



**Maynooth
University**
National University
of Ireland Maynooth

[Maynooth University School of Business](http://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/school-business)

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Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Plan

2018

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Introduction

The School of Business viewed the Quality Assurance and Improvement process as an ideal opportunity to reflect on how our work supports the strategy and operations of the university, focusing firmly on the quality of the educational journey for our students and the research mission of the university. As such we engaged fully in this process. We created a Quality Assurance and Improvement steering committee to guide us and engaged in an extensive review of our quality assurance and improvement strategy and processes, consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including all faculty and staff within the School of Business, the student body, alumni, university departments and external stakeholders. A detailed report was provided to the Peer Review Group (PRG). The PRG also met with the School of Business staff and faculty in groups and individually, as well as key stakeholders including students, the university community, alumni and employers.

We would like to thank the members of the PRG for the attention that they took in reviewing our Quality Assurance and Improvement report. It is clear to the School of Business community that the PRG members took great care to explore our Quality Assurance and Improvement strategy and operations. They have produced a very practical and insightful report that we believe is actionable and provides us with very valuable insights into where we are doing well, and opportunities for improvement. We want to sincerely thank each of the PRG members for their professionalism, time, and insights.

The PRG report was then used to reflect further on our process of Quality Assurance and Improvement. In this response to the PRG report, we outline the key actions we are taking to address their recommendations. As part of the process of addressing the recommendations of the PRG report we undertook further consultation with the faculty and staff of the School of Business, in order to work together, as a team, on implementing these recommendations. The PRG report was shared electronically with all members of the staff and faculty of the School of Business. All were asked to reflect on the recommendations of the PRG and offer formal or informal reflections on next steps to take to the Head of School or any member of the Quality Assurance and Improvement steering group. Opportunities for group reflection were provided at School Meetings on 23 May, 22 June and 19 October of 2018. Additionally the Quality Assurance and Improvement steering group and the School Advisory committee undertook actions to develop quality assurance and improvement initiatives based on these recommendation and reflected on actions to take in the medium and long term. The outcome of these consultations is this response to the PRG report.

We would like to note that many actions that we currently undertake to support Quality Assurance and Improvement were outlined in the Quality Assurance and Improvement report that we compiled for the PRG visit and we continue to undertake these actions, where they were the outcome of commendations by the PRG report.

General Observations

The PRG provided a detailed series of commendations about the actions that the University take to support the Quality Assurance and Improvement strategy and operations of the School of Business. Additionally, they provided commendations to the School of Business. For us Quality Assurance and Improvement is very much driven by a partnership between the many departments of the University and all the members of the staff and faculty of the School of Business. In partnership we collectively work to support both the quality of the education

journey for our students and the research mission of the university. We concur with the institutional and school level commendations of the PRG report. We believe that these speak for themselves and thus commit to continue taking actions to support the positive processes and outcomes that these commendations refer to.

We will now make five general observations on the quality assurance and improvement strategy and actions of the School of Business that shape current and future learning journeys of our students, research and engagement with society. As a School of Business we do wish to highlight a few of these commendations in particular and note that continuity of these is key to the future success of quality assurance and improvement for us. We will then turn to weaknesses and other key concerns of the PRG.

1. Institutional Level Commendations, but are they sustainable within current funding model?
The PRG report noted that a key positive feature of Maynooth University is its ‘flexible, liberal, interdisciplinary, committed and responsive approach to education across the institution.’ This is very much felt on a weekly basis in the working lives and education journey of members of the School of Business community. We see this as a key strength of the university and will work to support this institutional strength, just as we encourage the university to continue to keep this core strength in its work (and which we are delighted to see has been embedded in the Maynooth University Strategic Plan 2018-2022).

The inclusive approach to education is central to the university and core to the values of the School of Business, again we are proud and supportive of this continuing to be a central aspect of the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan.

The support that the university provides in planning for facilities and staffing is very welcome, within the context of a very challenging resource environment for the universities in general, and Maynooth specifically. A key report was produced for government, in which the long term under funding of the Irish University system was mapped out, the consequences of continued underinvestment upon the quality education for students, and options to resource universities, including Maynooth into the future to improve quality of education to internationally acceptable standards. This report, led by Peter Cassells, is: ‘[Investing in National Ambition: A Strategy for Funding Higher Education. Report of the Expert Group on the Future of Funding for Higher Education.](#)’ We note with both realism and concern that whilst this report was published in March 2016, the Dáil continues to reflect on the funding options of this report and has not arrived at a sustainable funding model for maintaining and improving quality of education and research in Irish Higher Education institutions.

Within this context of underfunding, the University and the School of Business have worked hard to achieve the high quality outcomes noted by the PRG report. The weaknesses that they have identified will be very challenging to address adequately without significant and sustained increases in funding at a university level, some of which would then be allocated through the resource allocation and planning process of the university to the implementation of the recommendations of the PRG.

We feel it our duty in this report to observe that without increased investment in staffing, built environment and training within the School of Business, and more widely the support services and structures of the university, that the existing high levels of performance are unlikely to be sustainable over the next five years.

2. School Level Commendations

The PRG has noted a significant number of commendations in terms of the Culture and Standards of the School of Business; Excellence and Innovation in Teaching and Learning; and Excellence in Research. We thank the PRG for each of these reflections, which are the result of considerable effort on the part of the small, hardworking and motivated team of staff and faculty at the School of Business in service of our community of students and the research mission of our university.

We particularly wish to thank the PRG for observing that ‘overall, the Peer Review Group were satisfied with the School’s quality procedures and its standards in relation to curriculum development’. This for us was the key positive and we are working to reinforce our focus on quality with improvements in our governance structures, appointing two new Academic Director roles to existing full time faculty, namely an Academic Director for Undergraduate Teaching and Learning and a Postgraduate Director for Teaching and Learning, in addition to maintaining our practices of an Academic Director for each of our programmes, and systems to annually review the curriculum, overseen by the School Advisory Committee. Additionally, we are reinforcing this by commencing the process of engaging with an international accreditation process, which has as its central mission the assurance of and improvement of learning for students, engagement with practice, and research.

We would like to note that the improvements we have made to our governance structures and our engagement with accreditation processes to date have not involved any additional resources. Faculty appointed to these roles have taken them on as additional service roles, without reductions in teaching loads or research expectations. We are grateful to the flexibility that all faculty have shown in taking on additional work as we have expanded. We note that this is not sustainable in the medium term. There is a need to engage in on-going investment in staff, as recommended by the PRG report, to ensure that we do not face burnout of existing faculty and staff due to the pressures of growth, and that we meet the quality assurance and improvement expectations of our students and accreditors.

Quality assurance and improvement is not sustainable without resources commensurate with needs. We are confident that the leadership of the university will continue to work towards narrowing the resource gap between our university and others in the sector in general, and support the narrowing of resource gaps between the School of Business (in terms of student staff ratios and built environment) and other departments in the university, and also relative to other Schools of Business nationally and internationally. This requires government support and other imaginative resourcing initiatives, of which the School of Business is happy to play a role in doing (for example our expansion of postgraduate student numbers via design of new programmes that are in demand from students and employers).

We also particularly wish to thank the PRG, for their observations that we had ‘a positive and constructive engagement with the review process’ that we have ‘developed a distinctive and compelling position in a very competitive field’; that we have a ‘spirit of continuous improvement and shared development’ in teaching and learning; and that we delivered ‘research publications at a high level, and investing time in the research environment’. The other commendations are also much appreciated. We are continuing to take actions to support work on maintaining all of the commendations noted in the PRG report.

3. Institutional and School of Business Weaknesses: Root Cause - Systemic Underinvestment

The PRG report has identified a number of areas of weakness, or areas in need of improvement, at both an institutional and school level. Each of these are insightful and important issues that we need to address, subject to resourcing. All of these issues have a common systematic root cause, which is underinvestment be that in the numbers of staff necessary to support student numbers of our scale, or the built environment necessary to provide a learning experience to international norms. This is a function of underinvestment in the sector in general, and Maynooth University specifically, since 2008, the same year as the School of Business was founded. The School of Business has grown rapidly through this period of underinvestment in universities. It is normal for universities to provide resources to support growth once the growth is proven to be sustained (which it has been proven in the case of the School of Business). Investment takes time, and requires available resources. As noted earlier, solutions at a sectoral level have been provided by the [Cassells report](#) (2016), but government and the Dáil have still not made decisions around these policy options.

In this context the limits of growth for the School of Business are approaching on two fronts.

First, the complexities of a liberal timetable (a key strength of the university that we fully support and embrace in our actions) require flexible and available teaching and social spaces. The campus is at capacity and without new buildings we will not be able to service our large undergraduate programmes properly. Critically we will not be able to expand our postgraduate programmes, which is a core aspect of the Maynooth University 2018-22 Strategic Plan. Limitations on growth in postgraduate education is particularly troubling because our undergraduate students have a high demand for postgraduate business offerings. At present they must go to other providers and are reporting to us that they very much wish to continue their learning journey in Maynooth. The lack of appropriate buildings for students to be taught in using a flexible timetable and appropriate interactive teaching spaces (especially for our liberal and practice engaged ‘Living Laboratory’ teaching concepts) means that we are failing our students by not providing the postgraduate programmes they want. This area is in need of urgent investment.

Second, limited investment in support staff means that our faculty are very time stretched due to teaching a very large number of students, coupled with significantly higher than normal levels of administrative workload relative to other university Schools of Business in Ireland and internationally. To put things in context we have both a significantly worse administrative staff to faculty ratio than any other university School of Business in Leinster and a significantly worse student to faculty ratio than almost all other academic departments in Maynooth. This means that we have significantly fewer faculty to teach students relative to the numbers of students that we teach and in turn fewer administrators as a proportion of students we teach and faculty we support. In this context it is surprising that we have sustained the high levels of publication in international journals and continue to have very high levels of student satisfaction.

There is a very serious risk of staff and faculty burnout if this level of under investment continues for much longer. We have a duty of care as an employer to our staff and faculty to ensure that they are not subject to undue risks of burnout. This is a real and present risk that the School of Business is facing at present, as we suspect are other departments with high student to staff ratios (both academic and service departments). This needs to be addressed both at a national level by implementation of any one of the [Cassells report \(2016\)](#) investment options, and locally by the university continuing with its limited resources to support

investment in new staff, faculty and buildings for those academic and student facing service units that are growing.

4. International Accreditation

The PRG recommended that the School of Business explore the process of entering an international accreditation process, whilst ensuring that steps are taken to maintain the positive elements of our culture and practices. Following consultation within the School of Business community the decision has been made to engage in the process of AACSB accreditation. We are mindful of the advice of the PRG to be realistic about the timeframes and investment requirements of AACSB and also of the benefits that full engagement with the AACSB accreditation process can bring to the quality assurance and improvement process of business education. We recognise that the absence of AACSB accreditation in the medium term is a serious competitive threat to the School of Business. All other Schools of Business at a university level in the Republic of Ireland are currently engaged in the process of applying for international accreditation. Without accreditation our students will be disadvantaged in competitive postgraduate education and labour markets. In turn the School of Business will be disadvantaged in its ability to attract and retain high quality faculty. High quality faculty, who come from Ireland and 11 other countries worldwide, have been key to the success of the School of Business to date and we need to remain competitive in that marketplace.

The School Advisory Committee is initially leading the process of engagement with training required by the international accreditation body with the aim of an initial application for accreditation by no later than October 2020. We anticipate that the process of accreditation will take a further five to seven years of sustained and active engagement in the quality assurance and improvement processes that are guided by international accreditation processes. We need to immediately commence the process of investment in accreditation and quality assurance. To this end we have started preparing for the AACSB quality assurance and improvement process through a series of actions using existing (but very limited) resources. These have included recent governance improvements within the School of Business to support processes of assurance of learning and research. New resources, coupled with a sustained focus by existing faculty and staff, will be needed for the next seven years, coupled with investment in resources and systems that are found to be necessary through the accreditation process. This time horizon and resource investment is typical of the Schools of Business in Ireland that have to date obtained international accreditation, and mirrors international norms.

Failure to obtain AACSB accreditation represents one of the greatest risks to the viability of the School of Business as it will reduce our competitiveness in local and international markets where we have been successfully growing by delivering unique value to our students. Our students compete for jobs on local and international markets. Organisations based in Ireland compete for customers and investment globally. When our students work with people from around the world saying that their degree is internationally accredited by AACSB is a straight forward way for others to know that they have a high quality education that is globally recognised. A failure to have AACSB accreditation will make our students less attractive to these employers in the mid-term, as AACSB is being increasingly recognised as an international accreditation brand that assures stakeholders the accredited Business School provides high quality education and is committed to continuing to improve quality. It is a normal part of an accreditation process to have multiple reviews before succeeding. However consistent, meaningful engagement in the process does in the long term lead to improvement for students and ultimately accreditation outcomes.

We have asked the university to provide all necessary resource support required by AACSB to support the quality assurance and improvement processes required to be successful. We are engaging in a process of consultation within the School of Business and the university community to raise awareness and understanding of the benefits and processes of international accreditation. This is a key resource requirement that the School of Business needs from the university. Without resource support, in terms of administration staff within the School of Business, appropriate faculty levels, governance mechanisms that support quality assurance and research, then the application will not succeed. We firmly believe that the School of Business community has the motivation and skills to succeed in international accreditation, if supported by the university. We believe from our discussions with the university, that it is committed to supporting us on this journey as it is focused on improvement of the quality of the student education experience for the students of this university.

5. Postgraduate Education

A central aspect of the Maynooth University Strategic Plan 2018-22 is the deepening and expansion of postgraduate education at taught masters and doctoral levels. The PGR notes our postgraduate work and the need to resource this adequately. During the process of the Quality Assurance and Improvement review we have been working on the development of our postgraduate offerings. We have developed a new postgraduate strategy, focused around the five values of the School of Business (research informed education, practice engaged, liberal, sustainability and careers focused, and egalitarian). We have launched our three revised programmes and experienced very positive feedback from students and employers, resulting in a 35% rise in postgraduate student numbers and deepening of relationships with employers. Our programme involves a common platform of core education experiences (academic and industry engaged) and specialist modules.

Our doctoral programme policies, processes, and structures have been reviewed by the co-Doctoral Programme Directors. This has resulted in greater support of the taught elements of doctoral studies, clarity in supervisory arrangements, progression and assessment processes. As part of the strategy development process of the School of Business we developed a clear mission and five core values. These drive all of our activities and are congruent with those of the university. In reviewing the Doctoral Programmes we have been mindful of these values. We have therefore sought to ensure that we specifically meet the research informed and practice engaged values. In the context of doctoral studies in Schools of Business these needs are often met by different Doctoral Programmes. We are therefore working with the university on the development of both PhD and Professional Doctorates. This is congruent with the 2018-22 strategic plan of the university. Resourcing needs, in terms of both supervisory capacity and taught modules will arise as these programmes are developed. We believe that existing programme approval processes and staff allocation processes ought to be able to manage these needs. Professional doctorates will require different built environment provisions and this does need to be considered in estates development. Specifically, these are typically residential programmes and have catering needs. We believe that rooms with our partner institution St. Patricks College could be accessed for accommodation needs. Catering needs (especially out of normal hours) ought to be structured into the development of the new academic buildings.

The School Advisory Committee, the Postgraduate Programme Directors, and the wider School of Business community are working to develop and launch a series of new taught postgraduate programmes over the next five years. In doing so we are meeting the challenge of the university strategic plan 2018-22. We need support from the university in the following areas to ensure

that we can develop these programmes that are demanded by students, and retain our position in a competitive marketplace:

- New programmes review process that is focused on quality of programmes, market needs, and mindful of the need to move quickly in fast moving and competitive School of Business markets.
- New built environment that has teaching facilities that enable participatory and industry engaged forms of teaching (the ‘Living Laboratory’ space and flexible teaching spaces from 25 to 125 students)
- Social spaces for postgraduate students to be able to undertake team project work and meet with faculty
- Staffing to support postgraduate education. Specifically a dedicated School of Business accreditation officer, dedicated Marketing team (in addition to the general University Postgraduate office), and a Careers Service Officer based in the School of Business (to support the careers focus of these programmes). These are the minimal staffing infrastructures that Schools of Business have to support their postgraduate programmes and an accreditation expectation. We recognise that these resources would need to be developed over time and believe that innovative solutions can be found in the short term working with the careers and postgraduate offices. The need for an accreditation officer is however an immediate need.
- Faculty to support the teaching of postgraduate programmes, through a mix of full time and contract faculty (with practice and academic skills).

Responses to the Peer Review Group Report

Institution Recommendations

Recommendation of Peer Review Group	School of Business Action Plan/Response
<p>S.1 Facilities and resources: Estate</p> <p>We recommend that the university prioritise the School of Business in the development of its estate, specifically: Considering the provision of high-quality flexible learning and teaching spaces suitable for postgraduate programmes and experiential classes.</p> <p>Providing a sense of a ‘home’ for students as well as staff, including study spaces for group work and social spaces adjacent to core teaching facilities.</p>	<p>Our analysis indicates that lack of teaching space and social space is a key limit to the expansion of the School of Business, and also the sustainability of service provision for existing numbers of students. We urge the university to remain focused in the implementation of plans to build new teaching and social spaces, firmly focusing on the needs of students. Specifically, we urge the university to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prioritize the provision of appropriate teaching and social spaces for postgraduate taught programmes in the new academic building currently in development and in future projects. Specifically, to provide high quality, flexible teaching spaces where postgraduate students can be taught interactively (flat – non-theatre style - classrooms, flexible furniture to enable team interaction, sufficient internet connectivity and power for all students to be able to use laptops and other mobile devices for teaching purposes) for class sizes of 25 to 125. These spaces ought to have teaching technology that can enable interactive computer aided teaching, including screen capture – of lecturer work and that of student teams, internet and database capabilities, support for disabled students and faculty, and screen visibility for all. 2. Creation of interactive teaching spaces that enable a ‘living laboratory’ that is technology intensive, enables large scale meetings, and small group breakouts ought to be a priority in the built environment so that practice engaged teaching at a postgraduate level can be adequately supported. Introduction of this concept in our postgraduate resulted in 35% growth in 2018-19, but capacity limits have been reached. Current implementation is proving very problematic because of limiting classroom layouts, technology and timetabling. 3. Priority needs to be given to a built environment that is compatible with both the flexible needs of the university wide liberal education timetable (e.g. Arts) that is key to the success of Maynooth, whilst creating space for innovative timetabling at

	<p>postgraduate level. In the later timetabling of day long teaching is very difficult as current timetabling and limited space does not facilitate or prioritise day long block teaching. This is the key method by which we teach Postgraduate students. As this is key to the Strategic Plan of 2018-22 we urge the university to create spaces where day long block teaching can occur in the timetable (and in an environment that has temperature control, power management, and support services that recognises the needs of students working in one space all day).</p> <p>4. We are committed to the principle of integrated university level services and education, we are therefore asking that the needs of the School of Business students and faculty be taken into account in estates planning. We have provided the university with considerable growth and the needs of our undergraduate and postgraduate students do require new teaching and social spaces. Urgently, we need growth in postgraduate education to be managed with appropriate built environments. We believe that the needs of taught postgraduate students ought to be addressed as a key priority in the new academic building. The university has supported considerable expansion in undergraduate students of business and they are seeking postgraduate education in Maynooth. To provide this we need the appropriate built environment. Clearly the same issue applies to undergraduate spaces, where our students are experiencing overly full classes in some modules.</p>
<p>S.2 Facilities and resources: Staff</p> <p>The school staff-student-ratio (SSR) is high and there is a need for additional academic and administrative staffing. Given the developmental, growth and accreditation demands on the school in the coming years, we recommend that some consideration be given to addressing these particular needs.</p>	<p>This is a cause of major concern. We urge the university to continue to support the School of Business (and any other department within the university) by ensuring that we achieve a 30:1 student to staff ratio in the short term and reduce the School of Business ratio to the university average ratio in the medium term. At present we are significantly above this ratio and urge that this continue to be addressed in forthcoming new staff resource allocation rounds. We very much acknowledge that the university has been supportive of this goal to date and ask that this continue.</p> <p>A key concern is that the number of administrative staff as the ratio of both faculty and students is significantly below the norm in university Schools of Business in</p>

	<p>Ireland and internationally. This will pose considerable challenges in both the development of our postgraduate education programmes, which require bespoke marketing and service support within the School of Business, and also for our efforts to attain international accreditation. We do need immediate support of an accreditation and marketing officer within the School of Business administration team if we are to be successful in our initial work on international accreditation and ask that this be a priority. In the absence of such a staff member accreditation applications will likely be unsuccessful as all other Irish applicants have such a staff member in place (or in several cases multiple staff) and this is very much an expectation of AACSB.</p>
<p>S.3 Facilities and resources: Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has been praised for its research orientation, but this needs to be sustainably supported We recommend that the University consider the provision of funding to: support more uniform access to leading international conferences for staff; and establish funds for ‘pump-priming’ research projects, especially where these could lead to larger scale grant applications or collaboration and support from industry. • We recommend exploring the possibility of individual faculty research accounts for staff. • Consider incentives for staff supervising high-quality PhD students. • Consider, in dialogue with the school, increasing access to electronic library resources (including journals and books). 	<p>We concur that current levels of research productivity will be very difficult to sustain without additional supports. To this end the School of Business has appointed a Director of Research from our full time faculty. This person will work with the university to communicate the value of business research, the needs of such research from a resource perspective, and communicate with the School of Business faculty to both enhance awareness of, and stimulate engagement with, the processes of university, national and international funding opportunities.</p> <p>We ask that the university normalise a process whereby schools and departments that are creating positive net revenues from teaching activities can ringfence a proportion of these revenues into a research fund. This fund ought to be managed by the School Research Director and their research committee, under the guidance of the Head of School. Particular attention ought to be given to pump-priming projects that can obtain external funding, or are capable of publication in top ABS 3 and 4 journal outlets. In our current budget submission we have explicitly prioritised research funding from within our internally generated resources and will seek to continue to do so in future years.</p> <p>We would like the university to grant permission for individual research accounts to be created, under the governance of the Research Director and Head of School, to support individual research projects using the above proposed research fund. This ought to focus on faculty who have viable research projects that can be published in ABS 3 and 4 journals, and who are facing particularly</p>

	<p>high levels of teaching. This would recognise the additional time that faculty with high student numbers put into teaching, reducing the time they have to identify and leverage external sources of research funding. They are in essence partially funding their research through high levels of teaching.</p> <p>We have re-appointed a faculty member as a Library liaison to work on communicating the needs of the faculty to the university, and within the faculty, their needs to the university. Electronic journal access is a key priority.</p>
<p>S.4 Policies and Processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recognize that university policies and processes are in a state of active development. However, we recommend that attention is given to clarifying these, and to increasing the visibility and accessibility of policies and processes to avoid isolation and divergence in school approaches. In particular but not only: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The process for the approval of new academic programmes needs to be clarified and made more transparent. ○ Academic staff are not clear about whether there is extant policy to inform processes at the school level. Some consideration should be given to the development of an (online) manual of academic policies and procedures. ○ Review and performance monitoring is informal and needs to be formalized. ○ Construct development frameworks for academic staff, administrators and Heads of School. ○ Explore optimization of centralised processes in the recording and calculation of student grades and degree classifications. • The university should consider developing policies that bring consistency to marking, including eliminating practices such as negative marking in MCQ examinations that were not present in the School of Business, but had impact on its students studying in other disciplines (for example, Economics). 	<p>We agree with all of these points and will support the university in any practical way as members of the community to address these issues.</p> <p>We will work to support the university in its on-going work on process and policy development. We welcome the work of the Registry Office in the appointment of Academic Policy officers, and the work of the Registrar in the creation of Academic Policy and Procedure manuals in recent months. These are very helpful.</p> <p>The process of approval of new programmes is a cause of considerable concern as we have a number of new programmes in development over the next five years. We are mindful of the need to assure both quality and financial viability in new programme approval processes. We welcome and support the university's recent work on clarifying these processes and working to implement processes in an efficient and fast manner. We urge this process of consultation and adjustment to continue.</p> <p>We will support any decision of the university to formalise the process of reviewing and monitoring the performance of staff and faculty, within the context of agreed HR practices.</p> <p>We are concerned as members of the university community about the efficiency and effectiveness of key academic systems, such as examinations, timetabling, and records. We believe that the university ought to sustain investment in these processes to minimise the risk of systems failure. We acknowledge that considerable work is on-going in the university to achieve these outcomes and that in the context of the Cassells report 2016 the university continues to make a system work with very limited resource investment.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The university should consider developing induction and orientation processes for students, including content and mode(s) of delivery, such that students may be reminded of access to central services at the point of need.	<p>We will continue to work with the university on the processes of student staff/faculty induction. We note that recently considerable investment has been made in induction of employees and the feedback has been very positive. On-going investment in training is needed and welcome.</p> <p>We are supportive of efforts to consider the impact of diverse grading approaches on students that share common modules. We are also mindful that diversity of grading is a normal part of disciplinary diversity and would urge that the university be mindful of disciplinary and international norms when making grading recommendations. An area of commonality would seem to us to be management of MCQ examinations. We need assessment as a positive reinforcement process and would not like to discourage students from attempting to address an assessment question. On this basis we would agree that negative marking is a practice that ought to be used in very limited circumstances if at all.</p>
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Recommendation of Peer Review Group	School of Business Action Plan/Response
<p>U.1 Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school’s key shared identity markers – interdisciplinarity, liberal and egalitarian values – are clear in teaching and learning, but could be made more visible in relation to research activities (as appropriate). • The school should capitalise on its strength in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and pedagogic research, by (for example) working with the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and developing its profile in this area. 	<p>In response to this recommendation we have discussed research strategy in our school meetings. We have appointed a new Director of Research role (noted earlier in this report), to guide our research strategy and development.</p> <p>Our choices in research strategy are guided by our values. One of the five values of the School of Business is research informed education. To this end we are seeking to support all our faculty in being research active educators and have been successful in doing so to date. We expect our faculty to undertake research within the broad area of their teaching expertise, mindful that research agendas can evolve over time.</p> <p>We are guided by the principles of research informed teaching and academic freedom, whereby our faculty have some flexibility to pursue research that they professionally think appropriate and guided by the principle that all research ought to have the goal of being published and subject to quality assurance processes of peer review. As a School of Business we are involved in a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate education areas. We believe that it is important (following our both our liberal and research informed education values) to ensure that we have a diversity of research fields and methods to support our diverse education programmes.</p> <p>Upon mature reflection we are reluctant to narrow our focus to a limited number of areas. We are, however, very much guided by our core values of research informed teaching, practice engagement and liberal education. We see our current research strategy as congruent with our five values and will bear these values in mind in the</p>

	<p>development of our future research strategies.</p> <p>We agree with the PRG that we currently have a distinctive research expertise in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. This research area will continue to play an important role in our research strategy and publications. We will seek to deepen our connections within the School of Business and the wider international research community in this field.</p>
<p>U.2 Staff development and expansion</p> <p>The school should consider, in dialogue with the University administration, the appropriate deployment of additional headcount, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing skills / experience gaps • Bolstering administrative support for marketing and accreditation processes 	<p>We very much agree with this recommendation. We will make this a priority in our annual staffing allocation review process within the university and urge the university to do the same. We need to continue investment in staffing to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attain an agreed position of student faculty ratios at 30:1 in the short term with the university • Seek in the medium term to reach university wide average student to faculty ratios • As a matter of urgent priority hire a dedicated accreditation and marketing officer within the School of Business. Without this our accreditation processes have little chance of success, nor will expansion of postgraduate programmes be sustainable. <p>We have been, and will continue, to engage with our university partners in the resourcing process for the above posts, mindful also of the need to address issues such as career support for postgraduate students in the medium term (as noted elsewhere in this report).</p>
<p>U.3 Learning and Teaching</p> <p>The school should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how best to build on the excellent teaching and learning 	<p>We agree with each of these recommendations and have begun the process of engaging with each.</p>

<p>noted in the commendations, while maintaining a balance of practical and theoretical, and group and individual, variants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalise on the students' societies in the business school's areas of interest, and discuss shared activities with them. • External stakeholders suggested additional specialised financial class(es) might enhance students' employability. • Pursue AACSB (Association for the Advancement of Collegiate Schools of Business) accreditation, giving due regard to appropriate timescales and resourcing, and maintaining the positive school culture (as discussed in commendations). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have improved our teaching and learning governance systems with the appointment of an undergraduate and a postgraduate Academic Director of Teaching and Learning. Both of these are members of the School Advisory Committee and are also creating their own Teaching and Learning committees to widen consultation and implementation capabilities. • We have deepened our relationships with the Business Society and are also seeking to build relationships with other student societies on dual discipline subjects. We have charged our Senior University Tutors with managing this process of engagement. To date we have jointly worked with the Business Society on our Industry Speakers Series, Careers events, and Socialisation events, where students and faculty meet together in work hours to share experiences of the learning journey. • We note that all students currently have several accounting modules as core on their programme. We are working with our colleagues in the Dept of Accounting, Economics and Finance to see how the concerns of external stakeholders on finance education might be best addressed. • We are very committed to pursuing AACSB accreditation as noted in detail earlier in this report. We appreciate the insights of the PRG as to the timescales involved and the need to maintain our positive culture. As a consequence we expanded our time horizons and are working hard to maintain our culture as we grow.
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