University College Dublin

REVIEW GROUP REPORT

Periodic Quality Review

UCD School of English, Drama and Film

January 2023

Accepted by the UCD Governing Authority at its meeting on 22 June 2023

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Summary Findings of the Review Group

The Review Group has identified a number of key findings in relation to areas of good practice operating within the School and areas which the Review Group would highlight as requiring future improvement. The main section of this Report sets out all observations, commendations and recommendations of the Review Group in more detail.

Please note that the numbers below refer to the relevant paragraph in the body of the Report.

Examples of Good Practice

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

2.2   The Review Group commends an effective management structure and supportive leadership within the School which encourages collegiality and participation in decision-making across all areas.

3.6   The Review Group commends the School for its professional and enthusiastic academic and professional staff. They are dedicated to an organisation in which colleagues speak openly and honestly to one another.

4.9   A highly qualified and increasingly diverse student body receives an education which is delivered through a plural, innovative and extensive set of modules; adaptation to new learning technologies has been acquired rapidly and has been deployed with professionalism and targeted technical support.

6.6   The Review Group commends the nuanced way in which research is recognised in the School – research as practice, practice as research, creative research and cultural impact – and considers it as appropriate for the diverse array of subjects covered in the School.

6.9   The Review Group commends the well-established procedures of School and College research support, both for study leave and for international conference travel, which is applied fairly and with transparency.

10.3   The Museum of Literature in Ireland (MoLI) and the Creative Futures Academy (CFA) are exemplary collaborations with other institutions in the Dublin area, placing the School in a unique position in its encouragement of culture practitioners, external engagement and performance, building on the successful Creative Fellows programme. The School is uniquely positioned to engage with these external stakeholders and continue to build networks that benefit external and internal constituencies.

Recommendations for Future Improvement

The Review Group would suggest that the following recommendations be prioritised:

2.5   The Review Group recommends that the School develops a plan to enhance participation by all of its constituent parts in the four subject areas (English, Drama, Film and Creative Writing) in the School Executive. In conjunction with this, the School should complete the staff handbook

and ensure that the School committee structure and membership is readily visible. This is important to ensure all members of the School understand School processes and organisational structure.

3.12 Given the recent growth in the number of staff and students in the School, the Review Group recommends that the School engages with the College and University to invest in and improve facilities and space commensurate with the number of students and staff, enabling the staff and the student body to gain both a sense of community with their degree studies and to study in facilities which match the quality and range of educational content across all four disciplinary areas (English, Drama, Film and Creative Writing) within the School.

3.13 The School should engage with the relevant authorities in the College and University to establish clarity on progression through and from fixed-term contracts, with the aim of ensuring that the. University recognises the significant contribution of those individuals on precarious and teaching-only contracts and that they are given opportunities for career and grading progression.

4.15 The School developed teaching innovations in new learning platforms and technologies during the pandemic and the School is encouraged to consider how these technologies might be used in future planning around delivery of content and improvement of the student experience.

6.11 Due to the School's growing success in research innovation, impact and funding the Review Group recommends that the School liaises with the relevant University authority to develop a plan to enable the appointment of dedicated research administration to support the application for and management of these grants.

8.7 The School demonstrates exceptional engagement in widening participation and UCD Access. Related to this, it is recommended that the School and College work further to lobby the national conversation in establishing the metrics related to rates of progression, completion and postgraduate attainment of widening-participation students.

1.   Introduction and Overview of the School

Introduction

1.1   This report presents the findings of the Periodic Quality Review of the UCD School of English, Drama and Film, University College Dublin, the site visit for which was undertaken on 17-20 October 2022.

The Review Framework

1.2   Irish Universities have collectively agreed a framework for their quality review and quality improvement systems, which is consistent with both the legislative requirements of the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012*, and international good practice (e.g. *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015*). Quality reviews are carried out in academic, administrative and support service units.

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

- To monitor the quality of the student experience, and of teaching and learning.

- To monitor research activity, including management of research activity; and assessing the research performance with regard to research productivity, research income, and recruiting and supporting doctoral students.

- To identify, encourage and disseminate good practice, and to identify challenges and how to address these.

- To provide an opportunity for units to test the effectiveness of their systems and procedures for monitoring and enhancing quality and standards.

- To encourage the development and enhancement of these systems, in the context of current and emerging provision.

- To inform the University's strategic planning process.

- The output report provides robust evidence for external accreditation bodies.

- The process provides an external benchmark on practice and curriculum.

- To provide public information on the University's capacity to assure the quality and standards of its awards. The University's implementation of its quality procedures enables it to demonstrate how it discharges its responsibilities for assuring the quality and standards of its awards, as required by the *Universities Act 1997* and the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012*.

The Review Process

1.4   Typically, the review model comprises four major elements:

- Preparation of a Self-Assessment Report (SAR);

- A visit by a Review Group that includes UCD staff and external experts, both national and international. The site visit normally will take place over a two or three day period;

- Preparation of a Review Group Report that is made public;

- Agreement of an action plan for improvement (Quality Improvement Plan) based on the Review Group Report's recommendations. The University will also monitor progress against the Quality Improvement Plan.

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

The Review Group

1.5   The composition of the Review Group for the UCD School of English, Drama and Film was as follows:

- Professor Aoife Gowen, UCD School of Biosystems and Food Engineering (Chair)
- Professor Emma Sokell, Head of School, UCD School of Physics (Deputy Chair)
- Professor Matthew Campbell, Professor of Modern Literature, University of York, UK (Extern)

1.6   The Review Group undertook an in-person site visit of the School from 17-20 October 2022 and held meetings with the College Principal; Head of School; SAR Co-ordinating Committee; Academic and Administrative staff in the School; undergraduate and postgraduate students; and other University staff working in support units which interact with the School. The review site visit schedule is included as Appendix 2.

1.7   In addition to the Self-Assessment Report, the Review Group considered documentation provided by the School and the University during the site visit, and also undertook a tour of the School facilities.

1.8   This Review Group Report has been read and approved by all members of the Review Group.

Preparation of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

1.9   Following a briefing from the UCD Quality Office in April 2021, a Self-Assessment Report Coordinating Committee (SARCC) was established by the School to prepare the Self-Assessment Report (SAR). The SARCC was representative of the key groupings within the School and included a Postgraduate Research student.

1.10   The SARCC met once in trimester 2, 2020-21 to discuss overall aspects of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR), and to assign responsibility for the different sections to individual members, and three times in trimester 1, 2021-22 to plan and review drafts of the SAR. A survey of staff was conducted in November 2021 using Google Forms. As the School had commissioned a survey of students for an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) report in 2020, it did not conduct a separate survey of students for the quality review. Drafts of the SAR were produced in consultation with

the School in December 2021, and the final text was then revised and circulated to all the members of the School for comment.

1.11   The draft SAR was sent to the UCD Quality Office on 31 January 2022. Feedback was provided to the School on the SAR, and the final, updated version was received by the Quality Office on 21 March 2022. The site visit had been due to take place in April 2022, but this was postponed to October 2022.   Given this, to ensure the Review Group was provided with the latest information about the School, a brief update on the SAR was provided on 4 October 2022.

The University

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

1.13   The University Strategic Plan (to 2024) states that the University's mission is: "to contribute to the flourishing of Dublin, Ireland, Europe and the world through the excellence and impact of our research and scholarship, the quality of our graduates and our national and global engagement; providing a supportive community in which every member of the University is enabled to achieve their full potential".

1.14   The University is currently organised into six Colleges and 37 Schools:
- UCD College of Arts and Humanities
- UCD College of Business
- UCD College of Engineering and Architecture
- UCD College of Health and Agricultural Sciences
- UCD College of Social Sciences and Law
- UCD College of Science

1.15   UCD is a leading research-intensive university and is Ireland's largest university with over 37,000 students (including overseas operations) and more than 3,900 (FTEs) faculty and staff. International staff comprise 37% of the faculty and staff cohort, and international students make up 29% of the student body, with students from over 150 countries attending UCD. The University also enrols over 4,500 students based at locations outside of Ireland. 35% of the total number of undergraduate students come from under-represented cohorts. 10,000 awards are conferred each year, and UCD is Ireland's University of first choice, leading in first-preference applications in Ireland year after year. UCD plays a key role in the national system of higher education and in the wider Irish society, and is distinguished by its scale, its diversity of programmes, the quality of its graduates, its focus on research and innovation, and its global engagement.

UCD School of English, Drama and Film

1.16   The School of English, Drama and Film has its origins in the Combined Departments of English, the Centre for Drama Studies and the O'Kane Centre for Film Studies, which were incorporated as a School in 2006; the School made its first appointment in Creative Writing in 2007, and it has

since become a recognised subject of the University and an important and growing part of the School. All four subject areas are taught at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

1.17 As of October 2022, the School has 56 academic staff, 12 research staff, 3.5 administrative staff and 1 educational technologist. The School was very successful in the 2019 University Ad Astra initiative, which aims to recruit 500 high-achieving researchers to academic posts over a period of five years. Four new Lecturer/Assistant Professor appointments were made to the School as a result of that scheme.

1.18 The School currently has three and a half administrators, with a new School Manager appointed in March 2022.

1.19 Overall, the age profile of the School shows around 50% of the School in the age bracket from 41-55. The gender profile for academic staff is 66% female, with strong representation of women at full professor level (73%).

1.20 The overall number of FTE students in the School is the highest in the College of Arts and Humanities, and in 2022 has increased to its highest level in ten years (953 in 2022, up from 800 in 2021.

1.21 At undergraduate level, the School delivers teaching to two programmes: the long-established BA Arts, and the newly created BA Humanities. In 2017 the College restructured the BA degree, following a break with the College of Social Sciences and Law, and introduced a new four-year BA Humanities programme, commencing September 2018, with a number of pathways of fixed subject-combinations. The School is currently involved in eight of the twelve pathways (English, Drama and Film; English Literature; English with Creative Writing; Music, Drama and Film; Classics, English and History; Global Studies; Irish Studies; Creative and Cultural Industries), and leads the first three of these. These programmes feature internships, opportunities for international study, research dissertations and (for the most part) cohort modules each year. The BA Humanities runs alongside the three-year BA Arts degree, which now has smaller numbers and a higher entry requirement than previously – although a Government-supported pandemic-related expansion of numbers in 2020-21 and 2021-22 has temporarily increased those numbers again.

1.22 At postgraduate level, the School offers eight MAs: a general MA in Literature and Culture, an MA in Irish Literature and Culture, MA in Creative Writing, an MFA in Creative Writing, an MA in Gender, Sexuality and Culture, MA in Writing for Stage and Screen, MA in Drama and Performance Studies, and the UCD-Gaiety School of Acting MA in Theatre Practice. MA numbers have dropped from 140 students in 2012 to 74 in 2020, although numbers have increased to 102 in 2021, and the School is engaged in reviewing its MAs with a view to expanding recruitment.

1.23 PhD recruitment for the School is relatively stable: the School has 10 new PhD students starting in 2022-23, and have been successful in recent years in both College and University doctoral scholarship schemes. Currently there are 54 PhD students registered in the School. The University offers a structured PhD programme, in which students take modules in professional skills such as Tutoring, Graduate Development, and Research Culture, as well as researching and writing their theses. Postdoctoral recruitment has primarily been a result of IRC or ERC schemes, though the School is now targeting Marie Curie-Sklodowska schemes too.

1.24   In relation to the School research profile, over the past five years the percentage of research active staff has risen from 78 to 92. Members of the School have been successful in winning competitive research grants, including ERC Starting (2015; 2022) and Advanced (2021) grants, as well as many IRC grants. In recent years the School has been listed in the top 50 Schools of English globally (QS World Rankings 2017 and 2019); and it is currently ranked 41 (2022), an improvement of 11 places since 2021.

2. Organisation and Management

General Comments and Context

2.1 The School has engaged constructively with this Periodic Quality Review and most of the stakeholders associated with the School contributed directly to the preparation of the SAR. All members of the School participated willingly and in good faith in the Review process. The Review Group was pleased to have the opportunity to meet and have productive dialogue with so many of these people.

Commendations

2.2 The Review Group commends an effective management structure and supportive leadership within the School which encourages collegiality and participation in decision-making across all areas.

2.3 The School makes good use of its four composite disciplines (English, Drama, Film and Creative Writing), respecting the discipline specificities whilst exploring opportunities for collaborative enterprise.

2.4 The School has benefited from the commitment of those staff who are the chairs of the various School committees (e.g. Teaching & Learning, Research, Graduate Taught, Graduate Research, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and Global Engagement). Staff from the School have also taken on College-level roles and the School is to be commended on this effort in what can be challenging administrative roles.

Recommendations

2.5 The Review Group recommends that School develops a plan to enhance participation in its management by all of its constituent parts in the four subject areas (English, Drama, Film and Creative Writing) in the School Executive. In conjunction with this, the School should complete the staff handbook and ensure that the School committee structure and membership is readily visible. This will be an important contribution and will help to ensure all members of the School understand School processes and organisational structure.

2.6 Whilst the Review Group recognises that recordings of School committee meetings are available, it recommends that summary notes/action points are documented and made available to all members of the School committee.

2.7 The Review Group recommends that role descriptions for the major roles (e.g. chairs of the School committees) are available to all members of the School. If these role descriptors are not available, they should be developed. This information would be helpful in ensuring that all members of the School are afforded the opportunity to put themselves forward for these positions.

2.8 The Review Group recommends that the School put in place more formal structures around mentorship for new staff by more senior colleagues.

3.   Staff and Facilities

General Comments and Context

3.1   The School has a group of highly committed academics, ably supported by a professional support staff and Education Technologist who has played a significant role in the development of material for the Brightspace VLE.

3.2   The professional support staff are sensibly deployed and have delineated responsibilities, but also work together as a team to support the academic activities of the School.

3.3   There are a number of Teaching Fellows in the School and the Review Group notes that there is no career pathway for staff on this kind of contract.

3.4   The Review Group observed that the School is reliant on tutors and occasional staff to deliver its modules. However, the group was impressed with the empathy that exists within the School for staff on these types of contracts.

3.5   The Review Group notes that some recent appointments to the School are on fixed-term basis funded by the Higher Education Authority (HEA).

Commendations

3.6   The Review Group commends the School for its professional and enthusiastic academic and professional staff. They are dedicated to an organisation in which colleagues speak openly and honestly to one another.

3.7   Professional administrative support within the School is fully engaged in the educational mission and adopts an impressive problem-solving approach to the challenges of managing a very large student body and recent growth in academic staff.

3.8   Both internal and external stakeholders spoke of the School with great warmth, respect and enthusiasm.

3.9   The Review Group commends the recent success of the School in the Ad Astra programme and the School's awareness of the significant contribution of those on precarious contracts.

3.10   The School is to be commended on the foresight it had in appointing an educational technologist who was in place to support the increase in use of the VLE during the pandemic. The School has a number of activities that require technical support and there is a recognition, including a new appointment, that appropriate resourcing in this area is essential.

3.11   The School has made use of the Humanities Institute to ensure that desk space for postgraduate students is available beyond the confines of the School's significant space limitations.

Recommendations

3.12   Given the recent growth in the number of staff and students in the School, the Review Group recommends that the School engages with the College and University to invest in and improve

facilities and space commensurate with the number of students and staff, enabling the staff and the student body to gain both a sense of community with their degree studies and to study in facilities which match the quality and range of educational content across all four disciplinary areas (English, Drama, Film and Creative Writing) within the School.

3.13   The School should engage with the relevant authorities in the College and University to establish clarity on progression through and from fixed-term contracts, with the aim of ensuring that the University recognises the significant contribution of those on teaching-only contracts and that they are given opportunities for career and grading progression.

3.14   Given the amount of School resources going to hourly paid teaching, the Review Group recommends that the School engages with the relevant College and University authorities to create permanent academic roles and ensure there is appropriate staffing in all disciplinary areas.

3.15   The Review Group were impressed to hear that the School has a workload model and workload committee, including a School level survey on the number of hours spent by each staff member on research, teaching and contribution; the Review Group recommends this transparency is maintained especially with regard to teaching loads of new staff in the different subject areas.

3.16   Although the overall School staff:student ratio has improved, this is not evenly distributed among the four subject areas, which ranges from 14:1 for English, 15:1 for Creative Writing, 17:1 for Drama and 18:1 for Film. There also appears to be an over-reliance on fixed-term academic staff in Creative Writing. In addition, while the subject area of English appears to be well represented in senior leadership roles in the School, Drama, Creative Writing and Film have fewer academic staff and are therefore less well represented on the School Executive. There is a strong case for a permanent academic appointment in Film. The Review Group recommends that the School addresses these disparities in future strategic planning.

4.   Teaching, Learning and Assessment

General Comments and Context

4.1   All four constituent parts of the School deliver high-quality teaching and a broad-ranging curriculum at BA and MA level.

4.2   Teaching is informed by research and practice-based research expertise, offering students a large range of modules which build on well-focused introductory work at levels one and two.

4.3   Methods of teaching are appropriate for the constituent subjects, ranging from seminars and lectures to workshops, rehearsals and screenings.

4.4   There is a wide range of teaching staff employed by the School: full time research and teaching staff, those on teaching only contracts, practitioners and graduate teaching assistants (or 'Tutors') who have representation on School committees and exam boards.

4.5   Assessment is varied, from exams to coursework, to dissertations to creative practice.

4.6   The School contributes to two main undergraduate degrees, the BA Arts (3 year) and BA Humanities (4 year).

4.7   There is longstanding evidence of successful MA recruitment and an ability to revise the MA offering as the market allows.

4.8   A large and vibrant research student community is supervised by a wide range of School colleagues, through individual supervision and Research Student Panels.

Commendations

4.9   A highly qualified and increasingly diverse student body receives an education which is delivered through a plural, innovative and extensive set of modules; adaptation to new learning technologies has been acquired rapidly and has been deployed with professionalism and targeted technical support.

4.10   The balance between research and teaching excellence is particularly commendable: the success in receiving research income is matched by comparable success in teaching, widening participation and Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

4.11   The adaptation to new learning technologies has been acquired rapidly and it is commendable that it has been deployed with professionalism and targeted technical support. The School has a high level of engagement with the University for ALL Digital Badge scheme.

4.12   The Tutor handbook is in many ways a model of its kind, providing commendably clear information and supportive instruction to the graduate teaching assistants ('Tutors') on whom much teaching in the School depends.

4.13   The Review Group commends recent School initiatives to support its commitment to students in academic or personal difficulty to progress through and complete their studies, particularly through the establishment of the post of Academic Support Officer to support students requiring resits.

4.14   The Review Group commends the success of the School in meeting university targets for widening participation of students.

Recommendations

4.15   The School developed teaching innovations in new learning platforms and technologies during the pandemic and the School is encouraged to consider how these technologies might be used in future planning around delivery of content and improvement of the student experience.

4.16   The Review Group recognises the resource implications in sustaining professionalised learning support and recommends that the School has structures in place to ensure the development of this support.

4.17   The Review Group recommends that the School monitors the provision and success of internships for its students on the 4-year BA in Humanities. There is also space for the School to provide clearer signposting to students on its modules as to the employability skills they are developing (critical thinking, etc) and careers awareness being made more clear to the students themselves within School modules (where possible).

5.   Curriculum Development and Review

General Comments and Context

5.1   As stated in Section 4. Teaching, Learning and Assessment, the Review Group noted the very large number of modules that the School offers, running with student enrolments ranging from less than 5 to over 300. This is evidence of a broad curriculum which also narrows to offer undergraduate and postgraduate teaching that is informed by considerable staff research expertise.

5.2   The modules in Theatre and Creative Writing are tightly focused to encourage both practice-led and pedagogic considerations of the subject.

5.3   Film teaching moves between a text-based focus and wider consideration of a broad range of media.

5.4   The recent rationalisation of the undergraduate offering into a three-year BA in Arts and a four-year BA in Humanities has just completed its first cycle, and presents considerable opportunities to students wishing to pursue a wider Arts education or one focused in English, Drama, Film and Creative Writing.

5.5   Postgraduate programmes have also recently been rationalised and offer range and expertise to a considerable cohort of students.

5.6   Collaborations with the Gaiety School of Acting and those that have been built for the Creative Futures Academy promise to establish a model for a mixed practice and academic-led curriculum, partaking of the best of conservatoire and research-led university teaching.

Commendations

5.7   In line with the considerable range and intensity of the work of the School, the Review Group commends the commitment of staff to delivering the high quality and volume of their teaching.

5.8   The Review Group commends the quality of systems of support for postgraduate research students, in particular through the Research Student Panels. Success in winning large levels of funding for such students is matched by a high on-time completion rate. Research student topics reflect the wide level of expertise in the School.

5.9   As stated in Section 4. Teaching, Learning and Assessment, the Review Group commends the rapid integration of new learning technologies into the curriculum at all levels. There is also evidence of considerable technical support (as noted in Section 3. Staff and Facilities) and enhancement of modules via alternative modes of assessment.

Recommendations

5.10   The Review Group recommends that in order to protect the long-term sustainability of delivering such high intensity teaching (and to prevent potential personal impacts on staff) that the School

considers whether the number of modules offered is appropriate to the School's capacity, at undergraduate and in particular masters level.

5.11   The Review Group notes the success of the four-year BA in Humanities. However, the group noted a concern regarding high student workloads in both the BA in Arts and BA in Humanities programmes. The Review Group recommends that the School liaises with the relevant Governing Board for these programmes to assess whether the structure of the curriculum can be more sensitive to the capacity of all students - particularly those studying a large number of 5 credit modules.

5.12   The Review Group recommends that the School explores the possibility of extending the support of the educational technologist, and creating a job description which focuses on the curricular development of the Virtual Learning Environment and other new pedagogic technologies.

6.   Research Activity

General Comments and Context

6.1   The Review Group found widespread evidence of a highly productive research culture managed sensitively to encourage all staff to reach their potential.

6.2   There is evidence of high-quality publications across many of the main subject areas of the four disciplines in an impressively broad range of creative outputs, including poetry, non-fiction and fiction.

6.3   Recent successes in research income show the School adapted to mounting bids for large sources of funding and showing responsiveness and agility to smaller initiatives.

6.4   There is evidence of research excellence encouraging postgraduate research in all of the subjects covered in the School, and of the effective integration of staff and student research.

Commendations

6.5   The Review Group commends the broad and extensive reach of research outputs, as shown in the large number of sole-authored and edited books that are being produced.

6.6   The Review Group commends the nuanced way in which research is recognised in the School – research as practice, practice as research, creative research and cultural impact – and considers it as appropriate for the diverse array of subjects covered in the School.

6.7   The Review Group commends a School workload model which is calibrated in such a way as to encourage effective time for research and for management of research grants. There was much evidence seen throughout the site visit of transparent thinking about managing research within the workload model and rewarding it through career expectations.

6.8   There is evidence of a longstanding culture of seeking internal and external research funding, which is shown in the highly successful performance which ranges from the IRC postgraduate scheme to large European Research Council grants. This is to be commended.

6.9   The Review Group commends the well-established procedures of School and College research support, both for study leave and for international conference travel, which is applied fairly and with transparency.

6.10   The Review Group commends the sharing of experience in gaining research funding internally. Whilst sharing of experience in this regard is common across academia, the School has systemised this sharing (for example, through internal mentoring and proposal feedback on funding applications, and the annual School Research Day event) and this has very likely contributed to its success.

Recommendations

6.11   Due to the School's growing success in research innovation, impact and funding the Review Group recommends that the School liaises with the relevant university authority to develop a plan to enable the appointment of dedicated research administration to support the application for and management of these grants.

6.12   While the School has demonstrated significant growth in research activity and funding diversification (e.g. recent awards from the IRC, EU and Welcome trust), the Review Group encourages the School to plan strategically for further funding diversification in collaboration with UCD Research, Innovation and Impact.

6.13   The OBRSS scheme has been rolled out across the University and provides performance-related research grant support. The Review Group was surprised to see that it does not appropriately recognise creative publications. The Review Group recommends that the School engages with UCD Research, Innovation and Impact so that the University adopts a more responsive and subject-sensitive way of channelling research support through the OBRSS internal funding model.

6.14   Given the large number of research students and the range of projects, the Review Group recommends that the School explores more formal means of monitoring student progression and support through maintaining School level records of Research Studies Panel meetings. It might also consider means to ensure that information regarding supports and procedures is available in the development of postgraduate researcher handbook modelled on the tutor handbook.

7.   Management of Quality and Enhancement

General Comments and Context

7.1   The School engaged fully and openly with the quality review process, demonstrating a positive and open culture towards quality enhancement which is regularly monitored via student feedback, student surveys, School committees and external examiners.

Commendations

7.2   The Review Group commends the high level of engagement of School staff in the quality review process and the high quality of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR).

7.3   A very high level of student satisfaction is evidenced in module survey results, indicating the high quality of teaching and dedication of teaching staff at all levels.

7.4   The School has put in place several initiatives to enhance quality, such as the Academic Integrity Panel, PhD Students Committee and graduate futures programme.

7.5   The School demonstrates a commitment to tutor training and development including the tutor handbook, training seminars, module level orientations and grading workshops.

7.6   The Review Group noted evidence of vibrant and supportive graduate studies and research committees.

Recommendations

7.7   The Review Group was surprised to learn that the School has not fully engaged with the Athena SWAN awards process and encourages the School to do so, in order to give more visibility to the leading role the School plays with regard to gender equality in the wider University. Engagement with the Athena SWAN process may help raise awareness of the availability of supports for those returning from, for example, maternity leave.

7.8   The Review Group recommends that the School further explores channels oriented towards student support. This would involve a wider use of student feedback mechanisms (in addition to module feedback), so that the School might be better positioned to hear student feedback and assess the quality of any actions that are designed to address concerns raised by students. It might also include gathering information about widening participation students and others from non-traditional academic backgrounds.

8.   Support Services

General Comments and Context

8.1   During the site visit, the Review Group obtained ample evidence that the School interacts productively with support units across the campus including UCD Research, Innovation and Impact, UCD Library, the Access Office and the College of Arts and Humanities.

8.2   Feedback from support services indicated a high level of collaboration and good working relationships between the School and University support units.

Commendations

8.3   The Review Group commends the School on developing and maintaining strong relationships with support services across the campus.

8.4   The Review Group particularly noted exceptional engagement from the School in widening participation and UCD Access.

Recommendations

8.5   The Review Group observed that while there was a good relationship with the Library, there was significant scope for enhanced collaboration with the School, e.g. through video library/facilities for students to watch DVDs.

8.6   Given the current acute space issues being experienced due to the increase in student numbers across many subjects, the School is encouraged to further develop relationships with UCD Cinema, and the UCD Village, for short term needs in relation to auditorium space.

8.7   The School demonstrates exceptional engagement in widening participation and UCD Access. Related to this, it is recommended that the School and College work further to lobby the national conversation in establishing the metrics related to rates of progression, completion and postgraduate attainment of widening-participation students.

9.   Collaborative Educational Provision

General Comments and Context

9.1   The School has developed and nurtured strong collaborations with leading educational institutions, with numerous joint educational offerings. A notable example is the joint MA degree with the Gaiety School of Acting (GSA); students benefit from access to rehearsal space and work alongside theatre and performance professionals.

9.2   The School has also developed international partnerships, through the Erasmus programme in Europe and beyond.

Commendations

9.3   The School is commended for developing strong partnerships with leading Irish and international educational institutions via joint delivery of MA degrees; via student and staff exchanges supported by the Erasmus programme; MoUs with International Universities and engagement with the Fulbright programme.

Recommendations

9.4   While the School has had success in attracting incoming international students through programmes such as Erasmus, the Review Group would encourage the School to investigate further the current barriers to the participation of School students in outgoing Erasmus programmes.

10.   External Relations

General Comments and Context

10.1   The Review Group met with a range of external stakeholders, these included the Gaiety School of Acting, Museum of Literature in Ireland (MoLI), the Dublin Film Festival, an external employer and a mature PhD student. The discussion was overwhelmingly positive, with each individual being extremely keen to contextualise their comments in their own sphere.

10.2   The external stakeholders were all extremely complementary of the high calibre of the students and staff in English, Drama, Film and Creative Writing. The broad impact of the work of the School beyond UCD was extensively referenced, including the high profile of authors with faculty positions in the School.

Commendations

10.3   The Museum of Literature in Ireland (MoLI) and the Creative Futures Academy (CFA) are exemplary collaborations with other institutions in the Dublin area, placing the School in a unique position in its encouragement of culture practitioners, external engagement and performance, building on the successful Creative Fellows programme. The School is uniquely positioned to engage with these external stakeholders and continue to build networks that benefit external and internal constituencies.

10.4   The School provides education that continues to be extremely relevant to disciplinary, national and international trends, for example, creative thinking (writing) has been identified in Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025.

Recommendations

10.5   The Review Group recommends that the School formalise the input of the external stakeholders via an Advisory Board to help consider its research objectives in a more strategic fashion.

UCD School of English, Drama & Film

Response to the Review Group Report

The process of preparing and reflecting on the self-assessment report took place in Autumn and Winter 2021, and was a constructive experience for the School, especially as this was the period in which the School and the University were beginning to return from the covid-19 pandemic. We were very pleased that, after some delay, the review panel was able to conduct a site visit, in October 2022, and to evaluate the School on the basis of the self-assessment report and a brief update. We are grateful to the University and to the UCD Quality Office for accepting our request to defer the assessment from its originally scheduled time, which would have been at the height of the pandemic and in lockdown conditions. It was a very valuable and positive experience for the School to be able to meet in person with the panel, and discuss with them our current opportunities and challenges.

In the lengthy process of drafting and reviewing the self-assessment report, and throughout the three days of the panel's site visit, there was very strong and constructive engagement from all members of the School, as well as from students and stakeholders. The School is grateful to the Quality Office for support and guidance throughout the process, and to the three members of the Quality Review panel for their generosity and dedication throughout the site visit and in compiling their report.

The School is very pleased to see the many commendations of good practice provided in the report, and the positive evaluation of the School's work and standing. We were particularly gratified to see that the panel recognised the dedication and professionalism of all staff, and the core values of community, openness, and integrity which characterises our School. Meetings of the School Executive and the whole School have considered the recommendations made in the Quality Review report, and many actions are already in process, or are planned to be addressed in the near future.

There are seven prioritised recommendations in the report, and the School's response to those recommendations is provided below:

2.5 **The Review Group recommends that the School develops a plan to enhance participation by all of its constituent parts in the four subject areas (English, Drama, Film and Creative Writing) in the School Executive.**
The four subject areas are already represented in the School Executive, formally through the four Heads of Subject for English, Drama, Film and Creative Writing, and informally through the fact that two further elected members of the Executive are drawn from Film and Creative Writing. We think this recommendation may be intended to mean that the four subject areas should be better represented in School leadership roles, as it is currently the case that all senior leadership roles in the School (Head of School, Director of Teaching and Learning, Director of Research, Director of Graduate Research, Director of Graduate Teaching, Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and Director of Global Engagement) are members of the English subject group. This situation has emerged as a result of severe staffing pressures in the three smaller subject areas of the School – Film, Drama and Creative Writing – which has prevented members of these subject areas having the capacity to take on leadership roles, but as a result of recent hiring of new staff and a reduction in the staff:student ratio in those subject areas, it is anticipated that it will soon be possible to draw colleagues from those underrepresented subject areas into senior leadership positions.

2.5   In conjunction with this, the School should complete the staff handbook and ensure that the School committee structure and membership is readily visible.

The staff handbook is already in preparation, and will be ready in Spring 2023.

3.12   Given the recent growth in the number of staff and students in the School, the Review Group recommends that the School engages with the College and University to invest in and improve facilities and space commensurate with the number of students and staff.

Since the refurbishment of the C2 corridor in 2019, the School has drawn attention to the fact that the University has not managed to provide sufficient office accommodation to match the growth of the School. Through College structures, we have sought to identify additional space from other Schools and the College of Social Science with which we share the Newman building, but no additional space has been identified. For the past year, we have awaited the outcome of requests to UCD Estates and the space management committee for additional space. As a result of the delay to the refurbishment of the Newman building during and since the pandemic, facilities in the building are of highly varied quality, with offices in the J/K corridor experiencing unhealthy temperature conditions in the Winter. We welcome the encouragement of the Quality Review panel to engage further with the University to provide adequate space and facilities for our staff and students.

3.13   The School should engage with the relevant authorities in the College and University to establish clarity on progression through and from fixed-term contracts, with the aim of ensuring that the University recognises the significant contribution of those individuals on precarious and teaching-only contracts and that they are given opportunities for career and grading progression.

The School welcomes this support for our colleagues on precarious and teaching-only contracts, and will continue to engage with the College and the University to campaign for progression opportunities for those on 'below-the-bar' lectureships, Teaching Fellowships, and non-scale contracts of indefinite duration. Beyond the above categories considered by the Quality Review panel, the School would also point out the restricted opportunities for administrative and professional staff to progress.

4.15   The School developed teaching innovations in new learning platforms and technologies during the pandemic and the School is encouraged to consider how these technologies might be used in future planning around delivery of content and improvement of the student experience.

The School's Teaching and Learning Committee has featured regular discussions of teaching innovations in new learning platforms and technologies since we have returned to teaching on campus, and the Director of Teaching and Learning has brought proposals and items for discussion to the School meetings. We are fortunate to have several colleagues in the School who have held or continue to hold significant leadership roles at College and University level in Teaching and Learning, and also to have an Educational Technologist in the School who advises on and assists with new developments in educational technology.

6.11   Due to the School's growing success in research innovation, impact and funding the Review Group recommends that the School liaises with the relevant university authority to develop a plan to enable the appointment of dedicated research administration to support the application for and management of these grants.

On the basis of increased research funding to the School from large project awards, the School has been able to generate a new research administrator post. The post has been advertised and an appointment recommended. The successful candidate is expected to start in March 2023.

8.7   The School demonstrates exceptional engagement in widening participation and UCD Access. Related to this, it is recommended that the School and College work further to lobby the national conversation

in establishing the metrics related to rates of progression, completion and postgraduate attainment of widening-participation students.

There are many members of the School involved in access, EDI, and widening participation initiatives at School, College and University level. The School recognises and is actively advocating for better data on rates of progression, completion and graduate attainment of widening participation students.

Site Visit Timetable - UCD School of English, Drama & Film

SESSION 2.1 Stakeholder Meeting - College Principal
SESSION 1 Review Group Planning Meeting
Monday, 17 October 2022
Room 213, Tierney Building, UCD

All times are local Irish time

12:00-12:45	SESSION 2.1, Stakeholder meeting – College Principal
12:45-13:00	Review Group only – Key observations & preparation for next session
16:15-17:00	Preliminary Comments and areas for discussion
17:00-17:15	Break
17:15-19:00	Timetable Review, assignment of Review Group roles for meetings/questions, additional information requests
19:30	Dinner hosted for the Review Group by the Registrar & Deputy President

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SESSION 2
Core Activities & Stakeholder Feedback
Tuesday, 18 October 2022
Review Group Baseroom: Room C217, Newman Building
Stakeholder Meetings: Room C218, Newman Building

All times are local Irish time

12:00-12:45	SESSION 2.2, Stakeholder meeting – Head of School
12:45-14:00	Review Group only – Lunch
14:00-14:45	SESSION 2.3, Stakeholder meeting – SAR Co-ordinating Committee
14:45-15:00	Review Group only – Key observations & preparation for next session
15:00-15:45	SESSION 2.4, Stakeholder meeting – Academic Staff (English); All subject staff (30 mins) + Head of Subject (15 mins)
15:45-15:50	Review Group only – Key observations & preparation for next session
15:50-16:35	SESSION 2.5, Stakeholder meeting – Academic Staff (Drama); Head of Subject (15 mins) + all subject staff (30 mins)
16:35-16:40	Review Group – Key observations & preparation for next session
16:40-17:25	SESSION 2.6, Stakeholder meeting – Academic Staff (Film); Head of Subject (15 mins) + all subject staff (30 mins)
17:25-17:30	Review Group – Key observations & preparation for next session
17:30-18:15	SESSION 2.7, Stakeholder meeting – Academic Staff (Creative Writing); Head of Subject (15 mins) + all subject staff (30 mins)
18:15-18:30	Review Group – Key observations & preparation for next session

SESSION 3
Core Activities & Stakeholder Feedback
Wednesday, 19 October 2022
Review Group Baseroom: Room C217, Newman Building
Stakeholder Meetings: Room C218, Newman Building

09:00-09:30	Review Group only – Key observations & preparation for next session
09:30-10:00	SESSION 3.1, Stakeholder meeting – School Office Administrative & Technical Staff
10:00-10:15	Review Group only – Key observations & preparation for next session
10:15-10:45	SESSION 3.2, Stakeholder meeting – Associated Administrative Staff
10:45-11:00	Review Group break – Key observations & preparation for next session
11:00-11:45	SESSION 3.3, Stakeholder meeting – Programme Deans & College Leadership
11:45-12:00	Review Group – Key observations & preparation for next session
12:00-12:30	SESSION 3.4, Stakeholder meeting – College Finance Manager, HR Partner, HR Resourcing Consultant
12:30-13:00	Review Group break – Lunch
13:00-13:45	SESSION 3.5, Stakeholder meeting – New Academic Staff
13:45-14:00	Review Group – Key observations & preparation for next session
14:00-14:30	SESSION 3.6, Stakeholder meeting – Teaching Fellows
14:30-14:45	Review Group – Key observations & preparation for next session
14:45-15:15	SESSION 3.7, Stakeholder meeting – Tutors & Occasional Lecturers
15:15-15:30	Review Group only – Key observations & preparation for next session
15:30-16:15	SESSION 3.8, Stakeholder meeting – Undergraduate & Taught Postgraduate students
16:15-16:30	Review Group only – Key observations & preparation for next session
16:30-17:15	SESSION 3.9, Stakeholder meeting – Research students
17:15-18:00	Tour of Facilities

SESSION 4
Core Activities, Stakeholder Feedback & Exit Presentations
Thursday, 20 October 2022
Review Group Baseroom: Room C217, Newman Building
Stakeholder Meetings: Room C218, Newman Building

09:00-09:30	Review Group break – Key observations & preparation for next session
09:30-10:00	SESSION 4.1, Stakeholder meeting – Post-Doctoral Researchers and Research Support Staff
10:00-10:15	Meeting (via Zoom) with School Educational Technologist
10:15-10:30	Review Group – Key observations & preparation for next session
10:30-11:15	SESSION 4.2, Stakeholder meeting –School Committee Chairs
11:15-11:30	Review Group – Key observations & preparation for next session
11:30-12:15	SESSION 4.3, Stakeholder meeting – University & College support service staff
12:15-12:30	Review Group break
12:30-13:15	SESSION 4.4, Working Lunch & Stakeholder meeting – Alumni & Employers
13:15-14:30	Review Group only – Preparation for Exit Presentations
14:30-14:50	SESSION 4.5, Review Group key findings (commendations & recommendations) College Principal Nominee, UCD College of Arts & Humanities and UCD Director of Quality
14:50-15:00	Review Group break
15:00-15:20	SESSION 4.6, Review Group key findings (commendations & recommendations) Head of School and UCD Director of Quality
15:20-15:30	Review Group break

15:30-15:50	SESSION 4.7, Review Group key findings (commendations & recommendations) Theatre N, Newman Building
	All School staff (with Zoom/phone-in option) and UCD Director of Quality
15:50-16:00	Review Group only – Remote Site Visit close out & next steps