UNIVERSITY *of* LIMERICK

OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

Quality Review
of the
Department of
Education and Professional Studies

The University of Limerick (UL), through its membership of the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB), follows an established process for Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Improvement (QI). This involves a seven-year cycle during which all Departments work to improve the quality of their programmes and services and undergo a rigorous self evaluation prior to a quality review by internationally recognised experts in the field.

The process itself has evolved as a result of the Universities Act, 1997 in which the responsibility for QA/QI was placed directly with the individual universities. The UL Quality Support Unit (QSU) web site provides an elaboration of this process and the state of progress.

The broader picture is described in the publication *A Framework for Quality in Irish Universities* which can be downloaded from the IUQB web site: *http://www.iuqb.ie/*

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Quality Review Group	Appendix A
UL-QSU Web Site	www.quality.ul.ie
Web Site	www.ul.ie/education/eps.html
IUQB Web Site	www.iuqb.ie
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Table of Contents

1.0 Background

1.1 Legislative Framework

The University of Limerick, in common with all the universities in the Republic of Ireland, falls within the Universities Act, 1997. This Act specifies the responsibilities of universities in Ireland for Quality Improvement and Quality Assurance. Section 12 stipulates that, 'The objects of a university shall include - … to promote the highest standards in, and quality of, teaching and research'.

Section 35 (1) of the Act further requires that each university Governing Authority 'shall…require the university to establish procedures for quality assurance aimed at improving the quality of education and related services provided by the university'. The Act provides a framework for the universities to develop their quality processes. Section 35 requires each university to review the quality of the work of all faculty, academic Departments and service (including administrative) Departments on a ten-year cycle. In particular 'The procedures shall include … assessment by those, including students, availing of the teaching, research and other services provided by the university'.

Although each university is free to develop its own procedures in fulfilling its obligations under the Act, close co-operation has been achieved through the co-ordinating role of the Irish Universities Association Quality Committee, (IUAQC). Accordingly, the universities have developed a framework comprising a set of common principles and operating guidelines for quality improvement and quality assurance. These principles and guidelines have been integrated into each of the universities procedures, which ensure coherence through the university system, while maintaining the autonomy of each university and its individual institutional culture.

More detail is available at http://www2.ul.ie/pdf/585256597.doc and *www.iuqb.ie*

1.2 The Irish Universities Quality Board

The Governing Authorities of the seven Irish universities established the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) in February 2003. This board comprises representatives of the Conference of Heads of Irish Universities (CHIU) and a number of external members.

The aims of the IUQB are:
- To increase the level of inter-university cooperation in developing Quality Assurance processes
- To represent the Irish universities nationally and internationally on issues relating to quality assurance and quality improvement
- To articulate, on behalf of the Governing Authorities of the universities, the resource implications of recommendations for quality improvement.

The IUQB subsumed the roles and functions formerly carried out by the IUQSC (Irish Universities Quality Steering Committee). More detail is available at *www.iuqb.ie*

1.3   The Quality Review Process

The common framework adopted by the Irish universities for their Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement systems consistent with both the legislative requirement of the Universities Act 1997 and international practice comprise the following stages:

1. Preparation of a self-assessment report by the unit taking into account feedback from students and customers.

2. Quality (Peer) Review involving external experts, both nationally and internationally, who have visited the Department, met the students and studied the Self Assessment.

3. Quality Review Report, made publicly available by the Governing Authority of the university, incorporating the reactions and quality improvement plans of the Division and University.

4. Continuing improvement through implementation within the resources available to the university.

More detail is available at *www.quality.ul.ie*

1.4   Management of Quality in the University

The Vice President Academic and Registrar has overall responsibility for implementation of Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement policy and implementation at the University of Limerick. Implementation is carried out by the Director of Quality. The planned schedule of Quality Review of both academic and support departments was commenced in the year 2000, with the first full cycle of units within the University being reviewed within a seven-year cycle.

Academic departments are reviewed against international standards as described in the document "A Guide to the Quality Review Process for Academic Departments", which is available on the UL website at: http://www2.ul.ie/web/WWW/Services/Quality/Documents_to_Download .

In 2006, the university decided to implement a bespoke quality management system (QMS) and developed a suitable template with the assistance of external quality experts. This system is described in the document "Quality Management Systems – Standard Framework for Support Departments".

More detail is available at http://www2.ul.ie/web/WWW/Services/Quality/Academic_Departments/Quality_Review_Process

2.0   The Department of Education and Professional Studies

The National College of Physical Education was founded in 1973 to provide teacher education for physical education students. In 1979, under the new name of Thomond College of Education (TCE), the college was expanded to provide both concurrent and consecutive initial teacher education programmes in physical education, science, technology and business. The Department of Second-Level Education, later called the Department of Education and Professional Studies, was established when TCE was integrated with UL in 1991. The Department is now one of eight departments within in the Faculty of Education and Health Sciences (EHS).   The Faculty of EHS was established in January 2008 as part of a University wide reconfiguration process and included the following departments:

- Nursing and Midwifery
- Medicine
- Education & Professional Studies
- Occupational Therapy

- Physical Education and Sport Sciences
- Physiotherapy
- Psychology
- Speech and Language Therapy

The programmes currently delivered by the department, either wholly or in conjunction with other departments, are as follows:

A.   Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Programmes (Full-time)
Undergraduate Programmes
- BSc in Physical Education
- BSc (Education) in Biological Sciences with Physics or Chemistry
- BSc (Education) in Physics and Chemistry
- BTech (Education) in Materials and Construction Technology
- BTech (Education) in Materials and Engineering Technology
- BA (Education) Modern Languages

Postgraduate Programmes
- Graduate Diploma in Education (Business)
- Graduate Diploma in Education (Music)
- Graduate Diploma in Education (Technology)
- Graduate Diploma in Education (Languages)
- Graduate Diploma in Education (Physical Education)

B.   Professional Development (PD) Programmes
Undergraduate Programmes (Part-time)
- Diploma in Drug and Alcohol Studies (Level 7)
- Diploma in Community Inclusive Practice Facilitation (Special Education Needs) (Level 7)

Postgraduate Programme (Full-time)
- Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

Postgraduate Programmes (Part-time)
- Graduate Diploma/Master's in Academic Practice
- Graduate Diploma/Master's in Digital Media Development for Education
- Graduate Diploma/Master's in Health Education/Promotion
- Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling
- Graduate Certificate/Diploma/Master's in Education Mentoring
- Graduate Diploma/Master's in Integrative Psychotherapy
- Master's in Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy
- Master's in Education (Music)

The department also offers master's and doctoral programmes by research and thesis.

3.0   The Follow-up Process

The Quality Review process occurs on an approximately seven-year cycle at the University of Limerick. An average of five academic Departments are reviewed annually. Once the Peer Review Group report is finalised, the Department concerned immediately sets about planning its response to the issues raised therein.

The self-evaluation process is intended to be a reflective exercise in which a Department/Division should identify many of its strengths and weaknesses and develop plans to strengthen and grow as appropriate. Quite often, the Peer Review Group (PRG) will reinforce these issues and may identify areas of concern that were overlooked. In many cases, the PRG will also highlight the strengths of the Department and encourage faculty and staff to take advantage of these.

After the department and the university have been given time to respond to the issues raised; the Peer Review Group's report will be made available to the wider community through the University's web site. Normally, the report is available within the University less than four weeks after the PRG visit. Responses and plans for action are incorporated into the report and are subject to the approval of the Deans' Council.

Presentation to the University's Governing Authority usually follows within six months of the PRG visit. The Governing Authority will publish the Peer Review report, including reactions and plans, immediately following approval.

It is expected that a review of progress in implementing recommendations and investigating issues raised would occur quarterly for the two years following the Peer Review Visit. Progress Reports will be published as deemed appropriate.

Date	Action
Jan 2010	Education and Professional Studies department is issued with Peer Review report and required to prepare reactions and plans for Quality Improvement as appropriate. The report is circulated to all members of Management Committee for comment.
Apr 2010[1]	Reactions and plans, from all levels, incorporated into the document. Quality Improvement Action Plan developed and circulated to Deans' Council. Head of Division presents an overview of key issues from Quality Review Report to the Deans' Council. PRG Report with Responses and Quality Improvement Action Plan are tabled at Executive Committee meeting for discussion.
Dec 2010	PRG Report, incorporating reactions, is presented to UL Governing Authority for approval for publication.

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[1] Department response delayed by industrial action

4.0   Preliminary Comments of the Peer Review Group (PRG)

The quality of self-assessment as evidenced by the Self-Assessment Report and our dialogue with EPS members was of the highest standard, and made our role a professionally enlightening and enriching one.

The Peer Review Group (PRG) was impressed with the resilience, flexibility and collaborative approach of EPS in meeting the needs of their students during the period of uncertainty resulting from the recent system-wide review of academic structures. While it is acknowledged that such uncertainties have been addressed by the positioning of EPS within the Faculty of Education and Health Sciences in 2008, there are a number of systemic issues that remain to be tackled.

The PRG, whilst recognising the difficulties of the current economic climate, is of the opinion that only through a more flexible approach to funding and the provision of additional dedicated space can EPS achieve its full potential as a centre of excellence.

A commitment to address these issues is evidenced in the statement by the University President in the Academic Reconfiguration document to "establish structures to enhance the profile and management of our teacher education programmes."

5.0   The Report of the Peer Review Group

5.1   Mission

Commendations
The PRG commends the following:

5.1.1	The Mission Statement of the university as set out in its strategic plan which is challenging and has been appropriately contextualised at faculty and department level.
5.1.2	The clear sense of the new horizons, opportunities expectations and challenges arising from the recent structural changes.
5.1.3	The existing EPS Mission Statement which reflects the core issues facing the profession: *purposes, values, empowerment, excellence, pro-activity and professional responsibility.*
5.1.4	The desire to refocus and revisit the existing Mission Statement as a means of bringing a renewed energy and direction to planning and operations.
5.1.5	The strong and appropriate support for the values set out in the Faculty Strategic Plan: namely commitment, creativity, innovation, intellectualism, collaboration, synergy and empowerment.

5.0   The Report of the Peer Review Group

Recommendations

The PRG recommends the following:

5.1.6   The Mission Statement should be revisited in light of recent developments arising from structural change.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > The mission, vision and values of the department were reviewed during spring 2010 and a new mission developed. This was adopted by the department.

5.1.7   In revisiting the Mission Statement, a project team, representative of diverse interests and staff responsibilities, should be established to plan and schedule work.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > The project team for this drew from administration, technical staff, teacher education academics and clinical psychology academics.

5.1.8   A new Mission Statement must be suitably aspirational and recognise the transformative nature of the role of EPS in the formation of the citizens of tomorrow.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > Our new mission and values statement is:
> *With a team that has expertise in a distinctive combination of disciplines including education, psychology, psychotherapy, counselling and sociology, we offer a range of professional education programmes underpinned by the values of empowerment, positive professional relationships and social justice. Capitalising on this distinctiveness we:*
> - *educate and empower students to become effective teachers and human development & well being professionals; and*
> - *through research and development, respond to the needs of people locally, nationally and globally.*

5.1.9   The process of revisitation and renewal should provide a platform for addressing staff concerns in relation to inclusion and status.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > This process has enjoyed the full participation of the Department and was facilitated by an external facilitation agency (Invisio).

5.1.10   A new Mission Statement must include a values statement thus providing a context for discussion and consensus that transcends vested interests.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > The agreed values of the department are empowerment, positive professional relationships and social justice. We have also agreed that the focus of our work is on educating teachers and human development & well being professionals.

5.1.11   The Mission Statement should be a backdrop to all planning and decision making processes and resulting documents or plans.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > We are currently in the process of developing a strategic operational plan. This is a continuation of the process which led to the development of our vision, mission and values and is also facilitated by the same external consultant (Invisio).

5.1.12   Revisiting the Mission Statement, EPS should identify and address the cultural and logistical challenges likely to hinder mission realisation.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > We are currently addressing this as part of our movement from a focus on 'mission' to a focus on 'strategic operations'.

5.2   Design and Content of the Curriculum

Commendations
The PRG commends the following:

5.2.1	The diversification of Initial Teacher Education and taught and research Post-Graduate programmes of study that respond to identified professional and community needs.
5.2.2	The conceptualisation of critical reflective practice that underpins the range of education and professional development programmes providing coherence and links to the EPS mission.
5.2.3	The quality of both design and content of the programmes taught and/or co-ordinated by a small core of full-time staff.
5.2.4	The systematic and consultative approach to the development of new programmes exemplified by the structured doctorate, the principles of which should be used as a template for ongoing developments.

Recommendations

The PRG recommends that EPS:

5.2.5   Articulate the links between the university academic plan, EPS Mission Statement, ongoing programme planning and research strategy.

Response of Departmental Quality Team: > With over 1,200 initial teacher education students in UL, teacher education is of strategic importance to the university. As the department which delivers the teacher professional education component of initial teacher education, E&PS is of central importance to this work. We have reviewed our work in light of the faculty and university strategic plans to ensure that we continue to embody the best elements of the UL model.

5.2.6   Develop greater coherence in the standard of student learning experience afforded by the subject-specialist departments through consultation mechanisms developed in collaboration with the relevant faculties and subject departments.

Response of Departmental Quality Team: > We have been working with our partner departments to move away from having 12 different ITE programme course boards. We now have 5 ITE course boards and plan to rationalise further.
There is also a need for a body to bring teacher educators from all Faculties together to ensure greater coherence and common purpose, and to help develop a shared identity and responsibility for teacher education.

5.2.7   Consult more widely with schools and other stakeholders on the combinations of electives to be offered in ITE and relevant postgraduate programmes.

Response of Departmental Quality Team: > There is a need for a strategic decision making body at University level – at which E&PS (as the department which delivers on the teacher professional education component of all ITE programmes and as the only department involved all ITE programmes) is a strong voice – to play a role in matching our student intake to the needs of our partners in schools.

5.2.8   Review and rationalise PD programmes in the light of the development of EPS priorities and available resources.

Response of Departmental Quality Team: > A working group is reviewing the professional development (PD – i.e., postgraduate) suite of programmes. Providing agreement can be found among the current group of course directors of PD programmes, the proposals of this working group will be processed through the University's programme approvals process with a view to a rationalised model being in place for the AY 2011/2012.

5.2.9   Continue to align research activity and outputs with existing curricular strengths.

Response of Departmental Quality Team: > As part of the development of our strategic operational plan, our research strategy is being developed. A core principle of this work is to continue to align our research and teaching strengths.

5.2.10   Consider how research knowledge and research skills can be integrated within taught and research postgraduate programmes.

Response of Departmental Quality Team: > A suite of research methods modules has been developed (in collaboration with our colleagues in MIC) as part of the Structured PhD in education. It is intended that those not following the structured PhD route will take these research methods modules as part of their personal development plan (PDP).

5.2.11   Review entry requirements for ITE courses with specific reference to elective subjects

Response of Departmental Quality Team: > Course Boards to be asked to undertake this review. Report back expected in Spring Semester 2011.

5.3   Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Commendations
The PRG commends the following:

5.3.1	The clear evidence of a learner centred approach to education with obvious commitment to the facilitation of active and experiential learning and innovative approaches to teaching and learning.
5.3.2	The variety of appropriate learning strategies employed and also staff enthusiasm and flexibility in responding to students' learning needs.
5.3.3	The promotion of reflective practice for students and faculty which is a useful threshold concept for ITE and PD programmes.
5.3.4	The Centre for Teaching and Learning as a resource and support for EPS.
5.3.5	The high levels of satisfaction indicated by both ITE and PD students and confirmed in External Examiners' reports.
5.3.6	The reliability and validity mechanisms in assessment and the commitment to improving these through ongoing review.

Recommendations

The PRG recommends the following:

5.3.7   EPS continue to develop and review the Reflective Practice model for ITE courses and monitor student coursework with reference to formative and summative assessment provision.

Response of Departmental Quality Team: > Our model of reflective writing is integrated throughout the ITE programmes. A comprehensive resource has been developed to assist students in reflective writing (our reflective practice model was identified as being of the highest standards by the Teaching Council accreditation panel for the *BSc (Education) Physical Science* in Spring 2010. We make widespread use of formative assessment and this is also the topic for our teaching and learning workshop in January.

5.3.8   EPS to establish, and make explicit to students, a consistent set of criteria that will be used to moderate grading, particularly in relation to ensuring consistency of marking among part-time tutors.

Response of Departmental Quality Team: > We have:
- Reviewed the grading criteria used by tutors on TP
- Established a system for an increased moderation of TP tutors grades
- Made validity and reliability the focus of our last 3 training events for TP tutors.

Despite this, the low level of pay of TP tutors, the comparatively infrequent training that we can afford to offer them and the scheduling problems which arise when we try to bring them on campus all militate against us successfully addressing the validity and reliability issues on TP. This would require a quantum leap in resources allocated to Teaching Practice.

5.3.9   EPS to update feedback and evaluation forms and align them more closely with Programme/Learning Outcomes.

Response of Departmental Quality Team: > We have designed a new TP feedback sheet for students to make grading criteria more explicit. This will be introduced on a phased basis, starting in spring 2011. As part of our January 2011 Departmental Teaching and Learning event, we are looking at the models of formative assessment used in our Department with a view to agreeing Departmental principles/ approaches.

5.3.10   Recognition that Teacher Placement (TP) is not compatible with the resourcing of the University Co-operative Education model and consequently extra resourcing is required to enable EPS effectively to deliver supervision of TP.

Response of Departmental Quality Team: > The Teaching Council accreditation panel noted that "The staff/student ratio in the Department of Education and Professional Studies is in excess of 40:1… [and] that this is well in excess of the average staff/ student ratio in the university…The panel strongly recommends that the staff/ student ratio should, at a minimum, be on a par with the average ratio across the University". The Teaching Council has required the University to submit a timebound action plan setting out its proposals for implementation of these recommendations.

5.4   Faculty and Support Staff

Commendations
The PRG commends the following:

5.4.1	The committed and collegial approach that was evident throughout the review process, indicative of positive working alliances, and the excellent team spirit among faculty and staff.
5.4.2	The high levels of expertise and experience among EPS members who are actively engaged in promoting and developing quality research and development activities and outputs.
5.4.3	The provision of, and commitment to, the induction and mentoring of new staff members and encouragement to undertake doctoral level study and CPD where relevant.

Recommendations

The PRG recommends the following:

5.4.4   Faculty and EPS to prioritise the development of a workload model for EPS, in the context of extremely high workloads of faculty, particularly those who hold course directorships. The dependency on goodwill is neither sustainable nor equitable and needs to be regulated.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > A workloads model is under development with two elements:
> - *A normative element:* has been developed and has been used since the spring semester 2010 for assigning of teaching loads and teaching practice loads to academic staff members.
> - *A summative element:* is currently under development and it is to be approved by the Department before the end of December 2010.

5.4.5   University, Faculty and EPS to review staffing levels in the context of the current faculty allocation model with a view to implementing a remedial plan of action as a matter of urgency.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > The Teaching Council has required the University to submit a timebound action plan setting out its proposals for reducing the student/ staff ratio in E&PS from circa 40:1 to the University average. This will require circa 9 additional academic staff (over and above replacements or those associated with new programmes).

5.4.6   The University should take account of the particular demands of the EPS programmes in terms of personal development, professional support and 'fitness to practise' considerations that are required for public welfare and the specific resources needed to develop competent practitioners in this context.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > See item 5.4.5 above.

5.4.7   In addition to the current induction provided to part-time staff, EPS should facilitate ongoing training, CPD and consider providing a handbook/online resource of relevant departmental policies and procedures.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > The handbook for new members of academic staff was reviewed by a Department sub-committee in AY 2009/2010 and all new members of academic staff have had a mentor appointed to them for their first year in order to support their induction into the Department.

5.4.8   Faculty and EPS to utilise Performance and Development Review System (PDRS) for professional development and as a means strategically to plan career pathways for staff including sabbatical leave to facilitate quality research activity and CPD.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > The PDRS system was not available to us for AY 2009/10 due to industrial action in response to pay cuts. The HoD has, in September 2010, been trained on administering the PDRS and staff members have been scheduled for PDRS meetings during autumn semester 2010.

5.4.9   Faculty and EPS to encourage lecturers/tutors to avail of CPD opportunities, existing resources for teaching, learning and assessment and proactively seek support in specific areas as required.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > The Department has (a) organised training for staff on the use of ICT to support learning – Summer 2010 (b) organised a series of training events on the integration of development and sustainability issues into teaching and learning – September to December 2010 (c) and planned an E&PS teaching and learning day to be run in January 2011.

5.5   Facilities and Learning Resources

Commendations
The PRG commends the following:

5.5.1	The effective and efficient use of very limited teaching, administrative and student support spaces in light of diminishing central provision of dedicated facilities and despite increased enrolment and consequent pressures.
5.5.2	The proactive approach by EPS in continuing to develop a clearly defined vision for teaching spaces in order to promote "good pedagogical practice," particularly support for student teachers' integration of ICT in their teaching and learning.
5.5.3	The range and use of library resources available to EPS students both on and offline.
5.5.4	The commitment of EPS to use ICT software as an integrated learning resource to support students on- and off-campus e.g. Moodle.

Recommendations

The PRG recommends the following:

5.5.5   Develop a strategic plan of a short and longer term nature to ensure the provision of adequate dedicated space for EPS staff and students, especially in relation to the adequacy of existing ETC and dedicated ICT provision, to meet the increased enrolment and consequent needs of ITE students.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > A short term plan for additional space for the Department was submitted to the UL space committee. This has led to:
> - The development of a teaching practice preparation space with additional ICT facilities (LCB-012)
> - The development of 3 new pedagogy laboratories in the vicinity of LCB 0-12 (LCB-010 and LCB-009a and b). These will come on-line from Spring 2011.
> See also 5.5.9 below.

5.5.6   Review the provision and layout of research spaces currently provided to full-time EPS research students in the Foundation Building, in order to enhance the proposal to develop a Research Centre for Educational and Professional Practice (RCEPP).

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > This issue has been discussed with the research office and the faculty office. The research office is currently reconfiguring the research postgraduate space and it is intended that by January 2011 all E&PS postgraduate students will be brought together in a space that can be recognised as the RCEPP.

5.5.7   Maintain and develop a consultative, transparent and targeted budgeting process, taking into account the time lag between budget proposals and budget provision and the fact that enrolment is increasing.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > A new budgeting process was imposed upon the Department at short notice in May 2010. This does appear to offer the possibility of greater transparency. We are awaiting to see how it is made operational.

5.5.8   Address the significant health, safety and duty of care issues relating to accommodation requirements of cooperating students from local primary and post-primary schools.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > We have requested and got from Student Academic Administration a specific reception area for these students to be accommodated and have also developed a protocol with respect to transportation of students between the University and cooperating schools. This includes a clear framework for designating responsibility for supervision of students at all times.

5.5.9   Bring forward detailed design and layout proposals for the provision of a dedicated EPS Building.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > A project team has been established to develop this proposal.

5.6   Student Guidance and Support

Commendations

The PRG commends the following:

5.6.1   The integrated approach to student support in conjunction with the extensive range of University Support Services.

5.6.2   The creative response to the lack of sufficient number of UL trained academic advisers by assigning EPS faculty to first year tutorials.

5.6.3   The high level of staff-student interaction that implicitly engenders a collegial approach, thus enhancing professional roles and practice.

5.6.4   The remodelling of first year ITE modules, in order to address the gaps left by the loss of the Life Skills Module in 2008; this highlights the EPS perspective of the teacher as a holistic professional.

5.6.5   The significant support offered to research students in the context of staff shortages.

Recommendations

The PRG recommends the following:

5.6.6   Resource the CPD for academic advisers and ensure that the responsibility for this role is equitably shared across all Faculties benefiting from ITE students.

Response of Departmental Quality Team: > Following discussion of this issue at Academic Council the Academic Adviser training is now being offered once more. Responsibility for distributing advisers rests will Student Affairs.

5.6.7   Reduce the apparent stress on students on TP by further developing the balance between formative and summative assessment. In this context, there is scope to make more effective use of part-time TP tutors and host-school teachers.

Response of Departmental Quality Team: > Relationships with host schools and cooperating teachers are being further developed through the development of a handbook for cooperating teachers of UL students on TP. We are engaged in discussions with the Limerick Education Centre and with NUIG about how UL and NUIG can enhance our relationships with schools in the western seaboard area.

5.6.8   Explore how current research in Education Mentoring may be used to raise the role of host schools and teachers as effective mentors of student teachers while on TP.

Response of Departmental Quality Team: > The University of Limerick offers an academic progression for experienced mentor teachers who wish to broaden their perspective on mentoring and become mentor researchers and mentor leaders of learning in their schools. Currently we are exploring ways to develop a school university learning partnership that will raise the role of host schools and teachers as effective mentors with student teachers while on their practicum placement.

5.7 Research

Commendations

The PRG commends the following:

5.7.1	The EPS commitment to developing national and international research profiles.
5.7.2	The evidence of strategic endeavour in the development of research quality and research capacity in less than optimum circumstances.
5.7.3	The cultivation of a research ethos and recent investment in research leadership.
5.7.4	The pockets of good quality research and evidence of research development and clustering.
5.7.5	The healthy cohort of doctoral students, including the development of distinctive doctoral programmes with high completion rates.

Recommendations

The PRG recommends the following:

5.7.6   Develop a coherent Departmental research strategy consistent with the Faculty research strategy.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > A research strategy is currently being developed – linked to the development of our overall strategic operational plan. Workshops have taken place in spring 2010 and two more workshops are scheduled for autumn semester. It is planned that it will be agreed by December 2010/ January 2011.

5.7.7   Promote systematically an EPS research profile of distinctiveness and achievements.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > Our areas of distinctive strength have been identified. These are listed on - and form the basis for the design of - our website. They were included in our last job advertisement, are central to the development of 'research clusters' as part of the research strategy, and are the basis on which we are prioritising our links with external partners.

5.7.8   Prioritise an increase in the number of peer-reviewed publications in targeted journals.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > An increase in the number of SSCI listed journal publications is one of the proposed targets for the research strategy we are developing, to be achieved over a five year period.

5.7.9   Invest further in research leadership to reinforce a research culture based on mentoring and collaboration within and across the university and further afield.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > As part of the proposed increased in numbers of academic staff in E&PS, we propose the appointment of a second Chair in our Department. This would bring us into line with other Departments within the University of a similar and smaller size.

5.7.10   Monitor and support individual research targets through PDRS and develop incentives for staff to meet research targets, particularly focusing on the release of staff time and sabbaticals.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > Research outputs and productivity will be a key part of the PRDS meetings that are to be held in autumn 2010.

5.7.11   Encourage and support the RCEPP to make applications for major research grants.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > The development of major research funding applications is one of the targets for the research strategy we are developing, to be achieved over a five year period.

5.8   Quality Management

Commendations

The PRG commends the obvious commitment to a quality agenda as evidenced by the:

5.8.1	nature and quality of the EPS self-evaluation process,
5.8.2	protocols for module and course development,
5.8.3	collaboration with external agencies in the design and content of programmes,
5.8.4	contribution to external bodies and committees,
5.8.5	success of EPS in having professional courses accredited and in particular ITE courses,
5.8.6	voice given to students via surveys and informal consultations and the positive nature of the responses,
5.8.7	retention rates and the employability of graduates,
5.8.8	use made of external examiner reports,
5.8.9	use of the PDRS and CTL review processes to aid staff development.

Recommendations

The PRG recommends the following:

5.8.10   An internal review of planning processes with a view to creating a meaningful hierarchy of plans, both strategic to operational, including the following:

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > We are currently in the process of developing a strategic operational plan. This is a continuation of the process which led to the development of our vision, mission and values and is also facilitated by the same external consultant (Invisio).

5.8.11   all plans must include priorities and assign person/ team specific responsibilities and timeframes,

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > All working teams established since October 2009 have had a clearly designated lead person and a reporting deadline. These have been listed on a whiteboard in the Department meeting room.

5.8.12   a review of meeting schedules and agenda to ascertain need or otherwise,

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > The purpose and composition of the Department Meetings has been reviewed over the last year. As a result, items specific to ITE are now to be addressed in an ITE specific meeting, and the membership of the department has been extended to include non-academic staff.

5.8.13   all meeting agenda to feature as 'standing business' progress on annual plans and prioritised objectives,

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > Action items arising from our Quality Improvement Plan and from the Quality Review Process have been a feature of every Department meeting since December 2009. When our strategic operational plan is developed it will feature as an item of standing business on department meetings.

5.8.14   a quarterly review of progress on operational plans with remedial action if required.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > When our strategic operational plan is developed quarterly progress reviews will be a feature of its implementation strategy.

5.8.15   A major review of departmental work to reflect on:
- o   The Identification of core business
- o   The resource commitments to deliver on core business
- o   The effectiveness of current staffing and structures
- o   Existing or potential shortfalls in terms of resources and the impact of these
- o   Non core work that cannot be sustained by current funding arrangements
- o   The well-being of faculty and staff

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > We have:
> - Reviewed our mission, vision and values and identified from that our core business as being "educating teachers and human development & wellbeing professionals"
> - Reviewed our resources and our resource requirements and are making proposals to have the resource shortfalls addressed (detailed above)
> - Made all future developments of programmes contingent upon the delivery of adequate resources

5.8.16   A review of the preparation of resource bids to identify the specific quantum of resources required to deliver on specific goals or work streams and an analysis of the opportunity costs associated with a failure to resource these adequately.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > We have made all future developments of programmes contingent upon the delivery of adequate resources

5.9   Quality Improvement Plan

Commendations
The PRG commends the following:

5.9.1   The goals and improvements indicated by the SAR which are logical and consistent with the analysis of findings.

5.9.2   That the EPS team prioritised specific goals and targets as a result of the PRG discussions, the achievement of which is dependent upon UL support.

Recommendations
The PRG recommends the following:

5.9.3   Particular attention should be paid to the development of an EPS strategic research plan within the QIP. This should cover a broader 5-6 year cycle focusing on short (including quick win) and longer term targets and goals as indicated under 5.7.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > The strategic operational research plan is under development at present and will be agreed by December 2010/ January 2011.

5.9.4   Determining and applying an appropriate workload model for EPS which allows the strategic management of personnel and resources in the realisation of its Quality Improvement plans.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > A workloads model is under development with two elements:
> - *A normative element:* has been developed and has been used since the spring semester 2010 for assigning of teaching loads and teaching practice loads to academic staff members.
> - *A summative element:* is currently under development and its to be approved by the Department before December 2010.

5.9.5   Extending models of collaborative working practices internally and externally in relation to building research capacity and expertise.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > The RCEPP and the Structured PhD programme have provided the vehicles for working with colleagues in other departments to collaboratively develop research agenda. We are working closely with colleagues in NUIG on a number of research initiatives. As part of the research strategy we are planning to develop a number of international strategic partners.

5.9.6   Developing and using the UL website as a means to publicise and celebrate the strengths and achievements of EPS.

> Response of Departmental Quality Team: > The E&PS website has been completely reviewed and updated. A new website team has been put in place to manage the design and use of the website and responsibility for content management has been transferred to a member of our technical staff. The UL website more generally is in need of significant improvement.

Appendices

A   Membership of the Peer Review Group:

Dr. David Whan	(Chair), Quality Consultant, UK.
Dr. Ruth Leitch	Graduate Education Department, Queens' University, Belfast.
Dr. Eddie Mc Ardle	Registrar, General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland, Belfast.
Mr. Joe Harrison	Principal, Calasanctius College, Oranmore, Galway, Ireland.
Dr. Mary Creaner	School of Pscychology, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland.
Dr. Natalie Nic an Ghaill	PRG Recording Secretary, Quality Support Unit, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland.

B   Membership of the EPS Quality Team:

Dr Roland Tormey	Head of Department (since 1st Oct 2009) and Chair of Quality Team
Mr Tom Geary	Head of Department (until 20th Sept 2009) and Lecturer
Dr Jim Gleeson	Senior Lecturer
Ms Maureen Kendall	Department Administrator
Dr Oliver McGarr	Lecturer
Ms Janet Moody	Lecturer
Prof Marie Parker-Jenkins	Professor and Chair of Education

C   Contact

The Peer Review Group were given the opportunity over three days to talk to the Education and Professional Studies Quality Team both formally and informally. Meetings with staff, postgraduate & undergraduate students and others were scheduled as group sessions. The Review Group was given the opportunity to meet all Education and Professional Studies staff during a visit to the facilities of the department and this was most helpful.

All the meetings provided extremely useful additional information to support the SAR.

END of Report