



UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK
O L L S C O I L L U I M N I G H

Report of the Quality Review Group
to
UniJobs

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UL QSU Website	www.ul.ie/quality
Unit Website	https://unijobs.ie/
QCI Website	www.qqi.ie

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Table of Contents

1	The UL Quality Review Process	1
2	UniJobs.....	2
3	Preliminary Comments of the Quality Review Group (QRG)	3
4	QRG Commendations and Recommendations.....	4
	4.1 Commendations	4
	4.2 Recommendations	5
	Appendices.....	8
	A Membership of the QRG	8
	B Membership of UniJobs Quality Team.....	8

1 The UL Quality Review Process

The University of Limerick (UL) follows an established process for quality assurance (QA) and quality improvement (QI) in line with that originally developed jointly by the Irish Universities Association (IUA) and the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB), the latter whose functions are now carried out by Quality and Qualifications Ireland ([QQI](#)). The review process involves an approximate seven-year cycle during which each unit works to improve the quality of its programmes and services and undergoes a rigorous self-evaluation prior to a quality review by internationally recognised experts in the relevant field.

The common framework adopted by the Irish universities for their QA/QI systems is consistent with both legislative requirements and international good practice. The process itself evolved as a result of the Universities Act, 1997, in which the responsibility for QA/QI was placed directly on the individual universities. The process now complies with the [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012](#). The UL Quality Support Unit (QSU) website (www.ul.ie/quality) provides details on the process.

Academic units are reviewed against international standards as described in the document *Quality Review Process for Academic Units*, which is available on the [QSU website](#). The planned schedule of quality reviews for both academic and support units is available on the [QSU website](#).

The UL quality review process comprises the following three phases:

1. Pre-review phase, in which the unit under review conducts a self-evaluation exercise and writes a self-assessment report (SAR).
2. Review phase, in which a quality review group comprising external experts, both national and international, review the SAR, visit the unit, meet with stakeholders and produce a report (this report), which is made publicly available on the [QSU website](#).
3. Post-review phase, in which the unit considers the recommendations of the QRG, devises plans to implement them and reports implementation progress to a Governing Authority subcommittee and UL senior management.

The recommendations made by the quality review group (QRG) form the basis of a quality improvement plan (QIP) prepared by the QSU for the unit under review. Once the site visit is over, the unit sets about evaluating and implementing the recommendations, as appropriate.

Approximately six months after receiving the QIP template from the QSU, the head of unit provides a summary overview of progress to the university's Governing Authority Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance (GASPQA) sub-committee. GASPQA members are afforded the opportunity to discuss and evaluate progress.

Approximately 12 months after receiving the QIP template, the head of unit, Vice President Academic Affairs & Student Engagement, Dean (where relevant) and Director of Quality meet to formally review progress and to agree on any remaining actions to be taken.

2 **UniJobs**

[UniJobs](#) was established as a wholly owned subsidiary of the University of Limerick (UL) in 2012 and began operating in October 2013. The rationale for establishing UniJobs at that time was that the employment environment in which UL operated had become increasingly complex and challenging following the introduction of employment legislation and the [Employment Control Framework for the Higher Education Sector 2011-2014](#). Temporary staffing solutions were costing UL an additional 30% on top of payroll (VAT @ 23% + 7% recruitment agency mark-up). To address these matters and to minimise costs to UL, where possible, it was proposed to establish UniJobs, a wholly owned subsidiary of UL. A similar company – [Unitemps](#) – had been established by the University of Warwick in 1997 for comparable reasons. Unitemps had a £10 million (sterling) annual turnover with a sustainable annual contribution to the University of Warwick of £500,000. The University of Warwick has successfully rolled out this model to eight other universities in the UK.

It was proposed that the UL company would trade as a recruitment agency under license to provide an online recruitment service aimed at reducing the costs associated with recruiting temporary agency staff. The long-term aim was to become a major force in the Irish market by providing staffing solutions to higher education institutions, other public sector organisations and commercial organisations. The company would use experienced candidates from the international, national and local communities, recent graduates and students as the primary candidate base to provide temporary staffing solutions across all campus functions. The company would be the employer of temporary/casual staff and, as such, would provide greater flexibility to UL in the university's efforts to meet its changing employment requirements.

3 Preliminary Comments of the Quality Review Group (QRG)

The QRG found the self-assessment report (SAR) of UniJobs to be a clear account of the company's activities and a thoughtful analysis of its current environment, context and the challenges it faces. All members of the company had contributed to the compilation of the SAR. The report was supported by a wide range of relevant evidence and we are grateful for the helpful and timely way in which the company responded to our requests for additional documentation. The SAR formed a very helpful and informative basis for our discussions with the UniJobs staff, whom we found to be very professional, helpful, honest and open.

The QRG met with a range of UniJobs stakeholders and service users; all spoke highly of the professionalism of the staff, and we heard many endorsements of the high quality of service provided, along with positive suggestions for improvements. UniJobs demonstrated a clear and consistent commitment to addressing the needs of its users and stakeholders now and into the future. Staff have a strong focus on delivering services to users in a timely manner across the university in a wide range of functional areas. There is an admirable commitment to delivering on the client needs while remaining cognisant of the company's role within the broader university organisation and its internal recruiting structures.

While recognising the operational requirements of UniJobs to meet current staff demands and grow the business, the QRG sees a need for further improvements in governance and finance. UniJobs is reactive to UL demands for temporary staff and would benefit from a review of processes to make it more agile and efficient. Furthermore, we feel that the role, purpose and benefits of UniJobs should be explored with a wider range of stakeholders within UL.

Brand and reputation are critical to the success of UniJobs and its business model. The QRG suggests that it review its policies and engagement with its core stakeholders to explore opportunities. Given the rapid pace of change in the university's academic and business context, we think there is scope for UniJobs to engage more proactively with its users and stakeholders in order to better anticipate and address their changing needs over the coming years.

Our detailed recommendations in the following sections will, we hope, provide some useful pointers for areas of potentially fruitful development for UniJobs.

4 QRG Commendations and Recommendations

4.1 Commendations

The QRG commends the following:

1.	The UniJobs mission, model and clarity of proposition.
2.	The company's impressive growth which has led to significant savings for UL in non-pay costs for temporary appointments.
3.	The bold ambition of the company for growth and provision of services nationally.
4.	The energy, passion, professionalism and dynamism of the young team, which is held in high regard.
5.	The excellent analysis within the self-assessment report which highlighted strengths and opportunities and demonstrated commitment to continuous improvement and organisational ambition.
6.	The strengths of the processes used within UniJobs to the screening of candidates, which is recognised as a high risk area for all employers.
7.	The company's commitment to engage more actively with stakeholders.
8.	UniJobs' openness to feedback.
9.	The undertaking by the company of the formal survey that was carried out with stakeholders across the campus.
10.	The strong commitment of the company to quality improvement.
11.	The establishment of the new Account Manager role for UL.

4.2 Recommendations

The QRG recommends the following:

4.2.1 Level 1 Recommendations

	Recommendation	Justification
1.	Strengthen UniJobs governance with additional independent members on its board of directors.	As the UniJobs vision is to be the number one recruitment agency for the public sector in Ireland, it needs to have representation on its board from a broader range of public sector bodies.
2.	Explore the cost recoupment model to ensure that investment for growth is achievable within the period of the next business plan.	Resources need to be made available for additional roles, technology, marketing and premises to ensure that UniJobs has a strong foundation for growth.
3.	As a matter of urgency, undertake with UL a process redesign exercise to simplify the stages in the hiring process and achieve a more efficient system that is capable of responding more quickly to stakeholders' needs.	It was apparent from the QRG's discussions with staff that the process needs to be simplified to ensure maximum efficiency. There is a danger that the potential added value of UniJobs to UL is restricted by the university's cumbersome, lengthy processes. Currently, workarounds are used which emphasise that the existing UL processes are not fit for purpose.
4.	Clarify with UL senior management the purpose of UniJobs in order to add value to the university's staffing processes.	There is a perceived lack of commitment to UniJobs and a lack of understanding of the opportunities and additional benefits that the company could bring to the university.
5.	Implement the improved timesheet process early in 2019 as planned and include comprehensive communications and training for temporary employees and UL's hiring managers.	This will enable scalability and increase confidence in the UniJobs service and brand. The previous timesheet process has damaged the brand and every opportunity to highlight the value and efficiency of the new system to all users should be maximised.
6.	Develop and implement a systematic aftercare package for hiring managers and employees.	Positive engagement with hiring managers and employees is crucial to brand development. Maintaining communications with placed staff and hiring managers on a regular basis is critical to the brand image of UniJobs. Greater emphasis needs to

		be placed on communicating critical timelines. The provision of specific account managers should be implemented.
7.	Raise brand awareness of UniJobs across UL and the wider stakeholder network.	A wider network awareness of UniJobs will facilitate the company's growth. Mention was made of a strategic plan focusing on brand awareness. With the potential to attract a broader range of business, this plan should be developed, approved and implemented as a priority.
8.	Increase the pool of suitable candidates so that a quick fill rate can be achieved without the need to advertise so frequently for specific posts. Use generic adverts and anticipate needs using HR intelligence through effective workforce planning.	It is vital that UniJobs can satisfy demand quickly and with suitable candidates. Failure to put forward quality candidates in sufficient numbers will damage the brand and reputation of UniJobs.
9.	In partnership with UL, raise awareness of UniJobs within the university, including among managers, staff and other interested parties.	Greater understanding of the scope and role of UniJobs within UL should be facilitated by HR or other parties where direct relationships do not exist.

4.2.2 Level 2 Recommendations

	Recommendation	Justification
1.	Improve communications with stakeholders, hiring managers and temporary employees.	<p>It appears that not all stakeholders, hiring managers and temporary employees were aware of key messages including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new Account Manager role for UL • The improved system for timesheets • Key contacts within the team (i.e., who to go to with specific issues) • Pay rate changes for temporary employees • Contract renewals • Interview outcomes and feedback <p>Some current temporary employees would like more engagement with UniJobs during their placement.</p>

2.	Develop and implement a corporate social responsibility (CSR) work stream.	This will raise the profile of UniJobs as a not-for-profit company servicing public sector needs.
3.	Work with UL to conduct a benefits analysis to review and determine how the UniJobs service could be focused to maximum effect.	It is widely felt that UniJobs could add more value to UL if greater clarity of the roles within scope were determined.
4.	Develop and implement a systematic approach to obtaining feedback.	This should be a standing item at board meetings and should be used to inform decision making and process development.
5.	Refine the survey on email signatures to include a question about possible enhancements and move to an even number of options on the response scale.	This will enable more meaningful feedback to be collected.

Appendices

A Membership of the QRG

Mr. Charlie Dolan (Chair)	HR & Educational Consultant, Charles Dolan Consulting Ltd., Cork
Mr. Rob Allan	HR Director (Retired) Loughborough University, UK
Prof. Sally Ann Burnett	Professor of Higher Education Leadership/Higher Education Consultant
Ms. Ailish O'Farrell (Recording Secretary)	Technical Writer, Limerick

B Membership of UniJobs Quality Team

Bobby O'Connor	CE UniJobs
Damien Bowe	Recruitment Manager UniJobs
Grainne Mullane	Payroll & Office Manager UniJobs
Grace Clohessy	Recruitment Consultant UniJobs
Declan Hannon	Recruitment Consultant UniJobs
Becky Costelo	Payroll & Compliance Officer UniJobs
Kellie Duane	Recruitment Consultant UniJobs