

# DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED SOCIAL STUDIES

## QUALITY REVIEW 2017

### Quality Improvement Plan

The Department of Applied Social Studies is very grateful to the Peer Review Group for the engaging and constructive discussions that took place during its visit and for the very positive assessment and helpful recommendations contained in its final report. The Peer Review Group endorsed the overall approach set out in the Department's draft Quality Improvement Plan, and the "Recommendations to the Department" in its final report are complementary to the list of actions we presented in the draft, grouped under six overarching objectives that reflect the Department's longer-term mission and purpose. This revised and expanded Quality Improvement Plan therefore retains the format of the draft, inserting reference to the PRG's recommendations by number after the appropriate actions (some relate to more than one action).

First, for ease of reference, we list the PRG recommendations, with an indication of which action(s) in the Quality Improvement Plan relate or respond to them. The recommendations are numbered U1 to U18 (please note there is no U8 or U13).

<b>PRG Recommendation</b>	<b>DAPPSS QIP Action</b>
<b>U1.</b> The department should consider how some of the responsibilities of the Head could be devolved to more experienced departmental staff members. Apart from freeing up the Head's time, this would have the added benefit of enabling those staff members to take on positions of responsibility and develop the leadership and supervisory skills that are required for promotion to the next academic grade.	A.6.3 (a)
<b>U2.</b> The department should devise a Workload Allocation Model (WAC), to ensure even distribution of teaching, administrative, supervisory and student support responsibilities across the department. This would also ensure that part-time and early-career staff members are not unduly burdened and that all staff members have time to develop their research activities.	A.6.3 (b)
<b>U3.</b> The department should reflect on how the skills and expertise of support staff might be used to further the department's mission and publicise its activities both within and beyond the university.	A.4.1 A.6.3 (a)
<b>U4.</b> The department's expertise in promoting access and progression of non-traditional groups should be documented and disseminated as academic output and shared with the wider community of scholars and peers.	A.2.1 (a) A.5.1 A.5.3
<b>U5.</b> Department plans for the MA in Social Work and ongoing CPD should be taken forward with due consideration of implications both for additional staffing requirement and for teaching and learning accommodation.	A.1.1 (a), (d) A.1.2 (a), (c)
<b>U6.</b> The department should explore options for reconfiguring some aspects of student support with a view to freeing up some staff time for other aspects of their academic roles – but without undermining the excellence of staff-student relationships overall.	A.6.3 (a), (b)

<b>U7.</b> The department should explore the possibilities for staff who have recently acquired or are in the process of completing their PhDs to teach beyond the programmes they are formally attached to. This would give them exposure to a wider range of teaching environments and more diverse student groups.	A.1.7
<b>U9.</b> The department should formulate its research and publications strategy for the future. This could include preparation of PhD dissertations for publication as books, journal articles based on PhD chapters and contributing to edited collections. The strategy should include co-authorship of publications between colleagues in the department and with peers in other institutions as well as developing research partnerships within the department and beyond.	A.2.1 A.2.1 (d) A.2.4 A.3.4 A.5.3
<b>U10.</b> The department should document its professional student formation activities more systematically with a view to developing a specialism in publishing and disseminating this as peer-reviewed research output.	A.2.1 (b) A.5.3
<b>U11.</b> The department should explore ways of taking forward a mentorship model where established staff with experience of publishing and grant proposal writing could act as mentors to support early-career academics from within the Department and from within departments with related research interests.	A.6.4 (a)
<b>U12.</b> The department should widen its grant-seeking activities across the staff group and focus on identifying further national and international funding opportunities in its areas of expertise, for example by exploring opportunities for joining research consortia and partnering with peers in other institutions.	A.2.1 (g) A.6.4 (a)
<b>U14.</b> The department should look to develop research opportunities with relevant university offices in the areas of access, student support, retention and progression which will enhance services, scholarship and knowledge of these issues.	A.2.1 (a), (d) A.5.2
<b>U15.</b> The department should introduce a more formal PMDS or similar system to develop individual plans for personal development that are aligned with the appropriate promotion scheme rubrics. Such a system should be focussed on supporting each staff member in meeting the criteria for promotion. Completion of a PhD, while an important milestone for an academic researcher should be considered as part of a longer-term research plan for each individual researcher.	A.2.4 A.6.4 (b), (c)
<b>U16.</b> The department should explore opportunities to broaden and strengthen its academic base and bridge with the growing graduate-level research activities through involving postdoctoral researchers.	A.2.2 A.2.3 (a)
<b>U17.</b> The department should develop a strategy for documenting and disseminating, through appropriate publications, the 'scholarship of community engagement' to add value to its long-term achievements in this area of activity and further the goals encapsulated in its mission statement.	A.2.1 (c) A.3.1 A.5.3 A.6.2 (a)
<b>U18.</b> The department should explore the scope for developing collaborative research opportunities with civil society partners, for instance in potential IRC New Foundations Scheme and/or in EU Horizon 2020 Societal Challenges Thematic Research.	A.2.1 (f) A.2.2 A.2.3 (a), (b) A.3.1

## Objective 1

To offer a range of taught programmes in the social professions and social policy (at all university levels from certificate to doctorate and from pre-professional to post-qualifying and continuing professional development) that strive for both excellence and inclusion.

Action	Timescale
<b>A.1.1 New programmes</b>	
(a) MSocSc (Social Work) [U5]	Approval process underway
(b) HDip Social Policy (“conversion” programme)	Proposal pending
(c) MSocSc (Youth Justice)	For discussion with Dept of Law in 2017-18
(d) New certificate-level programmes in partnership with sectoral stakeholders [U5]	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certificate in Digital Creativity in Youth Settings</li> <li>• Certificate in Global Youth Work</li> </ul>	Recruitment underway Proposal pending
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Others in development</li> </ul>	2017-19
<b>A.1.2 Expansion of existing programmes</b>	
(a) MSocSc (Advanced Practitioner Route) [U5]	2018-19
(b) BA (Applied Social Studies) (increase numbers)	2018-19
(c) Offer of existing certificates with new partners and cohorts [U5]	2018-22
<b>A.1.3 Review of existing programmes</b>	
Review the structure and content of the BSocSc (Social Policy) and BSocSc (Community & Youth Work) <sup>1</sup>	2017-18
<b>A.1.4 Other programme development</b>	
Explore further options in social justice teaching	2017-20

<sup>1</sup> Taking account of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year curriculum reform and feedback from social policy graduates as part of the QR exercise (e.g. regarding work experience dimension); and in the case of community & youth work taking account of student/graduate feedback and Consultative & Advisory Group recommendations; both also in the context of MU Strategic Plan.

<b>A.1.5 Professional accreditation</b>	
Secure professional re-endorsement from NSETS and AIEB <sup>2</sup>	Re-endorsement processes scheduled 2018-19
<b>A.1.6 Internationalisation</b>	
(a) Design and deliver modules for short-term MU international students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• J-Term Module “Young People, Youth Services and Youth Culture in Ireland”</li> <li>• Others in development</li> </ul>	January 2018 <sup>3</sup> 2017-19
(b) Continue and expand support for community development and youth work, and education and training for same, in global south (current links with Liberia, India and others)	2017-22
(c) Further promote Erasmus+ and international staff & student exchanges, study and placement opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amsterdam University College</li> <li>• Edith Cowan University, Western Australia</li> <li>• University of Kentucky</li> <li>• University of Dundee</li> <li>• Erasmus + Study Visits</li> <li>• New community &amp; youth work fieldwork placement opportunities abroad</li> <li>• And others</li> </ul>	Established; to be extended Agreement signed, staff exchange 2017-18 ) ) In discussion ) 2017-22
<b>A.1.7 Staff teaching opportunities</b>	
More staff teaching across programmes within DAPPSS [U7]	Implemented 2017-18

<sup>2</sup> North South Education & Training Standards Committee for Youth Work; All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work

<sup>3</sup> This is the first MU J-Term module

## Objective 2

To engage in and support high quality research across all disciplines and professions represented within the Department, with a particular but not exclusive emphasis on civically engaged, practice- and policy-focused inquiry, resulting in published outputs that have relevance and impact.

Action	Timescale
<b>A.2.1. Research and Publications Strategy</b>	
Develop and implement a departmental research, scholarship and publications strategy [U9], with a focus inter alia on themes of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Access, progression, widening participation [U4, U14]</li> <li>(b) Professional formation [U10]</li> <li>(c) Community engagement [U17]</li> </ul> and with strategic actions relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(d) Internal MU collaborations [U9, 14]</li> <li>(e) Postdoctoral research [U16]</li> <li>(f) Civil society partnerships [U18]</li> <li>(g) National and international networks [U12]</li> </ul>	Departmental “away-day” January 2018
<b>A.2.2 CRRR</b>	
Prioritise the development of the research, scholarship and engagement programme of the Centre for Rights, Recognition and Redistribution [U16, U18]	Plan in development 2017-18
<b>A.2.3 CYRD</b>	
Further develop the strategic focus of the Centre for Youth research and development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) IRC Postdoctoral call [U16]</li> <li>(b) Jean Monnet Network application [U18]</li> <li>(c) H2020 options [U18]</li> </ul>	Application in preparation Submission February 2018 2017-19
<b>A.2.4 Staff doctoral research and publications</b>	
Support core staff to complete PhD studies and identify publishing opportunities [U9, U15]	2017-19

### Objective 3

To work constructively and collaboratively with colleagues, partners and other stakeholders in achieving shared and mutually beneficial aims, within and beyond the University.

Action	Timescale
<b>A.3.1 Strategic Relations</b>	
Continue to develop strategic relationships that contribute to the Department's and University's active engagement with civil society [U17, U18]	2017-19
<b>A.3.2 Experiential learning</b>	
Contribute DAPPSS experience and expertise to development of the University's experiential learning initiative	Discussions with CTL have taken place
<b>A.3.3 Elective Streams</b>	
Review and refine Elective Streams modules in partnership with colleagues in other Departments	Existing Electives reviewed 2017; discussions underway re new ones
<b>A.3.4 Interdepartmental Collaboration</b>	
Explore opportunities for more systematic collaboration (teaching and research) with cognate Departments particularly Education, Adult and Community Education, Sociology, Law and Geography [U9]	2017-18, semester 2
<b>A.3.5 Sustainability and Equality</b>	
Continue to contribute to the University's sustainability and equality initiatives with particular reference to gender, interculturalism, Green Campus and the 'age-friendly university'	Ongoing commitments
<b>A.3.6 Social Justice Week</b>	
Lead the reintroduction and enhancement of the Social Justice Week initiative and explore other ways in which DAPPSS can develop its social justice contribution within the University	Plans underway for February 2018 and beyond
<b>A.3.6 Communication and Organisation</b>	
Review DAPPSS internal communication and organisation, with more opportunities for reflective conversation	Use of MS Teams underway Staff 'away day' January 2018 and end of semester 2; regular meetings in interim

## Objective 4

To support and contribute to national and international developments and initiatives and act as a catalyst for reflection, analysis and action in our academic and professional fields.

Action	Timescale
<b>A.4.1 Staff strategic engagement</b>	
Promote and support staff strategic engagement with and contribution to a range of practice, wider civil society and policy fora <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irish Youth Workers' Association</li> <li>• Community Work Ireland</li> <li>• International Association for Community Development</li> <li>• Youth Work Educators' Forum</li> <li>• Irish Penal Reform Trust</li> <li>• Meath Age Friendly Alliance (<i>plus many others</i>) [U3]</li> </ul>	Ongoing commitments; others in development
<b>A.4.2 Conferences and events</b>	
Devise a schedule of engaged, academic and practice focused national and international conferences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World Community Development Conference</li> <li>• Youth Work E-learning Erasmus + Final Conference</li> <li>• 4<sup>th</sup> Maynooth International Youth Studies Conference (<i>plus other smaller-scale events</i>)</li> </ul>	June 2018  June 2019  June 2020

## Objective 5

To ensure that our commitment to human rights, justice and equality is reflected in all aspects of our work including recruitment and selection, programme design and development, teaching and assessment, organisational processes and procedures, research and engagement.

Action	Timescale
<b>A.5.1 Equality and diversity</b>	
Review trends in the composition of DAPPSS staff and student body from the perspective of equality and diversity [U4]	Underway (building on analysis conducted for Self-Assessment Report)
<b>A.5.2 Diploma in Higher Education</b>	
Collaborate with the Centre for Teaching and Learning to pilot the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education as a staff team, with a specific focus on human rights, justice and equality principles [U14]	Discussions in train with CTL
<b>A.5.3 Document review &amp; reflection processes</b>	
Document the Department's review and reflection processes with current and past students and external stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff Student forum</li> <li>• Courses consultative and Advisory Group</li> <li>• Module and programme evaluations [U4, U9, U10, U17]</li> </ul>	2017-18, semester 2



## Objective 6

To enhance the effectiveness, profile, remit and resources of the Department, so as to strengthen its capacity to further its mission and to meet its own and the University's strategic objectives.

Action	Timescale
<b>A.6.1 Space and physical resources</b>	
Review DAPPSS physical resources and facilities from the perspectives of educational suitability and accessibility	Additional space available from 2017-18
<b>A.6.2 External communications</b>	
(a) Develop a communications and promotion strategy for the Department's programmes, research and engagement with a specific focus on a significant online and social media presence [U17]	Underway 2017
(b) Conduct a comprehensive alumni survey	Semester 2 and summer 2018
<b>A.6.3 Roles &amp; responsibilities</b>	
(a) Review roles and responsibilities relating to leadership, coordination and administration of all programmes and activities [U1, U3 <sup>4</sup> , U6]	Underway
(b) Agree framework and principles for workload allocation [U2, U6]	Departmental "away day" January 2018
<b>A.6.4 Staff development</b>	
(a) Introduce mentoring model within staff team [U11, U12] <sup>5</sup>	2017-18, semester 2
(b) Explore how best to facilitate and support promotion opportunities for DAPPSS staff [U15]	2017-18
(c) PMDS or equivalent [U15]	For further discussion in context of practice within the University
<b>A.6.5 Departmental name</b>	
Explore the options for changing the name of the Department to reflect more accurately its programmes and purpose	Underway

<sup>4</sup> It is the Department's view that responding adequately to the PRG's recommendation U3 would be dependent on a positive response to its institutional recommendation S3 regarding administrative staffing

<sup>5</sup> To embrace teaching, research skills, publications, grant-seeking