



University College Dublin

Quality Improvement Plan

Access and Lifelong Learning

February 2021

Introduction

The University's strategic goal to "provide an inclusive educational experience that defines international best practice and prepares our graduates to thrive in present and future societies" (UCD Rising to the Future, 2020), underpins and contextualises the work of Access & Lifelong Learning. Our mission is to support the University to embed and mainstream access and inclusion, and in so doing enable UCD to demonstrate that it is a University for All, where all students feel welcome; their experience, perspective and opinions are respected and valued - in short, they belong.

The Quality Review process and the development of the associated Quality Implementation Plan (QIP) has been helpful, timely and provided a focused opportunity to reflect, critique, and consider the actions needed to further progress and support the University in its ambition to become a diverse and inclusion institution. The site visit was conducted from 15-18 April 2019, and we are grateful to the Reviewers for their expertise and attention, we welcome their report and appreciate their supportive comments. The Reviewers highlighted their impressions and general assessment of this Unit's progress and issued a series of commendations and recommendations, all of which are addressed in subsequent sections of this QIP.

ALL's Quality improvement Plan Committee, comprising staff, and students, developed this Plan following careful consideration of the Reviewers' recommendations.

Composition of the QIP Committee:

Dr Anna Kelly, Chair, Director of Access and Lifelong Learning
Dr Bairbre Fleming, Deputy Director
Ms Fiona Sweeney, Head of Outreach, Engagement and Transition
Dr Jennifer Doyle, Project Manager
Ms Julie Tonge, Disability Officer
Dr Lisa Padden, Project Lead, University for All
Ms Áine Murphy, Outreach Officer
Ms Tina Lowe, Campus Accessibility Officer
Dr Paolo Virtuani, Executive Assistant
Mr Aidan Byrne, Student Representative
Ms Leanne Joyce, Student Representative

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS / ACTIONS

Categories

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

PLANNING, ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

RG Report	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff/Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
2.15	The Unit's strategic planning processes, particularly around the identification of priorities and goals, could be significantly enhanced through further institutional and Unit investment in data analytics and reporting capability. Such capability will enable the Unit to more effectively evaluate the impact and outcomes of each of its activities. An	1	UCD's newly-published Strategic Plan ("Rising to the Future") is the anchor for the development of the ALL Work Plan (2020-2024), and this recommendation will be addressed as part of this process. In this context, the remit of the ALL Data group, will be extended to consider the additional measures needed to effectively evaluate the impact and outcomes of activities.	Access & Lifelong Learning Head of Unit	Feb 2020	July 2020

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	evidence-based approach should be central to the Unit’s strategic planning processes. Such an approach would help inform decision-making around project priorities, the activities to be maintained, areas that would benefit from a greater focus and the identification of activities that might be discontinued.					
2.16	Given the limited resources available to the Unit and the demanding nature of many of the projects and priorities identified in the work plan, the Review Group believes there is a need to focus efforts on the operational projects relating directly to the core mission and purpose of the Unit. ALL should continue to explore ways of showcasing and disseminating best practice in the field to colleagues in	2	We will continue to focus on the priorities and operational projects and the gathering of associated research evidence relating directly to the core mission and purpose of the Unit We will also continue to explore ways of showcasing and disseminating best practice in the field to colleagues in Colleges, Schools and other university units.	Access & Lifelong Learning Head of Unit	June 2020	June 2024

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	Colleges, Schools and other university units.					
2.17	The Review Group believes that engaging in research-related activities is detracting from the 'core business' of the Unit. The Review Group recommends, instead, that ALL identify, and engage with, faculty around the University who share an interest in undertaking research on topics related to the work of the Unit. Engagement with the UCD Centre for Teaching and Learning, the UCD School of Education and, perhaps, the academic staff that attended the townhall meeting during the University for All week in November 2018 might be useful starting points in this regard.	2	See response to 2.16 We have found that research-related activities have been instrumental in progressing the output and progress of our work over the last decade and have successfully moved the Unit's activity from solely concentrating on operations to advocating, promoting and supporting the mainstream and inclusion agenda throughout the wider University community. We will continue to support the University Widening Participation Committee, which is the formal link to the wider University community. This Committee is chaired by a senior faculty member, and membership is drawn from all Programme Boards, as well as Policy and Support unit.	Access & Lifelong Learning Head of Unit	June 2020	June 2024

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2.18	The Review Group notes the absence of any clear benchmarking plan that would enable the ALL Unit to compare its performance, effectiveness, and efficiency with comparable higher education institutions, both nationally and internationally. The Review Group recommends that the Unit identifies comparable institutions and sets out the key benchmarks that would be helpful in informing its strategic planning process.	1	This recommendation will be addressed through revisiting of the work done in the Self-Assessment Report, and in collaboration with our HR partner, and will explore a potential process to carry out a benchmarking exercise.	Access & Lifelong Learning Head of Unit	Oct 2020	July 2021
2.19	The governance relationships between various groups and committees relating to the work of the ALL Unit appear to be complex. For the purposes of enhancing clarity, the Review Group recommends a review of	2	This recommendation has been superseded by a change in governance arrangements, which was enacted after the drafting of the SAR. The WP Committee now reports to the UMT Education Group (UMTEG) with a 'dotted line' reporting relationship to the UMT Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and UMT Student Experience, respectively. Access and Lifelong Learning continues to report to the Registrar and Deputy President.	Access & Lifelong Learning Head of Unit	n/a	n/a

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	the reporting and governance relationship between the ALL Unit, the Widening Participation Committee, the University Management Team (UMT) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion group and the College Programme Boards.					
2.20	In attempting to understand the matrix project structure, it was not entirely clear to the Review Group as to where staff accountabilities and responsibilities rest. The Review Group recommends that the matrix project structure more clearly articulates this information.	1	This recommendation will be addressed through the development of the Unit Work Plan, which will consider workload allocations.	Head of Unit	Feb 2020	July 2021
2.21	The extent to which the matrix project structure is effective from both a staff and a user perspective was	1	See response to 2.20 The next workplan is being developed and will be informed by the ongoing review of the project structures and associated activities.			

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	<p>not clear to the Review Group. The matrix project structure has been in place since 2015 and it would appear timely that an internal review be conducted to ascertain the views of both staff and students on whether it is 'fit for purpose' going forward. This review, might include, for example, an examination of staff workload levels, the sustainability of these workloads and the demands on staff time, particularly in the context of the meetings structure currently in place.</p>					
2.22	<p>Staff involvement in multiple projects and the need to attend multiple meetings each week related to these projects has significant implications for the workload of, and demands on, each member</p>	1	See response to 2.20			

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	<p>of staff. Staff sometimes find themselves in a “fire-fighting or reactive” mode, particularly when they also find themselves having to respond to students who present themselves at the Unit reception. The Review Group believes there is an urgent need to consider how all staff might be given the opportunity to regularly set aside dedicated time and space to enable them to reflect, and make progress, on work projects and to be able to participate in relevant staff development activities.</p>					
2.23	<p>Progress has been made on moving the work of the Unit from the “margins to the mainstream” of the University. However, the Review Group believes that greater clarity is needed within ALL itself and within Colleges/Schools in terms</p>	1	<p>The University for All Toolkit and related materials communicate clearly and in an accessible format to ALL and colleagues about what is meant by mainstreaming. We would therefore refute the statement that ‘greater clarity is needed within ALL itself’ on this issue. As part of the University for All deliverables for 2020 we will create and implement a communications strategy to include internal and external communications. This will address outstanding issues around the meaning of mainstreaming which is core to the University for All project.</p>	Head of Unit	May 2020	May 2022

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	of what is meant by “mainstreaming”.					
2.24	While acknowledging the value for the Unit of maintaining the many individual relationships it has formed with colleagues from certain Colleges/Schools, the Review Group recommends that ALL rely less on the ‘goodwill’ from these relationships. Instead, the Review Group recommends that the Unit increase its investment of time and energy on relationship building with Colleges/Schools. The Unit might consider the appropriateness of introducing a College partnering model (similar to the HR Business Partner model).	2	The University Widening Participation Committee has representatives from each undergraduate programme board and other policy/support units within the university. This structure allows for a specific line of communication and responsibility across key areas of the university. The University for All Implementation plan has been approved by the UMT Education Group. The University’s academic structures will be the basis for its implementation. The University for All implementation will include identifying need for professional developing in areas such as disability awareness and educational barriers. We will also explore the possibilities of the partnering model.	Head of Unit/WPC Chair	May 2020	2024

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2.25	The Review Group recommends that UCD Foundation work more closely with the ALL Unit and assist them in developing and implementing a plan for the future in terms of philanthropy from both private and corporate sources.	2	The ALL Centre and UCD Foundation have a strong working relationship and have been successful in attracting public and private philanthropic funding, as part of the ongoing work of the Unit we will continue to develop a common objectives and plan to attached further philanthropic funding. We are also currently exploring a formal structure for information sharing with the full team in Foundation to ensure the necessary data is available to the team meeting with potential donors.	Head of Unit	2020	2022
2.26	Based on discussions with staff from around the University, the Review Group believes that work remains to be done on building awareness among staff in terms of the work of the Unit. The Review Group recommends, for example, that information sessions be held with all College/School staff who are directly involved in student recruitment. Teaching and learning symposiums and new faculty orientations held at College/School level might	2	This will continue to be prioritised. The ALL Centre facilitates numerous events each year including an Access Symposium, which builds awareness among staff of the work of the unit and our key areas of priority. We offer training across the university in areas such as disability awareness an inclusive practice. We have collaborated in the development of the Universal Design for Teaching & Learning in Higher Education Digital Badge, accredited through the National Forum. This is offered to UCD faculty at least once per academic year. We work closely with our colleagues in student recruitment and they are represented on the Widening Participation committee. In fact, work to embed our target student groups in all work of student recruitment has been ongoing for some years. We also attend and present at various symposiums throughout UCD. Linking with the College VPTL is core to the implementation plan for University for ALL.	Head of Unit	Ongoing	

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	also be useful fora for the Unit to raise awareness of its activities. The Review Group recommends that ALL link in with each College Vice Principal for Teaching and Learning to identify suitable events that it might contribute to.					
2.27	A stronger internal and external communications plan might help ALL to increase awareness and visibility of its activities, both internally and externally. The Review Group recommends that UCD Communications work with the Unit and assist them in developing such a plan.	2	This will continue to be addressed through our communications plan, which was developed in collaboration with our colleagues in UCD Communications. It will be reviewed as part of the development of our new work plan 2020-23.	Head of Unit	Ongoing	Within 5 years
2.28	The ability of the Unit to raise its profile and increase awareness around its activities, both internally and externally, appears to be somewhat hampered by	2	This continues to be a priority. The ALL Centre has an active web presence and invested significantly in a new webpage in 2018-19. We will continue to work with UCD Communications to ensure it is positioned to maximise its visibility on the UCD website.	Head of Unit	Ongoing	

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	its current positioning on the main UCD website. The Review Group recommends that ALL work with the UCD Communications unit to address this.					
2.29	During meetings with staff from across the University, there appeared to be rather limited understanding of what it means to be an “age friendly university”. The Review Group recommends that appropriate steps be taken to raise awareness among the university community of the principles for an age friendly university.	1	This recommendation forms part of our ongoing work: our website includes a thorough explanation of what “Age Friendly University” means (https://www.ucd.ie/all/cometoucd/applying/lifelonglearning/agefriendlyuniversity/). We use the logo in all relevant work/activity to remind our colleagues. The concept is further enhanced through the University for All initiative which demonstrates the spirit of inclusion and by inference, what Age Friendly involves. The impact of this work will be measured through tracking the number of Lifelong Learning students engaging with the University and incorporating that metric in our annual Data Report	Head of Unit	Ongoing	
2.30	The development of more media content (e.g. videos, testimonials) that captures the ‘stories’ of students participating on the various programmes and the impact this participation	1	This recommendation forms part of our ongoing work: we have developed a bank of media content (40+ videos and testimonials) and will continue to develop this content over the coming years.	Head of Unit	Ongoing	

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	has had on themselves, their families and their wider communities could be helpful in raising the profile of the Unit externally.					

FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES AND PROCESSES

RG Report	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff/Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
3.12	The ALL Unit should further commit itself to putting into place systematic processes to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the pre-entry programmes that it directly manages (the Access programme).	1	The Access Programme is mainstreamed and responsibility for it rests with the Science and Social Science Governing Boards, and the ALL Unit. This recommendation will be actively considered	Head of Unit/Deans	2020	Within 5 years
3.13	The Review Group recommends the gathering of data from the much larger activity that pertains to awareness-raising that is facilitated with community partners, Schools and Colleges. Nuanced data is needed, captured longitudinally, to assess change in terms of application, admission and retention trends from targeted organisations. This might be assessed alongside a range of other factors that might affect access, including that of transport infrastructure.	1	The Data group's remit now includes all aspects of the students' journey, including outreach, admissions, participation, and graduate outcomes. The Group is currently focused on developing outreach metrics that will be used to capture, measure and monitor trends in the pre-entry space.	Head of Unit	Dec 2020	2022

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3.14	Consideration might be given to offering higher profile events in communities with no tradition of large numbers of students progressing to university. This might, for example, involve creating a strong community engagement role for academics to work with communities in addressing key community-driven concerns, and profiling the University as a driver for Dublin as learning city.	2	This recommendation is part of our ongoing work which is demonstrated by our active participation as member of the PATH Learning Cities initiative which raises awareness of and engagement in developing a learning city. This allows us offer high profile events to participants in communities who were previously distant.	Head of Unit	Ongoing	
3.15	The issue of suitable transport links to UCD from some target communities might be considered, through, for example, discussions with the city's transport authorities or the offer of the University's own shuttle bus.	2	This recommendation will be brought to the attention of UCD Estates, who work closely with Dublin Bus and other public transport providers to improve public transport links to the UCD.	Head of Unit	2020	
3.16	The Unit should be supported in the efforts it makes in mediating on behalf of students in cases of intransigence relating to 'reasonable accommodations' where this is a legal requirement. Its staff should not have to expend valuable time in such negotiation. Clear escalation procedures should be in place to help resolve these matters and the	2	This recommendation will be addressed through the Widening Participation Committee, which has established a working group on Services to Students with Disabilities. The Working Group has been tasked with gathering evidence on the extent to which UCD meets the needs of students with disabilities. The working group intends on gathering feedback from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registered students on the extent to which their needs are met in relation to supports for academic and co-curricular activities, 	Head of Unit / WPC Chair / Registrar	2020	2020

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	appropriate HR processes should be invoked at an early stage.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees of the University on their experience and attitudes to providing supports to students. Work has begun on a Reasonable Accommodation Policy, which it is intended will be submitted to UMT EG in due course. 			
3.17	Although potential students make visits to the university, largely in the spirit of improving awareness, an opportunity is being missed in not creating mechanisms whereby facilities of the university (such as laboratories) could be used more extensively, especially when not used by existing students of the University.	2	<p>This recommendation is part of our ongoing work. We have an extensive Outreach Programme that allows for potential students to explore and experiences the UCD campus. There are a number of university wide initiatives whereby UCD facilities are available when students not using them, for example, the James Joyce Library facilitates Leaving Certificate student to use the library for study once the UCD students have completed their studies, in collaboration with ALL students from DEIS students can use this facility free of charge. As part of the ALL student experience strand of outreach, additional resources have been secured to develop the UCD Outreach Lab and the Moot Court Facilities to provided structured opportunities for potential students to use these facilities and for UCD staff to showcase their research and work.</p> <p>Rooms, theatres and facilities on Campus are routinely used by the ALL Centre for Seminars, Lifelong Learning courses and any activities organized by our Centre, where compatible with UCD's Academic requirements.</p>	Head of Unit	Ongoing	

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3.18	The Access programme could be expanded considerably. It is customised provision that matches well with the undergraduate curriculum and enjoys considerable support in Schools of the University.	3	This recommendation will be considered. Currently the University Access programme is designed for mature participants but could be adapted for other cohorts subject to accessing sufficient funding to support this. The programme is successful in preparing, empowering and progressing under-represented students to higher education. An expansion would have to consider the additional resources needed by the University and the students to finance this expansion.	Head of Unit / Registrar	2020	Within 5 years
3.19	Similarly, there is opportunity to expand the Open Programme, and the aspiration to eventually allow whole degrees to be taken in this mode could be achievable more readily without extra cost by offering certain modules only in twilight or evening mode for all students of the University. Discussion with Schools already involved show that some already do so, and do not see impediments. Others expressed concern about the potential loss of full-time students in electives should this approach be taken. So, care has to be taken, but there could be benefits for all students, including those in full-time study by freeing up time in the day for part-time work or other activities.	1	This recommendation is being actively worked on by the University, at institutional and sectoral levels, and discussing all aspects including state funding, institutional systems, student support and data collection issues.	Head of Unit / Registrar	2020	Within 5 years

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3.20	There is an opportunity to expand the Lifelong Learning programme to showcase the research and scholarship of the University. The extent of the current provision is relatively modest. The participation might be diversified, and this may require review of its relatively high cost. Consideration should be given to situating this work within the framework of the Dublin Learning City initiative.	1	This recommendation is being actively considered.	Head of Unit / Registrar	2020	Within 5 years

MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES

RG Report	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff/Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
4.16	The Review Group recommends that further work is undertaken with the institutional research team to develop a robust dataset of clearly defined WP cohorts that can be used to inform practice and assist with impact monitoring of transitional and post-entry support. This would include, for example, exploring whether there is an association with improved rates of retention and progression for WP students who engage with ALL activities, compared with those who do not participate in order to help the team identify those activities that have the greatest impact.	2	This recommendation coincides closely with the aspirations we outlined in the SAR and further work will be carried out in collaboration with the Director of Institutional data to minimise the manual intervention required each year with the dataset used to monitor participation rates. We will also request that these reports are automated and integrated into Infohub. Our intervention using MicroStrategy was intended as a short-term solution which would encourage colleagues to embed our established reports into existing systems. This will require collaboration between IT Services, the Enterprise Applications Group, Access & Lifelong Learning and the Director of Institutional Data. We have also recently been able to provide Graduate Outcomes data for access students in collaboration with UCD Career Development Centre. We can now also analyse Outward Mobility trends for access students.	Head of Unit	Ongoing	

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4.17	The Review Group recommends that the Unit undertake a cost and impact analysis for each project using an initiation template to clearly identify aims and objectives, resource requirements, targets and outcomes.	1	This recommendation is part of our ongoing approach	Head of Unit	Ongoing	
4.18	The management team should have a clear understanding of the opportunities for growth and efficiency savings that could be achieved for each activity, as well as the associated impact (e.g. increasing/reducing the reach of an activity and by how much).	1	This recommendation is part of our ongoing approach	Head of Unit	Ongoing	
4.19	The Unit should take a transparent and systematic approach to staff workload planning so that appropriate time is allocated to all activities and staff have a clear understanding of individual aims, objectives and priorities	1	This recommendation is part of our ongoing approach	Head of Unit	Ongoing	
4.20	Consideration should be given to building capacity to support increasing numbers of access students through sharing expertise and enabling staff elsewhere to support students with more complex needs (e.g. Student Advisers and staff at the Student Desk).	2	This recommendation is part of our ongoing approach and is an integral part of the University for All initiative, as outlined previously.	Head of Unit	Ongoing	

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4.21	The Review Group recommends that a core programme of training be developed and implemented for all staff within the Unit and that sufficient time be allocated to this within staff workload allocations. This training should include, for example, GDPR, EDI, unconscious bias, mental health awareness and dealing with distressed students.	1	This recommendation is part of our ongoing approach. Staff training is catered for in different ways, in accordance with UCD's guidelines. There is a formal mechanism for staff to book professional development in UCD on all those suggested topics through HR Learning and Development and each staff member can confirm attendance with the Line Manager. If a staff member feels they require additional training, not currently offered through HR this can be arranged through the Line Manager. A periodical review of professional development, Performance for Growth (P4G), ensures that the professional needs and necessary training of staff are considered and reviewed. We also provide professional development training and resources to others covering some of the areas listed in the recommendation.	Head of Unit	Ongoing	
4.22	A dedicated resource within the Unit should be allocated to fundraising, either through working directly with UCD Foundation, or identifying opportunities to make discrete bids for project funding through relevant foundations and charities to support the maintenance and on-going development of ALL work.	2	This recommendation is refuted on the basis that we would be duplicating effort: we have a close working relationship with UCD Foundation, building on this there is an opportunity to identify strategic priorities that can be incorporated in the Foundation's fundraising activities. The Cothrom na Féinne Scholarship programme is growing and as a result the administrative element continues to grow, allocating additional resources to the Scholarships may need to be considered. ALL is currently working with the foundation office to support the objective to replaces funding with Philanthropic funds.	n/a	n/a	n/a

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4.23	The Review Group recommends that greater use be made of alumni and students as a resource to support the work of the team, e.g. through a structured and targeted alumni mentoring programme.	2	This recommendation is being actively worked on and forms part of the Pathways to the Profession 5-year project.	Head of Unit	2020	Within 5 years
4.24	The Review Group recommends that greater use be made of the institutional VLE, particularly in relation to creating a Unit repository of academic and support resources available to students of the Unit. The Unit should work with the VLE implementation team to explore how this might best be implemented.	2	This recommendation is part of our ongoing approach. We were early adopters of the VLE. We have worked with the VLE/ Brightspace team to ensure accessibility to all students and will continue to do so. We have also developed a module hosted on Brightspace, containing academic and support resources available to Access Students. Finally, we have created a UDL self-enroll module for faculty.	Head of Unit / IT / Virtual Learning Environment team	Ongoing	

USER PERSPECTIVE

RG Report	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff/Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
5.5	The Review Group recommends the development of efficient and appropriate mechanisms to collect feedback from stakeholders that could be used to better inform the work of the Unit.	1	This recommendation is underway, and a feedback survey is developed for staff and students. In addition, The Outreach team plans to include a feedback process for our community partners. Our new workplan will also examine other feedback processes, where needed.	Head of Unit	2020	Within 5 years
5.6	The Review Group recommends that the Unit work to achieve greater integration with external stakeholders with a view to further enhancing collaboration and exploring new opportunities.	2	This recommendation is being considered as part of our new work plan for the Outreach Programme.	Head of Unit	Ongoing	Within 5 years

SWOT ANALYSIS

RG Report	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff/Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
6.5	The Review Group recommends that the ALL Unit use the SWOT exercise to link it more clearly to address the issues identified in the SAR.	1	We developed the SWOT exercise was used as a guide for framing subsequent unit recommendations in our SAR. We ensured that the elements in the SWOT that coincided with our aspirations and expectations were articulated further in our own recommendations. These were then woven into the relevant section of the SAR, then summarised at the end of each chapter and were finally collated over three pages in the SAR.	n/a	n/a	n/a
6.6	In order to address the weaknesses and potential internal and external threats to the Unit, the Review Group recommends that an evidence-based approach to all its activities should be adopted.	1	We will continue to strengthen our evidence-based approach to activities and gather data and stakeholder feedback.	Head of Unit	2020	within 5 years