



**University College Dublin**

**REVIEW GROUP REPORT**

**UCD School of History and Archives**

**April 2015**

**Accepted by the UCD Governing Authority at its meeting on 9 February 2016**

# Table of Contents

Summary Findings of the Review Group	3
1. Introduction and Overview of UCD School of History and Archives	5
2. Organisation and Management	10
3. Staff and Facilities	16
4. Teaching, Learning and Assessment	19
5. Curriculum Development and Review	22
6. Research Activity	25
7. Management of Quality and Enhancement	28
8. Support Services	30
9. External Relations	31
Appendix 1: Summary Commendations and Recommendations	
Appendix 2: UCD School of History and Archives Response to the Review Group Report	
Appendix 3: Schedule for Review Site Visit to UCD School of History and Archives	

## **Summary Findings of the Review Group**

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

### **Examples of Good Practice**

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

- The diversity and depth of the School's curriculum, the excellence of its scholarship, the high level of research output and grant income, all attest to the calibre and exceptional levels of commitment of the School's academic staff coupled with effective local management.
- The Head of School and the School's staff are commended for engendering a strong sense of collegiality.
- The School's undergraduate, postgraduate and post-doctoral cohorts as well as its external stakeholders were effusive in their praise of the School and are strong supporters. This is a major achievement given the financial and broader sectoral restrictions within which the School must operate.
- The School's administrators are very highly commended for their continued high level of professionalism in the face of quite severe long-term under-resourcing.
- The Archives staff operate with a high level of professionalism and with a clear commitment to the preservation of their collections and the continuation of good relations with depositors and users.

### **Recommendations for Future Improvement**

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

- The School should seek to achieve a better level of strategic planning, by making more effective use of its Executive Committee to mobilise and engage all key stakeholders, especially students and external stakeholders, to devise a dynamic 'outside-in' Strategic Plan.
- More effective mentoring of all staff, but particularly of recently appointed and mid-career staff should be undertaken at both School and College level. The issue of staff morale must be addressed more proactively and vigorously, particularly at the College and the University level. The Review Group detected a sense that gender-related issues are affecting staff morale, particularly in the aftermath of the recent promotion round.
- The School should undergo the Athena Swan bronze award accreditation process to complement the wider institutional accreditation.
- The School, in cooperation with the Dean, cognate Schools and the relevant College Principals should seek to radically reform the BA degree in order to address specific concerns about student recruitment and retention.

- The contractual positions of a number of staff appear to be highly irregular and should be addressed by the College and University in cooperation with the School as a matter of urgency. There is a need for greater engagement and support by the HR partner and the wider University HR services to help the School to resolve these difficult issues urgently.
- The future of Archives and its staff was unclear at the time of the review. The University should move quickly to clarify this situation and to ensure that Archives can go on to develop its full potential that should follow from the professionalism of its staff and the importance of its collections.
- The School and the College should seek to work more proactively to identify areas where the College can influence University decision making through improved advocacy. This is particularly crucial for a School that now has a relatively high proportion of early- to mid-career academics as a result of significant generational turnover in recent years.

# 1. Introduction and Overview of UCD School of History and Archives

## Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a quality review of the School of History and Archives, University College Dublin, and site visit which was undertaken on 23-26 March 2015. The School response to the Review Group Report is attached as Appendix 2.

## The Review Process

- 1.2 Irish Universities have collectively agreed a framework for their quality review and quality improvement systems, which is consistent with both the legislative requirements of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, and international good practice (e.g. Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2007). Quality reviews are carried out in academic, administrative and support service units.

- 1.3 The purpose of periodic review is to assist the University to assure itself of the quality of each of its constituent units, and to utilise learning from this developmental process in order to effect improvement, including:

- To monitor the quality of the student experience, and of teaching and learning.
- To monitor research activity, including: management of research activity; assessing the research performance with regard to: research productivity, research income, and recruiting and supporting doctoral students.
- To identify, encourage and disseminate good practice, and to identify challenges and how to address these.
- To provide an opportunity for units to test the effectiveness of their systems and procedures for monitoring and enhancing quality and standards.
- To encourage the development and enhancement of these systems, in the context of current and emerging provision.
- To inform the University's strategic planning process.
- The output report provides robust evidence for external accreditation bodies.
- The process provides an external benchmark on practice and curriculum.
- To provide public information on the University's capacity to assure the quality and standards of its awards. The University's implementation of its quality procedures enables it to demonstrate how it discharges its responsibilities for assuring the quality and standards of its awards, as required by the Universities Act 1997 and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

- 1.4 Typically, the review model comprises four major elements:

- Preparation of a self-assessment report (SAR)

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

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

1.5 The composition of the Review Group for the UCD School of History and Archives was as follows:

- Professor Frank McDermott, UCD School of Geological Sciences (Chair)
- Dr Martin McNamara, UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems (Deputy Chair)
- Ms Caroline Brown, Centre for Archive and Information Studies, University of Dundee (Extern)
- Professor Katy Cubitt, Department of History, University of York (Extern)
- Professor Alvin Jackson, Department of History, University of Edinburgh (Extern)
- Dr Pierre Purseigle, Department of University of Warwick (Extern)

1.6 The Review Group visited the School from 23-26 March 2015 and held meetings with School staff; undergraduate and postgraduate students; the SAR Co-ordinating Committee; staff from across the University, including the College Principal; employers, graduates and external stakeholders. The site visit schedule is included as Appendix 3.

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

#### **Preparation of the Self-assessment Report (SAR)**

1.8 Following a briefing from the UCD Deputy Director of Quality, a Self-assessment Report Coordinating Committee (SARCC) was put in place. Members of the committee, in consultation with staff members and students, drafted the Self-assessment Report. The members of the Self-assessment Committee were as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position/Role</u>
Tadhg ÓhAnnracháin	Head of School
Lindsey Earner-Byrne	Deputy Head of School
Catherine Cox	Director of Finance
Diarmaid Ferriter	Director of Research

Robert Gerwarth  
Paul Rouse  
Elizabeth Mullins  
Elva Johnston  
Seamus Helferty  
Kate Breslin

Chair, QR Committee  
Director of Teaching and Learning  
Head of Archivistics  
Director of Graduate Studies  
Chief Archivist  
Administrative Officer

## The University

1.9 University College Dublin (UCD) is a large and diverse university whose origins date back to 1854. The University is situated on a large modern campus about 4 km to the south of the centre of Dublin.

1.10 The University Strategic Plan (to 2014) states that the University's mission is: "to advance knowledge, to pursue truth and to foster learning, in an atmosphere of discovery, creativity, innovation and excellence, drawing out the best in each student, and contributing to the social, cultural and economic life of Ireland in the wider world".

The University is organised into 38 schools in seven colleges:

- UCD College of Arts and Celtic Studies
- UCD College of Human Sciences
- UCD College of Science
- UCD College of Engineering and Architecture
- UCD College of Health Sciences
- UCD College of Business and Law
- UCD College of Agriculture, Food Science and Veterinary Medicine

1.11 As one of the largest universities on the island of Ireland, UCD supports a broad, deep and rich academic community in Science, Business, Engineering, Health Sciences, Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine, Arts, Law, Celtic Studies and Human Sciences. There are currently more than 26,000 students in our UCD campus (approximately 16,300 undergraduates, 7,800 postgraduates and 2,200 Occasional and Adult Education students) registered on over 70 University degree programmes, including over 6,300 international students from more than 121 countries. The University also has over 5,400 students studying UCD degree courses on campuses overseas.

1.12 The University accounts for over 30% of international students within the Irish education sector, over 25% of all graduate students and almost 28% of all doctoral enrolments across the seven Irish Universities.

1.13 The University finalised its University Strategic Plan 2015 – 2020 in November 2014. The School is active in contributing to its implementation.

## **UCD School of History and Archives**

- 1.14 The UCD School of History and Archives, established in 2005 following extensive restructuring within the University, is the second largest of eight schools in the College of Arts and Celtic Studies. It comprises two academic disciplines, History and Archivistics, and an archival repository, hereafter referred to as Archives.
- 1.15 Archives has been part of the UCD School of History and Archives since 2005. Archives is a distinct unit within the School, situated on Level 0 of the James Joyce building. It is not an academic unit, but both the History and Archivistics subject areas within the School have close connections with Archives.
- 1.16 The School structure is under discussion by the University following the finalisation of the University's Strategic Plan *Strategy 2015-2020*, its stated vision for 2020 and the alignment of its structures to achieve its ten key objectives. The visit of the Review Group coincided with the announcement that, from the academic year 2015/16, Archives would no longer be part of the School. At the time of the visit no definite information was available to the Group as to the position of the Archives within UCD in future. Proposals under discussion include the School of History and Archives becoming the School of History to include the discipline of Archivistics. In one such proposal, Archives would be associated with the UCD Cultural Heritage Collection in the future.
- 1.17 The School has 25.5 academic FTEs, plus two endowed chairs, four administrative staff, four curatorial staff, 18 postdoctoral fellows and one research administrator.
- 1.18 The School has 1,608 undergraduate students which includes 1,119 core students, 141 Irish Studies Students, and 348 students taking History modules as electives. Postgraduate students number 89, comprised of 61 in graduate taught (43 History, 18 MA in Archives), 23 doctoral (Archives 2, History 21) and 5 MLitt students.
- 1.19 The study of Irish History is a key strategic priority for the School as outlined in its Strategic Plan of 2007. The School has developed a strong international reputation in the areas of War Studies and the History of Medicine.
- 1.20 The Group was informed of the imminent retirement of the Principal Archivist and the Archives Officer. There is uncertainty as to whether these posts will be filled and lack of clarity about the future management of the administrative posts shared with Archivistics given the separation of Archives from the School.

## **Methodology**

- 1.21 The Review Group wishes to thank the School for its high level of cooperation, constructive engagement, disclosure and open dialogue throughout the entire review process.
- 1.22 Separately, each member of the Review Group considered the School's Self-Assessment Report and its appendices prior to the site visit. Each member then provided initial feedback to UCD's Quality Office on designated sections of the report. This initial feedback was circulated to all members of the Review Group by the Quality Office prior to the site visit.
- 1.23 Prior to visiting the School, the Review Group met on March 23<sup>rd</sup> with a representative of UCD's Quality Office to discuss the School's Self-Assessment Report. At this meeting a

number of specific areas for which the Review Group wished to obtain additional information were identified. This allowed for timely scheduling of additional meetings (e.g. with the School's HR partner) and communication of requests for further specific data from the School. The Review Group also met informally with a representative of the Registrar at this stage.

- 1.24 During the three-day site visit (March 24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>), the Review Group met with a wide range of academic and support staff from the School of History and Archives. It used these meetings to encourage further self-reflection, to clarify outstanding issues and to canvas views about the School's current situation and its future strategic direction.
- 1.25 The Review Group also met with two visiting professors, administrative and support staff from the School, curatorial staff from Archives and support staff from the Library and from the College Finance Office. Meetings were also held with the Principal of the College of Arts and Celtic Studies and with a representative of the Dean of Arts. The Review Group also met with the School's HR Partner.
- 1.26 The Review Group met with a range of external stakeholders that included employers of graduates, professionals from media organisations that frequently call on the School's expertise, representatives from research funding agencies and regular users of the Archives.
- 1.27 The Review Group met with groups of undergraduate and graduate (taught and research) students, including a small number of students from overseas. A meeting was also held with a group of postdoctoral fellows.
- 1.28 The Review Group were given a tour of the Newman building and saw examples of teaching space, ranging from small group teaching rooms to large lecture theatres. The Review Group were also shown the facilities in Archives and the work space available to Archivistic staff.
- 1.29 A large volume of additional material was provided to the Review Group during the site visit. Because of time constraints, the Review Group had to prioritise this material for reading and assimilation.
- 1.30 Prior to departure, the Review Group presented a preliminary summary of the main points of their findings and recommendations to a meeting of all staff.

## 2. Organisation and Management

- 2.1 The School is home to two cognate academic disciplines, History and Archivistics.
- 2.2 The current Head of School was appointed in September 2014. He is assisted in the management of the School by a Deputy Head of School, and by several members of academic staff who have taken on responsibility for Teaching and Learning, Graduate Studies (Taught), Graduate Studies (Research), Research, Finance, Examinations and Tutors.
- 2.3 Physically, the School of History is accommodated on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Newman Building on UCD's Belfield campus. The School has exclusive use of only two contiguous rooms for meetings and seminars that are adjacent to the School Office. Aside from these rooms, teaching spaces are shared with other Schools. UCD Archives is housed on Level 0 of the James Joyce Library Building and includes appropriate strong room storage, archivists' workspace and facilities for conservation, digitization and copying. Archivistics staff and students use part of this area for teaching and practical work.
- 2.4 Organisationally, the School's recently re-established committee structure appears to function well, with most decisions taken at School Meetings that are open to all staff. The School Executive which has a more strategic planning function, meets infrequently.
- 2.5 The Review Group noted that the School of History and Archives has undergone significant generational turnover of staff in recent years, due to the retirement of several high profile academics. Notwithstanding these changes, several of the current academic staff as well as the PhD and postdoctoral community, commented on the high degree of academic collegiality and a strong sense of shared purpose in the School.
- 2.6 The Review Group received mixed signals regarding the state of staff morale in the School. Whilst there is a strong sense of collegiality and shared purpose at School level, several staff members feel that their views are not being listened to, that they are not being consulted and that they feel unable to influence decisions at College and University level. This issue was particularly acute in Archives, but it was a recurring theme in several meetings with staff in the School.
- 2.7 This review coincided with a time of strategic realignment and renaming of several academic units within UCD in March 2015. Whilst this review pertains to the existing School of History and Archives, the Review Group was conscious that the School's name is set to change to the School of History at the beginning of the 2015/2016 academic year, reflecting the imminent loss of Archives from the School.
- 2.8 The Review Group understands that following recent restructuring within the University, the academic discipline of Archivistics will remain within the School of History, but that the curatorial function of Archives will no longer be part of the School of History. The Review Group has contemplated the implications of these changes and it makes recommendations below pertaining to the consequences of the proposed restructuring, having consulted widely during the review process.
- 2.9 In common with most academic units within UCD and the wider Irish Higher Education sector, the School has operated within exceedingly tight and difficult financial constraints since the onset of Ireland's economic downturn. The School operates within a sector that is highly regulated by government, not least through its Employment Framework Directive.

The latter appears to be a particularly blunt instrument that inhibits sustainable growth and meaningful strategic planning.

- 2.10 The administrative staff (1 permanent FTE and 0.5 temporary FTE) in the School Office are currently hugely overworked and overstretched. This situation is unsustainable.
- 2.11 The Review Group noted that despite the scarcity of resources, the School's administrative staff has managed to maintain good and effective day-to-day working relationships with the Arts Programme Office.
- 2.12 The Review Group detected a widespread concern among the School's academic staff about the current health and future strategic direction of the BA programme. These concerns were linked mainly to issues around student recruitment, student retention and the employment prospects of graduates. Several staff were of the opinion that a radical 'root-and-branch' reform of the BA programme is long overdue. These issues will be discussed in more detail in Section 4 of this report.
- 2.13 It was evident to the Review Group that there is a misalignment between the academic and financial organisation of the Bachelor of Arts (BA) programme. Academic staff from three different colleges contribute to the BA and whilst overall academic oversight rests with the Dean of Arts, financial control is vested largely in the College Principals. This, combined with the overall complexity of the BA structure seems to hinder coherent academic and financial planning and is likely to hinder the root-and-branch reform of the BA programme referred to above.
- 2.14 The School currently appears to have developed relatively informal and ad-hoc links with the Institute of Humanities and with the Clinton Institute.
- 2.15 A draft of the School's new Strategic Plan (2015-2020), developed in line the UCD Strategy 2015-2020 'Ireland's Global University' that was launched in November 2014, was available at the time of the review. The Review Group formed the opinion that the School needs to set aside more time to think and plan strategically on a regular basis and to devise internal systems that produce regular reviews of progress relative to the School's strategic goals and aspirations.
- 2.16 The School appears to have robust budgetary systems in place that reflect current good practice. An academic staff member acts as Director of Finance in the School. The School also liaises regularly with the College Finance Officer.

#### **Commendations:**

- 2.17 The Review Group were hugely impressed by the intellectual and academic calibre of its academic staff, by the diversity and depth of its undergraduate and post-graduate curriculum, by its high level of scholarship, research output and grant income.
- 2.18 The School is commended on the high levels of satisfaction that was evident among the undergraduate, postgraduate and post-doctoral cohorts that the Review Group met. Equally, all of the external stakeholders that the Review Group met were effusive in their praise of the School and were strongly supportive of its work. This outcome should be

viewed as a major achievement given the financial and other restrictions within which the School operates.

- 2.19 The School is commended for managing itself effectively. The vast majority of staff expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the School's management and are conscious of the restrictive external financial and employment controls within which the School management must operate.
- 2.20 The School's administrative staff is highly commended for its continued high level of professionalism in the face of long-term under-resourcing and a continuing difficult financial climate.
- 2.21 The School is commended for establishing a well-developed transparent structure of multiple committees that are responsible for decision making, strategic planning and the core activities of Teaching and Learning, Research and Financial management.
- 2.22 The School is commended for the inclusive membership of the School Meeting group. The Review Group noted that Visiting Research Professors and Post-doctoral Research Fellows are made to feel welcome and are well integrated as full members of the School.
- 2.23 The School is commended for operating an innovative no-cost internal system for one-semester research leave for its academic staff. The Review Group noted that this facility now extends to staff in Archivistics.
- 2.24 The Archives staff operate with commendable professionalism and with a clear commitment to the preservation of their collections and the continuation of good relations with depositors and users. The Review Group hopes that this will continue, especially in the light of the restructuring and uncertainty about staffing.
- 2.25 The Group was pleased to note that the Archives collect statistics about the collections and their use and gather and respond to feedback from users and depositors.
- 2.26 The Archives' reputation is such that it continues to attract significant deposits which add to the already impressive value of its collections. It is clear that the collections held by the Archives are of national and international significance and are heavily used. The Archives and archivists have a strong reputation and continue to receive new material which will require processing and housing.
- 2.27 The collections are well used by various History staff and students. There is also a close connection between Archivistics and the Archives, with Archivistics students benefitting from working on collections close to the Archives' public and storage areas.
- 2.28 Issues raised in the self-assessment review indicate that staff are aware of the importance of an online presence, in particular an online catalogue. The Review Group commends the Archives' involvement in the History Hub and Digital Library and the redesign of the Archives' website.
- 2.29 The storage areas conform to best practice and the housing provided for the archives is excellent.

## Recommendations:

- 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. Specific recommendations are given in Section 3 of this report.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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. This point is amplified further in section 3 below.
- 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. This point is amplified further in section 3 below.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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).
- 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.
- 2.43 A number of issues were raised in the self-assessment report which the Review Group were not able to discuss with the School as the restructuring, future of the Archives and staffing were the focus of the conversations. Consequently some of the recommendations below, in particular those relating to surrogates, online catalogues, University records and priorities, are based on information supplied in the SAR report alone.
- 2.44 Discussions surrounding the future of Archives should be brought to a speedy conclusion by the University to provide a greater degree of certainty about the future for its staff. Whatever solution eventually emerges must ensure that the School's Archivist staff continue to receive the high level of access and cooperation that they have hitherto been afforded by the staff of Archives.
- 2.45 As a consequence of these changes, and the lack of consultation and information surrounding them, it was clear to the Review Group that the Archive staff feel undervalued, and that a stressful and uncertain situation is contributing to low morale. The Group noted that this is compounded by concerns over lack of promotional opportunities felt by staff.
- 2.46 It is imperative that the situation regarding the future of the Archives is resolved. Uncertainty is damaging morale amongst staff and may cause concern and reputational damage amongst external stakeholders. Archives staff have sought to be proactive and have suggested moving to within the Library. The Review Group supports their suggestions that this would have benefits including further collaboration with Special Collections and the potential for improved support for staff and a coordinated approach to support for teaching, learning and research.
- 2.47 Given the value and significance of the collections, the importance of continuing to attract similar material to UCD, and the potential of the Archives to contribute directly to the

strategic aims of UCD, it is vital that the Principal Archivist is replaced at a senior level. The Review Group also recommends that this post be filled by a professional (someone with an expertise in managing and promoting the use of archival collections).

- 2.48 The Archives is reaching the limits of its storage capacity, the currently unused storage room should be shelved with archival standard mobile shelving. The Review Group suggests that the ramp outside the Archives and the signage to the Archives be improved as a matter of urgency.
- 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.
- 2.50 In the self-assessment review Archives staff mentioned a limited visibility within the University. The Review Group recommends that the Archives builds on its existing relationship with the School by contributing further to classes, offering volunteering opportunities, and collaborating on potential PhD and other research projects. The separation of Archives from the School should be seen as an opportunity to demonstrate the value of the Archives to the whole of the University and the Group commends the fact that the archivists currently contribute to other subject areas and UCD activities, particularly during this period of commemoration.
- 2.51 It is a strategic aim of the Archives to improve their online presence. It is essential that resources are found to improve the information available online about the collections whether this is through putting PDFs online, using a service such as the Archives Hub, or an open source solution such as AtoM, if a bespoke or commercial cataloguing package is not an option.
- 2.52 The Review Group note the comments in the SAR about limited staff time for cataloguing and it is a concern that this might have led to collections being offered elsewhere. Staff will have to decide on priorities and consider whether their commitment to creating surrogates and not producing originals is sustainable. While the Group understands the time commitment required to supervise placements, volunteers and students seeking work experience can also bring many benefits to Archives.
- 2.53 The separation of the Archives from the School is an opportunity for the Archives to develop their own strategy and set priorities regarding these areas and others mentioned in the SAR such as University records and digital material.

### 3. Staff and facilities

- 3.1 The School is clearly distinguished by hard-working, dedicated staff, both in History and in Archives. The external reputation of both parts of the existing School is very high, and its position in the College and wider university is enviably strong.
- 3.2 The Review Group noted some issues of morale arising in particular from gender imbalances in some promoted grades within the School (there are for example no women at professorial or associate professor grades) and with the operation of the 2012-13 promotions process. Morale has also been affected by the complex or irregular contractual status of a small number of School members.
- 3.3 The School's Self-Assessment Report emphasises a range of unsatisfactory circumstances which have arisen from the current national and institutional funding constraints. These include dependence upon fixed-term contract staff of various types (temporary lecturers, post-doctoral fellows), lack of promotions opportunities, the present or impending opening of gaps in the spread of teaching coverage.
- 3.4 A number of gaps (or threatened gaps) in teaching coverage relate to (*inter alia*) the general areas of Archivistics, 19<sup>th</sup> century Irish history and, in terms of its wider strategic ambitions, to non-Western history. A threatened problem with the teaching of medieval history has been partly addressed by the advertisement of a lectureship in this area. The School also identifies the need to move to replace the Principal Archivist, who is on the cusp of retirement.
- 3.5 Closely linked with these curricular challenges is an issue relating to the contractual standing of some staff. Members of the School presented some (to us) persuasive evidence which suggested that the contractual standing of some of the School staff was likely to present serious difficulties in terms of future teaching provision in key areas, or to present issues of equity, and perhaps even challenges to the reputational standing of the School. We recommend that where possible such contracts be regularised.
- 3.6 The staff/student ratio quoted in the internal review document is high (c.23:1), but has (we understand) declined subsequently. This appears to be in line with other Schools across the Arts and Humanities. We note and commend the School's commitment to small group, research-led teaching; but we also note a wide array of modules (especially at taught postgraduate level) which appear to have very low levels of student recruitment.
- 3.7 The balance between teaching and research is broadly satisfactory. Teaching and research are equally weighted in the School's long-established workload model. The School is commendably supportive of research-led teaching, and has led initiatives in this area (e.g. the ten credit module at Level Three). It is possible that the recent emphasis upon the improvement of research quality and productivity has led to a need to reward teaching excellence more publicly. Again, the School has a suggestion for an in-house teaching award which is to be commended.
- 3.8 The School's Self-Assessment Report placed some emphasis upon questions of morale amongst staff. It appeared to the Review Group that this weakening of morale has a clear gender dimension. For example, the severe lack of promotions opportunities is particularly felt by women in the School, who are underrepresented in some promoted grades. The School has already begun to address these questions, and we would strongly encourage the current Head both in his general approach and in his pursuit of greater transparency and equity in issues relating to promotions and staff development. We also commend the Head

of School's keen awareness of gender questions in relation to a range of issues (governance, promotions) within the School. The consolidation of mentoring provision across the School might help to address these questions of morale and (in some cases) potential alienation.

- 3.9 The administrative support offered to the School is clearly of the highest quality. However, the School evidently relies upon the excellence and experience of one highly dedicated and highly skilled full-time senior administrator. This situation needs urgently to be addressed in terms of workload pressures and morale, and also in terms of the sustainability of the School's business. More administrative support would help in a number of ways – in terms of succession planning within the School office, and also in terms of relieving some of the administrative burden which at present necessarily falls directly on academic colleagues. Additional administrative support would also help in terms of marketing the School's offerings as well as with the (often complex) management of grants. Given the likely separation of History and the Archives, the position of the shared administrative posts needs to be clarified as soon as possible.
- 3.10 The Review Group visited the teaching areas in the Newman building and were given a tour of the Archives' facilities, including the storage areas and the rooms which are used by the Archivistics programme.
- 3.11 The Review Group was made aware of the proposed Newman-Joyce extension which may have an impact on facilities available to the School and Archives, but further details and a timescale were not provided.
- 3.12 Conversations with staff and students raised a number of issues with regard to facilities, particularly relating to PhD students and postdoctoral fellows which are raised in section 6 below. The Review Group noted that many of the teaching areas are shared facilities and consequently any changes would have to be supported at College/University level.
- 3.13 The Group noted that, in the event of an issue with technology, immediate technical support is not always available due to the removal of service desks from the Newman building and that this situation is not satisfactory.
- 3.14 The facilities available to Archives are fit for purpose with storage areas conforming to best practice. The remaining unused storage room should be shelved with archival standard mobile shelving. Access and signage to Archives as outlined in 2.48 should be addressed. Opportunities should also be explored to increase the online presence of Archives through the Collections catalogues or through the utilisation of an online catalogue package.

**Commendations:**

- 3.15 The Head of School's active work to address questions of staff morale is commended. The Review Group noted the high esteem in which he was widely held across the School.
- 3.16 The high levels of dedication of all academic and archives staff, is evidenced in very strong teaching and research profiles.
- 3.17 The superb work undertaken by the School Manager and professional staff, despite limited resources and ever greater business pressures.

- 3.18 The generally successful responses of the School to the challenges created by a high level of staff turnover (largely through retirements) over the past decade and by national and institutional financial pressures.
- 3.19 The teaching areas available to the School are adequate and the Review Group particularly supported the improvements to facilities and atmosphere provided in the refurbished areas of the Newman building.
- 3.20 The School is commended for its use of technology to facilitate discussions and collaboration with international colleagues.

**Recommendations:**

- 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.
- 3.22 That the School continue to strive for greater transparency in its governance structures.
- 3.23 That the School utilises the School Executive more fully as a strategic planning tool.
- 3.24 The School should formalise mentoring for early career colleagues and introduce mentoring for mid-career colleagues.
- 3.25 That the temporary lecturership in archivistics be made permanent.
- 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.
- 3.27 That the School move to fill the post of Principal Archivist, shortly to be vacated through retirement.
- 3.28 That the School consider pursuing additional administrative support.
- 3.29 That the School undergo the Athena Swan bronze award accreditation process to complement the current wider institutional accreditation.
- 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 (see also 6.8).
- 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.
- 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.

## 4. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

- 4.1 The School's Self-Assessment document makes it clear that academic and administrative colleagues, while clearly challenged by constraints of resource, have thought carefully about the student experience in the School, and have worked hard on improvements, where these have been deemed necessary. It is commendable (for example) that external expertise has occasionally been deployed where required (as with the briefing sessions supplied by the Head of Teaching and Learning at the University of Chicago some years ago).
- 4.2 There is a case for stronger strategic planning within the School in terms of identifying clear directions for teaching provision and associated staffing priorities. At present the School Executive meets infrequently, but might play a greater role than hitherto in this respect (the internal review already 'recognises the need for more focused committees for curriculum and research development'). The Review Group notes (SAR, p.85) that the School has 'embarked on the beginning of a new more long term planning process in 2014 with the framing of its SWOT analysis', and that the School has begun to respond to the University's greater emphasis upon formal planning.
- 4.3 As it stands, the School has sought to build into the curriculum a clear wider pedagogic vision. For example, careful thought has been given to structuring a set of degree programmes which offer a clear sense of student progression through the different levels/years. This gradual movement towards more intensive, research-led courses and (in the case of Single Honours) the major dissertation, is to be commended.
- 4.4 The Review Group noted frustration with the wider parameters established by the University for the BA programme (although these seem to be easing – in terms, for example, of 'flattening' at level 2). The School has a very strong tradition in the field of Irish history, and the curriculum properly represents its strengths and ambitions in this respect: the review document eloquently makes the case for an outward-looking Irish historiography, and a release from an older parochialism.
- 4.5 Teaching methods fairly reflect the content of the curriculum, and appear to be thoroughly effective. The School's Self-Assessment report presents clear evidence of progression and improvement at various stages, but in particular the transition from level 3 performance to that attained at level 4.
- 4.6 The care expended over (for example) developing a wide array of different assessment techniques is to be commended. These are monitored carefully by external examiners, and by the Staff-Student Committee. We noted some variation in the effective workload burden required in particularly the Level Three 10 point modules (while we commend the principle of the modules).
- 4.7 Colleagues in the School have clearly thought carefully about the desirability of sustaining a research-led seminar experience in a unit which is characterised by very large numbers of students and relatively small numbers of staff. The provision of ten credit modules at level 3, and the related effort to restrict class sizes to a maximum of 17, are strongly to be commended. Equally, the centrality of dissertations at level three, particularly but not only for single honours History, underlines the connection between research and teaching which the School is seeking to uphold.
- 4.8 The Review Group notes some issues of concern raised in the School's Self-Assessment Report. The downturn in some graduate recruitment (including for the key taught MA) is

noteworthy, though the report highlights that it is too early to decide whether this is related to wider economic and employment conditions, or is a longer-term and more complex trend.

- 4.9 The data provided in the Self-Assessment Report suggests a School which is less international in terms of its student body than might be expected given its quality and importance. It may be that the nature of the data – which concentrates on degree cohorts – presents a simplified picture of (in reality) a more diverse student body. It is slightly surprising that US students (for example) are not better represented within the School's student body.

#### **Commendations:**

- 4.10 The recent regularisation of module handbooks and information (achieved over the last four years or so) is strongly commended, and means (for example) that learning outcomes are clearly defined.
- 4.11 The School is commended for having careful mechanisms in place to review course details and related examinations.
- 4.12 The breadth and balance of teaching sustained in a relatively small School is striking and commendable. However, while clearly appropriate to History at the largest university in Ireland, this also clearly places strains on individuals and upon resource, and is associated with a dependence upon fixed-term contract lecturers or post-doctoral fellows (see above, under 'staffing').
- 4.13 Students appear to be fully aware of the expectations placed upon them – and their workloads appear appropriate.
- 4.14 The School is commended for its use of external advisors and models where appropriate.
- 4.15 The School is commended for its commitment to academic and pedagogic progression through the levels of learning experience, to research-led teaching, to a diverse curriculum and to small group teaching (where resources permit).
- 4.16 The School is commended for its success in developing Archivistics teaching.
- 4.17 The strong student-centred ethos of the School (endorsed widely by the students themselves) and the highly enthusiastic student reports on the School and its work, conveyed to us across a succession of meetings, were most impressive.
- 4.18 The Review Group commends the School's idea for a School Teaching Award.

#### **Recommendations:**

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

- 4.21 Clearer demonstration of the impact of the Staff-Student Committee on review and improvement of teaching provision.
- 4.22 Better student representation in terms of the governance of the School is recommended.
- 4.23 The School should seek opportunities to optimise the internationalisation of its student body particularly from areas such as the United States.

## 5. Curriculum Development and Review

- 5.1 The RG was impressed by the quality of the curriculum offered at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Our comments are based on the SAR documentation, on follow-up discussions with members of academic and administrative staff, and on our meetings with a sample of undergraduate and postgraduate students. The latter was representative of the diversity of modules, experiences and backgrounds expected within such a large school. It included mature students who had benefited from university access courses.
- 5.2 The documentation, as well as the meetings held during our visit highlighted a degree of anxiety about the role that the curriculum may play in securing higher student retention rates. It seems, however, that the issue of student retention, albeit a serious one, is more of matter of broad student experience than a strictly pedagogical issue. Conversation with students confirmed that the curriculum and the School's educational offering continue to appeal to students throughout their time on campus. In keeping with our overall experience, these meetings with students offered us the chance to hold open, critical and constructive discussions with both staff and students.
- 5.3 The relatively high drop-out rate may well have more to do with the experience of students adjusting, or rather failing to adjust, to life within a large cohort and on a large campus, where strong social ties are difficult to forge and maintain. In this regard, the School faces issues well documented across campuses in continental Europe. Though the School's attempt to remedy this situation by introduction pedagogical innovations is to be commended, the review group considers that the problem would better be addressed at College and University levels. If we admire our colleagues' willingness to increase their workload to address this problem, we are not certain that this represents the most efficient solution to an issue that ought to mobilize the entire University community.
- 5.4 The School rightly accepts the need to streamline its MA offerings to maintain and to grow student numbers in a very challenging national and international context. In addition to the impact of the recent economic crisis, the School's MA programmes have suffered from changes introduced recently to the postgraduate qualifications in Education (PME). Few PME students are inclined to supplement their professional training with a postgraduate degree in History or indeed any other discipline taught at secondary-school level. History, like English, nonetheless seems to have especially suffered as a result.
- 5.5 The formal and informal processes in place to review the curriculum are evidence of the professionalism of the School's staff and their commitment to excellence in teaching. The existing curriculum was substantially modified as a result in the last two years. The School continues to monitor the curriculum and a review of the graduate provision is currently underway.
- 5.6 The review of the curriculum falls within the purview of the School's Director for Teaching and Learning who mobilizes a wide range of materials to monitor the programmes. This includes internal documentation (handbooks, feedback forms, etc.), reports of external examiners, as well as feedback from external stakeholders and employers.
- 5.7 The School actively encourages professional and pedagogical development. A number of staff have benefited – and continue to benefit - from relevant training. The School's commitment to teaching excellence is evidenced by College Teaching Awards and a Fellowship in Teaching and Academic Development. Just as importantly, the Review Group can attest to the general

commitment of members of staff to monitor and improve the curriculum on an on-going basis.

- 5.8 The programmes and modules in Archivistcs represent a key asset and the School is committed to consolidate and build on their success. However, uncertainty over staffing and the impending move of Archives raise a series of critical questions that the College and the University should consider as a matter of urgency, lest these programmes suffer as a result.
- 5.9 The design and content of the School's curriculum is informed by recent developments in teaching and learning. As indicated above, individual members of staff and the School as a whole place the curriculum at the centre of their preoccupations. The review group was impressed with the work done under the leadership of the Director of Teaching and Learning and the School Executive committee.

### **Commendations**

- 5.10 The School offers a curriculum that is remarkable for its breadth and depth. It reflects the strengths and expertise of a very productive group of scholar-teachers. The curriculum's chronological and geographical span is impressively wide when considered in light of the relatively small number of academic staff employed by the School.
- 5.11 The curriculum is aligned with the School's and the University's strategic objectives and it provides for a stimulating and diverse educational experience. The School is committed to maintaining such an alignment.
- 5.12 The curriculum emphasizes the acquisition of critical skills and underlines the contemporary relevance of history in a fast-changing national and global environment.
- 5.13 Existing pathways offer both flexibility and coherence to students.
- 5.14 Level 1 modules are clearly designed to provide the foundational skills that will facilitate progression in the later years of the undergraduate courses.
- 5.15 The curriculum is delivered and supported by a wide and appropriate range of delivery methods and assessments.
- 5.16 The postgraduate programmes and certificates in Archivistcs are a resounding success, attested by student recruitment, employers' feedback and the external accreditation process.
- 5.17 The School is commended for the attention paid to issues of retention, progression, and recruitment.
- 5.18 Students generally offered very positive feedback on both the content and delivery of their courses.

### **Recommendations**

- 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.

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

## 6. Research Activity

### Commendations

- 6.1 The School has a world-wide reputation for the calibre of its research, as witnessed by its success in grant capture, an enviable ability to attract postdocs and its outstanding publication record. The School's publication record and grant capture were benchmarked against comparable institutions in Ireland and in the UK (York and Warwick, ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> in the UK 2014 REF.) The School's outstanding reputation for research supports UCD's aim to establish itself as a global university.
- 6.2 The School's research achievements are particularly impressive in the light of the relatively high Student-Staff ratio, and it is clear that this research activity has not had a negative impact on teaching quality in the School, rather it has enhanced it. The successful new 10-credit modules were designed to showcase staff research and to encourage postgraduate applications from the undergraduate cohort.
- 6.3 Overall, the School's workload scheme seems fair and appears to work well. Sabbatical leave is granted on application after a review of the applicant's plans and progress. The School is to be commended on making sabbatical leave available to Archivist staff, and it also should consider the introduction of lighter loads for Early Career Researchers in order to protect their research in the heavy early years of establishing a teaching portfolio.
- 6.4 A key component of the School's research success lies in its collegial and supportive research community into which all, both staff and postgrad students, are welcomed. The RG was extremely impressed by the testimony of the postdocs, postgrads, new staff and visiting colleagues of the warmth and vitality of the School's research community. Research activity is fostered by the impressive number of research centres, embedded in or linked to the School, such as Centres for War Studies, for the History of Medicine and for the History of the Media.
- 6.5 Grant capture by the School is excellent with over 6 million euros totalled since 2009 from an impressive range of prestigious international and national funders, including the Wellcome Trust, the EU and Mellon Foundation. These awards, for example, the Wellcome grant, have brought in significant funding for research students.
- 6.6 It was clear from meeting the postgraduates that individual PhD supervision is well conducted. The students were effusive in their praise of their supervision and of the general availability of other staff for consultation about their research.
- 6.7 The high quality of the School's external activity that result from its research activities, and the strength of its external partnerships with a number of cultural, media and other bodies is striking.

### Recommendations

There are a number of ways in which the School's research environment and activities could be enhanced.

- 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).

- 6.9 HR should be more proactive in advising of the financial implications of the contracts of temporary postdoctoral fellows.
- 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.
- 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.
- 6.12 The School's research leaders should play a more active role in supporting staff and in School's management.
- 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.
- 6.14 The role of the School's Graduate Committee should be enhanced and its membership widened to include postgraduate student representatives.
- 6.15 The School's regular research forum should be extended and used more effectively to integrate PhD students into its research community.
- 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.
- 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 Archivist 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.
- 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.
- 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.

- 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.
- 6.21 Computers should be provided for all postdoctoral fellows. The School, or College, should consider finding a work room for the MA students.
- 6.22 While the current numbers of postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students are good, and for the Archivist 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

## **7. Management of Quality and Enhancement**

- 7.1 The RG was impressed with the spirit of reflection and critical inquiry in relation to its own structures, processes and practices that was evident in the School, contributing to a thoughtful and self-aware environment in which all staff are committed to continuous quality review and enhancement, and innovation, despite the internal and external constraints under which the School has and continues to operate.
- 7.2 The School should continue to adapt its management, organisation and governance structures to better harness this spirit of critical self-reflection so that it feeds into operational and strategic planning, quality improvement and periodic review, in a distributed and continuous manner, ensuring that key stakeholders, internal and external, are fully engaged.
- 7.3 Systematic collection and collation of data in relation to performance and delivery could help enhance the School's adaptive capacity to respond to challenges in a complex and evolving environment, characterised by a degree of uncertainty and tension at key college and university interfaces, by providing evidence of the success of existing and proposed initiatives, suggesting alternative tactics and strategies, and supporting the case for additional resources to realise the school's strategic plan.
- 7.4 The RG notes with concern the School's observations in relation to recruitment to and progression on the BA programme, as well as its governance and structure.

### **Commendations**

- 7.5 The RG commends the School's spirit of robust self-appraisal manifest in a questioning, critical stance that challenges the status quo.
- 7.6 The RG commends the re-activation of the School's committee structure.
- 7.7 The School's student retention initiative is commended.
- 7.8 The RG commends the School's commitment to review and reform of its curriculum and pedagogy.
- 7.9 The School's active staff-student committee is commended.

### **Recommendations**

- 7.10 The RG recommends that the College evaluate and review the governance and structure of the BA programme as a matter of urgency.
- 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.
- 7.12 The RG recommends that the roles and responsibilities of its officer and director roles be outlined in clear and concise position descriptions.
- 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.

- 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.
- 7.15 The RG recommends that each of the School's committees formulates objectives, agrees a workplan, 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.
- 7.16 The School should also review annually its induction, orientation and peer mentoring system.
- 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.
- 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.
- 7.19 The RG recommends that the School consider formalising and strengthening student representation on other committees, as appropriate.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

## **8. Support Services**

- 8.1 The RG notes the School's concerns in relation to inadequate levels of support from some college and central university services; for example, UCD HR, UCD Research, UCD Estates, UCD International and IT and AV services. The RG acknowledges, however, the constraints within which such services are currently operating.
- 8.2 The RG shares the School's concern about inadequate levels of administrative support within the School; it is difficult to see how the school can realise its ambitions with current staffing levels.
- 8.3 The RG also notes the view of the College Programme Office that it is inadequately resourced to fulfil its role in ensuring a quality student experience.

### **Commendations**

- 8.4 The RG commends the diligence, commitment and dedication of the school's administrative staff. Academic and student feedback was consistently positive. The School Manager, in particular, is commended for her ability to maintain operations in a very challenging environment.
- 8.5 The RG commends the willingness of academic staff to engage in key administrative activities.

### **Recommendations**

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

## **9. External Relations**

9.1 The School of History and Archives is recognized both nationally and internally as a centre of excellence in its two core disciplines of History and Archivistcs. This well-deserved reputation continues to be sustained through a high degree of engagement with stakeholders both within and without the University.

### **Commendations**

9.2 The School has played and remains committed to playing a significant role in the life and administration of the College and the University.

9.3 Individual members of staff have made and continue to make a considerable contribution to the academic profession at national and international levels.

9.4 The School has made and continues to make a significant contribution to public life and debates in Ireland and has fed into policy-making processes at national and European levels.

9.5 Its high degree of integration into international research networks testifies to the leadership role played by individual members of staff in their respective area of expertise.

9.6 The School hosts well-established and prestigious visiting professorships and is commended for the quality of the environment it provides to chair-holders.

9.7 The School boasts a relatively high degree of staff mobility and exchange.

9.8 The School is committed to a strong and responsive programme of public engagement that is supported and enhanced by Archivistcs and Archives staff.

9.9 The School makes very good use of new and social media to promote its scholarship and activities. The History Hub is particularly impressive in this regard.

9.10 External stakeholders, including employers, speak highly of the School and their relationship with it.

### **Recommendations**

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

## Appendix 1: Summary Commendations and Recommendations

This chapter contains a summary of all commendations and recommendations made by the Review Group for UCD History and Archives and should be read in conjunction with the specific section. *(Please note that the paragraph references below refer to the relevant paragraphs in the report text)*

### Organisation and Management

#### Commendations:

- 2.17 The Review Group were hugely impressed by the intellectual and academic calibre of its academic staff, by the diversity and depth of its undergraduate and post-graduate curriculums, by its high level of scholarship, research output and grant income.
- 2.18 The School is commended on the high levels of satisfaction that was evident among the undergraduate, postgraduate and post-doctoral cohorts that the Review Group met. Equally, all of the external stakeholders that the Review Group met were effusive in their praise of the School and were strongly supportive of its work. This outcome should be viewed as a major achievement given the financial and other restrictions within which the School operates.
- 2.19 The School is commended for managing itself effectively. The vast majority of staff expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the School's management and are conscious of the restrictive external financial and employment controls within which the School management must operate.
- 2.20 The School's administrative staff is highly commended for its continued high level of professionalism in the face of long-term under-resourcing and a continuing difficult financial climate.
- 2.21 The School is commended for establishing a well-developed transparent structure of multiple committees that are responsible for decision making, strategic planning and the core activities of Teaching and Learning, Research and Financial management.
- 2.22 The School is commended for the inclusive membership of the School Meeting group. The Review Group noted that Visiting Research Professors and Post-doctoral Research Fellows are made to feel welcome and are well integrated as full members of the School.
- 2.23 The School is commended for operating an innovative no-cost internal system for one-semester research leave for its academic staff. The Review Group noted that this facility now extends to staff in Archivistics.
- 2.24 The Archives staff operate with commendable professionalism and with a clear commitment to the preservation of their collections and the continuation of good relations with depositors and users. The Review Group hopes that this will continue, especially in the light of the restructuring and uncertainty about staffing.
- 2.25 The Group was pleased to note that the Archives collect statistics about the collections and their use and gather and respond to feedback from users and depositors.

- 2.26 The Archives' reputation is such that it continues to attract significant deposits which add to the already impressive value of its collections. It is clear that the collections held by the Archives are of national and international significance and are heavily used. The Archives and archivists have a strong reputation and continue to receive new material which will require processing and housing.
- 2.27 The collections are well used by various History staff and students. There is also a close connection between Archivistics and the Archives, with Archivistics students benefitting from working on collections close to the Archives' public and storage areas.
- 2.28 Issues raised in the self-assessment review indicate that staff are aware of the importance of an online presence, in particular an online catalogue. The Review Group commends the Archives' involvement in the History Hub and Digital Library and the redesign of the Archives' website.
- 2.29 The storage areas conform to best practice and the housing provided for the archives is excellent.

**Recommendations:**

- 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. Specific recommendations are given in Section 3 of this report.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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. This point is amplified further in section 3 below.

- 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. This point is amplified further in section 3 below.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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).
- 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.
- 2.43 A number of issues were raised in the self-assessment report which the Review Group were not able to discuss with the School as the restructuring, future of the Archives and staffing were the focus of the conversations. Consequently some of the recommendations below, in particular those relating to surrogates, online catalogues, University records and priorities, are based on information supplied in the SAR report alone.

- 2.44 Discussions surrounding the future of Archives should be brought to a speedy conclusion by the University to provide a greater degree of certainty about the future for its staff. Whatever solution eventually emerges must ensure that the School's Archivist staff continue to receive the high level of access and cooperation that they have hitherto been afforded by the staff of Archives.
- 2.45 As a consequence of these changes, and the lack of consultation and information surrounding them, it was clear to the Review Group that the Archive staff feel undervalued, and that a stressful and uncertain situation is contributing to low morale. The Group noted that this is compounded by concerns over lack of promotional opportunities felt by staff.
- 2.46 It is imperative that the situation regarding the future of the Archives is resolved. Uncertainty is damaging morale amongst staff and may cause concern and reputational damage amongst external stakeholders. Archives staff have sought to be proactive and have suggested moving to within the Library. The Review Group supports their suggestions that this would have benefits including further collaboration with Special Collections and the potential for improved support for staff and a coordinated approach to support for teaching, learning and research.
- 2.47 Given the value and significance of the collections, the importance of continuing to attract similar material to UCD, and the potential of the Archives to contribute directly to the strategic aims of UCD, it is vital that the Principal Archivist is replaced at a senior level. The Review Group also recommends that this post be filled by a professional (someone with an expertise in managing and promoting the use of archival collections).
- 2.48 The Archives is reaching the limits of its storage capacity, the currently unused storage room should be shelved with archival standard mobile shelving. The Review Group suggests that the ramp outside the Archives and the signage to the Archives be improved as a matter of urgency.
- 2.49 Despite the separation of the Archives from the School, it is essential that the connection between Archivist and Archives is maintained and strengthened. In particular, the Archivist 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.
- 2.50 In the self-assessment review Archives staff mentioned a limited visibility within the University. The Review Group recommends that the Archives builds on its existing relationship with the School by contributing further to classes, offering volunteering opportunities, and collaborating on potential PhD and other research projects. The separation of Archives from the School should be seen as an opportunity to demonstrate the value of the Archives to the whole of the University and the Group commends the fact that the archivists currently contribute to other subject areas and UCD activities, particularly during this period of commemoration.
- 2.51 It is a strategic aim of the Archives to improve their online presence. It is essential that resources are found to improve the information available online about the collections whether this is through putting PDFs online, using a service such as the Archives Hub, or an open source solution such as AtoM, if a bespoke or commercial cataloguing package is not an option.

- 2.52 The Review Group note the comments in the SAR about limited staff time for cataloguing and it is a concern that this might have led to collections being offered elsewhere. Staff will have to decide on priorities and consider whether their commitment to creating surrogates and not producing originals is sustainable. While the Group understands the time commitment required to supervise placements, volunteers and students seeking work experience can also bring many benefits to Archives.
- 2.53 The separation of the Archives from the School is an opportunity for the Archives to develop their own strategy and set priorities regarding these areas and others mentioned in the SAR such as University records and digital material.

## **Staff and facilities**

### **Commendations:**

- 3.15 The Head of School's active work to address questions of staff morale is commended. The Review Group noted the high esteem in which he was widely held across the School.
- 3.16 The high levels of dedication of all academic and archives staff, is evidenced in very strong teaching and research profiles.
- 3.17 The superb work undertaken by the School Manager and professional staff, despite limited resources and ever greater business pressures.
- 3.18 The generally successful responses of the School to the challenges created by a high level of staff turnover (largely through retirements) over the past decade and by national and institutional financial pressures.
- 3.19 The teaching areas available to the School are adequate and the Review Group particularly supported the improvements to facilities and atmosphere provided in the refurbished areas of the Newman building.
- 3.20 The School is commended for its use of technology to facilitate discussions and collaboration with international colleagues.

### **Recommendations:**

- 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.
- 3.22 That the School continue to strive for greater transparency in its governance structures.
- 3.23 That the School utilises the School Executive more fully as a strategic planning tool.
- 3.24 The School should formalise mentoring for early career colleagues and introduce mentoring for mid-career colleagues.

- 3.25 That the temporary lecturership in archivistries be made permanent.
- 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.
- 3.27 That the School move to fill the post of Principal Archivist, shortly to be vacated through retirement.
- 3.28 That the School consider pursuing additional administrative support.
- 3.29 That the School undergo the Athena Swan bronze award accreditation process to complement the current wider institutional accreditation.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

## **Teaching, Learning and Assessment**

### **Commendations:**

- 4.10 The recent regularisation of module handbooks and information (achieved over the last four years or so) is strongly commended, and means (for example) that learning outcomes are clearly defined.
- 4.11 The School is commended for having careful mechanisms in place to review course details and related examinations.
- 4.12 The breadth and balance of teaching sustained in a relatively small School is striking and commendable. However, while clearly appropriate to History at the largest university in Ireland, this also clearly places strains on individuals and upon resource, and is associated with a dependence upon fixed-term contract lecturers or post-doctoral fellows (see above, under 'staffing').
- 4.13 Students appear to be fully aware of the expectations placed upon them – and their workloads appear appropriate.
- 4.14 The School is commended for its use of external advisors and models where appropriate.

- 4.15 The School is commended for its commitment to academic and pedagogic progression through the levels of learning experience, to research-led teaching, to a diverse curriculum and to small group teaching (where resources permit).
- 4.16 The School is commended for its success in developing Archivistics teaching.
- 4.17 The strong student-centred ethos of the School (endorsed widely by the students themselves) and the highly enthusiastic student reports on the School and its work, conveyed to us across a succession of meetings, were most impressive.
- 4.18 The Review Group commends the School's idea for a School Teaching Award.

#### **Recommendations:**

- 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.
- 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.
- 4.21 Clearer demonstration of the impact of the Staff-Student Committee on review and improvement of teaching provision.
- 4.22 Better student representation in terms of the governance of the School is recommended.
- 4.23 The School should seek opportunities to optimise the internationalisation of its student body particularly from areas such as the United States.

### **Curriculum Development and Review**

#### **Commendations**

- 5.10 The School offers a curriculum that is remarkable for its breadth and depth. It reflects the strengths and expertise of a very productive group of scholar-teachers. The curriculum's chronological and geographical span is impressively wide when considered in light of the relatively small number of academic staff employed by the School.
- 5.11 The curriculum is aligned with the School's and the University's strategic objectives and it provides for a stimulating and diverse educational experience. The School is committed to maintaining such an alignment.

- 5.12 The curriculum emphasizes the acquisition of critical skills and underlines the contemporary relevance of history in a fast-changing national and global environment.
- 5.13 Existing pathways offer both flexibility and coherence to students.
- 5.14 Level 1 modules are clearly designed to provide the foundational skills that will facilitate progression in the later years of the undergraduate courses.
- 5.15 The curriculum is delivered and supported by a wide and appropriate range of delivery methods and assessments.
- 5.16 The postgraduate programmes and certificates in Archivistics are a resounding success, attested by student recruitment, employers' feedback and the external accreditation process.
- 5.17 The School is commended for the attention paid to issues of retention, progression, and recruitment.
- 5.18 Students generally offered very positive feedback on both the content and delivery of their courses.

### **Recommendations**

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

- 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.

## **Research Activity**

### **Commendations**

- 6.1 The School has a world-wide reputation for the calibre of its research, as witnessed by its success in grant capture, an enviable ability to attract postdocs and its outstanding publication record. The School's publication record and grant capture were benchmarked against comparable institutions in Ireland and in the UK (York and Warwick, ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> in the UK 2014 REF.) The School's outstanding reputation for research supports UCD's aim to establish itself as a global university.
- 6.2 The School's research achievements are particularly impressive in the light of the relatively high Student-Staff ratio, and it is clear that this research activity has not had a negative impact on teaching quality in the School, rather it has enhanced it. The successful new 10-credit modules were designed to showcase staff research and to encourage postgraduate applications from the undergraduate cohort.
- 6.3 Overall, the School's workload scheme seems fair and appears to work well. Sabbatical leave is granted on application after a review of the applicant's plans and progress. The School is to be commended on making sabbatical leave available to Archivist staff, and it also should consider the introduction of lighter loads for Early Career Researchers in order to protect their research in the heavy early years of establishing a teaching portfolio.
- 6.4 A key component of the School's research success lies in its collegial and supportive research community into which all, both staff and postgrad students, are welcomed. The RG was extremely impressed by the testimony of the postdocs, postgrads, new staff and visiting colleagues of the warmth and vitality of the School's research community. Research activity is fostered by the impressive number of research centres, embedded in or linked to the School, such as Centres for War Studies, for the History of Medicine and for the History of the Media.
- 6.5 Grant capture by the School is excellent with over 6 million euros totalled since 2009 from an impressive range of prestigious international and national funders, including the Wellcome Trust, the EU and Mellon Foundation. These awards, for example, the Wellcome grant, have brought in significant funding for research students.
- 6.6 It was clear from meeting the postgraduates that individual PhD supervision is well conducted. The students were effusive in their praise of their supervision and of the general availability of other staff for consultation about their research.
- 6.7 The high quality of the School's external activity that result from its research activities, and the strength of its external partnerships with a number of cultural, media and other bodies is striking.

## Recommendations

- 6.11 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.
- 6.12 HR should be more proactive in advising of the financial implications of the contracts of temporary postdoctoral fellows.
- 6.13 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.
- 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.
- 6.12 The School's research leaders should play a more active role in supporting staff and in School's management.
- 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.
- 6.14 The role of the School's Graduate Committee should be enhanced and its membership widened to include postgraduate student representatives.
- 6.15 The School's regular research forum should be extended and used more effectively to integrate PhD students into its research community.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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

## **Management of Quality and Enhancement**

### **Commendations**

- 7.5 The RG commends the School's spirit of robust self-appraisal manifest in a questioning, critical stance that challenges the status quo.
- 7.6 The RG commends the re-activation of the School's committee structure.
- 7.7 The School's student retention initiative is commended.

- 7.8 The RG commends the School's commitment to review and reform of its curriculum and pedagogy.
- 7.9 The School's active staff-student committee is commended.

### **Recommendations**

- 7.10 The RG recommends that the College evaluate and review the governance and structure of the BA programme as a matter of urgency.
- 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.
- 7.12 The RG recommends that the roles and responsibilities of its officer and director roles be outlined in clear and concise position descriptions.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 7.16 The School should also review annually its induction, orientation and peer mentoring system.
- 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.
- 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.
- 7.19 The RG recommends that the School consider formalising and strengthening student representation on other committees, as appropriate.
- 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.
- 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.

- 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.

## **Support Services**

### **Commendations**

- 8.4 The RG commends the diligence, commitment and dedication of the school's administrative staff. Academic and student feedback was consistently positive. The School Manager, in particular, is commended for her ability to maintain operations in a very challenging environment.
- 8.5 The RG commends the willingness of academic staff to engage in key administrative activities.

### **Recommendations**

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

## **External Relations**

### **Commendations**

- 9.2 The School has played and remains committed to playing a significant role in the life and administration of the College and the University.
- 9.3 Individual members of staff have made and continue to make a considerable contribution to the academic profession at national and international levels.
- 9.4 The School has made and continues to make a significant contribution to public life and debates in Ireland and has fed into policy-making processes at national and European levels.
- 9.5 Its high degree of integration into international research networks testifies to the leadership role played by individual members of staff in their respective area of expertise.

- 9.6 The School hosts well-established and prestigious visiting professorships and is commended for the quality of the environment it provides to chair-holders.
- 9.7 The School boasts a relatively high degree of staff mobility and exchange.
- 9.8 The School is committed to a strong and responsive programme of public engagement that is supported and enhanced by Archivistics and Archives staff.
- 9.9 The School makes very good use of new and social media to promote its scholarship and activities. The History Hub is particularly impressive in this regard.
- 9.10 External stakeholders, including employers, speak highly of the School and their relationship with it.

### **Recommendations**

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

## Appendix 2: UCD History and Archives Response to the Review Group Report

When the School was reviewed in 2014/15 it was then constituted as the School of History and Archives. Independently of the Quality Review process the decision was taken at University level to detach the curatorial archive from the History and Archivistics section of the School. Consequently, the current response deals only with the elements relevant to the History and Archivistics section of the report and response to the Curatorial Archival section will be addressed in a separate exercise under the aegis of the Library.

The School would like to express its thanks to all members of the review group who executed their task with thoroughness, efficiency and in a very pleasant, supportive and collegiate manner. The School is gratified by the many commendations which the group made about our activities, in particular concerning our world-wide reputation in research based on outstanding publication and grant capture, the intellectual and academic calibre of our staff, our commitment to and success in delivering an excellent curriculum, the strong sense of collegiality, the transparent structure of committees, and the outstanding professionalism of the administrative staff in the face of severe under-resourcing.

The School has prepared a plan to deal with the recommendations which have been made in the Quality Review report and has already undertaken numerous actions, for instance with regard to the irregular contractual positions of staff which the School is treating as a point of particular urgency, liaising with the Library concerning the future of Archives, devising a dynamic 'outside-in' strategic plan and in redefining the role and function of its Executive Committee to allow the unit to achieve a better level of strategic planning.

With specific reference to the prioritised recommendations identified by the Review group, the School's initial response is outlined below.

1. The School commits itself to a more focused process of strategic planning co-ordinated by the School executive operating under a clearly defined frame of reference. This process has already commenced.
2. The School will institute more effective mentoring and will attempt to seek College support in this regard.
3. The School recognizes that there has been a gender dimension to the issues affecting staff morale in the unit and is happy to put itself forward to undergo Athena Swan bronze award accreditation. The Head of School has already commenced discussion of this with the University team responsible for this programme. However, the School hopes that it will receive administrative support for this labour-intensive exercise.
4. The School will do all in its power to regularise staff contracts and welcomes the recommendation that both the College and the School should see this as a matter of priority.
5. The School commits itself to working with the Dean, cognate Schools and the relevant College Principals to attempt to reform the BA degree radically and would be happy to participate in College discussions of the UCD 'science model' and a possible restriction of entry numbers. (4.19).

6. The School welcomes the recommendation that it should work proactively with the College to identify areas where the College can contribute to University decision making through improved advocacy.

In terms of the additional recommendations the School will consider them all carefully over the next academic year and it has identified the following in particular as of key importance:

7. The Head of school will review how decision making is undertaken in the School (2.36)
8. The unsustainable situation with regard to administrative support has been partially alleviated by the granting of permission to replace the Archives officer with an EA but the School will consider how further administrative staff and the quest for further academic appointments should be prioritised in the future. (2.38 and 8.6)
9. The School endorses completely the recommendation that, despite the separation of the Archives from the School, it is essential that the connection between Archivistics and Archives be maintained and that Archivistics students should maintain their access to collections stored in the Archives. (2.49)
10. The School entirely supports the recommendation that responsibility for post-doctoral redundancy payments should be assumed by the University. (3.30 and 6.8)
11. The School will devise and implement a programme to ensure better student representation in terms of the governance of the School. (4.21)
12. The School accepts that further curriculum change should seek to maximise teaching staff time and resources.
13. The membership of the Research committee will be extended to make it more representative and to include more junior staff. (6.10)
14. The School will try to make use of the new co-location strategy to provide social space for post-graduate and post-doctoral researchers. (6.20)
15. The School welcomes the recommendation that Key Performance Indicators need to be reassessed at a higher level with regard to their applicability across different disciplines and will co-operate with any initiative in this regard. (6.25)
16. The School entirely welcomes the recommendations to the College concerning the BA programme (7.10 and 7.11)
17. The School will revise its filling of director and officer roles and will pay attention to gender considerations in this regard (7.13)
18. The School accepts in its entirety the recommendation that each of the School 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. (7.15)

## Appendix 3:



### Review Visit Timetable

#### School of History and Archives, 23-26 March 2015

#### Monday, March 23, Pre-Visit Briefing Prior to Site Visit (Note this does not involve any member of the School)

- 17.00-19.15 Review Group meet to review preliminary issues and to confirm work schedule and assignment of tasks for the following three days.– **Review Group and UCD Quality Office only**
- 19.30 Dinner hosted for the Review Group by UCD Dean of Arts representing the Registrar and Deputy President

#### Day 1: Tuesday, March 24

##### Venue: Room K114 / Newman Building

- 08.30 – 08.45 Private meeting of Review Group
- 08.45 – 09.30 Review Group meets Principal, College of Arts and Celtic Studies
- 09.30 – 10.15 Review Group meets Head of School
- 10.15 – 10.45 Review Group meets BA Programme Dean representative and BA Programme Manager
- 10.45 - 11.00 Review Group private meeting - key observations
- 11.00 – 11.30 Tea/coffee break in K115 – with staff
- 11.30 – 12.15 Review Group meets SAR Coordinating Committee
- 12.15-12.45 Break – Review Group reviews key observations and prepares for lunch time meeting
- 12.45-13.45 Working lunch (buffet) – meeting with employers and other external stakeholders
- 13.45-14.15 Review Group reviews key observations
- 14.15-15.30 Review Group meets with representative group of academic staff – primary focus on Teaching and Learning, and Curriculum issues.
- 15.30-15.45 Review Group tea/coffee break
- 15.45-16.15 Review Group meets with professional staff representatives
- 16.15 – 16.20 Break

16.20 - 16.40	Review Group meets Mary Ball Washington Visiting Professor
16.40 – 17.00	Review Group meets Keith Cameron Visiting Professor
17.00-17.15	Break
17.15-18.15	Tour of Teaching Facilities in Newman Building and Archives
18.15	Review Group departs

**Day 2: Wednesday, March 25**

**Venue: Room K114 / Newman Building**

08.45-09.15	Private meeting of the Review Group
09.15-09.45	Review Group meets: Archives Curatorial Staff
09.45 – 10.00	Library Liaison Officer and Special Collections Officer
10.00 - 10.10	Break
10.10-11.00	Review Group meets a representative group of graduate students (taught and research) and recent graduates
11.00-11.15	Review Group tea/coffee break
11.15-12.15	Review Group meets the School Research Committee
12.15-12.30	Break – Review Group review key observations
12.30-13.15	Lunch – Review Group only
13.15-14.00	Review Group meets representative group of undergraduate students
14.00-14.15	Review Group private meeting - review key observations
14.15-15.00	Review Group meet with College Finance Manager and Head of School
15.00-15.15	Break
15.15-15.45	Review Group meets recently appointed members of staff
15.45-16.15	Review Group meets postdoctoral fellows
16.15-17.15	Review Group available for private individual meetings with staff
17.15-18.00	Review Group private meeting – review key observations/findings
18.00	Review Group departs

**Day 3: Thursday, March 26**

**Venue: Room K114 / Newman Building**

8.45-9.00	Private meeting of Review Group
09.00-9.30	Review Group meets Head of School to clarify any outstanding issues
9:30-10.45	Review Group prepares draft Report
10.45-12.30	Review Group finalises first draft of Review Group Report and feedback commendations/recommendations
11.30	Review Group meets College Principal re feedback initial outline commendations and recommendations
12.30-13.15	Lunch
13.30-13.45	Review Group meets Head of School to feedback initial outlines commendations and recommendations
13.45-14.00	Break
14.00-14.30	Exit presentation to all available staff of the School
15.00	Review Group departs