



**Maynooth
University**
National University
of Ireland Maynooth

Ollscoil Mhá Nuad

Maynooth University

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND ASSURANCE

PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT

LAW

ACADEMIC YEAR 2016 / 2017

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Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Peer Review Group Members	3
3. Timetable of the site visit	3
4. Peer Review Methodology	4
4.1 Site visit	4
4.2 Preparation of the Peer Review Group Report	4
5. Overall Assessment	4
1. Summary Assessment of the Department	4
2. Self-Assessment Report.....	5
6. Findings of the Peer Review Group: Commendations and Recommendations	5
6.1 Overview.....	5
6.2 Commendations	12
6.3 Recommendations for Improvement.....	15
Institutional/Strategic Recommendations	16
Recommendations to the Department	18

1. Introduction

This report is based on a Self-Assessment Report (SAR) provided by the Law Department and on interviews and observations from a three-day site visit by the Peer Review Group (PRG) (7-9 February 2017). The site visit allowed the PRG to meet with Departmental staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students, University officers and external stakeholders and, in conjunction with the SAR, was sufficient to be able to review the activities of the department as required by the MU Guidelines for Internal Quality Reviews. The PRG spoke to the departmental support and academic staff as a group and individually, as well as to a randomly selected representative sample of undergraduate (BA, BCL, LLB, 1st – 4th year), taught graduate and research PhD students. Phone calls to three external stakeholders gave us a sense of how the department and its graduates are perceived outside the University.

2. Peer Review Group Members

The PRG Members are listed in Table 1. The duties of panel chair were agreed and split between the two external members on the PRG: Dr Deirdre McCann (Day 1) and Prof. Rory O’Connell (Day 2). The exit presentation was made by the external panel members. The PRG report was completed with all members providing input and reading drafts.

Dr Deirdre McCann	Durham Law School Durham University, UK	External member
Prof. Rory O’Connell	Transitional Justice Institute Ulster University	External member
Dr Gavan Titley	Maynooth University Dept. of Media Studies	Internal member
Dr Cr��idhe O’Sullivan	Maynooth University Dept. of Experimental Physics	Internal member

Table 1 *The Peer Review Group Members*

3. Timetable of the site visit

The timetable of the visit (Appendix 1) was drafted by the Maynooth University Quality Office prior to the review.

4. Peer Review Methodology

4.1 Site visit

The site visit provided the PRG with an immersive introduction to the department staff, and their reflections and evaluations of the current state of affairs and future challenges. Following initial briefings from the Dean of Faculty and Quality Assurance Office, the PRG discussed the self-assessment report and identified key areas for discussion with (a) the Head of Department (b) the staff as a whole (c) individual staff members and (d) university officers and representatives.

Some of the university officers had been recently appointed or had completed their term of office and the PRG appreciates that they were willing to speak about any of the issues with which they were familiar. It would have been useful to speak with a representative of the Registrar's office about issues related to routes of entry and progression, grades awarded etc. but a second meeting with the Head of Department allowed us to clarify the details that were needed. Some of the meetings were permitted to run a little over-time but in all cases the next staff member or student was available and the PRG is grateful for their patience.

The PRG mainly worked together, other than dividing into two groups of one internal plus one external for the parallel sessions of individual staff discussions. They used lunch and evening meal times as working sessions to examine the issues arising, to consolidate shared impressions, and to identify further questions or matters for clarification. With the exception of a campus tour that focused on teaching spaces and the Department's office building, the site visit was conducted in the University Council Room. The site visit was very efficiently organized and hosted, and there was sufficient flexibility to allow for necessary alterations to the schedule.

4.2 Preparation of the Peer Review Group Report

The PRG used the report template to organize their impressions and interim findings during the site visit. After all of the interviews and discussions had been concluded. It mapped out the main dimensions of the report and main findings, which also served as the basis for the exit presentation. The report writing was divided between the group members, with one member taking final editorial responsibility for integrating the different contributions.

5. Overall Assessment

1. Summary Assessment of the Department

Maynooth University Department of Law was founded as a separate entity in 2009 and is the youngest Law School in Ireland. The SAR and site visit highlighted an ambitious and fast-growing Department that has rapidly developed an enviable reputation in teaching, research

and engagement. Yet the Department is confronted by a set of interlinked challenges that are related to a rapid and substantial growth in student numbers.

It is clear that a guiding aspiration of the Department is to establish a top-tier reputation and to be competitive at the international level. It was apparent to the PRG that the Department is capable of achieving these objectives. Our concern is that the current Departmental model will inevitably be placed under substantial pressure. The PRG's key objective in this report, then, is to ensure that the Department's success is sustainable.

To this end, we have made a set of Recommendations for Improvement (see Section 6.3 below). Although we suggest that specific strategies should be designed through a process of consultation within the Department, we have made a set of broad suggestions. These include that a degree of formalisation may be necessary in the governance and organisation of the Department; that teaching provision and support must meet the challenges of a new curriculum while responding to the growth in student numbers; that additional resources be provided to sustain the Department's impressive research achievements, and in particular to prevent excessive teaching workloads; that increased University support be provided for staff development; that Departmental facilities be upgraded; and that measures be taken to strengthen the Department's considerable engagement with policy and community bodies.

2. Self-Assessment Report

The Self-Assessment Report (SAR) was detailed and clearly presented. It provided sufficient detail for the PRG to prepare its work, and provided excellent background for the review visit itself. There was very strong congruence between the SAR and the discussions during the review visit itself. The SAR clearly indicated the strengths of the Department, but also weaknesses and challenges. As might be expected, the review visit brought out much detail and nuance, but there was no sense in which anything significant was omitted from the SAR.

Methodologically, the SAR reflected input from different members of the Law Department staff. During the visit it was evident that members of the staff were familiar with the contents of the SAR. All of this represents good practice in terms of enhancing ownership of the review process and ensuring transparency.

6. Findings of the Peer Review Group: Commendations and Recommendations

6.1 Overview

Department governance and organisation

As outlined across this report, the Department is growing significantly in terms of the proliferation of courses and programmes (a variety of undergraduate, taught postgraduate programmes but also joint programmes with foreign institutions, summer schools, etc). Connected with this is a very strong growth in the number of students.

The SAR provided details on the role of the Head of Department, who has responsibility for many diverse areas. Each individual has an administrative responsibility, though there is no formalised committee system. The review saw considerable evidence that staff at all levels within the Department were working hard to ensure excellent levels of achievement. The issue is how this governance structure will cope with the pressures generated by enormous growth in student numbers. The Department should consider how to develop a somewhat more formal committee structure to deal with the increased pressures brought by growth.

There is a flat workload model. The majority view among staff is that this workload model, under the current Head of Department, has worked well so far. Nevertheless, as the Department grows, there will be more demands on staff time. Consideration should be given to incremental development of the workload model process, perhaps to include details like class sizes and PhD supervision (which, when done properly, is time-consuming). The workload allocation process should be transparent – details of each individual’s workload in terms of modules, administrative responsibilities (and PhD supervision if this is included) should be circulated on an annual basis.

The Department should give consideration to developing practices that protect research space e.g. the Department may want to consider front-or-back loading of teaching; creating sabbatical spaces for each other over a period of years; adopting a policy of one research day a week when staff are expected not to teach or answer emails etc so they can focus on research.

Teaching, learning, assessment and student feedback

At undergraduate level, there is much excellence in teaching arrangements. There was general satisfaction reported from student participants. There were a number of specific queries from students about the role of electives, feedback, small group teaching.

The new curriculum, proliferation in the number of degrees and the number of students does raise a number of issues, however, which the Department needs to consider.

Regarding the new curriculum, some students expressed concern that they had been encouraged to take non-Law electives to ‘broaden’ their minds, but they had found that these were not pitched at the right level. They reported considerable anxiety about this in terms of the associated workload.

There seemed to be some confusion among students as to how to report student issues to the Law Department, ie they seemed unclear as to the existence of a formal staff student consultative committee, although at one point they did refer to student representatives. The Department should review the formal process for students to report issues to the Department and ensure that students are aware of these arrangements.

The proliferation in the number of degrees raises a number of challenges. One is the concern that the Department needs to consider what is the distinctive identity of legal education at Maynooth. The different degrees may make it difficult to plan for a coherent learning experience, including student progression over the course of a full degree. The University and Department may want to consider the processes by which students can transfer from an Arts degree into a Law degree. The Department should also consider very carefully before embarking on any new programme.

The growth in student numbers also has important implications for teaching and learning and for graduate employability. In relation to teaching and learning, the increase in numbers has impacts on the student: staff ratio (addressed below under 'Staffing'), the possibility of small classes teaching, and feedback. Students expressed a desire for more teaching in small groups. In relation to feedback, it is welcome that the Department has recently adopted a feedback strategy. This should be kept under review to ensure it addresses legitimate student expectations within resources. The feedback strategy should be communicated to the students so they know what feedback they can expect. The Department should take advantage of the Centre for Teaching and Learning and opportunities to learn from best practice elsewhere in the university.

In terms of the graduate employability issue: the Department should give consideration as to how it communicates about career development, in relation to both legal and non-legal careers. Given the Department's age, and the profile of its students, there is a potential that access to training contracts may be a challenge for Maynooth graduates (this is explicitly not a comment on the quality of the degree or the students themselves). The Department should consider how it promotes the employability of their graduates, especially regarding those considering legal practitioner routes. Connected with this, the Department should consider how to develop its alumni network.

The University needs to consider how to deliver training to staff. A number of areas were signalled as being of importance during the review visit. These included training in dealing with large class-sizes, a university induction programme, PhD supervision training, and promotions.

The PRG noted that the Department has responded to external examiner recommendations on a number of matters. The review group also notes that external examiners have commented on the use of the full range of first class marks. The percentage of first class results in degree awards does appear to be low. The Department is encouraged to use the full range of first class marks.

Research activities and outputs

The PRG was highly impressed by the Department's research achievements. It recognises that the law school is a young Department that has undergone rapid expansion in a very short period of time. This trajectory makes the volume and quality of the Department's research contributions particularly impressive. The recruitment strategy in recent years has secured excellent researchers. The SAR highlighted the Department's wide-ranging research, and a publication record that incorporates top journals. A range of additional research activities are undertaken, which include a seminar series, the research-exchange elements of the Erasmus programme with the Catholic University of Lyon, and student internships on staff research projects. In the interviews, staff conveyed a Department that is hard-working, enthusiastic, and ambitious in the research dimension of its work.

The PRG has two central suggestions on the support needed for the Department's research activities and outputs. First, staffing levels must be appropriate to support the ongoing expansion in student numbers. So far, insufficient numbers of staff have been hired. Second, the Department's capacity to heighten its international research profile is intimately tied to the teaching workload. The PRG therefore views the suggestions above on the workload model as crucial to the provision of research support.

The PRG also suggests that University support for research should be enhanced. In this regard, the Sabbatical Leave Scheme is significantly less attractive than those of competitor institutions, crucially in the associated salary reduction. It is notable that the Department's achievements in producing academic monographs does not match its success in publishing journal articles. Yet the publication of monographs by leading academic presses remains a significant indicator of research quality in Law. For this facet of the Department's research activity to embed and grow, inevitably a substantial time-commitment is required. It is therefore recommended to the University that the Sabbatical Leave Scheme be reconsidered.

Further, travel funding, which appears to be £200-300 a year for each staff member, is also insufficient. In particular, it is not feasible for staff to participate in conferences or research visits to North America on this budget. This limitation appears already to be recognised by the University, and the PRG would encourage travel funds to be increased.

As in relation to the Department's teaching activities, discussed above, the PRG is of the view that further support is needed for staff development in research. Leadership/career development activities are relatively scant, with limited training opportunities targeted at either the induction of new staff or at subsequent career development. At the Departmental level, there is no formal system of mentoring, or of internal review of draft publications or grant applications. Substantial support and guidance are provided on an informal basis. Yet, again, this approach raises concerns about sustainability, especially when the Departmental hiring strategy has been centred on ECRs.

To this end, there is a role for both the Department and the Faculty/University in providing training and mentoring. Mentoring within the Department could take the form, for example, of a more formalised system of peer review of publications, and could perhaps be the subject of a devoted Departmental policy. There is also a particular role for the Faculty or University in the sharing and circulation of best practice. This support would be most effectively delivered through processes of consultation that would bring together staff from across Departments, and at all levels, to share innovations on research mentoring, PGR supervision, grant applications, publication strategies etc.

On the research dimension of the workload model, it is evident that the Head of Department currently achieves a balance through consultation with staff members, and that his efforts are appreciated by the staff and widely considered to be equitable. However, this informal model is under pressure. The process of Departmental reflection that is central to the PRG's Recommendations for Improvement (see Section 6.3 below) should therefore encompass the workload model. In this regard, there is an apparently widespread perception among staff that reforming the current model would generate an unduly burdensome and restrictive replacement. Yet this outcome is not inevitable, and some more limited refinements to the current model could be considered. The workload review could include, for example, a consideration of whether certain research-related administrative roles, such as the Director of Doctoral Studies, should attract a reduction in workload. Teaching reduction could also be considered that recognises staff involvement in PGR supervision, and it should be ensured, as far as possible, that staff teach in their areas of expertise and on the same courses in successive years.

A Research Committee could also be established, as part of the broader rethinking of the committee structure that was suggested above.

The development of PGR supervision has been impressive, and the PGR students interviewed were strikingly appreciative of the support available to them. The PGRs were of the view, for example, that funding to participate in conferences and summer schools was readily available. Yet there appears to be little formal training on PhD supervision and no formal mentoring. The PRG would also suggest that the process of annual review of PGR students be redesigned. In particular, staff review panels could be established, which would include colleagues across the Department in the review and support of PGRs and expose the students to a range of expertise, perspectives, and potential mentors.

On publication strategy, the PRG does not intend to be prescriptive by suggesting, for example, targets for the quantity or placement of publications. There is clearly a degree of flexibility in this regard in a Department that operates beyond the strictures of a national review exercise comparable to the UK Research Excellent Framework. It may be that the issue of placement, including the balance of publications in Irish and international sources, would be part of the process of Departmental consultation proposed by the PRG. It should be noted, however, that standards on publishing rates, placement and outputs, at least

implicitly, form part of the promotion process. More junior colleagues should therefore be made aware of these targets and be provided with sufficient support in attaining them. The promotion process should also appropriately recognise 'gaps' in outputs that relate to family and care obligations.

The Department is making substantial progress in efforts to attract external funding, including through the development of bids for Horizon 2020 and Irish Research Council funding. Further success in this regard would also increase funding for PhD students, which is not currently at a level comparable to comparator Law Schools, and continue to raise the international profile of the school. More support could be considered for developing external funding applications, including in the staff mentoring strategy that was proposed above, and potentially in a redesigned workload model. In this regard, the Department should be alert to opportunities to be integrated into the University's activities under the keynote interdisciplinary strategy. The University's efforts to develop Social Sciences and to recognise the significant role that legal researchers can assume in designing large grant applications are welcome.

It is also the view of the PRG that the Advisory Board could be more effectively deployed in developing the research dimension of the Department's activities (see further 'International and External Engagement' below).

Staffing

The Department has 14 full-time, permanent academic staff members (one Professor, three Senior Lecturers, and 10 Lecturers), 11 of whom have been appointed since 2013. Nearly all the staff are research-active. The Department has a young age profile with a relatively large proportion of early-career researchers and a good gender balance. In addition, there are a number of associated staff members: five practicing solicitors delivering one specialised module each, two hourly-paid lecturers (this number can vary and they are typically practising barristers, or early-career academics) and a number of tutors (practising barristers and PhD students) to deliver the tutorials that are an accreditation requirement for core modules. The Department currently has 14 PhD students, six of whom started in the current academic year. There are two full-time permanent administrative staff members (one at SEA, the other at EA level). The SAR clearly describes the current staffing level and how it has evolved over recent years. As mentioned in 'Research activities and outputs' above, the concern of the PRG is that staffing levels continue to support the valuable work of the Department while responding to the continuing expansion in student numbers.

Staff development

As mentioned above, the SAR reports that there are few formal staff professional development measures, either at Departmental or University level. The University does

provide some training (e.g. media training), but on an *ad hoc* rather than on an on-going or structured basis. There are opportunities for peer observation of teaching and some staff had taken advantage of this in the lead-up to a recent promotion round. There is limited initial staff training, including for the Head of Department, and the lack of formal and on-going training for PhD supervision was raised several times in meetings with the PRG. No system of mentoring has been developed within the Department and no current member of staff has taken sabbatical leave at Maynooth. In the early years, individual researchers presented their work to other members of the Department to get feedback and are now supported in inviting guest lecturers to participate in the regular seminar series. Because of the economic situation, Maynooth University has held just one round of promotions since 2011 and the SAR raises the issue of a lack of promotional opportunities for early-career staff as a threat to the vibrancy of the Department.

The administrative staff carry out a wide range of tasks, both at Departmental and university level. The SAR describes how the lack of awareness of university administrative procedures made this difficult early-on, but only at a level that might be expected for a new Department and communication with university offices has improved since.

Resourcing and Facilities

The Department is located in New House on the South Campus. This is a beautiful location and building, though its age does pose clear issues of accessibility. The Department offices are predominantly located on the top floor, with some lecturer offices now also located on the ground floor. As the Department is set to expand, sourcing sufficient proximate offices for the Department is a priority. The building is also not wheelchair accessible (there is no lift to the Department), which is clearly problematic. There is a small postgraduate room and staff kitchen, both of which are valued for their role in the shared life of the Department, though they are likely also to become too limited as the Department grows.

Nearly all of the Department lectures and tutorials are conducted on the North Campus, in the teaching rooms of the Arts Block and in the lecture theatres and seminar rooms of the John Hume Building. As noted previously, seminar groups in Law are relatively large, and therefore when seminars are conducted in the Hume rooms they are at maximum capacity. It is also possible that the projected expansion in first year intake will mean that law lectures can only be conducted in 1-2 lecture theatres, potentially creating additional timetable complexity to that which already exists.

Internal and external engagement

The PRG was impressed by the breadth and strength of the Department's engagement with policy and community actors. These activities are crucial to raising the awareness and impact of the Department's research. The success in shaping legal reform is particularly striking. The

PRG therefore suggests that this external engagement could be considered a key strength of the Department, which is perhaps currently underplayed, and would suggest that these activities continue to be expanded.

To further develop this area of the Department's work, it can be suggested that the expertise and connections of the Advisory Board should be more proactively drawn on. The Board is evidently a valuable channel for involving stakeholders, ensuring that programmes and modules are tailored to the needs of the legal profession, and enhancing student employability. Current efforts by the Board on Departmental strategy, teaching, admissions, placements etc. could be complemented by a strengthened engagement with the Department's research dimension, in particular through supporting involvement in legal reform.

The Department might also consider developing a more formal impact strategy, as an opportunity to reflect on how best to translate engagement and awareness-raising into concrete policy and legal reform.

As noted above, the engagement dimension of the Department's activities has attracted the attention of the University, which is beginning to consider the advantages of integrating legal researchers into large-scale grant applications. Since such opportunities are a path to generating teaching buy-out, PhD funding, and financial resources for administrative support, they could be more consciously considered as part of broader Departmental reflection. To this end, it may be that other elements of the Department's engagement activities would need to be reconfigured, such as direct engagement with feeder Schools.

Implementation of recommendations for improvement made in Peer Review Group Report arising from last quality review

Not Applicable.

6.2 Commendations

The Department is commended for the detailed and helpful **SAR**, which reflected input from multiple members of the Law Department as well as the Head of the Department. The visit confirmed this was an accurate and critical self-assessment and was invaluable for the work of the PRG.

The Department is commended for the **excellence of the full range of its work** across teaching, research, and engagement; there are numerous examples of excellent achievement which is all the more commendable given the relative youth of the Department. The commitment and enthusiasm of the Department is apparent. Staff are

evidently ambitious that the Department be recognised as a force in legal teaching and research at the international level.

The Department is held in **high esteem by other units within the University**. Other units voluntarily mentioned that they regarded the Law Department as professional, dedicated, ambitious and responsive.

The Department's **students** – at undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research student levels - were all extremely complimentary about the Department. The Department is to be commended for the vibrant student experience at the different levels.

The reports of **PhD students** were especially favourable and spoke to both excellent supervision at an individual level and the more structured provision of training.

The Department's **external stakeholders** similarly reported favourably on their interactions with the Department. The existence of an Advisory Board in particular is an example of good practice.

Numerous University staff within the Department and outside commented favourably in particular on the current **Head of the Department**, in terms of general competence and, more specifically, his management of staffing issues.

There is evidently a strong sense of **collegiality** within the Department across all staff, administrative and academic, and this is to be commended. This is a young Department that has grown extremely quickly. The staff has coped remarkably well with an ever-changing situation and the inevitable challenges that this brings.

University officers commented on the willingness of the Law Department to be innovative in new **programme offerings** and did appreciate the massive contribution to increasing student numbers that has already been made.

The **degree results profile** of students has improved over the Department's history and this is to be commended.

Discussions held during the PRG visit reveal continuous reflection and **innovation in teaching methods**.

The Department is to be commended in specifically targeting 'critical' **external examiners** in order to drive continuous improvement.

The Department is to be commended in adopting a new **feedback strategy** in response to concerns raised by the increasing sizes of classes.

The Head of Department is to be commended in achieving a reasonable **workload model** through a process of staff consultation. This consultation is widely appreciated and generates a model that is considered to be fair and transparent. Many staff members commented on the level of autonomy granted within the Department, once their workload was allocated, and this is greatly valued.

Each academic member of staff undertakes at least one key administrative role and so is afforded the opportunity to acquire the experience needed for future **promotion**. Some staff members applied for promotion in the latest round, the first since 2011.

While formal **training** opportunities are low, the Head of Department reported that he always has access to HR and senior University officers for support, if required, and HR provides twice-yearly staff induction. The Head of Department, in turn, has been very supportive to his staff. The helpfulness of the university research office was singled out by many of the staff and the joint-supervision of PhD students (e.g. with the Department of Sociology), shared courses and research interests does allow for some sharing of best practice. The support and guidance provided to more junior colleagues on an informal basis is welcome. The administrative staff have also a forum to share experiences with other staff and to help colleagues.

The Department is commended for the quality and extent of its **research activities and outputs**. The ambitious recruitment strategy has attracted a team of excellent researchers to the Department, including a number of highly promising Early Career Researchers.

The rate and quality of **publications** produced by the Department meets a high standard, which is broadly comparable to competitor Law departments.

The substantial development of the Department's **PGR supervision** in recent years is to be commended. The PGR students who were interviewed during the Review were visibly enthusiastic about the Department and about their experience of doctoral research.

The concerted efforts of the Department towards developing its **external funding** profile, including through applications to major funding bodies, was appreciated by the PRG.

It is good to see that the **staffing** situation has stabilised and that the Department is less reliant on hourly-paid staff to teach its core curriculum. The Department is proud that recruitment has been targeted at good researchers capable of delivering on all aspect of undergraduate and post-graduate teaching. It is clear that the Department has a staff that is keen, energetic, hard-working and committed to providing quality student experiences and research.

The breadth and strength of the Department's **engagement with local and international policy and community actors** is to be commended. The success of members of the Department in influencing legal reform is particularly striking. These efforts have raised the profile of the Department in the University and with external stakeholders.

The **Advisory Board** is a particularly useful initiative. The Board has the capacity to provide meaningful support for the research activities of the Department, in particular through channelling the available skills and experience of Board members in awareness-raising and policy impact.

6.3 Recommendations for Improvement

As stated in Section 6.1 above, the PRG is of the opinion that the Law Department has the capacity to become a leading international player in teaching, research, and engagement. To this end, however, sufficient resources must be made available.

Throughout this Review, we have offered observations and suggestions on the work of the Department across the range of its activities. This Section summarises our key recommendations. It should be noted that we have avoided making recommendations that are highly prescriptive. We acknowledge that there are a number of models that could be selected to further develop the work of the Department. We are of the view that it is for the Department as a community to pursue a process of reflection on the model(s) that are best suited to its objectives and priorities. Most broadly, we suggest that this process should reach a conclusion on the identity of the Department, whether defined by research quality, teaching excellence, the particular skills of Maynooth Law graduates, or a combination of these dimensions.

Institutional/Strategic Recommendations

Number	Recommendation	Additional PRG Comments
S.1	The University should review how 'electives' are delivered in the new curriculum.	Some students expressed considerable anxiety that they had chosen electives outside Law and had found them not pitched at the right level.
S.2	The University and Department should review the process by which Arts students can transfer into Law.	There is a risk that uncontrolled transfers may create problems in terms of staff/student ratios and class sizes, and may undermine the student experience.
S.3	It is crucial that staffing in the Department be sustained at a level adequate to support and expand the substantial achievements of the Department while responding to the continuing expansion in student numbers.	
S.4	The University should reconsider the Sabbatical Leave Scheme, including by ensuring that it is competitive with schemes in operation at competitor institutions.	The capacity of staff in the Law department to publish academic monographs that provide a substantial contribution to the field depends on access to regular sabbatical leave by staff at all levels.
S.5	Training for leadership/career development should be strengthened. New initiatives could include a role for the Faculty	

	or University in sharing and circulating best practice in teaching and research e.g. feedback, mentoring, PGR supervision, grant applications, publication strategies etc.	
S.6	The University's awareness of the benefits of involving legal researchers in large-scale grant applications, including by benefiting from the familiarity of legal academics with impact pathways, is welcome and could be further enhanced and acted upon.	
S.7	The University should recognise that there is value for academics in an Irish University to publish in both Irish and international outlets.	Some concern had been expressed about the weight accorded to publications in Irish and international outlets. The PRG considered that a balanced approach was sensible.
S.8	The University should take steps to raise awareness of the Erasmus+ scheme and to streamline the application process.	
S.9	The University should address the accessibility problems of the Law Department (wheelchair access).	Apart from potential legal issues, the lack of full accessibility falls well short of good practice on equality and diversity.
S.10	The University should consider how to address the space needs of the Law Department e.g. meeting room space.	

Recommendations to the Department

Number	Recommendation	Additional PRG Comments
Department governance and organisation		
U.1	The Department's workload model should be reconsidered, potentially to encompass at least certain crucial incremental adjustments. These initiatives could include e.g. teaching reduction for research-related administrative roles and for PGR supervision.	It may be that options for change are not purely dichotomous, i.e. either a flat workload model or a highly formal one. Recommendations for change should be considered in an incremental way that builds on existing strengths and values.
U.2	The Department should consider the use of a more formal committee structure to carry out certain responsibilities.	
Teaching, learning, assessment and student feedback		
U.3	The Department should consider a formal process for staff/student consultation, especially in the light of the diverse	As noted above, some students seemed uncertain as to the process for bringing student concerns to the attention of the

	pathways and increasing student numbers.	Department.
U.4	The Department should consider how to address undergraduate student requests for more tutorials or other forms of small group teaching.	There may well be resource implications here. The Department might want to consider different models of good practice e.g. 'drop-in clinics' hosted by postgraduate students.
U.5	We recommend the Department keep the new feedback policy under review and consider how to provide feedback efficiently even in large classes.	We understand the Department has introduced a feedback policy with a standard feedback template. We note that students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels indicated that, at least on some modules, they received a mark for work but not individual feedback. We in particular note a concern that the practice of making staff available for a consultation day may mean that some types of students will not seek out feedback. There are other departments within MU with experience of dealing with large classes and we encourage sharing of good practice between different departments. Feedback policy should consider the need to differentiate between different types of assessments e.g. exams, coursework.
U.6	The Department should review how it communicates careers advice to students and should seek to develop an alumni network.	
U.7	The Department should discuss how research space might be created within the teaching calendar.	Departments elsewhere, for instance, shift teaching responsibilities so as to create a teaching free semester for each staff member every few year or practice policies of 'front-or-

		back-loading' teaching.
U.8	The Department should consider whether the Department and its staff are being spread too thinly.	The Department should consider if there are some activities that it can curtail so as to divert efforts elsewhere. As an example of this, the PRG was struck at the efforts to do outreach with schools even though there does not seem to be an issue of low student numbers.
U.9	The Department should consider how library purchases benefit different student cohorts.	Students at different levels expressed concern at Library holdings.
U.10	The Department should take heed of external examiner advice that it is appropriate to use the full range of first class marks.	
Research activities and outputs		
U.11	The establishment of a Research Committee could be considered as part of the introduction of a committee structure.	
U.12	The annual review process for research students could be reconsidered to ensure that it is not unduly burdensome. Staff review panels would be particularly welcome.	
U.13	The Department should continue to reflect collectively on its publication strategy e.g. publishing rates, placement etc.	

U.14	The research elements of the promotion strategy should be transparent and staff should be provided with appropriate support in achieving these targets.	
U.15	Continued efforts to attract external funding are welcome.	
U.16	The Advisory Board would ideally play an increased role in supporting the Department's internal and external engagement.	The Department may also wish to consider adopting a more formal impact strategy to support the efforts of individual staff.
Staffing and Staff Development		
U. 17	The results of a recent academic staff planning review were not available to us, but the PGR strongly supports the Department's application for new staff.	Although the SAR describes the staffing level as having stabilised, there is still a requirement for hourly-paid teaching staff in addition to tutors and specialist lecturers. The numbers of students can be reasonably expected to rise significantly in the next few years due to new programme offerings and routes of entry. Given the student numbers involved, the expected increase is not one that could be managed with existing staffing levels without having a serious impact on the student experience at Maynooth. The unpredictability of the student numbers (since, for example, there is at present no cap on the number of students who are allowed to transfer from the BA to LLB) must also present a huge challenge.
U.18	The PRG recommends additional help for the administrative staff, and the Department should also investigate, with the appropriate	The administrative staff carry out a wide range of duties in the Department and these too are expected to increase. Managing

	University office, whether some tasks (e.g. student transfers, the logistics of mature-student entrance exams) could be handled centrally rather than at Departmental level.	student records, exam results, transfers, law-firm recruitment rounds, tutorial timetabling for external practitioners, for example, are all set to become more time consuming. The administrative staff are also often the first port-of-call for students needing help.
U.19	The PRG recommends that Faculty-wide fora for the exchange of ideas be investigated, so that there is an opportunity to learn best-practice (e.g. grant-writing, giving student feedback) from more senior colleagues in cognate disciplines.	The career-stage profile of the department has led to an inevitable lack of mentoring opportunities from senior staff.
U.20	The PRG recommends increasing the provision of formal career development training opportunities and the clear promotion of these and existing schemes (Aurora, mentoring).	We note the plan to start running the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education, possibly in modular form. The PRG is pleased to hear that the University plans to move to biennial promotion rounds and supports regular opportunities for staff to apply.

APPENDIX 1 DEPARTMENT OF LAW: PEER REVIEW GROUP SITE VISIT TIMETABLE

Tuesday, 7th February, 2017												
Time	Description	Venue										
19:00	<p>Convening of the Peer Review Group.</p> <p>Briefing by: Siobhán Harkin, Director of Strategy and Quality PRG agrees a Chair, and discuss the visit. Identification of any aspects requiring clarification or additional information.</p> <p>Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group and Director for Strategy & Quality & University Executive Member</p>	<p>Carton House Hotel Booked at 7pm for 6 people under the name Harkin</p> <p>Siobhan Harkin Maurice Devlin Rory O'Connell Deirdre McCann Gavan Titley Crepidhe O'Sullivan</p>										
Wednesday, 8th February, 2017												
Time	Description	Venue										
8:45– 9:00	Convening of Peer Review Group; Director of Quality available to group	Council Room										
9:00 – 9:45	Professor Michael Doherty, Head of Department	Council Room										
9:45 – 10:30	Group meeting with all Department staff	Council Room										
10:30 – 11:15	Visit to core facilities of Department, escorted by Professor Michael Doherty	New House/Library/North Campus										
11:15 – 11:30	Refreshments	Council Room										
11:30-11.50 11.50-12.10 12.10-12.30 12.30-12.50	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Parallel Session1/CR (RO'C/CO'S)</th> <th>Parallel Session2/PB (DMcC, GT)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Dr Noelle Higgins</td> <td>Dr Delia Ferri</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dr John Reynolds</td> <td>Dr Brian Flanagan</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dr Claire Hamilton</td> <td>Dr Maria Murphy</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dr Louise Kennefick</td> <td>Mr Seth Tillman</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Parallel Session1/CR (RO'C/CO'S)	Parallel Session2/PB (DMcC, GT)	Dr Noelle Higgins	Dr Delia Ferri	Dr John Reynolds	Dr Brian Flanagan	Dr Claire Hamilton	Dr Maria Murphy	Dr Louise Kennefick	Mr Seth Tillman	Council Room & Presidents Boardroom
Parallel Session1/CR (RO'C/CO'S)	Parallel Session2/PB (DMcC, GT)											
Dr Noelle Higgins	Dr Delia Ferri											
Dr John Reynolds	Dr Brian Flanagan											
Dr Claire Hamilton	Dr Maria Murphy											
Dr Louise Kennefick	Mr Seth Tillman											
12:50 – 14:00	Working Lunch	Pugin Hall/Table reserved with service for Quality/4 people										
14:00 – 14:30 14.30-15.00 15.00-15.30	Meet with Students: Undergraduate (7) PG Taught (3) PhD (3)	Council Room										

15:30- 15:45	Break	
15:45-16:15	Rosaleen McCarthy (HR Director) & Peter Miller (Senior HR Manager)	Council Room
16.15-16.45	Ronan Reilly/International Office	
16.45	PRG meeting – identification of any areas for clarification and finalisation of tasks for following day	Council Room
19:00	PRG private working dinner	Carton House Hotel/Booked at 7pm for 4 people under the name Titley

Thursday, 9th February, 2017

Time	Description	Venue								
8:45-9:00	Convening of Peer Review Group	Council Room								
9:00-9.20	Stakeholder Calls/Note Dial 0 for line out and then no. Michel Cannarsa, Dean of Law, Lyon University	Council Room								
9.20-9.40	Maura Butler, Law Society									
9.40-10.00	Susheela Math/ Advisory Board									
10.00-10.30	Dr Alison Hood, Dean of Teaching & Learning	Council Room								
10.30 - 11:00	Professor Maurice Devlin, Dean Faculty of Social Sciences	Council Room								
11.30-12.00	Professor Ray O'Neill, Vice President for Research & Innovation	Council Room								
12:00-12.20 12.20-12.40 12.40-1.00	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Parallel Session1/CR (DMcC, GT)</th> <th>Parallel Session2/PB (CO'S, RO'C)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Dr Clíodhna Murphy</td> <td>Dr Fergus Ryan</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dr David Doyle</td> <td>Ms Gina Wilson & Ms Elaine Burroughs</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Dr Neil Maddox</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Parallel Session1/CR (DMcC, GT)	Parallel Session2/PB (CO'S, RO'C)	Dr Clíodhna Murphy	Dr Fergus Ryan	Dr David Doyle	Ms Gina Wilson & Ms Elaine Burroughs		Dr Neil Maddox	Council Room & Presidents Boardroom
Parallel Session1/CR (DMcC, GT)	Parallel Session2/PB (CO'S, RO'C)									
Dr Clíodhna Murphy	Dr Fergus Ryan									
Dr David Doyle	Ms Gina Wilson & Ms Elaine Burroughs									
	Dr Neil Maddox									
12.40-13.30	Professor Michael Doherty, Head of Department	Council Room								
13:30-14:30	Working Lunch	Pugin Hall/Table booked with service for Quality, 4 people								
14:30-16:30	Preparation of Exit Presentation	Council Room								
16:30-17:00	Exit presentation to all departmental staff, made by the Chair of the PRG, summarising the principal commendations and recommendations of the Peer Review Group.	Council Room								
17:00	Refreshments and Exit of the PRG	Council Room								