



University College Dublin

Quality Improvement Plan

UCD School of Biology and Environmental Science

December 2022

1. Introduction

Give a very brief introduction to the approach taken in the development of the Quality Improvement Plan, including the dates of the original review and the names of the Quality Improvement Committee.

The original quality review of the School of Biology and Environmental Science took place via zoom on **March 21st – 24th 2022.**

The report of the Review Group was circulated to all members of the School the School community (Academic staff, technical staff, administrative staff, research staff and graduate research community.

A Quality Improvement Committee (details below) with representatives from the key areas mentioned in the Quality Review Group's report was formed and a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) based on the recommendations of the Review Group. The draft QIP was circulated to all members of the School community for comment prior to finalising the plan

Quality Improvement Committee

- Professor Evelyn Doyle (Head of School)
- Associate Professor Mary Kelly-Quinn (Head of Teaching and Learning)
- Dr Gavin Stewart (Stage 1 co-ordinator, former Head of T&L)
- Dr Jonathan Yearsley (Head of Research)
- Dr Sean Storey (Technical Staff representative)
- Ms Helen McCarthy (Administrative Staff representative)
- Ms Alannah Chalkley (Postgraduate student representative)

Abbreviations used

CFM	College Finance Manager
CoS	College of Science
CTO	Chief Technical Officer
HoS	Head of School
RG	Review Group
SGSC	School Graduate Students Committee
SHGE	School Head Global Engagement
SHRII	School Head Research, Innovation and Impact
SRIIC	School Research, Innovation and Impact Committee
STLC	School Teaching and Learning Committee
SHTL	School Head of Teaching and Learning
VP TL	College of Science VP for Teaching and Learning
VPGE	College of Science VP for Global Engagement

2. Recommendations for Improvements - Follow-Up Action Taken and/or Planned

Categories

1. Recommendations concerning academic, organisational and other matters which are entirely under the control of the unit
2. Recommendations concerning shortcomings in services, procedures and facilities which are outside the control of the unit
3. Recommendations concerning inadequate staffing, and/or facilities which require additional recurrent or capital funding

1.PRIORITISED RECOMMENDATIONS						
RG Report (Paragraph Reference)	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead* (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff/ Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
2.17	The RG recommend the School develop a plan, with the College Finance Manager, to invest a portion of the reserves to leverage investment in equipment and staffing. It is also recommended that each future grant application should include a budget for a piece of equipment and, if funding bodies permit, a portion of staff to be allocated to a research administrator.	1,2	The School will work with the College Finance Manager to develop an appropriate plan (which complies with UCD financial guidelines) to invest a portion of School financial reserves in equipment and staffing.	HoS SHRII CFM,UCD Research	Sept 2022	Sept 2027
			The School has already allocated funds from the School budget/reserves for the purchase of equipment which is managed by a committee chaired by the Head of Research, Innovation and Impact (SHRII)	SHRII	Sept 2022	Dec 2022
			The School is mindful of retaining sufficient reserves to allow for the purchase of new equipment for the Phase III development of the Science Centre and to protect the School against any sudden drop in student numbers.	School Exec	Ongoing	Ongoing

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			The School will require all large and group funding applications that typically require Head of School approval to include funding for equipment and/or a research administrator. The responsibility will lie with the named lead researcher on the application. For individual grant applications that do not require HoS sign off before submission, the School will advise staff to include funding for equipment and/or a research administrator if funding bodies allow.	HoS, UCD Research, All academic staff	Sept 2022	Ongoing
4.16	Since the University Curriculum Review in 2016, the School has seen a significant change in its module portfolio (see 4.5, re: development of new modules). The diversity and number of modules offered, particularly at Level 4, is demanding on staff time. Consideration should be given to reducing the number of modules, whilst enhancing quality, to provide an adequate and attractive portfolio that can facilitate the strategy for future growth in student numbers.	1	The School has already commenced a full review of module curricula. Once the data have been collated, the module portfolio will be reviewed in consultation with Heads of subject and Directors of taught graduate programmes. This will enable us to identify where and if module numbers can be reduced and what gaps need to be addressed within existing modules to ensure that the teaching and learning activities, assessments, and content of the suites of modules in each programme are aligned with the programme outcomes, and at the same time provides an appropriate and attractive portfolio.	SHTL. STLC	Sept 2022	Dec 2023

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			<p>It should be noted that the diversity and number of Level 4 modules available provides our students with the opportunity to select topics that fit their interests and career goals, as well as providing a more interactive, small group, learning environment. The diversity of Level 4 modules specifically serves the BBNL programme as a key aspect of this programme's success is the module choice. The BBNL programme, and its diversity, is critical for the financial stability of the School.</p> <p>The workload associated with Level 4 modules is not high compared to modules at Level 1, 2 or 3 and staff typically enjoy teaching them as they focus on their research interests. There is a concern that reducing the number of modules may negatively impact the student experience, without any significant reduction in staff workload. Balancing a lower number of Level 4 modules with quality enhancement and ensuring the portfolio remains attractive will be challenging and may not be possible.</p>			

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4.17	Assessment maps suggest that many programme learning outcomes are being assessed up to six times. The RG recommends that the School re-evaluates its assessment strategy, focusing on programme, rather than module-level requirements.	1	The School has already commenced a full review of the amount and type of assessment in all modules and programmes in the School. Once the data have been collated, assessment strategies will be reviewed in consultation with Heads of subject and Directors of taught graduate programmes with a view to reducing the overall number of assessments and ensuring programme learning outcomes are assessed.	SHTL, STLC	Sept 2022	Jan 2024
6.12	All academic staff should aim to secure external funding for research. This is the funding that makes research projects happen and provides extra resources for explorative research. The quality of research should also follow an upward trajectory.	1,2	<p>90% of SBES faculty have secured external funding for research in the last 3 years. The School will continue to support staff in securing external funding through local initiatives (e.g. school equipment fund, a school sabbatical policy, researcher's away day) and through engagement with research institutes such as UCD Earth Institute and UCD Conway Institute.</p> <p>The School plans to recruit local research administrative support and will use the workload model and sabbatical policy to encourage staff to lead more strategic applications that involve more staff in the School.</p>	<p>HoS, SHRII, UCD Research</p> <p>HoS</p>	<p>Sept 2022</p> <p>Jan 2023</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Jan 2025</p>

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6.13	The RG recommend that (a) the Research Committee establish a system to identify areas of critical mass where SBES scientists could form a small number of competitive clusters for strategic grant applications. The clusters in crops and plant science prove this can deliver considerable competitive funds to the School. (b) The Research Committee should nominate a leader for these potential research clusters, and funds should be allocated, or acquired via UCD Seed Funding, to buy out the lead individual's teaching and administration for a defined period, which would be used to (c) develop a research strategy to produce a series of strategic grant applications.	1,2	<p>We acknowledge that developing strategic grant applications would be a benefit to SBES researchers. The UCD Earth Institute has an existing Strategic Priorities support mechanism that has had some success (https://www.ucd.ie/earth/whatwedo/strategic-priorities/).</p> <p>The RII committee will put out a call to SBES researchers asking for strategic cluster proposals, each requiring a named lead researcher. The school's researcher's away day will be used to develop a school wide consensus on priority clusters and possible school supports. The RII committee will draw up proposals for school support of a strategic cluster and the selected cluster proposal. This will be presented at the School Executive for approval. If this approach is successful (evidence of winning research funding) it will form the basis of an ongoing process.</p>	SRIIC, UCD Research, CoS	Nov 2022	Nov 2025

2.ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES

RG (Paragraph Reference)	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff/ Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
2.14	The RG recommends a review of School organisational structures, with the appointment of a School Head of Global Engagement or International Study, as a leadership role to develop the School's strategy for global impact and international partnerships in line with the College and University priorities. It would also welcome undergraduate student representation on School committees.	1, 2	The School has appointed a School Head of Global Engagement who is now a member of the School Executive committee.	HoS	Sept 2022	Sept 2022
			The School Head of Global Engagement will work with the College VP for Global Engagement and UCD Global to develop the School's strategy for global impact and international partnerships in line with the College and University priorities.	SHGE VPGE	Sept 2022	Sept 2024
			The School already has an UG representative on the EDI committee and will appoint UG representatives to other appropriate School committees (T&L, H&S, SAB).	HoS School Executive	Sept 2022	Jan 2023
			See also 8.9 & 8.10 below			
2.15	The RG recommends the creation of role descriptors for School leadership roles, for example SHTL or SHRIL, along with SOPs to document the key functions of the School Office. It is also recommended that the School works to implement its policy of fixed terms	1,2	The School will generate role descriptors for all School leadership roles. The School has just appointed an additional administrative team member and they will draw up SOPs for all the key functions of the School Office. Most academic leadership roles in the School now rotate every 3-5 years and the School will work	School Executive	Jan 2023	Jan 2024

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	and rotation for academic leadership roles.		to ensure all roles have fixed terms and rotate. It should be noted that >30% of the current academic staff have been appointed since 2020 and 3 senior staff have been seconded to University roles (Director of Graduate Studies, College Principal, Director of Earth Institute). While every effort will be made to ensure new staff get relevant leadership experience and roles rotate, it would not be fair to burden new staff with roles such as SHTL or SHGS which carry a heavy workload. Thus the pool of candidates for some roles is quite small.			
2.16	Workload is a concern for the academic staff, and the RG recommends that the School works towards the reduction of third-trimester teaching and the introduction of a regular system of research sabbaticals. There is also scope to reduce the number of School committees.	1, 2	It is not possible to reduce third trimester teaching given the School, College and University dependence on income from taught MSc students. However, the School will look at ways of providing staff with a least one trimester free of teaching every 3-5 years. This will be challenging as taught MSc students typically do projects during the summer trimester and given the breadth of research across the School and the nature of the MSc programmes it is not always possible to exclude an academic staff member while	HoS, School Executive	Jan 2023	Jan 2024

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			<p>maintaining the breadth of research projects required.</p> <p>The School will review the workload model which has now been used for 3 years with a view to determining if it can be used more effectively to manage workloads across the School. It may be that the provision of trimester free teaching will have to be done on a case by case basis.</p> <p>The School recently produced a sabbatical policy and will promote this more widely to staff.</p> <p>With the exception of the School Advisory Board (recommended by the last Quality Review) and the Rosemount Management Committee all School committees are those required according to College and University structures. It is therefore not possible to reduce the number of School committees.</p>	<p>SHRII</p> <p>CoS</p>	<p>Sept 2022</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>Sept 2023</p> <p>N/A</p>

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			off before submission, the School will advise staff to include funding for equipment and/or a research administrator if funding bodies allow.			

3. STAFF AND FACILITIES

RG Report (Paragraph Reference)	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff / Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
3.16	Infrastructure is always ageing and needs constant replacement. There needs to be a strategy for developing the best scientific infrastructure that is worthy of the people who work in the School, and for resourcing technical support for the maintenance of pieces of equipment that require a dedicated technician.	1,2, 3	The School has recently established an Equipment group which will develop a plan for replacing old and purchasing new equipment. However, it will not be possible to fund the best scientific infrastructure that is worthy of the people who work in the School solely from the School budget. The School will work with the College of Science and the Science Phase III project team to identify appropriate infrastructure for the School and the new building.	HoS, School Executive, CoS	Sept 2022	Sept 2027

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RG Report (Paragraph Reference)	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff / Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
			<p>Cost recovery models are in place for most major pieces of equipment in the School and these will be reviewed to ensure they include costs for maintenance etc.</p> <p>The School plans to recruit a technical officer in 2023 and appoint a CTOII. We will review technical support needs in the light of the appointment of so many new staff and plan our recruitment around the outcome of this review.</p>	<p>CTO</p> <p>HoS, School Executive, STLC, SRIIC</p>	<p>Jan 2023</p> <p>Nov 2022</p>	<p>Jan 2024</p> <p>Jan 2024</p>
3.17	<p>The RG recommends that a survey be carried out to identify all key equipment in SBES, as well as items of equipment that are required but not available. A School-level strategy could then be established to replace or purchase equipment, e.g. with applications for equipment grants or the compulsory inclusion of smaller pieces of equipment on all grant applications submitted by SBES. This would allow the School to build a complete, state-of-the-art set of equipment over a three-to-five-year period.</p>	1, 3	<p>The School has a list of current equipment but all staff may not be aware of how to access it. The School will ensure the list is more visible.</p> <p>As stated above in 3.16 the School has recently established an Equipment group to develop a plan for replacing old and purchasing new equipment. This group has been provided with a budget from research overheads and has recently put out its first call for applications for equipment. Income from research overheads allowing, it is hoped that this approach will go some way to establishing state-of-the-art set of equipment over a three-to-five-year period.</p>	<p>CTO, HoS</p> <p>HoS, School Executive, SRIIC</p>	<p>Sept 2022</p> <p>Sept 2022</p>	<p>Jan 2023</p> <p>Sept 2027</p>

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			<p>However, depending on the needs of staff and the fact that 9 new staff will have joined the School between Jan 2022 and Mar 2023 and the School will hopefully be located in a new building (Phase III of Science) with associated equipment needs, research overheads alone will probably not be sufficient to cover the cost of equipment needed.</p> <p>As stated in 2.17, grant applications will be expected to include funding for equipment and/or research administration</p>			
3.18	The technician pool should be increased in size to expand the collective skill set and alleviate workload pressure on individuals. New academic staff should be made aware that there are limitations to the technician support they can appropriately request.	1,2	The School plans to recruit a technical officer and appoint a CTOII in 2023. We will review technical support needs in the light of the appointment of so many new staff and plan recruitment around the outcome of this review. Any further expansion of the technical pool is dependent on income but will be considered a priority by the School.	HoS, School Executive	Nov 2022	Dec 2024

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RG Report (Paragraph Reference)	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff / Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
3.19	Existing School practice around induction should be further developed and formalised for all new academic, research, technical, and administrative staff. The induction process should be conducted by the Head of School or designated manager in line with the UCD Probation Periods Policy.	1	The School will review its current induction practice and document and develop it further to ensure a formal process conducted by the Head of School or designated manager exists in line with the UCD Probation Periods Policy for all staff in the School.	HoS, CTO and School EDI committee	Sept 2022	Jan 2024

4. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

RG Report (Paragraph Reference)	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff/ Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
4.14	The Review Group recommends that the School explores better ways of hearing the student voice. We believe this is an issue of visibility and would encourage the School to identify ways in which class representatives are more visible and easier to contact, probably through digital means. In addition, we would like the undergraduate body to be represented on appropriate School committees (cf. 2.14).	1	A student representative will be included on the Teaching & Learning Committee and other appropriate committees.	SHTL & HoS	September 2022	September 2023
4.15	Degree outcomes have improved, notably during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is unclear if the School fully understands the basis for the higher degree classifications. The balance of assessment changed during the pandemic from examinations in favour of coursework. The School should reflect on whether such changed weightings should continue in the future, and the likely impact on programme outcomes (see 7.19, on authentic assessment).	1	The School is undertaking a review of assessment types, including the balance between exams and assignments (taking on board learning from the pandemic practices), across all undergraduate modules to develop an assessment strategy.	SHTL	September 2022	January 2024

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4.16	<p>Since the University Curriculum Review in 2016, the School has seen a significant change in its module portfolio (see 4.5, re: development of new modules). The diversity and number of modules offered, particularly at Level 4, is demanding on staff time. Consideration should be given to reducing the number of modules, whilst enhancing quality, to provide an adequate and attractive portfolio that can facilitate the strategy for future growth in student numbers.</p>	1	<p>The School has already commenced a full review of module curricula. Once the data have been collated, the module portfolio will be reviewed in consultation with Heads of subject and Directors of taught graduate programmes. This will enable us to identify where, and if module numbers can be reduced and what gaps need to be addressed within existing modules to ensure that the teaching and learning activities, assessments, and content of the suite of modules in each programme are aligned with programme outcomes, and at the same time provide an appropriate and attractive portfolio.</p> <p>It should be noted that the diversity and number of Level 4 modules available provides our students the opportunity to select topics that fit their interests and career goals, as well as providing a more interactive, small group, learning environment. The diversity of Level 4 modules specifically serves the BBNL programme as a key aspect of this programme's success is the module choice.</p>	SHTL STLC	September 2022	December 2023

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			<p>The BBNL programme, and its diversity, is critical for the financial stability of the School.</p> <p>The workload associated with Level 4 modules is not high compared to modules at Level 1, 2 or 3 and staff typically enjoy teaching them as they focus on their research interests. There is the concern that reducing the number of modules may negatively impact the student experience, without any significant reduction in staff workload. Balancing a lower number of Level 4 modules with quality enhancement and ensuring the portfolio remains attractive will be challenging and may not be possible.</p>			
4.17	Assessment maps suggest that many programme learning outcomes are being assessed up to six times. The RG recommends that the School re-evaluates its assessment strategy, focusing on programme- rather than module-level requirements.	1	As noted under 4.15 the School is undertaking a review of assessment types across all undergraduate and taught graduate modules to develop an assessment strategy that identifies where the number of assessment points can be reduced and that is cognisant of programme rather than module or lecturer-level requirements.	STLC	Sept 2022	Jan 2024

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4.18	Undergraduate students highlighted the need for improved information and advice on entry to the common entry DN200 Science programme about potential constraints on module and pathway choice in Stages 3 and 4, as a consequence of module choice in Stages 1 and 2. We recommend the School reviews its advice, and through student consultation, develops better guidance for future student cohorts.	1,2	Recruitment to DN200 is managed at College of Science level. We will continue to work with the College of Science to ensure that students are well informed on module and pathway choices starting at Stage 1. An online tool (https://major-pathways.ucd.ie) has recently been produced to help students see the module requirements for all programmes. We regularly review the advice and information we provide at student Advisory Sessions, on the School website and other resources. To facilitate better engagement with students we will involve postgraduate students in advisory sessions. We will also survey graduates for their feedback on the advice given.	CoS, STLC	Sept 2022	Sept 2027

5.CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

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5.9	SBES has indicated that it will retain the elements of online delivery that worked well during the pandemic, but there is no apparent trajectory for moving further into a digital delivery model. As we emerge from the pandemic, we encourage SBES to consider a holistic strategy for teaching and learning: to consider the need for increased student numbers, the balance of in-person and online provision, consortial provision with other schools, and the balance of on- and off-shore delivery to enable attractive programmes to be delivered in an effective and efficient manner, whilst enabling staff to deliver on their research ambitions.	1, 2	<p>We will engage in the University Review of Online Assessment. The output of this exercise will help inform the School's assessment strategy (4.17). We will work with the College and University Teaching & Learning Committees and the educational technologist to enhance the School's teaching and learning strategy, cognisant of the need to achieve a balance between online and in-person teaching. Options to include active learning approaches in on-campus sessions will be considered. A session on active learning was given by Prof. Prem Kumar, an advocate for active learning in the University of Birmingham, at the SBES Teaching & Learning Away Day in June 2022.</p> <p>We will work with the CoS VPTL, UCD T&L and educational technologist to continue to develop and enhance our online taught graduate programmes.</p>	STLC, UCD Centre for T&L, CoS, VPTL	Sept 2022	Sept 20 27

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5.10	The RG recommends that SBES undertake a review to better understand the causes behind the differential incompleteness rates between male and female PhD students and then develop a strategy to support all PhD students to complete their studies in a timely and successful manner.	1	We are developing a student survey with significant input from our PhD students. We aim to survey all PhD students twice - at stage transfer (12-18 months) and completion (4 years). We will also instigate a series of regular postgraduate workshops with invited guests, where students will decide the precise topics (e.g. career advice), to foster a greater sense of community. Finally, we will continue to monitor the incompleteness rates over the next 3 years and endeavour to compare these to those in other schools across the College of Science.	VPTL SGSC	January 2023	December 2026

6. RESEARCH ACTIVITY

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6.12	All academic staff should aim to secure external funding for research. This is the funding that makes research projects happen and provides extra resources for explorative research. The quality of research should also follow an upward trajectory.	1, 2	<p>90% of SBES faculty have secured external funding for research in the last 3 years. The School will continue to support staff in securing external funding through local initiatives (e.g. school equipment fund, a school sabbatical policy, researcher's away day) and through engagement with research institutes such as UCD Earth Institute and UCD Conway Institute.</p> <p>The School plans to recruit local research administrative support and will use the workload model and sabbatical policy to encourage staff to lead more strategic applications that involve more staff in the School.</p>	<p>SHRII, SRIIC, UCD Research</p> <p>HoS</p>	<p>Sept 2022</p> <p>Jan 2023</p>	<p>ongoing</p> <p>Jan 2025</p>

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6.14	The RG recommends that the University should continue to increase the proportion of grant overhead that returns to the School. We hope this can return to pre-pandemic levels as soon as possible.	2, 3	We welcome this recommendation and will bring to the attention of university management. The school has several initiatives (e.g. equipment fund, graduate support scheme, support for open access publication) that use the overheads to support SBES researchers. Increasing the proportion of grant overheads that returns to the school will allow school initiatives to be grown.	UCD, CoS	Jan 2023	Jan 2026
6.15	There is a need for the School to develop an implicit innovation/impact/commercialization strategy along with supporting processes to deliver the strategy. This should align with a College strategy.	1, 2	The school will work with UCD Nova, SBES researchers with commercialisation experience and alumni to develop an innovation/impact/commercialization strategy that aligns with the UCD "Shaping the Future" strategy .	SRIIC, UCD Nova, UCD Research, CoS	Jan 2023	Jan 2025

6. RESEARCH ACTIVITY

RG Report (Paragraph Reference)	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff/Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
6.16	PhD students receive different stipends depending on their funding source. In the interest of equity, the RG feels it would be desirable for the School to top up lower stipends to ensure all students receive the same.	1	<p>The school has increased the stipend it pays to School funded PhDs to €19000 per year, which is broadly in line with other PhD funding.</p> <p>The School does not have sufficient budget nor does it feel it appropriate to top up stipends from external agencies such as DAFM and the China Scholarship but will advocate strongly for these agencies to increase the stipends</p>	HoS	Sept 2022	Sept 2022

7. MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY AND ENHANCEMENT

RG Report (Paragraph Reference)	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff/ Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
7.12	The RG recommends that the School conducts an audit of academic staff who have achieved a teaching qualification and works with this group of people to facilitate engagement of staff in thinking more about quality enhancement and innovation, with the aim of generating a community of practice focused on scholarship of teaching and learning.	1, 2	<p>The School will conduct an audit of academic staff who have achieved a teaching qualification. Their success will be highlighted to the School via the monthly update.</p> <p>The School will work with the College VPTL and the College of Science new educational technologist to develop a community that will promote engagement of staff with quality enhancement and innovation and focused on scholarship of teaching and learning.</p> <p>Publications on teaching and learning will be promoted via the monthly update.</p>	<p>HoS</p> <p>STLC, VPTL</p> <p>HoS</p>	<p>Jan 2023</p> <p>Jan 2023</p> <p>Oct 2022</p>	<p>Jan 2024</p> <p>June 2024</p> <p>Oct 2022</p>
7.13	SBES has a Teaching and Learning Away Day, yet there appears to be limited opportunities to identify innovation, and to highlight and share this information amongst staff. This could be remedied by having an online space for staff to post working papers, blogs, and videos about their teaching and learning development activities.	1, 2	This is already being done at UCD level led by UCD Centre for T&L (e.g UCD Teaching and Learning Community). We will learn from broad University engagement to avoid duplication of effort and will highlight to staff what's available and encourage engagement with existing resources (e.g. https://www.ucd.ie/teaching/showcase/)	STLC, UCD Centre for T&L	Sept 2023	Sept 2025

7. MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY AND ENHANCEMENT

RG Report (Paragraph Reference)	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff/Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
7.14	Further sharing of good practice could happen by introducing peer observation of teaching and a peer-review system for module structure and content.	1, 2	Once the School has completed the curriculum content project and assessment review (4.15), information will be shared with staff delivering the various degree programmes. Module content and structure will be reviewed at programme level and across programmes. A system will be set up whereby interested staff can avail of an in-house peer-review of their teaching but this will be on a voluntary basis.	HoS, STLC, UCD Centre for T&L HoS, STLC, UCD Centre for T&L	Jan 2024 Jan 2023	Jan 2025 Ongoing
7.15	The graduate student voice is already heard at School and College committees, and we would encourage SBES to consider the introduction of undergraduate student representation on such committees as well (cf. 2.14).	1	The School will include undergraduate representatives on appropriate committees.	HoS	Sept 2022	Sept 2023
7.16	The School should reflect on the positive contribution to student outcomes from the move to online delivery during the pandemic and develop a strategy for how to benefit from online or hybrid delivery in the future, in particular to assess if the academic staff have the required skills that would enable new distance learning programmes to be	1	As mentioned in action 5.9, we will continue to enhance our existing online programme and consider the possibility of some of them being offered as microcredentials. This may have resource implications in terms of recruitment of additional teaching staff.	HoS, STLC	Jan 2023	Jan 2025

7. MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY AND ENHANCEMENT

RG Report (Paragraph Reference)	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff/Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
	developed should the need or opportunity arise. This could offer a means of enabling student growth without requiring additional teaching spaces.					
7.17	The RG supports the School's suggestion that they will advocate for an increase in the level of support (advice and training) for staff at College and University level for online delivery, e.g. additional educational technologists as well as an adequate supply of equipment.	1, 2, 3	The School supports this recommendation and welcomes the recent appointment of an educational technologist by the College of Science and would welcome further expansion of this area at college level.	CoS	Sept 2022	Nov 2022
7.18	The RG found varying levels of background expertise and training of teaching assistants in some modules. This should be addressed by requiring a timely and appropriate induction to the materials to be taught, and if possible, have greater academic input in the assignment of teaching assistants to modules, to better match their disciplinary knowledge to the subject to be taught.	1, 3	The School has introduced new guidelines for practical classes which clearly indicate the roles and responsibilities of all cohorts (academic and technical staff and teaching assistants) involved in delivering these classes. We will review these after a year. While it may be possible to more closely align teaching assistant knowledge with subject matter for stage 3 and 4 modules, the large level 1 modules present significant operational issues for this. We will endeavour to ideally match TAs wherever possible, subject to the constraints presented by large classes and complex timetabling.	HoS	Aug 2022	Aug 2023

7. MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY AND ENHANCEMENT

RG Report (Paragraph Reference)	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff/ Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
		1	<p>We have hired a Teaching Fellow who will be reviewing large stage 1 and stage 2 labs. We will review the need for this post after 2 years</p>	HoS	Nov 2022	Jan 2025
		1	<p>The School will also have to plan for additional capacity for statistics and data analysis modules as the numbers we will need to accommodate will increase significantly, soon.</p> <p>Increased student numbers in all our programmes requires increased numbers of research demonstrators. The School is dependent on research funded and a small number of School funded demonstrators to support lab and field based classes. Ideally the School would fund additional demonstrators but this cannot be supported from the School budget</p>			

7. MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY AND ENHANCEMENT

RG Report (Paragraph Reference)	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff/Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
7.19	Feedback from employers, in particular those hosting work placements, suggests that while the subject specific knowledge of SBES students is excellent, they sometimes lack the skills to apply this in a workplace setting. We recommend that SBES reflects on the extent to which the use of examinations can be replaced by authentic assessments that test students on the application of their knowledge.	1	We will work with UCD Teaching & Learning and review our assessment strategy. We will analyse our current methods of assessing practical skills, field-based skills, group work, writing and presentation skills. As our graduates enter a broad range of industries, in connection with this we will also establish an industry advisory panel for the School and ask them for advice regarding which applied skills are missing. This “skills gap analysis” input will identify more authentic assessments that allow students to be better tested in the application of their knowledge. In addition, we will further expand our students' engagement with the SCI30080 Internship module currently offered by UCD. Finally, the process of seeking future accreditation for some programmes that we are undertaking will also naturally help us give more authentic, applied skills to our students.	SHTL & VPTL	Jan 2023	Jan 2025

8.SUPPORT SERVICES

RG Report (Paragraph Reference)	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff/ Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
8.9	The RG recommends the development of a School strategy for international partnerships and global impact, under the leadership of a School Head of Global Engagement or International Study (see 2.14) to ensure that new collaborations focus not just on revenue but equally on the benefits for staff research and the UCD student experience.	1,2	<p>The School has appointed a School Head of Global Engagement (SHGE) who is a member of the School Executive and represents the School on the College Global Engagement Group.</p> <p>We will review the School's strategy in association with the College GEG.</p>	<p>HoS</p> <p>HoS, SHEG, CoS GEG</p>	<p>June 2022</p> <p>Oct 2022</p>	<p>June 2022</p> <p>Aug 2023</p>
8.10	The School strategy for the next phase of international educational collaboration should also focus on sustainable student growth. In particular, SBES should reflect on its strategy for how to exploit its experience in online delivery to develop new distance learning programmes (cf. 7.16).	1, 2, 3	Student recruitment is managed at College of Science and UCD Global level. The School will work with the College of Science and University Global Engagement teams to identify an appropriate strategy for sustainable student growth.	HoS, STLC, CoS, UCD GEG	Jan 2023	Jan 2024

9. COLLABORATIVE EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

RG Report (Paragraph Reference)	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff/Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
9.6	Continue the strong working relationships with support services and strengthen the level of communications between UCD Estate Services and the School in relation to the decant and refurbishment of the School's space.	1, 2	The School will continue our excellent working relationships with support services and strengthen these by inviting them to School meetings where appropriate and engaging in the Green campus and UCD Sustainable research initiative.	All	Sept 2022	Sept 2027
9.7	The RG recommends that SBES appoints a School Research Administrator to assist PIs in pre- and post-award grant management.	1	The School plans to appoint a School Research Administrator to assist PIs in pre- and post-award grant management. This post will be 50% funded from research overheads	HoS	Jan 2023	Jan 2024

10.EXTERNAL RELATIONS

RG Report (Paragraph Reference)	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff/ Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
10.8	There is a need for a concise strategy for external relations and a plan to deliver that strategy. It should be consistent with the College and University strategy.	1.2	The School has recently appointed an Alumni representative who is working with UCD Alumni to develop and grow a strategy for external relations.	SBES Alumni Rep, HoS, CoS	Sept 2022	Jan 2024
10.9	To give students the maximum benefit from the experience, SBES might consider how to help both graduate and undergraduate students prepare for internships. The School could also be more proactive in advertising external internships to students.	1,2	<p>Internships for undergraduates and taught graduates are organised through the College of Science Programme Internship Managers. The School will work with them to advertise internship opportunities to the students at a local level and prepare them for the internship experience.</p> <p>The School will run a short information session for students going on internships before they commence</p>	MSc Programme Directors, SHTL, College of Science Internship Managers	Sept 2022 Jan 2023	Ongoing July 2023
10.10	The School might also consider engaging with a number of internship-providers to identify their needs. This would help manage the expectations of both external providers and student interns.	1, 2	With the exception of the MSc Global Change, internships for undergraduates and taught graduates are organised through the College of Science (CoS) Programme Internship Managers. Directors of taught graduate programmes and Heads of Subject (where appropriate) will work with the CoS internship managers to identify internship-providers' needs and manage their expectations and those of the students.	Heads of Subject, MSc Programme Directors, College of Science Internship Managers	Jan 2023	Sept 2026

10.EXTERNAL RELATIONS

RG Report (Paragraph Reference)	RG Recommendation	Category (See above list)	Action Taken/Planned	Lead (E.g. Name of Faculty/Staff/ Group)	Start Date	Planned Completion Date
			Post-internship questionnaires are circulated to Global Change MSc students to help identify whether the skill set of the student matched with what the host required and identify where improvements can be made	MSc Global Change Director	Already commenced	Ongoing
10.11	UCD has a long tradition of engaging with alumni. A defined and coherent strategy for how SBES might contribute to this would be beneficial.	1,2	<p>The School has recently appointed an Alumni representative who is working with UCD Alumni to engage more effectively with alumni. An administrative officer has also been appointed to support this activity.</p> <p>The School will generate of database of alumni of the degrees within science delivered by School.</p>	School Alumni rep, UCD Alumni Office	<p>Jan 2022</p> <p>May 2022</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Jan 2024</p>

3. Prioritised Resource Requirements

3. Prioritised Resource Requirements

This section should only contain a list, prioritised by the Quality Improvement Committee, of recommendations outlined in the Review Group Report, which require additional resources. The planned action to address each recommendation with an estimate of the cost involved should also be included:

Additional space as we have exceeded planned targets for 2025 in terms of student numbers and academic staff

Increased demonstrators to support training of undergraduate laboratory and field-based classes

Additional academic staff to support increased student numbers

Appropriate Career pathway for Teaching Fellows

Additional educational technical support at School / College level

No	Recommendation	Plan	Estimated cost
3.16	Infrastructure is always ageing and needs constant replacement. There needs to be a strategy for developing the best scientific infrastructure that is worthy of the people who work in the School, and for resourcing technical support for the maintenance of pieces of equipment that require a dedicated technician.	SBES will work with the College Finance Officer and the Science Phase 3 Project Team to develop a strategy for funding of infrastructure. It is particularly important to ensure that the infrastructure in the new building is appropriate and it is likely that some existing key pieces of equipment may not survive the decant process, It will not be possible to fund this from the School budget alone	€500,000
3.17	The RG recommends that a survey be carried out to identify all key equipment in SBES, as well as items of equipment that are required but not available. A School-level strategy could then be established to replace or purchase equipment, e.g. with applications for equipment grants or the compulsory inclusion of smaller pieces of equipment on all grant applications submitted by SBES. This would	While the School will use research overheads and reserves to develop a School level strategy to build a complete, state-of-the-art set of equipment over a three-to-five-year period, School funds alone will not cover the cost of this and we will need support from the College of Science and/or UCD in	Cost dependent on outcome of survey

	allow the School to build a complete, state-of-the-art set of equipment over a three-to-five-year period.	developing a complete, state-of-the-art set of equipment	
6.14	The RG recommends that the University should continue to increase the proportion of grant overhead that returns to the School. We hope this can return to pre-pandemic levels as soon as possible.	The school has several initiatives (e.g. equipment fund, graduate support scheme, support for open access publication) that use the overheads to support SBES researchers. Increasing the proportion of grant overheads that returns to the school will allow school initiatives to be grown	Increase to 40%
7.17	The RG supports the School's suggestion that they will advocate for an increase in the level of support (advice and training) for staff at College and University level for online delivery, e.g. additional educational technologists as well as an adequate supply of equipment.	The School welcomes the recent appointment of an educational technologist by the College of Science and would welcome further expansion of this area at college level.	~€50K per annum to employ an educational technologist
7.18	The RG found varying levels of background expertise and training of teaching assistants in some modules. This should be addressed by requiring a timely and appropriate induction to the materials to be taught, and if possible, have greater academic input in the assignment of teaching assistants to modules, to better match their disciplinary knowledge to the subject to be taught.	Increased student numbers in all our programmes requires increased numbers of research demonstrators. The School is dependent on research funded and a small number of School funded demonstrators to support lab and field based classes. Ideally the School would fund additional demonstrators but this cannot be supported from the School budget	Funding of at least 4 additional demonstrators at a cost of €19,000 per annum plus fees
8.10	The School strategy for the next phase of international educational collaboration should also focus on sustainable student growth. In particular, SBES should reflect on its strategy for how to exploit its experience in online delivery to develop new distance learning programmes (cf. 7.16).	Development of new distance learning programmes comes with a cost in terms of administrative and technology support	~€50K per annum for admin support

Note: The Quality Improvement Plan should be used to inform Unit and College level academic, support service and resource planning activities.