



University College Dublin

Quality Improvement Plan

UCD Quality Office

30 April 2014

UCD QUALITY OFFICE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN – 1 April 2014

(Date of Quality Review Site Visit: 11-14 November 2013)

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	In control of the Unit	1	Already Implemented	A
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UCD GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT OF QUALITY REVIEWS				
3.18	The institution under the auspices of the UCDQO should continue to lobby for a risk and proportionality approach to external and internal quality review in discussions with the QQI about the new Quality Assurance Framework and across other relevant QQI policy developments.	1/2	The UCD Quality Office will continue to work with QQI and the rest of the sector during 2014 onwards to develop new external and internal quality review frameworks.	B/C
3.19	In accordance with recommendations made in previous reports the UCD Academic Council should seek to review its sub-committee structure with a view to its rationalisation and simplification	2	Academic Council Executive Committee will undertake a review of the membership structure and composition of Academic Council and its sub-committees during 2014.	B
PLANNING MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION OF RESOURCES				
4.13	UCDQO and other relevant bodies should consider carefully whether the considerable skills set of the staff are being leveraged to optimum effect.	1	The UCDQO currently works closely with other relevant support units including Academic Secretariat, Teaching and Learning, Institutional Research and Research Office. Examples of synergetic projects in 2013-14 include (1) the development of UCD Research & Library	A

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			<p>Quality Review Framework; (2) UCD Teaching & Learning organised a series of workshops to co-facilitate School internal self-evaluation dialogue and action planning for writing the Quality Review SAR; (3) UCDQO and Director of Institutional Research are developing an Integrated Institutional Quality Report; and (4) UCDQO are contributing to an Academic Secretariat led project to redevelop the UCD Framework to Approve, Monitor and Review Collaborative and Transnational Educational Provision.</p> <p>The UCDQO will continue to seek opportunities to contribute to/lead relevant quality related institutional projects.</p>	
4.14	Members of the Quality Office staff take an active role in committees and network within the University and in the Irish Higher Education Quality Community. The Review Group wants to stress that this networking activity should be shared between the members of staff, to secure stability and development in the unit.	1/2	<p>The UCDQO will continue to seek to expand opportunities for UCDQO staff to develop their networks, within the University and at national/international level e.g. attendance at the EUA Annual Conference.</p> <p>Where appropriate, opportunities will continue to be identified for staff to accrue greater responsibility, and to provide critical development experiences. Developmental considerations, where appropriate, will inform future UCDQO representation, as committee/working group opportunities present.</p> <p>(It should be noted that some committee/external engagement is</p>	Ongoing
5.31	Given the Director of Quality's highly effective engagement on behalf of the institution, further consideration should be given, and opportunities provided, to other members of the team to lead on internal initiatives as part of their ongoing			

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	career development and to facilitate institutional succession planning.		conditional on the post held within UCD and/or the membership requirements of some external bodies e.g. membership may be dependent on nomination, e.g. IUA – which are outside the control of the UCDQO)	
4.15	The University should reconsider the location of the unit and discuss if it would be resource effective to co-locate the unit with other relevant support units, such as Teaching and Learning or Academic Secretariat.	2	As stated in response to recommendation 4.13 above, the UCDQO already works closely with relevant support units, including UCD Teaching and Learning, UCD Research, UCD Institutional Research and UCD Academic Secretariat. A review of the organisation of quality within UCD is implicit within the broader review of UCD Management and Governance sponsored by the UCD President in January 2014.	B
4.16	It may be difficult to obtain further resources in light of the current funding constraints; however, the Review Group believe that maintaining the current complement of four staff would significantly improve its effectiveness and its ability to expand its role to broader ranges of quality assessment.	2	The University acknowledges that a staff complement of four is sufficient to meet current workload demands. Given, however, UCD's expanding portfolio of collaborative and transnational activity, combined with increasing responsibilities for QA for linked providers (under the 2012 Act), UCD (and the UCDQO) will keep staff levels under periodic review.	Ongoing
FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES, PROCESSES				
5.24	Given the distributed nature of QA/QI there is scope for the ACCQ to better discharge its functions in accordance with its	1	The UCDQO, in conjunction with the Registrar, will plan with the Chair of ACCQ, how ACCQ can become more proactive in identifying	B

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	current Terms of Reference. It should be more pro-active in identifying suitable projects to facilitate and encourage this and should provide more opportunities for staff in the UCDQO to undertake a more strategic role, in collaboration with other units, in relation to quality assurance, quality management and quality enhancement, to avoid insularity and to give greater prominence and visibility to the role of the Office.		institutional level QA/QI projects (in collaboration with other University units as appropriate) to further promote and support a quality culture in UCD. As stated in response to recommendations 4.13 and 4.16 above, the ACCQ and UCDQO already actively interact with relevant units across the University, on institution-wide projects. As part of an ongoing process to develop a broader strategic quality development role, in March 2014, ACCQ will engage in a number of cross-unit projects relating to quality, including: (1) UCD Research and UCD Library (in conjunction with UCDQO) in relation to the development of a Research & Library Quality Review Framework; and (2) UCD T&L- Obtaining and Responding to Student Feedback and (3) Supporting School's Self-Assessment of T&L Activities for Quality Review.	
5.25	There is merit and scope for the UCDQO to undertake more 'thematic' reviews to address interdisciplinary and University-wide issues.	1	Two thematic reviews have been completed in the period 2011-2013. The number of Thematic Reviews that can be undertaken, is in part, driven by budgetary considerations. The UCDQO (in conjunction with ACCQ and UMT) routinely updates the review schedule and will consider further thematic reviews as operational needs dictate.	A
5.26	Further consideration should be given as to how Review Group reports and their associated QIPs are progressed by their respective units and better aligned to the units'	1/2	Implementation of recommendations arising from Review Group Reports and the preparation of QIP's are the responsibility of units and their respective College or Directorate. The majority of units use	B/C

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	strategic planning processes and timescales.		<p>the opportunity, when developing this QIP, to inform and/or revise their strategic plan. As part of this process, relevant timelines are factored in regarding for example, unit enhancement activities, external accreditation scheduling, filling staff vacancies etc.</p> <p>As part of the implementation of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act (2012), a fundamental external review of the Irish HE Quality Assurance Review model commenced in November 2013. As part of this process, UCD will be reviewing its internal Quality Review model to ensure alignment with the revised national QR Framework: Integral to this review, the UCDQO will engage units and University Management to seek ways to better align unit strategic planning with Quality Review processes.</p>	
5.27	The Review Group recommends a slight modification to the Unit Review guidance to ensure that not only are student views sought as an integral part of the review process, but also that the feedback loop is closed by ensuring that planned actions arising from reviews that are relevant to the student body are subsequently shared with the students.	1/2	<p>Establishing effective mechanisms to close the feedback loop to students is a challenge for most institutions. Current feedback mechanisms include student representation on Academic Council Committee on Quality and publishing Review Group Reports and QIP's on the Quality Office webpage.</p> <p>In addition to the publication of Review Group Reports and Quality Improvement Plans, the UCDQO is considering the addition of a number of mechanisms to communicate actions taken and/or</p>	B/C

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			planned, to students in response to their feedback. These mechanisms may include circulating excerpts from QIP's indicating how units will address student related recommendations e.g. via email from the school/unit; Dean's Newsletters; Blackboard 'News' stream; or the 'Current Students News Stream' on the UCD website. Once the mechanism(s) have been identified, the QIP Guidelines will be updated for consideration by ACCQ.	
5.28	Members of review groups would support the development of standardised templates populated with key institutional data sets to inform unit review and provide a more consistent and uniform basis for analysis.	1	UCD Institutional Research provides a standard set of key School and Institutional data for units preparing for Quality Review. The UCDQO is currently working with the UCD Director of Institutional Research to refine the data template further. UCD Research and UCD Library, in conjunction with the UCD Quality Office have developed a data framework to assist schools, colleges and institutes preparing for quality review and to provide benchmarking data for Review Groups.	A
5.29	The Review Group recommends that consideration is given to the current constraints on the openness and directness of the language used in reporting and current legislative requirements to publish review group reports on the publically accessible institutional website.	1	There are no language constraints placed on how Review Groups express their findings in Review Group Reports. In keeping with the formative nature of the current Quality Review model in Ireland, guidance is provided to Review Groups on how to present findings/recommendations in a constructive manner that facilitates enhancement – this, however, does not constrain 'robust'	B

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			<p>comments/recommendations being made where appropriate. Nevertheless, the UCDQO will consult with Review Group members and Units that have been reviewed to determine what improvements to the UCDQO Guidelines are required to guide the drafting of RG Reports., for example, updated Review Group Guidelines will reinforce the use of clear, explicit and robust narrative and/or recommendations in Review Group Reports, where this is justified.</p>	
5.30	Other feedback suggests that some Heads of Unit would welcome (notwithstanding the recommendation above), more direct, graduated and prioritised sets of recommendations for implementation.	1	<p>Within the current QIP template, planned actions are prioritised with regard to deliverable timelines e.g. already implemented; implemented within a year etc.</p> <p>The UCDQO is currently consulting Heads of School/Units with a view to enhancing the way Review Group recommendations are presented e.g. prioritised or categorised in a different way.</p> <p>(It should be noted, however, notwithstanding that a Review Group may have prioritised some (all) recommendations, there may be variables that a Head of School/Unit needs to factor in when planning action to address recommendations that may be outside their control e.g. filling staff vacancies, organisational restructuring, budget availability, college/institutional priorities etc.)</p>	B

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5.32	As previously indicated, a national review of the Quality Assurance Framework is underway, and when agreed there is scope for a fundamental review of the current governance arrangements for quality assurance and quality improvement, its purpose and benefits to the institution, and the role of the UCDQO in their effective implementation.	1/2	As part of the QQI review of the current external institutional review and internal quality review models, the UCDQO (with appropriate institutional stakeholders) will revisit the current governance arrangements for quality assurance and quality enhancement and the role of the UCDQO in their implementation.	B/C
USER PERSPECTIVE				
6.8	The Review Group wants to emphasise that the users of the periodic unit review processes must be considered as an asset in the discussions on developing fit for purpose models and development of new frameworks. As hinted in the SAR, the UCDQO should involve users in discussions and the processes of developing a refreshed internal quality framework.	1/2	The UCDQO has already begun to engage users of the quality review process about the pros/cons of the current review model and the potential features of a refreshed internal review framework. These discussions with users will be ongoing over the next 12-18 months, initially as a national quality assurance framework is developed, which in turn will inform the development of a new or refreshed internal review model.	B/C
6.9	The UCDQO should prioritise the development of a more interactive and fruitful relationship with the students as users, and to the Students' Union. It might also be necessary to refine the understanding of students as users.	1	The UCDQO has a history of interaction with students. For example, in previous years the UCDQO has held student focus groups to elicit feedback from students across aspects of the student experience at UCD. The UCDQO has also in the past participated in training events for Student Union Class Representatives. On the UCD Quality Office	A/B

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			<p>webpages there is a section dedicated to students, outlining the Quality Review process and how students might contribute.</p> <p>Following interviews with students in February 2014, the information sheet outlining the Quality Review process and how students may contribute, was revised.</p> <p>In March 2014, representatives from the student body assisted the UCD Quality Office in the recording of a student podcast to communicate student experiences and involvement with Quality Review. Students also played an active role in the review of the UCD Quality Office in November 2013, and there are two student representatives on ACCQ.</p> <p>As illustrated in the response to recommendation 5.27 above, the UCDQO will engage students and Schools to identify ways to close feedback loops to students about actions planned or already taken to address student related issues arising from Quality Review.</p> <p>This project will be part of a wider discussion with students about opportunities to further develop an ongoing interactive relationship with the UCDQO.</p>	

