



Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Plan

Department of Design Innovation

2018

Note

This Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Plan was prepared by former Head of Department Dr Peter Robbins and subsequently edited by Professor David Prendergast, Acting Head of Department, together with Dr Mark Maguire, Dean of Social Sciences. The content has changed in terms of style and format but not in substance from that discussed with the President of Maynooth University.

The Acting Head and Dean have added a brief addendum.

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1. Overview

The Department, despite its youth, has earned a reputation as the country's leading (multi-award-winning) department for design innovation. The comments and recommendations of the Review Panel are timely and welcome. On the institutional side, they recommend that Maynooth UE engage more closely with the Department and assist or even oversee the development and delivery of a compelling, coherent and differentiating strategy for the Department. Secondly, the report challenges the University to invest in studio facilities to bring them up to an acceptable level.

At the Department level, we are challenged to effect a number of improvements to our practice with which we readily agree and are already taking steps toward progressing. Our response to these is given in more detail in the following pages:

- Developing a Strategy and Resource Plan
- Investigate more embedded collaborations with possible joint programmes
- Rationalized delivery of programmes to balance the needs of the staff in terms of their own development towards PhD
- Review whether block delivery remains the optimal model for the MSc programme
- Enhance our Work Placement proposition in terms of mentoring, prior, during and after
- More focus on Visual Communications within the Product Design Degree
- Make the pathways from UG to PG more explicit and more attractive for students
- Formalize a channel for student feedback outside the University survey
- Ensure all our adjuncts attend an induction and training session before they begin lecturing with us

This document will, first, give a brief commentary on the key programmes delivered by the department with considered, strategic recommendations, based on discussions with and after the review panel, for the potential future direction of each. The following pages reflect on the quality of the programmes and their management by our department. We then move to a brief reflection on the future of Eden, its activities and a potential future funding stream for it. It then looks at what we've been thinking and planning towards for our Product Design degree. We then look at the PostGrad programmes in the department and make recommendations for their development.

The bulk of the document adheres to the conventional format: recommendation: response: plan - by whom and by when. This is a very special department bursting with skills that are in huge demand in the workplace. We have talented, passionate people and we have developed excellent, award-winning programmes which we deliver to talented and committed students. We are also the department which is most closely engaged with industry and most tightly embedded with other departments across the campus. In just two years, the Department has grown its student numbers by 42% and we have designed, developed and delivered a €1m externally-funded, award-winning MSc programme. Largely because of this success, the Department is at an inflection point and the next couple of years will be crucial in delivering its potential to be a differentiator for the University.

Overall: The PRG's overall assessment is that the Department of Design Innovation comprises an ambitious, creative, collegial and dedicated team who are in the early stages of creating a distinctive role for their Department within the university and industry sectors, and who are making significant strides in this regard.

Quality & Governance: Based on analysis of the SAR, the site visit, and ongoing reflections and discussions, the PRG is generally very satisfied with the Department's governance and organization, its teaching, learning, assessment and programme development, and external engagement.

The Culture: The culture of the Department is exceptionally strong in terms of its ambition, innovation, creativity, resourcefulness, collegiate values and professional work ethic.

2. EDEN

EDEN ~ University center for Design, Creativity & Innovation ~ is the campus-wide initiative to foreground creativity and enterprise right across the university by using design thinking. Eden's impacts on student life are strategic: EDEN compliments the university's focus on critical thinking. It helps students, through divergent thinking, to develop more and better options so that they can deploy critical thinking in selecting the best one to choose. It also acts as a recruiting pipeline to encourage promising early stage social or commercial enterprise ideas which may subsequently end up with our commercialisation office, like Access Earth. EDEN delivers modules across all three faculties: in Law, in Biology and in Music. In the last two years, our department FTE's have grown by over 40% and most of this growth has been driven by EDEN. There remains further space for growth with EDEN with a number of departments, including English and Chemistry having expressed an interest in discussing possible collaborations. It can continue to drive growth for the department.

EDEN also delivers hands-on creativity workshops: sessions on visual thinking; on business model innovation; on developing a novel idea; on how to craft the perfect pitch to frame your idea. These sessions are outside the curriculum and are often taken by students who have an intention to enter the Student Enterprise Competition. Over the past two years, we have attracted over 200 students to these 'Creativity Gym' sessions. EDEN runs the €10,000 Student Enterprise Competition which, according to EI, is the best funded and highest regarded student enterprise competition in any third level college. EDEN also leads out on Enactus and uses its tools to help develop and incubate promising social enterprise ideas. It also creates and delivers modules into the mainstream curriculum. It runs two modules in the first year set of Critical Skills modules as well as delivering a pair of modules as electives in second year.

EDEN should be continue to be funded and resourced and if the University resources are not available to do it, we recommend that funding from Blackstone is explored. Blackstone fund similar initiatives in Trinity, UCC, UL, NUIG. They provide funding, mentorship, resources and other supports and their ethos is aligned with the work of EDEN. Blackstone is a charitable foundation that launched in Ireland in 2015.

3. Product Design

Demand remains strong for our degree in Product Design - and, by the way, its full title includes Marketing and Innovation. We currently accept 40-45 students every year and this is the maximum that we can possibly accept because of the quality and capacity of our current facilities. If our studio space was refurbished and extended, we could expand this very successful programme. Our students have been very successful in winning national and international design competitions but, more importantly, in securing employment in industry.

We believe the opportunities for growth in the design area for Maynooth lie in the area of service design and digital transformation. We have looked to find the sweet spot where there is a big and growing industry need; where there is government interest and investment and where the university already has an impressive capacity.

I have recommended to the Dean that we create an Advisory Board which may be chaired by an external industry person (possibly Mark Brennan VP of SAP) but which would include Computer Science, Media Studies and perhaps IVI so that together we can co-create something that builds on our institutional strengths and helps to solve a real world problem.

This area has exciting possibilities for us. It plays to our experience of industry engagement and it also foregrounds the design element of digital service delivery. We can design public sector services: private sector customer experiences and these can be underpinned by design thinking.

We believe that this activity is additional to our existing highly successful programme but that in 2020 we could be offering a PG programme in Creativity for Contemporary Technology or, simply, Digital Service Design.

4. Postgraduate Possibilities

We have a number of very promising sources of potential growth for our postgraduate degree programmes:

- 1) Better pathways from undergraduate programmes - such as EDEN
- 2) Expanding on the Bord Bia success by:
 - a) Targeting different verticals like insurance, banking, legaltech and offering them a tailored course in innovation and design thinking for their industry.
 - b) Exploiting the Bord Bia win by offering Exec-Ed Modules to Food & Drink companies as discrete short courses.
- 3) Developing new, adjacent masters programmes in service design and experience design.

5. Quality Improvement Plan

Recommendation/Issue	Response
Strategic Alignment	<p>The panel correctly identifies a gap between the Department’s vision and strategy to fulfil its potential and the UE’s vision for it. The principal dividend from this entire process is the primary recommendation that we convene a panel comprising department members and senior UE representatives. This is a recommendation that we embrace enthusiastically and look forward to its early implementation. We have connected with the VP Innovation and agreed a meeting with him, the Registrar, the Dean and other key internal stakeholders. We are hopeful this will happen in July/August. At this meeting, we hope to frame a coherent, distinctive vision for the department which will inform the other actions indicated from this review.</p>
<p>Design Innovation studios workshop fall well below the minimum standard expected of University Teaching and Learning facilities and are a significant impediment to student recruitment and delivery of the specialized curriculum associated with Product Design and Design Innovation.</p>	<p>For us, this is a headline issue. Our studio facilities are patently inadequate and need to be upgraded. This has been noted in every external examiner report since I arrived in Maynooth in 2011. It has been mentioned in every communication from our department about either resourcing or strategy as the number one impediment holding us back from fulfilling more of our potential. Additionally, it speaks to another panel recommendation which suggests that we don’t do enough to foster a studio-culture in our students. But with a studio like ours, fostering a studio culture is impossible. We welcome this recommendation and will work with University to do everything we can to improve these facilities. This includes our suggestion and willingness to identify and pursue commercial sponsorship or EI Regional development funding for a new or refurbished studio. But, if we are to do so, this must be part of a strategic plan and this needs some input from UE.</p>

<p>The department urgently needs to devise a strategy and resource plan that will enable it to develop fully its profile, place and sustained relationships with other departments and units across the institution</p>	<p>This recommendation, like most of the others, cascades from the need to create a coherent and agreed strategy for the department. The department has shown great capacity to grow with agility, adding 42% to its FTEs in the last two years despite having to cap the numbers in its biggest course the BSc in Product Design. It has also brought in non-exchequer funding of €1m in a partnership with Bord Bia. From one staff-member 18 months ago, the department now has similar student numbers to much longer-established and far better-resourced departments in the university - such as Music, Media Studies, Anthropology, Adult Education, Chemistry and Celtic Studies. This just points to the growing demand for the outputs of design innovation and also underlines the discipline's capacity to act as an integrator for other disciplines. For the department to realize its considerable potential, there is a need to bring senior stakeholders together and forge a vision for the department which is aligned with the national agenda and the university strategy. The department will be a willing and active participant in these discussions and we will enter them with enthusiasm and a spirit of openness.</p>
<p>Dept should seek more embedded, integrated collaborations through joint delivery of programmes (as distinct from individual modules) with other departments in the university</p>	<p>This is a useful and relevant recommendation and one we have looked at before. Right now, some of our subject matter is being delivered on other programmes, but generally only at modular level. There are undoubtedly opportunities to collaborate, more at post-graduate level with other departments to produce some joint programmes. Our disciplinary space lends itself to connecting more tightly with technology (Computer Science and IVI) as well as Mathematics and Engineering so we can apply the principles of design to data analytics and even drones. With this in mind, we have begun dialogue with other departments. However, while we are already widely networked, delivering into a</p>

	<p>number of departments, there are clearly more opportunities we could exploit. Once we get a clear strategic north star, the right alliances will become more obvious.</p> <p>We have also developed a proposal to have design thinking as an undergraduate option in arts for those choosing a double major or a major/minor combination. This would undoubtedly swell our numbers but it could have negative consequences for other university departments as we would merely attract undergraduates away from other disciplines; we would accrue market share of the UG student population but it wouldn't grow the market. Moreover, it would put greater strain on our teaching resources. But, it should remain a possibility for the future as the demand is high both from students and from employers.</p>
<p>The Peer Review Group recommends that the department devises a mechanism for a more rationalized and strategic delivery of degree programmes. This should involve ongoing review of individual members' teaching loads, mindful of (a) professional career development and (b) strategic advancement of other important elements of an academic department's activities.</p>	<p>This is an especially helpful recommendation. We have already taken it on board to plan a review for both UG degrees, in terms of content, delivery, scheduling. For design, we are founder members of a new Design Educators Forum where we are taking the lead on curriculum development for design. Equally, two key members of teaching staff, in particular, need adequate relief from teaching duties to facilitate the completion of their doctoral studies. There are a number ways in which this can be accomplished: 1) By reducing the number of modules delivered. Over the summer, on foot of this recommendation, we pruned a number of modules from our programmes and added a couple from business and media studies as alternative options. 2) Altering the design of the degrees accordingly. We have planned a review of the content of both the UG degrees offered for Q4. However, this will depend on the resolution of the strategic alignment procedure, which is why that recommendation is the first and most important one. 3) Deploying additional teaching resources into</p>

	<p>the department by some appropriate mechanism and at the Resourcing review, we got the greenlight for one additional lecturer. The resolution of this issue will be high on the agenda of the Advisory Board proposed in Recommendation 1.</p>
<p>The block delivery of the MSc Programme is not ideal insofar as it can militate against building a studio culture, establishing teams and coordinating group work</p>	<p>The design/scheduling of the MSc programme directly reflects the wishes of the busy executives usually taking it. However, this is a timely reminder to see if the assumptions that held four years ago still prevail now. Accordingly, we will take a number of actions to investigate this issue: 1) We will develop a formal channel or forum for the masters' students to communicate with the faculty in a regular, open and constructive way. 2) We will review, with the help of the FSS Exec, what other departments are doing in the design and scheduling of their MSc programmes. 3) We will review, through the Design Educators Forum, what other design schools are doing that we might learn from. 4) We will survey our students and get their views on the ideal structure 5) Our Programme Director, TV, will take point on this deliverable.</p>
<p>The department needs to enhance its mentoring of students prior to and during work placements so as to ensure that both students and workplace supervisors have a clear understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities, and a full awareness of the role of work placement within the requirements of their programmes. The department also needs to enhance institutional supports for undergraduate students organizing work placement.</p>	<p>At present, the Work Placement is managed centrally with our faculty closely involved in, sometimes securing the placements and always reviewing the outcomes and marking the students' reports. This recommendation suggests we need to be more centrally involved and so we will be. We will review our work placement programme in terms of objectives; outcomes; process and delivery in Q1 of 2019. It seems clear that the way things are handled now is a cause of regular complaint with the student body and we will have to take a more proactive stance on delivering this element of the programme.</p>
<p>More extensive training in visual communication and organizational design needs to be provided as part of the undergraduate Product Design curriculum.</p>	<p>This is aligned with U-3 in which we confirmed a review of the content of the Product Design degree. The recommendation of including more content on Vis-com is one we will bear in mind as we evaluate all</p>

	<p>elements of the programme. To foreground organizational design for Product Design students is a novel idea but we will explore pathways to make it available to our students. The Business School runs a highly-respected series of modules on OD and these are open to our students to take.</p>
<p>Lack of Clearly Defined Pathways from UG to PG in the department</p>	<p>Currently, our lecturers promote the MSc (Design Innovation) to our UG students at key points during the programme and we also invite Graduate Studies in to deliver a talk on other masters or post-grad opportunities and avenues in Maynooth University. Perhaps this is either insufficient or ineffective, we need to review our conversion rates relative to other departments and other design schools. But, based on this recommendation, we will engage with some 4th years and use a design thinking approach to develop a better system for recruiting from our undergraduate population. We will also work with Graduate Studies to ascertain what best practice is in this area and we will adopt it. This work will start in Q4 with a view to having a better outcome in 2019.</p>
<p>Formal way of gathering, reviewing and acting upon student feedback.</p>	<p>1) We will look at best practice and establish a student: staff liaison group from Q1 2019 2) This group will meet bi-annually and will review the feedback per module, escalating appropriate matters to HoD 3) The group will also devise a more sensitive research instrument to enrich the institutional feedback. 4) We will restore the practice of having annual meetings with student reps from each year</p>
<p>The department needs to ensure that non-permanent lecturers are provided with appropriate induction and familiarized with University policies and procedures</p>	<p>We have developed a comprehensive Adjunct Lecturing Pack which is delivered to each lecturer teaching with us. We also run two half-day 'adjunct induction courses' throughout the year. But we need to codify this and ensure that lecturers must attend the course prior to the commencement of their module. We will instigate a record book, detailing all the adjunct faculty teaching for us</p>

	and will record their attendance at the course and their receipt of the adjunct pack.
Over-reliance on adjunct staff 'poses significant risks to the department's ability to deliver and develop programmes'	Our SSR is currently the highest in the entire faculty (and possibly the university) at 46.6:1 and this means that our reliance on adjuncts is forced rather than desired. Happily, in the latest resourcing review, we were green-lighted for an additional lecturer which will bring our SSR down to 38.8:1 and this will reduce our use of adjunct lecturers by between 5-6 modules. On the positive side, as the discipline (of design innovation) is new and evolving, sometimes the flexibility and subject expertise of adjuncts offer an ideal combination to suit our needs. But, we agree, the balance of own staff to adjuncts needs to be realigned over time.
A need for more explicit and directive mentoring of Masters students.	We will take a number of actions to remedy this deficit: 1) We will develop a formal channel or forum for the masters' students to communicate with the faculty in a regular, open and constructive way. 2) We will review, with the help of the FSS Exec, what other departments are doing in the supervision of their MSc dissertations. 3) We will review, through the Design Educators Forum, what other design schools are doing that we might learn from. 4) Our Programme Director, TV, will take point on this deliverable.

6. Addendum

The above report was discussed with the President in late 2018. Since then, Dr Peter Robbins resigned his lecturing post and as Head of Department to work in a different university. The Dean FSS recommended to the President the temporary appointment of Professor David Prendergast as Acting Head of Department effective 01 January 2019. Since that time,

- The pressure on **design studio space** remains acute, though it is hoped this will be alleviated as part of the University's ongoing building programme. An interim solution involving renovation and reorganisation of existing prefabricated facilities was explored but found to be too costly for the limited temporary gains. A number of additional safety measures have been implemented in the workshop including the purchase of a fireproof solvents cabinet and training and certification in first aid for the on-site technician. Works are in progress for the installation of a paint spray booth and a permanent dust extraction ventilation system to replace the mobile units.
- A **departmental strategy** meeting and a number of curriculum review meetings have been held since 01 January 2019. Outcomes include the streamlining of the module structure reducing areas of overlap and implementing new modules in the areas of visual communications and service design and innovation. A full department strategic planning process will commence on the appointment of a new HoD.
- Importantly, the **Entrepreneurship** degree will be relocated to the School of Business by the 2019-2020 academic year. A number of modules associated with this degree will no longer be offered by the Department of Design Innovation which, coupled with the above streamlining, will help to reduce the currently excessive teaching loads on departmental staff. It is envisaged there will be an expected reduction in FTE student numbers for a short period but it is hoped the introduction of a new second year lecture based elective module in Service Innovation made available across the University will reverse this temporary trend in a manageable and sustainable manner.
- A **new staff member** was appointed in service innovation to facilitate this new strategic direction for the department and complement the existing product design and design thinking skillsets. A position for Senior Lecturer in Design has also been advertised. The successful candidate will be expected to provide both research leadership and act as Head of Department.
- **Career development** discussions have been held with departmental staff. Teaching workload has been reduced to four modules per academic staff member in order to enable the pursuit of agreed career goals ranging from PhD completion to research publication. This is considered an essential step in the desirable development of a research culture in the department. This is being further bolstered by the development of the HEA-funded **Maynooth Innovation Lab (MI:LAB)** which will be set up and run from Design Innovation in collaboration with the MU Graduate Studies Office following a successful application by Trevor Vaugh. Staff members are working with colleagues across the university including a very promising collaboration with the Assisted Living and Learning (ALL) institute.
- Design Innovation already has an excellent history of working with **external partners** and inviting industry stakeholders to speak and participate in our modules. It is hoped to solidify

this into a more formal seminar series. In February a joint seminar was held between Design Innovation and Anthropology with invited speaker Dr Catriona Macaulay, Chief Designer for the Scottish Government.

- Postgraduate training is an essential part of the department. Our MSc in Design Innovation continues to be very popular and well subscribed. The experimental MSc funded by Bord Bia is in its second and final year and is proceeding very successfully. **Financial discussions with Bord Bia about continuing the MSc Design Innovation (Food Innovation) are currently underway.**
- As the staff balance changes, we plan to increase focus on building a **PhD cohort** within the department. It is hoped that a Graduate Teaching Award will be offered to a PhD student starting in 2019. Recipients of the award will be expected to provide marking and tutorial assistance to PD coded design modules such as service innovation or our EDEN module in the law department. The student will also be asked to provide periodic assistance in our studios during periods of high demand such as preparing for the product design degree show.
- Design Innovation already runs joint teaching activities with Anthropology and this will continue on both our MSc Design Innovation and a new AN module in anthropology, user experience and service innovation. Discussions are underway with the School of Business to broaden our module collaborations, particularly in the area of **service innovation**. There is considerable interest expressed on both sides about future collaboration on a joint CDM postgraduate Programme.
- The department has **student union representatives** for each year group within our degrees. However, in order to facilitate better staff-student engagement a formal meeting has been set up between student representatives, the HoD and programme directors to receive and discuss feedback on modules and improving the student experience. This will take place once a semester.

Professor David Prendergast, Acting Head of Department of Design Innovation

Dr Mark Maguire, Dean of Social Sciences

April, 2019