School Review of the School of Languages

Executive Summary

Introduction

The main purpose of the School Review in the School of Languages was to take a strategic overview of the School itself, its current position and its ability to respond to changing needs. A key element of the School Review process includes making recommendations in relation to the continuing approval by Academic Council of the awards of existing programmes.

This is the first School Review which the School of Languages has undertaken and is therefore an important undertaking for the School.

Summary of Main Recommendations

The Review Panel is thankful to the School for the positive interaction of its staff with the Review Panel. It is very impressed by the students met and the positive view they had of the School, its programmes and its staff. The Panel hopes that its report and in particular its recommendations assist the School in its future endeavours.

The key recommendations of the Review Panel are:

i) There was some concern, in relation to Irish and Chinese, that there is too much reliance on one member of staff for each languages. In order to secure the future of these languages in the DIT and to maximise the range of approaches to teaching these languages, the School needs to widen the staff base in these areas. The Panel is aware of the current position in the Institute in relation to the recruitment of staff; nonetheless, it advises the School and the Institute to consider its priorities when the opportunity to recruit staff arises. The Panel in particular would ask the School as well as the Institute to reflect on the strategic importance of Chinese for Ireland, given that 50% of the world's tourists will be Chinese by the year 2015 and the number of industrial links between Ireland and China.

ii) The School should develop a suite of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes as appropriate in areas where staff are research active, both in the School and in the Digital Media Centre. The Panel is of the view that the School needs to reinforce its identity and considers that this recommendation will help in this regard.

iii) The Panel is of the view that, upon careful examination, that staff workloads including incentives such as time allowances and the time available over the course of the year constitute a favourable research environment which all staff should avail of. The Panel
School of Languages School Review Report

recommends that the School should set targets in relation to research that are in line with European norms in this regard and that this is an urgent priority as well as a realistically achievable goal for the School.

iv) The Panel is of the opinion that the School is well-placed to take a lead role in relation to the development of a national language policy and it recommends that it should maximise its influence with the Department of Education and Science in this regard.

v) The Panel supports the School's links with other Schools and Faculties in the Institute. The Panel commends the ongoing collaborations with the Faculty of Tourism and Food and it supports the development of the BSc in International Tourism and Languages, recommending that this programme should be based within the School of Languages and also that additional language streams, for example, Chinese, should be introduced.

vi) The Panel recognises, in relation to the BA in International Business and Languages, that there exist issues in relation to students’ preparedness in terms of oral fluency in French for the year abroad as well as issues around the selection of the French university. This problem was identified by students and acknowledged by staff. It recommends that the School resolve this issue as a matter of urgency so that the success of the year abroad is not jeopardised for students on the French stream. The Panel notes that the other streams operate successfully in this regard.

vii) The management of the year abroad needs to be given further consideration. The Panel recommends that the School tap into the experience of fourth year students and allow this to inform this in order to improve the experience for other years. The Panel suggests that there are good examples elsewhere in the Institute of maintaining good contact with placement students (eg BA (Hons) in Culinary Arts).

viii) The Panel recommends that students be encouraged to attain recognised language qualifications (for example, the Cambridge certificate) during the year abroad.

ix) The Panel commends the School in its implementation of the Institute's quality assurance procedures and in particular reports that students comment favourably on their input to their programmes through the Q6 forms and through representation on Programme Committees. It recommends that the School ensure that it embeds student representation on Programme Committees in all years of its programmes.

x) The School has already made written representations that the post of Administrator in this School be upgraded to grade V as part of the Administration Review, as the workload and responsibilities associated with this post have grown steadily in recent years and it wished to
repeat this appeal in the context of this review. The Panel agrees that this recommendation should be referred to the Excellence in Administration Review to be dealt with as a matter of urgency.

xi) The Panel identifies the need to integrate better Erasmus students, and it recommends that this is achieved through an improved induction programme and the creation of opportunities for engagement and integration into the life of the School and the Institute.

In relation to the BA (Hons) in International Business and Languages:

The Panel recommends that the BA (Hons) in International Business and Languages programme including the BA (Hons) in Chinese and International Business continue in approval for the five-year period since its last review (until 2010/2011) and recommends that it undergo programme review within the next two years. This review should address the following issues:

− the perceived lack of integration between the language and business streams. The Panel feels that this could be done easily, either through a guest lecture series, the introduction of bridging/integrated modules, the delivery of some business lectures in French/Spanish etc;

− the place of the minor language and whether the programme benefits from its inclusion. The Panel is of the view that the minor language should no longer be a compulsory element of the programme. It considers that its inclusion may adversely affect student recruitment to the programme. It also believes that students cannot attain competency in this minor language and that this therefore could damage the reputation of the programme;

− the need for better communication and coordination among staff, to encourage them to collaborate in relation to programme delivery and research;

− the use of electronic means/virtual learning environments for the creation of class notes for students.

The Panel recommended continuing approval of the MA in Applied Irish. It also recommended approval of a number of minor amendments in relation to the MA in Applied Irish and the BA (Hons) in International Languages. These are listed in the appendix to this report.
Report of the School Review Panel in relation to
the School of Languages

1 Introduction
The main purpose of the School Review in the School of Languages was to take a strategic overview of the School itself, its current position and its ability to respond to changing needs. A key element of the School Review process includes making recommendations in relation to the continuing approval by Academic Council of the awards of existing programmes.

This is the first School Review which the School of Languages has undertaken, therefore, it is an important undertaking for the School.

2 The Review Process
The focus of the School Review is in respect of the School as a whole. This includes its general position and performance; its range of activities and how these are conducted, reviewed and developed; the range and quality of taught programmes including apprenticeship education; research and staff development activities; the management procedures and quality improvement systems and the links with external bodies. The external environment, including the effects of demographic changes and competition from other educational institutions in relation to the programmes offered, was also considered within the review process.

Central to the review process is the self-study, prepared by the School and considered by the Review Panel prior to visiting the School. This self-study is a critical evaluation of the School's activities and highlights strengths and achievements as well as areas of difficulty. The process of review carried out by the School followed the DIT current practice for the review of existing programmes; that is the documentation prepared by the School was sent to the Faculty Board for endorsement. The documentation was then forwarded, with external assessor nominations, to the Academic Quality Assurance Committee which appointed a Review Panel.

The review visit took place over a two-day period on 28 and 29 May 2009. The Panel, through a series of meetings with Faculty and School management, teaching, administrative and support staff, students and graduates of the School and a visit to the facilities available to the School, considered issues raised in the self-study and in the other documentation presented.

2.1 The Purpose of the School Based Review
The broad objectives of the School Review are to evaluate:

- the School's approach to programme design and development, having due regard to the influence of bodies representing students, employers and the sector;
School of Languages School Review Report

- the learning environment of the School;
- staffing including academic, administrative and technical;
- staff development and research activities within the School;
- the School’s quality assurance systems, including the effectiveness of taught programmes in meeting their stated objectives; and,
- the School's development plans for the future.

2.2 Membership of the Review Panel

The Review Panel appointed by Academic Council to carry out the School Based Review was comprised as follows:

**External Members**

Nicola Horgan-Rogers  
Director, Export Orientation Programme, IBEC, Dublin

Professor Gregory Lee  
1st Vice President, University of Jean Moulin, Lyon, France

Professor Grace Neville  
Vice-President for Teaching and Learning & Associate Professor of French, University College Cork

**Internal Members**

Lloyd Scott (Chair)  
Head of Learning Development, Faculty of the Built Environment, DIT Bolton Street

Neil Andrews  
School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, DIT Cathal Brugha Street

Dr Cliona Doris  
Head of Conservatory of Music and Drama, DIT Rathmines Road

**Representative from the Office of the Academic Registrar**

Jan Cairns  
Quality Assurance Officer

2.3 Programme of Visit to School

The Review took place in accordance with the following schedule.

**Day 1 – Thursday 28th May 2009**

**Venue:**  
*Boardroom (1st floor), DIT Kevin Street*

9.00 am  
Formal beginning of process: Chair of Panel introduces members of panel to the Faculty Director who introduces the Head of School and Heads of Department.

9.30 am  
Short formal presentation by Head of School and Heads of Department describing main activities of the School and introducing the key points from the self-study report.
School of Languages School Review Report

10.15 am  Private meeting of Panel to discuss agenda for day.

11.30 am  Panel meets with School Management Team to discuss the broad contents of the self-study report and the implications for the School in terms of individual programmes and resources, more specifically the School’s arrangements for quality assurance, programme development, links with business, research activity and staff development.

12.45 pm  Panel meets with representatives of the Faculty of Business, Faculty of Tourism and Food and School of Media to discuss their interaction with the School of Languages.

1.15 pm  Lunch.

2.00 pm  Panel meets with School Management Team, Faculty Administrator, School Administrator, Kevin Street Librarian and Examinations Officer to review contents of School’s evaluation of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, based on self-study report and to discuss School’s Plan for future development.

3.00 pm  Private meeting of Panel to review progress and decide on matters for further discussion or evaluation.

3.45. pm  Panel meets with Heads of Department and Programme Chairs Head of Learning Development to discuss the suite of programmes offered by the School and the trends and direction of these – including discussion regarding programme management issues and quality assurance arrangements and to address specific issues relating to changes proposed.

5.15 pm  Panel views the physical facilities and resources of the School.

6.00 pm  Panel meets with representative current and former students.

6.45 pm  Private meeting of Panel to review progress thus far.

7.00 pm  Dinner (to include Faculty Director, School Management Team and other appropriate staff and Panel).

Day 2 – Friday 29th May 2009

Venue:  Boardroom (1st floor), DIT Kevin Street

9.30 am  Private meeting of Panel to review progress thus far.

10.00 am  Meeting of the Panel with staff teaching on School of Languages programmes and Head of Learning Development to discuss syllabuses, teaching methods and assessment issues specific to the programmes.

11.00 am  Meeting of the Panel with staff teaching languages on programmes outside the School.

12.00 am  Panel meets with research supervisors within the School.

12.30pm  Panel meets with Faculty Director, School Management Team and Faculty Administrator to discuss issues of resources, staff development and any issues requiring clarification arising from self study.
1.15pm Lunch

2.00 pm Private meeting of the Panel to consider the draft report.

4.00 pm Tea/coffees: Meeting of the Panel with the Head of School and School Management Team to outline orally the Panel’s findings.

The self-study for the School was circulated to the Review Panel. Available for perusal during the event were Programme Documents including Module Descriptors, Student Handbooks, examination papers, reports from the annual monitoring process, external examiner reports relating to individual programmes, staff CVs and a staff publications and other documentation relating to the School, the Faculty of Applied Arts and the Institute.

3 Background to the Faculty and Institute

3.1 Background to the Dublin Institute of Technology

The Dublin Institute of Technology was established as an autonomous institution under the DIT Act in 1992, but its origins go back to 1887 and the establishment of technical education in Ireland. The Institute continues to build on its long and proud tradition of providing education to the highest levels. The DIT Act of 1992 provided for the formation of the Dublin Institute of Technology by bringing together six colleges of higher education formerly under the City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee.

These colleges had provided much-needed education services, pioneering technician and technologist training and education, both to meet the needs of industry and to develop the students’ individual potential. Their graduates played an enormous role in the development of industry, business and the community in Ireland throughout the 20th century.

By 1992, these colleges were recognised as centres of excellence in their areas of specialism and, following the establishment of the Institute, their expertise formed the nucleus of the faculty structure within DIT today. DIT continues to build on those solid foundations in order to respond to the social, cultural and educational needs of Ireland in the 21st century. Today DIT is the largest third-level institution in Ireland. It has developed into a very modern, most innovative and multi-faceted institute which offers professional and career focussed third-level education. Currently more than 22,000 students (of whom 10,000 are full-time undergraduate), are enrolled on full and part-time programmes that range from apprenticeship and craft education through to PhD and post-doctoral research. Education is provided for students of all ages and backgrounds. It is the first choice for many Irish school-leavers and business people and it currently records one of the highest numbers of first preference choices and overall choices in applications for third level places by school-leavers. Across all of its programmes, DIT is renowned for the applied nature of
its teaching and learning. Strong links and regular interaction with industry and the professions allow the Institute to base its teaching on the latest global trends and needs. It keeps a close eye on job market trends and encourages input from industry partners regarding the design and development of programmes. This close link with the market place is further strengthened through industry training and career placement for students during the majority of study options. The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) was established under the provisions of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999. In 2003 the NQAI launched a 10-level national framework of qualifications. The Dublin Institute of Technology, which is recognised under the 1999 Act both as a provider and an awarding body, adopted the national framework of qualifications in 2004. Since then, all new awards made by the Institute are in alignment with the national framework.

DIT, in addition, boasts a flexible ‘ladder system’ that affords students the opportunity to progress from certificate level (NQAI level 6) to ordinary degree level (NQAI level 7) to honours degree level (NQAI level 8). This system actively supports a learner-friendly structure, which opens up access to programmes and offers students the opportunity to progress to higher qualifications (NQAI levels 9 and 10). In addition, the Institute encourages advanced entry into later stages of its programmes and is implementing a framework for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Continuing professional development through part-time degrees and CPD short-course provision remains a strategic priority for DIT and it is currently the largest single volume provider of such education in the Republic of Ireland.

In 1996, following a review by an international team of the quality of the Institute’s programmes and its quality assurance procedures, the Institute was granted full degree awarding status up to doctoral level.

The Institute is divided into six Faculties:

− Faculty of Applied Arts
− Faculty of the Built Environment
− Faculty of Business
− Faculty of Engineering
− Faculty of Science
− Faculty of Tourism and Food

Each Faculty is managed by a Director. All Schools, Departments and Faculty Committees report to the Faculty Board which in turn reports to Academic Council. Each School holds regular School Forums, attended by all School staff, where School business is discussed and decisions made. The content of these forums form the basis of the reports to the Faculty Board. The School of Languages is in the Faculty of Applied Arts.
3.2 The Faculty of Applied Arts

The Faculty of Applied Arts is the Republic of Ireland's largest and leading provider of a wide range of innovative, multi-disciplinary and professional-level training and educational research programmes in the creative, visual and performing arts and media, the social sciences, legal studies and languages. The emphasis of the Faculty is on providing a rigorous intellectual grounding combined with a thorough practical/professional education, and developing a culture of critical and reflective thinking. The Faculty emphasises integration between theory and practice, so that students are prepared for professional life through the development of innovative training and education programmes in disciplines that are dynamic and expansive by nature. Programmes in the Faculty are offered at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. All programmes have been developed to meet the opportunities presented by the changing economic, social and demographic profile of Irish society, the emergence of new information and digital technologies, and growing international recognition of the socio-economic importance of the cultural industries.

Programmes are modularised and students are offered a choice of elective modules within the Faculty, and study abroad opportunities with universities across Europe, the United States and China. Students are encouraged to achieve the highest intellectual and professional standard possible which prepares them for professional life in Irish and European social, economic and public life. As a result, the graduates of the Faculty are highly sought after and successfully employed at all levels within the private and public sectors.

The Faculty of Applied Arts has 5 Schools:
- School of Art, Design and Printing
- School of Languages
- School of Social Science and Law
- School of Media
- Conservatory of Music and Drama.

There are currently over 3,000 students studying at undergraduate and postgraduate level in the Faculty.

4 The School of Languages

4.1 Historical Overview of the Development of the School

Language teaching is one of the oldest continuous educational activities in what is now DIT, and can be traced back through the precursor constituent colleges to 1896/97. In the 1940s languages were introduced to the curriculum in the College in Catering in Cathal Brugha Street, and to Rathmines College in the following decade. In the 1960s the then College of Technology in Kevin St took the decision to introduce foreign language courses into the programme of every full-time
student attending the College. Later, these courses came under the aegis of what was then the Department of Languages and Industrial Studies. In the College of Marketing in Mountjoy Square foreign languages had a very strong representation on the Marketing degree programme. French and German were the first two foreign languages offered as service courses to the students of Kevin St. The college went on to offer additional languages to these students. Russian was introduced on a part-time basis and Spanish followed suit. In 1984 a full-time, two-year Certificate Course in Languages and Business Studies was established. It was at this stage that Spanish was launched on full-time programmes.

Students on this Certificate course were assisted in finding work placements abroad and participated in various exchange programmes. It proved to be so successful that it was upgraded in 1990 to a three-year Diploma and students were for the first time offered the opportunity to study abroad for a period of one term. Italian and Russian were added to the programme in 1990 as minor languages. Today this programme is run as a four-year BA (Honours) degree programme, with six languages in all now offered as major language options; it is also the first conjoint, trans-faculty degree programme offered by DIT. It is now called BA in International Business and Languages.

Since the inception of DIT, languages provision across the Institute has greatly increased in terms of students, programmes and languages offered in line with the “Languages for All” policy of the new School of Languages, which itself became a full School following the formation of DIT and the implementation of faculties.

In 2001 the School of Languages was formed from the merging of the language staff of the former Department of Languages and Industrial Studies in Kevin St with their colleagues in foreign languages throughout the Institute. It regrouped all DIT language staff and formed the academic, educational and administrative centre for their activities. The creation of the School of Languages was an initiative of the new DIT and Faculty of Applied Arts with the aim of regrouping all language staff for the first time within their own discipline. This new institutional entity has not just created an essential framework for the academic identity and professional progress of staff members; it has also provided the basis for the further development of programmes in languages and cultural studies, not only as independent offerings of the School of Languages but as joint programmes with other Schools such as the School of Media and the School of Marketing.

The School of Languages is one of the five Schools of the Faculty of Applied Arts. It comprises two Departments, whose titles were arrived at following lengthy discussions among staff. These are the Department of Applied Languages and the Department of Languages and Cultural Studies.
4.2 School function

The School of Languages in DIT is now one of the larger School of Languages in the state and provides modules to upwards of 1000 students across DIT in a total of eight languages: French, German, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, Russian, Irish, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL). EFL is provided at a variety of levels and on all major sites of the Institute. The size of the School and its tradition of all languages cooperating on programmes have led to a high level of interaction among all staff and a constant openness to the introduction of new languages. This has already been demonstrated by the ease with which ESOL, Chinese and Italian were seamlessly introduced onto a degree programme written for French, German and Spanish.

The School introduced Ab Initio Level (Intensive) streams on its degrees in German, Spanish and Italian when changes at the secondary school level meant that the candidates for degree programmes in languages no longer had the customary preparation in languages. At the same time, the School also set up successful programmes for training and upgrading the skills of secondary teachers in Spanish and Italian when the Department of Education and Science identified a need for language upskilling in the secondary sector. These programmes were validated as postgraduate Diplomas and ran successfully from 2003 to 2005.

It is the School’s intention to upgrade these diplomas to full MA taught programmes. The School’s entry into the provision of fourth level programmes was also marked by its being awarded funding by HEA to offer an MA in Applied Irish, now into its second intake and second year of successful operation. The School looks forward to the development and validation of further Master’s and other fourth level programmes, which will be frequently linked to the upgrading of the qualifications of those already in employment. The School has identified a national requirement for the teaching of lesser taught languages for which the total demand may be very limited, but is not being met at present within the state educational sector. The School carried out a small DIT-funded project to investigate the English language requirements of the immigrant communities in the country. It was also able to run a pilot project in English for asylum seekers at a North Dublin refugee centre.

5 Key issues arising from the self-study

The Panel had discussions with the staff and students that it met on the key issues emerging from its consideration of the self-study and the School’s own recommendations arising from the self-study. These key issues are captured under the main purposes of School Review:
5.1 The School’s approach to programme design and development, having due regard to the influence of bodies representing students, employers and the sector

5.1.1 Programme design and development

The School of Languages currently runs one undergraduate programme (BA (Hons) in International Business and Languages) and one postgraduate programme (MA in Applied Irish). The BA (Hons) in International Business and Languages programme is a joint programme with the Department of International Business in the School of Marketing, with 50% of language content and 50% business content. The programme is offered in 6 languages (French, German, Spanish, Italian, Chinese and English, the latter for students for whom English is not their first language). French, German and Spanish are offered at two levels: advanced (Leaving Certificate level) and *ab initio*, while all other languages are offered at *ab initio* level. Students who take a language at advanced level also take a second language. The MA in Applied Irish was developed as a direct response to an HEA call for an increase in the supply of graduates with specific Irish language skills. It was validated in 2007 and has now taken its second cohort of students.

For a long time language teaching has part of many of the Institute’s programmes, and much of the School’s activity relates to the delivery of language teaching on programmes in other Schools/Faculties. However, these programmes are managed by other Schools and the School of Languages has limited control over the development of languages in these programmes. The self-study has referred to the development of a suite of Applied Languages programmes at Masters level and the Panel is of the view that the School needs to create a more distinct identity through the development of such programmes, at undergraduate as well as postgraduate level. It also points out that currently graduates of the BA ((Hons) in International Business and Languages cannot progress to Masters programmes within the School of Languages. It urges the School to develop a suite of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes as appropriate in areas where staff are research active, both in the School and in the Digital Media Centre. The Panel is of the view that the School needs to reinforce its identity and considers that this recommendation will help in this regard.

There was some discussion about the number of languages on offer and whether these could be expanded and on what basis such decisions were made. In the absence of a national language policy, languages chosen are based on demand and on the expertise available within the School. The recent addition of Chinese is important given the significance of Chinese as a world language and the number of Chinese students now studying within Ireland and the Institute, as well as the Institute’s growing links with China, through for example the partnership with Harbin University. The School also reported that the development of CPD modules in Lithuanian is being explored.
School of Languages School Review Report

for which, given the substantial Lithuanian population within Dublin, the School believes there could be a significant demand.

5.1.2 Responsiveness to industry/government

The School has been responsive to external demands, such as the development of the Postgraduate Diploma programmes in Italian and Spanish for secondary school teachers which ran for a number of years in response to a Department of Education and Science request, and it is now providing upskilling Continuing Professional Development programmes for these teachers. There was some discussion in relation to the School’s and the Institute’s language strategy, in terms of the strategic decisions about the languages on offer. The School points out that it is actively developing a ‘Languages for All’ Policy within the Institute which will afford all students the opportunity to either further develop their language skills or take a language ab initio. However, on a national level there is a lack of language policy (except in relation to Irish which had led to the development of the MA in Applied Irish) and this is evident at primary and secondary levels. The Panel is of the opinion that the School is well-placed to take a lead role here and should maximise its influence over the development of a national language policy.

5.1.3 Service teaching

It has already been noted that much of the School’s activity relates to the provision of language teaching on programmes in other Schools and Faculties. These include the BA (Hons) in Media Arts and the BA (Hons) in Journalism with a Language within the School of Media, the BA (Hons) in Culinary Arts and all programmes within the School of Hospitality Management and Tourism within the Faculty of Tourism and Food. The Panel was pleased to meet with the relevant Heads of School who discussed their interaction with the School of Languages. The Panel notes how the language choices on the Media programmes have been reduced (the languages now offered on these programmes being French and Irish) as the School of Media considered these languages to be the most relevant and viable. Language staff later indicated that the decision to drop German and Spanish had been taken against the advice of the School of Languages although the Panel observes that the School of Media, having ownership of these programmes, was entitled to so do. This, the Panel believes, underlines the need for the School of Languages to develop programmes under its own control.

Collaborations with the School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology and the School of Hospitality Management and Tourism has been very positive, with a number of languages staff based on Cathal Brugha Street and sitting on the relevant Programme Committees. The representatives of these schools believe that language has been a popular and important component of their programmes, to such an extent that a new programme, BSc International Tourism and Languages (French and Spanish) is being developed in collaboration between the Schools of
School of Languages School Review Report

Languages and Hospitality Management and Tourism. The Panel welcomes this development, and it recommends that this programme should be based within the School of Languages and also that additional language streams, for example, Chinese, should be introduced.

5.1.4 Modularisation and semesterisation

The Panel notes that, through the offering of language electives for students on programmes throughout the Institute and the ‘Languages for All’ Policy, the School has responded to the spirit of the modular scheme. The Panel recognises that barriers that are hampering the potential flexibility of the scheme, such as timetabling issues and the disparateness of the Institute’s sites.

In relation to semesterisation the School is of a view that high failure and withdrawal rates in languages can be attributed to the difficulty of delivering language learning in semesters. To address this problem, the Programme Committee for the BA (Hons) in International Business and Languages has agreed that languages throughout the programme should be delivered through year-long modules. Changes to the English stream in this regard have been put forward for approval to the Review Panel.

5.1.5 BA (Hons) in International Business and Languages

During the course of the review the Panel met with staff teaching on the BA (Hons) in International Business and Languages as well as students from that programme and the Head of Department of International Business who indicated that the Faculty of Business is intending to review and seek revalidation of the business component of the programme. The Panel considers that the programme should undergo a full review within the next two years, to coincide with the review of the business component. The Panel recommends that the issue of how the language and business components of the programme can be more effectively integrated as well as how the year abroad might support the business component of the programme should be considered as part of this programme review. Other issues were raised which the Panel believes should be dealt with at Programme Committee level, including the varying language ability of students upon entry.

The Panel recognises, in relation to the BA in International Business and Languages, that there exist issues in relation to students’ preparedness in terms of oral fluency in French for the year abroad as well as issues around the selection of the French university. This problem was identified by students and acknowledged by staff. It recommends that the School resolve this issue as a matter of urgency so that the success of the year abroad is not jeopardised for students on the French stream. The Panel notes that the other streams operate successfully in this regard. There is a more general issue about the management of the year abroad which students reported to the Panel, and the Panel considers that the management of this year should be given further consideration. The Panel recommends that the School tap into the experience of fourth year students and allow this to inform how the School might improve the experience for other years.
The Panel suggests that there are good examples elsewhere in the Institute of maintaining good contact with placement students (eg BA (Hons) in Culinary Arts). It also recommends that students should work to attain specific language qualifications (such as the Cambridge certificate) during the year abroad.

Issues in relation to student failure and withdrawal rates have been noted above, as have the re-introduction of year-long modules to address this. The School has discussed a number of other ways to address student retention, for example, a ‘buddy’ system where fourth year students team up with first year students as an additional support mechanism, and an incentive scheme to encourage class attendance.

The students the Panel met expressed their concern about the minor language, taken by students on the advanced language streams throughout the programme, in particular following the year abroad. The Panel notes that an amendment has already been approved to remove the minor language as a compulsory module in the fourth year. The Panel further recommends that the place of the minor language on the entire programme be reconsidered. It considers that its inclusion may adversely affect student recruitment to the programme. It also believes that students cannot attain competency in this minor language and that this therefore could damage the reputation of the programme.

5.1.6 ERASMUS students

The School is a natural port of call for visiting ERASMUS students. A suite of short courses in languages and cultural studies, organised under three titles: English for Academic Purposes, Language and Contemporary Culture and Culture/Intercultural Modules, have been offered and there has been a high take-up from visiting ERASMUS students. The Panel met with a number of ERASMUS students who reported difficulties in mixing with Irish students and that the social events organised for them were solely for international students and did not involve Irish students. The Panel recognises that fourth year International Business and Languages students are often more sympathetic to these students, having undergone similar experiences themselves during their year abroad. The Panel is of the view that there is a need to integrate better Erasmus students, through an improved induction programme, opportunities for engagement and integration into the life of the School and Institute.

5.2 The School’s research strategy

The self-study for the School refers to the Institute’s Research Strategy Document and the key research metrics listed within and indicates that research active staff in School of Languages can be seen to have outputs in peer-reviewed publications, arts and artefacts and to be active in organising and participating in significant conferences. The Digital Media Centre within the School of Media has attracted substantial funding in relation to linguistic research and has a
throughput of PhD Students. The School does acknowledge that it has a relatively small research output currently (with only one-third of its staff research active) and it points out that its staff consistently highlight serious barriers to research and to a research culture, the most significant of these is a 16 -18 hour weekly teaching load coupled with administrative responsibilities. Other difficulties relate to the disparate nature of the teaching team, with many teaching on different sites and previous attempts to encourage staff to meet in order to stimulate activity have encountered these difficulties. The Panel notes that the School has a wide range of international links that would prove valuable in terms of joint research projects but that this network has been underused. The Panel is of the view that, upon careful examination, that staff workloads including incentives such as time allowances and the time available over the course of the year constitute a favourable research environment of which all staff should avail. The Panel recommends that the School should set targets in relation to research that are in line with European norms in this regard the School and that this is an urgent priority as well as a realistically achievable goal for the School.

5.3 The learning environment

5.3.1 Learning, teaching and assessment strategies

The self-study notes that the overall aim of the School is to create the best possible learning experience for all students. The most important element is the commitment of staff, both academic and non-academic, and their willingness to continually maintain and improve the quality and excellence of what they do. The strategies, consistent with the Institute’s Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategies, adopted to achieve this aim include:

− implementing best practice for quality in diversity of teaching, learning and assessment via a student-centred approach to programme design;
− ensuring that research and scholarship inform learning, teaching and assessment practice;
− equipping and training staff in the use of appropriate technology to enable new and more flexible ways of programme delivery
− matching programme learning outcomes to market needs and demands and to recommendations for programme development identified by national and EU policy;
− strengthening links with industry and professional bodies to facilitate a rapid and agile response to changing needs and demands made by lifelong learning and continuing professional development.

The Panel asked how the School ensures a common approach to learning and teaching. The staff responded that there are common approaches such as a student-centred approach along with small class sizes and an emphasis on applied language, the School does not impose a particular style on individual staff. Year teams do meet to discuss their approaches to assessment and assessment schedules. Staff also have a common approach to the provision of feedback to students which is immediate and constant throughout the programme.
### 5.3.2 Laboratories and physical facilities

The School of Languages is based at Kevin Street and although it delivers modules for programmes across the Institute, it relies mainly on lecture theatres, class rooms and laboratories on the Kevin Street site, which, for the most part, are outdated and in urgent need of refurbishment and modernisation. The School believes that not only does this impact upon the delivery of teaching but also, in time, it may have serious implications for the recruitment and retention of students. The Director of the Faculty of Applied Arts acknowledged the accommodation problems at Kevin Street and reported that the Directors of the four Faculties who have to a greater or lesser extent a presence at Kevin Street are working together to plan how best to improve the students’ learning environment (the Kevin Street site houses the five Schools of the Faculty of Science, two Schools from the Faculty of Engineering, the School of Languages and the Baking facility which is part of the School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology). The School of Languages reports that the rooms are not flexible enough for new teaching and learning methods. The acquisition of a mobile language laboratory has been a positive step and the School has also made a submission regarding the Grangegorman campus where it would seek flexible learning spaces and movable furniture.

### 5.3.3 Library and IT facilities

As Kevin Street is at present the main site for language programmes, the holdings in this Library on languages and related studies are particularly large. Language studies are represented by a wide selection of language learning material such as books, videos, DVDs and by ancillary items such as newspapers and magazines. The School of Languages adds to its stocks on a continuous basis, with books on language and language-related topics, literature in the relevant languages, history and current affairs, travel books and other background studies. A key element in book ordering is the provision of material of interest but not directly related to course work. In recent years, the School has taken on a particular commitment to offer English courses to all DIT’s non-native speakers of English, both staff and students. At present (Spring 2009) the School and the Library are in the process of greatly increasing the stocks of creative literature in English to encourage the reading of non-course book material among the increasingly large and diverse body of learners of English now in DIT. The Panel met with the Kevin Street Librarian and notes how the Library has cooperated with the School in the hosting of exhibitions, the provision of live TV broadcasts and similar activities. In the 2008 literary event SILENT VOICES, the School of Languages was the Library’s major partner, with contributions by writers from Ireland, Britain, Lithuania, Pakistan and China. The Panel is pleased to note the positive interaction between the School and the Library.
5.4 Staffing including academic, administrative and technical

5.4.1 Academic

There are 47 academic staff, 27 full time, 11 staff on contracts of indefinite duration (CID), 8 part-time academic staff within the School of Languages. There is some concern, in relation to Irish and Chinese, that there is too much reliance on one member of staff for each language. In order to secure the future of these languages in the DIT and to maximise the range of approaches to teaching these languages, the School needs to widen the staff base in these areas. The Panel is aware of the current position in the Institute in relation to the recruitment of staff; nonetheless it advises the School to consider its priorities when the opportunity to recruit staff arises. The Panel in particular would ask the School as well as the Institute to reflect on the strategic importance of Chinese for Ireland, given that 50% of the world's tourists will be Chinese by the year 2015 and the number of industrial links between Ireland and China.

5.4.2 Administrative and Technical staff

There are two administration staff, a grade III (Secretary) and a grade IV (Administrator) who are currently working in the School Office. They support the Head of School, Heads of Departments and other members of staff with administration issues as needed. It is the focus point for academics, students and general public in terms of information on exams, registration, courses and similar matters. The School differs from other Schools in that it provides CPD short-courses to all Faculties across the Institute which are open to all registered students, part-time, as well as full-time. The Office registers all these students in blocks (DT560 – English for Academic Purposes, DT562 – Irish Cultural Studies, DT563 – Language and Contemporary Culture), and then they have to be split up into different groups and levels. The Office organises certificates on completion of the course. The Office deals with all the administration regarding this. Applications for DT558 – International Business and English, which is a programme designed for non-native speakers of English - are processed directly by the School of Languages. The School Administrator supports the English Co-ordinator and the Management of the School in the administration of this course. The School Office also deals with a number of additional tasks such as administration of the language classes offered to staff, the organisation of venues for the oral and written tests for students on the International Business and Languages programme. The School has reported a large turnover of grade III staff in the last seven years which it believes is due largely to the fact that the system does not allow a member of staff to stay in the same position: s/he must move to a different department when s/he is promoted. The School has already made written representations that the post of Administrator in this School be upgraded to grade V as part of the Administration Review, as the workload and responsibilities associated with this post have grown steadily in recent years and it wished to repeat this appeal in the context of this review. The Panel agrees that
this recommendation should be referred to the Excellence in Administration Review to be dealt with as a matter of urgency.

The School employs a whole time information technology / audio-visual technician. Technical support is provided by this school technician. The current technician has recently taken up this post and is replacing a technician who previously provided technical support for the School for over 40 years. This technician fulfilled an audio-visual based role with less emphasis on information technology. Daily jobs included the maintenance of all overhead projectors in the classrooms in Kevin Street. Plans for the new technician’s job include a greater focus on the area of Information Technology and also working towards the updating and provision of IT equipment and services to the School’s staff and students.

5.5 Staff development and research activities within the School

The self-study document details the research and scholarly activities that staff have been involved with, in terms of publications, conference participation, as well as development in relation to pedagogical activities. The School further encourages staff development and broad interests amongst staff through an internal seminar series. The seminars are opened to all staff and provide a stimulus to discussion. The Personal Management and Development System (PMDS) helps identify particular staff development needs and research interests.

The Panel has already noted the relatively low level of research within the School and has made observations and recommendations in this regard.

5.6 The School’s quality assurance systems, including the effectiveness of taught programmes in meeting their stated objectives

The School implements the quality assurance and enhancement procedures of the Institute, i.e. through the Programme Committee system including student participation, the annual monitoring process including the collection of student feedback through the Q6 forms, and through the external examiner system. The Panel commends the School in its implementation of the Institute's quality assurance procedures and in particular it is pleased to report that students comment favourably on their input to their programmes through the Q6 forms and through representation on Programme Committees. It recommends that the School ensure that it embeds student representation on Programme Committees in all years of its programmes.

The Panel recommends that the BA (Hons) in International Business and Languages programme including the BA (Hons) in Chinese and International Business continue in approval for the five-year period since its last review (until 2010/2011) and recommends that it undergo programme review within the next two years. This review should address the following issues:
the perceived lack of integration between the language and business streams. The Panel feels that this could be done easily, either through a guest lecture series, the introduction of bridging/integrated modules, the delivery of some business lectures in French/Spanish etc;

the place of the minor language and whether the programme benefits from its inclusion;

better communication and coordination among staff, to encourage them to collaborate in relation to programme delivery and research;

the use of electronic means/virtual learning environments for the creation of class notes for students.

The Panel recommended continuing approval of the MA in Applied Irish.

It also recommended approval of a number of minor amendments which are listed in the appendix to this report.

5.7 School’s Development Plan

The Panel has noted in section 5.1.1 the development plans for the School, including proposals for a suite of Masters programmes and the proposed BSc in International Tourism and Languages. It has already expressed its view that the School should enhance its profile and its visibility within the Institute, as well as providing progression possibilities for its graduates, through the development of programmes that are owned by the School. Such programmes should emerge from the research activities of the School’s staff, whether in literature, linguistics and cultural studies.

6. Conclusions

The Review Panel commended the School of Languages for its positive interaction with the Panel. It was impressed by the students met and their ability to communicate their views effectively. The Panel hopes that its report and in particular its recommendations assist the School in its future endeavours. In conclusion, the Panel should like to thank the School and Faculty for its hospitality and for facilitating the School Review and the work of the Panel.