



**Maynooth  
University**  
National University  
of Ireland Maynooth

Ollscoil Mhá Nuad

**Maynooth University**

## **QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND ASSURANCE**

### **PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT**

#### ***RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT OFFICE***

### **ACADEMIC YEAR 2016**

Confidential

Date 26<sup>th</sup> July 2016

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## 1. Introduction

The Review of the Research Development Office took place on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> and Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2016. The Research Development Office (RDO) is a key professional office in the university. Originally established in 2002 as part of the Research and Graduate Studies Office, it subsequently evolved into the RDO as part of the university's desire to reflect a broader mission to promote research. The RDO is responsible for: developing and supporting research capacity, performance and activity in the University's research community; formulating and implementing the university's research strategy; increasing the impact of the university's research; developing and enhancing research collaborations with industry, government and civic society; and ensuring the integrity and ethical underpinnings of the university's research. For example, RDO staff provide extensive advice, support and guidance on grant applications, proposal preparation, external funding, contract negotiation and ethical and compliance issues.

The RDO occupies part of the third floor of the John Hume Building on the North Campus in close proximity to the Commercialisation Office and the Graduate Studies Office. The responsibilities of the Commercialisation Office include: developing a commercialisation culture, enhancing industry collaborations for MU's research programmes and protecting, managing and exploiting MU generated IP via licensing and spin-off activity. Both the RDO and the Commercialisation Office are under the remit of the Vice-President for Research, to ensure a strong link between commercialisation activity and research strategy and operations.

## 2. Peer Review Group Members

Name	Affiliation	Role
<b>Mrs Yvonne Fox</b>	Lancaster University	Head of Research Services
<b>Professor Emeritus Eugene Kennedy</b>	Dublin City University	School of Physical Sciences (previously VP Research)
<b>Dr Sinead McGilloway</b>	Maynooth University	Senior Lecturer, Psychology Department
<b>Dr David Malone</b>	Maynooth University	Lecturer, Mathematics and Statistics Department / Hamilton Institute

### **3. Timetable of the site visit**

*Review Timetable included as Appendix A*

The Peer Review Group (PRG) received the timetable, Self Assessment Report (SAR) paperwork, instructions and guidance in advance of the review visit, allowing sufficient time to read, review and prepare questions. Professor Jim Walsh, the Vice President for Strategy and Quality, met with the two internal reviewers in advance to appraise them of the requirements and processes of the quality review visit, whilst he also hosted a dinner for the PRG on the evening before the site visit. Both of these were extremely helpful, informative and supportive. The dinner provided an excellent opportunity for the PRG members to meet and ask questions about the format of the review in a relaxed and informal setting. A further helpful briefing was provided by Professor Walsh on the first morning of the site visit with intermittent liaison thereafter to continue to support and facilitate the process.

The detailed timetable prepared for the two-day review, whilst intensive, helped to maximise the use of the reviewers' time and enabled a series of meetings between the PRG and Professor Bernard Mahon, the Vice President for Research, the RDO Director Dr Carol Barrett, RDO staff and a wide range of staff/relevant stakeholders from across the university. The schedule was quite challenging and perhaps could have allowed for a little more time for the panel to reflect on, and consider, some of the issues that emerged. However, every effort was made by Professor Walsh and the RDO team to help smooth the process and accommodate slight variations to the timetable. This intensive review process enabled a deep submersion into the processes and procedures of the RDO, as well as the wider context within which research is being conducted at Maynooth University.

## **4. Peer Review Methodology**

### **4.1 Site Visit**

The site visit for the RDO Review was conducted over two full days, during which time the PRG members met with all staff from the RDO and other relevant staff and stakeholders, including, the Commercialisation Office, several members of the university's Research Committee and Ethics Committee, Faculty Deans and a selection of other academic staff and postdoctoral researchers from different departments and disciplines across the university. The PRG met with the staff of the RDO as a group on the first day and the RDO staff members were also given the opportunity to meet either individually or in groups with PRG members on the second day of the review. All of the staff availed of this opportunity. The PRG was also given a guided tour of the very impressive MaynoothWorks facility and to meet some of the company directors occupying the Business Incubator. The entire PRG visit ran very smoothly and by the end of the two days, the PRG had acquired a significant body of information and important insights into the strategic and operational workings of the RDO and the wider university context within which it operates. The only additional Office which the PRG might usefully have met with was the Research Administration Office, in view of the role it plays in Post-Award processes.

A summary of the key observations of the PRG was provided in a brief presentation during a final plenary session which was attended by Professor Jim Walsh, Professor Bernard Mahon (VPR), all RDO staff and some Commercialisation Office staff.

The PRG wishes to acknowledge the significant efforts of everyone involved in organising, and participating in, the review and to express their appreciation and thanks to all staff for helping to make the visit such an interesting, informative and rewarding experience. All of those who participated in interviews and group discussions were totally engaged in the process and answered all questions frankly and fully. The PRG would also like to make special mention of the warm hospitality they enjoyed and to congratulate the RDO staff and Professor Jim Walsh, for such an efficient and well-organised process.

## **4.2 Peer Review Group Report**

The PRG panel was chaired by Professor Eugene Kennedy who played a key role in group discussions/interviews and in co-ordinating the panel's efforts. All four reviewers worked very well together throughout the visit and the combination of their varied experiences, both internal and external to Maynooth University, proved to be very complementary, with each member adding a particular perspective and expertise. The PRG were unanimous on all of the key issues to emerge from the review and, on the second afternoon, were able to work together in a timely and efficient manner to prepare a series of initial observations which, as mentioned earlier, were presented to the RDO and Commercialisation Office staff and University senior managers at the end of the two-day visit. The PRG continued to collaborate remotely thereafter to review and expand upon the initial key findings and to compile this final Report and its associated Commendations and Recommendations.

While primarily a review of the Research Development Office (RDO), it was also necessary for the PRG to examine the relationships between the RDO and other key Offices within the university including, in particular, the Commercialisation Office, Graduate Studies Office (GSO), Research Administration Office (RAO), Human Resources (HR) and Communications as well as the overall university strategic framework for research.

## **5. Overall Assessment**

### **5.1 Summary Assessment of the Present State of the Unit**

In this section, the PRG reports its observations and findings based on an assessment of the Self Assessment Report (SAR) as well as the series of meetings with RDO staff and a wide range of key stakeholders, including staff from other offices associated with the university's research activities, a wide range of cross-Faculty departments and researchers of various disciplines. This section of the report is presented in three parts. The first focuses on the operational performance of the RDO which relates primarily to the day-to-day support activities of the RDO for researchers and its interactions with other university offices/units, in terms of the provision of an overall coherent infrastructure for research. The second describes the links between the RDO and other units within the university, and the third summarises observations of the PRG with respect to strategic considerations, given that the RDO has to carry out its support and development activities within the wider strategic context of the university.

## **Operational aspects**

The RDO is widely recognised as a key unit within the university and its quality and performance clearly underpin the research mission and reputation of MU. Information gleaned from the various categories of staff/stakeholders who participated in the review process, indicated that the day-to-day interactions with the VPR and RDO staff were overwhelmingly positive. For example, staff were described as very efficient, accessible, helpful, professional, productive, knowledgeable, quick to respond and collegiate. This was further reflected by a strong team spirit which was clearly in evidence during the PRG interactions with the RDO staff themselves.

There were also extremely positive views of the Commercialisation Office and highly favourable comparisons with other such offices throughout the country. Staff mentioned excellent levels of flexibility, a 'can-do' attitude and high levels of ability.

The staff of both the RDO and the Commercialisation Office were highly engaged and enthusiastic in their interactions with the PRG and presented as very cohesive and efficient teams.

The PRG was aware that the RDO had previously participated in a Quality Review in 2010 and was also the subject of an important recent review by PwC. Following recommendations from these reviews, a number of recent changes were implemented, which appear to have significantly enhanced and streamlined the operations of the RDO. These included the appointment of the RDO Director, the provision of in-house accounting expertise (i.e. in the form of a Pre-Award Accountant), access to CORE, the appointment of a Legal and Contracts Officer (leading to improved contracts/legal support), and a single point of contact in HR support for all research-related matters. The resulting processes within the RDO were viewed by the wide range of stakeholders interviewed as helping to increase the overall effectiveness of the Office.

Whilst acknowledging the helpfulness of the RDO staff (and other operational aspects), many stakeholders, including the RDO staff members themselves, felt that too little time was available for research development and indeed, this appears to have stalled in the last 12 months despite a willingness by RDO staff to become more involved in this aspect of their role. The increasing competition for external funding has meant that despite a growth in the number of grant applications from MU staff (with a consequent increased workload within the RDO), there has been a reduction in the overall funding won. At the same time however, it was noted that MU staff perform very well with regard to the overall quality and volume of their publications. The reduced funding though has led, in turn, to a shortfall in development capacity due to the need to 'maintain position'. It was recognised that this has also been a feature of other universities in Ireland during the recent economic downturn and years of austerity. Inevitably however, resource constraints have led to a situation where the RDO feels driven by demands and therefore more reactive than pro-active in executing its role and functions. Importantly though, there is some evidence to suggest that this is beginning to change, at least in terms of the RDO engaging more proactively with researchers; for example, open-door sessions plus some workshops are notable recent positive initiatives. It was also noted that, while some research promotion events were organised (e.g. on a Marie Curie or Faculty basis), there was no university wide annual research day or awards for outstanding researchers.

A number of funding sources and schemes were specifically mentioned by staff/stakeholders at various junctures throughout the review process. Of particular concern were the so-called 'non-traditional' funding sources such as ESPON (despite having the National Contact person at MU), INTERREG and certain types of contract/tender work. A significant number of staff indicated that these kinds of applications are generally not encouraged or supported within the university, and this was perceived as an important barrier to the autonomous pursuit of research interests and ultimately career development. Where possible, these types of grants should be supported. Where it is not possible, researchers indicated that they would appreciate clear explanations as to why it is not possible and/or an exploration of ways to work around any issues. On a related point, there was some concern among researchers regarding bureaucratisation of the legal, accounts and other processes, although there was a sense that this could be addressed by means of a positive "can do" attitude. The ongoing need to support smaller research groups, 'lone researchers' and those undertaking high quality unfunded research was also stressed by some stakeholders.

As stated earlier, one of the roles of the RDO is to ensure the integrity and ethical aspects of all of the university's research. Certainly, it would appear to be the case that ethics processes within the university are functioning very well. In particular, the introduction of a new three-tier process (including a 'rapid approval' mechanism) has been very helpful in terms of streamlining the ethics application and review process for both staff and committee members. However, there are workload concerns for committee members and especially in relation to the Social Research Ethics Sub-Committee (SRESC) which typically receives a large number of applications per annum. It was noted that this places a significant burden on committee members whilst also adding extra work for the PA to the VPR who co-ordinates, and responds to, all applications as an add-on to her existing role. Staff felt that it was important for this to be acknowledged and for SRESC committee members to receive recognition for their efforts and commitment. There may also be a need to plan for future capacity-related requirements (e.g. allocated hours, writing workshops for staff, larger committees). Support for both the day-to-day operation of the ethics committees and policy support was greatly appreciated by committee members.

The new RIS system was generally seen as a very positive development, and all staff seem keen that it can improve interactions and the flow of information in relation to grant applications, legal and ethical issues and perhaps even individual customisation of research advice. However, it was clear that it will be important to secure ongoing staff buy-in and to maintain and adequately support the RIS into the future (e.g. by creating a dedicated part-time role) to fully exploit its potential and continue to reap the expected benefits from this important development.

There was some discussion around *Research Professional*, which some staff/stakeholders liked, but which others found too generic and overwhelming. Some of the latter had hoped for more personalised recommendations. In an ideal world, some researchers would prefer that RDO staff would have a sufficient understanding of the areas in which they work to make more targeted recommendations. Dedicated Faculty-specific support rather than funder-specific support was suggested as a possible way to achieve this.

It was widely recognised that the RDO has had ongoing challenges in retaining and developing staff due to the low number of permanent staff, grading issues, disparities in pay, contract duration issues, staff turnover, the lack of promotional opportunities and the movement of staff elsewhere. Importantly, most of the office staff are on short-term contracts (including two of the core staff) with a consequent ongoing risk of loss of key expertise through continuing staff turnover. Furthermore, it was indicated that the training of new staff takes time thereby increasing the demands on existing staff and with potentially little reward/benefits if the trained staff subsequently leave. There was a widely expressed view that the Research Development Office was operating at full capacity, and that it is crucial to recruit more staff (preferably on a permanent or longer term basis with more competitive salaries) in order to maintain or expand operations; this is particularly important in view of the need for more research development work and capacity building in the area of contracts and legal support, both of which were specifically highlighted by staff at a number of junctures. Whilst the latter was regarded as much improved due to the appointment of a Legal and Contracts Officer, the existing volume and diverse nature of the legal work was considered to be far too onerous to be managed by only one (part-time) person and could be a point of failure. The requirement for legal expertise is associated with the development of contracts emanating from both the RDO and Commercialisation Office. On a related point, a need for a University level risk framework and guidance and support on risk management was also highlighted (e.g. a 'traffic light' system).

#### **Links to other university offices and committees**

The co-location of the RDO and Graduate Studies Office (GSO) was seen as very positive and the interactions between the two Offices appear to be good. At an organisational level, there were some perceived anomalies around the management of particular types of research funding and responsibility for research students and postdoctoral researchers. For instance, most felt that the management of IRC postdocs should be handled by the RDO (resources and expertise permitting) rather than by the GSO as is currently the case. Due to different reporting lines, it was also suggested that periodic meetings at a strategic level between both Offices might also be useful and not least as policy decisions by the RDO may have unexpected knock-on effects on the GSO and vice-versa.

The co-location of the RDO and Commercialisation Office also facilitated excellent interactions, with the corresponding Directors meeting regularly, often on a daily basis. Strategic planning between the RDO and Commercialisation Office seems to work well. It was also noted that the Commercialisation Office had recently been very positively externally reviewed in terms of its majority funding from Enterprise Ireland. The importance of the research pipeline for the ongoing success of the Commercialisation Office in terms of its metrics was stressed. An associated area of concern was the reducing numbers of postdoctoral fellows and commercialisation related submissions, exacerbated by capacity issues in the RDO. Despite the recent much welcomed enhanced level of legal-related support this was still seen as a 'bottle-neck' for the Commercialisation Office.

A need to more effectively communicate and reflect the breadth and diversity of the university's research (and research successes) was highlighted by a number of groups, with specific mention



of the roles of the Communications Office, the university website and the RDO website. For example, it was felt there was a need to allow greater autonomy for staff/ researchers to present and promote their work in a way most appropriate to their discipline and interests (e.g web pages and websites for research groups and clusters) and also to allow for the inclusion of PhD students. More extensive coverage of research successes (both large and small) within the university was also seen as desirable together with greater transparency and timeliness of the overall communications process. Both of these might be monitored, supported, facilitated and championed by the RDO.

While pre-award support was generally recognised to be good, post-award support was considered more challenging, with issues arising from the split in responsibilities between RDO, Graduate Studies and the RAO. The division of responsibility is not always clear and the level of coherence and support not always predictable. Many felt that greater integration of the RDO and RAO should be examined in terms of developing a 'one-stop-shop' for researchers, with pre-and post-award provided in one Office. Similarly, there were some concerns expressed about links to University Committees where issues relevant to the research agenda are often discussed. Specifically, representation of the research function on the Risk Committee was seen as important, as was the need for the Dean of Graduate Studies to have membership of the university's Research Committee. Interaction with the procurement process by researchers was also raised as a current gap in terms of links with other parts of the university system.

Research-related interactions with HR have been recently enhanced with the availability of a specific contact point for research issues. Some issues were raised, particularly with regard to hiring specialist research staff and being open to appointing research staff on permanent or long-term Contracts. It is recognised, though, that these kinds of decisions may be outside the control of HR to some extent, or at least, may require the input of senior management. The pursuit of the HR Excellence Logo was mentioned as a positive development.

There was a sense from some stakeholders that post-doctoral and contract researchers were not given the recognition that they deserved in the university and that some consideration should be given to providing bridging funds for them in between contracts so that they have the opportunity to work on securing further grant monies related to previous projects. This could reap significant rewards for the university in the medium to longer term whilst providing significant support to staff and other early career researchers. Issues related to postdoctoral-and other contract researchers included access to teaching, research student supervision and the ability to be named as PIs or co-applicants on grants or contracts. There was a recognition that often these issues were funder-specific, but that more support and recognition was needed in this regard.

## Strategic aspects

The importance of taking account of the university's uniqueness in terms of strategic research and teaching profiles was widely recognised by stakeholders as was the reliance of the university's reputation on research as much, if not more than, its teaching and learning. There was a general recognition of a number of significant challenges to the strategic landscape/research agenda at MU which had impacted on the RDO, such as the reductions in research income and decreasing numbers of PhD students and postdoctoral researchers/Fellows (also seen to some extent at other institutions) as well as other strategic issues outlined below. The loss of PIs to other universities and the fact that MU PIs have not led many large-scale research centre applications were mentioned as additional challenges and sources of concern. However, the leadership position of MU in a recent Climate Change Centre submission to SFI was welcomed, while it was noted that specific support for this application required the equivalent of 1 FTE dedicated support from RDO.

The view of many was that research at MU had been significantly negatively affected due to the ongoing and widely recognised efforts in all parts of the university in respect of curriculum reform. There was a widely held feeling that the time was now right to reinvigorate the research agenda. However, given that the curriculum reform is now at a challenging implementation stage, it was widely believed that this will put further pressure on researchers and that it may be difficult to focus on enhancing research in parallel, despite the need to do so in terms of "parity of esteem" between the two key pillars of research and teaching and learning.

Regarding the relatively recent initiative of clusters, most felt that some had worked and that others had not. There was a general lack of clarity on what their real purpose was, how they were to be resourced if they were to be supported at departmental or institutional level and the role of cluster convenors. However, they were considered to be a useful structure if allowed to be dynamic/organic, and if allowed to form and dissolve in a natural way. Their links to the planned research institutes were not clear.

Specifically on the establishment of the research institutes, there was significant lack of clarity amongst many of those interviewed on proposed operational and governance issues and on how existing institutes/researchers would integrate with them, as well as the potential benefits that might accrue to researchers through affiliation. There was a concern that the "top down" structure of the institutes would be difficult to interface with the "bottom-up" nature of the research clusters. However, the presentation on research by the President and VPR at the recent Academic Council was widely welcomed in terms of the commitment expressed and the potential new momentum it could create and that pressing forward with the institutes with this senior level endorsement would help to reinvigorate the research agenda.

On a related point, there were attendant concerns about the formation and implementation of research policy and strategy within the university. Many felt that it was now timely to develop a new University Research Strategy to help explain, motivate and empower the planned structural changes. A clear strategy would help in securing buy-in from the wider research community and would facilitate the marrying of top-down (Institutes) and bottom-up (Clusters) approaches,

whilst also supporting the retention of high-performing PIs and optimising future strategic hiring. There was a strong consensus that moving forward in a planned and well-communicated manner is key to addressing the apparent confusion, frustration and skepticism expressed by those who took part in interviews with the PRG.

Some felt that there were limited resources available for research strategic planning and follow-on implementation, and various types of extra support were mentioned (e.g. Associate Deans for Research, Special Project Officer, Assistant VPR) to support the VPR and the RDO in their role to drive the development and implementation of a coherent university-wide research strategy. Indeed, a number of stakeholders mentioned the unreasonable burden that had been placed on the VPR in his role.

## **5.2 Self-Assessment Report**

An essential part of an effective quality review process is the self-examination by the unit of its own performance. This self-examination enables the unit to actively review different aspects of its role within the wider university community and to obtain the perspectives of users with regard to its accessibility, competence, professionalism and whether it is best fit-for-purpose. The self-learning by the Unit through this process is essential to convince staff members of the relevance of future actions and underpins and enhances any findings and recommendations of an external review group.

The Self-Assessment Report, which was received in good time by the PRG, provided a comprehensive and very informative introduction to the research context at MU and the role of the RDO and the Commercialisation Office. It provided useful statistics regarding funding and performance as well as qualitative data obtained primarily from a series of focus groups which provided helpful insights from the various stakeholders across the university research community. However, it was noted that the numbers of staff taking part in the focus group discussions were lower than desirable, whilst it was also not clear how focus group composition was decided or how staff were recruited. This is an important point in terms of representativeness. In future quality reviews, the inclusion of university-wide surveys and more extensive qualitative work would be beneficial.

It was clear from the SAR that the RDO staff were fully engaged with their self-examination of their role, links with other units and overall effectiveness and the SAR was very helpful in enabling the PRG to prepare for the two-day review and to optimise its interactions with the wide range of stakeholders. The SAR concluded with a list of recommendations for further improvement. The content of the SAR and its recommendations are well-reflected in the findings and recommendations of the PRG, thereby indicating a high level of awareness and recognition from the RDO of how its role and functions can be best supported into the future.

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

### 6.1 Overview

Very brief summary comments are included under the headings provided in this section as further details were presented in Section 5 above.

#### *Unit governance, organisation, staffing and staff development*

The operational effectiveness of the RDO was universally praised in terms of its availability, flexibility and personnel efficiency and competence. The recent appointment of a Director who reports directly to the Vice-President for Research and enhancement in terms of Pre-Award accounting and legal expertise have considerably improved the RDO performance. Nevertheless, the RDO continues to operate within significant resource constraints (more severe it would appear than in other universities in the sector) which are considered to be unsustainable going forward. The difficulties are compounded by generally high levels of staff turnover, due to the relatively large number of short duration contracts, and a consequent loss of valuable expertise. This has meant that the Unit has had to be more reactive than proactive due to the day-to-day demands and pressures placed on staff and the services which they provide.

Staff are provided with training opportunities, but the uptake is limited due to the day-to-day pressures of work and the need to provide cover for staff who leave and training for incoming replacements.

#### *Services and engagement with user groups*

The RDO engages in a very positive way with staff seeking support and with other relevant units throughout the university. The unit is also attempting to become more proactive in terms of its engagement with researchers across the Faculties through a number of new initiatives including 'open door' sessions and workshops. The new RIS system was widely viewed as an important development, although it was considered important to secure buy-in from all staff in view of the widespread unpopularity of the previous RIS and to provide dedicated protected time for a (trained) staff member to maintain, develop and update the system.

#### *Resourcing*

The RDO is a key unit within the university supporting one of its major pillars, that of research. As winning research funding is a highly competitive national and international process, the adequate resourcing of the RDO should be a high priority for the university. Recent appointments of a Director of Research Development, Pre-Award Accountant and a Legal and Contracts Officer have been very positive developments arising from the implementation of previous review recommendations. However, issues identified in Section 5.1, such as the number of short-term contracts and staff turnover need to be addressed.

#### *Internal and external communications*

Internal communications appear to be generally strong and are facilitated by the close proximity of staff and recently improved organisational structures. Links with the Commercialisation and the Graduate Studies Offices are also good, due largely to their proximity along the same corridor. However, improved linkages between the RDO and both the RAO and the Communications office would be desirable.

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

The RDO was previously reviewed in 2010 through the university Quality Review process and more recently by PwC. It is reassuring to note that some of the key recommendations have been implemented. Further details are presented in the SAR.

## **6.2 Commendations**

As described in more detail in earlier sections, the RDO was universally highly regarded in terms of its support for researchers across the university. Despite significant resource constraints in recent years, it is clear that the unit 'punches well above its weight' in terms of supporting staff and a growing number of grant applications ranging from large-scale to medium-sized and smaller submissions across a very wide range of funding schemes and sources. Recent changes in its structure have also received very positive comment. (see Section 5.1 for a more complete listing and analysis). All of the RDO staff are to be congratulated on their hard work and continuing high levels of commitment in often challenging circumstances and the leadership of the VPR should also be noted in this regard.

### 6.3 Recommendations for Improvement

The recommendations listed below are not in any priority order and should be read in conjunction with Section 5.1 which provides further contextual commentary.

#### Strategic Recommendations

Number	Recommendation	Additional PRG Comments
<b>S.1</b>	Develop a new coherent university research strategy to reinvigorate the overall university research agenda and ensure parity of esteem with teaching and learning. This should help to: (1) enhance the visibility of research in the university; (2) explain, motivate and empower the planned structural changes; (3) address ongoing concerns; and (4) promote a cultural shift in thinking around research and its importance for the overall reputation of the university.	See Section 5.1  for further contextual commentary regarding recommendations
<b>S.2</b>	Consider the appointment of a Special Projects Officer as support for the VPR in developing, communicating and implementing the new Research Strategy. This support could also facilitate the development and submission of strategic large scale grant applications.	
<b>S.3</b>	Introduce an Annual MU Research Day to enhance the visibility of research successes, provide an annual opportunity to engage with the wider university community and, through appropriate awards, incentivise, recognise and reward outstanding research achievements.	
<b>S.4</b>	Examine the possibility of greater integration of the RDO and RAO, in order to develop a 'one-stop-shop' for researchers, with integrated pre- and post-award support.	

<b>S.5</b>	Enhance the links between the RDO and the Communications Office with a view to improving the promotion and promulgation of research successes. Review the university website permissions to allow researchers greater freedom to develop and post individualised information.	
<b>S.6</b>	Include the Dean of Graduate Studies as a member of the Research Committee. Consider representation of the research function on the university Risk Committee and re-evaluate the need for a university Procurement Officer.	
<b>S.7</b>	Develop and implement a Postdoctoral Fellowship Framework aimed at enhancing training and career prospects, recognising experience, facilitating access to teaching-related activities, promoting research student supervision and supporting early career researchers to hold grants or contracts.	

## Whole of Unit Recommendations

Number	Recommendation	Additional PRG Comments
U.1	Urgently review the staffing levels and contract conditions for the RDO staff with the aim of creating greater capacity for developmental activities and enhanced stability and sustainability. For example, additional legal support is essential to avoid contract-related bottle necks within the RDO and the Commercialisation Office.	See Section 5.1  for further contextual commentary regarding recommendations
U.2	Ensure adequate resources are in place to maintain and support the RIS in order to continue to reap future benefits from new and enhanced features.	
U.3	With respect to the Ethics Committee, plan for future capacity requirements and adequately recognise the workloads involved.	
U.4	Continue and enhance the RDO proactive development activity in terms of meeting with researchers and identifying future opportunities, for both interdisciplinary team and individual based research. Faculty targetted expertise within the RDO may help in this regard.	
U.5	Shift the responsibility for and management of IRC postdocs from the GSO to the RDO, resources and expertise permitting.	
U.6	Instigate periodic meetings at a strategic level between the RDO and GSO.	
U.7	Investigate possible ways of working around the identified issues with	



	InterReg, ESPON or similar awards. Produce clear explanatory guidelines in respect of acceptance/non- acceptance and associated risks.	
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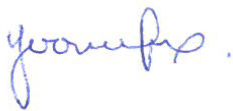
Signed:

Yvonne Fox

Eugene Kennedy

Sinead McGilloway

David Malone



**APPENDIX 1**

Research Development Office Quality Review  
June 2016  
Timetable  
Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2016

<b>TIME</b>	<b>DETAIL</b>	<b>PURPOSE OF MEETING</b>	<b>VENUE</b>	<b>PRESENT</b>
8.45am-9.30am	Welcome and Introduction	Discuss quality review process, timetable, logistical issues and paperwork	John Hume Staff Development Room	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone Professor Jim Walsh/VP Strategy & Quality
9.30am-10:00am	Peer Review Group Meeting		John Hume Staff Development Room	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone
10.00-10:45	Meet with VP Research & Director of Research Development	Give an overview of Research Development Office in the context of the University's structure and strategic plan	John Hume Staff Development Room	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone Professor Bernard Mahon/VP Research Dr Carol Barrett/Director RDO
10.45-11.30	Meeting with RDO Staff	Introduction to staff and group meeting	John Hume Staff Development Room	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone Dr Miriam Ryan/Legal & Contracts Officer Dr Elaine McCarthy/RD officer

External Reviewers: Professor Eugene Kennedy, DCU & Ms Yvonne Fox, Lancaster University

Internal Reviewers: Dr Sinead McGilloway & Dr David Malone

				Ms Shona Leith/RD Officer Ms Petra Stolfova/Pre award accountant Dr Christine Shortt/RD Officer Dr Patrick Boyle/RD Officer Ms Marie Murphy/RIS Manager Ms Valerie Bartley/PA to VP Research
11.30-12.00	Meet with Research Committee	Discuss role of Research Committee and relationship with RDO	John Hume Staff Development Room	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone Dr Catherine Hurley/Mathematics & Stats Professor Sharon Todd/Education Dr Aphra Kerr /Sociology Professor Stephen Buckley/Maths & Stats
12.00-12.45	Meet with Faculty Deans & Faculty Research Committee Chairs	Discuss interactions with Research Development Office	John Hume Staff Development Room	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone Professor Rowena Pecchenino/Faculty Dean SS Dr Fiona Lyddy/Faculty Dean S&E Dr Victor Lazzarini/Faculty Dean ACS&P Dr Valerie Heffernan/RCC ACS&P S&E/ Dr John Mc Donald/RCC S&E
12.45-14.00	Lunch		Pugin	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone Professor Jim Walsh

External Reviewers: Professor Eugene Kennedy, DCU & Ms Yvonne Fox, Lancaster University

Internal Reviewers: Dr Sinead McGilloway & Dr David Malone

14.00-14.30	Meet with current Research Institute Directors	Discuss interactions with Research Development Office	John Hume Staff Development Room	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone Professor Mark Boyle/Director MUSSI/NIRSA Professor Chris Brunsdon/Director NCG
14.30-15.00	Meeting with Ethics Committee Chair & Committee Members	Discuss interactions with Research Development Office	John Hume Staff Development Room	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone Dr Deirdre Desmond/Chair/Psychology Dr Ronan Foley/Geography Deirdre Daly/ Biology Dr Jane Gray/Sociology Dr Andrew Coogan/Psychology Carol Barrett/Director RDO Gillian O'Meara/Biology
15.00-15.30	Meeting with ERC Grant Holders	Discuss interactions with Research Development Office	John Hume Staff Development Room	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone Professor Rob Kitchin/NIRSA Professor Sean O'Riain/Sociology
15.30-16.00	Meeting with S&E Researchers	Discuss interactions with Research Development Office	John Hume Staff Development Room	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone Dr Jennifer Mc Manus/Chemistry Dr Ronan Farrell/Electronic Eng Tom Naughton/Computer Science

External Reviewers: Professor Eugene Kennedy, DCU & Ms Yvonne Fox, Lancaster University

Internal Reviewers: Dr Sinead McGilloway & Dr David Malone

				Dr Sean Commins/Psychology
16.00-16.30	Meeting with Arts & SS Researchers	Discuss interactions with Research Development Office	John Hume Staff Development Room	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone Dr Mary Gilmartin/Geography Dr Thomas Strong/Anthropology Professor Marion Lyons/History Dr Rebecca King O'Riain/Sociology Dr Delma Byrne/Sociology Professor Anne Ryan/Adult & Comm Ed
16.30-17.00	Meeting Postdocs	Discuss interactions with Research Development Office	John Hume Staff Development Room	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone Conor Cahalane/NCG Lidia Manzo/Geography Pooria Varahram/Electronic Eng.
19.30	Dinner		Dinner Carton 7.30pm	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone

External Reviewers: Professor Eugene Kennedy, DCU & Ms Yvonne Fox, Lancaster University

Internal Reviewers: Dr Sinead McGilloway & Dr David Malone

**Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2016**

9.00-9.45	Meeting with Commercialisation Executives & visit Maynooth Works meet new Company Directors	Discuss relationship with RDO and academic researchers	John Hume Staff Development Room/MaynoothWorks Eolas	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone Peter Conlon/Commercialisation Dr Paul Tyndall/Commercialisation Dr Karen Griffin/Commercialisation Lorraine Kane/Commercialisation Owen Laverty/Maynooth Works
9.45-10.15	Meeting with Dean of Graduate Studies & Graduate Studies Officer	Discuss interactions with Research Development Office	John Hume Staff Development Room	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone Professor Ronan Reilly/Dean Graduate Studies Dr Andrea Valova/Graduate Studies Officer
Parallel Session 1 10.15-10.30	Meeting with Research Development Staff	Discuss role in Research Development Office	Room 3.03/3 <sup>rd</sup> Fl/JH	Marie Murphy/RIS Implementation Manager Valerie Bartley/PA to VP 1 Internal Reviewer 1 External Reviewer
Parallel Session 2 10.15-10.30	Meeting with Research Development Staff	Discuss role in Research Development Office	Room 3.13/3 <sup>rd</sup> Fl/JH	Dr Elaine McCarthy/RD Officer Petra Stolfova/Pre award accountant 1 Internal Reviewer 1 External Reviewer
Parallel Session 1 10.30-10.45	Meeting with Legal & Contracts Officer	Discuss role in Research Development Office	Room 3.03/3 <sup>rd</sup> Fl/JH	Dr Miriam Ryan/Legal & Contracts Officer

External Reviewers: Professor Eugene Kennedy, DCU & Ms Yvonne Fox, Lancaster University

Internal Reviewers: Dr Sinead McGilloway & Dr David Malone

				1 Internal Reviewer 1 External Reviewer
Parallel Session 2 10.30-10.45	Meeting with Research Development Officer	Discuss role in Research Development Office	Room 3.13/3 <sup>rd</sup> Fl/JH	Dr Christine Shortt /RD Officer Shona Leith/RD Officer Patrick Boyle/RD Officer 1 Internal Reviewer 1 External Reviewer
Parallel Session 1 10.45-11.00	Meeting with Director RDO	Discuss role in Research Development Office	Room 3.03/3 <sup>rd</sup> Fl/JH	Dr Carol Barrett/Director of RDO 1 Internal Reviewer 1 External Reviewer
Parallel Session 2 10.45-.11.00	Meeting with Director Commercialisation	Discuss role and relationship with RDO	Room 3.13/3 <sup>rd</sup> Fl/JH	Dr John Scanlan/Director of Commercialisation 1 Internal Reviewer 1 External Reviewer
11.00-11.45	Peer Review Group Meeting		John Hume Staff Development Room	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone
11.45 – 12.15	Meeting with VP Research	To consider any emerging issues	John Hume Staff Development Room	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone Professor Bernard Mahon
12.15-1.00	Meeting with VP Strategy & Quality	Overview of preliminary conclusions	John Hume Staff Development Room	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone Jim Walsh
1.00-2.00	Lunch		Pugin	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox

External Reviewers: Professor Eugene Kennedy, DCU & Ms Yvonne Fox, Lancaster University

Internal Reviewers: Dr Sinead McGilloway & Dr David Malone

				Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone Professor Jim Walsh
2.00-4.00	Prepare for Exit presentation		John Hume Staff Development Room	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone
4.00-4.30	Exit presentation followed by refreshments		John Hume Boardroom	Professor Eugene Kennedy Ms Yvonne Fox Dr Sinead McGilloway Dr David Malone Professor Bernard Mahon Professor Jim Walsh Dr Carol Barrett, Director RDO Dr Miriam Ryan/Legal & Contracts Officer Dr Elaine McCarthy/RD officer Ms Shona Leith/RD Officer Ms Petra Stolfova/Pre award accountant Dr Christine Shortt/RD Officer Dr Patrick Boyle/RD Officer Ms Marie Murphy/RIS Manager Ms Valerie Bartley/PA to VP Research Dr John Scanlan, Director Commercialisation Peter Conlon/Commercialisation Dr Paul Tyndall/Commercialisation Dr Karen Griffin/Commercialisation Lorraine Kane/Commercialisation

External Reviewers: Professor Eugene Kennedy, DCU & Ms Yvonne Fox, Lancaster University

Internal Reviewers: Dr Sinead McGilloway & Dr David Malone