



UNIVERSITY *of* LIMERICK

O L L S C O I L L U I M N I G H

Quality Review of the **Management and Marketing Department**

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, 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/>

Issued by QSU	Stage 5 , 9 th May 2012
Review Date	1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd May 2012
Quality Review Group	Appendix A
UL-QSU Web Site	www.quality.ul.ie
Web Site	www.ul.ie/business
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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, (IUQAC). 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 www.quality.ul.ie/The_Act.htm 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.

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 www.quality.ul.ie .

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 www.quality.ul.ie

2.0 The Management and Marketing Department

The Department of Management and Marketing was established in 1994 and is one of four departments within the Kemmy Business School at the University of Limerick. It is a committed teaching and research community with academics across subject specialisms in Marketing, Management, Information Management, Communications and Entrepreneurship. The department is a significant contributor to the Bachelor of Business Studies Programmes (BBS) in addition to offering a range of taught postgraduate programmes in Marketing, Business Management, International Management and International Entrepreneurship.

The department is committed to ensuring that all students in its remit have a positive teaching and learning experience and several departmental faculty have won local, national and regional 'Excellence in Teaching Awards' from the University of Limerick, the Shannon Regional Consortium and NAIRTL (National Academy for Integration of Research Teaching and Learning).

The Department has a strong research culture which informs not only teaching and curriculum development, but also policy and practice in Ireland and beyond. Faculty in the department have contributed to important debates and led research in various fields as reflected through departmental publications, conference contributions and services to national and international academic and practitioner communities. Faculty also have links with many prestigious universities in Australia, U.S.A., Spain, UK, Finland and elsewhere.

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 University's Governing Authority Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance Committee. Presentation to the committee usually follows within six months of the PRG visit. The Governing Authority will publish the Peer Review report, including reactions and plans, 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
Date of review	Department is issued with Peer Review Group 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.
Date of review	PRG Report, incorporating reactions, is presented to UL Executive Committee for discussion, as appropriate.
+ 2/3 months	Reactions and plans incorporated into the Quality Improvement Action Plan and circulated to GA Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance committee. PRG Report with Responses and Quality Improvement Action Plan are tabled at GASPQA ¹ meeting for discussion.
+ 1 year	Head of Department, Dean, Vice President Academic & Registrar and Director of Quality discuss progress with resolution of recommendations and outstanding items are referred to GASPQA

¹ GASPQA – Governing Authority Strategic Planning & Quality Assurance committee.

4.0 Preliminary Comments of the Peer Review Group (PRG)

The Department of Marketing and Management engaged fully with the peer review process. The self-assessment report was detailed, honest and reflective, clearly the product of a process which had involved staff across the department. Staff who met with the peer review group (PRG) appeared a close-knit and collegial team very willing to engage in discussion.

Providing an excellent student experience is clearly the current priority of this department and one which it meets successfully. All staff are enthused by their involvement in teaching, learning and assessment and this has allowed development of a range of innovative practice in these areas as evidenced by local and national recognition. Such practice, however, is demanding of staff time and, despite a University of Limerick (UL) strategic aim to improve research ratings and a number of departmental initiatives to promote research, there appears to be a reluctance to revise priorities or to experiment with ways of streamlining existing activity to increase the time available for research.

Existing pockets of research strength are likely to be lost in a culture which does not protect them. For this reason, the PRG strongly encourages the department to deploy its own management and marketing expertise to seek a way forward which reduces management and administrative overhead, protects clear excellence in teaching and learning and supports the majority of staff in increasing their research profile.

Such cultural change would be facilitated by a carefully monitored research action plan which rewarded genuine effort to increase research profile by the submission of articles to high-quality journals, supervision to successful completion of increasing numbers of postgraduate research students and applications for research funding (even when such applications are unsuccessful).

The department cannot achieve such change unsupported and the PRG believes it is necessary for the university to ensure that central infrastructure for research is proactive and fully utilised by departments. The university should further enable the development of staff skills which support its strategic aims concerning research. It should also define a series of staged performance indicators which, whilst challenging, are seen by staff as worthwhile and achievable and which lead over a defined period of time to its overall research goals.

5.0 The Report of the Peer Review Group

5.1 Mission

Commendations

The PRG commends the following:

5.1.1 The development of a department mission statement.

5.1.2 The inclusivity of the process used by the department in developing its mission statement.

5.1.3 The undertaking of the strategic review and SWOT analysis.

Recommendations

The PRG recommends the following:

5.1.4 A small leadership group should:

- Increase the relative emphasis on research in the mission statement to fully align it with the UL mission.
 - Define the strategic objectives required to support the mission with an emphasis on identifying gaps in departmental capabilities.
 - Compile a prioritised implementation plan that has clear ownership defined for the key tasks and initiatives required to meet those objectives.
 - Closely monitor and track progress on the implementation plan.
-

5.1.5 The department should determine a small number of values to underpin the revised mission.

5.2 Design and Content of Curriculum

Commendations

The PRG commends the following:

- 5.2.1 The aim of providing programmes which differentiate the KBS.
-
- 5.2.2 The market focus of programmes developed and offered by the department. In particular, it would appear that there is a clear appreciation of what employers require, what competitors are offering and what prospective students need.
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- 5.2.3 The highly evolved and robust set of processes and protocols for curriculum design and development which work to underpin the market-facing attributes of programmes offered by the department.
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- 5.2.4 The enthusiasm of faculty in ensuring that the curriculum delivers a positive student experience.
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Recommendations

The PRG recommends the following:

- 5.2.5 Explore ways of reducing the administrative burden associated with the wide portfolio of programmes by such means as:
- Reviewing programme structures to ensure the efficient and optimal use of modules.
 - Considering a reduction in the number of programmes offered.
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- 5.2.6 Rationalise the student survey process to reduce duplication and survey fatigue.
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5.3 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Commendations

The PRG commends the following:

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 5.3.1 | The increase in innovative teaching practices and the embracing of current technologies. |
| 5.3.2 | The Teaching and Learning Forum which provides an excellent mechanism for the sharing of knowledge on teaching and learning initiatives. |
| 5.3.3 | The enthusiasm and commitment of staff to support of students in industry projects. |
| 5.3.4 | The widespread culture of excellence in teaching across the department. |
| 5.3.5 | The successful engagement of businesses in teaching and in particular the success of 'live projects. |
| 5.3.6 | The appointment of an executive in residence. |

Recommendations

The PRG recommends the following:

- | | |
|--------|---|
| 5.3.7 | Explore ways that the department can streamline the teaching and assessment of programmes that are offered at Masters level, for example by exploring the potential to develop 'live' projects that feed into more than one module. |
| 5.3.8 | Develop formalised mechanisms that consolidate the resource-intensive activities around teaching and engagement with businesses, for example by using the expertise of the executive in residence. |
| 5.3.9 | Continue to upgrade technology to include wifi in all teaching and office spaces along with relevant technical support. |
| 5.3.10 | Investigate the potential for further use of technology in the teaching, learning and assessment process in order to optimise the use of staff time. |

5.4 Facilities and Learning Resources

Commendations

The PRG commends the following:

- 5.4.1 The impressive volume and range of facilities and resources available to staff and students.

- 5.4.2 The support model for the provision of library resources and services to the department using a dedicated subject librarian.

- 5.4.3 The department for constantly identifying possible improvements in this area and implementing these where possible.

Recommendations

The PRG recommends the following:

- 5.4.4 Compile a business case for local technical support based on a model similar to that for the college librarian with appropriate autonomy combined with strong links back to the central IT Division.

- 5.4.5 Further progress the social and digital media agenda within the department.

- 5.4.6 At UL level, either upgrade or replace the Sulis facility as a priority.

- 5.4.7 Exploit the full potential of the SharePoint portal to meet the document management requirements of the department.

- 5.4.8 Investigate and fully exploit the potential of the high-tech marketing suite both within and outside the university.

- 5.4.9 Exploit the revised KBS website to market the department locally, nationally and internationally.

5.5 Staff

Commendations

The PRG commends the following:

- 5.5.1 The quality, qualifications and depth of academic expertise of the staff.

- 5.5.2 The impressive staff engagement, work ethic and collegial culture.

- 5.5.3 The clear motivation and passion of staff for excellence in teaching and in supporting the student experience

- 5.5.4 The enthusiastic staff collaboration with industry and the community.

Recommendations

The PRG recommends the following:

- 5.5.5 Develop a long-term staffing plan (3-5 years) that increases uninterrupted and extended research time for research active staff.

- 5.5.6 Establish incentives in addition to promotions to support department priorities.

- 5.5.7 In the annual PDRS meeting, increase the focus on reviewing previously agreed goals.

5.6 Student Guidance and Support

Commendations

The PRG commends the following:

- 5.6.1 The comprehensive range of support services that are centrally available to the department's students.

- 5.6.2 The exceptional academic and pastoral support from faculty who, students report, readily provide advice and guidance.

- 5.6.3 The exciting and welcome initiative of the First Seven Weeks programme.

- 5.6.4 The establishment of a close working relationship with the Student Affairs Division as indicated by 'live' projects that students have undertaken in conjunction with the division and the integration of careers services into the curriculum in Marketing Leadership.

Recommendations

The PRG recommends the following:

- 5.6.5 Explore the potential for the First Seven Weeks programme to evolve into a compulsory induction module customised to the department.

- 5.6.6 Promote a greater utilisation of the UL careers service offered by the Cooperative Education & Careers Division.

- 5.6.7 Formalise the processes to ensure an optimal and attractive experience for international students.

5.7 Research Activity

Commendations

The PRG commends the following:

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| 5.7.1 | The substantial increase in research outputs since the previous review. |
| 5.7.2 | The provision of opportunities for the development of staff's research skills through research seminars and peer review of papers. |
| 5.7.3 | The creative resourcing of the visiting scholars scheme which provides a valuable mechanism for staff to interact with and learn from leading international faculty. |
| 5.7.4 | The high level of collaboration and collegiality between researchers in the department. |
| 5.7.5 | The funding and support given to PhD students, which provides opportunities for staff to manage shared research projects. |

Recommendations

The PRG recommends the following:

- | | |
|--------|---|
| 5.7.6 | Nominate a research director within the department to lead the development of research capabilities. |
| 5.7.7 | Expand mechanisms through which senior faculty members can share research expertise and provide research leadership. |
| 5.7.8 | Expand the visiting scholars scheme. |
| 5.7.9 | Collect data on all applications for research funding. |
| 5.7.10 | Publicise the department's research successes more comprehensively, including on the department's web pages, with a view to building reputation, impact and citations. |
| 5.7.11 | Develop a research plan for the department to include priorities, expectations regarding the progression of individual members up the research ladder, expertise development and reputation building. |
| 5.7.12 | At UL level, strengthen the level of support to improve departmental research. |

5.8 Department Organisation and Management

Commendations

The PRG commends the following:

- 5.8.1 The professional management of the programmes.

- 5.8.2 The continued collegiality, motivation and culture of support across the department, particularly in light of the resource constraints across the university and the third-level sector in Ireland.

- 5.8.3 The planning and implementation of the offsite strategic reviews.

Recommendations

The PRG recommends the following:

- 5.8.4 Employ the research director to lead on the development and implementation of the multi-year research plan.

- 5.8.5 Explore the utilisation of emerging management practices and communication tools to enhance the running of the department.

- 5.8.6 Explore enhanced workload prioritisation methods, including alternative approaches to how the department is organised, with a particular emphasis on reducing administrative activities and increasing research activities.

- 5.8.7 Utilise the department's capabilities in management and marketing to create business cases to secure resources at department and university level.

5.9 Quality Improvement Plan

Commendations

The PRG commends the following:

- 5.9.1 The comprehensive nature of the initial quality improvement plan.
 - 5.9.2 The distinction between periodic reviews and regular ongoing reviews.
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Recommendations

The PRG recommends the following:

- 5.9.3 Consider introducing clear milestone dates, rather than ongoing open-ended tasks, which can be measured and tracked.
 - 5.9.4 When adding items to the quality improvement plan which may develop over multiple years, consider breaking them down into multiple specific items or phases with distinct milestone dates for each.
 - 5.9.5 Incorporate the recommendations of the PRG into the quality improvement plan and align these to the department's strategic plan.
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Appendices

A Membership of the Peer Review Group:

Mr Kevin Costello	HR Business Partner, Dell, IRL.
Prof Carole Howorth	Professor of Entrepreneurship and Family Business Lancaster University Management School, UK
Mr Kevin Magee	Managing Director, Open Window Analytics, Dublin
Ms Mary O'Connor	Manager, Business Optimisation, ESB Energy International, IRL.
Ms Ailish O'Farrell	Recording Secretary, Limerick.
Prof Don O'Sullivan	Associate Professor of Marketing, Melbourne Business School
Prof Gaynor Taylor	Quality Systems Consultant, France. (Chair)

B Membership of the Department Quality Team:

Dr Naomi Birdthistle	Course Director, Corporate MBA Programme
Dr Conor Carroll	Lecturer in Marketing
Prof John Fahy	Professor of Marketing
Dr Briga Hynes	Course Director, MBS in International Entrepreneurship Management
Dr Maria Lichrou	Lecturer in Marketing
John McCarthy	Lecturer in Management
Dr Regina McNally	Course Director, MSc in International Management and Global Business
Bernie O'Connell	Departmental Administrator
Dr Deirdre O'Loughlin	Senior Lecturer in Marketing (Quality Team Leader)
Dr Lisa O'Malley	Head of Department
Dr John Walsh	Course Director, MA in Business Management (Upgrade)

C Contact

The Peer Review Group were given the opportunity over three days to talk to the department 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 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