University College Dublin

REVIEW GROUP REPORT

Periodic Quality Review
UCD Registry

July 2020

Accepted by the UCD Governing Authority at its meeting of 24 June 2021

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Key Findings of the Review Group

Key Findings of the Review Group

The Review Group (RG) has identified a number of areas of good practice operating within UCD Registry, and areas which the RG highlight as requiring improvement. The main section of this Report sets out all observations, commendations, and recommendations of the RG in more detail. An aggregated list of all commendations and recommendations is presented in Appendix 1.

Examples of Good Practice

The RG identified a number of commendations, in particular:

- UCD Registry's strong approach to service delivery and continuous improvement.

- The evident and widespread expertise contained within the UCD Registry team, supporting business critical activities.

- UCD Registry's commitment to partnership working with faculty and professional services staff.

- The innovation displayed by the UCD Registry team.

- UCD Registry's commitment and creativity in coping with the significant challenges that have arisen since the last internal periodic quality review.

Prioritised Recommendations for Improvement

The full list of recommendations is set out in Appendix 1 and the RG suggest that the following be prioritised:

- The RG recommends that UCD Registry, in support of the University Strategy, be bold in the scope of its vision for the future of services provided in student recruitment, admissions, assessment and student support.

- UCD Registry should develop a clear roadmap of at least three years, which describes the future development of the key institutional functions and services for which it holds primary responsibility.

- In planning for reorganisation of the Unit, the RG recommends that the starting point should be an analysis of the demands the University Strategy 2020-2024 will place on UCD Registry, recognising that "form follows function".

- The RG recommends that UCD Registry and University Management consider introducing Change Impact Assessments in advance of new initiatives and major projects involving UCD Registry staff.

- The RG recommends that the University considers how it might better use the expertise within UCD Registry to plan and deliver its strategic ambition.

1. Introduction and Overview of UCD Registry

Introduction

1.1   This report presents the findings of a quality review of Registry, University College Dublin, which was undertaken between 2nd and 5th March 2020. The Unit response to the Review Group Report is attached as Appendix 2.

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 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 in relation 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 an 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 UCD Registry was as follows:

● Professor Grace Mulcahy, UCD School of Veterinary Medicine, Chair

● Ms Gillian Reilly, UCD School of Medicine, Deputy Chair

● Dr Robert Partridge, Executive Director of Student and Academic Services, University of Glasgow

● Dr Bruce Nelson, College Registrar, College of Science and Engineering, University of Edinburgh

● Ms Paula Coonerty, Executive Director for Education and Student Experience and Academic Registrar, University of Bristol

1.6   The RG visited UCD Registry from 2nd to 5th March 2020 and held meetings with UCD Registry staff; undergraduate and postgraduate students; graduates, the SAR Co-ordinating Committee; other University staff, including the Registrar/Deputy President, Dean of Graduate

Studies/Deputy Registrar and Dean of Students and representatives including faculty, professional staff and students. The site visit schedule is included as Appendix 3. All members of the Review Group participated in all discussions and meetings.

1.7 In addition to the Self-assessment report, the RG considered documentation provided by UCD Registry and the University during the site visit.

1.8 This report has been read and approved by all members of the RG.

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 UCD Registry.

1.10 The SAR was prepared in the period February 2019 – January 2020 by the Co-ordinating Committee, who met monthly and consisted of members from each UCD Registry unit and across all staffing grades. Staff were consulted during the process with specific aspects of the report discussed in various groupings. The final draft report was developed by the SAR Co-ordinating Committee reflecting the various inputs. All staff were invited to discuss and comment on the final draft and to contribute to the final report.

1.11 The RG considers that the SAR Co-ordinating Committee, along with other UCD Registry colleagues, produced an excellent, informative, and exceptionally well-presented report.

The University

1.12 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.

1.13 The University Strategic Plan (to 2020) 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

1.14 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, Celtic Studies and Human Sciences. There are currently more than 26,000 students in our UCD campus (approximately 16,300 undergraduates, 7,800 postgraduates and 2,200 Occasional and Adult Education students) registered on over 70 University degree programmes, including over 6,300 international students from more than 121 countries. The University also has over 5,400 students studying UCD degree programmes on campuses overseas.

UCD Registry

1.15 UCD Registry was established in 2007, following the appointment of the Director of Registry, as a successor to the unit that operated under the direct management of the Registrar.

1.16 The Fees and Grants function came under UCD Registry's remit in 2008, with domestic graduate recruitment coming under the remit of Student Recruitment in 2016.

1.17 UCD Registry comprises the Office of the Director of Registry and four internal units: Administrative Services, Assessment, Admissions and Student Recruitment.

1.18 UCD Registry is one of nine units in Academic Affairs, which is headed by the Registrar/Deputy President/Vice President for Academic Affairs.

1.19 UCD Registry's mission is to deliver student-centred professional services, support and advice to the University community in respect of its core functions of recruiting, admitting and assessing students, maintaining student records, raising and collecting fees, supporting curriculum approval and curriculum management and providing front-of-house services to students via the Student Desk.

2. Planning, Organisation and Management

General Comments and Context

2.1 Feedback from UCD Registry staff indicates that they enjoy working in Registry, are strongly committed to their unit and are very supportive of colleagues. This is reflected in several mentoring and development initiatives within UCD Registry (Buddy System in Action ~~Scheme~~, Staff Recognition Scheme, pilot cross-unit mentoring Scheme) to develop staff for future roles and aid staff retention. These initiatives actively contribute to embedding a positive and open organisational culture within UCD Registry units.

The "Buddy System" to support new staff, and the pilot cross-unit mentoring scheme are both excellent initiatives. We understand that the UCD Registry staff recognition scheme significantly influenced the University wide scheme "Values in Action".

2.2   UCD Registry's ambition to be best in class has motivated horizon-scanning across other institutions, resulting in senior colleagues throughout the University regarding UCD Registry staff as sources of national and international best practice.

2.3   The University's position as a global university is mirrored in UCD Registry's vision statement, and it would also be good to see a commitment to inclusion referenced here.

2.4   The Registry Management Team (RMT) is cohesive and proactive in terms of ability to deliver business critical services effectively. However, the scale of portfolios among Directorates vary, so the reorganisation of UCD Registry is an opportunity to rebalance spans of control and team structures, to consider cross-functionality and more flexibility to support the new University strategic plan and activity of Academic Affairs. The potential for cross-training and working in a reconfiguration could relieve staff members from day-to-day tasks to undertake project work to support new projects/initiatives within UCD Registry, cross-collaborations within Academic Affairs and more broadly across the University.

2.5   There is a sense among faculty that too many UCD Registry-supported initiatives were introduced within the University over the past year and colleagues across the University relayed that there was a lack of clarity on who owned these initiatives.

2.6   Although the RG understood from meeting with UCD Registry staff that the UCD strategic theme of "digital transformation" is not clearly understood in terms of the expectations of senior University leadership and how it will impact on UCD Registry units, staff are hoping that it will mean a more integrated approach to IT systems, to facilitate an end-to-end student experience.

2.7   UCD Registry staff report that they have found it hard to progress some systems projects and there has already been a negative impact on staff regarding the time spent working on systems projects which were not mobilised.

2.8   A Risk Register is compiled annually with mitigation measures or contingency plans for each item. This facilitated the timely adoption of the contingency plan for adverse weather conditions during a severe weather incident in 2018.

2.9   UCD Registry is committed to embedding EDI principles within the unit, for example, it participated in a pilot work placement initiative for graduates with disabilities under the Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) programme and the successful candidate was appointed to a UCD Registry role.

Commendations

2.10   The RG commends the evident and widespread expertise contained within the UCD Registry team, supporting what are business critical activities.

2.11   The RG commends the very proactive and supportive approach from an employee experience.

2.12   The RG commends the commitment and dedication of UCD Registry staff.

2.13   The RG commends UCD Registry's work placement initiative for graduates under the WAM Programme.

Recommendations

2.14   The RG recommends that UCD Registry, in support of the new University Strategy 2020/2024, be bold in the scope of its vision for the future of services provided in student recruitment, admissions, assessment and student support. In collaboration with the University Senior Management, professional services, and academic colleagues, UCD Registry can provide leadership and act as an enabler for truly transformative end-to-end processes and services to match the University's ambition.

2.15   Although UCD Registry's vision statement reflects the University aspiration of being truly global, an opportunity is missed to articulate UCD Registry's contribution to a diverse and inclusive community of students, so a revision of this statement is recommended.

2.16   UCD Registry should develop a clear roadmap of at least three years, which describes the future development of the key institutional functions and services, discussed in Section 3 below, for which it holds primary responsibility.

The RG recommend that the roadmap should:

o   aligns with the University's strategic ambitions to enhance the student experience, increase student numbers, and diversify its education portfolio.

o   be determined through a process of co-creation with UCD Registry's key stakeholders, including colleagues across Academic Affairs, senior academic leaders, student representatives, Colleges and Schools.

o   describes a series of priorities and projects which will deliver measurable benefits to students, faculty, and professional services colleagues to include clear timelines for the achievement of these projects and the resources required for their delivery.

o   be disseminated widely within the University and subject to regular scrutiny and review.

2.17   In planning for reorganisation, the starting point should be an analysis of the demands that the University's Strategy 2020-2024 will place on UCD Registry, including projected increases in student numbers and the delivery of the road map, recognising that 'form follows function'.

Items for further consideration include:

· Identifying new ways of working across internal unit boundaries, and more broadly within Academic Affairs
· Reviewing current spans of control, which are high for some managers
· Coalescing functional expertise within UCD Registry (e.g. data, systems, project management)
· Ways to create capacity for planning for and delivery on strategic initiatives
· Deploying flexible staffing models to cater for peaks
· Safeguarding and strengthening the existing strong collegial ethos within UCD Registry

3. Functions, Activities and Processes

General Comments and Context

3.1   The Self-assessment report provides a comprehensive and detailed account of UCD Registry's form and functions, which encompass domestic recruitment, domestic and international admissions, assessment, curriculum management, student records, systems and data, fees, online registration, student communications and enquiry handling.

It describes a dedicated UCD Registry staff team, which has adapted working practices as the nature and volume of work has grown and embraced technology effectively to improve the applicant and student experience. This impression was strongly reinforced by our meetings with staff outside UCD Registry, who consider UCD Registry colleagues to be trusted and adaptive partners.

3.2   **End-to-end and user-centred design**
    3.2.1   End-to-end and user-centred design needs additional consideration by UCD Registry and should be incorporated as part of an integrated approach in any future planning. This review focussed on the services delivered by UCD Registry but, in almost all cases, Registry services sit at the beginning or end of a function, activity or process, which also involves other services in the centre, Colleges and/or Schools. It can often be difficult in these situations to determine where overall responsibility for such functions, activities and processes rests, and the experience at UCD is no exception. Even in cases where UCD Registry's accountability was undisputed, UCD Registry does not necessarily have the agency to address functional failures outside its direct span of managerial control and yet can be perceived as being responsible for these. In addition, whilst UCD Registry's student-facing functions generally work very well, they are not necessarily always well-integrated with other student-facing functions and therefore there is a danger that the overall student experience can feel disjointed in some situations.
    3.2.2   The consolidation of graduate student recruitment hints at other opportunities which might exist to adopt a more functional integrated approach to student services at UCD. However, a more in-depth consideration of the wider organisational context

and structures will be required to assess these opportunities. Further benchmarking of the total resource allocated to each of the functional areas, taking account of central and local resources, and evaluation of the student/staff user experience of service functions / service units would also provide relevant evidence.

3.3 **Continuous improvement**

3.3.1 The UCD Registry work plan aligns with the University's strategy and describes a series of priorities for investment and improvement. Whilst there does not appear to have been any significant recent investment in UCD Registry, there is nonetheless strong evidence of continuous improvement in each of its services. This is demonstrated by the case studies contained within the self-assessment and was clearly validated during the meetings with stakeholders.

3.3.2 College and School stakeholders expressed some frustration that proposals for improvements were sometimes abandoned late in the day, because of bottlenecks in IT support.

3.3.3 UCD Registry has made effective use of the University's transformation team (UCD Agile) in support of the UniShare Roll Out project. However, the RG was surprised to hear about an apparent lack of prioritisation of UCD Agile projects across the organisation.

3.3.4 The adoption of standard operating procedures (SOPs) will have enabled colleagues in Colleges and Schools to work more effectively with their UCD Registry partners, although there are continuing concerns about communication, which suggests that there is a lack of clarity over the roles and responsibilities of local and central teams in the overall delivery of student and teaching support.

3.3.5 UCD Registry colleagues identified several areas which would benefit from further improvement:

- There can sometimes be too many hand-offs between teams within Registry, which means they are not working as effectively or efficiently as they might; the internal reorganisation may go some way towards addressing this.

- The Admissions team mentioned that the verification of original documents is primarily paper-based and laborious for both students and staff; this will require a review of the current process and appropriate systems development.

- In keeping with many universities, processes and systems have been designed around a traditional academic year. The number of students with alternative study patterns (transnational education, postgraduate research, continuing professional development) is growing rapidly and arrangements for these now need to be regularised. This will require some fundamental rethinking of

processes and systems and should form part of the broader institutional transformation plan.

3.4 Assessments

The RG heard that end of semester examinations operate with 'military precision' and there was extensive praise from stakeholders for the highly competent examination logistics team. However, the volume of transactional management and processing here and in other areas has prevented the team from engaging in policy work, for example relating to academic regulations and grade approval. This, in turn, has placed UCD Registry staff and others in Colleges and Schools under further pressure. The implementation of the new academic regulations is a good example of a project in which there are complex interdependencies between regulation, policy, process and systems. We heard compelling evidence during stakeholder meetings that if UCD Registry had been consulted earlier, this project might have proceeded more smoothly.

3.5 Admissions

When it is working well, the admissions function should be largely invisible, and this was very much the case at UCD. However, we heard several frustrations and challenges expressed by the team. These included coordination between domestic/EU and international admissions, given the organisational separation of leadership and management of these areas; maintaining awareness of target numbers, given changes in the student number planning process; and process risks relating, for example, to the inability to reconcile admissions decisions with individual assessors.

3.6 Student Recruitment

Whilst the student recruitment team was universally praised, there was a disjunction described by staff and stakeholders between the planning and delivery of domestic/EU recruitment and recruitment of international students, which is handled by UCD Global. It is very unusual for these functions to be organisationally separated to such a degree and there would be much to gain for Schools, Colleges and the central services if these two functions were led and managed in a more integrated way.

3.7 Student Desk: use of KPIs

The RG was enormously impressed by the Student Desk, which combined thoughtful use of physical space, with a strong customer focus and innovative technology. We had read in the Self-assessment report about service KPIs, but it was not clear to us how these have been derived and whether they are consistent with institutional expectations and needs, nor how well these are communicated to partners in colleges and schools. However, the Student Desk team was able to tell us about their service KPIs. These had clearly driven improvements in the timely resolution of simple queries although, in case of more complex queries, we heard from students that it can result in multiple visits to the desk.

3.8 **Resourcing and transformation**

3.8.1 The most significant concern of UCD Registry staff and stakeholders alike related to resourcing: the staff FTE has grown by c. 3% over a period in which the Self-assessment report suggests student numbers have grown by c. 25%. Whilst appreciating that a substantial proportion of UCD Registry activity is transactional, which is less heavily impacted by growth in student numbers, it is difficult to see how the current operating arrangements can be sustained in the long term.

3.8.2 The RG noted an interesting consequence of the process automation which UCD Registry has been able to introduce in the past is that roles have become more focussed on quality controlling processes than on their direct administration. As a result, the work has become more complex and staff have a higher degree of responsibility than might previously have been the case. We noted that this has not necessarily been recognised in terms of training, development and grading.

3.8.3 UCD seems to have high hopes that many of these challenges can be resolved through digital transformation, yet there seemed to be very little confidence or understanding of what this might mean. In any event, a fundamental transformation of educational processes and systems is unlikely to be realised in under five years. Therefore, UCD is faced with some difficult decisions to make around medium-term investment, and whether this is used to improve existing systems or employ additional staff to ensure that activities can be maintained in the interim.

3.9 A recurrent motif in our conversations about functions, activities, and processes, related to the ownership of these and a need to define more clearly the roles and responsibilities of the central services, Colleges, and Schools. It is increasingly common for universities to empower Registry to act as the institutional process owner, whilst recognising that any one process will likely involve the actions of centre, College, and School. UCD Registry clearly is seen as responsible for failings in processes, according to both stakeholders and the UCD Registry staff, but lacks the agency to influence or control these failings at present.

Commendations

3.10 The RG commends the flexibility and adaptability of all the UCD Registry teams in coping with day-to-day pressures and project work.

3.11 Innovative use of technology and automation to streamline some processes.

3.12 UCD Registry's strong approach to service delivery and culture of continuous improvement.

3.13 Delivery of end of semester examinations and associated logistics.

3.14 The very positive impact and service delivery of the Student Desk.

Recommendations

3.15   The RG recommends that UMT considers opportunities for integration between student services provided by UCD Registry and those delivered by other units.

3.16   The RG recommends that University Management consider the opportunities for integration across domestic/EU and international student recruitment.

3.17   With respect to the University's Digital Transformation strategy, UCD Registry should seek involvement in decision-making around medium-term investment, and whether this is used to improve existing systems or employ additional staff, to ensure that activities can be maintained in the interim as student numbers continue to increase.

3.18   The RG recommends that UCD Registry adapt existing processes to meet the needs of growing numbers of postgraduate research, continuing professional education and other students, where the deadlines associated with trimesters are not appropriate.

3.19   The RG recommends that UCD Registry consider alternative solutions to the current manual document verification process.

3.20   UCD management should more clearly articulate the "process-owner" responsibilities of UCD Registry *vis-a-vis* those of other stakeholders within the University.

4. Management of Resources

General Comments and Context

4.1   The Registry Management Team (RMT) runs a very tight ship, with a strong focus on service delivery underpinned by a culture of continuous improvement. We heard a consistent message on the high quality of service delivered and UCD Registry's customer-focussed ethos, from colleagues across the University: faculty, professional staff in colleges and schools, professional staff in other administrative units, and from students. With current levels of customer satisfaction, it would be easy to take UCD Registry for granted. However, we also heard concerns about UCD Registry's capacity to cope with the University's future student expansion.

4.2   The financial environment in which UCD Registry has been operating in recent years has been very challenging. It is to the credit of the RMT that they have been able to cope with the 25% + growth in student numbers with the level of budgetary cuts they have had to sustain. (The 2019/20 budget is approximately 4% below the 2015/16 figure in cash terms).

4.3   In addition, UCD Registry has also operated within a set of internal and external constraints on HR policies which, while put in place for the greater good (both national, and UCD), have created challenges for University managers. For example, the requirement to advertise most

posts internally, while creating good opportunities for staff to develop their careers, has led to rapid turnover in entry-grade posts, and challenges in managing increased numbers of temporary secondments. In some areas of UCD Registry activity, there is a potential lack of resilience because of key posts being filled by staff on short-term contracts.

4.4   Despite these challenges, UCD Registry has continued to innovate, in response to the previous review and University-wide projects (e.g. new Academic Regulations) but also through projects identified within the team. Some of the latter were derived from the RMT's national and international horizon scanning to identify best practice.

4.5   While innovation obviously requires a motivated RMT with a shared vision on how it wishes to develop the unit strategically, and clarity on plans for delivering this, successful delivery also requires support from a good team. UCD Registry has a generally excellent and highly motivated team, albeit one under increasing pressure. We felt that one of the reasons why the team was successful and highly motivated was the approach taken to staff development in UCD Registry as highlighted in Section 2.

4.6   As noted earlier in this report, the Student Desk is sectoral-leading and is far ahead of that available in many other institutions. The only significant criticism we heard was that the system is not currently set up to deal with multiple enquiries from the same student, particularly at the start of session, resulting in some having to make multiple trips to UCD Registry.

4.7   The Student Desk is underpinned by the Unishare customer relationship management system. This is impressive in so far as it currently goes, but it is still relatively narrowly used, with a focus on Registry-specific activity. The RG understood that it was being introduced to some other parts of the University. UCD will gain maximum advantage with wider use.

4.8   The RMT has taken opportunities to reconfigure the team in recent years. The Self-Assessment Review asked the RG to suggest their ideas for consideration for future restructuring:

4.8.1   In most Higher Education Institutions, recruitment and admissions is a single function. This is worth noting in the context of an organisational review and the current division of responsibility for these functions between UCD Registry and Schools.

4.8.2   In addition, the proposed organisational review could beneficially examine several key areas, and these are outlined in Section 2 for consideration. Our general view is that 'form should follow function' and so we do not think it would be helpful for us to make highly specific suggestions. If the recommendation to develop a forward-looking roadmap of projects to support the University's strategic plan is taken forward, the priorities emerging from this should be able to guide the RMT on what resources are needed to deliver these projects, and how they should best be configured.

4.9   Crucial in the roadmap will also be a more focused and formal approach to assessing in advance the impact of new initiatives and major projects on UCD Registry staff – at planning, project implementation and "business as usual" stages. We heard views from a few staff and service users that the RMT was too willing to take on new projects without full consideration of the impact on the ability of staff having to deliver these alongside their day job. This is not

just an issue for the RMT; it is one for University management more broadly. We are therefore strongly recommending that University Management consider introducing formal Change Impact Assessments in advance of new initiatives and major projects.

4.10 As already highlighted, UCD Registry is recognised for its innovative use of IT systems. The RG heard comments about the high quality of its reports delivered to stakeholders and we have commented above in relation to Unishare and the Student Desk.

4.11 UCD Registry also has ambitions to use new technologies such as artificial intelligence and Blockchain to further improve support over the period of the University's new strategic plan in digital transformation. It is the opinion of the RG that these plans are not yet well-developed, and we felt that UCD Registry was not yet clear exactly what the University was expecting from this theme. Such clarity will be needed before the proposed roadmap, highlighted in the recommendations in Section 3, can be developed. Collaboration and consultation with IT Services - Enterprise Applications Group (EAG) colleagues on required amendments to existing software and new IT provision will also be necessary.

4.12 There is a more immediate need for increased IT support. Though it is expected that many improvements will come with the planned Banner 9 implementation, there is also a strong demand for shorter-term more focused IT developments. The RG heard that UCD Registry was less able to advance such projects than it had been in the past, because of the growing demands on IT Services (EAG) from other areas. However, the RG consider that there is a clear need for more of this smaller scale work. We suggest that UCD Registry should work with its service users to produce business cases for this type of innovation. If these demonstrate sufficient return to UCD this should unlock the case for re-prioritisation of IT resources.

4.13 We visited most of UCD Registry's physical facilities and were told of the improvements since the last review. The open plan accommodation is adequate, and while it has the same noise challenges as most such spaces, we felt that the quality of the space was generally high, and space provision a little more generous than we had seen in some other facilities. As already highlighted, the RG were very impressed by the Student Desk and such a facility would be the envy of many other HEIs. The student recruitment facilities were also impressive. We did hear concerns from students about the exam facilities, specifically those on the Blackrock campus.

Commendations

4.14 The RG commends UCD Registry's commitment and creativity in coping with the significant challenges that have arisen since the last internal Periodic Quality Review.

4.15 The RG was impressed with UCD Registry's vision in developing the Student Desk and physical space.

4.16 UCD Registry is commended for its innovative use of IT systems, and for the high quality of its reports delivered to stakeholders.

4.17 The RG commends UCD Registry's commitment to staff development.

Recommendations

4.18   The RG recommends consideration by University Management of the capacity of UCD Registry to cope with the planned increase in student numbers, with current resourcing levels.

4.19   University Management should consider introducing formal Change Impact Assessments in advance of new initiatives and major projects involving UCD Registry staff.

4.20   UCD Registry should continue to engage actively with IT Services (EAG) colleagues on the appropriate balance between adapting existing and adopting new IT systems to ensure delivery of Registry functions and services.

4.21   Use the outputs from the UCD Registry Project Roadmap to inform the proposed organisational review, bearing in mind the recommendation that "Form should follow Function".

4.22   The RG recommends that UCD Registry consider working with its service users to produce business cases for system innovation /smaller scale work.

5. User Perspective

General Comments and Context

5.1   The RG received consistently positive comments from all stakeholders they met in relation to the excellent services provided by UCD Registry, and the responsiveness of team members to their needs. A strong focus on service delivery, continuous improvement and quality of support provided was emphasised by students and colleagues across the University including faculty, professional staff in Colleges and Schools and central administrative units. The Student Desk was particularly praised in meetings with students as a valuable interface with staff which facilitated speedy issue resolution.

5.2   The relationship between Colleges and Schools and UCD Registry was characterised as collaborative. The customer service relationship, professionalism, dedication, and collegiality among UCD Registry staff was described as remarkable.

5.3   Colleagues and students consistently referred to the breadth and depth of expertise in each UCD Registry unit. UCD Registry advice and consultancy capabilities and services were especially commended. Faculty also commented that UCD Registry staff are essential for them in doing their jobs and professional services staff affirmed that UCD Registry staff have provided valuable support in resolving challenging situations. The Student Recruitment team was noted as expert and the use of data by Admissions to generate value adding reports was also praised.

5.4 There was a widely-held opinion that the considerable expertise within UCD Registry could be utilised more fully by the University, not only in implementing policy, but also in planning for initiatives, for example through digital transformation and in growing student numbers.

5.5 Both students and employees valued UCD Registry as a vital partner in their work. Employees rated the systems used by UCD Registry highly, in terms of ease of accessing information and the reports provided. They did also suggest, however, that the ability of users outside UCD Registry, in particular College/School/Programme offices, to run reports rather than always having to ask UCD Registry staff to do this would be very useful.

5.6 The RG also heard that the volume of work involved in manual grade changes, which has increased since the introduction of new Academic Regulations, was an area that could benefit from attention.

5.7 The College Liaison Officer role was highly valued and colleagues in Colleges and Schools were generally full of praise for the role. Generally, staff preferred UCD Registry communications to come from an individual, rather than having a generic signature.

5.8 The internal organisation within UCD Registry was perceived as being rather opaque, and staff tend to contact someone they know within UCD Registry to find information. Some concerns were raised also about the apparently separate systems for providing data to Colleges and Schools on national/EU and International student recruitment data, respectively.

5.9 As has been outlined in previous sections of this report, the Student Desk received universal praise. Students however suggested enhancing the system to allow for logging of more than one type of query at any one time.

5.10 Students expressed some frustration on the timing of notification of exam results, which they felt generated unnecessary anxiety, and suggested that communications in this regard could be improved.

5.11 A similar level of unease was evident in respect of equity of access to module registration, in cases where module capacity was limiting.

5.12 In general, there is a perception that graduate students receive less attention, in respect of the Welcome to UCD, and the suitability of UCD Registry systems to their needs, as compared with undergraduate students. This was also highlighted earlier in this report in terms of the challenges of working with multiple academic terms. To some extent also, there is a perception that systems are being "retro-fitted" inelegantly to cope with "non-standard" students (for example those on international programmes, CPD students).

5.13 While the introduction of the E-Thesis was welcomed, stakeholders also reported that refinement of the system might be required.

5.14 The RG heard from students that they greatly appreciated being provided with opportunities to perform the student ambassador role, and those we met were a real credit to UCD.

Commendations

5.15   UCD Registry's commitment to partnership working with faculty and professional services staff.

5.16   The approachability and helpfulness of UCD Registry staff in answering queries directly or referring them appropriately.

5.17   The robust and reliable nature of UCD Registry systems, and their associated reports.

5.18   The College Liaison Officer role implemented by UCD Registry.

5.19   The impactful Student Ambassador programme and student recruitment operations.

Recommendations

5.20   The RG recommends that the University consider how it might better use the expertise within UCD Registry to plan and deliver its strategic ambition.

5.21   It is recommended that UCD Registry consider how the number of reports that can be run by staff outside UCD Registry could be increased, in the interests of greater efficiency and alleviating some of the UCD Registry workload.

5.22   The RG recommends that attention might be focussed on streamlining processes for manual grade changes.

5.23   Consideration should be given on how to improve communications and timing around notification of examination results, and on module registration.

5.24   In the next phase of planning, UCD Registry, along with University Management, is urged to explore ways of delivering services to graduate students and to others where the standard Academic Year/trimester is not an appropriate framework.

5.25   Review the success and any shortcomings of the E-Thesis project after it has been in operation for a year.

UCD Registry– Full List of Commendations and Recommendations

This Appendix contains a full list of commendations and recommendations made by the Review Group for the UCD Registry and should be read in conjunction with the specific chapter above. *(Please note that the paragraph references below refer to the relevant paragraphs in the report text)*

2. Planning, Organisation and Management

Commendations

2.10   The RG commends the evident and widespread expertise contained within the UCD Registry team, supporting what are business critical activities.

2.11   The RG commends the very proactive and supportive approach from an employee experience.

2.12   The RG commends the commitment and dedication of UCD Registry staff.

2.13   The RG commends UCD Registry's work placement initiative for graduates under the WAM Programme.

Recommendations

2.14   The RG recommends that UCD Registry, in support of the new University Strategy 2020-2024, be bold in the scope of its vision for the future of services provided in student recruitment, admissions, assessment and student support. In collaboration with the University Senior Management, professional services, and academic colleagues, UCD Registry can provide leadership and act as an enabler for truly transformative end-to-end processes and services to match the University's ambition.

2.15   Although UCD Registry's vision statement reflects the University aspiration of being truly global, an opportunity is missed to articulate UCD Registry's contribution to a diverse and inclusive community of students, so a revision of this statement is recommended.

2.16   UCD Registry should develop a clear roadmap of at least three years, which describes the future development of the key institutional functions and services, discussed in Section 3 below, for which it holds primary responsibility.

The RG recommend that the roadmap should:

o   aligns with the University's strategic ambitions to enhance the student experience, increase student numbers, and diversify its education portfolio.

o   be determined through a process of co-creation with UCD Registry's key stakeholders, including colleagues across Academic Affairs, senior academic leaders, student representatives, Colleges and Schools.

o   describes a series of priorities and projects which will deliver measurable benefits to students, faculty, and professional services colleagues to include clear timelines for the achievement of these projects and the resources required for their delivery.

o   be disseminated widely within the University and subject to regular scrutiny and review.

2.17   In planning for reorganisation, the starting point should be an analysis of the demands that the University's Strategy 2020-2024 will place on UCD Registry, including projected increases in student numbers and the delivery of the road map, recognising that 'form follows function'.

Items for further consideration include:

·   Identifying new ways of working across internal unit boundaries, and more broadly within Academic Affairs
·   Reviewing current spans of control, which are high for some managers
·   Coalescing functional expertise within UCD Registry (e.g. data, systems, project management)
·   Ways to create capacity for planning for and delivery on strategic initiatives
·   Deploying flexible staffing models to cater for peaks
·   Safeguarding and strengthening the existing strong collegial ethos within UCD Registry

3. Functions, Activities and Processes

Commendations

3.10   The RG commends the flexibility and adaptability of all the UCD Registry teams in coping with day-to-day pressures and project work.

3.11   Innovative use of technology and automation to streamline some processes.

3.12   UCD Registry's strong approach to service delivery and culture of continuous improvement.

3.13   Delivery of end of semester examinations and associated logistics.

3.14   The very positive impact and service delivery of the Student Desk.

Recommendations

3.15   The RG recommends that UMT considers opportunities for integration between student services provided by UCD Registry and those delivered by other units.

3.16 The RG recommends that University Management consider the opportunities for integration across domestic/EU and international student recruitment.

3.17 With respect to the University's Digital Transformation strategy, UCD Registry should seek involvement in decision-making around medium-term investment, and whether this is used to improve existing systems or employ additional staff, to ensure that activities can be maintained in the interim as student numbers continue to increase.

3.18 The RG recommends that UCD Registry adapt existing processes to meet the needs of growing numbers of postgraduate research, continuing professional education and other students, where the deadlines associated with trimesters are not appropriate.

3.19 The RG recommends that UCD Registry consider alternative solutions to the current manual document verification process.

3.20 UCD management should more clearly articulate the "process-owner" responsibilities of UCD Registry *vis-a-vis* those of other stakeholders within the University.

4. Management of Resources

Commendations

4.14 The RG commends UCD Registry's commitment and creativity in coping with the significant challenges that have arisen since the last internal Periodic Quality Review.

4.15 The RG was impressed with UCD Registry's vision in developing the Student Desk and physical space.

4.16 UCD Registry is commended for its innovative use of IT systems, and for the high quality of its reports delivered to stakeholders.

4.17 The RG commends UCD Registry's commitment to staff development.

Recommendations

4.18 The RG recommends consideration by University Management of the capacity of UCD Registry to cope with the planned increase in student numbers, with current resourcing levels.

4.19 University Management should consider introducing formal Change Impact Assessments in advance of new initiatives and major projects involving UCD Registry staff.

4.20 UCD Registry should continue to engage actively with IT Services (EAG) colleagues on the appropriate balance between adapting existing and adopting new IT systems to ensure delivery of Registry functions and services.

4.21   Use the outputs from the UCD Registry Project Roadmap to inform the proposed organisational review, bearing in mind the recommendation that "Form should follow Function".

4.22   The RG recommends that UCD Registry consider working with its service users to produce business cases for system innovation /smaller scale work.

5. User Perspective

Commendations

5.15   UCD Registry's commitment to partnership working with faculty and professional services staff.

5.16   The approachability and helpfulness of UCD Registry staff in answering queries directly or referring them appropriately.

5.17   The robust and reliable nature of UCD Registry systems, and their associated reports.

5.18   The College Liaison Officer role implemented by UCD Registry.

5.19   The impactful Student Ambassador programme and student recruitment operations.

Recommendations

5.20   The RG recommends that the University consider how it might better use the expertise within UCD Registry to plan and deliver its strategic ambition.

5.21   It is recommended that UCD Registry consider how the number of reports that can be run by staff outside UCD Registry could be increased, in the interests of greater efficiency and alleviating some of the UCD Registry workload.

5.22   The RG recommends that attention might be focussed on streamlining processes for manual grade changes.

5.23   Consideration should be given on how to improve communications and timing around notification of examination results, and on module registration.

5.24   In the next phase of planning, UCD Registry, along with University Management, is urged to explore ways of delivering services to graduate students and to others where the standard Academic Year/trimester is not an appropriate framework.

5.25   Review the success and any shortcomings of the E-Thesis project after it has been in operation for a year.

UCD Registry - Response to the Report of the Review Group

Engaging with the Quality Review process has proved an insightful and valuable experience for UCD Registry staff. For newer staff, this Review was their first opportunity to participate in a structured reflection on the unit's quality and effectiveness. It is reassuring that the effort that went into the review activities and the Self-Assessment Report has been recognised. Although UCD Registry seeks feedback from stakeholders on an ongoing basis, the broader consultation required in this instance, generated a more open dialogue, allowing our University colleagues to consider their relationship with the unit and its development over the last seven years. The viewpoint of our stakeholders is evident in both the commendations and recommendations of the Review Group Report.

The site visit was a very positive experience for UCD Registry staff. The review team had clearly prepared very thoroughly and made a very positive impression with their insights and levels of engagement throughout.

Since the site visit in early March, the University landscape has changed in an unprecedented way.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought with it significant changes to the current environment, as well as an altered trajectory for the unit. In the immediate term, this has meant remote working, changes to operations and service provision, and health and safety considerations for students and staff. Other ramifications are still becoming apparent but will include cuts to the unit budget and resourcing restrictions. In addition, the planned futureproofing of Registry by means of a structural redesign will not go ahead, having been superseded by a planned University level reorganisation. Notwithstanding this, the majority of the recommendations made in the Review Group Report remain valid and will be valuable to the unit in addressing the challenges ahead.

UCD Registry welcomes the recommendations of the Review Group, acknowledging the expertise that has been brought to bear in their development. It is encouraging that, in the main, the recommendations are highly pertinent and achievable. In a context where the unit is inundated with requests for additional support and enhancements from across the University, the recommendations provide welcome guidance and prioritisation.

A number of recommendations in the report had previously been highlighted for implementation and are therefore already underway. These include a project to streamline exceptional grade changes and to provide improved reporting for Schools and Colleges as a deliverable of the Grade Approval Process Review. Other recommendations can be progressed in the short-term without the need for large-scale

consultation or additional resources. These include a revision of the Vision Statement, the development of a three-year road map and an improvement to student query management to allow logging of multiple queries.

Several of the recommendations are linked directly or indirectly to the strategic theme of Digital Transformation (Transforming Through Digital Technology). An improved articulation of the objectives of this strategic theme and UCD Registry's role in it, would allow the unit to integrate this into its planning road map and ensure local level projects and initiatives are consistent with these goals.

The Review Group has included several recommendations that require the support or endorsement of University management. These include the integration of student services provided by UCD Registry with those delivered by other units in the University, the involvement of Registry at University level project conception stage and the introduction of Change Impact Assessments in advance of new projects and initiatives.

The last Quality Improvement Plan (2013-2018) was a key driver in affecting change across the unit and we look forward to developing and implementing the quality improvement initiatives that will arise from this review. The Quality Improvement Plan will be developed over the coming three months and will outline in more detail how Registry proposes to implement the Report recommendations. The QIP will be agreed with the Registrar and signed-off by the Chair of the Review Group and the Director of Quality. The QIP will be considered by the University Management Team (UMT) and the UCD Academic Council Committee on Quality Enhancement (ACQEC) and published alongside the Review Group Report.

UCD Registry

Quality Review Site Visit: 2-5 March 2020

TIMETABLE

17.00-19.00   Review Group and Director of Quality *__only__* meet to review preliminary comments and to confirm work schedule and assignment of tasks for the following two days

                       UCD University Club Cypress Room. Belfield

19.30   Review Group and Director of Quality *__only__* - Dinner hosted by Professor Mark Rogers, Registrar/Deputy President/Vice President for Academic Affairs

                       UCD University Club Belfield

Day 1 Tuesday 3 March 2020
Venues – Boardroom Room 213, The Cube - Tierney Building and for recruitment meetings, John Hume

08.30-09.00   Private meeting (RG)

09.00-09.30   RG meet with Registrar/Deputy President/Vice President for Academic Affairs

09.30-09.45   Key observations (RG only)

09.45-10.30   RG meet with Director of Registry, Head of Support Unit

10.30-10.45   Break (RG only)

10.45-11.45	RG meet with:
	Dean of Graduate Studies and Deputy Registrar, Dean of Students
11.45-12.00	Key observations (RG only)
12.00-12.30	RG meet with Director of Administrative Services, UCD Registry
12.35-13.30	Lunch (RG only)
13.30-14.00	RG meet with Director of Admissions and Enrolment Planning, UCD Registry
14.05-14.35	RG meet with Director of Assessment, UCD Registry
14.35-14.45	Break (RG only)
14.45-15.15	RG meet with Office of the Director of Registry Team
15.15-15.30	Key observations (RG only)
15.30-16.00	RG meet with Admissions Team, UCD Registry
16.05-16.35	RG meet with Administrative Services Team, UCD Registry
16.35-16.45	Key observations (RG only)
16.45-17.05	Tour of Open Plan and Student Desk Space
17.05-17.15	Walk to John Hume Building
17.15-17.45	RG meet with Director of Student Recruitment, UCD Registry
17.45-17.55	Tour of Student Recruitment offices, John Hume Building
18.00	RG depart

Day 2 - Wednesday 4 March 2020
Venues – Boardroom Room 213, The Cube - Tierney Building

08.30-09.00	Private meeting and preparation (RG only)
09.00-09.50	RG meet with representative members of Faculty
09.50-10.05	Key observations (RG only)
10.05-10.35	RG meet with Assessment Team

10.40-11.10	RG meet with Student Recruitment Team
11.10-11.25	Break (RG only)
11.25-11.55	RG meet with IT Services Leadership team
12.00-12.30	RG meet with HR Partner
12.45-13.45	Working lunch with student representatives (UG & PG)
13.45-14.00	Key observations (RG only)
14.00-14.50	Meeting with professional staff representatives (Schools, Colleges & Programme Offices)
14.50-15.00	Break and Key observations (RG only)
15.00-15.50	RG meet with professional/support service staff representatives
15.50-16.00	Key observations (RG only)
16.30-17.00	Additional Meeting with Director of Registry and Unit Heads
16.00-17.00	Private meetings with individual staff (10 min slots)
17.00-17.30	Director of UCD Agile
17.30-18.00	Meeting of Review Group only
18.00	RG Departs

Day 3 -Thursday 4 March 2020
Venues – Boardroom Room 213, Tierney Building

09.00-09.30	Private meeting (RG only)
09.30-10.30	Begin preparing draft RG Report
10.45-11.00	Break (RG only)
11.00-12.30	Continues preparing draft RG Report
12.30-13.15	Working lunch for Review Group
13.15-14.00	RG finalise first draft of RG Report and feedback commendations/recommendations
14.00-14.15	RG meet with (Registrar/Deputy President/Vice President for Academic Affairs) to feedback initial outline commendations and recommendations
14.15-14.30	Break

14.30-14.45	RG meet with Directory of Registry to feedback initial outline commendations and recommendations
14.45-15.00	Break
15.00-15.20	Exit presentation to UCD Registry Staff –summarising the principal commendations/recommendations of the Review Group
15.30	RG depart