

# Quality Implementation Plan for the Department of Ancient Classics

## 1. Recommendations which the Department could implement unaided

**Recommendation 1.1:** That the Department continue with its current line of thinking and reintroduce small group teaching at levels 2 and 3.

Action :

The Department has introduced extra small group teaching in its second- and third-year Greek and Roman Civilization programme (hereafter GRC). All modules in the GRC second- and third-year programme (with the exception of GC350)<sup>1</sup> now have four hours of small group teaching attached in the form of workshops. Previously two hours had been allocated to small group teaching at this level.

The workshops operate with small groups and focus on helping students with compulsory essay work (see below), with preparation for examinations, and with discussion, debate, and argument as a fundamental part of the process of learning. The aim is to encourage and develop confidence in discussion and in academic abilities.

In addition, the Department has also increased the number of tutorials offered at first-year level. Each of the four modules offered in first-year already had three tutorials attached to it; this has been supplemented with a number of additional tutorials designed to improve essay writing and examination technique.

**Recommendation 1.2:** The Department continue with its current line of thinking and reintroduce compulsory essays for each course-unit at levels 2 and 3, and that it consider increasing the length of its examinations.

Action :

The Department has introduced compulsory written work for one module in each semester, in the second- and third-years of its GRC programme. Four modules are now assessed through compulsory written essay work only. Optional essays are still available in all the other modules in second- and third-years.

The Department has not made any addition to the length of examinations. At present the Department is following current university recommendations: 5 credit examinations are of a one-and-half-hour duration, while 10 credit examinations are of a three-hour duration

**Recommendation 1.3:** The *Report* notes: ‘The research achievements of the Department are all the more remarkable given that there is no formalised internal research leave scheme. At present the only opportunities for staff leave are those of

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<sup>1</sup> This module is centred on independent research, where independent study is supported by introductory classes, essay titles, and bibliographies.

oversubscribed external schemes (such as IRCHSS)<sup>2</sup>, or a somewhat unattractive university scheme involving a sacrifice of 30-35% of one's salary. Clearly this is a scheme designed only for plutocrats. In this context we recommend that the Department consider the introduction of an internal sabbatical rota of one semester's leave on a sequential basis' (*Peer Review Report*, p. 11).

Action:

The Department has not attempted to create an internal sabbatical rota. While such a scheme may operate successfully in many university departments, it is unlikely to work in the Department of Ancient Classics for the following reason. The Department teaches three subjects: Greek and Roman Civilization, Greek language, and Latin language. There are six full-time members of the teaching staff. As a result the teaching load for members of Department is unusually high in comparison with other departments. This means that an internal sabbatical rota would place extra teaching on staff members who are already shouldering heavy teaching burdens, and therefore it was not something that the Department saw as a viable option.

**Recommendation 1.4:** That the Department focus its proposed marketing drive on convincing prospective students that a Classics degree can take them in a number of different directions.

Action :

The Department has put in place a more aggressive marketing policy to encourage more students to opt for GRC as a subject in the Arts omnibus programme. This has involved heightening our representation at Open Days held at the University, and at Careers and Higher Options Days held off campus. In addition, in conjunction with the Admissions Office, we have revamped our programme of short introductory lectures in Orientation Week in an aid to demonstrate the scope and vitality of our first-year programme.

Another area where we are marketing ourselves more fully is on our web-pages where a section is under construction which will be devoted to sell the subject by providing an introduction to the Graeco-Roman world for those with little or no knowledge of it. Our task is to convince prospective students that a Classics degree can take them in a number of different directions and can impart the mental flexibility and transferable skills valued by many employers. Our aim is to attract the attention of such students before they arrive at university and provide them with some ideas about why they might want to study the civilizations of Greece and Rome. In addition, we intend to provide data concerning the employability of Classicists, and the range of jobs available to someone with a good Classics degree.

## **2. Recommendations which the Department could implement only with assistance from other bodies within the University and without cost implications**

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<sup>2</sup> The IRCHSS Research Fellowship and Senior Research Fellowship, the schemes that normally provide research leave funding for individual lecturers, are suspended at present.

**Recommendation 2.1:** That the Faculty tackle the problem of student absenteeism from classes by articulating and publicizing a clear set of consequences for poor attendance.

Action:

The Department is fully in agreement with the above recommendation and will support the Faculty in any endeavour in this area.:

**Recommendation 2.2:** That the Faculty/University introduce anonymous exam marking as standard for all courses.

Action:

The Department is fully in agreement with the above recommendation and will support the Faculty/University in any endeavour in this area.

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**Recommendation 2.3:** That the Faculty should consider co-listing Classics courses in second and third year – e.g. list a course as simultaneously both Classics and History (or English) - so that students are able to take more modules outside their main chosen pathway.

Action:

The Department is fully in agreement with the above recommendation and will support the Faculty in any endeavour in this area.

### **3. Recommendations which the Department could implement only if additional resources are provided by the University**

**Recommendation 3.1:** That the university, when the economic position improves, should consider increasing the number of staff in the Department by appointing a specialist in language teaching and in material culture.

Action:

The Department is fully in agreement with the above recommendation and encourages the University to give this proposal serious consideration

### **Appendix: General Departmental response to the Peer Review Report**

The Department was extremely pleased with its *Peer Review Report*. It has every reason to be proud of a *Report* which concludes as follows: ‘This is a most impressive department. In every aspect of its activities, it punches well above its weight on the

national and international stage. It maintains its core teaching mission admirably while continuing to produce excellent, indeed world-class, research at an impressive rate, and contributes generously to the classical and the wider community in Ireland and the UK. Some excellent appointments have been made of late; and all staff, whether of recent or long-standing appointment, display a can-do attitude, a yeasaying responsiveness, which is as rare as it is invaluable (*Peer Review Report* p. 13). The Report points up not only the hard working nature of this Department, but also the quality of its teaching and research. In terms of its recommendations, the ones within the remit of the Department itself, concern only minor adjustments to ‘what is already a successful, creative and innovative operation’ (*Peer Review Report*, p. 4). Our need to market ourselves more forcefully has been duly noted and steps are underway to achieve this. The other recommendations involve, either assistance from other bodies within the University, or require additional resources. The Department encourages the University to engage with all the recommendations in this Report and offers its support in any undertaking regarding them. The future of this Department is knitted to the wider world of the University and we ask for its support based not on our valuation of ourselves but on the assessment of international peer reviewers. The ‘Classics department is a real asset, a highly motivated and talented team which reflects extremely well upon its home institution and achieves valuable and important results in terms of research outputs, student satisfaction and learning outcomes - what used to be called scholarly and pedagogical merit. This is a department of style and class, which deserves to be supported to the hilt’ (*Peer Review Report*, p. 13).