

Quality Promotion Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting of 3 September 2010

Present: Professor Jim Walsh (Chair), Dr Honor Fagan, Mr Cathal McCauley, 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 Colm Nelson, Mr Aengus Ó Maoláin.

1. Minutes and Notes of meeting of 24 August 2010

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

2. Matters arising

None

3. Procedures for Follow Up

The Deputy President and the Director of Quality had discussed the process of "Follow Up", with a view to preserving a collegial approach without causing undue delay to the unit under review. They had produced a document for the consideration of the Sub-Committee. The proposals were agreed with various suggestions for improvement, and the Director undertook to incorporate the proposals into the document *Procedures for Follow Up* as clarifications.

4. Quality Implementation Plans

According to the procedures agreed under the preceding item, the members of the QPSC are to be invited to submit comments on each Quality Implementation Plan (QIP) to a subcommittee consisting of the Internal Reviewer(s) and the Director of Quality; this subcommittee is to collate the comments and the Director is to send the resulting draft QIP to the QPSC for noting and to the President and Head for further consideration and production of the final document, which will be the QIP. It was agreed that these procedures should be adopted and used for the eight draft QIPs which had been circulated for the meeting. It was further agreed that departments and

units which had already made responses to their Peer Review Reports before the introduction of the clarified procedures should not be required to produce a QIP in the newly introduced format.

5. Response to Institutional Report on NUIM

This item (numbered 6 on the circulated agenda) was considered before the documents on Benchmarking, since the response to recommendation 6.23 would have a bearing on the discussion of Benchmarking. Detailed discussion resulted in various changes in the responses to 6.14, 6.19, 6.20, 6.21, 6.22 and 6.24, and the resulting document is attached as an appendix to these minutes. In the case of 6.22, the Deputy President is to raise with the Senior Officers the matter of establishing a working group to prepare a plan.

6. Benchmarking

A wide ranging discussion took place. It was agreed to request the Institutional Research Officer to combine the documents produced by herself and by the Vice President for Research in order to identify the next steps to be taken.

7. Peer Review Groups for forthcoming reviews

Several members volunteered to act as Internal Reviewers, as in the following table

<i>Date</i>	<i>Departments/Services & Supports</i>	<i>Internal Reviewers (1 or 2, + 1 sub)</i>
21 – 22 September 2010	Research Support Services	Professor Jim Walsh
19 – 21 October 2010	Student Services	Professor Jim Walsh Mr Cathal McCauley
15 – 17 November	Library	Professor Ray O’Neill

2010		Dr Tom O'Connor
25-26 November 2010	Graduate Studies Office	Professor Rowena Pecchenino
8 – 10 February 2011	Access Office	Dr Honor Fagan Dr Frank Mulligan
15 – 17 February 2011	French	Dr Bernard Mahon Dr Tom O'Connor

In addition, Dr Fagan volunteered to act as an Internal Reviewer in the review of the Department of Philosophy, the date of which has yet to be fixed. The Director undertook to seek for more volunteers.

7. AOB

None.

Appendix: Response to Institutional Report on NUIM

At its meeting on 21 April 2010 the Governing Authority considered the *IRIU Report: Institutional Review of the National University of Ireland Maynooth*, and requested that an action plan be prepared to implement the recommendation of the Report. Accordingly, the Quality Promotion Sub-Committee (QPSC) considered each of the recommendations in Section 6 of the Institutional Report, assigned responsibility for action in each case, sought responses from the responsible bodies, and collated the results in the appended table. This table outlines the actions undertaken or proposed in response to the recommendations. In some cases, the responsible bodies submitted

detailed descriptions of actions, and these have been summarised below. In the case of ongoing actions, it will be necessary to review progress before the end of the academic year 2010-11.

ACTION PLAN			
	Recommendations	Responsible bodies	Actions proposed or taken
6.12	The President and Chair of the governing authority should make vigorous representations to the highest levels of government in an attempt to tackle the current funding impediments;	President and Chair of Governing Authority	The President and Chairman will continue to make appropriate representations at every opportunity.
6.13	The Irish Universities Association (IUA) is advised to lobby the Government to ensure the Irish Universities receive the funds required to enable international competitiveness both in teaching and research;	President as Chair of IUA	The IUA will continue to vigorously lobby the government to increase significantly the funding for higher education.
6.14	NUIM must demonstrate innovative strategies and capacity for management with limited resources;	Deputy President	The Deputy President and Senior Officers have prepared an Adjustment Strategy with proposals in relation to filling posts in the context of the government's Employment Control Framework, and in accordance with key strategic objectives of the University. This was considered by various bodies and approved by the Governing Authority on 21 April 2010. There will be ongoing monitoring and review of the Strategy in the light of changing circumstances.
6.15	NUIM should address as a matter of urgency the lack of adequate administrative support for Deans and Heads of Departments;	Human resources	The issue of administrative support for Deans and Heads of Departments will be considered within a wider context of workload management models.
6.16	NUIM is encouraged to think fundamentally about its organisational and committee structures with an aim to prioritise and focus;	Deputy President in consultation with Senior Officers	A review of the organisational and committee structures will be initiated before the end of 2010
6.17	The University's response to the self-assessment process demonstrates an institutional capability to address real or potential problems and the Team encourages NUIM to continue the development of a quality culture;	QPSC	Many members of the Quality Promotion Sub-Committee are on the key bodies for consultation and decision making in the University, such as the Faculties, Academic Council and Governing Authority. They should ensure that concern about quality matters remains to the fore in the deliberations of all

			these bodies.
6.18	Although the University has started to integrate the strategic planning and quality assurance processes, more work is required and the review Team encourages the university to continue to consolidate this integration further;	QPSC	The integration of strategic planning and quality assurance processes will be consolidated mainly by ensuring that the quality processes are completely aligned with the strategic planning as set out in <i>NUI Maynooth Strategic Plan, Addendum for period 2009-2014</i> . Quality review processes are subject to ongoing modifications, based on various factors such as the experience of the units under review; as a result, the document <i>Quality Review Guidelines</i> was revised in 2007, and again in 2009. The next major revision will take place after completion of the second round of quality reviews, and will take full account of the strategic plan agreed for 2009-2014.
6.19	The University should establish effective institution-wide communication and follow-up procedures to be implemented after each quality review;	Director of Quality	The procedures for follow up provided in section 1.3 of <i>Quality Review Guidelines (Revised September 2009)</i> have been clarified in the document <i>Procedures for follow up</i> approved by the QPSC on 4 June 2010. The aim is to ensure that Quality Implementation Plans are published on the web along with Peer Review Reports as the recorded outcomes of each quality review. In addition, the Quality Promotion Office is to make improvements in the presentation of these outcomes on its web site.
6.20	The University should adjust the aims and scope of the reviews to address only those issues that can realistically be achieved;	Director of Quality and QPSC	Heads of Department should try to moderate the expectations of staff regarding possible outcomes of quality reviews, particularly during the preparation of Self Assessment Reports. The recommendation of the previous institutional review, that external reviewers make a clear distinction between those recommendations that can be implemented without additional resources and those which require investment, is included in section 4.4 of <i>Quality Review Guidelines</i> . The document <i>Procedures for follow up</i> and the newly introduced template for a Quality Implementation Plan place emphasis on the distinction, and inclusion of the document and template with material sent to prospective reviewers should underline the importance of realism in Peer Review Reports. Finally, the Internal Reviewers can play an important role in impressing on the External Reviewers the importance of taking account of the various constraints that would prevent the implementation of unrealistic proposals.

6.21	The University should adopt a consistent approach to collecting feedback from students on teaching and learning and to report on appropriate follow-up actions;	Dean of Teaching and Learning	Following discussions at the Teaching and Learning Committee a working group was established (October 2009) with a remit to prepare a draft policy for a formalised and uniform system of student feedback and follow-up. A final decision will be made on how to proceed by January 2011.
6.22	The University is encouraged also to develop processes for systematic tracking of graduates;	The Career Development Centre and the Alumni Office	A working group will be established, consisting of Senior Officers, representatives of the Career Development Centre, the Alumni Office and the Institutional Research Office, to prepare a plan before the end of 2010 which will enable the University to track graduates in a systematic way.
6.23	NUIM should consider exploring benchmarking at the levels of disciplines, which in many cases may even be more fruitful and result in more concrete benefits;	Institutional Research Officer, Vice President for Research, QPSC	Outline proposals have been prepared by the Institutional Research Officer and the Vice President for Research. A Working Group will be established to advance this project, initially at the level of institutional benchmarking. Consideration will be given to the inclusion of a benchmarking requirement in the next cycle of quality reviews.
6.24	The university should address the problems of large classes through adoption of more creative and innovative approaches;	Dean of Teaching and Learning	The Centre for Teaching and Learning initiated a large group teaching research project in June 2009. The Teaching and Learning Committee has established a working group which will investigate ways in which class sizes in First Year may be reduced. The working group will make recommendations to Academic Council in December 2010.
6.25	There is a need for stronger links between evaluation activities (Quality Assurance) and Quality Enhancement activities in order to develop a Quality Culture;	QPSC	A template for a Quality Implementation Plan has been agreed by the QPSC in June 2010. The intention is to ensure that the evaluation activities in the quality reviews, by those being reviewed in producing a SAR and by reviewers in producing the Peer Review Report, should lead directly to quality enhancement activities, by those reviewed, other related departments or units, and the University as a whole. A process map outlining the procedures for closing off on reviews has also been prepared.
6.26	Action must be taken to correct the deficiencies that presently exist in the academic advisory and career services;	Deputy President	First stage responses have been provided within the context of the University Adjustment Strategy. Further resources will be prioritised at

			the earliest opportunity.
6.27	The university should incorporate the strategic goal of internationalisation visibly into the quality management assurance processes.	QPSC	The revision of the document <i>Quality Review Guidelines</i> should require each unit under review specifically to address, in the Self Assessment Report, the question of how the unit contributes to the strategic goal of internationalisation; and the Peer Review Group should consider, in the Peer Review Report, how successful the unit is in making a contribution.