

Quality Promotion Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting of 18 October 2010

Present: Professor Jim Walsh (Chair), Dr Honor Fagan, Dr Bernard Mahon, Professor Ray O'Neill, Dr Tom O'Connor, Professor Rowena Pecchenino, Dr David Redmond, Dr Richard Watson (Secretary).

Apologies: Professor Tom Collins, Professor Margaret Kelleher, Mr. Cathal McCauley, Mr. Colm Nelson, Mr. Aengus Ó Maoláin.

1. Minutes and Notes of meeting of 3 September 2010

The draft minutes and notes of this meeting had been circulated and were accepted.

2. Matters arising

Under 5, Professor Walsh reported on progress in implementing the Action Plan. In particular, he has discussed recommendation 6.22 on developing processes for the systematic tracking of graduates with Mr. Fitzmaurice, Director of Corporate Services, and the Director of Quality. The Action Plan is to be kept under review.

3. Self Assessment Report from Library

The QPSC reviewed the draft Self Assessment Report of the Library. It was impressed by the comprehensive description of a wide range of activities, many of them undertaken to meet new demands very different from those traditionally made of the Library in the past. Many of these initiatives, such as the January Publications Festivals and the provision of generic skills modules, were much admired. The QPSC commended also the SWOT analysis that emerges from the description of the activities of the Library, along with the surveys mentioned in the main body of the Report and summarised in Appendices 1 and 2.

Much of the discussion of the QPSC centred on the role of the Library, with the questions prompted by the very diversity of the activities described. It was agreed that many of the questions could not be answered by the Library in isolation from the rest of the University, and that enormous benefit could be derived by raising these questions with the External Peer Reviewers during the Peer Review Visit. The Strategic Plan of the Library is well aligned with that of the University, and yet questions remain. Is the Library responding to needs expressed by other sectors in the University as these arise, or is it following paths leading in new directions agreed in advance by policy making bodies within the University? How does the Library see its role, how does the University see the role of the Library, and if there are differences in the envisaged roles, how best should these be reconciled? Is there a need for representation of the Library on more committees, such as the Research Committee? Are there ways in which the interface between the Library and Academic Support Services Committee might be improved so as to facilitate more consideration of strategic matters? Might it be desirable to introduce a committee (the Library

Committee?) explicitly charged with the task of considering questions of strategy and planning involving the Library and its role in the University, and of providing a forum for discussing matters such as the relationship between the Computer Centre and the Library, and the use of electronic resources as compared with the use of books?

The QPSC is not suggesting that any attempt should be made to address these questions in the SAR: they do require the involvement of bodies from outside the Library. There are, however, a few suggestions which are intended to improve the presentation.

1. In Appendix 1, the meanings of the second and the last bullet points need to be clarified.
2. The QPSC would welcome a more extended account of the basis and interpretation of the LibQUAL survey, and a more detailed analysis of the findings concerning postgraduates; also, the list of *Weaknesses* under “Library as Place” might need to be rephrased.
3. The bullet points on pages 14-15 and page 31 should be stated in a more uniform way.
4. Some minor additions might be made: on page 17, for example, the decrease noted in the number of subject enquiries at the desk might merit a suggested explanation; again, on page 20, ratios should perhaps be added to the table.
5. There are a few typos which the Director of Quality will convey to the Librarian and Deputy Librarian.

4. Quality Implementation Plans with QPSC comments

The QIPs from Ancient Classics, Music and Psychology, with added comments from the QPSC, were noted. There was some discussion as how best bibliometric criteria might be used in quality reviews, and it was agreed that their proper use does depend on the particular discipline of the department under review.

5. Benchmarking: next steps

The Deputy President circulated a document prepared by the Institutional Research Officer. The first step mentioned is the preparation of a review report on good practices in benchmarking, and a review of indicators for benchmarking of teaching and learning, research, and knowledge transfer and innovation. It was agreed that this might best be initiated by the Institutional Research Officer, who could consult the Research Support Office, the Centre for Teaching and Learning, and other interested bodies. The second step, namely the formation of a benchmarking steering group as a subcommittee of the QPSC to outline benchmarking objectives for NUIM and decide

on suitable methods of benchmarking at disciplinary level in NUIM, might best take place in the light of the findings of the first step.

6. Peer Review Groups for forthcoming reviews

Some discussion took place concerning possible internal reviewers. Dr Bernard Mahon volunteered for the review of the Graduate Studies Office, but was unable to attend on the date proposed for discussion of the Self Assessment Report. The Director of Quality undertook to contact Professor Peter Denman to see if he would be willing to act as an internal reviewer.

Three people had volunteered for the review of the Department of Philosophy, and it was agreed that Dr Honor Fagan and Professor Margaret Kelleher would act as internal reviewers, with Professor Rowena Pecchenino to act as substitute should the need arise.

7. AOB

The date of the next meeting was mentioned, and the Secretary reported that the student representative would be unable to attend. It was proposed that a second student representative be invited to attend the meetings of the QPSC in order to try to ensure a student presence, and the Secretary is to contact the President of the Students' Union with a view to co-opting a suitable student to the Sub-Committee.

NOTE: Subsequent to this meeting, the next meeting was fixed for 3.00 p.m. on 3rd November 2010 in the Registrar's Conference Room, rather than the time and date originally suggested.