

Quality Promotion Sub-Committee

Notes of the meeting of 20 May 2011

1. Minutes and Notes of meeting of 11 February 2011

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

2. Matters arising

None

3. Review of Student Services

The QPSC considered various matters relating to the Review of Student Services. The Committee agreed that care should be taken, particularly by the internal reviewers, to ensure that comments on the work of a small unit did not emerge as a personal criticism of an individual, as required by the Quality Review Guidelines. It was also agreed that, since every unit under review is now invited to respond to the PRR at the end of their Quality Implementation Plan, the appropriate way in which a unit can express disagreement with the PRR is to make full use of this opportunity. Finally, the following general principle was adopted in order to enable reviews to be completed in accordance with the existing guidelines:

Following receipt of the Peer Review Report and its circulation to members of the unit under review it may emerge that some text may give rise to ambiguity in interpretation or may be perceived as potentially critical of some identifiable individuals. If such text were published on the university's Quality Promotion Office web page it may attract commentary that would not be helpful to the individual(s) or unit concerned and may hinder the implementation of the Quality Improvement Plan. In the event that members of a unit are dissatisfied with some text in a Peer Review Report the matter will be investigated in the first instance by the Director of Quality and the Chair of the Quality Promotion Sub Committee. They may (i) decide that the level of dissatisfaction does not warrant any amendment to the text, or (ii) decide that the relevant text may be deleted as it does not detract from the substantive content of any recommendation, or (iii) propose some amendments to the text for consideration by the Peer Review Group. Options (ii) and (iii) can only be activated in consultation with the Peer Review Group. The outcome of the consultation with the Peer Review Group must be communicated to the QPSC. The fundamental principle that must be adhered to is that any amendment(s) to the PRR text cannot in any way alter the substantive content of any recommendation made by the Peer Review Group.

4. Review of Faculty of Social Sciences

The Director of Quality reported that, in accordance with the procedures for Faculty Review laid down in section 5.4 of *Quality Review Guidelines (Revised September 2009)*, a meeting of Heads of Departments and Directors of Institutes in the Faculty of Social Sciences was held on 9 May 2011. The meeting considered a summary of the main features of the Peer Review Reports prepared by the Director of Quality under three main headings, commendations, recommendations for joint actions, and specific recommendations, and focused on recommendations in areas of common concern. Five actions were agreed, to be presented to the Faculty or the Academic Council in due course. The QPSC considered these recommendations and made some suggestions to eliminate factual errors.

5. Review of Commercialisation Office

The document entitled *Review of Contract: Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative* had been circulated. This report had been prepared for Enterprise Ireland by a team of distinguished reviewers from the US, the UK and Ireland following a rigorous review process very similar to that of the standard reviews conducted in the University. After some discussion, it was agreed to accept it as a Peer Review Report and to publish it as such on the web. The Vice President for Research reported that the Commercialisation Office was presently engaged with Enterprise Ireland in the preparation of a response to the report. He was requested to bring this response, when it becomes available, to the QPSC in order to ascertain if the response might serve as a Quality Implementation Plan.

6. The Library and Departmental Reviews

The Librarian outlined a difficulty that had arisen in a number of quality reviews. In some cases, no provision had been made in the timetable of a Peer Review Visit for the external reviewers to inspect the Library; after arriving on campus, the reviewers had asked to see the Library and the relevant holdings; and the consequence was that visits to the Library had had to be arranged at very short notice and at considerable inconvenience to Library staff. It was agreed that it should be obligatory that the timetable for reviews of all academic departments, and some other units, should make provision for a visit to the Library by the external reviewers, and that this requirement should form part of any revised version of *Quality Review Guidelines*.

7. Forthcoming Reviews

The Director of Quality listed the internal quality reviews to be completed before September 2011 and those to be undertaken in 2011-2012, which would bring the second cycle of reviews to a conclusion. There was much discussion of how best the remaining units to be reviewed might be grouped, to ensure that broadly similar units

might be reviewed together and to avoid undertaking reviews with a focus on very small units. Questions were raised concerning the appropriateness of the present procedures for reviewing administrative offices and service units, and it was thought that different approaches might be considered. These might include the use of KPIs, or ISO models, or effectiveness reviews.

The Director also proposed an outline programme of work for the QPO and the QPSC over the next few years:

2012-13: revision of guidelines.

2013-2017: cycle 3 of internal reviews, with reviews to begin in September 2013 and continue until August 2017, with one faculty reviewed in each academic year:

Social Sciences (~11 units) 2013-14;

Science and Engineering (~12 units) 2014-15;

Arts, Celtic Studies and Philosophy (~9 units) 2015-16.

Reviews of administrative and service units (~14) would be spread throughout the period 2013-2017, but specified in advance.

It was hoped that the very heavy schedule of QPSC meetings called at short notice might be avoided by the adoption of a strict timetable. Each unit would be invited in January to provide names of six possible external reviewers and four sets of possible dates for a Peer Review Visit to take place during the following academic year, two in first semester and two in second semester; all dates for visits would be fixed by June, strict deadlines would be set for submissions of draft SARs, and dates for QPSC meetings would be fixed in the light of these deadlines.

8. AOB

The Director of Quality informed the meeting that the final part of the quality process, Follow Up, was now working smoothly, and that a number of Quality Implementation Plans had been published on the web.

The Chair thanked Mr. Aengus Ó Maoláin for his very helpful contributions to the QPSC throughout the past year, and wished him well in his future career.