



University College Dublin

Quality Improvement Plan

Centre for Distance Learning
UCD College of Business

November 2017

1. Introduction

This Quality Improvement Plan for the business programmes offered in Singapore and Hong Kong was prepared in response to the Quality Review process coordinated by the UCD Quality Office in March 2017. The programmes reviewed in Hong Kong and Singapore were Bachelor of Business Studies (BBS) and Master of Science (MSc) offered by University College Dublin (UCD) with the partner institutions, Kaplan Higher Education Ltd in Hong Kong and Kaplan Higher Education Institute Pte Ltd in Singapore. A detailed two-day site visit was held in each location and allowed for a critical analysis of the current partnership arrangement to include; the programme, curriculum development, assessment, quality assurance, feedback, and annual programme monitoring. The governance structures, programme delivery and programme management support are broadly similar in both Hong Kong and Singapore.

The original Peer Review Report was prepared by the partners and the Quality Assurance Committee at UCD College of Business. This standing committee prepared both the Self Assessment Report and the Quality Improvement Plan. The members of the Quality Assurance Committee include:

- Professor Damien McLoughlin (Chair), Anthony C. Cunningham Professor of Marketing and Associate Dean (International), UCD College of Business
- Dr Linda Dowling-Hetherington, Director, Assurance of Learning, UCD College of Business
- Professor Brian Fynes, Professor of Supply Chain Management at the School of Business, University College Dublin and former Subject Area Head of the Management group, UCD College of Business
- Ruth Harrison, Business Operations Manager, UCD College of Business
- Dr Maeve Houlihan, Vice Principal for Teaching and Learning at UCD College of Business and Senior Lecturer, UCD College of Business
- Dr Orna O'Brien, Programme Office Director and School Manager, Centre for Distance Learning, UCD College of Business

The Peer Review Team included:

- Professor Michael Gilchrist, Head, School of Mechanical and Materials Engineering (Panel Chair)
- Professor Marie McHugh, Ulster University, former Dean of Ulster Business School
- Professor John Beck, Nanyang Business School, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
- Dr Roy Ferguson, UCD Director of Quality
- Michael Kennedy, Senior Policy Officer, UCD Quality Office (Panel Rapporteur)

Categories

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

Timescale

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

Report (page, paragraph)	RG Recommendation	Category	Action Taken/Action Planned/Reason for Not Implementing	Timescale
ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT				
Page 3, 7 and Page 7, 5	In accordance with best practice in UCD and internationally, the Review Group recommends that the duration of all associated Memoranda of Agreement, in future, be no longer than 5 years. This is appropriate even for such long-established partnerships, and any automatic renewal period should be conditional on satisfactory completion of a periodic quality review prior to renewal of the Memoranda of Agreement.	1	Any future agreement will be 5 years in duration. The current agreements are due to expire in 2020.	A
Page 3, 7 and Page 9, 7	Advanced Standing Qualifications (ASQ) – most applicants to the undergraduate programmes in both Singapore and Hong Kong are admitted directly to Stage 2, with an ASQ for Stage 1 based on work completed previously through another education provider. Further formality should be introduced for these arrangements, in particular with the education providers that supply the largest number of	2	Work has commenced to confirm Articulation Agreements with the key providers of students accessing Stage 2 entry. It is expected to continue over the next 12-18 months. There are 3 institutions who have engaged in this process with us and the others have not yet responded to our frequent requests. For those who have engaged in the process, we hope to have the articulation agreements ratified in 2018.	C

	students onto the UCD/Kaplan programmes (the Review Group was informed that six institutions provide pathways for nearly 70% of students). This should take the form of articulation agreements, and this was acknowledged as a 'work-in-progress'.			
Page 4, 1 Also 12, 2 and 15,3	<p>The Review Group recommends that teaching staff arrangements and the mode of delivery of the programmes (through short, 1-week visits) should be evaluated in further detail, and that the approach to this should be informed by international best practice, benchmarked against other comparable institutions and programmes, compared with other similar collaborative and transnational provision which UCD is engaged with, and undertaken in consultation with the UCD Vice-President for Global Engagement, with a view to considering a wide range of models for delivery of the programme content by UCD-Belfield academic staff. Closer interaction and alignment with the UCD Global Engagement framework is recommended by the Review Group in order to exploit opportunities which may be of mutual benefit, particularly in relation to engagement with alumni and regional employers of graduates.</p> <p>The Review Group acknowledged that the modes of delivery for the programmes in Singapore and Hong Kong are designed to accommodate local market-needs, which make them <i>different</i> to the programmes delivered in Dublin, but the Review Group developed some reservations regarding the <i>comparability</i> and <i>equivalence</i> of the teaching and learning experience afforded to students in Singapore and Hong Kong, as compared with students based in Dublin. The Review Group recommends that the College revisits the relationship between the workload, timeframe and mode of delivery for programmes in Singapore and Hong Kong.</p>	1	A competitive analysis report has been commissioned to review the programmes in light of the UCD Global Engagement framework and also competitors in both Hong Kong and Singapore. This will be completed by our Asia Manager by March 2018. The model of intensive delivery is well established at the College of Business on domestic offerings and overseas. The commissioned report will be considered in light of local market offerings and best practice within the College of Business. The report will review the duration, model in terms of delivery and class provision, awarding body and partner institution.	C
Page 4, 2 and	Localisation of the programme content is undertaken by lecturing staff based in Singapore and Hong Kong. The	1	A comprehensive project has been completed over the last 24 months to ensure that all module content is generated from UCD Faculty. This has	A

15, 5	<p>intention is that modules are delivered by locally based, suitably qualified lecturers in partnership with UCD faculty. Following the last quality review exercise in 2008, UCD-based faculty have provided increased input into the delivery of modules. This is considered to have significantly enhanced the quality of the provision. The Review Group recommends that the College of Business ensures that UCD faculty provide, at a minimum, 50% input to the teaching of all modules in Singapore and Hong Kong. A two year project to ensure this level of UCD input into modules commenced in September 2015. Most modules in BBS Stage 2 and Stage 3 are already delivered locally, with standardised resources provided by UCD. In 2017-18 this will be extended to postgraduate modules. The importance of UCD direct input relates to the quality of the provision, but it also helps to justify for the students the high fee, and establishes the key unique selling point for the UCD programmes. The Review Group further recommends that the College of Business considers whether UCD's Belfield faculty would deliver their course material during single two-week periods rather than more intensive one-week periods. This would significantly enhance the quality of students' learning experience and would provide further opportunity to strengthen the collaborative research activities between UCD's Belfield faculty and both staff and industry in the Singapore and Hong Kong regions.</p>		<p>already been implemented (Timescale A).</p> <p>In light of the competitive analysis report above, the College will review its model of delivery in light of local market offerings and best practice within the College of Business. Details are provided above.</p> <p>The recommendation that faculty would remain for two weeks is beyond the resourcing capability of the College at present. Resourcing for the overseas programmes is already under pressure and doubling the resource implication for travel would have a major negative impact for both domestic and overseas offerings.</p> <p>The construction of the Moore Learning building by the College of Business may allow for enhanced student provision through online and enhanced technology solutions. This building is now under construction and is due for completion in January 2019. It is expected once it is available that it will be possible to allow for greater technology support of module delivery. For example, it is planned that some modules may share an aspect of delivery or allow for greater sharing of guest lecturers across programme offerings.</p>	C
Page 4, 4 and 15,7	<p>The mode of delivery of the Summer School in UCD-Belfield should be evaluated closely, and discussed at the relevant programme board in the College of Business to ensure the quality of the student experience for those who undertake the Summer School.</p> <p>It is recommended that in advance of making any decision to participate in the Summer School, students should be provided with more detailed information about it, and should be provided with opportunities to meet with students who have previously attended the School. The Review Group also recommends that the College of</p>	1	<p>The Summer School extension proposal has been ratified by the Undergraduate Business Taught Programme Board and the College Executive of the College of Business. The Summer School option has been opened to the BSc Sri Lanka students for the module 'BMGT3001L Business Policy' for August 2018. Students from the domestic BBS programme in Ireland are also invited to attend for this module for August 2018.</p> <p>The comments regarding an extension of provision have been discussed and additional online sessions will enhance the provision two weeks in advance and four weeks after the class. Students will have 4/5 days of intense classroom time which will be further supported by these online</p>	A A

	Business considers offering the opportunity for Dublin based students to participate in summer modules, and that opportunities are provided for international participants to meet Dublin based students. The Review Group also recommends that the College of Business introduces a Summer School for MSc students that is open to both international and Dublin based students.		<p>sessions. The student reading preparation period has also been extended.</p> <p>An opportunity for MSc students to undertake modules on campus at the UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School will be explored for 2018/19 provision.</p>	B
Page 4, 6 and Page 15, 4	The Review Group recommends that the College revisits the relationship between the workload, timeframe and mode of delivery for programmes in Singapore and Hong Kong. The Review Group also recommends that the CDL provides a detailed representation (e.g. a Gant chart) of the timeframe for delivery of the programmes, from the point of admission, including module delivery, assessment dates, block teaching by UCD-Belfield academic staff, examinations and the grade approvals process, including final approval of grades. This indicative timeline could be included in the response to this report to be provided by the CDL and the College of Business.	1	This Gant chart regarding, timeframe for delivery, and student experience was provided to the UCD Quality Office in July 2017. This was included in the CDL response to the Quality Review report. This chart will inform the discussions regarding the model of delivery as outlined above, once the competitive analysis report is received in March 2018.	Gant A
Page 15, 8	The Review Group recommends that the CDL, through Kaplan, explores the development of stronger links with employers to facilitate student internships, and that increased opportunity is provided for students to develop employability skills. This would also support the building of the UCD brand in overseas markets.	1	UCD College of Business will explore the opportunities for internships in both locations. With many students on part-time programmes, the demand for internships was low. There are also visa restrictions for student visa extensions which would be problematic for internships. Over the coming year, an investigation with Kaplan will be undertaken to explore how this might be received by students on all offerings.	B
Page 15, 9	The Review Group recommends that students be made more aware of what supports are available to them to assist them in understanding the academic material, for example through additional seminars/tutorials. Students from different (academic and/or language) backgrounds may experience different challenges with different modules (e.g. non-Maths oriented students may experience difficulties with statistics modules). This does not necessarily need to be provided for all students, but at least for those who require this additional support. Academic writing and the correct way of referencing should also be	1	<p>Students will continue to be made aware that supports are available to them at orientation and through our periodic student newsletters and memos. For example, an additional academic techniques session will be offered by local faculty for students who have failed a resit module during the summer period.</p> <p>The Stage 3 additional academic workshop each October and April, which addressed academic writing, exam technique and referencing for BBS students, will continue to be promoted and developed. For students who refail a module, an additional specific examination techniques session is scheduled starting from December 2017.</p>	A

	introduced to students – there have been attempts to introduce this in orientation sessions, though not always with success.		CDL will continue to promote the office hours of local faculty for students who require academic support.	
Page 18, 2	It is recommended that the College of Business and CDL seek to clearly identify the root causes of high attrition and low progression in some modules on the BBS programme in both Singapore and Hong Kong and, where possible, put in place measures to address this.	1	The trends regarding progression and attrition will feature as part of the Annual Reports in future, starting from September 2018. Initial investigations suggest that part-time students experience a larger number of additional constraints due to work and family situation which can impact upon their studies. Equally, for new international students in Singapore, a new location with no family support can further magnify academic issues. A review will be conducted as part of the 2017/2018 annual report to confirm the root causes and propose solutions to reduce them for students.	B
Page 18, 4	It is recommended that the CDL ensures that in all cases, the comments and recommendations made by External Examiners are addressed and that in providing a response to them, it is made clear what action/s have been implemented and/or planned in relation to the provision in question. Additionally, the CDL must make clear and document how the reports from the External Examiners are systematically evaluated, how they are actioned, and how they influence programme planning.	1	In keeping with the approach for all programmes at the College of Business, since 2015 a letter to each External Examiner will continue to be sent which acknowledges their feedback and indicates the actioned recommendation. This is cc'd to the Associate Dean, International and the relevant Head of Subject Area. An explanation will continue to be provided if a recommendation cannot be actioned. These letters were included in the baseroom for the Quality Assurance Review. As explained during the Review, the timeline regarding the submission of the Annual Programme Reports for the Business Programme Board is not optimal. This is a vehicle which allows for the sharing of feedback from the External Examiner and the update regarding of its implementation. The deadline for External Examiner Reports should be decoupled so that Programme Staff can bring in the feedback from all external examiners into the reports.	A
STAFF AND FACILITIES				
Page 4, 5, Page 9, 6 and Page 19, 1	The Review Group recommends that to support its quality assurance processes, the University is asked to give consideration to the provision of IT systems for data analytics and reporting mechanisms that support the required forensic interrogation of data by the CDL and the College of Business. The specific requirements in this	2	Discussions with MSU will continue to address the deficits in this regard and it is anticipated the reports requested should be granted within the next twelve months. Progress has been made regarding admissions metrics but the reporting and analytics for assessment and other areas requested has not	B

	respect are set-out in Appendix 6 .		progressed to date.	
Page 12, 3	The Review Group noted the remuneration restrictions imposed on the Irish Higher Education Institutions in recent years by the Department of Education and Skills, as a result of the economic downturn in Ireland. To some extent, this had made Singapore and Hong Kong teaching assignments for Dublin-based staff less attractive. In relation to the long-term sustainability and viability of the programmes, this issue should be considered further by the UCD Vice-President for Global Engagement and UCD Human Resources, particularly as it may also impact on other similar programmes.	2	The issue has been brought to the attention of UCD Vice-President for Global Engagement and UCD Human Resources.	A
Page 15, 6	In the context of both the institutional aims and objectives, and the College of Business desire to provide a truly international experience for its students, the Review Group recommends that the College of Business establishes a Global Classroom (facilitated by relevant technology) to enable students based in Dublin, Singapore and Hong Kong to participate in classes/lecture sessions that are delivered in Dublin and seek to engage students in remote locations. Through scheduling, this may be in real time, or through the availability of podcasts.	1	With the construction of the Moore Learning Wing (technology enhanced learning spaces) to the UCD Lochlann Quinn School of Business commencing now and due to be ready for occupation in January 2019, an opportunity will be available to provide a Global Classroom. A real-time classroom is preferable for student interactivity over a passive podcast offering.	C
Page 20, 2	Alumni engagement is not quite yet ingrained. The Review Group recommends that the CDL, Kaplan and the UCD College of Business explore strategies to develop this area. This can assist, for example, with the development of internship opportunities, use of 'real-world' experience and examples within modules, and enhanced career development support. A more consistent, structured and holistic approach to alumni engagement would be valuable for the alumni themselves. Linking with the Irish consulate, and having collaborative research activities between UCD-Belfield and local staff and regional industry contacts, would also be particularly valuable, and this would help UCD to differentiate itself. Closer interaction and alignment with the UCD Global Engagement framework is	1	CDL colleagues will be working with the UCD College of Business Alumni team with regarding this recommendation. Ongoing resourcing and opportunities will be supported and developed in the coming years. While Kaplan do have an alumni function, the College of Business has deliberately ensured to try and manage UCD alumni activities directly with the alumni.	C

	recommended by the Review Group in order to exploit opportunities which may be of mutual benefit, particularly in relation to engagement with alumni and regional employers of graduates.			
Page 18, 1	The Review Group recommends that an audit be carried out to assess the availability of all materials listed in study guides within the UCD Library, and that difficulties associated with remote access to UCD Library facilities be investigated and addressed.	1	<p>This has been completed in August 2017. 17 titles were available which students could avail of using e- books for the BBS in Singapore. This has been communicated to students by student memo. Additional information regarding access to journal material has been provided.</p> <p>An additional orientation session will be provided online this year also on the online resources available to students in Singapore, Hong Kong and Sri Lanka, including UCD Library Facilities.</p> <p>With the timeline for lecturer allocation and the time to purchase e-resources, it can be challenging to enhance e-book provision.</p>	A
TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT				
Page 4, 3	An important element in the student learning process is the provision of feedback to students on their academic performance. Although general feedback to students on modules is provided, the Review Group found no evidence of a systematic approach for providing individual feedback to students on their coursework. The absence of any formalised mechanism for providing feedback to students on coursework prior to examinations is considered by the Review Group to be a significant shortcoming of the provision, and the Review Group recommends that this be addressed. Furthermore, and more generally, the effectiveness of the formal mechanisms for collecting student feedback on the way each of the programmes are managed and delivered should be further enhanced. The Student Forum provides a useful mechanism for receiving student feedback, but there is scope to further enhance this so that it might more closely resemble the formal Staff-Student Committees which exist in UCD-Belfield.	1	<p>As outlined during the review process, students do receive detailed general feedback for all modules already. For half of the modules, students do receive individual, written feedback, as well as in class feedback on group work and presentations. A project commenced in June 2017 to encourage staff to make wider use of assessment rubrics to provide more detailed feedback to students. A rubric for assessment, usually in the form of a matrix or grid, is a tool used to interpret and grade students' work against criteria and standards. It extends beyond the UCD grade descriptor to provide detailed areas of grading assessment specific to each component of assessment.</p> <p>It is recognised that the academic regulations in UCD are due to change in the coming year and the mode of assessment and requirements for feedback will also heavily influence this practice.</p> <p>The student forum structure has been reviewed with both partners. The meetings once per term with UCD staff will continue and the students now have the opportunity to demonstrate an interest in being elected to the</p>	B

			fora. Student representatives will continue to serve on the forum across the programme duration and all class members will be informed by memo of who will be representing them and of the meetings.	
Page 4, 7 Page 17, 6	The Review Group was informed that provisional examination results are approved within sixty days from examination, but formal approval may take 6 months from the date of examination. This is excessively long, and can also impact on the timeframes for the application of the University's examination appeals process for students on the programmes. The Review Group recommends that the CDL and the College of Business, in consultation with the Assessment unit in UCD Registry, evaluates this matter further and identifies the reasons why the process can take this long, with a view to improving alignment with the Grade Approval Process as it applies to programmes delivered at UCD-Belfield.	1	From September 2017, modules are processed now at the time of completion for the Grade Approvals Process, rather than programme stage end.	A2017
CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW				
Page 8, 7	UCD and Kaplan should work together to further develop their strategy in relation to the programme offerings, cognisant of the changes in the market which may mean less requirement for Business programmes and a need for more technically-oriented programmes, and of the local market demands and the potential contribution that local staff/alumni can make to identifying opportunities (e.g. the MSc Marketing). The financial viability of the Hong Kong operation should be closely monitored and evaluated in the context of strategic planning, while the strategy for Singapore should recognise the maturity of that market and how the current success can be sustained and enhanced.	A	The UCD Kaplan Strategic Board will continue to review the programme portfolio each December and each May. The Board will consider the current portfolio in light of local market demands using the data available from student recruitment targets. The UCD Kaplan Strategic Board will also continue to review and monitor the portfolio in Hong Kong and the UCD Strategic presence in this location.	1
RESEARCH ACTIVITY				
Page 12, 4	The Review Group recommends that CDL consider ways in	1	The annual Teaching and Learning Festivals now has a staff research	B

	<p>which it can develop the research skills of local staff, for example by encouraging visiting UCD-Belfield staff to undertake joint research activities with local staff, including delivering research seminars for local staff, industry and the business community while in Singapore and Hong Kong, and by encouraging local staff to visit UCD-Belfield. The development of a video to give teaching tips to all faculty (not only those travelling overseas) would also be useful, and technology should be employed to enable staff at all locations to interact during teaching and learning events.</p>		<p>element since May 2017. The events are intended to encourage the research skills of local staff.</p> <p>Further research seminars for local staff, industry and the business community might be best resourced through our Alumni Office at the UCD College of Business.</p> <p>A video on teaching tips for teaching overseas is being developed with our Business Elearning team and will be ready by June 2017.</p> <p>We will continue to offer Teaching and Learning events which are offered across the different locations to continue to foster engagement and good working relationships.</p>	
MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY AND ENHANCEMENT				
Page 11, 1	<p>The formal mechanism for collecting student feedback on the way each of the programmes are managed and delivered should be further enhanced – the Student Forum provides some opportunity for this, but this should be further enhanced so that it might more closely resemble the formal Staff-Student Committees which exist in UCD-Belfield. The Review Group recommends that all stakeholders, including the College Principal and staff from Kaplan, are provided with the annual programme monitoring reports, and are made aware of issues which may arise and any and all actions planned to address them.</p>	1	<p>The Student Forum schedule will continue and formal representatives from each class will be appointed. UCD staff will continue to attend and contribute to the fora which are held in each of the 6 terms during the programme delivery.</p> <p>The Annual Reports for each programme will continue to be shared with the College Principal, the partners and Programme Boards.</p> <p>It is requested that the timeline regarding the submission of the Annual Programme Reports for the Business Programme Board and the deadline for External Examiner Reports should be decoupled so that Programme Staff can bring in the feedback from all external examiners into the reports.</p>	A
Page 17, 7	<p>Data provided by the University Secretariat reveals a high number of examination infringements associated with the College of Business overseas programmes in Singapore. The Review Group considers it unlikely that this is due to higher detection rates as compared with programmes assessed in Dublin. In Singapore (and Hong Kong), it is Kaplan staff that organise and oversee the examinations process. With respect to other transnational programmes offered by UCD in other locations, there has been detailed</p>	1	<p>187 cases were reported overall of academic breaches at UCD in 2015/2016 according to the Disciplinary Committee Review. By way of context, 41 of these cases were from Singapore, a student population of 2778. The Centre for Distance Learning will continue to monitor such examination infringement. Students will continue to receive information regarding the importance of academic integrity at orientation and regular reminders throughout their studies. Kaplan programme management staff will also be heavily involved in this process.</p>	B

	discussion and interaction with the Assessment unit in UCD Registry, with a view to investigating the reasons for a high number of examination infringements and determining a mutually agreeable course of action to address the issue – the Review Group recommends that the UCD College of Business and the Centre for Distance Learning consider a similar approach and consults with the Assessment unit in UCD Registry to address the issue.		The Centre for Distance Learning is liaising with the Assessment Unit regarding any further recommendations they may have to reduce the number of infringements. Given the changes in the Academic Regulations which are impending, further discussion with Assessment and at College level will ensue in the coming year.	
Page 18, 3	It is recommended that the College of Business affirms that the English language entry requirement of IELTS 6.5 is sufficient for its overseas provision. It is further recommended that students who have difficulty with English language are identified at an early stage, and that they are required to avail of the additional English language support classes provided by Kaplan (particularly in Hong Kong).	1	UCD College of Business is happy to continue to abide by the UCD requirement of an IELTS of 6.5 for the programme. Students in need of English language support will continue to be directed to the additional weekly English language support classes offered by Kaplan. CDL will continue to monitor this activity.	A
SUPPORT SERVICES Reference to the Library Support and MSU are listed above under ‘Staffing and Facilities’				
EXTERNAL RELATIONS Reference to external relations with our Alumni Unit are listed above under ‘Staffing and Facilities’				

3. Prioritised Resource Requirements

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

1. n/a

Note: The Quality Improvement Plan should be used to inform Unit and College level academic, support service and resource planning activities.