



NUI MAYNOOTH
Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

QUALITY REVIEW 2001

PEER REVIEW REPORT 2001

**Department of Anthropology
National University of Ireland, Maynooth**

Quality Review Report

prepared by the External Assessors

Dr. Graham McFarlane, School of Anthropological Studies,
Queen's University Belfast

Dr. Sharon Roseman, Department of Anthropology,
Memorial University of Newfoundland

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Ms Saranne Magennis (Quality Promotion Officer, NUI, Maynooth)

The staff of the Department of Anthropology

Professor Lawrence Taylor (Head of Department)

Dr. Abdullahi El Tom

Dr. Séamas Ó Siocháin

Dr. A. Jamie Saris

Dr. Steve Coleman

Dr. Pauline Garvey (Visiting Lecturer)

The Executive Assistants: Lynn Wyse and Deirdre Dunne

The Occasional Lecturers (2000-2001): Ciara Kierans. Alison O'Meara

Adam Drazin. Michelle Cotter, Piera Sarasini. Gavin Macarthur

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Introduction

This report derives from an analysis of documentation provided by the Department of Anthropology and by the Quality Promotion Unit and from reflections of interviews and observations carried out during a two day visit to Maynooth (14 – 15 March 2001). Our report will be divided into five sections dealing with:

1. Teaching and Learning
2. The Learning Environment
3. The Student Experience
4. Research Culture and External Links with the Department
5. Conclusions and General Recommendations

It is worth making some general points right at the outset. During the review process, we encountered a lively department going through a period of transition, in relation to all of its activities. All permanent and temporary teaching members of the Department are concerned with student learning and are teaching at the cutting edge of research. They are engaged in carefully evaluating and reworking their curriculum in the light of student need and demands. We found that all staff were willing to engage in frank discussion of their activities without defensiveness and that they were all concerned not only with their students' academic progression but also that their students' experience in the department would be a positive one. Not surprisingly, given the approach demonstrated by staff, we also encountered some clearly motivated and bright students who are deeply concerned about the future of their department and of the discipline of Anthropology in Ireland.

In their Self-Assessment Review, the Department sets out as a main aspiration its development as a centre of an outward looking 'Irish Anthropology'. While not all staff are convinced that such a thing as 'Irish Anthropology' could ever really be constructed, all staff are aware of the image that many outsiders have of the Department as standing on one side of the now outmoded division between British and American traditions in anthropology, and they all want to undermine that perception. Perhaps 'Irish anthropology' is a chimera, but, looking in from the outside, it does seem to us that in everything they do - in teaching, in research, and in developing relations beyond the world of academia – the Department is progressing in developing an intellectual context in which something like an 'Irish Anthropology' could indeed emerge and flourish.

1. Teaching and Learning

As the self-assessment report stresses, the Department has been engaged in a two-year period of intensive self-reflection about all of its courses. This reflection has resulted in the dramatic, ongoing revision and implementation of changes in the four courses in their undergraduate and postgraduate teaching programmes. We discussed these developments with the Head of Department, with individual members of staff and of course with the students. We are happy that, in monitoring the implementation of these changes, the staff are paying proper attention to the kinds of criteria set out by the QPU.

We are pleased that the courses (individual years of study) are structured in such a way to allow students to progress in developing an anthropological imagination. It is quite clear that the aim of all the courses is to develop such an anthropological imagination rather than attempting to give a total coverage of the entire history of the discipline. An anthropological imagination is firmly based in comparative reflection on ways of thinking and living in society. This imagination encourages deep levels of self-reflection among students about their own cultural assumptions and about their own places in a rapidly changing world. It is quite clear to us that the Department is contributing in a significant way to NUI Maynooth's overall aim of producing articulate and globally aware citizens.

The overall undergraduate programme has a very coherent structure, given the aim of developing an anthropological imagination over three years. In year one, students are introduced to the anthropological perspective on the world while in year two they are given a solid grounding in most of the central debates within the field. Then, in year three they are given the opportunity to apply theoretical, ethnographic, and methodological skills in a personal research project (the B.A. thesis).

The postgraduate programme is also coherent in structure, having a common taught year (offering a Higher Diploma) followed, if successful and desired, by a minimum of one year's or two year's research (for the Masters and PhD respectively). Important unique elements (in the Irish context) is the opportunity offered to North American students to undertake the taught element of their PhD programmes at Maynooth and the consideration being given to "hands on" staff supervised research activities in year one.

Clearly, anthropology at Maynooth is a popular option, especially at undergraduate level. However, there are dangers in this popularity as all staff are aware. In order to appreciate the potential danger of the popularity of anthropology soon placing an unmanageable strain on existing staff resources, one only has to examine the changing enrolment

figures on page 9 of the department's self-assessment report. The number of students in First Year of the undergraduate programme has increased from 116 in 1998/1999 to 305 in 2000/2001. As a consequence, assuming that the student retention rate of 40% between Years 1 and 2 is sustained, some 120 students will be entering into Year 2 in 2001/2002. If this happens, and the large Year 1 entry is sustained, it would seem from our calculations at least that the staff/student ratio would emerge at about 1:40+ next year, a figure which contrasts greatly with the mean staff/student ratio for Irish Universities of 1:22.

This all has clear implications for staffing. But that is not all – it has implications for the kinds of joint programmes which are offered. For instance, given that one of the more popular choices of joint honours programme is likely to be a combination with Sociology, staff are aware that they will have to monitor closely the courses which will be offered in the future by their sister discipline to avoid replication

We hope that it is clear that we have a broadly positive view of the teaching programme in the Department, and we would like to assert that we are happy that a very professional approach is being taken to all these issues. However, as we go through this section of our review, we would like to suggest some possible improvements which we, together with the staff and students, have identified in relation to some aspects of the teaching programme. Everyone concerned is clear that such fine-tuning is necessary as the new courses embed and the student numbers expand.

1.1 Course Content and Delivery

1.1.1 Undergraduate Year 1

This is the second year of the revamped First Year course, but staff are still fine-tuning its content. The inclusion of short modules built around a first year 'take' on the research interests of staff and on recent developments in the discipline as a whole has clearly added to the popularity of the subject among students. Students are made to feel involved with a community of scholars right from the onset.

The course is delivered through lectures, participation in discussion groups and in sessions on ethnographic monographs as well as showings of ethnographic film. While the first two means of delivery seem to be working very well, there are problems with attendance for the ethnography and film components of the course, for which the department is already seeking solutions.

We would suggest that since ethnographic film does enliven the learning of anthropology and does encourage students to address issues of authorship and representation, this component is really worth retaining and strengthening. If the audiovisual equipment

in lecture theatres allows, it might be an idea to incorporate appropriate edited extracts from videos into lecture sessions, rather than showing complete films on separate occasions. The problem with attendance for classes on ethnographic monographs might be alleviated by allocating a percentage of the overall assessment to work/participation/attendance at these classes (see below for general comments regarding assessment).

1.1.2 Undergraduate Year 2

The second year undergraduate course is built around a core “theoretical” course, made up of a 5 short modules, together with a series of topical courses centred on important sub-fields within the discipline. As we have noted above, the overall second year package does seem to offer students a good grounding in some of the central debates in the various sub-fields of the discipline.

This second year course was introduced this year, with the core element designed explicitly as an attempt to get students to think more clearly about the connections between theory, method and ethnography, and the topical courses designed to “cover” as many as possible of the important sub-fields. Initially the course was predominantly lecture based. Clearly, since all anthropology is theoretical, both the core and the topical elements are contributing to the aim of getting students to think about the relationship between theory, method and ethnography

The changes introduced this year seem to be seen as something of an improvement by staff and students – to judge from comments in the Self Assessment Document and from some comments by two of this year’s third year students who voiced some envy of what this year’s second year students are doing. However, clearly staff and students still have some concerns about the second year course – the possible future inclusion of a contextualising “History of Anthropology” element is being seriously and sensibly considered, while the department has commendably incorporated tutorials into the course in response to student demand.

During this ongoing reflection, we would also encourage staff to think about the placing of the different elements between the ‘core’ and the ‘topical’ courses. Of course, since all anthropology is theoretical and since students undertake all the taught elements anyway, it could be argued that it makes little difference where elements are placed. However, the impression we have gained is that the core course in year two is designed to be ‘meta-theoretical’ in nature, i.e. designed to expose students to entire theoretical paradigms. Certainly (British) Social Anthropology, Interpretative Anthropology, Semiotic Anthropology and Anthropology and Development do have this kind of sweep. Given this kind of sweep in the other modules in the core course, it would seem to us that it

might be more consistent to incorporate a reworking of the Gender topic course (say as something like 'Gender and Anthropological Theory') as a module in the core, while making the existing Material Culture module in the core course an essential topic course.

1.1.3. Undergraduate Year 3

This course builds upon the second year course very neatly, integrating general issues of theory, ethnography and method with the regional and topical research specialisms of permanent staff in its core element 'Current Issues in Anthropology'. This course is delivered by lectures, although tutorials are being considered. The specialist research interests of permanent staff are given further exposure in the accompanying seminar options, but this time augmented by teaching in the research specialisms of visiting and temporary staff. The other crucial element in the third year course is, of course, the dissertation.

The fact that all the students do the B.A. fieldwork based thesis is one of the strengths of the department, and it is perhaps unique in European terms (at least), where for the most part only single honours students undertake their own fieldwork. The fieldwork based dissertation is a strength which students are quick to identify, since they regard this as a major learning opportunity and the product of their work is something which they can use to demonstrate their capabilities both in the labour market and in any research career they might pursue. Given the passionate attachment to dissertation work from staff and students alike, and given its centrality in learning about anthropology, we would hope that the dissertation element of the degree will be retained in the future. We hope that it would not be compromised by limitations in staff resources.

Although there is some groupwork at the moment, the dissertations are mostly individually supervised, a time consuming but very fruitful way of encouraging student learning. Additional staffing of one or two would allow this form of delivery to be sustained if student numbers in Year 3 increase by 20 or so. However, we have our doubts that individual supervisions could continue if student numbers in Year 3 double (or even treble, if the expected 120 students in next year's Year 2 progress to Year 3 in 2002/2003). We would encourage staff in the department to investigate other forms of delivery for dissertation writing up – expanding group work and reducing the number of formal individual sessions might help.

1.1.4. Taught Postgraduate (Year 1 of the Programme: The Anthropology of Ireland in European and Global Context)

This is made up of 4 elements, all delivered by seminar as befits postgraduate work. The core seminar – ‘Anthropology at Maynooth’ – exposes students to members of staff research and to some of the theoretical issues which preoccupy them. A second seminar – ‘Ireland in Comparative Context’ – has been based around visiting speakers whose work is directly (or indirectly?) relevant to aspects of society and culture in Ireland. ‘The Topical Seminar’ allows postgraduate students to be exposed to the issues addressed in the Year 3 undergraduate topic seminars, according to their interests. Finally, the Graduate Student Seminar is a forum in which all postgraduate students, at whatever stage, can present and debate their ideas.

The self - assessment document notes, and the postgraduate students we met have confirmed, that three of these taught elements are working very well indeed. There has been less enthusiasm about the ‘Ireland in Comparative Context’ element, with students concerned about the range of topics covered, and the difficulty they have had in relating these to their own work or to the anthropology of Ireland in general.

The Department is currently discussing whether the introduction of some kind of survey course on the Anthropology of Ireland would be a useful addition to the programme, especially for the visiting North American students who have not been regularly exposed to Ireland as an anthropological focus. At the very least, the Department is thinking of limiting the number of visiting speakers for this element of the course. We would encourage the Department to consider seriously the option of a survey course on the Anthropology of Ireland, a survey course into which this more limited number of visitors could be integrated

1.2 Student Assessment and Progression

1.2.1 The Assessment Mix.

The bulk of assessment at undergraduate level is by unseen examination and by continuous assessment essays, each contributing a proportion of the percentage marks for each course. As far as we can see only the Topic Seminars in Year 3 are assessed by essays only. Essays are not only summative in aim, but are also formative, in the sense that the detailed feedback given on essays (written and oral) allows students some ongoing measure of how they are progressing on individual courses.

The same summative/formative characteristics apply to the broad range of continuous assessment used at postgraduate level – essays, reaction papers, seminar papers and the thesis proposal are used here, while unseen examinations are eschewed.

All of these are commendable, if a little traditional, as ways monitoring student progression and allowing learning. While we would not argue that the ‘traditional’ approach to assessment is by definition flawed (far from it – essays and unseen examinations do give adequate measures of various key study skills), we are still a little surprised that a broader range of assessment techniques have not been explored. No doubt heavy teaching and assessment loads, and the consequent lack of time for generic learning and teaching courses, makes it difficult for staff to be very innovative. However in its thinking about assessment, we would encourage staff to consider additional options. We would encourage consideration of the following at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels:

- ***a percentage of the overall mark for a course to be allocated for participation in tutorials and seminars. This could be assessed through verbal presentations to the group, or through written (weekly or fortnightly) tutorial worksheets. There are benefits in these practices in that they encourage attendance (see Year 1’s ethnographic monograph component)***
- ***the option of writing long essays in lieu of the unseen exam (especially popular among mature students)***
- ***‘seen’ exams***
- ***‘group’ essays, with individual student percentage marks being calculated out of combination of an overall group essay mark and a mark for individual contributions***
- ***book reviews***

1.2.2 Marking for taught courses

We are pleased that the Department has instituted double marking for the undergraduate dissertation, given its central importance in the degree and in the marks for it. Nevertheless, since all student work (with the exception of year 1 work) contributes towards overall degree marks, and since all anthropology departments in the UK and many in Europe are already being asked to develop robust procedures to ensure that institutions rather than individual academics can ‘stand over’ student marks, we would encourage the Department to continue their discussions about the broad issue of moderation over the next year or so.

We accept that the Department already has procedures for identifying what could be 'quirky'/unusual essay/exam marks for individual students, not least at its examination boards, and we are convinced that with the ease of communication between such a small number of staff no injustices have ever been done. We also accept that 'blind' double marking of all assessed work contributing to a degree might be unnecessary and probably impossible, given large student numbers. However, we feel that some degree of moderation of essay and exam marks for each course should be instituted. There are of course various procedures with a 'lighter touch' than blind double marking which could be adopted, and we would encourage the Department to discuss their choices with their external examiners.

1.2.3 Monitoring Student Progression

We were pleased to learn that the department has delegated the responsibility for each year of study to a different staff member. This has clearly allowed for more close monitoring of student progress. We would encourage the staff members responsible for each year of study to continue meeting with all of the students for whom they are responsible at the beginning of the academic year in order to give details of the year's course and to answer any questions which students may have. We hope that the student representative for each year of study, can be encouraged further to bring student concerns to the attention of the staff member responsible for their year

1.3. Information Provision for Students

1.3.1 Handbooks

As was indicated in the Department's self-assessment report, as well as by staff with whom we met during our visit, the staff take seriously student concerns that as much detail as possible be provided to them in written materials, in the form of handbooks and course outlines, updated each year.. This need was indeed stressed in our meeting with the group of anthropology students. The Department has already made much progress in this area and is currently engaged in producing handbooks, especially for Year 2 undergraduates and for postgraduates: we have seen the First Year Handbook and the Handbook for Occasional Students and a selection of course outlines, all of which are impressive. We would encourage further work in this area, especially as student numbers are increasing and the culture of complaint among students seems to be expanding. We are aware that virtually all of this information is available to students already, and we are aware that many of them are never satisfied, but we feel that the effort should be made, given this period of expansion.

We would encourage the production of at least 4 handbooks for students: a Year 1 handbook, a handbook for each of Years 2 and 3, and a handbook for the Postgraduate Programme. We would expect that the existing occasional student undergraduate handbook could continue to be a cumulative and amended version of the undergraduate handbooks.

All of the programme handbooks could have in common:

general information about the Department eg location, facilities, list of staff, their teaching/pastoral responsibilities, the research interests of teaching staff, details of how communication is managed in the Department, the Anthropology Society (most of this already exists in the handbooks produced)

a broad statement of the overall degree programme, whether undergraduate or postgraduate.

the general content and aims of the individual courses which make up the year of study, with lecture topics and tutorial topics where appropriate, submission dates for essays for each course, assessment procedures adopted and the percentages of the final course mark allocated to them

as much timetabling information as possible for the relevant courses, especially lecture times

a statement about procedures for the submission of written work and about any penalty point scheme which exists for late submission

some hints on essay preparation/writing, and some guidance for the presentation of written work, including general comments on the 'house style' for referencing etc.

a statement about the relevant marking schemes, and some indication of the kinds of qualities which are associated with work in different degree classes for undergraduates, and some information about the qualities associated with different grades of work for postgraduates.

a broad statement about the sin of plagiarism and the consequences of being found guilty of that sin

a statement about any student complaint procedure which exists

All undergraduate handbooks could also contain:

a clear statement about how final degree classification is carried out, especially about the relative weighting of different assessed elements and about the percentage marks carried over from Year 2 to Year 3.

The postgraduate handbook could also contain:

some general statements about the relationship between supervisors and research students, especially concerning the rights and obligations of each

an outline of funding opportunities for Irish students and students from abroad.

1.3.2 Course Outlines

The Department currently produces excellent course outlines. We would assume that the outlines produced in the future would continue to include and expand upon the information provided in the handbooks, especially through detailed and prioritised reading lists, more details on lecture/tutorial topics, essay titles, and of course details of the aims/objectives of the courses, hopefully identifying the range of skills which students should expect to gain through undertaking the courses.

Without wishing to encourage tiresome and unnecessary uniformity in the presentation of course outlines, and without wishing to restrain staff innovation, it might be a good idea from the students' point of view to have at least something of a 'house style' in the presentation of course outlines

1.3.3 The Department Web Page.

If it is within the Department's power, we would encourage staff to ensure that the web page is kept as up to date as possible, since this is often the first port of call for undergraduate and postgraduate students alike. At the moment the page does not accurately reflect the current content of the undergraduate programme beyond year 1. We are aware that web pages are probably never completely accurate and we understand the problems which can exist here, especially given unavoidable last minute changes in teaching programmes and the possibility that the Department might not have the liberty to make speedy changes.

1.4 Timetabling

We were surprised to learn that, in the past, it was not possible for students to read both Anthropology and Sociology in their first year of the Arts undergraduate degree. Similarly, it is not currently possible for students studying Anthropology to enroll in some first year language courses. Given the importance of combining an education in Anthropology with that in adjacent disciplines such as Sociology and Geography and in the study of languages (such as, for example, Irish, Spanish, and French), we hope that NUI, Maynooth is constantly re-evaluating the way in which its Faculty of Arts courses are scheduled, especially in relation to programmes of study which are popular among students and departments. We are aware that hard choices have to be made, since there are only so many hours in the day, but would wish the university to continue to be responsive to and to prioritise important timetabling requests from departments who wish to strengthen their joint programmes.

In their self-assessment report, the Department also comments that some of their students (mostly those who are mature students) found particular time slots to be unduly inconvenient when combined with work and family responsibilities. We would encourage the University to take such concerns into account when they are dealing with the timetabling of courses in anthropology, where there are high numbers of mature students in attendance (approximately 30 % of Anthropology's total student body are classified as mature students).

2. The Learning Environment

We would like to signal our strong agreement with the staff, students, and members of the Quality Promotion Unit that the physical space in which the Anthropology department is working is not conducive to the best practice in course delivery, student supervision, and collegial communication. Everyone is aware that, in addition to the need for additional academic staff, this issue of office and classroom space is one of the major constraints on all activities of the department.

The current offices of academic staff and the executive assistants are overly cramped. The offices of the academic staff, including that of the department head, do not provide sufficient space for either the proper storage of confidential research data and teaching materials or for staff to meet with more than one student (and/or colleague) at one time. As the present quarters of the department were not designed to serve as offices, we agree that that department should be moved to a new building as soon as it is possible and that new departmental space should include as a priority much larger offices for the academic staff.

The executive assistants' office is the work space for Lynn Wyse and Deirdre Dunne, and is used for the storage of most departmental administrative files, and for the provision of a variety of everyday services to staff and students. These services include the distribution of required handbooks, course information and course readers, the lending of departmental theses and videos and the submission of written work. In addition it is the first base for visitors to the Department as well as for the anxious student. The room is really much too small to deal with all of these tasks, and we were really surprised that good humour was managed in this physical environment. When the Department is moved, it would clearly be advisable to provide a much larger office for the executive assistant(s).

To continue the sad story, it must also be said that when there is a relatively large number of students waiting to see either the academic staff or the executive assistant, the small hallway becomes very crowded and noisy. There is no comfortable seating for students who are waiting to talk to members of the department. All of this is not conducive to stress-free activities among staff and students, even if it does, perversely perhaps, help to produce to the friendly and informal atmosphere in the Department. Clearly, however, this atmosphere does in no way depend upon this mutuality in adversity.

The Department will need more rooms in the future, especially if the decision is made to increase staff numbers. In addition, given the department's ongoing need to employ contract lecturers and its

successful incorporation of postgraduate students into the teaching of the undergraduate programme, it is important that at least some office space could be allocated to them.

Although the Department has instituted a system of once-monthly meetings, and the staff and students meet more frequently than that on ongoing issues, this commitment to regular communication is severely hampered by the lack of a common space. In order to facilitate the organization of meetings, regular seminar classes and seminars which are led by visiting speakers, we think that it is essential that the Department be provided with its own seminar/meeting room. This room could also be used for the meetings of members of research teams led by members of the department. If such a room were outfitted with an adjoining small kitchenette, it could even be used as a coffee and lunch room for academic staff and postgraduate students. The possibility of convening in a regular manner in a comfortable space would facilitate the continuation of good communication and the continued development of a Departmental identity in an ongoing manner as is the ultimate goal of quality review exercises.

To maintain a corporate spirit among the large student body, it would be useful if the University considered providing a small amount of 'in-house' study space for anthropology students. This space could incorporate a small departmental library which would be used by postgraduate students, academic staff, visiting researchers as well as by undergraduate students, and, of course, it could be the central meeting place for the student society.

3. The Student Experience

On the afternoon of March 15th, we had the opportunity to meet for more than two hours with a group of sixteen lively and committed students working at all levels of study:

Number of students	Course
3	1st year
3	2nd year
4	3rd year
1	M.A.
2	H-Dip/Masters
3	PhD (2 at Maynooth and 1 at another institution)

Students at all levels expressed their passionate commitment to the department and the members of staff. We are not surprised by this reaction, given the amount of time and effort members of staff take to build good personal relationships with individual students. This implies a huge amount of hidden and unrecorded work by the members of academic staff and the executive assistant.

In our two-hour discussion with students, they did express some serious concerns about their experience at Maynooth. The students emphasized that they regard these concerns as being out of the direct control of members of the department; further, they recognized that the department is putting up a valiant effort to deal with these problems given the constraints under which they are working. Among these is the crucial issue of integration of first year students into university life.

Students did suggest that some form of faculty advising system at least, but not necessarily exclusively, for first year students (common in comparable institutions) could be instituted. We notice that something like this was mentioned in a previous university strategic plan and were pleased to learn that the University is aware of this concern and plans to take steps to institute such a system in the near future. It seems to us that from the perspective of the department, if such a system is not instituted,

student demands on staff pastoral and mentoring skills will be stretched to the limit and detract from other activities.

Since they are a refreshingly vociferous lot, we feel that it would be useful to list some additional points of priority identified by the students:

Although they warmly and effusively complemented the current members of staff, the students all felt that the Department needs more permanent academic staff in order to maintain the close attention that students expect at all levels of study. They perceive a growing groundswell of interest in anthropology in Ireland and they are convinced that this immediately requires additional resources of permanent staff.

Some of the comments made by students about the current staff indicate their appreciation and expectations: they stressed that they are on a 'first name terms' with staff; that the staff 'know your name'; that all of the academic staff without exception are 'very approachable'. One student noted that 'Everyone has time for you' to nods of agreement from other students.

The undergraduate students are generally very pleased with the reorganization of their courses, and in particular, for first years, with the tutorials run by teaching assistants and, for all, the provision of course readers. There were a few gripes about the timing of year 2 continuous assessment submission dates and a few expressions of surprise about being recently told about the extent to which this work contributes to their degree. Logically enough, the students wanted the Department to be encouraged to create even more structure to support the success of their programmes of study. They requested more detailed explanations of the role of continuous assessment, the link between assessments in second and third year, and the assessment criteria used at different levels of study. Students also requested that information about each year's programme of study be provided in some sort of 'pack' circulated at the beginning of each year.

The students indicated that they are particularly pleased with the wide range of topics being covered in the different courses and modules. The students said that they felt very well prepared in contemporary anthropological theory and those who had studied elsewhere reported having been as well educated in anthropology as students who had studied anthropology elsewhere.

Some of the students welcomed the possibility of the Department organizing a link with the Public Institute of Technology. There is a great deal of interest in visual anthropology among the students at all levels. Some undergraduate students not surprisingly indicated

an interest in having access to cameras and other equipment in order to complete their theses or other projects.

The students requested that the library budget for books and journals in Anthropology be increased to reflect the growing number of students studying this discipline. The postgraduate students and senior undergraduate students complained that interlibrary loan services are slow and expensive and that some of them can only receive a two day pass for the entire academic cycle to use other libraries in Ireland (e.g. UCD).

The Anthropology Society is perceived as strong and is seen as providing a forum for the development of a community among students from different years of study. The Anthropology Society welcomes the current support which they receive from the academic staff and are looking forward to future cooperation in the organization and scheduling of events.

Although students are enjoying the taught postgraduate programme, they encouraged the department to continue to provide even more clear structure and guidance for the postgraduate degree programmes.

Those students working as teaching assistants reported a severe lack of space for preparing their work and meeting with students. Given the great deal of pressure under which they have worked, it is crucial that they be provided with sufficient resources.

The postgraduate and undergraduate students would place a high priority on the provision of better space for the department. They would like the University and Department to consider designing a new departmental space that includes not only larger offices for the academic staff and executive assistants but additionally sufficient desk space for postgraduate students (and especially those working as teaching assistants and occasional contract lecturers), a study room or departmental library to which undergraduate students would have access, and a department seminar room.

Like humanities/social science students everywhere, the students complained about the general imbalance in funding (especially for IT and other physical resources) between Applied Science and Arts students.

Some of the students voiced a concern about there being no permanent female staff in the department. These individuals appeared to be supported by other students when they indicated that they would like to be able to have a female supervisor for their thesis and also felt that women staff would offer alternative role models

We should stress that they did not feel that the Department is phallogocentric in any way.

Although we found all of this discussion to be very helpful and enjoyable and although the students made a sustained effort to allow time for an equal coverage of issues relevant to different levels of study, we would suggest that it might have been beneficial to have had the opportunity to meet separately with the undergraduate and postgraduate students, given the large number of students reading anthropology at all levels of study. Perhaps such a scheduling change could be implemented for the next Departmental review

4. Research Culture and External Links with the Department

We are impressed by the balanced mix of international and national publication among staff; we are impressed by the mixture of audiences to whom staff are presenting their research in written and oral form; and we are impressed by the strong 'applied' aspect to much research activity in the department. Clearly the overall rate and quality of publication is consistent with that of equivalent departments, in Britain, Ireland and Canada at least. The Department has a sabbatical leave scheme and, to an extent, teaching arrangements to facilitate research and publication. It seems to us that if this rate and this quality is to be maintained in the midst of increased teaching demands, then more permanent staff will need to be recruited and the existing sabbatical leave scheme/light teaching periods be sedimented further.

Despite these various strengths, the department recognizes that there are a few significant areas in current anthropological discussion in which the Department can presently only offer modest contributions; recruitment of additional staff would extend the Department's research culture into these areas.

We believe also that if the Department is intent on overcoming the misperception that it is dominated by an American tradition (whatever that is these days) in anthropology then members of staff should consider submitting high quality articles to British and European journals for anthropology, and of course presenting more academic papers at seminars and conferences in Britain and in the rest of Europe

With the new postgraduate programme, avenues have been opened up for students to be involved directly with academic staff in research projects. Students are attracted to the department because of the cutting edge nature of most of the research activity; because of the enviable breadth of areas in which students can be supervised; and because of the degree of commitment and encouragement which staff provide in the supervision of theses and the securing of research funds.

The Department organises an impressive number of public lectures by visitors from other institutions and is also invited to present their own research results in a wide variety of venues.

Several members of the Department are currently working on research, writing, visual, and editing projects with the members of other disciplines including Sociology, Geography, Medicine, and Photography. We were impressed by the extent of these creative

collaborations, especially given the small size of the department.

The Head and other members of the Department were involved in the development of the proposal for the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis, to be housed at Maynooth and we expect this opportunity to expand even more the extent of the Department's involvement in interdisciplinary research in Ireland. Two members of the Department are currently editing *The Irish Journal of Anthropology*, and previous department members have done this in the past.

We are impressed by the extent to which such a small department has been able to be active in all the areas identified by the QPU as crucial activities for a university department. As the self assessment report pointed out, and as our discussions have confirmed, members of staff are involved in university committees, external examining, as officers for professional bodies, in the development of the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis, in consultancy work and applied research projects, and in attracting international scholars to Maynooth through conferences and seminars.

The international networking in which staff are involved is very extensive for such a small department. Professional links are maintained to North America, Africa, and Latin America and increasingly to Britain and Europe. This networking is seen as essential to sedimenting their identification as a known centre of Irish Anthropology. From October, 1999 to December, 2000 the Department hosted public lectures by eighteen visiting speakers from diverse locations including The Queen's University of Belfast, Fordham University, City University of New York, the University of Oslo, the University of Vienna, Utrecht University, the University of Chicago, University College London, the University of Adelaide, and Harvard University.

5. Conclusions and Summary of General Recommendations

It is our view that, if provided with sufficient resources, the Department of Anthropology has the potential to become one of the premier departments at NUI, Maynooth and to consolidate further its importance as a centre for anthropological inquiry in the international arena. Throughout this review we have been offering suggestions and recommendations regarding teaching and research. Here we would like to offer a summary of our key recommendations for consideration by the University. We believe that our recommendations follow from what has been said above.

5.1. Recommendations regarding staff investment

5.1.1 New permanent lecturer posts

In our view, it is essential that serious consideration be given to additional permanent staff investment in the very near future. The significant increase in the number of students studying anthropology in the past few years, and the need to expand the Department's research culture of publication and supervision alone would make the case for this. Without the addition of new lecturers to the current ranks of the permanent staff, we cannot see how the department will be able to continue to serve the growing numbers of students at all levels as well as meet its goal of expanding even further its current research activities.

We agree with the department's view that it will require two new permanent academic staff positions in the very near future. If it is impossible to provide two staff positions to begin in 2001/2002, we would suggest that one new lecturer should commence in 2001/2002 and a second one in 2002/2003.

For such staff recruitment we would hope that the University could encourage applications from women anthropologists.

We would hope that an institutional evaluation could be done within five years to determine whether a third new position is needed. Such an evaluation could of course focus on whether the department retains many of the growing numbers of undergraduate students who have begun the first year of study recently.

5.1.2 The continuation of temporary lectureships positions when warranted

In order to allow for all of the permanent academic staff to pursue their research careers, it is crucial that they continue to have access to regular sabbatical leave. When one of the academic staff is

absent from teaching duties for a semester or full year, he or she should ideally be replaced by a full-time contract lecturer in order to support the full range of courses and supervision offered by the Anthropology department.

5.1.3 The continuation of teaching assistant positions for 1st and 2nd year courses

According to both students and staff, the system of employing postgraduate teaching assistants to assist with the instruction of undergraduate students is working very well. We would encourage the University to continue s much as possible with this element in the Department's budget. Not only does the addition of tutorials and the availability of postgraduate teaching assistants enhance the learning experience of undergraduate students, it also provides postgraduates with the valuable opportunity of being mentored by the department head and other instructors who provide a teacher-training function as part of their supervision of the work of the teaching assistants.

5.2. Recommendations regarding space

Further serious consideration should be given to the physical environment in which the anthropologists are working.

5.2.1 Staff Offices

Ideally, all staff members--including temporary lecturers--should be provided with larger offices that would allow for the secure storage of their own research data and teaching materials as well as space for them to meet with more than one student at a time.

5.2.2 Desk Space for Teaching Assistants

The teaching assistants require sufficient office space in which to prepare for their tutorials, to consult with each other, and to meet with undergraduate students who require individual advice and assistance

5.2.3 Department Seminar Room/Meeting Room

The department requires access to its own seminar room which could also be used for meetings.. Such a space could serve for postgraduate and third year seminar classes, seminars by visiting speakers, and the regular staff meetings. In order to support its many activities and to facilitate regular and easy communication, it is essential that the academic staff members have access to a common space in their department.

5.2.4 Executive Assistants' Office

When the Department is moved, the executive assistants should be provided with a larger office given the various functions served by the office.

5.2.5 Study space for undergraduate and postgraduate students

The anthropology students, whom we found to have a strong corporate identity and a deep commitment to their Department and discipline, would benefit in numerous ways from having access to their own study space, a space which could incorporate a modest departmental library.

5.3. Recommendations regarding learning and teaching

Some fine-tuning regarding the written information provided to students about courses and assessment at each level of study is desirable, as is some more thinking about the range of assessment techniques under use. We are aware that the staff are already working on these and have provided a number of some specific suggestions above with the aim of reinforcing this process.

5.4 Recommendation regarding Faculty advising

We support the University's current plan to institute a faculty-based advising system for the registration and ongoing academic and pastoral support of undergraduate students. This would be a valuable addition to the pastoral care already offered on a more informal basis by year convenors and all staff in the Department of Anthropology.