

Department of Spanish
Peer Review Report 2004

National University of Ireland, Maynooth
Quality Improvement and Quality Assurance

Academic Year 2003/2004

2004

Introduction

The review process and peer review visit

The peer review visit began at 4.00 pm on Wednesday 28 April, and concluded on Friday 30 April in mid afternoon. The external reviewers had two lengthy meetings with the other members of the peer review team (Dr Frank Mulligan, Vice-President, and Dr David Redmond, Registrar), at the beginning and end of the visit. In between those meetings, the external reviewers managed to undertake all the other meetings specified in the timetable, viz., meeting the head of the department and the staff, both collectively and individually (that is, the permanent academic staff, the tutors and the administrative staff), representatives of all three undergraduate years, and the single postgraduate. They saw the departmental facilities, ranging from individual staff rooms, through the departmental resources room and the language centre, to classrooms and teaching areas, including the John Hume Building. At their own suggestion, they also visited the library, met the subject librarian, saw the holdings in Spanish and Portuguese, and discussed with the librarian the holdings in these areas, both from an undergraduate and postgraduate viewpoint.

The Department

The Department has been in existence only since 1999, and has only recently acquired its third permanent member of academic staff (2002). Given that the number of students doing Leaving Certificate Spanish in 2003 was only 1200 over the whole country, no department of Spanish can afford to neglect ab initio courses. Indeed, the great majority of the Department's student intake (around 90%) is of ab initio students. This means that the Department, like the larger and older departments in UCCork, UCDublin and UCGalway, finds itself obliged to offer separate first-year courses for students who have done Spanish at Leaving Certificate level. No small department can afford to offer courses covering all the languages, literatures and cultures of the entire Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking world, and the department has made choices in keeping with its own strengths. These involve a full three-year course in Spanish language (divided in First Year between Beginners and Leaving Cert students), courses on the history and culture of both Spain and Latin America, courses on modern Spanish and modern Latin-American literature. In first and final year students can take Portuguese, and Basque is also available as a final-year option. The same courses are also taught to students doing the new degree in European Studies, and to students combining Finance and Spanish. Students in this last group are also given courses in Spanish for Business in their second and final years, if numbers justify.

Response to the Self-Assessment

Course aims and objectives

The first-year courses SPA 101A and SPA 102A are intended to bring beginners up to Leaving Cert standard in the four traditional skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. The parallel courses SPA 101B and SPA 102B are similar in their aims and objectives, but directed towards students who already have Leaving Certificate Spanish (or the equivalent). One of the principal aims of the SPA 101A and 102A courses is to enable beginners to share the same language classes as non-beginners in the second and final years. This is normal practice in other departments of Spanish which offer ab initio courses.

The other first-year courses aim to introduce students to the recent history, culture and society of Spain (SPA 103), and to the history, culture and society of Latin America (SPA 104), including Spanish-speaking residents of the United States.

Portuguese is available as an option in first year (POR 101 and 102, which seek to introduce the students to the Portuguese language and the Portuguese-speaking world).

The objective of the second-year language course SPA 201–202 is the improvement of the students' language skills: in addition to revision and development of the skills acquired during the first-year courses, students learn to develop the skills involved in translation. As in first year, conversation practice and language laboratory work continue to develop students' oral proficiency. Courses SPA 203 and SPA 204 (*Expresión escrita* and *Expresión oral*) have the objective of enabling students to achieve fluency in both written and spoken Spanish. The other second-year courses are SPA 205/206 (Modern Spanish Literature) and SPA 207/208 (Modern Latin-American Literature and Society). The first is intended to introduce students to contemporary Spanish prose fiction (both novel and short story) and theatre; the second (Modern Latin-American Literature and Society), to contemporary Latin-American prose fiction and poetry. Students taking Finance omit SPA 205/206 and SPA 207/208, and take instead SPA 209, a course intended to provide an introduction to Spanish as it is used in a business context.

At present there are seven students studying in Spanish universities under the Socrates scheme, in what is the third year of their university careers. The Department's own Quality Review Report makes it clear that members of the Department have invested a great deal of time in setting up exchange links (eight in Spain and two in Portugal), so it is disappointing to find that less than a quarter of the eligible students (7 out of 32) have taken advantage of this opportunity. No blame attaches to the department, but something needs to be done to make this option more attractive to students: the grant provided by Brussels is absurdly small.

The final-year courses SPA 301 and 302 aim to develop the linguistic capabilities and analytical skills of the students, while SPA 303 and 304 seek to develop their translation skills. SPA 305–306 seeks to explore women's writing by introducing students to some of the most important writers of contemporary Spain. SPA 307–308 aims to study contemporary Latin-American prose fiction and poetry. SPA 309 introduces students to Latin-American cinema, while SPA 310 introduces them to contemporary Spanish theatre. SPA 311 seeks to broaden the students' understanding of Spanish and Portuguese cultures. Finally, SPA 312 seeks to examine the formation of Mexican-American identity. For students taking Finance, courses SPA 313 and SPA 314 seek to provide students with the language skills and cultural understanding necessary to engage in business with the Spanish-speaking world.

Portuguese is available as an option in final year (POR 301 and 302, which introduce students to the theory and methods of translating from English to Portuguese and vice-versa).

Course information

Course information is provided by small (A5) student handbooks, one each for first, second and final year. These contain details of courses, course work deadlines, practical details on Spanish symbols on computer, as well as as student consultation times for each staff member. Discussion with students revealed that while the content and size of the student handbooks might be modest in comparison with—say—those produced by the Department of French, the readiness of the members of the Department to find time for consultation, even at unspecified hours, could scarcely be improved upon (except perhaps by concentrating all the departmental offices in the same area). It is also quite clear from student response that the Department's executive assistant also plays a major role in providing information about courses and other matters.

Course assessment

Continuous assessment usually accounts for 40% of the total marks available for a course, although it rises as high as 100% in POR 301, 302, 304. Continuous assessment involves essays, tutorial assignments and language exercises. Deadlines for written work are published in the student handbooks. Written examinations take place at the end of the second semester, and involve an appropriate range of question types such as comprehension, translation, grammar and composition (language), and essay and commentary (literature). Past examination papers, which give detailed information about the marks awarded for different sections of papers, are available for consultation by students on the departmental website. Students felt that access to computers was satisfactory, although it was necessary sometimes to book in advance.

Course content

The first-year courses SPA 101A and SPA 102A involve language laboratory work and conversation classes (with a native speaker) and instruction in grammar. The parallel courses SPA 101B and SPA 102B are similar in their content but different in their level, since the students taking them have Leaving Certificate Spanish (or the equivalent).

The other first-year courses introduce students to the recent history, culture and society of Spain (SPA 103), and to the history, culture and society of Latin America (SPA 104).

The optional Portuguese courses POR 101 and POR 102 deal with the basic language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The second-year language course SPA 201–202 involves revision and development of the skills acquired during the first-year courses; students also do translation. As in first year, conversation practice and language laboratory work form part of the course. Courses SPA 203 and SPA 204 involve *Expresión escrita* (writing descriptions, summaries, narratives, essays and reports), and *Expresión oral* (presentation skills). Of the other second-year courses, SPA 205/206 (Modern Spanish Literature) covers Novel, Theatre and Short Story; while SPA 207/208 (Modern Latin-American Literature and Society) covers Literature and Society in Latin America, Latin-American Novel and Latin-American Poetry. Students taking Finance omit SPA 205/206 and SPA 207/208, and take instead SPA 209, Introduction to Spanish for Business.

The final-year courses SPA 301 and 302 involve literary comprehension and analysis, study of the more complex areas of the grammar of Spanish, as well as composition through summary writing. SPA 303 and 304 introduce students to translation theory, lexical meaning and lexical non-equivalence, etc., through a range of different linguistic registers. SPA 305–306 involves a study of four novels, each one written by a major woman writer (Carmen Laforet, Carmen Martín Gaité, Rosa Montero and Esther Tusquets). In a similar way, SPA 307–308 examines contemporary Latin-American prose fiction (again through four novels, by Manuel Puig, Juan Rulfo, Mariano Azuela and Carlos Fuentes) and poetry (Jorge Luis Borges and Mario Benedetti). SPA 309 examines Latin-American cinema, particularly that of Mexico (including Buñuel's period there), Cuba and Argentina; films studied include *Allá en el rancho grande*, *Los olvidados*, *Rojo amanecer* and *Fresa y chocolate*. SPA 310 examines contemporary Spanish historical drama and drama as social commentary through works by Antonio Buero Vallejo and Fernando Fernán-Gómez. SPA 311 is an integrated language/ cultural studies course, which uses textual and audio-visual material to examine linguistic diversity, minority languages, ethnicity and identity, and regionalism and nationalism. Finally, SPA 312 studies Mexican-American identity through

works by Aristeo Brito and Sandra Cisneros. Courses SPA 313 and SPA 314 analyse business-related texts, show students how to prepare business letters, CVs and reports, as well as how to deal with interviews and business telephone conversations in Spanish.

The final-year Portuguese optional courses (POR 301 and 302) introduce students to the theory and methods of translating from English to Portuguese and vice-versa.

Course delivery

The first-year courses SPA 101A (semester 1) and SPA 102A (semester 2) are delivered to groups which are larger than the appropriate size for language teaching (that is, there are five groups for the ninety-odd students in first year, or an average of about nineteen per group). Both courses involve three hours per week in language classes and one hour in a conversation group, as well as additional language laboratory time.

The parallel courses SPA 101B and SPA 102B are aimed at students who already have Leaving Certificate Spanish (or the equivalent). At present this group is small enough to form a single language teaching group.

The other first-year courses (SPA 103 and SPA 104) can be given to the entire first-year class together. All first-year courses are also offered to students of European Studies and Finance.

In second year, the separate language groups of first year are redivided into mixed groups. In 2003–2004, this has meant two groups of 22 and 21: these are considerably larger than the ideal size for a language teaching group. Courses SPA 201 (semester 1) and SPA 202 (semester 2) both occupy two hours per week, as do SPA 203 (semester 1) and SPA 204 (semester 2). The other second-year courses, SPA 205/206 (Modern Spanish Literature, semesters 1 and 2) and SPA 207/208 (Modern Latin-American Literature and Society, semesters 1 and 2), are suitable for large-group teaching (24 hours of lectures), but are also taught through fortnightly tutorials (an additional 12 hours). While this method of delivery is a desirable one, a large second-year group is bound to put an extra teaching burden on staff, as tutorials have to be duplicated. While the SPA 209 course (Introduction to Spanish for Business, 1 hour per week) is appropriate for Finance students, as well as potentially making use of one of the areas of specialisation of a staff member, it creates an extra teaching burden for what may turn out to be a disproportionately small number of students. In the circumstances, the decision not to deliver the course for particularly small numbers is wise.

The final-year courses SPA 301 and SPA 302 are taught to final year as a single group (25 students in 2003–2004). This is twice the size of the optimal number for a grammar class, but no other

departmental member is free at the relevant time. The final-year class is divided for SPA 303 (semester 1) and SPA 304 (semester 2) into two appropriately-sized groups. Both courses are one hour per week. The final-year non-language courses (SPA 305–306, SPA 307–308, SPA 309, SPA 310, SPA 311 and SPA 312) are—appropriately—taught to the final-year class as a single group. Students taking Finance (none as yet in final year) will omit SPA 305–306 and SPA 307–308, and take instead SPA 313 (semester 1) and SPA 314 (semester 2), one hour per week; again, wisely, the Department will not offer these two courses if numbers are too small.

The problem with course delivery involves language groups: in all three years some are larger than they should be, as the Department members are well aware. This is not the fault of the present members of the Department, who not only have more contact hours than normal, but also a much greater amount of correction of language exercises.

Course administration

The Department's executive assistant plays an indispensable part in the administration of the Department's activities. In theory, all student records are kept centrally, but, as often happens, they are not available in time or with sufficient ease, and the departmental administrator needs to maintain the Department's own confidential records. Under the heading of "course administration", the executive assistant's duties include calculation and correlation of continuous assessment marks, calculation and inputting of examination results, preparation and compilation of examination papers, dealing with students' personal details, medical certificates, official correspondence relating to students, providing students with results and marks, preparation and distribution of course outlines, timetables, student essays and assignments, and the arrangement of tutorial room and classroom allocation for teaching to take place.

Communication

Communication between the Department and the wider University community is reflected in the presence of departmental staff on various university committees and consultation bodies, and in administrative roles within the Faculty. Inter-departmental communication is maintained through the development of joint courses involving Spanish and European Studies, Finance, Media Studies and the new International Studies degree, as well as in combination with other languages. There are also common teaching and potential research interests with individuals in other departments, in the area of modern Iberian political history, Music and Basque Studies. Within the Department, communication is maintained through frequent staff meetings, through meetings between the year co-ordinators and

student representatives, through student handbooks (colour-coded according to year), and through increasing use of the Department's website. In addition, staff have consultation hours for students, although in practice, they often make time to see students outside these hours. Students are unanimous in their opinion that the staff of the Spanish Department are approachable, and always willing to help or offer advice on the spot or at short notice.

The reviewers did find that there were problems of communication between the full-time lecturing staff and the part-time language tutors, and between some groups of students and their part-time language tutor. However, it was apparent to them that this was due to the nature of contractual arrangements for language-teaching staff, all of whom are paid by the hour, and who therefore sometimes feel that they do not 'belong' to the Department. The size of some language groups, and the lack of a clear focus for some oral expression classes, also produced communication problems, and the physical location of the Department, which is dispersed between the arts building and an annexe, was an additional factor.

Support Services

The support services are those that one might expect in a university with a growing and varied student population. The reviewers paid particular attention to the Language Centre and the Library, given that these are central to the teaching operation of the Department. The Language Centre is well-equipped with private learning facilities, access to Spanish and Portuguese television, films and a range of language learning material. The language laboratories are relatively small, and may prove unable to cater for the growing numbers of students of Spanish and Portuguese. The reviewers therefore felt that any expansion of the centre's facilities would be important in the next few years. At the same time, the employment of part-time language assistants teaching in both the Language Centre and the Department, is, for reasons mentioned above, neither good for the Department nor, possibly, for the Centre, given the workload factor.

Students were generally satisfied with the availability of computers on which to do their written assignments, even though at certain times of the day, and depending on the time of year, computers had to be booked. They also indicated that help with computing was available, even though for certain skills (such as inserting Spanish and Portuguese accentuation), they relied on the departmental secretary who, like her teaching colleagues, had proved approachable and helpful.

The Library has built up a basic stock of essential books for Spanish, Portuguese and Latin-American Studies, but given that the subject is so recent at NUIM, there is still considerable room for expansion, especially if the University wishes to attract postgraduate students. The reviewers would

therefore urge that the current budgetary level for Spanish in the area of book and periodical ordering be maintained for the foreseeable future. The Department is very fortunate to have a subject librarian who is a graduate in Spanish because she is able to detect obvious gaps and fill them on her own initiative. A major historical and cultural resource is the Salamanca Archives, which comprise a collection of some 50,000 documents from the Irish Colleges in Spain, while the Russell Library holds some rare Spanish books. There is clearly room to support a doctoral or post-doctoral fellow to research the archival material. Such an investment could enhance the research culture across a number of departments, including Spanish, and of course ensure that this research initiative is led by NUIM.

Research

Most world-class universities seek to link teaching and research. In the NUIM Spanish Department, research is focussed largely on the modern period, and is innovative and, within these islands, unique in its focus, ranging from Portuguese and Azorean literature (from both the Azores and the important Azorean diaspora in the U.S.), translation studies, Chicano literature and Hispanic border cultures within the U.S., and contemporary Spanish drama and women's literature. In addition, the presence of a postgraduate preparing a comparative thesis on two major Spanish and Portuguese novelists, is important in a field where the two languages have traditionally been studied in isolation. The Department also benefits from research nuclei in adjacent departments, and which focus on modern Spanish and Portuguese political history and, uniquely within Ireland and the UK, Basque language and culture.

The Department is to be commended for its publishing venture, *NUI Maynooth Papers in Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies*, ten of which have been published since 2000, ranging across the field, and including texts by international scholars from the U.S., U.K. and Ireland. These are beginning to put NUIM on the international research map in Iberian Studies. A new translation series promises to further enhance the Department's research status.

On the other hand, heavy teaching loads for the three lecturing staff, especially in the area of language teaching, inevitably hamper the desired correlation between teaching and research. Lecturing staff appear to teach an average of nine hours per week, two thirds of which may be in language (with corresponding heavy marking duties). Staff supposedly have a research day (Wednesday), but this is often used for marking or class preparation. It was clear to the reviewers that this problem would have to be addressed if the research effort was to be maintained, and cutting-edge younger research staff to be retained in an increasingly competitive market.

Clearly a Master's programme in Spanish and Portuguese (or a themed programme in which the Department might be involved) would enhance the Department's research effort and bring in a much needed postgraduate cohort. An MA programme would also offer a route into full research degrees, thus enriching the research culture as well as offering valuable teaching assistance. However, the lecturing staff, for all their undoubted goodwill, can hardly be expected to undertake additional responsibility for postgraduate tuition and supervision without a significant reduction in their current language workload in the undergraduate programme.

The reviewers also felt that institutional support for research could be improved. The allowance for travel to conferences or to conduct research overseas (fundamental to researchers in foreign cultures) is minimal at the moment, and one member of the lecturing staff is out of pocket for having given a paper at an important conference in the UK, while another is being helped out of departmental funds to participate in an international conference in Spain. Sabbatical leave for completion of research projects is, in theory, possible, but only with a cut in salary, which is out of the question for younger lecturers.

Staff Development

The range of Staff Training and Development courses and events offered by the University's Quality Promotion Office is, by any standards, impressive, and the lecturing staff of the Spanish Department have attended a number of such courses over the last two years to improve their classroom and mentoring skills.

In the field of professional development, the Department has done its best to deploy financial support to enable staff to attend and participate in events organised by the DIT and the Instituto Cervantes (Dublin), as well as to give papers at international conferences (see above under Research). The inclusion of one paper authored by a younger lecturer in the *NUIM Papers in Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies* is another important contribution to staff development offered by the Department.

Once again, a reduction of teaching loads might encourage and enable staff to attend more courses put on by the Quality Promotion Office.

External Relationships

For a department of its size, Spanish is well represented on the various committees and governing bodies of the University (see above under Communication), among them the Faculty of Arts, of which one of the younger staff members is currently secretary. All staff are members of international professional and research associations across the field of Spanish, Portuguese and Latin-American

Studies, and a number of them serve, or have recently served, as external examiners at universities and tertiary colleges in Ireland and the U.K. at both graduate and postgraduate level. The Department also has important external relations with the Instituto Camões (Lisbon), which provides the Portuguese language assistant (shared with UCD), and with universities in the Iberian Peninsula and the U.S., through the individual research links that staff members have built up.

Internationally, the Department has developed an impressive range of Socrates exchange programmes with universities in Spain and Portugal. Although there is an imbalance between the numbers of students imported from these partner institutions and those going out from NUIM, these links represent a considerable resource in the form of a Spanish and Portuguese student presence on the campus, as well as a potential route to research collaboration through staff exchanges. Further links are currently being sought with Latin-American universities, possibly through the EU's Alpha Programme. However, the establishment of such important exchanges requires time and institutional support to kick-start them, as well as a more flexible teaching timetable to enable staff to visit partner institutions.

Other Factors

It is worth remembering that the Department at NUIM is not solely a Department of Spanish. Portuguese, which is an important international language, has been successfully introduced into the curriculum and is an important component of the research effort. A cohort of 36 students choosing beginners' Portuguese reveals the potential for the subject. The reviewers would hope that this subject area would receive due support from the institution to ensure that it can flourish alongside Spanish, and compete with other universities in Ireland and the UK.

Conclusions

The reviewers were impressed by the efforts made to put on a coherent and innovative degree programme in Modern Spanish and Latin-American Studies, with additional possibilities for studying Portuguese and Basque. They were equally impressed by the buoyant figures for students coming in to study these subjects, as well as the excellent retention rate, which demonstrates the success that this small Department has had in capturing the interest of the students and providing them with the necessary pastoral care. However, if, as seems likely, the student intake remains as healthy as it is now (and not forgetting the similarly buoyant, though smaller numbers for Portuguese), there will be strains in a department that has only three lecturing staff. The reviewers would therefore draw the attention of the university authorities to the success achieved by the Department thus far, and the need to provide it with an appropriate level of staffing.

The contractual arrangements whereby language tutors are employed on an hourly basis have created problems in communication and focus, and while these problems are not generalised, it will become increasingly difficult to sustain the quality of the language provision as student numbers grow even bigger. Oral presentation classes with over fifteen students in them are cumbersome and, ultimately, do not represent the best use of class time. The situation would improve if the University were to allow for at least one and preferably two full-time language assistants, as is the case in other language departments, while still allowing for some part-time help when necessary.

On the research front, the Department is to be commended for the in-house publishing initiatives it has taken, and which represent a significant contribution to Irish and international Hispanism. Individual programmes of research promise well for the future, but must have institutional support in the form of less heavy teaching loads, greater access to funds for attending conferences and undertaking fieldwork, and more viable forms of study leave (i.e. without loss of salary). Once again, staffing levels are a major problem in inhibiting research, as indeed they are in inhibiting the introduction of postgraduate programmes, which would benefit the Department's research culture.

Recommendations

The Department should be wary of spreading itself too thinly. It has expanded enormously in terms of both students and courses since 1999, but further expansion, at least in terms of courses, is not a realistic option without more full-time members of staff. In detail:

Spanish courses

The present range of courses represents the practical limit in terms of present staffing. Further expansion into other areas of peninsular Spanish literature and culture (such as the Golden Age, or the Middle Ages), while desirable, should not be contemplated without the appointment of at least one specialist in these areas.

Portuguese

The continuation of Portuguese, as offered at present, is dependent on the goodwill of the Instituto Camões, and it would not be practicable to continue in the same way without it. In the longer term it might be possible to appoint another colleague specialising in both Spanish and Portuguese. This would give the Department the opportunity of continuing to offer Portuguese without depending on assistance from Lisbon.

Master's course

On p. 35 of the Appendices there is an MA course proposal. Postgraduates are immensely useful to a department, both in terms of morale and practical assistance. Masters students regularly opt to continue with higher postgraduate degrees, and the training of MLitt or PhD students can profitably include minor administrative tasks as well as several hours per week of teaching. While members of the Department should think seriously about further individual offers to supervise the higher degrees, it would not be wise, unfortunately, to introduce a taught MA course without another full-time appointment to share in the teaching. The final course proposal (made after another appointment) should also, as the present one does, reflect the Department's strengths.

Further Appointments

The number of students taking Leaving Certificate Spanish has been rising steadily, but even if the Department's first-year intake merely remains constant, the excellent "stay-on" rate will add up to an overall total of students of Spanish in excess of 200 within a couple of years. No language department with only four full-time posts (three academic and one administrative), can operate effectively with such numbers. Up to now, the solution has been to rely on additional teaching from the language centre and from tutors. At present, two of these tutors are teaching around 35 hours per week between them. But

since tutors are paid only for teaching contact hours, no tutor can be expected to be available to students on the same kind of basis as a full-time member of staff, or even to “belong” to the department in the way that a full-time member does. Inevitably, communication suffers, as it appears to have done to a degree in this case, when a particular group or groups of students feel disconnected. Since Spanish is the only department to lack a full-time native-speaking language teacher, the answer to the problem is to employ one or—preferably—two. The Spanish government will not fund such a post, but foreign language assistants are not expensive. For around €20,000 p.a. (€15,000 for nine months), they can take on 15 teaching contact hours a week, as well as being available to students and colleagues for another 20 hours a week: all this at an average of less than €10 per hour. Such assistants can be employed for up to three years, and the experience they gain makes them readily employable by other institutions. Experience suggests that qualified staff are available, i.e., with a degree in Arts, the CAP (= HDipinEd) and a qualification in ELE (the Spanish equivalent of TEFL). Since the post is not permanent, an unexpected downturn in Spanish student numbers will not cause a long-term over-staffing problem. The total cost of two nine-month-contract assistants would be very little more than the current payment-by-the-hour costs, and the advantages in morale would be considerable. The current tutors would of course be eligible to apply, if they wished.

The possibility of secondment of a senior academic staff member from ITÉ is entirely a separate matter. The duties of such a staff member are a matter for the professor, but conversation classes (for example) involve native speakers.

The appointment of one or two foreign language assistants is a matter of urgency. If the secondment does not take place for any reason, and student numbers are maintained in September 2004, then the university authorities should sanction another full-time permanent appointment, in order to allow the Department to establish a Master’s course.

The Library Budget

Compared with less recently-established departments, NUIM’s Department of Spanish has a generous library budget. However, the Department is still at the stage of acquiring the basic literary texts as well as fundamental works of criticism. The reviewers recommend that the Department’s budget be maintained for as long as possible, to enable the Department’s holdings to catch up with basic requirements.

The Salamanca Archives of St Patrick's College, Maynooth

Much still remains to be done before the university library's holdings of printed material can provide a useful tool for serious postgraduate research, but efforts can be made to exploit the Salamanca archives. These are the archives of the various Irish Colleges in Spain, which were initially transferred to the Salamanca College as the others closed, and then, finally, to Maynooth. Covering the period from the late sixteenth century to the twentieth, they have already been catalogued by the Spanish subject librarian, but their content represents considerable research potential for historians with a knowledge of Spanish, or for hispanists with a knowledge of history.

Comments on the Methodology of the Review Process

The self-assessment documents along with the proposed timetable of the visit were received in good time, some two to three weeks before the visit. The reviewers would like to thank the University authorities, and in particular the Quality Promotion Office and the Spanish Department for the welcome extended to them and for the help and cooperation provided. The reviewers were allowed to go about their business without undue intrusion, and visits and interviews not foreseen on the timetable, but which proved necessary, were arranged quickly and efficiently.

Peer Review Board

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