

Quality Implementation Plan for the Department of Psychology

This plan was approved following a meeting of the President and Head of Department in November 2010.

1. Recommendations which the Department could implement unaided

Recommendation 1.1: that “Staff consider ways of raising visibility, within the University, of their contribution to its research mission.”

Response of Department: The Peer Review Report notes that: “Staff are to be congratulated for the quality and quantity of research outputs and their success in securing external research funding. They are highly research efficient in their use of resources producing high quality and quantity outputs at a low cost to the University; this represents excellent value for money.” We have discussed ways of raising the visibility, within the University, of this contribution to the University’s research mission and we have implemented a number of actions to this end, including: increased contributions regarding funding attained and research findings to the University newsletter; regular updating of staff profiles on the Research Information System; publicizing events such as guest lectures, workshops and conferences via the newsletter and main NUIM webpage; contributing to the library’s Science & Engineering festival, Science week and other University events. In addition, a submission was made to the University by three staff members to establish a designated research and training cluster. We will continue to monitor the means by which we communicate regarding the department’s research contribution.

Action: It was agreed at the meeting between the President and Head of Department that the Department’s contribution to the University’s research mission was evident. Recent high profile contributions were discussed, and it was agreed that these were successful in further raising the Department’s contribution: the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) conferences; the launch of CISM network Ireland, hosted at the Department of Psychology (see www.cismnetworkireland.ie); contributions during Science week and associated media coverage; recent guest lectures and workshops, including the recent workshop on Bayesian Statistics for postgraduate students presented in collaboration with the University of Almeria, Spain.

Recommendation 1.2: “Staff reflect further on their plans for the Department over the next decade in particular with regard to the development of a distinctive identity, the foundations for which are well established in its undergraduate and postgraduate provisions, that will distinguish it from other departments of psychology both regionally and nationally;”

Response of Department: The Department has reflected on the issue of identity as the staff complement grows, and will continue to do. Academic staff have established a reputation in three broad research areas: language and cognition; neuroscience; and health and mental health. In addition we are now providing the only doctoral level training in applied behaviour analysis in Ireland or the UK and as such are at the forefront of developments in this rapidly expanding field. The first group of doctoral students will graduate in summer 2011, providing

a further opportunity to consider the course's contribution to the department's identity. The Department has also been in discussions with the University senior management regarding re-launching the RapidLearn unit (RapidLearn: NUIM Centre for Educational Achievement), which we operated for several years and which, along with the Mental Health and Social Care research unit on the South Campus, contributed significantly to the Department's identity and allowed interaction with the wider community. The unit was discontinued as no suitable space was available on campus from which to operate; the Department continues to seek such space and may discuss this matter further with the Director of Corporate Services. We will also continue to monitor developments across the University and to consider collaborations that would enhance our identity and distinguish us from other departments of psychology both regionally and nationally.

Action: The Department's identity and future course developments were discussed at the meeting of the President and Head of Department. It was agreed that a distinctive identity was emerging and would be the focus of strategic planning over the coming decade, so as to distinguish the Department from other departments of psychology both regionally and nationally. The Department's plans regarding course development are to be modified, and future actions formulated subject to constraints posed by the current economic climate. Plans for specific course developments discussed at the meeting are being implemented.

2. Recommendations which the Department could implement only with assistance from other bodies within the University and without cost implications

Recommendation 2.1: "The procedures for purchasing small items of equipment and consumables should be reviewed with a view to achieving better value for money, for example through the use of a departmental purchase card."

Response of Department: The Department will continue to monitor procedures in this regard.

Action: The procedures remain under review by the Department.

3. Recommendations which the Department could implement only if additional resources are provided by the University

Recommendation 3.1: "The Senior Management Team within the University continues to recognize and prioritize the need to locate staff in the Department on to a single site."

Response of Department: The Department would welcome the opportunity to be located on one site, and the senior management team have indicated that there may be an opportunity in the coming months to have lecturer offices located in another building moved to the main site. This move will support the integration of relatively new staff members, and will help to maintain the "exceptionally strong collegiate atmosphere" noted in the Peer Review Report (2009).

Action: Two lecturers have now been re-located to the John Hume building 3rd floor, allowing all lecturing staff to be located in one building. Research staff are located over three additional sites (MAP lodge, Rye Hall, Logic House annex). Unfortunately no further space was available for the Department within the John Hume building. The Department continues to seek additional lab space. This issue has been referred to the Director of Corporate Services.

Recommendation 3.2: “The level of technical support is very low and poses a significant risk for the University and the Department. Approaches to reducing this risk through an additional allocation of technical support staff should be pursued.”

Response of Department: The Department would welcome further specialist technical support and specifically the appointment of a second technician. While the current employment framework may delay such an appointment, the Department will continue to seek additional support from the University.

Action: This issue is to be referred to the Senior Officers responsible for implementation of the Staffing Adjustment Strategy.

Appendix: General departmental response to the Peer Review Report

The report was very positive and provided a comprehensive and supportive evaluation of the Department and its activities. We are particularly pleased that the report recognises:

- The evidence that the Department has addressed the recommendations of the Quality Review Peer Report 2005;
- The “exceptionally strong collegiate atmosphere” in the department, and the “positive professional work ethic which is shared by students and staff”;
- The quality of our student intake and achievement;
- The quality and quantity of research outputs and funding success;
- The clearly articulated aims and objectives of the departmental strategy;
- The use of an “exemplary” workload model;
- The development of a “lively, well organized portfolio of research and taught programmes” and the “unique offering” provided through the professional Doctorate in Psychological Science.

In summary, the response of the department’s staff to the peer review report has been positive and we very much appreciate the constructive comments provided and the time and care taken by the reviewers in conducting the review.

Professor Tom Collins,
President

Dr Fiona Lyddy,
Head of Department