

Quality Assurance / Quality Improvement
Programme for Academic Units
2006-2007



Peer Review Group Report
for the
School of Health & Human Performance

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Date 7-9th March 2007

Introduction

This Quality review has been conducted in accordance with a framework model developed and agreed through the Irish Universities Association Quality Committee (formerly CHIU – IUQSC) and complies with the provisions of Section 35 of the Universities Act (1997). The model consists of a number of basic steps.

1. An internal team in the Unit being reviewed completes a detailed self-assessment report (SAR). It should be noted that this document is confidential to the Unit and to the Review Panel and to senior officers of the University.
2. This report is sent to a team of peer assessors, the Peer Review Group (PRG) – composed of members from outside DCU and from other areas of DCU – who then visit the Unit and conduct discussions with a range of staff, students and other stakeholders.
3. The PRG then writes its own report. The Unit is given the chance to correct possible factual errors before the Peer Group Report (PGR) is finalised.
4. The Unit produces a draft Quality Improvement Plan (QulP) in response to the various issues and findings of the SAR and PGR Reports.
5. The PGR and the Unit draft QulP are considered by the Quality Promotion Committee.
6. The draft QulP is discussed in a meeting between the Unit, members of the Peer Group, the Director of Quality Promotion and Senior Management. The University's responses are written into the QulP, and the result is the finalised QulP.
7. A summary of the PRG Report, the QulP and the Executive Response is sent to the Governing Authority of the University, who will approve publication in a manner that they see fit.

This document is the report referred to in Step 3 above

1. Profile of the School

Location of the School

The facilities of the School of Health and Human Performance (1353 Sq.m) are primarily located in the basement of the Science and Health building. These include lecture rooms, laboratories and a storeroom.

Staff

At present there are 9 full time academic staff, 1 full time contract academic staff member, 5 contract academic staff, 1 shared administrative position and 2 technical staff. The teaching staff comprises 3 physiologists, one psychologist and one physical activity and public health specialist, one biomechanist, one adapted physical activity specialist (50%), one sport sociologist, one physiotherapist/ATT, and one adjunct sports medicine physician.

Programmes/Outputs

The School of Health and Human Performance (SHHP) currently delivers three undergraduate degree programmes (BSc) and no taught postgraduate course. The three undergraduate programmes, all of which are 4 years in duration, are:

- Sport Science and Health (SSH) -initiated 1999/2000
- Athletic Therapy and Training (ATT) - initiated 2005/6
- Physical Education with Biology (PEB) - initiated 2006/7

The student numbers and full time equivalent (FTE) scores associated with the delivery of these programmes are detailed in Table 3.1.

School Programmes and FTEs

	1	2	3	4	FTE
1. B.Sc. in Sport Science and Health*					
% delivered by SHHP	66%	92%	100%	100%	
Number of Students	44	43	44	32	165.4
2. B.Sc. in Athletic Therapy and Training*					
% delivered by SHHP	80%	96%	100%	92%	
Number of Students	30	24	-	-	55.1
3. B.Sc. in Physical Education with Biology*					
% delivered by SHHP	60%	70%	60%	60%	
Number of Students	32	-	-	-	32
				Total	252.5

*Note: Partner schools include School of Educational Studies, School of Biotechnology,

School of Chemical Sciences, and School of Physics.
Information supplied by the DCU's Institutional Research & Analysis Officer.

The academic staff has strong involvement in research and currently, there are 22 research students registered for MSc. (n=12) or PhD (n=10) programmes. Of these, six students are registered on a part-time basis. These include two technicians and two academic members of other institutions. The majority of students (n=16) are undertaking research in Exercise Physiology.

Current status of postgraduate students

		No. of years registered					
		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Number of students	MSc	4	5	3	0	0	12
	PhD	2	3	3	2	0	10

In terms of the staff research outputs, over the period of the past five years 28 peer-reviewed articles and 5 book chapters have been published by members (n=5) of the School. The majority of these papers have been published in Exercise Physiology, and in particular by Prof. Moyna (n=16). The average impact factor for 23 of the publications was 2.9 (Range 0.9-7.8). There were 81 published abstracts and 13 non-peer reviewed abstracts presented by School members at national and international meetings. There were 8 non-peer reviewed reports generated by research activities. Approximately 66 invited presentations were delivered by School members at national and international conferences and symposia and the School of Health and Human Performance has hosted or part-organised 6 national and international conferences over the same time-frame.

2. The Self-Assessment Process

The School Quality Review Coordinating Committee

The School Quality Committee is made up of a mixture of staff from the academic and technical sectors of the school. The members are:

Dr Kieran Moran (Lecturer) – Chair

John Kerrane (Lecturer) - Vice Chair & *'Organisation and Management'* Coordinator

Dr Siobhain McArdle (Lecturer) – *'External Links and Community Relations'* Coordinator

Javier Monedaro (Technician)

Professor Niall Moyna (Assoc. Prof)

Dr Donal O'Gorman (Lecturer) – *'Scholarship and Research'* Coordinator

Dr Catherine Woods (Lecturer) – *'Programme and Instruction'* Coordinator

Methodology Adopted

The Committee was formed in October 2006 and members were allocated their various positions of responsibility and tasks. Four members were assigned roles as theme coordinators (Organisation and Management, Scholarship and Research, Teaching and Learning, External Links and Community Relations). Early meetings were devoted to identifying the process and instruments that are used to assess current practices in these themed areas. Subsequent meetings ascertained progress, and where difficulties were identified, solutions were found. In January 2007, the Department organised one-and-a-half days away at a local hotel to undertake a SWOC analysis of the School, which extended to an additional two days of review at DCU. All but one of these latter days were led by an external facilitator.

Following the completion of the SWOC analysis, coordinators directed the efforts of their own small working groups to produce a strategy document for their theme. A number of meetings were subsequently held to reach a consensus of opinion on each.

In parallel to this process each of the coordinators also compiled and processed data from staff and other key stake-holders to write a review of current practices and outputs for their respective theme. In all, 12 meetings were organised, three of which lasted over a full day. In total it is estimated that 32 hours of committee or 'all-staff' group meetings were held, with numerous sub-meetings being organised by the four theme coordinators.

3. The Peer Review Group Process

Overall Comments on the Visit

The DCU Quality Promotion Unit provided adequate information for the PRG at all stages of the process. Both the documentation supplied prior to the visit and the initial briefing by the Direct of Quality Promotion were extremely useful as they highlighted for the PRG important points it should consider in its report. The schedule of visits and meetings organised by the QPU was well planned, and provided the PRG with the information needed of the department. The liaison provided by the School of Health and Human Performance during the visit was excellent and the PRG would like to sincerely thank Prof. Moyna, Dr. Moran as Chair of the Self Assessment Report, and all the staff who engaged at any level in this important process

The Review Group

Prof. John Kirwan, Associate Professor of Molecular Medicine, Cleveland Clinic Foundation and Case Western Reserve University (Chair)

Prof. Mary O'Sullivan, Professor of Physical Education and Youth Sport University of Limerick,

Prof Paschal Preston, Senior Academic Communications DCU

Mr. Brendan Hackett, CEO Athletics Ireland

Dr. Regina Connolly, Business School, DCU (Rapporteur)

Methodology

The review process consisted of three distinct activities:

1. Familiarisation with the self-assessment report prior to the visit.
2. The site visit per se. Its main purpose was to review and validate the main points of the self-assessment report by conducting directed interviews of relevant personnel/stakeholders and by inspecting/evaluating the research, teaching and general facilities. The members of the PRG decided to stay together at all stages of this visit. The chair of the PRG and the other members of the PRG were invited to ask questions if they wished.
3. The writing and edition of the present review report which summarises the main findings of the PRG and makes recommendations for future developments was undertaken as follows: the initial sections were written by the rapporteur while all the PRG members contributed to sections 4-6. The main sources of information used to produce the report were the School self-assessment report and the notes taken during the visit.

Site Visit Programme

Day 1 (Wednesday, 7 March 2007)

- 14.00 – 15.00 Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group, Briefing by Director of Quality Promotion.
- 15.00 – 16.00 Group agrees final work schedule and assignment of tasks for the following two days.
- 16.00 – 17.30 Consideration of Self-Assessment Report with School of Health and Human Performance co-ordination committee.
- 19.30 Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group, Head of Unit (Prof Niall Moyna) and Unit Quality Co-ordinating Committee, Director of Quality Promotion.

Day 2 (Thursday, 8 March 2007)

- 09.00 – 10.00 Meeting of Peer Review Group to review previous day's findings and prepare for day 2 and 3 of visit.
- 10.00 – 13.00 Meetings with group members of School of HHP, e.g.
- 10.00 Dean of Faculty (Prof Malcolm Smyth)
 - 10.30 Head of School (Prof Niall Moyna)
 - 11.15 Quality Review & Programme coordinators
- 13.00 – 14.00 Brief Discussion with the Director of Quality Promotion followed by working lunch for members of Peer Review Group
- 14.00 - 17.00 Meetings with representative selections of stakeholder groups
- 2pm Alumni
 - 2.20pm Students
 - 3pm Staff (Academic, Support/Administrative)
 - 4.15pm Central Support Units
- 19.30 Working private dinner for members of the Peer Review Group

Day 3 (Friday, 9 March 2007)

- 09.00 – 10.00 Meeting with Senior Management Group
- 10.00 – 11.00 Tour of core Facilities (Prof. Niall Moyna, Dr. Catherine Woods)
- 11.15 – 12.00 Meeting with Head of Unit (Prof. Niall Moyna) to clarify any outstanding issues
- 12.00 – 12.30 Brief Discussion with the Director of Quality
- 12.30 – 13.30 Working lunch for members of Peer Review Group
- 13.30 – 16.00 Preparation of 1st Draft of Final Report
- 16.00 – 16.30 Exit presentation to staff of the Unit made by the Chair of the Peer Review Group, Prof. Mary O' Sullivan and Mr. Brendan Hackett summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group

Overview of the Site Visit

The PRG followed the timetable of meetings described above. It met initially with the Director of Quality Promotion and the School Quality Committee. The PRG was impressed by the quality of the responses from all the parties it met and the detail of information on the School's activities provided by the members of the School Quality Committee. The following paragraphs echo the views of the staff and stakeholders and summarize the main outcome of the discussions that took place during the site visit.

1) The self-assessment report was considered by the PRG in the presence of all the members of the School Quality Committee. The Head of School first gave a brief history of the generation of the self-assessment report. In a question and answer session the position of the School of Health and Human Performance within the faculty of Science was discussed. The excellent uptake in student numbers and resource implications relating to it was outlined. The development of unique undergraduate programmes was commended, although the School sees the resource implications in relation to the high student uptake of these programmes as an issue. The meeting was followed by an evening meal with members of the PRG and the School Quality Committee.

(2) The PRG met individually with the group members of the School of Health and Human Performance including the Dean of the Faculty (Prof. Malcolm Smyth), the Head of the School (Prof. Niall Moyna), and the Quality Review and Programme coordinators. This was followed by informative meetings with selections of stakeholder groups including alumni, current undergraduate and postgraduate staff, other academic staff including contract staff, support and administrative personnel, and the University Secretary (Mr. Martin Conry). In the evening there was a private working dinner for the members of the PRG.

(3) The PRG meet with the Senior Management Group of the University in order to discuss issues that had emerged from the site visit. A tour of the core facilities was then provided by Prof. Niall Moyna and Dr. Catherine Woods. A final meeting with Prof. Moyna enabled outstanding issues to be clarified.

Overview of the Site Visit

The administrative arrangements were excellent. All the staff and students were very welcoming and shared their insights and understandings with us in the limited time available to cover the activities of the School. The PRG members were impressed by the very open and frank mode of communication adopted by the School members towards this review process.

Review Group's View of the Self-Assessment Report

The PRG found the self-assessment report to accurately represent the work carried out by the School, including a candid analysis of its strengths and weaknesses. There were no significant omissions in the report. The School without reserve provided any extra information that was requested by the PRG. The School also arranged additional requested meetings with stakeholders such as postgraduate students without reserve.

Report Methodology

The group worked as a team. Specific areas of this report were first drafted by individual members and then, following discussion, the findings were incorporated into this report.

4. Findings of the Review Group

Background and Context

The School of Health and Human Performance (previously the Centre for Sport Science and Health) was established in March 1999, and gained School status in 2005. It recruited its first two members of staff in 1999 and launched its first degree programme (Sport Science and Health, BSc.) in September 1999. It now has a compliment of 9 full-time academics, one full-time secretary and two full-time technical officers. The School has experienced an amazing period of rapid growth in 7 years and now offers two additional degree programmes (established in 2005/6 and 2006/7). It currently has a total of 249 undergraduate students registered on its three programmes, which is set to increase to 440 in 2009/10 when the programmes are fully rolled out. The School also currently has 22 post-graduate research students.

The willingness of the University and Faculty of Science and Health to quickly and effectively incorporate what many saw as a 'non-traditional' science subject into its cohort of science-based programmes, was reflective of DCU's ethos to be pro-active, dynamic and innovative. The School has continued to enjoy wide spread support from the University and Faculty which has allowed it to grow rapidly and, within a relatively short period of time, develop a significant and positive national reputation in the areas of 'physical activity for health' and 'sports participation and performance'. The facilities of the School of Health and Human Performance (1353 Sq.m) are primarily located in the basement of the Science and Health building.

The School offers three four-year undergraduate degree programmes: Sport Science and Health (est. 1999); Athletic Therapy and Training (est. 2005); and Physical Education with Biology (est. 2006). The courses attract high numbers of applicants, both CAO and 'non-CAO', with the CAO points being among the highest in the University (SSH: 460; PEB: 480; ATT: 500). One in six first choice applications to DCU in 2007 selected one of the three courses offered by the School of Health and Human Performance. As a consequence they attract very intelligent and highly motivated students.

The School aims to produce professional graduates who are knowledgeable and experienced in their relevant disciplines, have the necessary skills for employment and an interest to sustain their professional development post qualification. Practical classes are a significant requirement for all three programmes. Due to the large increase in student numbers, delivering practical classes will require additional full-time staff and dedicated laboratory/sports hall/clinical skills space. This will be a challenge for the School and University over the coming years. Feedback on the School's programmes is obtained

through a variety of formal and informal methods. Students, external examiners, national governing authorities and employers are solicited to provide constructive advice on how to maintain good practice, and how to develop and improve programmes.

The School has grown rapidly in the last 5 years with a young, enthusiastic and research motivated staff. There are no formal research structures within the school but individual and collaborative research groups have been formed. The School is represented at the Faculty Research Committee, the Research Ethics Committee and the Research Advisory Panel by the Research Convenor.

There have been challenges in establishing research programmes. These primarily arise from the School's focus on a relatively new, interdisciplinary area, the necessity to design and launch relevant new teaching programmes, and a lack of dedicated research space within the School. As a new and emerging School it has been difficult to compete with more established and resourced Schools for prioritisation within the Faculty.

There has been a year-on-year increase in peer-reviewed publications and recently appointed staff are becoming research active. A total of 28 papers and 5 book chapters have been published. Over €900,000 of research funding has been awarded to School staff. There was another €675,000 funding for projects where school members were co-applicants. In addition, Prof. Moyna was involved in a successful €4.6 million NIA/NHLBI grant and a Cycle III PRTL programme. There are 22 graduate students currently registered for MSc. (n=12) and PhD (n=10) degree programmes. During the review period, 8 students have graduated.

The School does not currently have a policy in relation to External Links and Community Relations (EL/CR). The School does recognize, however, the importance of EL/CR to student education, staff development and to the growth of the School's current research portfolio. The importance of EL/CR to the School is reflected in the fact that 100% of staff members currently have responsibilities, memberships and/or projects both external to the School and/or to the University. The breadth, depth and extent of the School's engagement with external links is a confirmation of the staffs passion and expertise in their area and the School's commitment to the social component of DCU's Strategic Plan, 'Leadership Through Foresight' (2006-2008). Through education, research and service provision, the School not only fulfils its obligations but also makes a significant contribution towards the development of DCU's profile at both a national and international level.

The School has a relatively young staff, who are in general in the early stages of their academic careers. However, due to the heavy workload associated with developing new teaching programmes, combined with large administration duties and external relation activities, it will be a challenge to develop vibrant research careers.

The School prides itself on attracting quality staff who not only bring a high level of expertise, but who will also bring passion, energy, commitment and a good 'team ethos'. It has proved difficult to recruit suitable staff with expertise in some disciplines (e.g. Biomechanics, Physical Education), resulting in increased workloads.

While the laboratory and practical skills space was appropriate for one programme, the introduction of two additional programmes without a parallel increase in space has made the delivery of practical classes very difficult, with a reduction in practical classes having to take place. If the School's plans and potential for the expansion of (graduate) programmes and research is to materialise, the urgent need for additional teaching space will have to be addressed. In addition, there is no dedicated research laboratory space. This clearly hampers current research, and again it will prevent further desired and planned expansion of research activities.

Organisation and Management of the School

The School of Health and Human Performance is part of the Faculty of Science and Health. Prof M. Smyth (currently Executive Dean FSH) was Head of School from 1999-2002. The current Head of School, Prof. Niall Moyna was appointed in 2002. The School has one full-time Secretary. Aisling Scally has held this position since 1999. Since early-2006 Aisling has been job-sharing with Christine Stears. The School has two full-time technical officers - Javier Monedero (appointed in 1999) and Paul O'Connor (appointed in 2003).

The Head (Prof. Moyna) is the Chief Executive of the School. He is responsible for the management and administration of budgets and resources within the School.

Teaching duties are assigned at the beginning of each school year by the Head of School after consultation with each staff member. Every effort is made to assign staff to modules that are close to their area of specialization, and where possible a maximum of 4 teaching modules (ideally 3 modules) are assigned per year. The rotation of responsibilities and teaching duties is the responsibility of the Head of School. Due to the relatively small number of full time staff members and the development of new programs it has not been possible to rotate

responsibilities in a regular fashion. In addition, new staff members are not assigned administrative responsibilities during their first year.

There are two School Teaching meetings per year. These meetings (of all staff who teach on School programmes), deal with teaching matters relating to the taught programmes which the School is running. Staff meetings are held approximately once per week during the first and second semester. These meetings deal mainly with day-to-day issues related to the School programmes (Reports from: Programme Coordinators, INTRA Coordinator. Other items: briefings from Head, etc.)

At present, all teaching staff other than the Head of the School are at lecturer level. The lack of senior staff to whom certain duties can be devolved has increased the workload of the Head of School to a level that is unacceptable.

Many of the teaching staff are at an early career stage that needs support. However, the intake of student numbers appears to be higher than planned in some courses increasing pressure on time that staff can allocate to their research. Moreover, teaching staff are spending substantial time coordinating and assessing students' placements, which places further restrictions on the development of their research careers. There are no formal research groups within the school, and due to teaching and administrative time-related restrictions, staff do not have the time to explore research synergies. A resource-related restriction relates to the lack of dedicated research space as the available laboratory space is primarily committed to delivering taught programmes.

Strengths

- Young dynamic team that support each other and work well together.
- Dynamic head of school who encourages staff innovation/ development of programmes / staff research.
- High proportion of staff with PhD qualification.
- Flagship programmes with excellent student uptake.
- School has excellent community relationships and strong profile.

Weaknesses

- Head is over-extended in terms of workload.
- Intake of student numbers seems to be higher than planned in some courses and increases pressure on time for research.
- Teaching staff ideally should not be spending substantial time coordinating and assessing placements (resource implications).

- Potential to develop staff careers has been restricted due to lack of start up costs for research. No formal research groups within the school.
- Imbalance in terms of lecturer-to-senior lecturer ratio.

Opportunities

- Opportunity to create additional senior leadership position.
- In developing ATT & teaching practice system there is potential to adapt and use the placement and monitoring system developed by School of Nursing
- Opportunity to take on contract support staff (TA or similar appointment) to free up academic staff for research.

Challenges/ concerns

- Lack of senior staff to whom certain duties can be devolved.
- Acquisition of new staff.
- Lack of adequate teaching and research space resources.
- Career stage of young staff needs more support.
- Remedy the junior/senior staff ratio imbalance.

Programmes and Instruction

The School offers three four-year undergraduate degree programmes: Sport Science and Health (est. 1999); Athletic Therapy and Training (est. 2005); and Physical Education with Biology (est. 2006). The courses attract high numbers of applicants, both CAO and 'non-CAO', with the CAO points being among the highest in the University (SSH: 460; PEB: 480; ATT: 500). One in six first choice applications to DCU in 2007 selected one of the three courses offered by the School of Health and Human Performance. As a consequence they attract very intelligent and highly motivated students.

Strengths

- The three undergraduate programmes are in high demand and over subscribed.
- There is a strong commitment to providing hands on practical components in each programme.
- The staff are committed to high quality teaching and are deemed very accessible by students.
- The students were very positive about the programme and the quality of the experiences they have received.

Weaknesses

- There is an immediate staff shortage for the Physical Education and Biology programme.
- Space for teaching the PEB is costly, fragmented, and at a distance from staff offices.
- Space for teaching ATT/PEB is limited & fragmented and at a distance from main faculty offices.
- Continuity and leadership for practical PEB courses/Teaching Practice is lacking.

Opportunities

- To build national capacity in sport, health, and physical activity, and the School is beginning to do so.
- To support national agencies in the fields of sport, physical activity and health.
- To develop a new profession of Athletic Training and Therapists in Ireland.
- To provide for postgraduate training/programming in the field of physical activity and health.

Challenges

- To address the increasing teaching & supervision demands for ATT/PEB programmes both on campus and when they make school/field visits that will need to be supervised with multiple visits.
- Securing senior leadership in pedagogy is seen as both an opportunity and a challenge. Bringing in a young junior scholar to run the programme does not bode well for their broad academic career.
- With increasing interest in this field by other third level institutions, DCU needs to maintain the value added nature of its programmes in an increasingly competitive undergraduate market place.
- Needs to ensure that its programme offerings attend to experiences needed with emerging career possibilities in this sector in the Irish economy.

Scholarship and Research

As noted earlier in this section, the School has grown its research activities and output in the last 5 years despite being a new unit with the burden of developing new teaching programmes. There are no formal research structures within the school but individual and collaborative research groups have been formed. The School is represented at the Faculty Research Committee, the Research Ethics Committee and the Research Advisory Panel by the Research Convenor.

Strengths

- The key strengths and potential of this School comprise its relatively young, creative, enthusiastic and research-motivated staff.
- The School staff have grown their research activities and outputs in the last 5 years.
- This comprises a considerable achievement despite being a new unit with a novel interdisciplinary focus alongside the tasks of designing and delivering new teaching programmes.
- Staff have established multi-disciplinary collaborations within DCU and strong external networking outside DCU, all of which provide fertile ground for future research opportunities.
- High potential to utilise the staff team's expertise and creative human resources to further expand its research base in future years.

Weaknesses

- A large diversity of research areas within a relatively small team.
- Team now at a point of maturity and scale where more formal structures are required (e.g. to identify, effectively exploit and manage funded research opportunities and synergies across different areas).
- Time related difficulties balancing research and teaching.
- Continuing need and struggle to assert the legitimacy of this relatively novel and interdisciplinary area of human research and scholarship in the Irish context.
- Shortage of dedicated research space appropriate for the conduct of human based studies throughout the year.

Opportunities

- A dynamic and creative young research team who are keen to engage in research and scholarship in this new field.
- The H&HP field is now becoming a significant growth area for research and scholarship, both nationally and internationally.
- The staff's multidisciplinary research interests and expertise in the H&HP area provides significant opportunities to expand both School-based and collaborative research initiatives.

- Potential to (selectively) harness impressive array of external networking and collaborative linkages to further expand applied and translational research activities.

Challenges

- Achieving balance in staff time budgets, especially to ring fence structured time for engaging in funded research.
- To further develop the staff's creative approach in identifying suitable funding agencies for this interdisciplinary area in the Irish research funding arena.
- To obtain fuller recognition of the value and importance of this research area via-a-vis the local research prioritisation schema and metrics.
- To maximise the personal career goals of this relatively young and well-qualified staff team in the emerging new ball game in the Irish HE sector (where goals are increasingly focused on : research, research, research).

Social and Community Service

The School refer to this area in the self-assessment report as external links and community relations. While there is no formal policy in this area, the staff and students have made and are continuing to make a significant contribution to the community. The staff is involved in a number of important committees outside the University as well as acting as external examiners and teaching on external courses. They deliver lectures and workshops and provide a range of services to sporting associations at national and local level. They are involved in three comprehensive health based community programmes.

The staff engage the students in many of these projects in the belief that they are gaining quality educational experiences. The staff believes that this external work maintains and develops their professional skills thus adding an element of practical experience to their tuition.

There is strong evidence that the involvement of the School staff and students in community programmes and other external projects has increased the profile of the School and DCU in particular. The School has gained a reputation for research findings in the areas of health science and promotion and this is of considerable benefit to Irish society.

The self assessment report has outlined a detailed SWOC analysis by the staff of this area. The PRG concur with their analysis and offer our summation.

Strengths

- Valuable contribution to society

- Raises the profile of the courses, the School, and DCU.
- Provides opportunities for students during and after their courses.
- Develops the professional skills of the staff.
- Provides opportunities for research links.

Weaknesses

- Staff are over stretched and outside work involves substantial additional time commitment.
- Lack of administrative support.
- Problem with developing website.
- Over reliance on graduate students to oversee some projects.

Opportunities

- Time to evaluate community and social projects and external links.
- New courses need new links to be developed.
- Align community programmes with research opportunities.
- External feedback can provide valuable insights.

Challenges/ concerns

- Build this area into admin or research duties to enhance staff promotion.
- Prioritise projects so that research opportunities are maximized.
- Assimilate external work and feedback into existing courses.
- Develop a School policy regarding external involvement.

Staffing, Accommodation and Resources

Staff

Presently, 1 Associate Professor and 9 full-time Lecturers cover the research, teaching and administrative responsibilities of the School. There are 6 additional Lecturers on contract, and these individuals help deliver teaching modules. Two full-time technicians support the laboratories and practical classes associated with three teaching programmes. There is one full-time secretary for the School. With the introduction of two new programmes, one in Athletic Training and one in PE/Biology, the Dean has approved 4 additional positions. Two of these positions are now filled and the remaining two are open. Timing for the advertisement of these positions has not followed market availability, particularly in the US market where positions are advertised and filled from autumn through

to February. Consequently, recruitment has been hampered and many qualified individuals are not being tapped. A search is also open for a technician/store supervisor. This latter position will fill an essential function of handling the logistics associated with equipment for the sports related practical classes that form part of the PE/Biology degree programme.

Accommodation

In general, academic programmes that typify the School of Health and Human Performance require research labs, teaching labs, practical and clinical skills teaching areas, lecture rooms, and administrative offices. The DCU SHHP has high quality laboratory space, lecture rooms and good administrative space. However, there are no dedicated research laboratories, and there is insufficient teaching space for the new Physical Education & Biology, and Athletic Therapy & Training programmes. The SHHP is a vibrant, successful school that is under-resourced for space given its expansive brief and the nature of its programmes. The PRG recognizes that many of the current issues are growth related.

- The most effective long-term solution to the urgent space needs of the School is to provide a custom built building.
- In the short term it is reasonable to anticipate that on the basis of the planned space audit, additional space will be allocated to the SHHP to address the accommodation deficiencies.

Research space

Strengths

- Staff are highly qualified, and highly trained in their respective areas of expertise.
- Equipment is state-of-the-art.

Weaknesses

- Insufficient teaching space for the new Physical Education & Biology, and Athletic Therapy & Training programmes.
- There is no dedicated research space.
- Equipment is shared with the undergraduate teaching programmes.
- Availability and access to space and equipment for research purposes is problematic.

There is a major concern that research must be conducted in space that is shared with the laboratory teaching elements of the respective undergraduate degree programmes. This arrangement appears to be inconsistent with the working policy of the institution and needs to be rectified as soon as possible.

The research programme has achieved some notable successes despite the handicaps that are currently in place. Based on grant funding and publication history, individuals in the School are competitive on an international level, however their productivity is being hampered by the lack of dedicated space to conduct and grow their research programmes.

Both the PE & Biology, and the Athletic Therapy & Training programmes are at an early stage of development and the research needs of the staff in these programmes is still emerging. Nevertheless, it is clear at this stage that there is a need for an additional pedagogy lab. The research needs for the AT&T programme will be shaped by new staff hires, due consideration for their needs should be given careful consideration during the hiring process.

Laboratory teaching space

Strengths

- Excellent space.
- Excellent equipment.
- Wide range of physiological, biochemical, biomechanical, and motor learning tools.

Weaknesses

- Space is shared with staff research programmes.
- Limited number of teaching stations.
- Practical classes must be taught in small group sessions, which increases staff contact time.
- Expensive and sensitive pieces of research equipment are placed at risk when students who have limited expertise and experience, have access to the equipment.

Practical and Clinical Skills teaching space

Strengths

- Making great use of allocated space.
- Lecture hall space is excellent.
- Excellent sports facilities on campus and nearby.

Weaknesses

- No additional teaching space has been allocated for the new programmes despite the substantial growth in student numbers.
- Practical classes must be taught in rented space (Sports Center).

- Renting teaching space limits programme growth, creates a budgetary drain, and limits student access to facilities for practicing teaching skills.
- Must travel off campus to find facilities for some practical teaching classes.
- No micro-teaching laboratory for Physical Education related elements.

Office space

Office space for current academic staff was viewed as appropriate. However, the PRG was concerned that the office space for the Head of School was inadequate, inappropriate, and inconsistent with the level of this position.

There were no vacant office spaces and so it was unclear where new staff would be located. There was unanimity among the PRG that these new staff hires be housed in single occupancy office space. In addition, the future success of the School will partly depend on recruiting talented graduate students and postdoctoral level staff. Office space for these individuals does not appear to exist at present. The PRG viewed this as a weakness. However, this issue could be addressed by identifying some shared space, with occupancy dependent on the level of appointment.

Technical Staff presently share an office/workshop area close to the laboratories. This was viewed as being adequate for the present needs of the School. With increased growth of the two new teaching programmes and expected growth of the research programmes, there is some concern that there is sufficient reserve support. This should be tracked and monitored as the respective programmes roll out.

Administrative space for the School is relatively small considering the scope and breath of the programmes that are being supported. Currently there is 1 office space for a secretary. The PRG is recommending that one additional administrative staff be appointed to support teaching practice placements and coordination for the PE & Biology programme, and for clinical placement of the ATT students. This individual will require office space.

Computer facilities are adequate at present, but as stated previously concerning other aspects of the programmes run by the School, these may be insufficient after the full roll out of new programmes. In order to keep up with needs, there should be an on-going review of how these accommodations are meeting demand.

Resources

Based on our review, it is the opinion of the PRG that the Institution and Dean have done an excellent job in resourcing new programs with equipment/supplies. However, based on our interviews with staff, the start-up packages offered to

new academic staff appear to be extremely modest. While it is recognized that there is a wide spectrum of needs for the different hires within the School and Faculty, this is an area that requires greater consideration and some level of minimum standardization needs to be considered.

5. Recommendations for Improvement

The following notation is used in the recommendations for improvement:

- P1: A recommendation that is important *and* requires urgent action.
- P2: A recommendation that is important, but can (or perhaps must) be addressed on a more extended time scale.
- P 3: A recommendation which merits serious consideration but which is not considered to be critical to the quality of the ongoing activities in the Unit.

Additionally, the Review Group attempt to indicate the level(s) of the University where action is required by using the following:

- A: Administrative Unit
- U: University Executive/Senior Management

Organisation and Management of the School

1. P1-U Urgent appointment of senior staff to provide additional leadership and support to School staff.
2. P1-U Urgent appointment of additional support staff particularly teaching assistants or similar appointments to support increasing teaching and administrative demands on staff and facilitate development of school research profile.
3. P1-A Appointment of a dedicated placement coordinator for the ATT and PEB programmes. This will require development of a placement and monitoring system. There is an existing system on campus (i.e. Nursing) that might be adapted.

Programmes and Instruction

1. P1-U Consolidate current undergraduate programmes: Freeze enrolment at current levels until 2010.
2. P2-A Seek external facilitator to review market demand for new postgraduate programme(s) by 2010. Postgraduate programmes should be pump-primed to allow time for programme design without taking time from current staff's research and teaching responsibilities.

3. P2-U Seek national alliances to consider potential development of “graduate school” in physical activity and health area.

Scholarship and Research

1. P1-A Design new structures (research committee) to support staff in achieving dedicated time for research and effective responses to relevant funding opportunities (IRCSET, IRCHSS, HRB).
2. P1-A Establish a process to enhance and (selectively) utilize the staff’s wide array of external networking linkages to deepen its range of applied and translational research activities.
3. P1-U DCU needs to ensure that both university and faculty metrics for research adequately reflect the specific features of an emerging interdisciplinary field in the Irish HE context.
4. P2-A In reviewing external activities staff should identify which activities align best with research goals and metrics (applied or translational).

Social and Community Service

1. P2-A Build administrative costs into external service contracts.
2. P2-A Identify target projects for each member of staff based on their research interests, or areas of expertise, and ensure that this work is recognized for promotion purposes.
3. P3-A Set up formal process for evaluating and incorporating feedback from external sources.

Staffing, Accommodation and Resources

1. P1-U Allocate dedicated research space.
2. P1-U Urgently provide appropriate laboratory teaching space for laboratory modules delivered to students across all three programmes.
3. P1-U Immediately identify more appropriate office space for the Head of School.

4. P1-U Identify and allocate teaching space for new programmes in PE & Biology (microteaching room and practical skills teaching area), and Athletic Therapy & Training (second clinical training room).
5. P2-U Identify appropriate office space for all new staff hires.
6. P2-A Provide all new staff with a start-up package to support the development of their research programme.