



University College Dublin

REVIEW GROUP REPORT

Periodic Quality Review

UCD School of History

November 2022

Accepted by the UCD Governing Authority at its meeting on 21 September 2023

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Key Findings of the Review Group

The Review Group (RG) has identified a number of key findings in relation to areas of good practice and areas which the RG would highlight as requiring improvement within the UCD School of History. The main section of this Report sets out their findings, commendations and recommendations in more detail.

Examples of Good Practice

The RG identified a number of commendations in particular:

1. The range of research-led teaching in the curriculum is excellent, including a wide range of modules at level 3, innovations in field, scope and progression, diversification of content and early efforts towards decolonising the curriculum. (Commendation 4.23)
2. The integration of Archivistics into the School and the embedding of archive staff in school committees is highly commendable. (Commendation 2.18)
3. The dedication of the School's professional staff, who are managing many responsibilities is exceptional and highly commended. (Commendation 3.15)
4. The conversion of temporary academic contracts into permanent positions since the last review has stabilised the School and is welcomed. (Commendation 3.17)
5. The RG commends the Schools' progress in achieving research excellence as evidenced by a rise in QS ranking; high level of research-active staff (90%+), more peer-reviewed publications and monographs with leading academic publishers, funding successes including significant grants awarded post-submission of the SAR; the high level of public engagement and history staff successes in the University's impact competition, excellent resources in research centres such as the Michael O' Cleirigh Institute, the increase in number of postdoctoral researchers (from 4 to 10, 2017-22). (Commendation 6.17)
6. The RG commends the School for its strong relationships with students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders with a high level of public engagement. (Commendation 9.12)

Prioritised Recommendations for Improvement

The RG would suggest that the following be prioritised:

1. The RG recommend that a strategic plan which encompasses a future vision and trajectory for the School be developed. This plan should include a staffing strategy that aligns with the School's vision and is linked to financial planning cycles and financial status, and includes faculty, tutors, and professional staff. (Recommendation 2.19)
2. The RG recommend as a matter of priority that the Head of School develop a functioning workload model. The RG suggests the School explore models used in other schools and universities. (Recommendation 2.20)
3. The RG recommend as a matter of urgency the School formalise and improve mentoring for all academic and research funded staff. Models used across the University and in other institutions should be considered in formalising a revised system. (Recommendation 3.18)
4. The RG recommend the School institute in-School academic advising for students and include this activity in the School's new workload model. (Recommendation 4.38)
5. The RG recommend the following considerations of future curriculum development: (Recommendation 5.24)
 - a. Explore the potential for rationalising the complexity/number of offerings/pathways.
 - b. Continue to explore the opportunities for building greater interdisciplinarity.
 - c. Embed employability skills, in particular oral skills (individual and group presentation skills), group-working, and problem solving into assessment.
 - d. Review and align credit volume and workload across level 1 modules.
 - e. Work towards reducing class sizes wherever possible.
6. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion arose in multiple discussions during the remote site visit. While the School's focus on an Athena Swan application is commended, the RG recommend the School also reflect on issues beyond the gender focus of Athena Swan to encompass EDI issues in their broadest sense, including (but not limited to) sexuality, race, age, caring responsibilities, workload models, staff profile, student profile, access to facilities. As a matter of priority, the School Executive should develop, or update as appropriate, a School EDI Policy reflecting that of the University. The development process should include an appropriate consultation process with all School staff, either individually or collectively. (Recommendation 2.24)

1. Introduction and Overview of UCD School of History

Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a quality review of the University College Dublin School of History which was undertaken in April 2022. The School response to the Review Group Report is attached as Appendix 1.

The Review Framework

- 1.2 Irish Universities have collectively agreed a framework for their quality review and quality improvement systems, which is consistent with both the legislative requirements of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, and international good practice (e.g., Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015). Quality reviews are carried out in academic, administrative and support service units.

- 1.3 The purpose of periodic review is to assist the University to assure itself of the quality of each of its constituent units, and to utilise learning from this developmental process in order to effect improvement, including:

- To monitor the quality of the student experience, and of teaching and learning.
- To monitor research activity, including management of research activity, assessing the research performance with regard to research productivity, research income, and recruiting and supporting doctoral students.
- To identify, encourage and disseminate good practice, and to identify challenges and how to address these.
- To provide an opportunity for units to test the effectiveness of their systems and procedures for monitoring and enhancing quality and standards.
- To encourage the development and enhancement of these systems, in the context of current and emerging provision.
- To inform the University's strategic planning process.
- The output report provides robust evidence for external accreditation bodies.
- The process provides an external benchmark on practice and curriculum.
- To provide public information on the University's capacity to assure the quality and standards of its awards. The University's implementation of its quality procedures

enables it to demonstrate how it discharges its responsibilities for assuring the quality and standards of its awards, as required by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

The Review Process

1.4 Typically, the review model comprises four major elements:

- Preparation of a self-assessment report (SAR)
- A visit by a RG that includes UCD staff and external experts, both national and international. The site visit normally will take place over a two- or three-day period
- Preparation of a review group report that is made public
- Agreement of an action plan for improvement (quality improvement plan) based on the RG report's recommendations. The University will also monitor progress against the improvement plan

Full details of the review process can be found on the UCD Quality Office website: www.ucd.ie/quality.

The Review Group

1.5 The composition of the RG for the UCD School of History was as follows:

- Associate Professor Sue Rackard, UCD School of Veterinary Medicine, Chair
- Associate Professor Paul Fanning, Beijing-Dublin International College, Deputy Chair
- Professor Diane Urquhart, Gender Historian, Queen's University Belfast
- Dr Patricia Whatley, Senior Lecturer in Archives and Records Management, University of Dundee
- Professor Frances Andrews, Professor of Medieval History, University of St Andrews

1.6 The RG visited the School remotely from 19-22 April 2022 and held meetings with School staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students, graduates, employers, other university staff. The site visit schedule is included as Appendix 2.

1.7 In addition to the Self-assessment Report, the RG considered documentation provided by the School and the University during the online site visit.

1.8 This Report has been read and approved by all members of the Review Group.

Preparation of the Self-assessment Report (SAR)

- 1.9 Following a briefing from the UCD Quality Office, a Self-assessment Report Co-ordinating Committee (SARCC) was established by the School.
- 1.10 The SAR was prepared in the period May 2021 to February 2022. Staff were consulted during the process with specific aspects of the report discussed in various fora. The final draft report was developed by the SAR Co-ordinating Committee reflecting the various inputs with individual members taking responsibility for chapters of the report. All staff were given the opportunity to comment on the final draft and to contribute to the final report.
- 1.11 The RG found the SAR to be detailed and self-reflective in the main. Requests for additional information during the review process were met promptly. The inclusion of an organogram of the School's Committee structures and how the School sits within the College structure would have been welcome additions. The sections on external stakeholders and SWOT analysis were more narrative in style. The SWOT analysis section would have benefited from a concise summary of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats derived from reflections made throughout the full body of the report.
- 1.12 The RG would like to thank all those involved in the preparation of the SAR, with particular thanks to the Self-Assessment Co-ordinating Committee and Chair and all who participated in the site visit meetings.

The University

- 1.13 University College Dublin (UCD) is a large and diverse university whose origins date back to 1854. The University is situated on a large modern campus about 4 km to the south of the centre of Dublin.
- 1.14 The University Strategic Plan (2020 to 2024) states that the University's mission is: "to contribute to the flourishing of Dublin, Ireland, Europe and the world through the excellence and impact of our research and scholarship, the quality of our graduates and our global engagement; providing a supportive community in which every member of the University is enabled to achieve their full potential".

The University is currently organised into six colleges and 37 schools:

- UCD College of Arts and Humanities
- UCD College of Business
- UCD College of Engineering and Architecture
- UCD College of Health and Agricultural Sciences

- UCD College of Social Sciences and Law
- UCD College of Science

1.15 As one of the largest universities on the island of Ireland, UCD supports a broad, deep and rich academic community in Science, Business, Engineering, Health Sciences, Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine, Arts, Law, and Social Sciences. There are currently more than 33,000 students on our UCD campus, with approximately 18,000 undergraduates, 12,600 postgraduates and 2,200 Occasional students. This includes over 9,500 international students from 152 countries. In addition, UCD has almost 5,200 students studying UCD degree programmes on campuses overseas. Undergraduate degree students have the choice of 38 entry routes on offer via the CAO system, while UCD offers many other options at graduate level.

UCD School of History

1.16 The School of History is composed of two related academic disciplines, History and Archivistics and is ranked in the QS World University Subject Rankings in the top 100.

1.17 The School is one of the two largest of seven schools within UCD College of Arts and Humanities, and the largest department of History in the Irish State.

1.18 The School staff profile currently consists of academic (31.0 FTE), research (8.0 FTE) and professional (3.5 FTE) (based on March 2022 date provided by the School).

1.19 The academic staff grade profile is Full Professor 2, Professor 6, Associate Professor 6, Lecturer/Assistant Professor 15, Other Academic & Teaching 2. (based on March 2022 date provided by the School).

1.20 The School has a total student FTE of 564, with Undergraduate Degree FTE of 370 (based on March 2022 date provided by the School).

1.21 Undergraduate curriculum includes the Bachelor of Arts (BA) where students study History on this three-year joint major in combination with a wide range of other subjects, and the BA Humanities where students study History on the four-year BA Humanities degree on five discrete pathways – these pathways include History as single subject, Classic English and History, and History & Politics. Students also have the option to take History as part of a four-year BCL Law and History degree.

1.22 The School also offers eight distinct Master of Arts (MA) programmes, the majority are one-year programmes (full-time), two two-year programmes (full-time) and part-time equivalents for all MA programmes. These include:

- MA in Irish History
- MA in Medieval Studies
- MA Public History

- MA Global History
 - MA in the History of Medicine and Welfare
 - MA in European History (UNICA)
 - MA in International War Studies
 - MA in Archives and Records Management
- 1.23 The School also offers Certificates in Archives Management and Records Management, a Graduate Diploma in History and a Professional Certificate in Holocaust Studies.
- 1.24 Since the last review the School has undergone a number of structural changes, including the launch of the 4-year degree programme in Humanities in academic year 2016/17. In 2016 as part of a University-wide restructure UCD Archives joined with UCD Library.
- 1.25 The SAR also notes that following a period of few staff changes, seven new academic staff secured permanent posts and two new professional staff were appointed (the posts of two temporary professional staff members were regularised). Over 25% of current permanent staff joined the School after 2018.
- 1.26 The commendations and recommendations in this report are informed by the SAR, additional information requested during the remote site visit by the RG, interviews conducted during the remote site visit, as well as good practice from other institutions. As this was a remote site visit, the RG did not visit the facilities, however a video was provided by the School to the RG.
- 1.27 The RG noted that many of the findings below were also identified in the last Quality Review, some of which were enacted but not sustained, and others not enacted. Reflection on the last quality review's recommendations by the School is advised.

2. Organisation and Management

General Comments and Context

- 2.1 The School is led by the Head of School who reports to the College Principal. Selection of the Head of School is based on a consensus choice within the School. This role and that of the Director of Teaching and Learning are described as the most onerous administrative portfolios in the School. The RG noted that the current Director of Teaching and Learning is an early career academic.
- 2.2 The RG were concerned about the implications of the relationship between academic grade and senior responsibility where early career staff are in senior management positions and the potential for this to impede the development of a research profile and further career progression as a result.
- 2.3 School meetings are convened monthly in the Autumn and Spring trimesters and are open to all faculty and professional staff. These meetings act as the principal forum for discussion, communication and decision-making.

- 2.4 The annual planning and budget process takes place in the spring and involves discussions between the Head of School, the College Finance Manager and the HR Partner with directors of key areas within the School collaborating on this plan. The most recent school plan sets out annual objectives and longer term aims up to 2024. It was unclear to the RG if this process is driven by a strategic vision for the future trajectory of the School or the extent to which the current and future financial standing of the School (currently in deficit), feeds into this process.
- 2.5 The School's finances have been negatively impacted by the pandemic with the cancellation of Summer Schools in 2020 and 2021 and through the loss of income from occasional students.
- 2.6 An organogram showing the governance structure and relationship between the committees would have been helpful for better understanding the School's operations.
- 2.7 The SAR notes that the effectiveness of the School's committees is monitored by the Head of School. However, the RG found details on the remit, scope, lines of reporting and terms of reference to be scant. It was also noted in the SAR that minute-taking, having been formally adopted following the last quality review, has now 'fallen into abeyance'.
- 2.8 An absence of documented procedures and academic handbooks was also noted. The RG recommends that committees are required to produce and circulate minutes of meetings to increase efficiency, transparency and good practice.
- 2.9 Between 2017 and 2019 the School was successful in several strategic recruitment initiatives with the appointment of UCD Ad Astra Fellows, 1 Ad Astra Reactive Hire and 1 Wellcome Trust University Award, the conversion of a temporary post to permanent to support 'widening participation'. These initiatives also expanded the School's teaching and research expertise.
- 2.10 In September 2019 the School initiated an application for the Athena Swan Bronze Award and established a co-ordinating committee. The RG acknowledge this was an important endeavour for the School as it faces various Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) challenges relating to the profile of the School's faculty (The School currently has no female staff at professor or full professor level). The gender imbalance is also evident among research staff (20% are female (data provided by the School for January 2022)).
- 2.11 A workload model was adopted by the School following the 2014/15 quality review which converted workload across teaching, administration and research into points to facilitate comparison across the School. The SAR notes this 'fell into abeyance' for a number of reasons including a change in the type of teaching in 2016 associated with the introduction of new pathways in the BA Humanities and increased complexity in the syllabus structure.
- 2.12 The RG found the current revised workload model is primarily directed towards ensuring the School meets its commitments in respect of teaching provision within the BA and MA programmes rather than acting as a framework that ensures a balanced workload amongst all faculty within the School. A new workload model covering teaching and administrative responsibilities is required.

- 2.13 The School currently has a School Retention Officer with a contract of 4 hours weeks in the first and second trimesters.

Commendations

- 2.14 The very notable contribution of the Director of Teaching and Learning is commended.
- 2.15 The School holds monthly meetings open to faculty and professional staff for information dissemination, communication, discussion and decision-making.
- 2.16 An enhanced role of the School Executive in the School planning process has developed since the last quality review.
- 2.17 The School has done well in several strategic recruitment initiatives including the UCD Ad Astra Fellowship Scheme.
- 2.18 The integration of Archivistics into the School and the embedding of archive staff in school committees is highly commendable.

Recommendations

- 2.19 The RG recommend that a strategic plan which encompasses a future vision and trajectory for the School be developed. This plan should include a staffing strategy that aligns with the School's vision and is linked to financial planning cycles and financial status, and includes faculty, tutors, and professional staff.
- 2.20 The RG recommend as a matter of priority that the Head of School develop a functioning workload model. The RG suggests the School explore models used in other schools and universities.
- 2.21 An organogram showing the governance structure and relationship between the School's leadership, the School's various committees and the relevant governing boards should be created to clarify how the activities of the School are governed and managed.
- 2.22 The membership, remit, scope, terms of reference and reporting lines of School committees were unclear to the RG. Minuting of meetings should be re-activated and maintained with clarity around storage, access and sharing of the records of decision-making committees.
- 2.23 The relationship between academic grade and senior responsibility should be explored, focusing particularly on whether the undertaking of highly operational roles by early career faculty impedes their career progression.
- 2.24 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion arose in multiple discussions during the remote site visit. While the School's focus on an Athena Swan application is commended, the RG recommend the School also reflect on issues beyond the gender focus of Athena Swan to encompass EDI issues in their broadest sense, including (but not limited to) sexuality, race, age, caring responsibilities, workload models, staff profile, student profile, access to facilities. As a matter of priority, the School Executive should develop, or update as appropriate, a School EDI Policy. The development process should include an appropriate consultation process with all School staff, either individually or collectively.

3. Staff and Facilities

General Comments and Context

A. Staff

- 3.1 The School's excellent reputation in teaching and research is underpinned by the exceptional, committed staff in History and Archivistcs. The RG was impressed by the dedication of both faculty and professional staff, as well as postgraduate and doctoral students who were involved in the review process.
- 3.2 The RG noted the appointment of a teaching assistant to support the two Archivistcs staff would further enhance research and development activities of the discipline.
- 3.3 Since the last review, the prevalence of temporary and casual staff has been reduced considerably with the regularisation of staff contracts.
- 3.4 The dedication and efficiency of the small cohort of professional staff is impressive. However, the RG were concerned by the School Manager post not being extended beyond March 2024.
- 3.5 The establishment of five new strategic recruitment initiative posts is very positive and appears to have increased morale within the School. There was nevertheless some concern by the RG, based on their discussions, of what was understood to be a lack of transparency in the appointment of some tenured posts within the School.
- 3.6 The School plan to use broad searches for new appointments to ensure the highest quality appointments.
- 3.7 As well as the Athena Swan application, the establishment of an EDI officer (2020), a school level EDI committee (2021) and the promotion of the University's EDI policy at school level demonstrate a School awareness of the current staff gender imbalance issues and the need for urgent action on these issues.
- 3.8 Despite these encouraging developments the RG understood that few meetings have been held by the EDI committee.
- 3.9 The RG understood in discussions during the site visit that there are limited staff development and promotional opportunities for professional staff within the School.
- 3.10 The RG noted the implementation of mentors for new early career staff as a positive development. However, the RG found that the current mentorship system requires significant review to ensure that it operates effectively. The initiative could also usefully be extended to all faculty and research students with the process formalised, monitored and recorded. This has been recommended in the School's previous quality review with little progress made.
- 3.11 As noted earlier in this report, the School contributes to a multiple number of majors (38) and programmes. Programme structures are complex involving multiple Schools and Colleges. The RG found there is an open, collaborative and smooth working relationship between the School

Office and the College Office, and very good support from UCD Registry. The RG understood however, the School Office is managing tasks (relating to the Curriculum Management System) for which it would appreciate more assistance from the College Office.

B. Facilities

General Comments and Context

- 3.12 The SAR notes that the pandemic led to the postponement of plans for refurbishment of the School's facilities. The RG understood that current facilities in general are inadequate and do not permit all the School's faculty, staff and research students to be housed effectively within the School space.
- 3.13 The SAR also notes the School Office space is very constrained and it is not conducive to interacting with students. Accessing the office by wheelchair is not always possible or easy. Disabled access to the School Office and general School space requires urgent attention.
- 3.14 Students on the MA in Archives and Records Management programme use the School's rooms located in the basement of the Library building for practical work. These rooms are in a space shared with UCD Archives. It is essential for the space allocated to Archivistics in the Library basement be retained to enable archive students to develop practical skills. The space will also address professional accreditation requirements of theory and practice which that space facilitates.

Commendations

- 3.15 The dedication of the School's professional staff who are managing many responsibilities is exceptional and highly commended.
- 3.16 The plan to use broad searches for new appointments to ensure the highest quality colleagues are appointed is commended.
- 3.17 The conversion of temporary academic contracts into permanent positions since the last review has stabilised the School's staffing requirements and is welcomed.

Recommendations

- 3.18 The RG recommend as a matter of urgency the School formalise and improve mentoring for all academic and research funded staff. Models used across the University and in other institutions should be considered in formalising a revised system.
- 3.19 Following on from recommendation 2.24 above the RG recommend Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is included and placed early on School committee meeting agendas.

- 3.20 The RG recommend the appointment of an Archivistics Teaching Assistant to support the School's two core staff, ensuring the criteria for professional accreditation continues to be met.
- 3.21 There is a great opportunity for Archivistics students to gain essential practical experience by carrying out practical work onsite such as listing and digitisation. To facilitate this, it is essential that the secure space in the Library basement, currently used by Archivistics and close to the collections is maintained.
- 3.22 The RG recommend that facilities should be included in strategic planning - specifically the need to expand and improve facilities to help build a sense of community, enable individual research to be pursued in the same building, and ensure disabled access to School facilities.
- 3.23 The RG recommend that the School Manager post be retained beyond March 2024.
- 3.24 In developing the strategic plan (see 2.19 above), the RG recommend the nature and scope of the School's Retention Officer role should be clarified and enhanced.
- 3.25 The RG recommend the School ensure staff are clear on the process for the appointment of all tenured posts within the School.
- 3.26. The RG recommend a review of the School Office workload in the context of tasks that relate to Curriculum Management activity.

4. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

General Comments and Context

- 4.1 The School has an academic staff of 31.0 FTE (as noted in the Introduction above), 25% of whom have joined since 2018. The appointment of new staff makes this a very different group to the one reviewed in 2014/15 and the teaching reflects these changes.
- 4.2 Since 2014/15 the School has coped with substantial process change in relation to teaching, including IT systems, the VLE, exam paper management, and regulation of graduate studies, alongside the challenges created by the need for a structure and curriculum for the new four-year BA Humanities degree. The crisis of the pandemic only added to the difficulties. The RG wishes to acknowledge the stamina and exceptional efforts of the School's staff in responding to these challenges.
- 4.3 As noted above, the School offers both 3- and 4-year BA degrees (with multiple pathways), 8 MAs, has a sizable PhD (30 in 2022) cohort and runs a large summer school. The staff-student ratio of 16.5 is high for this discipline which thrives on small group work and the articulation of argument by individuals.

- 4.4 Successful student learning is evident in a variety of ways. Current students that met with the RG reported that they had acquired new skills, particularly in the first-year training modules which they regarded as providing foundational skills for the degree. The employers who met with the RG also underscored the high quality of UCD graduates, in particular commenting on the problem solving and critical skills of historians.
- 4.5 Several features of the teaching provided by the School further indicate it is of a high standard. These include the emphasis on active, autonomous student learning throughout the degrees, the progress from shorter, broader, more synthetic work to in-depth and primary source-based 4000-word research papers and (in the 4-year degree), an extended dissertation. This progression is enabled by new methodology modules at levels 1-2 (Creating History, History Today) as well as preparation for the dissertation at level 4. It is also evident that much of the teaching is strongly research-led. In particular, the ten-credit modules at level 3 which makes the most of the School's different research specialisms to offer students the wide choice of periods and types of history required to enable them to achieve a good History degree. This will be further enhanced by the plan to make additional appointments in Global History.
- 4.6 The 2019 accreditation process of the Archivistics programme confirmed the effective teaching methods on the programme. School faculty have also won UCD teaching prizes.
- 4.7 There is good variation in assessment methods. The double marking of dissertations which carry a high credit weighting within the School at both BA and MA level is optimal, as is the option to refer to externs for advice if needed. Academic staff clearly dedicate a lot of time and thought to grading, including moderating. In particular, the moderating of 10% of scripts graded by assistant examiners to ensure that standards are shared. Students nonetheless expressed a desire for greater and more detailed feedback, for example, on the end of trimester essays. It was clear that the School is aware of this and putting measures in place to ensure best practice is spread. However, the RG found that some module coordinators are still not yet providing sufficient linking between feedback and grading criteria.
- 4.8 Modules are reviewed by external examiners who have access to all module materials (for example, direct access to the VLE to moderate assessed work and review teaching materials) at undergraduate level. External examiners also advise the School on the allocation of prizes and nomination for student awards. Using external examiners ensures that module standards are met in line with University policy. These practices provide evidence on the sharing of good practice (from and to the School). The RG also noted the following:
- Feedback from external examiners feedback is currently reviewed in School as well as reported annually to the University, including the School's response to the feedback. It would also be helpful to ensure all feedback is widely shared in the School and retained for reference (perhaps via a staff/faculty intranet) and available to all School faculty.
 - Although moderating is now standard, the RG understood that MA externs do not make a site visit or provide feedback on either handbooks or assessment strategies. These are opportunities for exchange and ensuring best practice is shared. The School is aware of this, often seeking to adopt externs' recommendations at undergraduate level.

- 4.9 The scale of student engagement with graduate programmes is particularly impressive (22% of School FTE in 2022, in 2020, it was 16%). This is distributed across several strong MA programmes each with very good recruitment levels for this discipline (the same applies to Archivistics). The two-year MA degrees, including collaboration with other institutions, represent the best of international standards and all the MA degrees operate at a very high level.
- 4.10 Students learn about module requirements that include assessment requirements, submission deadlines from the Brightspace VLE once they have registered for a module and can access module handbooks. They expressed some anxiety about the lack of detail on some assessments, particularly essay questions at the beginning of a trimester. Where module coordinators intend to use more flexible assessments this needs to be clear to students when they sign up for a module so that students can make informed choices and schedule their work appropriately.
- 4.11 The RG understood the nature of recruitment from a common entry tariff means that students do not need to identify history as their subject of study on entry. As such, this is not particularly helpful to the statistical analysis of intake profiles for historians. It is, nonetheless, evident from the statistics provided by the School (2017-2021) that the number of fail grades in first year has been high. Those failing may have taken history as a third elective subject; though the failure rate may also indicate a mismatch between the qualifications of students admitted and the writing and analytical skills required for a degree in History/Humanities. However, the SAR notes that overall there has been a slight decrease in the last few years which is very welcome and perhaps reflects the activity of the School Retention Officer who works with students in need of additional support. The School is monitoring the situation and recognises that the shift to the BA Humanities where students do not start on a common entry tariff may also help improve pass rates.
- 4.12 The students spoke of the warm and supportive environment in the School. As well as individual friendly staff and faculty, the School Office clearly plays a key function as an information hub. The School Retention Officer also occupies an important role, if with a very limited contract, working with students who are identified by the College Office or by individual module coordinators as requiring additional support, or students who fail modules. However, the RG understood from their discussions that challenges can sometimes arise due to incomplete communication from the College Office. There is also a college student advisor.
- 4.13 However, students did note some difficulties in acquiring detailed information on module requirements as well as requirements for transitions between degree pathways. Although the orientation meeting and access to advice from the School Office are very welcome, as is the engagement of colleagues with the Academic Development and Assistance Project Team, Humanities (ADAPT Humanities) ¹ scheme, the absence of a faculty member in the School with whom to discuss any academic, administrative or personal issues that might arise for students

¹ *A college-wide pilot academic support project which will support student progression within UCD's BA Humanities (DN530).*

who are not struggling but may need accurate academic and personal advice or assistance is a gap needing to be addressed. The RG learned that in another School in the same College that a faculty member sends each student a check-in email a few weeks into the new trimester. The RG welcome the model and suggest that the School consider instituting a similar approach to academic advising and including it in the new workload model. (see 2.20 above).

- 4.14 Academic supports are multiple and well-directed including the Student Toolkit with guidance on how to write essays, a subject guide, academic integrity guide (much of this is on the Brightspace VLE), a writing centre and good relations with the Library. Extensive use of Brightspace and its multiple features including formats to promote accessibility, in particular the presence of dedicated support in the School office was widely praised by students, staff and faculty and appears to be working very well. It is also clear that the process for dealing with plagiarism is well designed.
- 4.15 The small library budget for this discipline is a cause for concern. The School has been expanding its provision to meet modern student expectations through the inclusion of global history and beginning to diversify and decolonize the curriculum. History remains a monograph and 'collected essays' heavy discipline which means teaching new subjects requires more substantial library support in these categories. The RG found the budget does not appear to be sufficient to support this need.
- 4.16 The career mentoring programme matching students with alumni in target careers is a very useful practice.
- 4.17 The School introduced several measures to allow teaching to continue during the pandemic. The students expressed a strong desire for some of these to continue, including recorded lectures and online meetings with faculty to discuss work and feedback. While the RG strongly agrees with the need to maintain in-person teaching and help students build community and communication, the RG also recommends that the School take the opportunity to enhance online offerings to support student learning.
- 4.18 The SAR notes since 2016, international student FTEs have increased from 42.3 to a high of 90.89 in 2019, with a slight dip to 87.45 in 2020, before a collapse to 45.43 in 2021 due to the pandemic.
- 4.19` At the MA level in particular, the RG understood from discussions that more international students might be attracted with greater support from UCD Global. The RG noted the contribution of international postgraduate numbers to the institutional profile, and the opportunity lost by not leveraging dedicated support for international recruitment to the School (see also comment 8.7 below).
- 4.20 Awareness of student satisfaction is available via discussion boards, the Staff-Student Committee (which now includes an MA student), the National Student Survey and in the circumstances of the pandemic use of an anonymous questionnaire to assess responses to the adjustments made to teaching.

- 4.21 Student feedback is also received via module feedback questionnaires which include both standard questions and, if the coordinator so chooses module specific points, a practice which seems well-suited to ensuring any student feedback is well-targeted. It is unfortunate that response rates are so low (20-21%), particularly as the SAR notes student feedback surveys are normally included in faculty members' applications for promotion processes. The SAR also notes early career, female, racial and ethnic minorities receive a disproportionate number of malicious and personalised comments and feedback.
- 4.22 The RG noted, as well as using the less formal methods of asking for feedback in person the School consider asking module coordinators to advise students to bring laptops or phones to the final module meeting and complete the questionnaires in the classroom with the coordinator leaving the room for ten minutes to facilitate this.

Commendations

- 4.23 The range of research-led teaching in the curriculum is excellent including a wide range of modules at level 3, innovations in field, scope and progression, diversification of content and early efforts towards decolonising the curriculum.
- 4.24 The warm and supportive environment for students in the School is commendable.
- 4.25 The RG commends the School's participation in the pilot ADAPT Humanities scheme to support student progression.
- 4.26 The RG commends the carefully structured approach to plagiarism and the opportunity for students to have representation if questions are raised.
- 4.27 Career mentoring and internship programmes integrated into both BA Humanities and the MA in Public History and as 'work placements' in the MA in Archives and Records Management were noted by the RG as examples of good practice.
- 4.28 The RG commends the process of centralisation of online applications and in-School committee approval of requests for extensions.

Recommendations

- 4.29 The School needs to address the high staff-student ratio and work to identify opportunities to reduce as much as possible.
- 4.30 The RG recommends the School aim to enhance appointments in Global History without weakening existing fields.
- 4.31 Whenever possible, all assessments should be clarified before a module begins. Where this is not possible, it should be made clear in the initial module outline so that students can schedule their work appropriately.

- 4.32 The RG recommend the School liaise with the College and other schools in the University to identify ways to improve student feedback to the School.
- 4.33 Continue to develop the work already underway to ensure that feedback on end of trimester work is improved and clear grading criteria are used throughout. For example, module coordinators could ask students to complete questionnaires in the classroom.
- 4.34 The RG recommend the University cease the use of module level feedback results for faculty promotion until response rates are 90% or above. In the meantime, the RG recommend the University continue to ensure that all feedback is sensitively monitored and malicious or personalised comments are deleted in line with University policy.
- 4.35 Improve liaison between the School Retention Officer and the College Office to ensure central services such as UCD Registry have the information needed.
- 4.36 The RG recommend consideration of the following:
- a. If external examiners are required to read student work for prizes, make sure this is recognised in their contracts.
 - b. Encourage site visits by MA externs to ensure best practice is shared.
 - c. Ensure external examiner feedback is widely shared in the School and retained for reference by colleagues as appropriate.
- 4.37 Continue to monitor fail rates at level 1 and intervene if needed to improve student attainment.
- 4.38 The RG recommend the School institute in-School academic advising for students and include this activity in the School's new workload model.
- 4.39 Work to increase the library budget to support the expansion required for diversifying the curriculum.
- 4.40 Retain enhanced online offerings where possible to facilitate access to learning for the student body, including online appointments to discuss feedback, access to electronic resources for teaching and other online activities as appropriate.

5. Curriculum Development and Review

General Comments and Context

- 5.1 As noted earlier in this report, the School is currently engaged in the College roll out of a new 4-year BA Humanities degree programme with multiple pathways for which full details of the fourth year are to be developed. The first students to take the final year will do so in 2022-2023.
- 5.2 The BA Humanities degree is designed to allow students to develop their historical skills more fully, in part by completing a dissertation for which they are prepared by a research skills module. The RG found the new degree fit-for-purpose and up to date. The RG also recognised the value of retaining a 3-year degree for those who cannot afford or do not wish to undertake four years of study.
- 5.3 The RG noted the drop in the numbers of students taking history since 2014/15, but also the potential for growth based on the expanding level 1 cohort attracted by the new 4-year degree, and the development of a single subject history pathway within it, as well as the 'History and Politics' pathway which recruits well.
- 5.4 As note earlier, the undergraduate curriculum is now constructed around a very large number of pathways, in either the 3-year BA or the 4-year Humanities BA which promotes student choice, and ranges from the BA History to the BCL Law with History to the Higher Diploma in Arts, (HDip Arts) to students taking single electives, and includes participation in innovative programmes such as Global Studies and European Studies.
- 5.5 The introduction of the four-year Humanities degree has led to substantial process change and multiplication of these pathways, (e.g. History and Politics, Classics, English, European Studies, Global Studies) and requiring considerable staff time to develop the structure and curriculum including new core modules. The RG therefore recognises that the School have been coping exceptionally well with the substantial challenges created by adjusting to the new four-year degree alongside its predecessors as well as introducing new MA degrees.
- 5.6 The structures of the 3- and 4-year undergraduate degrees in history are benchmarked against national and international standards and include some highly commendable elements including the training modules in first year, the progression from broader synthetic study to more specific research-led modules, the inclusion of methodological modules at all levels, research dissertations, internship and workplace programmes, as well as the opportunity to study abroad.
- 5.7 The requirement that students can take only 10 credits in level 1 and still progress to study history introduces a point of fragility raising concerns about how well such students perform. The RG suggests that the School explore whether it would be possible to move from 'informal advice' that those wishing to study history take more credits to formal encouragement.

- 5.8 The SAR notes that while class sizes for modules at levels 1 and 2 can often be large (with numbers of 250+ in level 1 surveys), seminars are taught in groups no larger than 20.
- 5.9 Interdisciplinarity is built into a selection of pathways and modules including the Discovery modules led by the School (War: Ancient and Modern; Contagion and Control). However, the RG recognised some concerns about the coordination of these which has not been easy to resolve at school level.
- 5.10 The new curriculum appears attentive to the need to decolonise curricula and to improve Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the content of teaching.
- 5.11 The new curriculum requires ongoing work that includes additional library budgetary resources and continuing explicit support.
- 5.12 The School has identified student learning outcomes for each element of each degree. However, the RG found there is some evidence of a lack of close oversight. As the School themselves noted level one History modules require too many hours for the number of credits obtained in the six modules.
- 5.13 The RG found there is work to be done to clarify how progression is built into assessment processes (beyond requiring greater length in written assignments). It is essential that students acquire (and can demonstrate that they have acquired) the range of skills expected of a history graduate. The RG found that oral skills are not being taught or assessed in a systematic way such that a student could choose to avoid this form of assessment. This contrasts with the clear preference and feedback from the employers the RG met during the site visit and who reported that they increasingly rely on finding recruits with excellent oral skills.
- 5.14 The RG acknowledges that students often express anxiety about oral assessments which require more support from faculty and in some cases, for particular arrangements to be agreed. It is important nonetheless that oral assessment goes well beyond 'classroom participation' to ensure that students learn how to articulate and present argument and analysis orally as effectively as in writing. The RG sees this as a critical gap that the School needs to fill.
- 5.15 The SAR notes positive feedback from students and faculty for the diversification of the School's syllabus and curriculum while retaining the valued emphasis on the teaching and research in Irish history. Students also expressed satisfaction at their experience of learning in broad survey modules and progressing to 10-credit small group modules.

Commendations

- 5.16 The subject specialisations reflected in MA teaching are impressive, from Archivistics, Irish, European, Global, War Studies, History of Medicine, to Medieval Studies and Public History.

- 5.17 The RG commend the School for the commitment to expanding the scope of its research-led teaching, including Global History, while also maintaining its strength in long-standing areas (Irish History, Medieval History, Modern European/American History). This will allow a balanced curriculum to cater to student demand while also reflecting the best research in the discipline.
- 5.18 The RG commend the School's training modules, for example the interactive academic integrity training at level one to be well-structured and appropriate to this introductory level.
- 5.19 The RG commends the move to 10 credits for level 3 and from 10 to 20 credits for dissertations which puts the School on a par with best practice in other history departments. The RG were also pleased to note that there will now be a dissertation prize.
- 5.20 The RG commends faculty engagement with the Universal Design for Learning approaches within the School and welcome the School's desire to expand this engagement further.

Recommendations

- 5.21 The RG recommend that the School explicitly encourage students wishing to continue to study history to take more history credits at level 1.
- 5.22 The RG recommend the School work to improve coordination of interdisciplinary degrees, liaising with colleagues in other UCD schools and colleges as appropriate.
- 5.23 The RG recommend that the School continue to work to embed EDI in teaching content while working to diversify the curriculum.
- 5.24 The RG recommend the following considerations on future curriculum development:
- a. Explore the potential for rationalising the complexity/number of offerings/pathways.
 - b. Continue to explore the opportunities for building greater interdisciplinarity.
 - c. Embed employability skills, in particular oral skills (individual and group presentation skills), group-working, and problem solving into assessment.
 - d. Review and align credit volume and workload across level 1 modules.
 - e. Work towards reducing class sizes wherever possible.

6. Research Activity

General Comments and Context

- 6.1 The School have identified five research strategies (increased peer-reviewed publications, increased research students and postdoctoral researchers, consolidating and diversifying research funding, enhancing its international profile, further public engagement and impact). These are to be commended and the suggestions below are positioned to encourage and support the School to achieve these aims.
- 6.2 During the remote site visit the RG met with members of the School Research Committee, postgraduate research students, research-funded staff and representatives from UCD Research Innovation and Impact. In particular, the issue of research support was also discussed more broadly during the review process.
- 6.3 The School has a strong sense of its research strengths and ideas on how it maps onto the University's Strategy - Rising to the Future 2020-24, and research themes of 'Creating a Sustainable Global Society', 'Empowering Humanity' and also 'Building a Healthy World'. However, the RG were of the opinion that the School is responding to rather than being driven/supported by the strategy.
- 6.4 The School's three research centres and institute (Mícheál Ó Cléirigh Institute for the Study of Irish History and Civilisation, UCD Centre for the History of Medicine in Ireland, UCD Centre for War Studies) are active and make a key contribution to research culture in the School and beyond.
- 6.5 The School's funding successes include the Irish Research Council (IRC), the Wellcome Trust, European Research Council programmes and the Norwegian Research Council. A range of internal funding to support research activities is available such as the UCD conference allowance, the UCD Output Based Research Support (OBRSS) funding scheme and UCD Seed Funding.
- 6.6 The School noted that the College of Arts and Humanities, uniquely within the University, lacks a dedicated College Research Manager. The need to support smaller grants was also highlighted.
- 6.7 The School acknowledges the gender profile of postdoctoral research staff (20% are female (Jan 2022) and needs to be addressed and is similar to that of staffing within the School.
- 6.8 The desire and need to build a closer sense of research community was expressed in a number of fora during the review process, including PhD students who felt that a sense of community among their peers was lacking. The RG acknowledge that the quality review took place in a period of post-COVID-19 recovery and transition back to campus but moving forward there are opportunities for transformative work.

- 6.9 The School has been encouraging staff to publish in peer reviewed journals and with leading academic publishers and the SAR effectively notes the impact of this support. The enhancement of the role of the School's Research Committee was also part of the School's strategy to address the decline in the number of research fellows.
- 6.10 PhD students were positive about their experience of studying history at UCD commending the structure of the PhD programme, the supportive faculty, the ability to connect with supervisors when required, opportunities to teach and clarity of the School PhD handbook.
- 6.11 Research-funded staff that met with the RG indicated they felt well-supported and valued the teaching and professional development opportunities available.
- 6.12 Informed by work done through the UK REF, the RG robustly rejects the University's use of research metrics (such as Scopus and measuring the percentage of international collaboration in papers) as research performance indicators for History. The RG noted that work done through the UK REF exercise demonstrate that these are not valid parameters for history and should not be used.
- 6.13 The integration of Archivistcs into the School (and the University Archives into the Library) gives great potential for the development of collaborative research projects, the incorporation of archival collections and special collections into research funding applications and the embedding primary sources into teaching.
- 6.14 The RG noted great potential for the establishment of a practice-based PhD programme in Archivistcs which permits workplace research with the submission of a practice-based component and a shorter thesis. Many practice-based PhDs are creative but in this discipline could include, for example, a practice related work model, a digital or a text resource.
- 6.15 The RG noted that the School has appointed a research integrity champion to advance the University's policy relating to research integrity and that graduate research students are required to complete research integrity training. However, the School raised concerns that the training package offered by Epigeum is not a good fit for humanities scholars.

Commendations

- 6.16 The RG commends the greater incorporation of research staff within the School since the last quality review.
- 6.17 The RG commends the Schools' progress in achieving research excellence as evidenced by a rise in QS ranking, high level of research-active staff (90%+), more peer-reviewed publications and monographs with leading academic publishers, funding successes including significant grants awarded post-submission of the SAR the high level of public engagement and history staff successes in the University's impact competition, excellent resources in research centres such as the Michael O'Clairigh Institute, the increase in number of postdoctoral researchers (from 4 to 10, 2017-22).

- 6.18 The RG commends the School Research Committee for creating connections with the Recruitment Committee and Athena Swan Committee.
- 6.19 The RG commends the increased level of research support provided by the research committee since the last quality review. For example, the organisation of networking and information workshops before and during the COVID-19 pandemic (on major grant applications and publishing), mock interviews for staff applying for major grants, Archivists' inclusion in the sabbatical leave scheme since last quality review, the School's research committee's internal peer review process of funding applications for Irish Research Council scheme initiated since the last quality review.
- 6.20 The merging of Archivistics into the School facilitates significant enhancement of staff and student research and teaching.
- 6.21 The review process for PhD students is based on a two-stage process and is appropriately focussed on the early stage of the PhD programme and then after 12-18 months of study. The RG noted as good practice that the research studies' panel includes both the supervisor and two other members of faculty.

Recommendations

- 6.22 The RG recommend the following in developing a research culture:
- a. revisit membership of the School Research Committee to include PhD representation, increase the frequency of meetings and the committee's remit beyond reviewing Irish Research Council grant applications.
 - b. maintain and circulate the School Research Committee minutes to provide accountability, transparency, and share best practice.
 - c. bolster the discussion of outputs and research planning as is being encouraged by the University.
 - d. support and inform staff of challenges in the research landscape, for example, where faculty/researcher are obliged by funders to publish research via Open Access platforms as well as information on funding opportunities.
 - e. explore further collaborative opportunities for funding.
 - f. build a closer sense of communal research culture whilst protecting historians' need for individual research focus recognising that some research-funded staff clearly identify more closely with research centres than with the School
 - g. in strategic planning identify a space where people can meet and network informally.
- 6.23 The RG recommend the following from an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion perspective:
- a. consider initiatives that are aligned with current HR policies such as gender decoding job adverts to help address the gender imbalance.
 - b. build-in a non-teaching semester when staff return from maternity leave to allow for revitalisation of research.
 - c. measure the EDI impact of schemes such as the OBRSS within the School and report any issues to UCD Research, Innovation and Impact.

- 6.24 The RG recommend the School develop a strategy to fulfil the School's ambition to increase PhD numbers and provide space accommodation for research students which intersects with increased PhD recruitment, supports and encourages interdisciplinarity.
- 6.25 The RG recommend the appointment of a School Research Manager to support research activities as a priority. Consideration should be given to pooling resources with other disciplines in the College to provide a research manager in the short-term. Such an investment will enhance grant capture to help the School out of deficit and provide full post-grant administrative support to support faculty which is especially important for more junior colleagues.
- 6.26 The RG noted the good uptake of sabbatical leave (almost 100% and a 25% reduction of teaching in a sabbatical year. It was also note that in some cases, there is also the continuance of mentoring of PhD students, postdoctoral fellows and/or MA supervision while on leave as a lower level of teaching relief and the RG recommend this be reviewed.
- 6.27 The RG support the School's continued engagement with UCD Research, Innovation and Impact to emphasise the importance of quality over quantity for History publications.
- 6.28 The RG recommends the following in relation to Postgraduate Research:
- a. set a minimum number of annual PhD supervisory meetings and ensure that these are recorded (i.e. via a central system or email record).
 - b. develop the means to collate data for the rate of the progression for PhD students by gender, both part-time and full-time. (The RG note that this is an issue that has been previously raised by the Athena Swan team in the School).
 - c. hold a mentoring session, potentially lead by a recent PhD graduate to offer advice on trajectory and career planning including how to communicate skills to non-academic employers for PhD students.
- 6.29 The RG found payment rates for PhD and postdoctoral tutors to be low, especially for marking. The RG recommends inclusion of an 'office hours' payment to cover time spent answering student queries and on feedback.
- 6.30 The RG recommend consideration be given by the School to the establishment of a practice-based PhD programme in Archivistis.
- 6.31 The RG recommend a review of the current research training package 'Epigeum' and consideration of a more appropriate package for humanities scholars.

7. Management of Quality and Enhancement

General Comments and Context

- 7.1 The School is clearly investigating many channels to improve and enhance its activities covering staff-student communication, internal staff review and external review. Examples include the Staff-Student Committee, electronic student feedback system, internal staff review, various task specific committees, appointment of a research integrity champion, school meetings, research seminars, mentoring and P4G, external examiner reviews and reports, programme boards as well as engagement with and representation on various college committees.
- 7.2 The RG acknowledge the School's commitment to addressing gender imbalance among postgraduate students as well as faculty. For example, School's initiatives, such as 'WomenAlsoKnowHistory' recruitment sessions for MA and PhD programmes.
- 7.3 The RG noted greater reflection on the School's structures, processes and practices and the documentation of discussions, decisions and implementations will increase transparency within the School.
- 7.4 Although the UCD Student Complaints Policy and Procedure for student complaints is available on the main website they are not available in either the Student Handbook or the School's website, areas which students are most likely to seek information.
- 7.5 The Staff-Student Committee is another mechanism through which students can voice their concerns on their teaching and learning experiences. Undergraduate student representatives (up to two per stage) are selected via annual Student Union elections and by-elections.
- 7.6 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) appears to be well managed within the School. However, it was not clear to the RG if information professionals act as advisors within that process to ensure compliance with the appropriate legislation.
- 7.7 The School has responded positively to a number of areas in the most recent report from the professional archive accrediting body, the Archives and Records Association UK and Ireland (ARA). For example, the inclusion of discussion on ways to effectively monitor the performance of records management initiatives over time.

Commendations

- 7.8 The School is commended for the commitment to support EDI initiatives such as 'WomenAlsoKnowHistory' recruitment sessions for MA and PhD programmes.
- 7.9 The School's response to the report from the professional archive accrediting body, the Archives and Records Association, UK and Ireland (ARA) is encouraging.

Recommendations

- 7.10 The RG recommend greater inclusion of students in the Staff-Student Committee to ensure adequate representation and involvement from all categories of student, particularly undergraduate students in the early stages of their degrees.
- 7.11 The RG recommend that the School continue to monitor, implement and resource the professional requirements in relation to Archives.

8. Support Services

General Comments and Context

- 8.1 The SAR identified UCD Library, UCD's Cultural Heritage Divisions, UCD IT Services, UCD HR, the UCD College of Arts & Humanities College Office, UCD Registry, UCD Access and Lifelong Learning, UCD Student Counselling Services, UCD Estates Timetabling & Room Allocation team, UCD Finance, UCD Research, Innovation & Impact as among the key support services enabling the School to fulfil its mission. During the remote site visit the RG also met with representatives of these services as well as representatives from UCD Global.
- 8.2 The key intersection points between the School and the University support services is usually the School Office.
- 8.3 The Library is an essential resource for students and staff and the School enjoys a strong collaborative working arrangement with it. There were concerns raised by the School in the SAR in respect of funding and expenditure allocated for the School's needs. Current expenditure for History, while having increased recently, remains lower than in 2007. Whilst there is an understanding that overall funds available to the UCD Library have also diminished there is a perceived lack of equity by the School regarding the extent of funds allocated to History vis a vis other Schools. However, it was clarified by the UCD Library that the Collections budget is no longer allocated by School and that the approach is to balance out the spend over a couple of years to ensure no one School receives more than other. The RG recommend the School also explore additional funding streams to support its required investment in library resources.
- 8.4 The School is well supported by UCD IT Services and UCD HR, for example, supporting reporting, student registration processes and management of budgets. While there is a significant amount of data available via the infohub system; where deficits arise the RG understood these tend to be at university level, for example, in support of data gathering for an Athena Swan application and also ease of use of data in InfoHub.

- 8.5 The School is complimentary of the excellent support provided by UCD Access and Lifelong Learning and UCD Student Counselling Services. The challenge for the School is largely around the current increased demand for counselling options and resulting waiting times for appointments, which in turn provides an additional administrative burden on the School Office as it becomes the immediate visible contact point for students.
- 8.6 While the support for developing applications for funded research projects provided by UCD Research Innovation and Impact works well, the post-award support, particularly in terms of financial management of grants was described as 'minimal'. This feedback was echoed across a number of fora during the site visit. The RG see this is an issue that should be resolved, if prevalent across the University or at College level, with the assistance of UCD Finance.
- 8.7 The RG noted an apparent disconnect in the relationship between the School and UCD Global. The RG understood from the School their sense was the market for their programmes is not sufficient to attract the attention of UCD Global, while the sense from the representatives of UCD Global was that the School is not engaging with them to the fullest extent possible. The RG recommends the School meet the UCD Global Directors (for International Student Recruitment & for Global Relations, Partnerships & Mobility) to foster a closer working relationship and ultimately a more international student cohort.

Commendations

- 8.8 The excellent service provided by the School Office in acting as the intersection point between the School and the multiple central support services within the University.
- 8.9 The School's close collaboration with the UCD Library and UCD's Cultural Heritage Divisions (UCD Archives, the National Folklore Collection, UCD Special Collections and UCD Digital Library) including the School's engagement with these areas in the delivery of modules and learning content to history related programmes.

Recommendations

- 8.10 The RG recommend the School liaise with the Library in respect of the allocation of the library budgets and explore additional funding streams, for example, increased revenue for international students to allow School investment in specific library resources.
- 8.11 The RG recommend the School formalise a process for highlighting with context to the College Principal, areas of central support services where investment/development is required. Examples noted in discussions included a) the lack of suitable reports through IT Systems and Services at university level for data gathering and analysis for an Athena Swan application, b) the lack of suitability of InfoHub data for longer-term strategic planning, c) level of post-award support for research grants.
- 8.12 The RG recommend that the School and UCD Global liaise more closely to enhance international postgraduate student recruitment in the School and help increase diversity.

9. External Relations

General Comments and Context

- 9.1 The RG met with an impressive array of external stakeholders representing professional and accrediting bodies, placement partners, employers and alumni who contributed to the quality review process. This is indicative of the high external esteem in which the School is held. Some of these relationships are close, long-standing and much-valued, enabling meetings to take place on campus and providing speakers for events.
- 9.2 The RG noted that a formal external advisory group for strategic planning and support to the Head of School was a recommendation of the previous quality review of 2014-15. This was not actioned. However, since the last review an alumni network group was established to support/advise regarding student career planning.
- 9.3 Alumni feedback to the RG regarding the quality of the School's teaching was very positive.
- 9.4 In relation to staff exchanges on the ERASMUS+ scheme, the RG found the School to be one of most active schools in UCD. Prior to March 2020, approximately ten staff members availed of ERASMUS + exchanges to Vietnam, Georgia, Israel, India and Russia and staff participation in these exchanges prompted initiatives in the School's teaching provision. Staff participation in these exchanges has also prompted initiatives in the School's teaching provision.
- 9.5 The RG noted, as did the School, the need for the School to further bolster the uptake of student internships which have remain low as well as access to study abroad opportunities.
- 9.6 Cultural heritage bodies have strong relationships with Archives and the School.
- 9.7 The School's high level of engagement in public discourse in the media is recognised by the University. These activities have also increased since the previous quality review.
- 9.8 The School's outreach work, such as HistoryHub.ie has been a major success alongside other projects and has generated significant global interest.
- 9.9 The School has identified the following as key areas of future development in external relations - further public engagement and impact work, increased staff and student mobility and the development of new internships and placements options by the College/Programme Office.
- 9.10 The RG noted in discussions that external recruitment practices are moving to a more holistic approach. The RG recommend the School reflect on what that means and map transferable employability skills into assessment. For example, orality (including group presentation skills), interdisciplinary learning, critical thinking, absorbing qualitative and quantitative data and problem solving were highlighted as key by employers to provide the 'T shaped' graduate. Study abroad is also valued by employers suggesting an applicant's comfort in international environments which supports the transition to the workplace.

- 9.11 The School notes that the World QS subject rankings indicate the reputation among employers has declined since 2016/17 (although it was noted that this is in line with the University's rating). The rationale suggested for this in the SAR that GDPR requirements for employer consent to be included in the survey was in part responsible for the decline did not resonate with the external partners during the quality review.

Commendations

- 9.12 The RG commends the School for its strong relationships with students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders with a high level of public engagement.
- 9.13 The School's very good range of engagement work is evident, for example, engagement with civic society, media, culture, social justice and advisory roles to government bodies.
- 9.14 The quality of the School's faculty engaging in media work was also commended by external stakeholders.
- 9.15 UCD History students and Archivists are seen as quality graduates possessing valuable skills such as grasping strategy quickly, the ability to nuance, having clear opinions and communicating them well which often gives them an edge over other graduates. External stakeholders were also impressed by the standard of the School's interns.
- 9.16 The RG commends the initiation of an internship programme and alumni mentoring scheme.
- 9.17 The RG commends the engagement by the School with the Erasmus+ scheme which is recovering well post-COVID-19.

Recommendations

- 9.18 The RG recommend the School publicise alumni mentors' scheme more widely to external partners to boost engagement, visibility and the number of mentors.
- 9.19 The School should consider strategies to ensure wider access to study abroad opportunities and how to address socio-economic factors that may prohibit student involvement.
- 9.20 The RG supports the School's desire for the College/Programme Office to further develop internship options that are connected to degree pathway themes.
- 9.21 The RG recommend the School develop strategies to counter the impact and consider the opportunities of Brexit on the Erasmus+ scheme regarding UK staff and student mobility.
- 9.22 The RG recommend the School further investigate potential factors contributing to the decline in School reputation in QS rankings.
- 9.23 The RG recommend the School consider feedback from external stakeholders on the importance of integrating transferable employability skills into assessment.

UCD School of History Response to the Review Group Report

On behalf of the School of History, I would like to thank the members of the Review Group for their work in analysing the School's self-assessment report, conducting the online site visit, and proposing recommendations for enhancing the quality of teaching, research, and administration in the School. The RG performed their work in challenging circumstances. It was regrettable that the RG did not include a modern European or global historian, but the School recognises the difficulties in securing external reviewers, due in part to the accumulation of commitments in the wake of the pandemic.

As will become clear in this initial response, the School has already benefitted from the self-assessment process and the RG's exit presentation in April. In the months between the site visit and the submission of the report in November, the School has already taken initiatives, changed practices, and formalised procedures to address issues raised in the Quality Assessment process.

In advance of the comprehensive QIP, the School offers initial thoughts on the six prioritised recommendations.

Recommendation 1: *The RG recommend that a strategic plan which encompasses a future vision and trajectory for the School be developed. This plan should include a staffing strategy that aligns with the School's vision and is linked to financial planning cycles and financial status, and includes faculty, tutors, and professional staff. (Recommendation 2.19)*

The School recognises the critical value of strategic planning to sustain a broad and diverse curriculum, informed by the latest scholarship.

- a) The HoS will lead a review in February and March 2023 of the School's current approach to the University annual planning process. The annual plan sets out the School's near-term objectives for the coming academic year and longer term aims over a five year period in line with the University's strategic plan. The planning process begins with a review of the School's financial position, budgetary outlook, and staffing plans over a five year period. The HoS works with members of the School Executive to develop the strategic plan and circulates drafts for discussion at School meetings.
- b) Recent changes in the BA degree, the source of the bulk of the School's income, has made it difficult to predict future income and the outlook has altered significantly and negatively since the School Plan 2021, the basis of the RG's assessment. The School's deficit means that it remains in CPAC, which reviews all proposals for professional posts, including those in existing staff plans, and any proposals for new academic posts.
- c) In line with School plans in 2021 and 2022, the School has established new posts through the UCD's Strategic Hiring Initiative in the history of medicine and the history of warfare. In addition, HEA Funding has enabled the School to establish a four year post in global history. These appointments between March and July 2022 and the unforeseen departure in September 2022 of a colleague in medieval history alter the circumstances for future appointments in the School.

- d) The School considers a permanent School Manager post as a critical priority (3.23).

Recommendation 2: *The RG recommend model as a matter of priority that the Head of School develop a functioning workload model. The RG suggests the School explore models used in other schools and universities. (Recommendation 2.20)*

The School acknowledges the importance of a workload model that is fair, equitable, reasonable, and transparent.

- a) In spring 2022, due to the Self-Assessment process, the HoS initiated a review of the current workload model, set out in section 2.4 of the SAR. To ensure transparency, HoS circulated workloads in teaching and administration in spring 2022 (for the academic year 2021/2) and in autumn 2022 (for the academic year 2022/3).
- b) In response to staff feedback, HoS added more details to the workload for 2022/3, such as membership of RSPs.
- c) The HoS has spoken to other heads in the College about their points-based models and he attended an EDI workload workshop in October 2022, where heads of schools discussed a range of models used across the University and their different implications.
- d) GEAC is also reviewing the School's workload model.
- e) The School will complete its review of its current model in May 2023 with a view to ensuring that the final model is fair, equitable, reasonable, and transparent.

Recommendation 3: *The RG recommend as a matter of urgency the School formalise and improve mentoring for all academic and research funded staff. Models used across the University and in other institutions should be considered in formalising a revised system. (Recommendation 3.18)*

The QA report of 2014/5 recommended the introduction of a mentoring scheme, but the implementation of the University-wide P4G system brought significant improvements in the support of career development. Nonetheless, the School recognises that P4G does not fulfill all the needs for mentoring and the School is introducing changes to formalise what had been an informal system:

- a) from early 2023 the School will establish a pool of mentors, who will undertake mentoring training.
- b) from September 2022 incoming staff are assigned a mentor after 4 to 6 weeks to give them an opportunity to settle in initially in the School and consider what kind of mentoring they wish.
- c) staff are mentored until they receive tenure.
- d) from February 2023, the School will establish a Career Development Support Group, which will offer specific career development support to all colleagues.
- e) the School will highlight the mentoring supports in the College (RAN) and the University, so that colleagues can access a wide pool of mentoring expertise.

Recommendation 4: *The RG recommend the School institute in-School academic advising for students and include this activity in the School's new workload model. (Recommendation 4.38)*

The School notes this recommendation and also acknowledges discussions at University and College level to provide academic advising.

- a) To provide each first year student across different History majors with a faculty contact, the School introduced a first year module, Creating History, in 2017. Along with core modules in the pathways in BA Humanities, Creating History ensures that each incoming History student should have a weekly seminar with a member of faculty and a faculty contact point.
- b) Due to stretched faculty resources, 4/12 Creating History Seminar groups in 2022-3 are now taught by experienced tutors, not faculty. The T&L Committee will review this arrangement in spring 2023 on the basis of student feedback and advice from student representatives on the staff-student committee.
- c) The School further notes that under its retention scheme, staff email students who fail to attend two successive seminars in the early weeks of the semester. The School follows up with support through the School's retention officer. Attendance records are now held in a School shared drive, which allows faculty to identify students missing classes across several different modules. The Director of Tutorials has set out the retention policy in the tutors' handbook, circulated to all teaching staff and communicated the policy in the first School meeting of the year.
- d) In the light of point 4.13, the HoS and Director of T&L will liaise with their counterparts in the other Schools in the College to find out more information about their approaches to student advising.
- e) The School expresses concerns about the workload implications of a more comprehensive academic advising system for all History students. In 2012 the School started a student advising scheme, modelled on a scheme at a Russell Group university, but ended it due to extremely low student interest.

Recommendation 5: *The RG recommend the following considerations of future curriculum development: (Recommendation 5.24)*

- a) *Explore the potential for rationalising the complexity/number of offerings/pathways:* The School agrees that the number of pathways poses administrative and workload challenges and does not plan the introduction of any further pathways. Pathway coordinators are engaged in a College review of pathways. The T&L Committee plans to review the two new pathways in European Studies and Global Studies in 2024/5 as the first cohort of entrants complete the degree.
- b) *Continue to explore the opportunities for building greater interdisciplinarity:* The School will continue to build on interdisciplinary teaching initiatives through its research centres and in the existing BA pathways, MA programmes (Medieval Studies and International War Studies), and Discovery modules, but in the light of the previous recommendation about the complexity of its teaching programme, it has no plans to lead new interdisciplinary programmes.
- c) *Embed employability skills, in particular oral skills (individual and group presentation skills), group-working, and problem solving into assessment:* The School welcomes the

recommendation to embed employability skills into its assessment. The T&L Committee has developed a suite of assessment options and it will update these in spring 2023 so that they can be built into curriculum design for 2023/4.

- d) *Review and align credit volume and workload across level 1 modules:* The T&L Committee will review level 1 assessment workloads in spring 2023 to ensure alignment of assessment across level 1 modules in 2023/4. Bearing in mind the principles of UDL and the different learning approaches of students, the School encourages a range of different but equivalent assessment methods across its level 1 modules.
- e) *Work towards reducing class sizes wherever possible:* The T&L Committee has worked to ensure that students at all levels are taught in seminar groups of 20 or fewer students (17 students in level 3 10 credit modules). While the School recognises the value of smaller classes, it does not have the staffing capacity to reduce further class size.

Recommendation 6: *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion arose in multiple discussions during the remote site visit. While the School's focus on an Athena Swan application is commended, the RG recommend the School also reflect on issues beyond the gender focus of Athena Swan to encompass EDI issues in their broadest sense, including (but not limited to) sexuality, race, age, caring responsibilities, workload models, staff profile, student profile, access to facilities. As a matter of priority, the School Executive should develop, or update as appropriate, a School EDI Policy reflecting that of the University. The development process should include an appropriate consultation process with all School staff, either individually or collectively. (Recommendation 2.24)*

The School acknowledges the importance of EDI across its activities.

- a) In 2021, the School established the EDI Committee. The chair of the EDI Committee was concurrently the chair of the AS self-assessment team. The School's successful application for the Athena Swan Bronze Award (August 2022) has led to the establishment of a separate Gender Equality Action Committee (GEAC) to implement the recommendations of the AS report. The EDI Committee is now separate from the GEAC and the AS process and a new chair of the EDI Committee has been appointed.
- b) The School Executive, in collaboration with the EDI committee, will develop an EDI policy for the start of the academic year 2023/4 and will build on initiatives taken in autumn 2022 including making University EDI policies more accessible through the School's EDI page, mandatory Unconscious Bias Training for all staff involved in hiring, and the rolling out of UDL training for staff, including tutors.
- c) The School looks forward to the appointment of a College EDI Director, which the newly appointed College Principal has already identified as a priority. This position will bring together best practice across the College.

The School wishes to clarify what appears to be a misunderstanding about the Library budget. The Library does not allocate each School a specific budget. Staff can order books through the online ordering system and the Library also keeps a 'wishlist' of more expensive items (notably databases), which it purchases as the Library budget allows. The History overall Library spend is lower than the School of English, Film, and Drama. To ensure that colleagues are aware of Library purchasing procedures to support their research and teaching, the School's new staff handbook includes a section on the Library, with links to online ordering and contact details for the College Liaison Librarian and the Collection Development and Description Librarian.



UCD School of History

Quality Review Remote Site Visit:

14, 19 -22 April 2022

TIMETABLE

Thursday, 14 April 2022	
10:45	Virtual Meeting Room opened (UCD Quality Office Lead)
11:00-13:00	Review Group only – Chaired by RG Chair- introductions & welcome, review of Preliminary Comments on the Self-Assessment Report (SAR), review of timetable and preparations of areas /questions for discussion during the remote site visit

Tuesday 19 April 2022	
08.45	Virtual Meeting Room opened (UCD Quality Office Lead)
09.00-09.30	Review Group only – prep
09.30-10.15	Deputy College Principal
10.15-10.45	Private meeting of Review Group
10.45-11.30	Head of School
11.30-12.00	Review Group only – Key observations & break
12.00-12.45	Discussion of Finances – Head of School, School Manager, CFM
12.45-14.15	Review Group only – Key observations and break for lunch
14.15-14.30	Review Group only – prep
14.30-15.15	SAR Co-ordinating Committee
15.15-15.45	Review Group only – Key observations & break
15.45-16.15	Professional Staff
16.15-16.30	Review Group only – Key observations & wrap up

Wednesday 20 April 2022	
09.15	Virtual Meeting Room opened (UCD Quality Office Lead)
09.30-10.00	Review Group only – private meeting
10.00-11.00	RG meet with representative group of faculty staff – primary focus on Teaching and Learning and Curriculum issues
11.00-11.30	Review Group only – Key observations & break
11.30-12.15	Representative Group of Undergraduate Students
12.15-13.00	Review Group only – Key observations & break
13.00-14.00	RG Meet with Representative Group of faculty staff- Research Committee
14.00-14.45	Review Group only – Key observations & lunch
14.45-15.30	Representatives of Research and Taught Postgraduate students, Recent Graduates
15.30-16.00	Review Group only - Key observations & break
16.00-16.45	Research Funded Staff
16.45-17.00	Review Group only - Key observations & wrap up

Thursday 21 April 2022	
08.45	Virtual Meeting Room opened (UCD Quality Office Lead)
09.00-09.30	Private meeting of Review Group
09.30-10.00	Acting Deputy Registrar
10.00-10.45	Review Group only – Key observations & break
10.45-11.30	School support service representatives (e.g., Registry, library, Student advisors informed by key areas highlighted in the SAR)
11.30-12.00	Review Group only – Key observations & break
12.00-12.30	Rep from UCD Research Innovation and Impact
12.30-13.00	Review Group only – Key observations & break
13.00-14.00	External Stakeholder meeting : professional and accrediting bodies and placement partners; employers/Alumni

14.00-15.15	Review Group only – Key observations & break for Lunch
15.15-15.45	Newly Appointed Staff
15.45-16.00	Key observations and break
16.00-16.30	Programme Dean
16.30	Key observations and wrap up

Friday 22 April 2022	
08.45	Virtual Meeting Room opened (UCD Quality Office Lead)
09.00-10.30	Review Group – prep for the day: Report Drafting and Exit Presentations
10.30-11.00	Review Group break
11.00-13.15	Review Group – Report Drafting and preparation for Exit Presentations & break
13.15-13.30	Review Group feedback initial outline commendations and findings
13.30-13.45	Review Group only – preparation for Exit Presentations
13.45-14.00	Review Group feedback initial outline commendations and findings Head of School; UCD Director of Quality
14.00-15.00	Review Group only – Report Drafting, timelines and final prep for Exit and Transition time
15.00-15.30	Exit Presentation to all available School staff – (summarising the initial key findings for commendations/recommendation of the Review Group)
15.30-15.45	Review Group only – Remote Site Visit close