



# **University College Dublin**

## **REVIEW GROUP REPORT**



**Periodic Quality Review  
Programme Review of Collaborate provision offered by  
the UCD College of Business in association with the  
National School of Business Management (NSBM), Sri Lanka**

**November 2018**

**Accepted by the UCD Governing Authority at its meeting of 21 June 2019**

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## **Key Findings of the Review Group**

The Review Group has identified a number of key findings in relation to areas of good practice operating on the UCD Business programmes offered in Sri Lanka 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 list 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:

- Dedicated and professional staff both in the UCD College of Business Centre for Distance Learning (CDL) and the National School of Business Management (NSBM) Colombo campus.
- Clearly articulated organisational and management structure outlining the roles and responsibilities of both partners. The Operating Model is strong and ensures that administrative errors are minimised.
- The appointment of subject area co-ordinators to support academic governance has allowed for subject oversight of modules in line with similar offerings in Dublin.
- The quality of the new-build physical environment of NSBM has supported the development of the student experience and the opportunity for both partners to explore future opportunities on programme development.

### **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:

- A joint vision for the future relationship between UCD and NSBM should be developed, linked to the strategic ambitions of both institutions. This will require amendment to the existing Memorandum of Agreement (MoA).
- A strategic review of the overall BSc programme should be undertaken that includes reviewing the existing pathways, strengthening the governance structure, streamlining the operating model to allow for greater agility while maintaining quality, and reviewing and updating the curriculum.
- UCD College of Business and CDL should strengthen the quality, viability, scalability and resilience of its Blending Learning provision through the modernisation of its pedagogies and technology enablement of Blended Learning. The College should develop a policy for the minimum expectations for online/VLE module presence; that the expectations include systemic and consistent presence for every module on the VLE. Specifically, that both face-to-face and tutor-

supported blended-learning effort is articulated and designed into module delivery; that the total of these is comparable to that for the face-to-face support for on-campus modules at UCD.

- An audit of all modules should be carried out to ensure that they comply with UCD requirements for teaching contact hours and student effort involved with respect to the academic credit that are granted for each module.
- Take advantage of opportunities to develop and grow relationships with alumni.
- Recommendations from the last Quality Review should be revisited. In particular, feedback on assignments and the need for individual written feedback.
- The appointment of a UCD representative, locally based in Sri Lanka, similar to existing provision in Hong Kong and Singapore, should be put in place.

## 1. Introduction and Overview of the Quality Process at UCD



*Figure 1. View of Campus, National School of Business Management (NSBM), Colombo, Sri Lanka*

### ***Introduction***

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a quality review of the undergraduate taught provision offered by the University College Dublin College of Business in partnership with the National School of Business Management (NSBM), Sri Lanka.
- 1.2 The purpose of this 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.
- 1.3 The review was conducted in accordance with the UCD Guidelines for the Review of Collaborative and Transnational Taught Programmes and the UCD Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement Policy, and 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, 2015).
- 1.4 This collaborative partnership was previously reviewed by UCD in December 2010.

### ***The Review Process***

- 1.5 The College of Business submitted a Self-assessment Report (SAR) in early April 2018 that provided details of the collaborative arrangement and a critical analysis of the current partnership.

- 1.6 A Review Group conducted a site visit during the period 23-26 April 2018. This involved meetings with UCD Management and representatives from the UCD College of Business in Dublin (23 April), and meetings in Colombo (25 to 26 April) with representatives from NSBM, UCD College of Business and its Centre for Distance Learning (CDL), students, alumni, employers, and local and UCD faculty. Details of the site visit are contained in Appendix 3. In addition to the Self-assessment Report, the Review Group considered documentation provided by CDL and NSBM during the site visit
- 1.7 This report reflects the findings of the Review Group along with its commendations and recommendations for improvement. The College has taken the opportunity to formally respond to this Review Group Report (RGR) and this is attached as Appendix 2.
- 1.8 College of Business, in partnership with NSBM will prepare a Quality Improvement Plan that will respond to and address each recommendation in the RGR, and this will be overseen by UCD.

### ***The Review Group***

- 1.9 The composition of the Review Group was as follows:
- Professor Alex Evans, Head, UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science, Chair
  - Professor Prakash J. Singh, Head, Department of Management and Marketing, University of Melbourne
  - Professor Brian P. Murphy, Director of Access, Digital and Distributed Learning, University of Ulster
  - Bronwyn Molony, UCD Deputy Director of Quality

### **Review Methodology**

- 1.10 A Quality Assurance Committee was established by the College of Business in March 2016 to oversee the reviews of its Singapore and Hong Kong provision in 2017. This Committee also had responsibility for preparing for the review of its programmes in Sri Lanka. The Committee met on three occasions between March 2017 and January 2018 in preparation for the review. The report was compiled in conjunction with its partners, in particular, the NSBM Interim Dean of Business. Both teams in CDL and NSBM supported the preparation of the report and documentation provided in the meeting room.
- 1.11 The Review Group would like to thank the College of Business, staff of CDL and NSBM for their active engagement in the process and during the site visit. They would also like to thank the NSBM Vice Chancellor who met with the Review Group at short notice.

## Self-assessment Report

- 1.12 The Review Group noted the level of engagement by the College of Business and NSBM in the preparation of the Self-assessment report, its appendices and documentation provided during the site visit in Dublin and Sri Lanka.
- 1.13 However, it should be noted that the Review Group were of the opinion that there was insufficient analysis provided in the SAR that created challenges for the Review Group in assessing the activity prior to the site visit.

## 2. Collaborative Partnership Arrangement

- 2.1 The UCD College of Business is the major Business School in Ireland, and the only Irish Business School with triple accreditation from EQUIS (EFMD Quality Improvement Scheme), AMBA (Association of MBAs) and AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate School of Business). The MBA programme offered by the UCD College of Business is ranked joint 94 in the world, and 25 in Europe in the Financial Times ranking of Business School (2018), and the subject “Business and Management” in UCD is ranked 101-150 in the world in the QS rankings (2018).
- 2.2 The College has a strong international profile, evidenced through its rankings, participation in the Communication of European Management Schools (CEMS), foundation member of the Global Network for Advanced Management (GNAM), membership of Partnership in International Management (PIM), UNICON, and diversity of both its faculty and student population.
- 2.3 NSBM is a fully-owned subsidiary of National Institute of Business Management (NIBM) located on the outskirts of Colombo. The NSBM Green University Town is a state-of-the-art institute offering degree programmes and advanced level qualified pathways in its own right and with its collaborative partners.
- 2.4 The partnership between the UCD College of Business and NSBM, and formerly NIBM, has been in operation since 1996 and it presently comprises the delivery of three BSc programmes in (i) Management Information Systems, (ii) Human Resource Management, and (iii) Management.
- 2.5 The most recent Memoranda of Agreement (MoA) was signed in January 2017, effective from 2016 and for a period of five years in accordance with best practice in UCD.
- 2.6 The roles and responsibilities of both partners are clearly set out in Schedule 1 of the MoA. UCD has responsibility for programme management, modules, admissions, registration, student discipline, exam arrangements, QA arrangements, awards, marketing and advertising oversight, staff appointments, and IT support. NSBM have responsibility for

programme administration support, programme promotion, ensuring adherence to UCD's policies and procedures, timetabling and scheduling of classes, provision of facilities for lectures and examinations, student liaison and counselling, and supporting the student experience.

- 2.7 Delivery of education in the programmes is split between the partners. UCD does not have any permanent faculty residing in Sri Lanka but a cohort of approximately 20 faculty are drawn on from faculty based in Ireland, Singapore and Hong Kong. NSBM have seven resident faculty that are approved to teach on the programmes by UCD.
- 2.8 Responsibility for the strategic direction and oversight of the College of Business's partnership programme are the responsibility of the Associate Dean – International. He is also a member of the College Management Team (CMT) that is responsible for the business operations of the College. All new programmes, including overseas, programmes pathways and major operational changes are the responsibility of the College Executive Committee which includes the CMT, director of the doctoral and MPhil programmes, the six subject area heads, and senior professional staff. The Committee provides academic and administrative oversight for the College.
- 2.9 There is a recently established Strategy Board for the UCD NSBM partnership that meets once a year. However, no strategy for the partnership was presented.
- 2.10 Academic oversight of the programmes is the responsibility of the UCD Business Undergraduate Programme Board, a sub-committee of the University Programme Board.
- 2.11 The UCD College of Business established a Centre for Distance Learning (CDL) in 2003. The CDL has operational responsibility for the three programmes offered in NSBM. The administrative team at NSBM act as an intermediary between students and the CDL for programme operations and management. The NSBM team comprises a director, 4 programme managers and 2 administrative assistants. They are also responsible for student recruitment and marketing of the programme.
- 2.12 Fee income is split 50:50 between UCD and NSBM after deducting 5% government tax, and the MoA outlines how the student fee will increase in the coming years.
- 2.13 Operational management of the partnership programmes in Sri Lanka is provided by a programme team overseen by the Dean of Business, Programme Directors for the subject pathways and a dedicated programme team.
- 2.14 The UCD College of Business currently has three faculty members based in South East Asia in the subject areas of Management, Finance and Marketing, and reporting to the Subject Area Head in Dublin. The College is currently recruiting for a further three posts with a proposal to locate one of these people in Sri Lanka.
- 2.15 At the review on the NSBM Green Campus the following documents were also made available to the Review Group.



- CDL Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) guide for applicants
- Notes from Student Fora meetings held on 1 Dec 2016 and 16 June 2017. While the notes are sparse, they show that students give feedback on their programmes and that there is a high degree of satisfaction with the programmes on offer.
- The document “Vision 2020” for the UCD College of Business. This articulates the College’s Mission, Vision and Way Forward (strategy). It includes the four areas of (i) UCD Lochlann Quinn School of Business (ii) UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School (iii) UCD Smurfit Executive Development and (iv) UCD Business International Campus. It also touches on developing its people, its facilities, its partnerships and its alumni.
- Irish Educated, Globally Connected, An International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016-2020, produced by The Minister for Education and Skills (Irish Government).

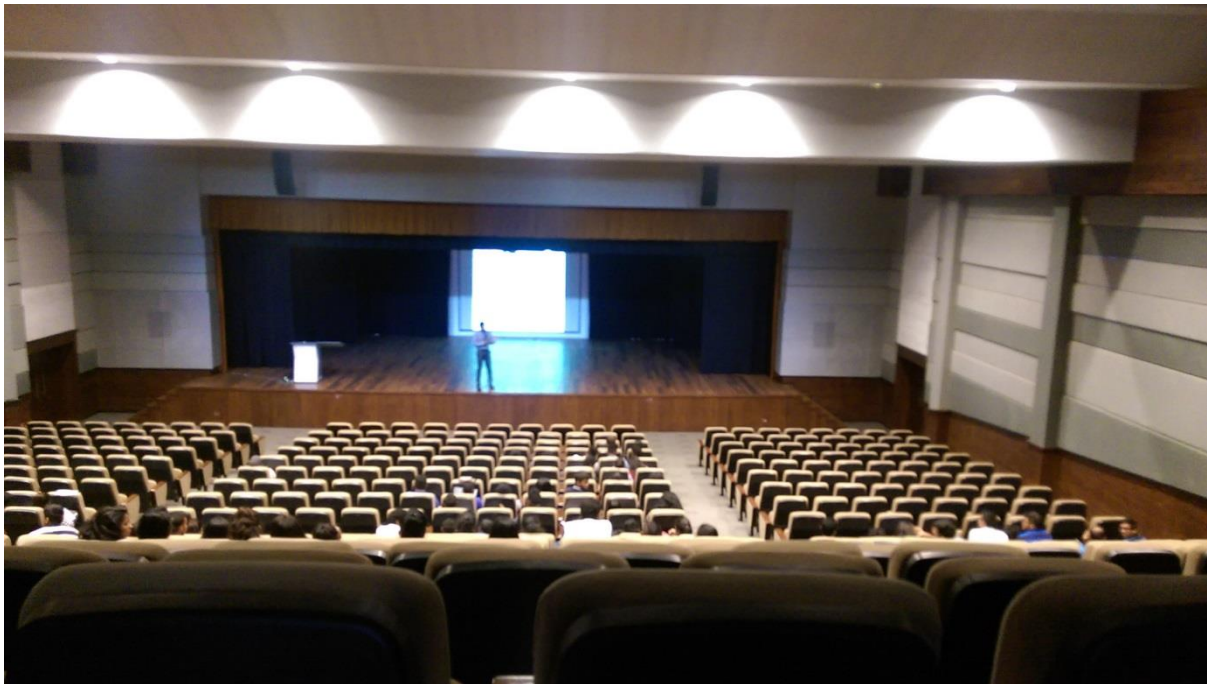
### **Commendations**

- 2.16 The Review Group commends the professionalism and dedication of faculty and professional staff both in Dublin and Sri Lanka. Student feedback during the site visit was extremely positive, highlighting both the academic and overall student experience.
- 2.17 The relationship started over 20 years ago and ran on a set of informal arrangements for many years. In recent years it has been formalised and is now based on a strong Memorandum of Agreement and set of operating documents.
- 2.18 Both UCD and NSBM have dedicated staff and resources to the programmes, and the relationships among staff is strong and coherent.

### **Recommendations**

- 2.19 The Strategic Management Board have not produced a strategy for the future relationship between UCD and NSBM. The Board should closely consider the ambition of their two institutions and map out a strategy for the future development of the partnership.
- 2.20 An ambition for the UCD College of Business to base one or more faculty in Sri Lanka has been articulated. Bringing this to a reality is a strong recommendation by the Review Group that would create an opportunity to develop UCD’s presence as part of the programme and enhance the student experience. Concerted and serious effort needs to be made to make this a reality.

### 3. Review Group SWOT Analysis



*Figure 2. Lecture Hall at NSBM*

3.1 The Review Group, as part of the process, conducted a SWOT analysis based on the Self-assessment Report, its appendices, the documentation provided during the site visit, its meetings with UCD Senior Management, UCD College of Business staff, NSBM staff, students, graduates and employers during its site visit to the UCD Belfield and NSBM campus in Colombo. This exercise informed the writing of this report and identification of the prioritised recommendations for UCD College of Business and NSBM.

#### **Strengths**

- Committed students who are dedicated to their programme of learning (combination of local teachers and foreign lecturers) while working at the same time.
- Well-articulated view on structure of programme – Higher Diploma and Degree.
  - Diploma is very vocation based.
  - Degree is much more academic / theory based.
- The combination of the Diploma and Degree produces a very useful employee – (2 + 2 model). The students build up a network through their diploma, and this is what keeps them together through their degree programme. Also helps with retention.
- Strong reputation and branding for UCD in South East Asia.
- The programmes support the Internationalisation Strategy of UCD – Global Engagement Strategy, backed by the Ireland strategy.

- A strong Alumni community of about 10,000, with enthusiasm for both NSBM and UCD.
- Face to Face (F2F) teaching is a high-level experience that students like. Highly intensive teaching does result in a good experience.
- NSBM Green campus – world-class facility for both students and staff.
- Summer School in Dublin - offers opportunities to students.
- Intensity of programme structure allows students to work in parallel with their studies.
- Internships give students opportunity to gain relevant work experience.
- Good teams are in place in UCD and NSBM and they work well together.
- Programme management is good. There are good operations co-ordination between UCD and NSBM – reflected in procedures manuals, monthly calls, etc.
- Local academic staff are dedicated and are important to the programme (Review Group noted that they could be doing a lot more – saw as an opportunity for future development).
- Sri Lankan economy is currently booming.
- Triple accreditation of UCD College of Business.
- Value given by students and their families to further education in Sri Lanka.

**Weaknesses:**

- Timetabling – insufficient notice is given to students of their timetables. This creates an issue with employers on students getting leave for their studies.
- Feedback – there is an absence of a written feedback culture on an individual basis. (Some group feedback is given in class but not on an individual basis). Some module co-ordinators do provide individual feedback orally in class but not written. This has also been highlighted by external examiners.
- The use of technology could be greatly enhanced. Limited use of VLE for effective programme delivery and pedagogy.
- Inconsistent equivalent experience between Dublin and Sri Lanka Students. It is the Review Groups view that they do not get this equivalent experience.

- Traditional / old fashioned programmes are offered.
- Level at which local lectures are utilised needs to be developed. They need to have latitude on curriculum delivery, assessment and feedback while still meeting the requirements of AACSB.
- Inconsistent use of Blackboard. This was experienced across all stakeholders in the Review Group's discussions – for example, in discussions the Review Group noted some material was not made available to students, some material was put up late, some modules were not using the VLE at all and in some cases scripts and feedback were sent by post rather than by email. NSBM and UCD need to engage the VLE and exploit its capabilities.
- Collaborative learning beyond F2F teaching was identified as a need by employers – they particularly identified the need to develop soft skills.
- There could be a greater focus on professional development and industry skills.
- Governance structure is currently bureaucratic and cumbersome which inhibits scaling up.
- Curriculum design: there is a rigidity and lack of electives offered to students.
- Distance from Dublin creates challenges – e.g. engagement of staff and students, time zones.
- There are cultural challenges – e.g. of programme expectation and plagiarism.

### **Opportunities:**

The SAR identified strong opportunities to expand education provision in Sri Lanka. The Review Group endorses this view

- Opportunities to expand offerings locally.
- Opportunity to hire / take on new faculty, and to develop new programme areas linked with the Asian market – e.g. Asian Finance, Fashion Business.
- Opportunity to introduce new pathways e.g. Business Analytics.
- Opportunity to strengthen the linkage and to hire a UCD Faculty member who would be based in Sri Lanka.
- Location of campus allows for opportunities with NSBM focused on growing student numbers, and further collaborative engagements and exchanges.
- There are opportunities for UCD in NSBM's plans to grow its student numbers from the current 9 to 10k to a future capacity of 30k.

- Movement from Blackboard to Brightspace creates an opportunity to review the operating model, to streamline systems and to create greater efficiencies while maintaining quality.
- 2018 is the first year that UCD will offer Sri Lankan students the opportunity to attend a Summer School in Ireland. There is an opportunity to consider holding the Summer School in Sri Lanka with students from all overseas campuses, including Dublin, attending. It could rotate between Hong Kong, Singapore, Dublin and Sri Lanka and add to the global engagement of the School.
- Elective modules provided by local lecturers, with UCD oversight, would enhance the student learning and allow for testing of the market with minimum risk.

**Threats:**

- Attracting and retaining staff locally in Sri Lanka.
- Emergence of competition in market offering more agile curriculum, with strong reputation.
- Potential instability in the economy where conditions could impact on students' ability to undertake programmes.
- Failure to adjust traditional curriculum due to demands of the market.
- Regulatory changes, imposition of requirements by Sri Lanka Grants Commission.
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) in Ireland.
- Requests of local accrediting bodies/professional bodies that may impact on the programmes.
- Effectiveness of the communication strategy and the relationship between the two partners and programme management.
- Change in Government educational strategy.

## **4. Memoranda of Agreement**

- 4.1 The programmes are governed by a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between UCD and NSBM (Appendix Seven of the SAR) that covers the period 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2022.
- 4.2 The MoA covers many items including the following headings:
1. Roles and responsibilities – management, modules, admissions, registration, discipline, examinations, quality, awards, marketing, staff, IT support
  2. Structure of the programme
  3. Financial arrangements
  4. Indemnity and liability
  5. Dispute resolution
  6. Duration
  7. Termination
  8. Intellectual property rights and confidentiality
  9. Force Majeure
- 4.3 At times the Review Group felt that having so many of the operations defined in agreements and handbooks may stifle initiative and innovation.
- 4.4 The strong and long-term relationship that exists between NSBM and UCD is not necessarily well articulated in the documents. The relationship is deeper and more meaningful than described in the MoA.

### **Commendation:**

- 4.5 The MoA includes a nicely articulated set of roles and responsibilities.

### **Recommendation:**

- 4.6 When a joint vision for the future relationship between UCD and NSBM is articulated this will require a review and revision of the present agreement.

## 5. Partner Institutions and Situational Analysis



**Figure 3. NSBM promotional material with University College Dublin**

- 5.1 UCD's College of Business is one of six academic colleges that make up University College Dublin, which has a long tradition of providing higher education since its establishment in 1908. The College of Business is comprised of the UCD Lochlann Quinn School of Business, UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate School of Business, Smurfit Executive Development, and UCD Business International Campus.
- 5.2 The College of Business offers a broad range of programmes at undergraduate and post graduate level which are underpinned by its triple accreditation, international faculty, strong global alliances and partnerships, UCD brand and quality framework that is aligned to the requirements of the Irish Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), and the European Standards and Guidelines for QA (ESG, 2015).
- 5.3 During meetings with the Dean of the College it was made clear that the College has the ambition to be ranked in the top 50 Business Schools in the World and that all of their activities were aimed to deliver this. The ambition for all students (irrespective of location) to have the same student "experience" was also articulated.
- 5.4 Higher Education provision in Sri Lanka is varied across both the public and private sector. It is provided under two national qualifications frameworks covering academic qualifications (Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework (SLQF)), and vocational qualifications (The National Vocational Qualifications Framework of Sri Lanka (NVQSL)).

- 5.5 University enrolment in the past two decades has increased dramatically across Asia, including Sri Lanka, and this is likely to continue. Higher education in Sri Lanka is delivered by a wide variety and range of institutions. Demand for higher education is strong which has led to a growth in private sector provision to meet the resultant shortfall in provision from the public sector. The private sector comprises both degree awarding institutions and providers of alternative higher education qualifications, such as professional certificate and diplomas.
- 5.6 NSBM was founded in 2011 and is a private degree awarding body of NIBM (National Institute of Business Management). Its purpose is to provide programmes of study for national and international students to study in Sri Lanka. Currently student numbers are approximately 9,000 with a projected campus capacity of up to 30,000 students.
- 5.7 NSBM moved to a well-resourced dedicated 26 acre campus in 2016 and now uses the title Green University. The NSBM Green University was established under the Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational Training and is a private University Grant Commission (UGC) recognised university specialising in Computer Science, Business, Engineering and Technology.
- 5.8 NSBM indicated during the site visit their ambition is to increase the student population to 30,000. They have recently acquired more land contiguous with the present campus and have a clear plan for expansion. NSBM has partnerships with several universities around the world and its Business School has partnerships with Plymouth University (UK), Limkokwing University of Creative Technology (Malaysia), Victoria University (Australia), and UCD (Ireland).
- 5.9 Clear progression paths for students are in operation across NSBM's programmes. Three pathways of BSc HRM, BSc MIS and BSc MGT are currently in operation with additional pathways in Logistics, and Business Analytics currently under consideration.
- 5.10 The SAR reports that there are 1,163 students enrolled in the three UCD programmes: 42 in Human Resource Management (HRM), 270 in Management Information Systems (MIS) and 851 in Management (MGT). The female:male split is 51:49% (2016/2017 academic year) and primarily concentrated in the 21-30 age group.
- 5.11 It was made clear to the Review Group that prospective students (and their parents) opt for programmes with traditional names. This may explain why the programme Business Management is more popular than Human Resource Management.

**Commendations:**

- 5.12 UCD and NSBM have a long standing and well-developed relationship and deliver programmes with strong branding and presence in Sri Lanka.
- 5.13 The NSBM Green Campus is a world class campus that has great potential to flourish into the future.



## Recommendations:

- 5.14 As recommended in Section 3 above, the future for the partnership needs to be developed and articulated.
- 5.15 The partnership should consider introducing new pathways. Business Analytics is mentioned in the SAR and Marketing was mentioned by a number of groups during the site visit.
- 5.16 The HRM pathway has the lowest student intake and is the least attractive offering. Careful consideration should be given to not increasing resources to this pathway and/or bringing it to an end.
- 5.17 A dynamic situation exists for the delivery of business education. UCD College of Business needs to be alert to and be prepared for competition. The SAR did not articulate any thinking on this. UCD College of Business needs to be agile in order to be able to modify its programme offerings that are in tune with present and future needs of all stakeholders.

## 6. Programme Overview



**Figure 4. Student Space, NSBM**

- 6.1 The transnational education portfolio of programmes subject to this review could be described as franchised, out-centre provision of the UCD College of Business at NSBM Sri Lanka. The provision is serviced by flying faculty of UCD and UCD-approved local faculty of NSBM at a teaching-hours ratio close to 60:40, flying: local. The delivery model is, in the main, one of intensive block teaching in sequential modules over two years on a part-time attendance basis. The UCD provision is the exclusive part-time (PT) route to a degree award in the transnational education portfolio of NSBM. In this way, the arrangement delivers

Stage 2 and Stage 3 of a UCD degree in two years; the same rate as full-time (FT) provision at UCD.

- 6.2 The programmes offered have a number of stand-out strengths which are supported by our findings with alumni, staff, students and management at both NSBM and UCD. They are articulated in the Commendations below.
- 6.3 Students enter the degree courses (mainly) under articulation arrangements from the Higher Diploma/Advanced Diploma provision of the NIBM parent of NSBM, the latter being the degree-providing entity of NIBM. Suitably qualified students are admitted directly to Stage 2 of the UCD programmes. The degree courses of NSBM in this field include national University Grants Council-funded degrees as well as a number of transnational franchised degrees of higher education institutions of Ireland, England and Australia. The provision with UCD is the largest in the transnational education portfolio of NSBM and is thereby strategic to both collaborating institutions.
- 6.4 The suite of UCD programmes are, on paper, the most agile post-diploma pathways to a degree qualification within the transnational education portfolio of NSBM. The degrees are marketed as two-year, part-time programmes. The part-time label reflects the pattern of attendance by students rather than the rate at which credits are accrued. The student voice on the attractiveness of the provision is clear: they select this provision as it allows them to hold down jobs, to 'earn while they learn', around intensive blocks of attendance.
- 6.5 The provision is traditional in both concept and delivery - probably reflecting the origins of the course - and continuity with the traditional is the adopted model. There are, however, signs of tension arising from scale of the provision which now has very high student numbers. Scale is presenting some risk to quality and the student experience, particularly in assessment and feedback for Blended Learning.
- 6.6 Price is an important signal in higher education markets. High fees are commanded by the most selective universities and are associated with expectations of return on investment by dint of quality and learning-gain outcomes for the students. In meetings with management, staff, students and alumni, the international esteem of UCD in this field is the prominent feature of distinction driving choice.
- 6.7 The provision under review is currently the most economical for students by fee per credit point. According to the Programmes tab of the home webpage of NSBM, and at exchange rates at the time of writing, the rates per credit point (ECTS equivalent) for undergraduate TNE in the NBSM Business field are approximately:
- |  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| • Plymouth (Marketing Management) FT                     | €42 per credit point |
| • Victorian University, Melbourne (Banking & Finance) FT | €42 per credit point |
| • NSBM (Business Management) FT                          | €33 per credit point |
| • UCD (Business Management) PT                           | €27 per credit point |
- 6.8 It is noted that the newly validated programmes of UCD will move from the most economical to (at least) price parity with the most expensive FT provision under plans (subject to review) for step-changes to the fee. According to the new Collaborative Agreement (Schedule Four - Financial Arrangements), the fee will rise to achieve parity within five years as follows:

|                                |                  |                      |
|--------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| • 2017/18 UCD (Stages 2 and 3) | 650,000 SLR RP   | €27 per credit point |
| • 2018/19 UCD (Stages 2 and 3) | 840,000 SLR RP   | €35 per credit point |
| • 2021/22 UCD (Stages 2 and 3) | 924,000 SLR RP   | €39 per credit point |
| • 2022/23 UCD (Stages 2 and 3) | 1,036,200 SLR RP | €43 per credit point |

- 6.9 These substantial fee revisions may have an impact on FT versus PT study choice and, consequently, on demand for UCD provision. It is not explicit from the SWOT analysis of the Subject Area Review that the impact of the new fees on numbers, viability and perception of quality has been fully evaluated, particularly under Opportunities and Threats – fields which normally take account of forces in the external operating environment. There is risk that at the planned fee rates, the courses could be threatened by more agile and innovative global providers.
- 6.10 The Review Group found those students and alumni nominated for the Review Group meetings to be highly motivated, articulate and effective in navigating the labour markets using their knowledge and skills developed through the UCD/NSBM programmes. Indeed, the good retention rates of the programmes would appear in large part to be due to the strong peer-support networks that the students have carried through from their Diploma studies with NSBM.

### **Commendations**

- 6.11 The triple-crown accreditation credentials of the UCD College of Business.
- 6.12 The reputation of UCD in the South East Asia market for higher education.
- 6.13 The perceived viability of the UCD NSBM partnership in terms of embedded institutional relations.
- 6.14 The flexibility of the block-and-blend approach to education that facilitates an earn-and-learn approach.
- 6.15 Provision that is exclusively part-time in attendance but which allows students to achieve credits at the same rate as a full-time programme.
- 6.16 The competence and potential of local staff at NSBM.
- 6.17 The quality of the new-build physical environment of the new NSBM campus.

### **Recommendations**

- 6.18 Provision of the programmes is traditional in concept and delivery and this presents risk in scaling the programmes in terms of the student experience, particularly in assessment and feedback. These issues should be addressed as part of a review of programme delivery and, in particular, implementation of a modern Blended Learning curriculum.

- 6.19 Aligned with the planned increase in fees charged for the programmes, modernisation in the pedagogies and technology enablement of Blended Learning to match the quality-underpinned fee increase is recommended (strengthen the quality, viability, scalability and resilience of the Blended Learning provision).
- 6.20 While there is a strong peer-to-peer support network among the students, the courses should not rely solely on individual learner resilience. Quality Blended Learning curricula need to include design-in supported student engagement in the significant distance-learning phases and this can be improved as part of the revision to the blended provision of education.
- 6.21 Consider adding new programmes. Those mentioned during the review include Fashion Business, Business Analytics, Digital Marketing, Logistics, Marketing, Finance, Supply Chain Operations, Manufacturing, Hospitality Management.

## **7. Programme Governance**

- 7.1 The programmes are designed at the appropriate level for higher education and there is evidence of strong governance (for traditional face-to-face delivery) in monitoring, academic planning, programme operations management, and in the application of standards for assessment and peer review. However, the Operating Model appears to be quite bureaucratic, is complex (with policies, processes, procedures, protocols), relies a lot on tacit knowledge and manual processes, and is slow and cumbersome.
- 7.2 Quality assurance management for transnational education at UCD is of the highest level for the sector and takes cognisance of international guidelines such as Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.
- 7.3 The Subject Area Review is weak on evidence of the student voice. Nevertheless, Review Group meetings with students and alumni indicated that students - past and present - were supportive of the courses, the delivery structure, the new location (Green University), and the staff both local and UCD. Furthermore, the UCD flying-faculty aspect of the provision which lends much-valued direct access to international scholars, featured strongly in student perception of esteem.

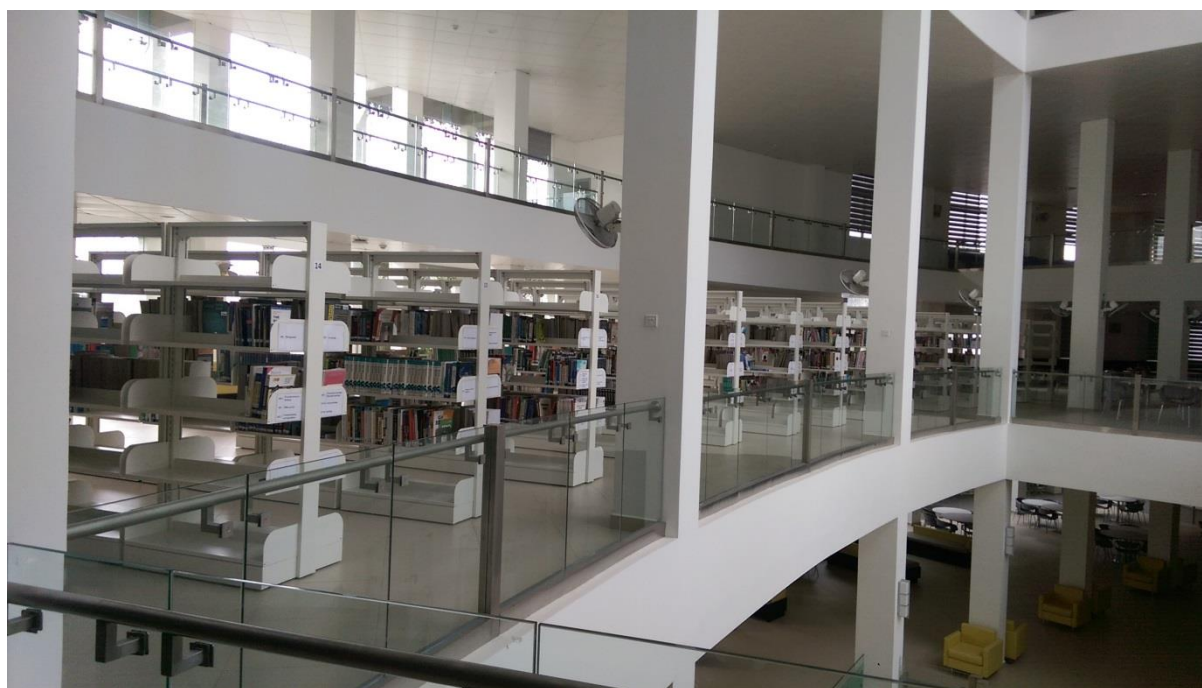
### **Commendations**

- 7.4 The Operating Model is strong and ensures that administrative errors are minimised.

## Recommendations

- 7.5 The aspects of the governance structure that deals with strategic areas (e.g., pathways, curriculum content, pedagogy, delivery modes, etc.) should be strengthened so that these aspects are considered more systematically and in greater regularity.
- 7.6 The Operating Model should be streamlined and made more transparent to reduce unnecessary complexity, manual work and reliance on tacit knowledge (without diminishing the quality control and assurance measures in place). A clear governance system is a prerequisite to growth.
- 7.7 UCD should leverage the local expertise, knowledge, experience and goodwill of NSBM in improving the Operating Model in the spirit of a maturing partnership between the two institutions.
- 7.8 Introduce a student voice to governance system.

## 8. Programme Staffing



*Figure 5. View of Library, NSBM*

- 8.1 The academic staff at NSBM are suitably qualified and experienced for appointment. From meetings with the management, support staff and local faculty, the Review Group commends NSBM on the quality, enthusiasm, commitment and potential of the staff.
- 8.2 The SAR indicated that it is difficult to attract and to retain good staff and that it is difficult to get UCD Faculty to teach at NSBM.

- 8.3 It was discerned that teacher training for higher education and in pedagogy and practice for large-group teaching and Blended Learning would be beneficial. It was felt also that the NSBM academic appointments would be capable of and reliable with much greater autonomy in the academic space to innovate in quality improvements in learning and teaching, such as adapting the curriculum to the authentic and local contexts. While appointments of local academics are compliant with AACSB accreditation, there is a lack of equivalence in provision of support to local faculty compared to the expectation for UCD staff to become qualified to teach.
- 8.4 The local support staff (the Programme Coordinators in NSBM) are highly engaged, demonstrated competence and conscientious commitment to the programmes and to the student experience. Much of the demand in their workload appeared to be transactional academic administration arising from inefficient academic use of the utility functions of the VLE. An example is emailing individual students with marks which could have been auto-released cohort-wide from the VLE. Another is mailing of assessment scripts between institutions for moderation and marking, rather than using the agility, security and functionality of the VLE to supplant manual processing. It was felt that, if consistent utility development of the VLE was in place, support staff could be deployed to higher value-adding roles to support the student experience, including in the online space.
- 8.5 The Centre for Distance Learning in UCD plays a pivotal role in front-line support to staff and students of the programme and in supporting the VLE. There is evidence of good staff and student induction and orientation by the Centre. The VLE should be one of the centre-pieces of Blended Learning provision. Currently, and in the absence of an academic policy for Blended Learning, the basic utilities of the VLE are not consistently adopted by staff across the programmes. Addressing this may require significant staff development from the Centre for Distance Learning and policy development from the UCD College of Business.

### **Commendations**

- 8.6 The Review Group commends NSBM on the quality, enthusiasm, commitment and potential of their staff
- 8.7 The Alumni commented that there was a good balance between local and foreign teaching staff (Faculty) on the programmes.

### **Recommendations**

- 8.8 That UCD College of Business consider making available staff development for local NSBM staff to achieve a recognised UCD award, such as Introduction to Teaching in Higher Education (or equivalent) that develops their teaching credentials in pedagogy and good educational practice in higher education.
- 8.9 Provide opportunities for faculty (including NSBM faculty teaching UCD modules) to obtain formal training (and qualification) in Teaching and Learning theory and practice.

## 9. Programme Delivery



**Figure 6: Face to Face Teaching, NSBM**

- 9.1 The College of Business Senior Management expressed the clear desire that all its students, irrespective of location, will have similar learning experiences and opportunities.
- 9.2 At NSBM each year of provision comprises a full Stage so that, although part-time in attendance, the rate of credit accumulation and progression is the same as that for a traditional course with full-time attendance. This PT mode that progresses at the FT rate is part of both the attraction and the challenge of the provision; and therein the quality improvement recommendations of this report find their most substantial context.
- 9.3 A large number of modules are delivered using a mix of delivery modes that include F2F teaching as well as periods of self-directed learning (it is debatable as to whether the “blended learning” label is an accurate description of this form of delivery mode).
- 9.4 Programme delivery feels like traditional ‘Block Teaching’ rather than ‘Blended Learning’. A full and complete review of the Blended Learning approach by the UCD College of Business in NSBM is needed. Full assurance on quality for Blended Learning requires that the programmes take account of the regulatory guidelines by QQI. This includes, inter alia, a number of key features:
- Face-to-face tuition
  - Access to learning technologies, such as a virtual learning environment
  - Online learning resources developed for online delivery
  - Online activities to support formative and summative assessment
  - Robust arrangements around the submission, receipt, marking and return of assessment

- Timely feedback through electronic or other media
- Robust arrangements in security of learner data (GDPR) and compliance with local jurisdiction
- Remote access to Library resources and embedded VLE content that is compliant with the Irish Copyright Licensing Agency<sup>1</sup> and the local jurisdiction of delivery
- Robust arrangements for guarding against plagiarism and other forms of unfair advantage (such as essay mills)
- Timing and synchronisation of assessment to take account of local cultural and religious context and time zones
- Effective tools supporting virtual learning and off-campus learning, such as virtual learning spaces, discussion boards and other fora to support students.

9.5 It is not clear that the required class contact hours as well as total student study time commitments are being achieved for the academic credit that the modules involve.

9.6 The programmes offered are 180 ECTS Bachelor of Science degrees (Schedule 2 of the MoA Collaborative Agreement). The first 60 credits are exempt due to Accredited Prior Learning. Details of the entry requirements are available (Appendix 11 of the SAR) but most students enter having completed a higher Diploma (~2 years) from NIBM. Minimum English language requirements for entry to the programmes are also clearly stated. The remaining 120 ECTS are delivered over the next two years in the form of 12, ten credit modules (Appendix 10 of the SAR). Across the three programmes there are 19 unique modules of which UCD faculty deliver 11 modules, with the remaining 8 being prescribed by UCD (through the CDL) and taught by NSBM approved faculty. Some very large modules are taught twice (repeated) to keep the class sizes under 200 students.

9.7 The module descriptors indicate that each 10 credit module comprises a total of 200 student hours of work that includes an intensive face-to-face block that provides 24h of contact by UCD and local tutors. In the RG's view, this is significantly lower than the norm for undergraduate provision for a 10 ECTS module.

9.8 Outside Block Teaching, the remainder of tutor activity is mainly reactive in asynchronous mode to individual student demand, rather than proactively and synchronously supported. The Review Group consequently has some concern on the levels of supported student engagement outside face-to-face contact for a quality-assured Blended Learning course.

9.9 When the Review Group analysed a selection of the timetables for the modules delivered by UCD faculty we learned that contact time varies considerably between them and that on occasions the whole module is delivered in such short periods of time that it is hard to understand how students can devote 200 hours of work to a module (e.g. Talent Management, and Business Policy; see the Table 1 overleaf).

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<sup>1</sup> Irish Copyright Licensing Agency <http://www.icla.ie> [Access May 2018]



**Table 1.** Details of timetables for selected modules taught by UCD faculty at NSBM

| <b>Module taught by UCD faculty</b> | <b>Start of Lectures</b> | <b>End of Lectures</b> | <b>Assignment(s) due</b> | <b>Final Examination</b> |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Talent Management                   | 13 Feb                   | 18 Feb                 | 24 Feb                   | 3 March                  |
| Management of Organisations         | 26 April                 | 2 May                  | 26 April<br>20 May       | 27 May                   |
| International Marketing - Group A   | 31 May                   | 3 June                 | 31 May<br>24 June        | 15 July                  |
| International Marketing - Group B   | 7 June                   | 10 June                | 7 June<br>24 June        | 15 July                  |
| Business Policy                     | 5 July                   | 8 July                 | 5 July<br>22 July        | 29 July                  |

- 9.10 Scheduling and timetabling of modules and assignments are inconsistent and seems to lack structure and coherence. Timetables need to be given to students months and not weeks in advance to accommodate their work commitments.

#### **Commendations**

- 9.11 A large number of modules are successfully delivered in NSBM.
- 9.12 The F2F teaching component of the total learning experience is deeply appreciated.
- 9.13 Many logistical and practical challenges are dealt with through flexible approaches to design and delivery of modules.
- 9.14 The teaching facilities, general amenities and learning environment that NSBM provides are excellent.

#### **Recommendations**

- 9.15 Transformation of all of the programmes to full and complete Blended Learning education taking into consideration the recent QQI guidelines (March 2018) for Blended Learning programmes. Implementation has the potential to enhance the student experience, transform the scalability of the programmes, protect against agile global competition and support future spin-off developments that may arise from strategic review of the provision.
- 9.16 That the UCD College for Business develop a policy for the minimum expectations for online/VLE module presence; that the expectations include systemic and consistent presence for every module on the VLE. Specifically, that both face-to-face and tutor-supported blended-learning effort is articulated and designed into module delivery; that the total of these is comparable to that for the face-to-face support for on-campus modules at UCD.

- 9.17 The Centre for Distance Learning design and provide staff development and training to support NSBM and UCD staff to operate efficiently and effectively within a VLE new policy for modules being delivered in NSBM.
- 9.18 The excellent teaching and learning facilities now available at the NSBM campus should be leveraged for more technology enhanced teaching, e.g., greater use of online teaching could be possible.
- 9.19 An audit of all modules should be carried out to ensure that they comply with UCD requirements for teaching contact hours and student effort involved with respect to the academic credit that are granted for each module.
- 9.20 Modules should be scheduled for delivery in a regular, consistent, structured and predictable manner.
- 9.21 Recommendation 8.18 from the review in 2010 recommended revising deadlines for assignments to better balance student workloads. The Review Group did not see any evidence of this having taken place.

## 10. Curriculum Design and Assessment



**Figure 7: Computer Lab & Teaching Space, NSBM**

- 10.1 A “conservative” regime to curriculum design and assessment is in place, with the programme having a “safe”, traditional and conventional orthodoxy to it.
- 10.2 Centre for Distance Learning exercises great deal of control over all aspects of the programme, particularly curriculum, assessment and grade approvals processes.

- 10.3 General feedback on formative assessment is provided in verbal (in class) and in some cases written forms; individual feedback is not provided due mainly to lack of time and historical practice.
- 10.4 The approach to assessment, particularly feedback is of some concern to the Review Group. In Blended Learning provision, individualised feedback is the equivalent of educational gold dust. In its current form, there is concern on the apparent lack of individualised feedback with assessment, or indeed breakdown of marks. The Review Group found little evidence in the samples of marked coursework and, furthermore, noted that this issue remains unresolved from prior External Examiner commentaries. There was evidence of general feedback; however, this feedback was so general as to be ubiquitous and of limited value for effective subject-based learning. The Review Group did find evidence from staff and students of responsiveness when individualised feedback was requested. In other words, individualised feedback is managed in a reactive mode but not in a standard, assured and proactively managed manner. The Review Group advises that urgent action on individualised feedback is a design and policy issue and is not solely related to resources for large cohorts.

### **Commendations**

- 10.5 High degree of quality control and assurance is maintained over curriculum and assessment aspects of the programme, leading to close compliance with internal and external regulatory expectations.
- 10.6 There is some indication that a conservative and traditional curriculum is desirable to certain groups of students and employers.

### **Recommendations**

- 10.7 That the UCD College of Business and the Centre for Distance Learning develop a policy for 'Online Management of Assessment and Feedback'. Individual level feedback should be provided for formative assessment and the use of online marking should be implemented in order to provide timely and more accessible feedback to students.
- 10.8 An agile and nimble process for curriculum review of the pathways and modules should be implemented to reflect contemporary developments in fields of study and industry practices.
- 10.9 The programmes offered at present do not give students any choices in the modules that they take. The Review Group recommend that introducing elective choices in the curriculum is considered.
- 10.10 Local academics should be empowered to have the ability to be more proactively involved in the curriculum design and review processes.
- 10.11 The grade approvals processes should be streamlined to reduce complexity, manual work and processing lead times.

- 10.12 Update the curriculum to include areas such as Bloc Chain, Cyber Security, Legal issues, Ethics and Privacy. It should also include more local case studies and field trips.
- 10.13 Consider offering internships for credit – this was also a recommendation (8.30) from the review in 2010.

## 11. Quality Assurance and Annual Programme Review

- 11.1 Throughout the Self-assessment report the Centre for Distance Learning has referenced the quality assurance processes and measurements in operation across the College of Business in supporting its ambition to become a top 50 Business School in the world across the School's four areas of activity; undergraduate provision, postgraduate provision, executive education, and overseas provision. They are underpinned and supported through the triple accreditation of the Business School by AACSB, AMBA and EQUIS, CDL's adherence to the Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN) Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision, and the European Standards and Guidelines (2015).
- 11.2 Since 2014 the strategy of the College has been focused on strengthening its overseas programme offerings as outlined in the SAR Executive Summary on page 8. The Review Group commend the College for this reinvestment in overseas provision but have identified the need to have a stronger core to integrate them. This could be achieved through the exchange of staff, integrated and refreshed curriculum and pedagogy, movement of students, integrating research, and implementing a system that provides individual student feedback on assignments.

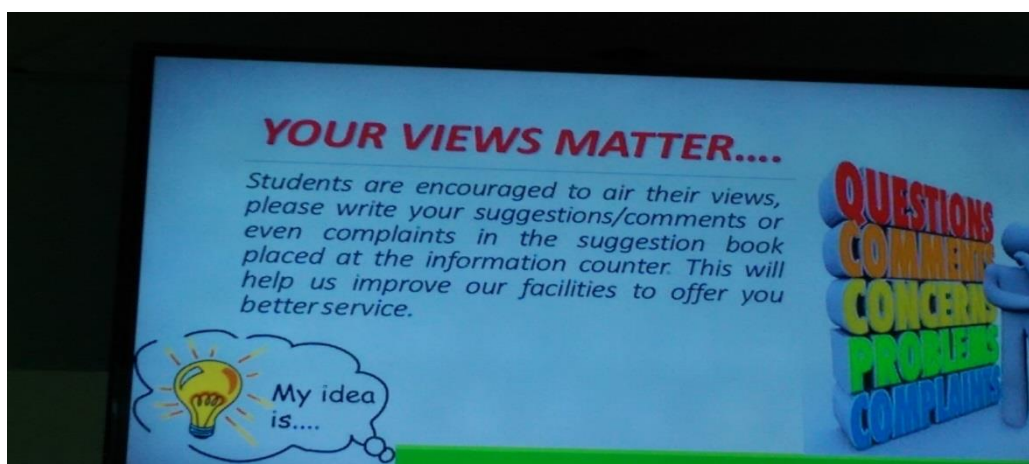


Figure 8: Promotion of Student Feedback at NSBM

11.3 The quality processes as outlined by the School are as follows:

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| Regular  | Module Design and Approval<br>Programme Design and Approval<br>Student Feedback on Modules<br>Student Fora<br>Module Assessment Review Form<br>Orientation Evaluations<br>Monthly Partner conference calls |
| Annual   | Annual Programme Reports<br>External Examiners<br>Annual Reports to QA Office<br>Module Evaluations<br>Programme Evaluations   |
| Periodic | Curriculum Review<br>Assurance of Learning Project (AACSB)   |
| External | Accreditation by external bodies including EQUIS and AACSB   |

11.4 Evidence of strong programme operational and administration was noted by the Review Group. Clear procedures were in place with regular interaction and good working relationships evident between CDL and NSBM. The professionalism of staff in their engagement with the Review Group and students was particularly noted by the Review Group.

11.5 The quality of the student experience was supported through the excellent modern and up-to-date campus provided by NSBM. The campus is located an hour and a half from Colombo with public transports links, supported by NSBM. The facilities offered reflect that of a modern university with a range of different sized lecture halls and rooms, student break out spaces, computer labs, recreational facilities, library, restaurant, recreational facilities, staff accommodation, and student accommodation of currently 500 beds, with more dormitory style student accommodation planned.

11.6 The introduction of Subject Area co-ordinators to support academic governance has allowed for subject oversight of modules in line with similar offerings in Dublin. The co-ordinators serve as a resource to local faculty staff in Sri Lanka and a liaison for the subject area.

11.7 External Examiners that are subject specific to the programmes in Sri Lanka have been in place since 2013. Annual reports are submitted to UCD in line with University policy.

## **Commendations**

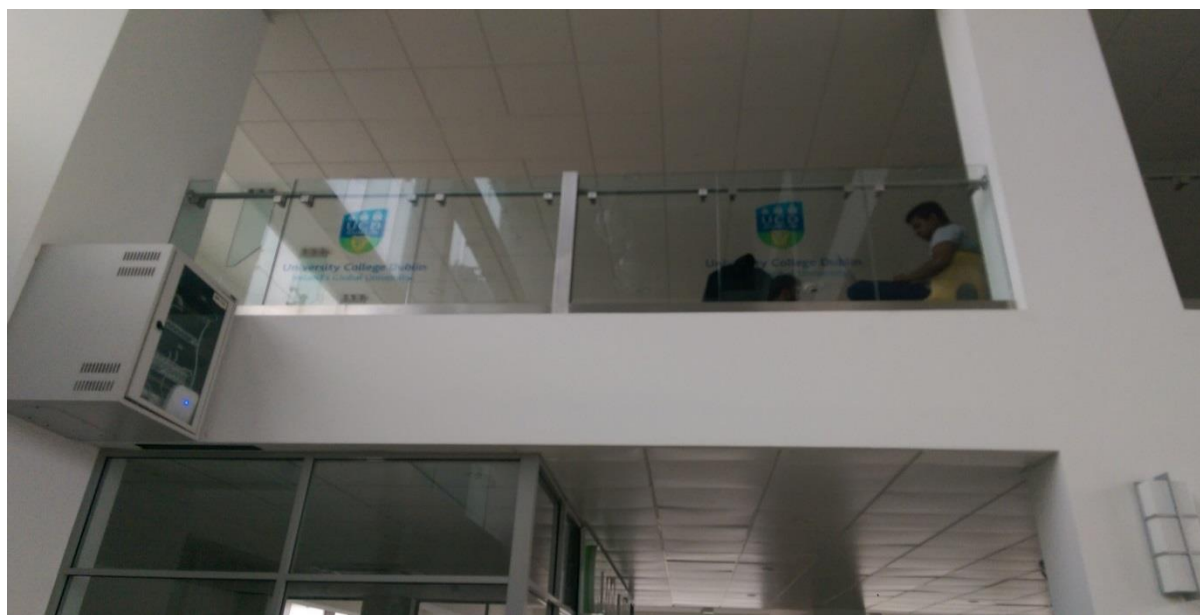
- 11.8 Well developed systems in place on governance, programme monitoring such as curriculum, assessment, video conferencing, and daily contacts, guides for staff and students.
- 11.9 The appointment of subject co-ordinators in ensuring oversight over the quality of the subject area modules and in strengthening academic governance.
- 11.10 Triple accreditation and recent review by AACSB.
- 11.11 Vision of the NSBM Vice-Chancellor in developing a Green University campus that is purpose built and future proofed for a future growth capacity of 30,000 students. The campus will offer students an experience that reflects best practice, for example, up to date facilities, lecture rooms, student break out spaces, recreational facilities, staff accommodation for local and visiting faculty.
- 11.12 92% student retention rate is to be commended.

## **Recommendations**

- 11.13 Recommendations from the 2010 Quality Review need to be implemented, for example, general feedback on assignments and need for individual written feedback. This has also been highlighted by the extern examiners. The College of Business needs to put in place a process that addresses this in light of recent UCD Academic Council recommendations.
- 11.14 Other 2010 recommendations that need to be addressed include revising the deadlines for assignments to better balance student workload.
- 11.15 Award/prize. NSBM and UCD College of Business should consider seeking local sponsorship to support the provision of an annual award/scholarship/prize(s).
- 11.16 The UCD College of Business has identified a need to automate a number of manual processes to achieve greater efficiencies and reporting. The Review Group are aware that some discussion has taken place with UCD MSU and would recommend that the College would, with the support of the College Principal, seek to prioritise these projects at a University level.
- 11.17 Information and guidance on the College's responsibilities on GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) and managing student data should be published. Staff in CDL and NSBM should be fully aware of their responsibilities around the security of student data, its access, processing, transfer and retention to ensure full compliance. This should include briefing for faculty and programme support staff at NSBM.

- 11.18 The College of Business and NSBM should engage with the current UCD development project and transition from Blackboard to Brightspace.
- 11.19 Timetables should be issued to students well in advance. Timetables should be issued months rather than weeks in advance to accommodate student work commitments.

## 12. Marketing and Alumni Relations



**Figure 9: Dedicated space for UCD students at NSBM**

- 12.1 In the Review Group's discussion with the College Principal and Associate Dean International, it was clear that building on existing alumni relations by the School on its overseas provision was a priority for the School. There are approximately 8,000 alumni of the UCD/NSBM programmes and there is a stated goal of creating a strong alumni community and network, with the College as a focal point. This ambition is supported by the Review Group through the operational areas of the College's dedicated Alumni Relations activity. The College of Business currently has a network of over 80,000 business alumni worldwide and proposes to provide a programme of activities that includes events, reunions, communication programmes etc. The recent annual alumnus of the year award on the undergraduate programme is evidence of some activity. This should be further developed through discussion with NSBM and the College's dedicated Alumni Relations.
- 12.2 Discussion with alumni included a presentation on the local alumni association ([www.ucdaasi.org](http://www.ucdaasi.org)), organised by the graduates. The Association has been in operation for 5 years and has membership of about 1,500. There was clear engagement by the graduates through the organisation of events which included events, activities, advice, trips, advertising job opportunities, networking opportunities, charity, discounts, and software competitions. Feedback from graduates was strong and open to opportunities to build and develop links.

- 12.3 CDL and NSBM should seek to identify further opportunities to grow and develop their relationship with alumni. In developing this capacity to network with its alumni it is critical that this is supported by the Alumni Relations function in Dublin including CDL and locally by NSBM. Both partners clearly recognise the value of this network, but it does require constant monitoring and support by the College.
- 12.4 Branding of both UCD and NSBM was clearly evident to the Review Group during the site visit on programme literature, advertising and marketing literature. Students were clearly aware of the value of their degree. An area for UCD students in the student centre has been allocated but there was little evidence of use by students.

### **Commendations**

- 12.5 Dedicated marketing function/team provided by NSBM with clear UCD branding in both the office and in marketing literature.
- 12.6 Brand requirements of UCD and NSBM are adhered to in the literature.
- 12.7 UCD branded space located in the student centre at NSBM.
- 12.8 Recent annual alumnus of the year award on the undergraduate programme is to be commended.
- 12.9 Large number of approximately 8,000 UCD/NSBM alumni with strong loyalty and enthusiasm to maintain links.
- 12.10 NSBM has links with industry and this has created opportunities for work placements/opportunities for students in developing their experience.

### **Recommendations**

- 12.11 CDL should work with the College of Business Alumni Relations to identify and develop a strategy for engaging with alumni. This could be developed in conjunction with the Graduate Association, alumni base and NSBM. University alumni are future ambassadors for the programme and building this relationship should be a priority for the College. This is strongly supported by the College Principal.
- 12.12 CDL and NSBM should discuss the opportunity offered by the current Summer School on the Belfield campus. This could include the provision of similar Summer Schools for UCD Belfield based students out in Sri Lanka or tap into other students markets such as India or China and the opportunities of UCD's global alliances and partnerships with CEMS - The Global Alliance in Management Education, and the Global Network for Advanced Management (Genam).
- 12.13 Developing the Career Service to students and graduates was explored with staff and students during the review. Interest was positive and further discussion between CDL and NSBM on expanding provision and building on student/graduate networks should take place.



- 12.14 NSBM and CDL should revisit the recommendation made in the previous QA report of providing an end of year student prize. Financial constraint was cited as the reason for non-implementation of this recommendation. However, sponsorship by a local Sri Lanka company should be considered.
- 12.15 It was not clear from the SAR as to whether a local ceremony is organised for graduates. The Review Group commend the University on the opportunity for students to attend graduation in Dublin. However, given the possible financial constraints it is critical that a presentation ceremony is organised locally in Sri Lanka. It is also an excellent opportunity to bring alumni and their families on the new green university campus where their families are the possible students of tomorrow.

**Programme Review of Collaborate provision offered by the UCD College of Business in association  
with the National School of Business Management (NSBM), Sri Lanka  
Full List of Commendations and Recommendations**

This Appendix contains a full list of all commendations and recommendations made by the Review Group for the UCD School of X and should be read in conjunction with the specific chapter above. *(Please note that the paragraph references below refer to the relevant paragraphs in the report text)*

## **2. Collaborative Partnership Arrangement**

### **Commendations**

- 2.16 The Review Group commends the professionalism and dedication of faculty and professional staff both in Dublin and Sri Lanka. Student feedback during the site visit was extremely positive, highlighting both the academic and overall student experience.
- 2.17 The relationship started over 20 years ago and ran on a set of informal arrangements for many years. In recent years it has been formalised and is now based on a strong Memorandum of Agreement and set of operating documents.
- 2.18 Both UCD and NSBM have dedicated staff and resources to the programmes, and the relationships among staff is strong and coherent.

### **Recommendations**

- 2.19 The Strategic Management Board have not produced a strategy for the future relationship between UCD and NSBM. The Board should closely consider the ambition of their two institutions and map out a strategy for the future development of the partnership.
- 2.20 An ambition for the UCD College of Business to base one or more faculty in Sri Lanka has been articulated. Bringing this to a reality is a strong recommendation by the Review Group that would create an opportunity to develop UCD's presence as part of the programme and enhance the student experience. Concerted and serious effort needs to be made to make this a reality.

## **4. Memoranda of Agreement**

### **Commendation:**

- 4.5 The MoA includes a nicely articulated set of roles and responsibilities.

**Recommendation:**

- 4.6 When a joint vision for the future relationship between UCD and NSBM is articulated this will require a review and revision of the present agreement.

**5. Partner Institutions and Situational Analysis****Commendations:**

- 5.12 UCD and NSBM have a long standing and well-developed relationship and deliver programmes with strong branding and presence in Sri Lanka.
- 5.13 The NSBM Green Campus is a world class campus that has great potential to flourish into the future.

**Recommendations:**

- 5.14 As recommended in Section 3 above, the future for the partnership needs to be developed and articulated.
- 5.15 The partnership should consider introducing new pathways. Business Analytics is mentioned in the SAR and Marketing was mentioned by a number of groups during the site visit.
- 5.16 The HRM pathway has the lowest student intake and is the least attractive offering. Careful consideration should be given to not increasing resources to this pathway and/or bringing it to an end.
- 5.17 A dynamic situation exists for the delivery of business education. UCD College of Business needs to be alert to and be prepared for competition. The SAR did not articulate any thinking on this. UCD College of Business needs to be agile in order to be able to modify its programme offerings that are in tune with present and future needs of all stakeholders.

**6. Programme Overview****Commendations:**

- 6.11 The triple-crown accreditation credentials of the UCD College of Business.
- 6.12 The reputation of UCD in the South East Asia market for higher education.
- 6.13 The perceived viability of the UCD NSBM partnership in terms of embedded institutional relations.
- 6.14 The flexibility of the block-and-blend approach to education that facilitates an earn-and-learn approach.
- 6.15 Provision that is exclusively part-time in attendance but which allows students to achieve credits at the same rate as a full-time programme.
- 6.16 The competence and potential of local staff at NSBM.

6.17 The quality of the new-build physical environment of the new NSBM campus.

**Recommendations:**

- 6.18 Provision of the programmes is traditional in concept and delivery and this presents risk in scaling the programmes in terms of the student experience, particularly in assessment and feedback. These issues should be addressed as part of a review of programme delivery and, in particular, implementation of a modern Blended Learning curriculum.
- 6.19 Aligned with the planned increase in fees charged for the programmes, modernisation in the pedagogies and technology enablement of Blended Learning to match the quality-underpinned fee increase is recommended (strengthen the quality, viability, scalability and resilience of the Blended Learning provision).
- 6.20 While there is a strong peer-to-peer support network among the students, the courses should not rely solely on individual learner resilience. Quality Blended Learning curricula need to include design-in supported student engagement in the significant distance-learning phases and this can be improved as part of the revision to the blended provision of education.
- 6.21 Consider adding new programmes. Those mentioned during the review include Fashion Business, Business Analytics, Digital Marketing, Logistics, Marketing, Finance, Supply Chain Operations, Manufacturing, Hospitality Management.

## 7. Programme Governance

**Commendation:**

7.4 The Operating Model is strong and ensures that administrative errors are minimised.

**Recommendations:**

- 7.5 The aspects of the governance structure that deals with strategic areas (e.g., pathways, curriculum content, pedagogy, delivery modes, etc.) should be strengthened so that these aspects are considered more systematically and in greater regularity.
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## **10. Curriculum Design and Assessment**

### **Commendations:**

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- 10.6 There is some indication that a conservative and traditional curriculum is desirable to certain groups of students and employers.

### **Recommendations:**

- 10.7 That the UCD College of Business and the Centre for Distance Learning develop a policy for 'Online Management of Assessment and Feedback'. Individual level feedback should be provided for formative assessment and the use of online marking should be implemented in order to provide timely and more accessible feedback to students.
- 10.8 An agile and nimble process for curriculum review of the pathways and modules should be implemented to reflect contemporary developments in fields of study and industry practices.
- 10.9 The programmes offered at present do not give students any choices in the modules that they take. The Review Group recommend that introducing elective choices in the curriculum is considered.
- 10.10 Local academics should be empowered to have the ability to be more proactively involved in the curriculum design and review processes.
- 10.11 The grade approvals processes should be streamlined to reduce complexity, manual work and processing lead times.

- 10.12 Update the curriculum to include areas such as Bloc Chain, Cyber Security, Legal issues, Ethics and Privacy. It should also include more local case studies and field trips.
- 10.13 Consider offering internships for credit – this was also a recommendation (8.30) from the review in 2010.

## **11. Quality Assurance and Annual Programme Review**

### **Commendations:**

- 11.8 Well developed systems in place on governance, programme monitoring such as curriculum, assessment, video conferencing, and daily contacts, guides for staff and students.
- 11.9 The appointment of subject co-ordinators in ensuring oversight over the quality of the subject area modules and in strengthening academic governance.
- 11.10 Triple accreditation and recent review by AACSB.
- 11.11 Vision of the NSBM Vice-Chancellor in developing a Green University campus that is purpose built and future proofed for a future growth capacity of 30,000 students. The campus will offer students an experience that reflects best practice, for example, up to date facilities, lecture rooms, student break out spaces, recreational facilities, staff accommodation for local and visiting faculty.
- 11.12 92% student retention rate is to be commended.

### **Recommendations:**

- 11.13 Recommendations from the 2010 Quality Review need to be implemented, for example, general feedback on assignments and need for individual written feedback. This has also been highlighted by the extern examiners. The College of Business needs to put in place a process that addresses this in light of recent UCD Academic Council recommendations.
- 11.14 Other 2010 recommendations that need to be addressed include revising the deadlines for assignments to better balance student workload.
- 11.15 Award/prize. NSBM and UCD College of Business should consider seeking local sponsorship to support the provision of an annual award/scholarship/prize(s).
- 11.16 The UCD College of Business has identified a need to automate a number of manual processes to achieve greater efficiencies and reporting. The Review Group are aware that some discussion has taken place with UCD MSU and would recommend that the College would, with the support of the College Principal, seek to prioritise these projects at a University level.

- 11.17 Information and guidance on the College's responsibilities on GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) and managing student data should be published. Staff in CDL and NSBM should be fully aware of their responsibilities around the security of student data, its access, processing, transfer and retention to ensure full compliance. This should include briefing for faculty and programme support staff at NSBM.
- 11.18 The College of Business and NSBM should engage with the current UCD development project and transition from Blackboard to Brightspace.
- 11.19 Timetables should be issued to students well in advance. Timetables should be issued months rather than weeks in advance to accommodate student work commitments.

## **12. Marketing and Alumni Relations**

### **Commendations:**

- 12.5 Dedicated marketing function/team provided by NSBM with clear UCD branding in both the office and in marketing literature.
- 12.6 Brand requirements of UCD and NSBM are adhered to in the literature.
- 12.7 UCD branded space located in the student centre at NSBM.
- 12.8 Recent annual alumnus of the year award on the undergraduate programme is to be commended.
- 12.9 Large number of approximately 8,000 UCD/NSBM alumni with strong loyalty and enthusiasm to maintain links.
- 12.10 NSBM has links with industry and this has created opportunities for work placements/opportunities for students in developing their experience.

### **Recommendations:**

- 12.11 CDL should work with the College of Business Alumni Relations to identify and develop a strategy for engaging with alumni. This could be developed in conjunction with the Graduate Association, alumni base and NSBM. University alumni are future ambassadors for the programme and building this relationship should be a priority for the College. This is strongly supported by the College Principal.
- 12.12 CDL and NSBM should discuss the opportunity offered by the current Summer School on the Belfield campus. This could include the provision of similar Summer Schools for UCD Belfield based students out in Sri Lanka or tap into other students markets such as India or China and the opportunities of UCD's global alliances and partnerships with CEMS - The Global Alliance in Management Education, and the Global Network for Advanced Management (Genam).



- 12.13 Developing the Career Service to students and graduates was explored with staff and students during the review. Interest was positive and further discussion between CDL and NSBM on expanding provision and building on student/graduate networks should take place.
- 12.14 NSBM and CDL should revisit the recommendation made in the previous QA report of providing an end of year student prize. Financial constraint was cited as the reason for non-implementation of this recommendation. However, sponsorship by a local Sri Lanka company should be considered.
- 12.15 It was not clear from the SAR as to whether a local ceremony is organised for graduates. The Review Group commend the University on the opportunity for students to attend graduation in Dublin. However, given the possible financial constraints it is critical that a presentation ceremony is organised locally in Sri Lanka. It is also an excellent opportunity to bring alumni and their families on the new green university campus where their families are the possible students of tomorrow.



University College Dublin  
An Coláiste Ollscoile, Baile Átha Cliath

**Quality Assurance Periodic Review**  
**University College Dublin**  
**and**  
**National School of Business Management, Sri Lanka**  
**QA – Sri Lanka**

**Site Visit Programme - Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2018**

| <b>Time</b>  | <b>Activity</b>  |
|--------------|--|
| 9.30         | Review Group arrive at UCD<br>Q272 UCD College of Business Boardroom   |
| 9.40-12.00   | Review Group Planning Meeting  |
| 12.00-12.15  | Break  |
| 12.15-1.30   | Review Group meeting with College of Business and UCD Centre for Distance Learning staff (including video conferencing with Review Group member<br><br>Dean of Business<br>Associate Dean, International |
| 1.30-14.45   | Lunch (Review Group only) and Private Meeting of RG  |
| 14.15- 15.00 | Break  |
| 15.00-15.45  | Review Group (including skype with Review Group member) meet Registrar & Deputy President, and VP Global Engagement  |
| 15.45-16.30  | Review Group, private meeting  |

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| 16.30 | Review Group departs for NSBM, Colombo |
|-------|--|

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> 2018**

|                    |  | Locations |
|--------------------|--|-----------|
| 2.00pm –<br>4.00pm | Review Group Meets only  | Colombo   |
| 4.00pm –<br>6.00pm | Review Group Meets<br><br>UCD Professor of Marketing and former Associate Dean,<br>International<br><br>NSBM Vice Chancellor<br><br>Interim Dean of Business |           |
| 6.30pm             | Dinner, UCD College of Business and the QA Review Team   |           |

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

|                     |   |              |
|---------------------|---|--------------|
| 7.00am              | Review Group travel to NSBM campus  |              |
| 9.00am              | Review team arrive in NSBM  |              |
| 9.30am              | Review Group Meets only   | Meeting Room |
| 10.00am –<br>1.00am | Review Group Meets NSBM Dean of Business and NSBM Programme Director - MGT/HRM)   | Meeting Room |
| 11.15am<br>-12.15pm | Review Group meeting with key Programme Staff responsible for teaching and learning, student support, quality assurance, programme management/administration to discuss Recruitment/admissions, Achievement by students, Student support and progression, Learning resources, Maintenance of standards and enhancement of quality, Arrangements for programme management, Areas for further development<br><br>Participants: NSBM Programme Coordinator, NSBM Programme Coordinator, NSBM Programme Coordinator, NSBM Programme Coordinator | Meeting Room |
| 12.15pm<br>- 1.15pm | Peer Review Team - Lunch  | Meeting Room |
|                     |   |              |

|                    |   |              |
|--------------------|---|--------------|
| 1.15pm<br>-2.45pm  | Review Group meets with representative group of local teaching staff<br><br>Context, intended learning outcomes, o curricula, teaching and learning, assessment.  | Meeting Room |
| 2.45pm<br>-3.45pm  | Review Group Meets CDL Programme Management Team<br><br>Programme Office Director, Overseas Programme Manager, Overseas Programme Manager   | Meeting Room |
| 3.45pm<br>- 4.30pm | Tours of relevant accommodation – administrative offices, teaching rooms, library, IT facilities, student social areas<br><br>Interim Dean of Business , <b>Programme Coordinator</b> , Overseas Programme Manager, Programme Office Director, Overseas Programme Manager | Meeting Room |
| 4.30pm<br>-7.00pm  | Review Group works in the Meeting Room  | Meeting Room |
| 7.00pm<br>-8.30pm  | Review Group Departs for Hotel  |              |
| 8.30pm             | Review Group Working Dinner in the Hotel  |              |

**Friday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

|                     |   |                       |
|---------------------|---|-----------------------|
| 9.00am<br>- 0.00am  | Review Group meet Employers <b>Hilton Colombo</b>   | The Opal meeting room |
| 10.00am<br>- 1.00am | Review Group meet Alumni <b>Hilton Colombo</b>  | The Opal meeting room |
| 11.00am<br>- 2.00pm | Review Group Meets Students <b>Hilton Colombo</b><br><br>Batch 20 & Batch 21, across stages and majors                | The Opal meeting room |
| 12.00pm<br>-1.00pm  | Lunch for Peer Review Team  |                       |
| 1.00pm<br>– 4.00pm  | Private meeting of Review Team to consider their commendations/recommendations and prepare their key summary findings |                       |

|                                |  |                              |
|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| <p>4.00pm<br/>–<br/>4.30pm</p> | <p>Review Group report key summary findings back to Partner Organisation (e.g. core recommendations, outline general findings, strengths and areas for further development)</p> <p>Professor of Marketing and former Associate Dean – International , NSBM Interim Dean of Business , Programme Coordinator, Programme Office Director, Overseas Programme Manager, Overseas Programme Manager</p> | <p>The Opal meeting room</p> |
| <p>PM</p>                      | <p>Review Group return to Dublin</p>   |                              |
|                                |  |                              |

The task of developing the Self-Assessment Report was a valuable, reflective and collaborative exercise, which facilitated the unit to review its position from a number of perspectives. This allowed us to highlight and confirm our strengths and opportunities, identify areas of good practice and evaluate the weaknesses and challenges of the unit in a systematic way. This was very beneficial for all involved.

This review took place in April 2018 and followed a university quality review of our operations in both Hong Kong and Singapore in February/March 2017. As a matter of reference, the College of Business is also preparing for its' own university quality review which will take place in March 2019. The Centre for Distance Learning, as one of the 4 units within the College of Business, is heavily involved in our overall College review.

The review group site visit was both a positive and constructive experience. We welcome the endorsement of the Review Group for our activities through the commendations received and will carefully consider all the recommendations made during the Quality Improvement Planning process which we are about to undertake.

There was a high level of engagement from staff and faculty as well as from the student community and alumni, in compiling the Self-Assessment Report and in interacting with the Review Group during the site visit. The Centre for Distance Learning wishes to thank the Review Group for their time, expertise and constructive comments, both at the time of the visit and in their helpful and detailed report.

We have formulated a plan to address the recommendations in the Quality Review Report, and many actions are already underway.

With specific reference to the prioritised recommendations identified by the Review Group, the unit's initial proposals/comments are outlined below:

- **Recommendation A: A joint vision for the future relationship between UCD and NSBM should be developed, linked to the strategic ambitions of both institutions. This will require amendment to the existing Memorandum of Agreement (MoA).**

**Comment:** A Strategic Board consisting of representatives of both UCD and NSBM has now been set up and this will form the nexus for the preparation of the vision for the future of the collaboration. In line with the UCD strategic process (2020-2024) currently underway, the College of Business will also be preparing its strategic plan for the next five years. This will inform the 'joint vision' discussion which will take place at the next meeting of the Strategic Board in order to implement this recommendation.

- **Recommendation B: A strategic review of the overall BSc programme should be undertaken that includes reviewing the existing pathways, strengthening the governance structure, streamlining the operating model to allow for greater agility while maintaining quality, and reviewing and updating the curriculum.**

**Comment:** This process will be undertaken in parallel with recommendation A above, with any process improvements identified being implemented as soon as practicable. It is noted that there is already close cooperation between the Centre for Distance Learning and NSBM which continues to seek out new opportunities to improve the curriculum on programmes by looking carefully at the market as well as acting on feedback from students.

- **Recommendation C: UCD College of Business and CDL should strengthen the quality, viability, scalability and resilience of its Blending Learning provision through the modernisation of its pedagogies and technology enablement of Blended Learning. The College should develop a policy for the minimum expectations for online/VLE module presence; that the expectations include systemic and consistent presence for every module on the VLE. Specifically, that both face-to-face and tutor-supported blended-learning effort is articulated and designed into module delivery; that the total of these is comparable to that for the face-to-face support for on-campus modules at UCD.**

**Comment:** The Centre for Distance Learning is currently transitioning all students in our three overseas locations from Blackboard to Brightspace. Specifically for the students in Sri Lanka, modules were moved across earlier than the mainstream modules (throughout UCD) due to the complexity of the timetables and to benefit the students by enabling a smoother transition. The CDL team are excited about this new VLE and the opportunities it will bring to the blended learning delivery of our modules.

- **Recommendation D: An audit of all modules should be carried out to ensure that they comply with UCD requirements for teaching contact hours and student effort involved with respect to the academic credit that are granted for each module.**

**Comment:** An audit will be carried out in the next few months in order to ensure that all UCD requirements are met.

- **Recommendation E: Take advantage of opportunities to develop and grow relationships with alumni.**

**Comment:** The alumni team in the College of Business has been strengthened in the last 12 months and this will enable a greater degree of engagement with alumni in Sri Lanka. An annual alumni event will be held to coincide with the annual degree presentation ceremony and an alum of the year award event will also occur. The alumni team will also work closely with alum ambassadors in Colombo in order to support graduate-organised chapter events as best possible.

- **Recommendation F: Recommendations from the last Quality Review should be revisited. In particular, feedback on assignments and the need for individual written feedback.**

**Comment:** The Centre for Distance Learning continually revisits all quality review reports and accreditation recommendations to further improve the developments within the centre. UCD College of Business is now providing teaching and learning support to local faculty via delivered workshops in order to promote higher-quality feedback mechanisms for students. The College is

also considering how the new Virtual Learning Platform, Brightspace could be optimally used in order to enhance the level of feedback provided to students.

- **Recommendation G: The appointment of a UCD representative, locally based in Sri Lanka, similar to existing provision in Hong Kong and Singapore, should be put in place.**

**Comment:** There are ongoing recruitment efforts being made by the College of Business and CDL to source a representative to be based in Sri Lanka. The current scale of student numbers makes it difficult to financially justify placing a permanent faculty member in Colombo which would be the preferred option. However, the College is investigating whether a 'split-site' appointment (between two overseas locations) may be viable.

Within three months of receiving the Review Group Report, the Centre for Distance Learning will prepare a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) outlining how it proposes to implement the Report recommendations. The QIP will be agreed with the Associate Dean - International and College Principal within the College of Business and this will be signed-off by the Chair of the Review Group and the Director of Quality. The QIP will be considered by the UCD Academic Council Committee on Quality and then published alongside the Review Group Report.

One year after the QIP has been accepted, a Progress Review meeting will be convened by the Registrar and Deputy President to review how the Centre for Distance Learning has progress the recommendations.