teaching workload over the first three years of their contract and this will be implemented by the Head of School, School Manager and Director of Teaching and Learning.

Recommendation 6.13: The School should improve oversight of PhD advisory and transfer panels. The advisory and transfer panels generally operated in a satisfactory and successful way, but in some cases oversight of the regularity of these panel meetings had slipped. The School should improve oversight of PhD advisory and transfer panels.

Action taken: Irregularities have been redressed since September 2014 and the Director of Graduate Studies has instituted a system of oversight to ensure there will be no unnecessary slippage in the future.

Recommendation 6.15: The School's regular research forum should be extended and used more effectively to integrate PhD students into its research community.

Action taken: A dedicated slot in the Forum schedule has been created for post-doctoral researchers. In addition, a special annual meeting of the Forum has been designated as an afternoon to showcase post-doctoral research within the School. All PhD students will continue to be invited to attend the Research Forum.

Recommendation 6.16: The vitality and warmth of the research support provided by staff on an individual basis to the postgraduate students and collegially within the School does not always translate into the wider community. The School's research seminar is an excellent forum where staff and postdocs can present their research, but this could be developed further, partly to provide a more central and cohesive focus and partly to integrate the research students into the School's research community.

Action taken: As for 6.15. In addition, the School has remodelled its annual post-graduate conference to ensure greater staff presence and contribution.

Recommendation 6.20: The provision of social space within the School for postgraduates and postdoctoral researchers was poor. The doctoral students have little or no social space, a great desideratum since this enhances graduate sociability and combats the stress and loneliness of humanities research.

Action taken: The UCD Common Room serves all postdocs. The School has also made use of the recent reallocation of rooms in order to set up a new work space which functions also as a social space. A specific session of the Research Forum has been dedicated to the School's post-doctoral fellows with a social gathering afterwards. Sadly, discussions with the Buildings managers indicate that there are no resources to allow for a social space specifically for PhDs although the dedicated work rooms in the College and the HI do at least allow for a limited element of sociability and research students have been included in the research events, and subsequent sociability, of the School staff.

Recommendation 6.21: Computers should be provided for all postdoctoral fellows. The School, or College, should consider finding a work room for the MA students.

Action taken: Most postdoctoral grants have an allowance for computers. Provision has been made for postdocs whose grants do not cover computers to apply to the School for funding. Given the pressures of space the School sees little possibility of providing dedicated work rooms for MA students.

Recommendation 7.12: The RG recommends that the roles and responsibilities of its officer and director roles be outlined in clear and concise position descriptions.

Action taken: This has been done.

Recommendation 7.14: It is recommended that key officer and director roles be supported by committees with clear terms of reference and associated minutes so as to better distribute responsibility and workload, and facilitate succession planning.

Action taken: This has been done.

Recommendation 7.18: The staff-student committee should ensure adequate representation and involvement from all categories of student, particularly undergraduate students in the early stages of their degrees.

Action taken: This has been done.

Recommendation 8.6: The RG recommends that the School prioritise the recruitment of additional administrative staff to enable the School to realise its ambitions in key areas such as communications, marketing, global engagement, financial management and post-award grant support.

Action taken: The School has received permission for an additional half-time EA post in the School Office.

Recommendation 8.8: The RG recommends that the School, in conjunction with collegiate schools, the College and the Dean of Arts, explore appropriate mentoring and other supports to help students to negotiate the BA programme.

Action taken: The School has been addressing this issue through its Retention Initiative which also reports back to the College and to the BA Programme Board.

Recommendation 8.9: It is recommended that the School consider the opportunity cost of academic time spent in administrative duties such as website maintenance and minute taking.

Action taken: The School has decided that the additional minute taking for the various committees will be discharged chiefly at administrative level and it is making use of the new part-time post in the School Office, which is effectively the partial restoration of the

administrative post which has been unfilled since 2008, to lessen the burden of electronic-based systems on academics.

Recommendation 8.10: The RG recommends that identified deficiencies in the Library's physical and digital holdings and the consequences of the loss of subject specialist librarians are addressed through appropriate means such as a library committee at School or College level.

Action taken: This recommendation is being implemented through the School Library Committee and in liaison with the Library

Category 1(b)

Recommendations to be implemented within one year

Recommendation 3.29: That the School undergo the Athena Swan bronze award accreditation process to complement the current wider institutional accreditation.

Action planned: The School has been in contact with the relevant academic coordinator of the university's Athena Swan programme and will move to begin this process in the coming twelve months. (The rolling out of the process at School level is dependent on other developments in the university). The School has also supported an application by a female member of staff to the university Aurora leadership programme and the Deputy Head of School has been appointed as the nominee of the College Principal to the University Equality, Diversity and Inclusion group which integrates this aspect of School Development centrally into the Executive committee.

Recommendation 4.20: While we commend the rich and varied programme of course offerings, it was noticeable that – particularly at taught MA level – there was perhaps an over-supply of courses (many operating with very small numbers). Some review is recommended here.

Action planned: The number of MA courses has been significantly reduced from 23 to 14 as part of a two-phase reform. It is anticipated that stage two of the reform will lead to further reductions in the number of MA courses.

Recommendation 4.21: Clearer demonstration of the impact of the Staff-Student Committee on review and improvement of teaching provision.

Action planned: The School will record instances where policy has altered to adjust to the input of the Staff-Student Committee, e.g. recent changes to ways of communication and the weighting of theses, in the centrally-recorded minutes of the committee.

Recommendation 4.22: Better student representation in terms of the governance of the School is recommended.

Action planned: The School believes that this is best accomplished through the remit of the Staff-Student Committee. The School is taking additional care that all relevant cohorts of students are represented and that the requests of the committee will be formally presented to the School meeting and decisions returned to the Staff-Student Committee.

Recommendation 5.22: Both School and College should consider the potential detrimental impact of forthcoming retirements on the undergraduate and postgraduate provisions.

Action planned: The School Executive will consider this matter in its strategic planning sessions in semester two of the current academic year and then make representations to the College in this regard.

Recommendation 6.10: The membership of the Research Committee should be extended to be more representative of the School and to include more junior staff. It could also become more proactive, for example, with oversight for the review of applications for sabbatical leave.

Action planned: A Postdoctoral Fellow will be invited to serve on the Research Committee. Research leave rotas will be reported to the committee and the School Manager. The committee may support leave applications by endorsing them before the College. Grievances and concerns with leave allocations will be addressed by the Head of School.

Recommendation 6.12: The School's research leaders should play a more active role in supporting staff and in School's management.

Action planned: This recommendation has been debated at School Executive level and it was decided that the point will be addressed again by the School Executive in its annual strategic planning session and concrete proposals will be implemented for each following year.

Recommendation 6.14: The role of the School's Graduate Committee should be enhanced and its membership widened to include postgraduate student representatives.

Action planned: A separate Graduate Committee will be re-constituted shortly. Membership will include the directors of the taught and research programmes, the school global engagement officer and contribution as appropriate from postdoctoral fellows. The Director of Graduate Taught will continue to sit on the T and L committee and the Director of Graduate Research on the research committee. This committee will liaise closely with the post-graduate representative on the Staff-Student Committee.

Recommendation 6.17: UCD Archives, currently part of the School, represents a research resource of international standing. The School should consider how it could maximise its exploitation of this outstanding asset in its research and research-based teaching, in postgraduate taught programmes and in research training, but particularly in doctoral research projects in collaboration with the Archivistics and archives staff. The Archive

provides exceptional opportunities for grant capture, for example, from the Mellon Foundation with which the School already has a relationship.

Action planned: A Principal Archivist is expected to be appointed after Christmas. As soon as s/he is appointed, the School will pursue a two-track approach of exploring how best to enable use for historical research and archivistics. We shall also investigate the possibility of establishing a joint History/Archive Research Studentship.

Recommendation 6.22: While the current numbers of postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students are good, and for the Archivistics MA excellent, and these are supported by a number of funded research places, there is, as the School noticed, a decline in recruitment. The School is taking steps to remedy this through improved marketing, but they should consider enhancing their website and exploiting electronic media such as Twitter.

Action planned: One of the responsibilities of the School's new administrative assistant will be dedicated to enhancing the School's web and social media profile, which will also reach out to prospective students for all MA programmes.

Recommendation 6.23: The School has developed a new MA in Medieval Studies, building on their key strengths and international reputation in this area. The School and College should consider how to target recruitment on North America where there is a keen interest in Medieval Irish and Celtic studies.

Action planned: As for 6.22. In addition the School's Global Engagement Officer will liaise closely with the School's Medieval Historians in this regard and act as a focus for their engagement with the University's recruiting hubs in North America. The School has made provision for scholarships for non-EU students to make study in UCD more attractive. The Global Engagement officer has also created a data set of existing links in the School with US universities with an eye to leveraging them for further recruitment.

Recommendation 6.24: The School should consider using their international visiting professors, especially those from North America, to build closer links with overseas universities and colleges to facilitate overseas graduate recruitment.

Action planned: The School has removed the MBW chair from Fulbright temporarily for two years in order to see if it can enhance the chair's strategic potential in all aspects of development, including graduate recruitment. The American History lecturers in the School and the Global Engagement Officer, in conjunction with the Head of School, are investigating the best means to create strategic networks of former MBW chairs.

Recommendation 7.15: The RG recommends that each of the School's committees formulates objectives, agrees a work plan, reviews progress regularly and submits an annual report to the Head of School that includes an evaluation of its own effectiveness in enhancing quality, and in driving and supporting innovation.

Action planned: The first aspects have been done and the committees will submit their first annual reports at the end of the current academic year.

Recommendation 7.16: The School should also review annually its induction, orientation and peer mentoring system.

Action planned: This will be done annually within the Executive at its Strategic Planning session.

Recommendation 7.17: An organisational chart should be drawn up, setting out the various school committees, their interrelationships, reporting lines and alignment with School, College, University and external structures, as appropriate.

Action planned: In conjunction with the Head of School, the School Administrator will produce this chart in the second semester of the current academic year.

Recommendation 7.20: The RG recommends that feedback from students be collated and used to inform its curriculum review and promote the school's strong student-centred focus through student testimonials in promotional materials and on its website.

Action planned: The first part of this recommendation is already being implemented, the second will be implemented in the second semester.

Recommendation 7.21: It is recommended that the School take account of the actual and opportunity costs of its diverse curriculum, wide student choice and small-group teaching model in light of existing and likely staffing levels, anticipated student demand and the need for rationalisation and consolidation.

Action planned: The School through the medium of its Executive Committee has discussed this issue and it will inform future choices. There has been a significant reduction in the number of MA courses offered to very small groups and further rationalization of this element of the syllabus is in hand.

Recommendation 7.22: The RG recommends that the Head of School consider establishing a formal advisory group comprising key external stakeholders to ensure strategic planning is 'outside-in' and to support him in his role.

Action planned: This will be implemented in the coming semester. To that end, the Head of School has invited the Chair of the Royal Historical Society to address the School in March and the Heads of the other Schools of History in the island to attend a lunch prior to his lecture. This event will be used to debate and plan the advisory group.

Recommendation 8.7: It is recommended that the School engage with collegiate schools to explore how additional administrative support might be shared and jointly funded.

Action planned: The Head of School will raise this issue with other Heads of School in the College, particularly with regard to the funding of History Hub in the second semester of this academic year.

Recommendation 9.11: Considering the challenging staffing context in which it operates, the School is encouraged to monitor its involvement in external relations activities. Care must be taken to ensure that both the demands and the opportunities of public engagement are fairly shared across the School.

Action planned: The School will compile a list of all public engagement activities carried out by School members and the Head of School will annually consider this list in terms of equity and opportunity.

Recommendation 9.12: In the current “decade of commemoration”, the School should not limit its external activities to Ireland but should seize the opportunity to promote itself on the European and global stage.

Action planned: Three members of the School are currently members of the University Commemorations Committee. Dr Conor Mulvagh has been involved in a wide suite of activities which addresses this recommendation. In addition to significant conferences on the subject of Universities in Revolution and the Tom Kettle memorial conference which contextualize the Irish experience internationally, in February 2016 the School is hosting a major three day international conference on the subject of Globalising the Rising. In addition Professor Robert Gerwarth has organized a prestigious international lecture series. Several major IRC applications are also in preparation.

Recommendation 9.13: The School has a lot to be proud of and should be a more active advocate for itself, both within and outside the University.

Action planned: In addition to other fora, the School has organized that Professor Peter Mandler of the RHS will come to address the School in March on the topic of the future of the Humanities in the UK. The Heads of the other Schools of History in the island have been invited to attend a lunch previously. The School has launched a strategy for utilizing its alumni more in this regard. A key mechanism is the unit’s involvement in a student mentoring scheme by History alumni. In addition to the advantage of the current students, the School anticipates that this will allow the cultivation of important relationships with alumni of the School now in positions of influence. This point will also be considered annually by the Executive Committee in its Strategic Planning capacity.

Recommendation 9.14: Senior staff and the professoriate should mentor colleagues to help them secure positions on College and University committees.

Action planned: This recommendation will be addressed in the context of the School mentoring programme. The Head of School will also bear this in mind in the appointment to positions which involve membership of College and University committees.

Category 1(c)

Recommendations to be implemented within five years

Recommendation 4.23: The School should seek opportunities to optimise the internationalisation of its student body particularly from areas such as the United States.

Action planned: The School has already set a considerable number of initiatives in train but has placed its response to this recommendation in this section because it acknowledges that this aspect will represent an ongoing challenge. The School has appointed a Global Engagement Officer and Global Engagement is now a standing item on the School Committee agenda. The School has been proactive in exploring new links, e.g. with Dartmouth and Villanova in terms of recruiting additional international students. In particular the School aims to attract graduate and undergraduate students from North America, but it is also recruiting students from throughout the EU, Australia, India, and, to a lesser extent, China. The vast bulk of ten credit modules *and* of five credit modules have been opened to International students and the International Office have noted their appreciation of the School's activities in this regard. The number of study abroad students entering the School has grown.

The School has developed a joint two year MA programme in European History with a consortium of leading universities throughout Europe. Students have a mobility track, enabling them to study at three of the partner universities. This will increase the diversity of our graduate student body and provide opportunities to recruit from this MA programme to our PhD programme. In addition this consortium is currently applying for ERASMUS Mundus funding, which - if successful - will enable the School to offer funded MA places to students from EU partner countries (Russia, Serbia or Albania for example). The School has played a central role in identifying partner institutions for ERASMUS Plus funding. The International Office has applied for funding with partners in Russia, Serbia, and Albania. This funding would provide financial support for incoming and outgoing students at graduate and undergraduate level, as well as facilitating staff mobility.

The School is reviewing its ERASMUS links. This review has shown that the School is not filling places in certain partner institutions, due in part to inadequate language skills amongst History students. The School is looking to identify partners, which provide English-language modules. It is also developing links with universities in Eastern Europe (Tallinn, Jagiellonian in Cracow). This reflects the expansion of the European Union in this millennium and also the changing demographic structure of Ireland due to immigration from Eastern European countries.

Recommendation 5.20: Further curriculum change should seek to maximize teaching staff time and resources. It should also build on existing strengths and on areas identified as ripe for strategic development such as Public History and Cultural Heritage, the History of the Media or the History of Sport.

Action planned: The recent UPB investigation of the School's third year syllabus indicates that, while labour intensive, the ten credit modules in the unit represent a very productive use of teaching staff time and resources. The objective of the School is therefore to safeguard the existing strengths of this system, in terms of small group research-led teaching, progression, and wide range of choice for students, over the next five years as the corner stone of its delivery of curriculum. The School is also committed to building on existing strengths and on

strategic development. The School notes the areas mooted as the type of areas ripe for strategic development and will examine the possibilities of such development - as indeed in other areas as the opportunity arises through the medium of the School Executive according to its newly constituted frames of reference.

Recommendation 5.21: The School is encouraged to promote, both internationally and externally, the quality of the educational experience it offers. In a competitive environment, the School can take pride in its work and should not hesitate to market its programmes.

Action planned: Similarly to 4.23, the School recognizes that this will be an ongoing endeavour over the next five years. Actions already taken include the creation of a new officer aimed at strengthening the School's links with relevant outside bodies for the promotion of the School; the School's participation in a pilot mentoring policy which increases its visibility with History alumni as well as providing an important opportunity for students; the appointment of a Global Engagement Officer; establishing new links with the Dublin branch of the History Teachers of Ireland; the School's support of History Hub which is a vital vehicle of publicity in raising its profile. The School notes that lack of higher-level marketing support as a significant obstacle to successfully responding to this recommendation.

Category 1(d)

Recommendations which will not be implemented

Recommendation: 7.13: The RG recommends the School's director and officer roles be filled in response to expressions of interest from eligible staff, followed by a transparent selection process.

Reason for not implementing: The School is happy to encourage expressions of interest for administrative positions and the Head of School will report to the School Meeting on the reason why particular individuals have been chosen for various portfolios. However, the School believes that the Head of School needs the freedom to approach the most suitable individual for key officer roles. The choices for such positions will be made with due regard for equality of administrative burden and equality of opportunity as key selection criteria and will be presented to the Executive for consultation at the beginning of the academic year.

Recommendation: 7.19: The RG recommends that the School consider formalising and strengthening student representation on other committees, as appropriate.

Reason for not implementing: The School has considered this and believes that the Staff-Student Committee represents the most suitable forum for student representation in governance. However, the School will continue to monitor on an on-going basis and will include student representation where appropriate.

CATEGORY 2:

Recommendations concerning shortcomings in services, procedures and facilities which are outside the control of the unit

Category 2(a)

Recommendations already implemented

Recommendation: 2.32: The School, in cooperation with the Dean, cognate Schools and the relevant College Principals should spearhead a drive to radically reform the BA degree in order to address specific concerns about student recruitment and retention.

Action taken: The School is heavily engaged in a range of processes looking at fundamental reform of the BA. The School entirely agrees that such reform is urgent and is working closely with the Dean and all other relevant parties to deliver change that will redress the decline of the BA. For example, the School has implemented new systems of support to assist with engagement for students at every level of its undergraduate programme. These systems include a revised approach to attendance and work-submission through our seminar system, and additional support for students who are struggling. These systems have been exhibited at BA level and some elements have been adopted by other Schools. The School continues to take a central role in the BA Programme Board, the BA Standing Committee and the University Programme Board in grappling with the challenges facing the BA. The School has made – and will continue to make – detailed submissions to the ongoing proposals and review processes that are attempting to chart a new path for the BA. For example, the School offered a detailed appraisal of the proposal to move to a new 4-year BA and is currently engaged in the curriculum review process which is underway at programme level.

Recommendation 2.35: The wholly irregular and unsatisfactory contractual situations of a number of key staff were identified as issues that must be addressed by the School with the proactive support of the College Principal:

Action taken: Since the report was compiled, the School received permission to advertise and then fill three permanent positions, two academic and one administrative. In conjunction with the lectureship in Medieval History, which was filled in the interim between the filing of the SAR and the RG report, this addresses in whole the concerns raised in this recommendation.

Recommendation 2.39: The contractual positions of a number of key academic staff appears to be highly unusual, irregular and wholly unsatisfactory for the individuals concerned. This situation is outside the School's control and must be resolved by proactive intervention by the College and University to ensure that all staff members can continue to contribute to the School's development, unencumbered by their uncertain contractual positions.

Action taken: As noted with regard to 2.35 these contractual positions have been resolved.

Recommendation 6.9: HR should be more proactive in advising of the financial implications of the contracts of temporary postdoctoral fellows.

Action taken: This issue has been brought to the attention of the HR partner but the university has since put arrangements in place to address the issue of the financial implications of postdoctoral fellows.

Category 2(b)

Recommendations to be implemented within one year

Recommendation 2.30: The issue of staff morale is absolutely crucial in an enterprise that relies so heavily on its human capital. Whilst the Review Group received mixed messages about the current state of staff morale, it is clearly an issue that must be addressed much more proactively and vigorously, particularly at the College and the University level. The Review Group had a strong sense that the College and University are not doing enough to value and nurture its staff.

Action planned: This recommendation was communicated to the College Principal by email. Staff morale within the School is vulnerable to decisions taken at University and College level and there is a firm commitment on the School's part to use every avenue to lobby against measures which are deleterious in this respect.

The Head of School and the other office holders are making and will make use of available outlets, such as the College Executive, the various college committees, Academic Council, the University Programme Board and the Heads of School Forum to communicate matters relevant to issues of staff morale within the School. For example at Academic Council, the Head of School urged a position on the issue of academic titles which was based on an awareness of implications for School morale of a decision being made without a general consultation of staff. Staff morale arising from commitment and investment in the School ten credit system has also been emphasised in School representations to the Registrar and University Programme Board and to the Dean of Arts as part of the School's case for the retention of ten credit modules. The implications for staff morale of the current budgeting system was also expressed to the Bursar by the Head of School at the University Planning day in January 2016.

Recommendation 2.31: The relationship between the School and the College appears to be somewhat strained. Both the College and School should seek to work more proactively to identify areas where they can influence University decision making through improved

advocacy. This is particularly crucial for a School that now has a relatively high proportion of mid-career academics as a result of significant generational turnover in recent years.

Action planned: This recommendation was communicated to the College Principal by email. The School has identified the College Executive as the most important forum where it can work to improve university decision-making. For example the Head of School has raised the issue of the University's Key Performance Indicators and the University's definition of research activity in that forum and drawn attention to their unsuitability in certain respects for the unit's staff.

Recommendation 2.34: Better mentoring of all staff, in particular of recently appointed and mid-career staff should be undertaken at both the School and College level.

Action planned: The Head of School of History has entered into discussions with the Vice-Principal for Research in the College concerning the revival of the College Mentoring system and his name has been entered as a College Mentor. However, consideration must be given to the fact there have been a number of "official" university mentoring systems put in place over the years but they have met with fairly low levels of success and very reluctant buy-in by colleagues. A member of the School, Dr Catherine Cox, is currently a member of the Vice-President for Research, Innovation and Impact's Research Careers Sub Committee which is considering mentoring for postdoctoral fellows at University level. The fear is that anything proscribed at College level would just be seen as extra work and/or an extra burden by colleagues rather than a true mentoring process. However, History has become involved in the mentoring process within the College for Marie Curie fellowships and RISE, Horizon 2020 and other ERC applications.

Recommendation 2.38: The situation in relation to administrative support in the School seems to be unsustainable and should be addressed in order to achieve more manageable workloads for the administrative staff and to simultaneously free up time for academic staff who currently deal with non-academic activities (e.g. website maintenance). This may involve difficult decisions at School and College level (e.g. to forego an academic appointment in order to appoint an additional administrator). While there is an understandable tendency to prioritise academic appointments, it was clear to the Review Group that more administrative support would actually improve overall academic productivity.

Action planned: The School has received permission to use the money which previously supported half of the Archives Officer's salary to fund a half time administrative position. Unfortunately, both the recommended candidate and the reserve candidate for this post following an interview process subsequently proved ineligible. The School is currently however employing an additional administrator on a temporary basis which has resulted in a significant diminution of pressure on the office. The School intends to readvertise the part-time position shortly.

Recommendation 2.41: The College should show a greater degree of flexibility in implementing local rules and should refrain from instances of micro-managing the School (e.g. in relation to the implementation of the School’s system for one-semester research leave for its academic staff).

Action planned: The School communicated this recommendation in an email to the College Principal. Further discussions are required between School and College to address this recommendation.

Recommendation 4.19: The School should take a lead role in reform of the BA programme. The School might consider adapting the UCD science ‘model’ – focusing on better marketing of the strengths of the degree together with a short-term reduction of student intake to raise entry points. The current approach combines lower points with little marketing of the (high) quality of the student experience and is not delivering on recruitment at present.

Action planned: The School fully supports the need to reform the BA Programme and acknowledges the success of the redesigned ‘Science model’. It particularly notes the superior marketing of the Science degree and regrets the absence of a similar approach to the BA. There is much that is good about the humanities that is left unheralded and this has a significant impact on the BA, the people who teach it and those who study for it. It is unclear, however, how precisely the ‘Science model’ would serve to redress the particular problems with the BA. The statistics on the BA show that students with basic entry level points for the programme are more than capable of completing a BA. The greater issue involves student engagement and finding ways to improve student engagement sits at the heart of any putative solution.

The School has taken a lead role both in engaging with the College Executive about responses to the Registrar’s initiatives in terms of reforming the BA and in the context of the forum established by the Heads of School in the College which has made submissions to the Registrar concerning a Liberal Arts Degree for the meetings of January 2016.

Recommendation 6.18: The Library is one of the essential resources for Humanities research; it appears to be under-resourced for the needs of research as opposed to teaching. Doctoral students spoke of having to buy their own copies of relevant books and the Library appears to be under-resourced with regard to some key online resources, such as State Papers Online. The under-resourcing of the Library with regard to research resources will impact negatively upon the School’s ability to recruit high quality postgraduates.

Action planned: The School invited the relevant personnel from the Library to address a School meeting in January 2016 to discuss possible ways of cooperation to implement the spirit of this recommendation. The Library has provided the School with useful information concerning budget and the School has reformed its Library Committee to make sure that it takes advantages of what budget is available.

Recommendation 6.19: The SAR and reports of individual staff indicated that while there was administrative support within the University for grant applications, much of the routine work of grant management, such as financial concerns, was devolved to the academic grant-

holders and was not managed by administrative staff. The RG suggests that some of the burden of this work could be carried out by an administrator, possibly at College level.

Action planned: The new part-time administrator in the School will assist staff to some degree in this regard. The School does not believe that the College possesses the resources to support this work but the Head of School has tabled the issue for discussion at the College Executive.

Recommendation 6.25: Key Performance Indicators need to be reassessed at College level with regard to their applicability across different disciplines. These are regarded as too 'broad brush' to be a fair indicator of research performance in History and due weighting needs to be given to the higher quality of certain types of publication, particularly monographs and peer-reviewed journal articles.

Action planned: The Head of School has raised this issue at College Executive level and with the Vice-Principal for Research who has informed him that KPIs have been completely reconsidered via an intensive process at UMT level (a sub-committee has been working on this for a number of months) and the results officially announced shortly. As soon as they are announced, UCD Research will be undertaking College-level consultations to discuss how the KPIs can be adapted for various disciplines. There will be extensive College-level consideration of this issue early in 2016. The Head of School will continue, on behalf of the School, to work with the Vice-Principal for Research on this issue.

Recommendation 6.26: The College should adopt, as it appears other Colleges do, fee relief for overseas doctoral students who undertake a minimum level of teaching in the School. Failure to do so, and the situation of inequality across the University which this seems to create, could have a negative impact on overseas postgraduate recruitment.

Action planned: This point has been raised with the Vice-Principal for Graduate Studies at College level who has indicated his support and his belief that discretion exists at School level and within School budgets to implement it. Following two recent graduations, no students are currently affected by this and the School has in place scholarships with the International Office to provide fee relief for future applicants.

Recommendation 7.10: The RG recommends that the College evaluate and review the governance and structure of the BA programme as a matter of urgency.

Action planned: The College and the University in general are currently in a phase of intense review of the BA programme in which the School is participating fully.

Recommendation 7.11: It is recommended that the BA be evaluated at the level of programme outcomes, overall student experience, graduate attributes and employability rather than at component module level only. The views of external stakeholders should be sought.

Action Planned: It is believed that all these factors are currently under investigation. At College and University level the School had provided submissions and participated fully in discussions. It has liaised extensively with the newly-appointed Dean of Arts in this regard.

Recommendation 9.15: The College must take pride in the excellent work done by the School of History and Archives and should be its most vocal champion and advocate within the University.

Action planned: The Head of School brought this recommendation to the attention of the College Principal by email. He will bring this recommendation to the attention of the College authorities when the opportunity presents itself again in the coming academic year and will seek to publicise the activities of the School and its members to relevant committees and colleagues across the university and in the wider public domain.

Category 2(c)

Recommendations to be implemented within five years

Recommendation 3.31: Refurbishment of the remaining areas of the Newman building is required and even small improvements, such as the provision of moveable tables in teaching rooms, will allow the School to continue to extend its range of teaching styles, particularly small group working.

Action planned: Discussions have been entered into with Ms Eliz Dunne of Buildings on this matter and this recommendation has been accepted as reasonable. It is hoped to achieve it within 12-24 months in at least some of the teaching rooms utilized by the School. The School notes the ongoing work by the University in the refurbishment of the Newman Building and is committed to supporting it.

Recommendation 3.32: The Wifi signal in some rooms is not robust and should be improved. To support the School's ambition to collaborate and network beyond the University a functioning video conferencing facility, should be made available.

Action planned: Discussions have been entered into with Ms Eliz Dunne of Buildings on this matter and again the recommendation was seen as reasonable. It is hoped that the refurbishment of the Newman Building will offer a particular opportunity to achieve improvements in Wifi signal. In terms of video-conferencing it is hoped to refurbish an area in D Block which would be open to booking by the School within the next 12-18 months.

Category 2(d)

Recommendations which will not be implemented

CATEGORY 3:

Recommendations concerning inadequate staffing, and/or facilities which require recurrent or capital funding

Category 3(a)

Recommendations already implemented

1. Recommendation:

Action taken:

2. Recommendation:

Action taken:

Category 3(b)

Recommendations to be implemented within one year

1. Recommendation:

Action planned:

2. Recommendation:

Action planned:

Category 3(c)

Recommendations to be implemented within five years

1. Recommendation:

Action planned:

2. Recommendation:

Action planned:

Category 3(d)

Recommendations which will not be implemented

1. Recommendation:

Reason for not implementing:

2. Recommendation:

Reason for not implementing:

3. Prioritised Resource Requirements

This section should only contain a list, prioritised by the Quality Improvement Committee, of recommendations outlined in the Review Group Report, which require additional resources. The planned action to address each recommendation with an estimate of the cost involved should also be included:

As a result of co-location, the School has had a number of Colleagues moved into the C corridor of the Newman Building. The Unit has been informed that the refurbishment of this area will proceed in the next twelve months. However, a payment of €30,000 is being sought from the School as their share of this process. In conjunction with the College Principal and accountant, the School reviewed this issue but came to the conclusion that under the new Budgetary model, and in the context of a projected deficit next year, such a massive injection of capital on the School's part could not form part of any credible budgetary plan. Nevertheless, it clear that the work should be done in conjunction with the aspects of renewal in C corridor. The School requests therefore that this money (€30,000) be provided to allow for the proper refurbishment of the corridor and that similar sums be provided when the J and K corridors are refurbished in their turn.