

Quality Implementation Plan for the Department of Biology/ Institute of Immunology

This plan was approved at a meeting of the President, the Head of the Department of Biology, and the Director of the Institute of Immunology in October 2010.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY PEER REVIEW GROUP:

1. Efficiency gains through creation of posts/appointment of staff

- 1.1 Appointment of a porter
- 1.2 Appointment of another full-time admin post
- 1.3 Appointment of an additional equipment technician
- 1.4 Appointment of an animal technician
- 1.5 Establishment of a permanent senior demonstrator position
- 1.6 Appointment of additional lecturing staff to bring the staff:student ratio into line with the average in the faculty of science and engineering.

2. Efficiency gains through infrastructural/procedural change

- 2.1 Implementation of an online procurement system
- 2.2 Planning for the future creation of a dedicated bioinformatics teaching lab
- 2.3 Establishment of a dedicated teaching lab to obviate time wasted setting up classes in different places
- 2.5 Establishment of central stores for bulk supplies, paperwork, refrigeration, and so on
- 2.6 Establishment of a tea room
- 2.7 Establishment of a core facility to house high-end equipment, specialist culture rooms, etc.
- 2.8 Investment in a separate building for an SPF facility.

3. Morale gains through staff-progression protocols/recognition of excellence

- 3.1 Encouragement of a culture that recognises and rewards excellence
- 3.2 Improvement of staff career-progression protocols, and
- 3.3 Ensure that promotion opportunities are available to all staff who qualify against established benchmarks.

1. Recommendations which the Department could implement unaided (*in order of priority*)

Recommendation 2.5 *Establishment of a tea room*

Response of Department: The current tea room facilities in Room 2.24 Callan Building have been improved, but the University could explore the feasibility of partnering with an external vendor to establish a coffee bar in the foyer of the Biosciences Building.

Action: The President is to refer this matter to the Bursar's Office.

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

Recommendations

3.1 *Encouragement of a culture that recognises and rewards excellence*

3.2 Improvement of staff career-progression protocols

3.3 Ensure that promotion opportunities are available to all staff who qualify against established benchmarks.

Response of Department: The Department/Institute feels these comments should be considered by the University's Promotions Committee. On a more local level the Department/Institute will establish new awards for excellence in research for postgraduate and postdoctoral workers as well as teaching for academic staff.

Action: These matters are to be considered also by other bodies, such as Faculties and Academic Council.

3. Recommendations which the Department could implement only if additional resources are provided by the University (in order of priority)

Recommendation 1.6 Appointment of additional lecturing staff to bring the staff:student ratio into line with the average in the faculty of science and engineering

Response of Department/Institute of Immunology: This is of the highest priority to the Department/Institute and one that needs to be acutely addressed. As already outlined in detail in the QR document, the Department of Biology has the highest student:staff ratio in the Faculty of Science & Engineering. Due to the recent loss of two permanent lectureships this situation has been exacerbated. Ideally to bring Biology up to the mean would require an additional 5-10 permanent lecturing staff but given present economic circumstances the Department/Institute would argue strongly that it should be highly prioritised in the allocation of currently limited lectureships.

Action: This is to be considered by the Senior Officers Working Group with responsibility for the Staffing Adjustment Strategy alongside requests for additional staff from other Departments and Institutes.

The development of new 4th year advanced practicals to address significantly increased numbers of students and enhance practical experience for all students was discussed at the meeting in October 2010, and in February 2011 the President and Senior Officers approved additional resources to fund the purchase of specific equipment. A once off fund of €50,000 has been granted to the Department of Biology.

Recommendation 1.3 Appointment of an additional equipment technician.

Response of Department/Institute: In the intervening period this situation in relation to equipment support has worsened due to the early retirement of our most senior and experienced equipment technician. This position has been replaced on a temporary basis by an inexperienced junior technician. The allocation of a Chief Technical Officer position is badly needed to fill the void left by the early retirement. This departure will have major consequences for both research and teaching support given the dependence of our research groups and advanced teaching programmes on high-end equipment.

Action: This is to be discussed by the President and the Director of Human Resources.

Recommendation 2.2 *Planning for the future creation of a dedicated bioinformatics teaching lab*

Response of Department/Institute: There is urgent need in the Department/Institute for a 100-seater computer based teaching lab in order to facilitate an ever increasing student intake. A dedicated computer laboratory would be a great asset to the department. This would not only host bioinformatics-based practicals, but would also support cost effective computer simulations, MCQ's and novel e-learning initiatives. The university could explore the possibility of using existing large-scale computer facilities within the university. The purchase of 100 computers would be in the range of €100,000.

Action: This is to be considered by Senior Officers (Bursar and the Director of Corporate Services) along with all other requests for additional space and equipment.

Recommendation 2.1 *Implementation of an online procurement system*

Response of Department/Institute: The Department/Institute is one of the most research-intensive units of the University and consequently there is a very high throughput of requisitioning and handling of orders that is currently managed in a manual manner. This is highly time consuming and inefficient and the purchase of an on-line procurement system would immediately address these deficiencies. This is a long standing request from the Department/Institute and has not been addressed.

Action: This is to be considered by the Bursar

Recommendation 2.3 *Establishment of a dedicated teaching lab to obviate time wasted setting up classes in different places*

Response of Department/Institute: This would require major investment and would take place as part of a larger development.

Action: This has been approved by the Senior Officers. It was agreed to extend the first year teaching lab in Callan building to increase capacity by 45, and planning permission for an extension to the Callan Building is presently being sought.

Recommendation 2.5 *Establishment of central stores for bulk supplies, paperwork, refrigeration, and so on*

Response of Department/Institute: For health and safety considerations there is an urgent need for the establishment of a central storage facility for dangerous and flammable chemicals in the Callan Building. This has been discussed several times with the University. Although forming part of recent PRTL applications this request has as yet been unsuccessful.

Action: This is to be considered by Senior Officers (Bursar and the Director of Corporate Services) along with all other requests for additional space and equipment.

Recommendation 2.6 *Establishment of a core facility to house high-end equipment, specialist culture rooms, etc.*

Response of Department/Institute: For the efficient streamlining of core analytical activities in the Department/Institute there is an urgent need for the establishment of a central equipment facility for the housing of specialised high-end equipment. This has been discussed several times with the University. Although forming part of recent PRTL applications this request has as yet been unsuccessful.

Action: This matter is to be considered by Senior Officers (Bursar and the Director of Corporate Services) along with all other requests for additional space and equipment.

Recommendation 2.7 *Investment in a separate building for an SPF facility.*

Response of Department/Institute: This is a major priority given increasing animal usage and was included as part of the most recent application to PRTL. This was unsuccessful but remains an important requirement for the university as a whole.

Action: This matter is to be considered by Senior Officers (Bursar and the Director of Corporate Services) along with all other requests for additional space and equipment.

Recommendation 1.5 *Establishment of a permanent senior demonstrator position*

Response of Department/Institute: Although the Department/Institute has now established a term-time part-time senior demonstrator for our very large first year lab, we still urgently need senior demonstrator positions for second and third year laboratory classes.

Action: This is to be considered by Senior Officers (President, Deputy President and Bursar) along with all other requests for additional staff.

Recommendation 1.2 *Appointment of another full-time admin post*

Response of Department/Institute of Immunology: Due to the very large number of undergraduate and research postgraduates there is an urgent need for additional administrative support.

Action: This is to be considered by Senior Officers (Working Group with responsibility for the Staffing Adjustment Strategy) along with all other requests for additional staff.

Recommendation 1.4 *Appointment of an animal technician*

Response of Department/Institute: Given the increasing use of the animal facilities, an additional half-time Animal Technician post is required. We would like the University to note that the current post, although being charged exclusively to the Department of

Biology, serves research groups beyond the Department/Institute. We consider that this present situation where the post is charged fully to Biology is unfair and some of the costs should be absorbed centrally.

Action: This is to be considered by Senior Officers (Working Group with responsibility for the Staffing Adjustment Strategy) along with all other requests for additional staff.

Recommendation 1.1 *Appointment of a porter*

Response of Department/Institute: In order not to waste valuable technician time, the appointment of a Porter would be appreciated. Given current limited resources and more pressing requirements above this is the lowest priority.

Action: This is to be considered by Senior Officers (Working Group with responsibility for the Staffing Adjustment Strategy) along with all other requests for additional staff.

Professor Tom Collins

Professor Paul Moynagh

Professor Kay Ohlendieck