Quality Improvement Plan of the Quality Review of the Department of Computer Science
March 2021

*The row below each **S** Number are the Additional PRG Comments in italics.*

Institutional / Strategic Recommendations
S.1 - Introduce an annual internal review process for operational management, programme management, research performance, Departmental infrastructure and facilities, and strategic planning.
This should be a "light-touch" process designed to help Departments to carry out effective quality assessment and improvement.
Response: The Dean will work with the Department to discuss how this might be implemented.
S.2 - Facilitate Departments to produce an annual Departmental report, providing information on student applications, enrolments, performance, work placements; postgraduate students and supervision; research applications and grants awarded.
In collaboration with Departments (U.7).
Response: This is important. Data from the existing annual staffing review and research review can be combined to produce this annual Departmental report. Information on applications and CAO data is available from Admissions and the Dean. We must document what is already happening and how it might be used. We will work with our own Administrative staff as well as the external input from the University Offices.
S.3 - Promote student participation in the annual survey of student satisfaction.
In collaboration with Departments (U.8). This would inform ongoing quality assessment and improvement.
Response: The University T&L committee is currently working on new student survey systems for use at programme and module level and so we can tie in with that. We will promote the National Student Survey. Course co-ordinators could notify lecturers when the survey is available.
S.4 - Introduce a framework for annual staff development and appraisal for academic, technical and administrative staff.
To be adopted by Departments (U.9).
Response: The University is developing a performance review and development process with the emphasis on staff development. The Department will implement this new process when finalised.
S.5 - Clarify the promotional procedures for academic staff, and establish structured advancement and promotion opportunities for both administrative and technical staff.
Response: A biannual promotional process for academic staff is now in operation with procedures published and briefing sessions for staff provided.

S.6 - Introduce a process that enables Departments to have input into setting student recruitment targets and CAO entry points annually, within the University's institutional strategic plan.
This would enhance a Department's sense of agency within the University and assist in planning its contribution to the institutional strategic plan.
Response: The University will work with the dept through enhanced advertising in order to increase the number of applicants. The department will engage with Admissions and the Assistant Registrar to define appropriate levels for individual programmes.
S.7 - For members of academic staff appointed principally to a research institute, clarify their expected role within the Department that they join, and the associated institute-Department funding model.
Greater clarity would help Departments in developing their research plans.
Response: The VPR and the Dean will work with the Department to clearly identify the roles of these academic staff.
S.8 - Develop induction programmes for newly appointed staff, and introduce developmental policies and structures to help Departments to manage early research careers successfully.
This would create a framework within which Departments could implement managed workloads, mentoring, and early career development (U.21)
Response: This is valuable and would be welcomed by the department in consultation with HR. There are induction programmes and help available from the RDO. Together with the University we are committed to working with new staff to develop their research careers.
S.9 - Explore how the University's recently established joint college with Fuzhou University can enhance the strategic development of the Department, and *vice versa*.
This can help to direct the Department's strategic plans (U.25).
Response: The department is already heavily involved with this process. MIEC and the Dean will work with the department to develop opportunities for both teaching and research. This is an evolving structure and any plans need to be fully clarified in partnership with the department.

Recommendations to the Department
U.1 - Develop a formal **Departmental Executive**, enabling staff to *meet* regularly, *plan* strategically, and take a more *proactive approach* overall to management.
The range of responsibilities that lies currently with the Head of Department is too great. The Department should maintain a plan with clear connection to the institutional strategic plan.
Response: We accept the Department has grown and that structures need to be revised. While the structure of how a formal departmental executive might appear, and the powers it might have are yet to be defined within the University, we will establish a Planning Group that would consider implementation of the University strategic plan, conduct a strategic review, explore the concept of a departmental executive and the direction of long term departmental goals. This should be open to all staff working on a subcommittee basis. We will work with the Dean on operational plans for a large department.
U.2 - Review and revise the Department's structures and systems for regular internal communication.
Current structures and systems are not effective.
Response: The onset of the pandemic has definitely impacted the use of technology for departmental communication. Facilities such as Teams enables regular remote meetings. Also Microsoft forms makes surveys easier to distribute and administer. As part of the review in U.1 we will commit to regular meetings and dissemination of information through email. These structures can develop over time.
U.3 - Implement a Departmental reorganization based on subject groups that enables greater delegation of internal engagement with other departments.
This should create a structure within which staff can develop a sense of agency in shaping the future of the Department and alleviate some aspects of the Head of Department's workload.
Response: It may not have been picked up in the review, but the Department has many engagements with other departments. The idea of prescribed subject groups might make this activity more visible. As part of the review in U.1 we will look at new structures which empower programme directors to make this more visible at both a departmental and institutional level.
U.4 - Review and formalize the terms of appointment of the various Departmental Coordinators (i.e., for specific undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes, undergraduate year cohorts, research students, final year projects, work placements).
Appointments should be for fixed terms, with the possibility of extension. Expressions of interest should be sought when appointments/re-appointments are made.
Response: Again this may not have been picked up by the review committee, but many coordinators have a close association with the teaching on relevant programmes. Again we can review this as part of the review in U.1 There is a process around appointments and staff will be recognised in terms of their efforts.

U.5 - Develop and implement a full workload model that takes into account all types of activities and contributions.
Current workload allocation takes into account only some types of activities.
Response: Carrying out this would benefit greatly from structural input from the University administration. Certainly, outside experience would help in developing a robust in-house model. It is difficult to accurately capture the full range of effort required for many activities within the department. We will work with the Dean and seek guidance from the University on future structural changes and possible new roles within the department.
U.6 -Create a Departmental calendar with dates published well in advance for Departmental meetings.
Regularity of Departmental meetings needs to be maintained
Response: We will liaise with Departmental Admin in order to produce this.
U.7 - Generate an annual Departmental report, containing information on all taught programmes; postgraduate students and supervision; research funding, outputs, collaborations and impact; staff contributions to the University; and a summary of significant external activities.
This should be facilitated by the University (S.2)
Response: This is a good idea and with the requisite planning, and available data, can be implemented. It will be brought as a proposal for discussion to staff as to what would be best for the department.
U.8 - Conduct an annual survey of student satisfaction. (in collaboration with S.3)
This would inform ongoing quality assessment and improvement.
Response: As S3. We will work with University programme and module level survey system as it becomes available.
U.9 – Introduce a process for annual staff development and appraisal for academic, technical and administrative staff. (S.4)
Response: We will put in place an annual internal mentoring system for staff development so as to elicit from staff what they need in order to achieve their career goals.
U.10 - Review the opportunities for administrative and technical staff to have greater input into Departmental activities and planning.
Opportunities exists for greater cooperation with administrative staff.
Response: This may not have been picked up by the review team, but certainly Administrative and Technical staff have given their input on many matters impacting departmental activity, for example, at staff meetings, and they have given lots of help during the pandemic. We will continue to appreciate their valuable contributions.
U.11 - Introduce staff-student liaison committees for each Programme, with a schedule of regular meetings.
Currently there is no formal mechanism for students to advance concerns and that commits the Department to respond to them.

Response: We will do this again by appointing as coordinators those in the Programme director role. Redacted minutes with actions and responses will kept and the actions will be distributed to the students.
U.12 - Conduct a review of continuous assessment across modules on each Programme, with a view to consistency, clarity of marking schemes, scheduling, and feedback; and establish guidelines for staff and students.
Students have commented on variations and uncertainties in some aspects of continuous assessment, and in some cases on the quality of the feedback received.
Response: We will assign this to a departmental teaching quality committee. The remit of the committee will include a review of CA, marking, and scheduling, and to report back to the department.
U.13 - Introduce a mechanism to ensure regular review of module information available to students online in the Departmental Moodle and Course Finder, and consistency with information available elsewhere.
Students have commented on some inconsistencies and uncertainties.
Response: This is managed by the departmental Administrator and programme coordinators. This will be continued and will ensure data is accurate and updated in a timely manner.
U.14 - Introduce mechanisms through which industry leaders could have a structured role in informing curriculum development and maintaining the industrial relevance of the Department's programmes.
The recently established Computer Science advisory group could be incorporated formally into the Department's curriculum development processes.
Response: There was a group doing this specifically for Computer Science that was run by the University. Given our involvement with student placement in our degrees, we have excellent contact with industry, have regular visits by industry and are open to this input. We will form an industry liaison group who will inform curriculum development, and we will work with the University group to review and renew this engagement in light of our current placement programme.
U.15 - Identify subject clusters for research within the Department and develop an action plan to use these as a framework to increase research capacity.
In the absence of focused critical mass, current research efforts are mainly individualistic and predominantly opportunistic.
Response: See response to U.18
U.16 - Adopt a more explicitly managed approach by appointing a Research Director or "Research Champion" to provide leadership and create a supportive research environment and culture within the Department, to include a seminar series.
This role would develop and promote the Department's "research identity", lead operational research management, and encourage mentoring and collaboration.
Response: See response to U.18

U.17 - Conduct a review of the Department's current links with the University's research institutes and centers and develop an action plan for more extensive and stronger interactions that would help to develop the Department's research capacity and enhance its profile.
Currently, strong connections between the Department and the institutes are limited to a small number of staff. The Department is a natural partner for many of the research priorities of the Hamilton Institute.
Response: See response to U.18
U.18 - Based on subject clusters identified, conduct a review of research capacity in relation to strategic priorities of the major funding bodies; and develop an action plan for funding applications that are collaborative and have critical mass, in collaboration with the Research Development Office.
Without sufficient research funding, it is difficult to maintain esteem, or expand current areas of research excellence with teams of postdoctoral researchers and PhD students.
Response: (U.15-U.18) U.15 to U.18 are linked to U.1 and U.3, the departmental executive and departmental reorganization. The Department will work with the VPR, the Dean and the director of the Hamilton Institute on a restructuring/strategy plan, identifying our research strengths, and a research director/Champion who will guide our research direction and culture, review current links with the university's research institutes and conduct a review of research capacity.
U.19 - Develop a staffing plan and adopt a strategic approach to the appointment of new staff in order to build the Department's capacity in focused research areas. (**U.15 -** subject clusters)
Response: A strategic plan for staff hiring will be developed, in liaison with the Dean.This plan will identify opportunities for enhancing research capacity in identified areas
U.20 - Be appreciative of diversity, particularly in relation to moving towards a gender balance.
The Department could work towards a Bronze award under the Athena SWAN Charter.
Response: With the assistance of the vice president for equality and the Dean this can be achieved. We will keep ourselves informed and aware of the EDI group in the University. The department has female Professors who will be encouraged to promote leadership for female staff within the department.
U.21 - Introduce induction programmes, developmental policies, and managed early research careers for newly appointed staff.
In conjunction with policies and frameworks developed by the University (S.8). New staff are not supported currently through an induction process, and policies and structures are not in place for early career support and development.
Response: This is certainly an important activity. We will work with HR and the RDO to identify and explore best practice in order to achieve this. We will also identify the needs of new staff in the Department. Our workload model will also include a model for new staff.
U.22 - Develop and implement an action plan to maintain adequate administrative support during periods of staff secondment.
This will be important during the secondment of the Departmental Administrator.
Response: We have been doing this and will continue to develop an action plan with the help of the Departmental Admin team. We will work with the Dean to assure adequate support in the Department during any potential secondments.

U.23 - Develop a plan for regular periodic renewal and enhancement of laboratory equipment and infrastructure
This should identify potential funding initiatives to meet constantly changing needs and expectations.
Response: This activity is ongoing. We will have regular meetings with the Technical staff concerning this.
U.24 - Identify meeting room space to facilitate frequent staff meetings.
This would enable staff meetings for which current social spaces are not always appropriate.
Response: Unfortunately, in our previous location we had our own dedicated meeting space. However, this is no longer the case, and we are aware there are high demands on university space. As opportunities arise we will bring up our lack of a meeting space. We will engage with campus services to explore if priority can be retained in booking rooms for CS in the Eolas Building.
U.25 - Determine how the Department will contribute fully to the University's recently established joint college with Fuzhou University in China.
Discussion with the University is required to explore how the collaboration can be directed to enhance the strategic development of the Department (S.9)
Response: This is an ongoing project and the department will continue to engage through the HOD, attend the regular meetings with the MIEC committee and continue to contribute as required in a collaborative manner.
U.26 - Explore opportunities for greater representation on the University's internal committees.
This is a natural way both to build individual staff careers and increase collective influence in institutional decision-making.
Response: We will continue to encourage staff to be active about applying.