

**AVEPRO**  
**Evaluation Report**  
**on the**  
**Pontifical University**  
**Saint Patrick's College**  
**Maynooth**  
**Ireland**

**(Final Version)**



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## 1. Introduction

This report is the result of an evaluation procedure organised by the Holy See's Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties (AVEPRO) for the Pontifical University at Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, Ireland.

The external Evaluation Commission was composed of:

- Rev Professor Emmanuel Agius (Dean, Faculty of Theology, University of Malta) – Coordinator
- Rev Professor Eamonn Conway (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, Ireland) – member
- Rev Professor Jim Corkery, SJ (Milltown Institute, Dublin, Ireland) – member
- Rev Luke Macnamara, OSB (PhD student at the *Pontificio Istituto Biblico*, Rome) – member

The four members of the review group appointed by AVEPRO visited St Patrick's College from the 9th until the 11th of March 2014.

## 2. General Comments on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER)

The SER, which AVEPRO sent to the members of the review panel, is the culmination of a series of internal initiatives which the Pontifical University, Maynooth, (PUM) has undertaken since 1997 to improve its quality assurance measures, curriculum design, learning objectives and outcomes, research and scholarship, resources and services, governance and administration. Initially, this process was conducted through Faculty Days.

The PUM launched its first formal Quality Review by anon-site visit on 1-3 May 2007, which followed the guidelines of the Quality Promotion Unit of NUIM. The External Quality Review Report submitted after this on-site visit was published on the College website and the Faculty undertook to implement many of its recommendations as detailed in the section *Implementation of University Processes and Policies*.

Another significant step in Quality Assurance was taken in October 2011 when all academic awards of the Faculty were approved by the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). This was a major recognition on the part of the Irish State of the quality of academic programmes taught in Maynooth.

In 2012 the PUM initiated the process for a Quality Review in line with the *Internal Evaluation Quality Assurance Guidelines for Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties* issued by AVEPRO. A Quality Review Committee composed of the Dean, the Registrar, the Director of Postgraduate Studies and the Director of Affiliated Programmes was established and it met to survey students, as well as the academic and administrative staff with questionnaires along the lines proposed by AVEPRO.

In April 2013 the SER was concluded in line with the requirements of AVEPRO. The PUM also appointed an external Peer Review Group that carried out an on-site visit from April 28<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013. This Peer Review Team, having given careful consideration to the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) in advance of its site visit, made a number of recommendations that the Faculty took very seriously and was already in the process of implementing prior to our visit.

The SER, which covers the period from 2007 to 2013, has 113 pages and contains ten chapters:

- Chapter I - (9 pages) outlines the history, mission and vision of the Faculty, including a very good summary of the SWOT analysis which is based on discussions among nine full-time Faculty members.
- Chapter II - (20 pages) presents an overview of issues related to teaching, learning and assessment. It also explains in detail the Faculty's endeavours to implement the recommendations of the 2007 Quality Review Report. Students' feedback on matters related to teaching, learning and assessment is also included in this chapter.
- Chapter III - (8 pages) presents a description and evaluation of the governance, management and academic administration of the Faculty. Moreover, the chapter

details staff feedback, including a desire that the Trustees take a more active interest in the governance of the faculty, as well as feedback from both staff and students in relation to academic administration.

- Chapter IV- (10 pages) discusses research and scholarship. This shows the evident strength of the presence of almost all the theological disciplines in this Faculty. A detailed list of all academic activities, such as international conferences, public lectures, symposia, and visiting scholars, is included. The Faculty's peer-reviewed journal, the *Irish Theological Quarterly*, and the postgraduate journal, *Maynooth Theological Journal*, are referred to as further evidence of excellence in scholarship. Chapter IV includes also staff feedback expressing concern about the lack of sufficient incentives to engage in research and publication.
- Chapter V – (8 pages) evaluated the resources, services and finances of the PUM. The PUM and the National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM), while being two independent entities, share a common campus, library resources and student support services and other facilities. Financially, the two institutions are autonomous. Staff and student feedback on these issues is included. The thorny issue of the future funding of both research and staff salaries at the PUM emerged as a major staff concern.
- Chapter VI – (4 pages) focuses on international relations with other third-level institutions. Since its foundation in 1795, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, has had an impressive international profile. This chapter refers to the College's bilateral agreements, the Erasmus Exchange Programme and student mobility.
- Chapter VII – (6 pages) addresses the three components of quality assurance at St Patrick's College: a) the Faculty structures necessary for continual quality assurance; b) consultation with the Quality Promotion Office of NUIM; and c) the Congregation for Catholic Education and AVEPRO. Particular attention is given to the considerable progress made in implementing the recommendations of the 2007 Quality Review Report. Staff evaluation of quality assurance includes the expression of a desire that on-going staff training and development become more integral to the life of the faculty.

- Chapter VIII – (8 pages) focuses on student statistics (2007-2012). It concludes with observations related to student recruitment and retention.
- Chapter IX – (5 pages) presents the Faculty's Strategic Proposals (2013-2018), proposals that build constructively on the results of the SWOT survey and other feedback.
- Chapter X – (29 pages) records recent staff research, publications and scholarship. It also refers to the service to the academic and wider community by staff of the Faculty of Theology.

AVEPRO's review panel commends PUM's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) for the SER's thoroughness, depth, transparency and honesty. Moreover, it notes that the SER was well-prepared, comprehensive, based on broad consultation with staff, and inclusive of students' feedback.

### **3. On-Site Visit**

The site visit took place over a period of two and a half days (9th-11th March). Members of AVEPRO's review panel met first amongst themselves on the afternoon of 9th March to discuss the methodology to be adopted during the site visit and to assign duties amongst themselves. Then they met with the members of the PUM's Quality Assurance Committee to discuss the content of the SER and to clarify certain issues raised during the review panel's meeting.

On 10th March, AVEPRO's review panel met the Dean of the Faculty of Theology, a number of professors representing all areas of theology, the editor of the *Irish Theological Quarterly*, the director of Affiliated Studies, and representatives from both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

The review panel was privileged to have an opportunity to meet briefly with the Irish Episcopal Conference, which coincidentally was meeting for its Spring Conference at the same time as the site visit. In effect, this was also a meeting with the College Trustees who are all bishops.

While the time allocated was too short to permit a meaningful consultation, the review panel nonetheless welcomed the bishops' openness to the review process, and in particular their willingness to hear the PUM's concerns, as expressed in the SER, in regard to the need for Trustees to take a more 'active interest' in the governance of the PUM. These concerns were reiterated by several staff members to the review panel during the site visit.

The review panel had a very valuable and encouraging meeting with the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, NUIM, the Registrar of NUIM, and a lecturer in Philosophy at NUIM, currently Head of the NUIM philosophy department, who also serves in an honorary capacity as Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Pontifical University. During this meeting, many issues related to the relationship between the PUM and NUIM were raised. Moreover, ways and means of consolidating existing cooperation and of exploring new avenues for further cooperation between the two institutions were highlighted. The review panel notes positively the genuine interest of NUIM is representatives in co-operating with PUM.

On 11th March the review panel met the President of St Patrick's College, the Director of the Higher Diploma in Theological Studies, the Acting Director of Pastoral Theology, the Bursar, the Vice-President/Registrar and the administrative officers. Moreover, the panel visited the Russell and John Paul II Libraries and was deeply impressed with the facilities available to students. Postgraduate dissertations were available to the panel for its perusal but time did not permit a detailed examination. The panel was impressed with the self-evident strong commitment of the President, Vice-President/Registrar and indeed all office-holders to their respective responsibilities and with their eagerness to engage fully with the Quality Assurance process.

Finally, the review panel met staff members and students from PUM to present their findings and recommendations.

#### **4. Current Situation of the Pontifical University**

At present, the Faculty of Theology consists of seven Professors, eleven Lecturers, one Director of Pastoral Theology and fifteen Occasional Lecturers. The Faculty is currently seeking to fill three positions in Systematic Theology, Sacred Scripture and Pastoral Training. The Chair of Homiletics is also currently vacant.

Last academic year's statistics indicate that at the PUM there are 477 registered students with 229 fulltime undergraduate students. Currently, there are 115 registered postgraduates. The first year student intake was significantly down and early indications are that this trend will continue. In this regard, the PUM reflects the downward trend generally in humanities, and in particular in theology, evident in other third level institutions in Ireland.

Affiliated and part-time courses have expanded rapidly over the last few years and this development looks likely to continue. Severe cutbacks in grants for postgraduate students have also raised serious concerns about future student numbers in the postgraduate programmes, reversing very positive growth in this area for the Faculty in recent years.

#### **5. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT)**

Nine full-time Faculty members were surveyed about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) concerning the Faculty of Theology as part of the SER. The site visit enabled AVEPRO's review panel to hear from these and additional Faculty members first-hand, and to note any changes or developments in the intervening period.

In general, the Faculty's self-appraisal was found to be self-effacing, honest and realistic and there was a strong congruence between the SER as conducted by the Faculty and the observations, formed during the meetings held over the two and a half day period of the site visit.

AVEPRO's review panel acknowledges that:

- the PUM is a rich resource for the mission of the church in Ireland and an academic institution of high quality theological education that can play a leading role in culture and society.
- the PUM is committed and faithful to what is best and distinctive in its noble academic tradition and identity
- a genuine effort is being made to implement all the recommendations proposed by the Internal Peer Review Panel in its May 2013 report.

## **5.1 Challenges**

In recent years the PUM has been faced with a number of converging challenges:

- reduction of funds;
- declining student numbers;
- the changing landscape of third level education with greater emphasis on economic and technological dividends.

The review panel recognises PUM's considerable efforts, creativity and commitment to preserve and safeguard the sustainability of the institution, to guarantee its future and to secure its place in the higher education landscape.

Members of AVEPRO's evaluation commission share the PUM's concern that these challenges require resources and need innovative reflections.

Notwithstanding these challenges, they observe the PUM's commitment to implementing its mission and vision and to responding creatively to the challenges by finding new ways to contribute to the academy, to society in general and the church in particular.

## **5.2 Positive Signs**

The teaching staff is highly qualified, motivated and dedicated to their academic

commitment. The administrative and professional services personnel, whom the review panel met, showed great personal dedication to their task and a high level of professionalism and experience.

The PUM is making every effort to ensure that all students with their diverse backgrounds, abilities, goals and aspirations, benefit fully from their educational experience in Maynooth.

The review panel notes the collective effort:

- to make PUM an attractive and desirable place to study, teach and research theology and to continue to make a valid and valuable contribution to society and the mission of the church.
- to develop good practices to raise the standards and procedures at national and international level.
- to consolidate its governance and encourage students' participation.
- to engage in a network of Catholic universities and faculties. This is evidenced by the list of universities involved in the existing Erasmus exchange programme, and by participation in the newly proposed network of ecclesiastical faculties being developed by the Holy See.

### **5.3 Strengths**

Among the PUM's strengths, the group observed its determination:

- to provide a wide range of fundamental theological disciplines;
- to service other institutions through its affiliated programmes office;
- to increase the numbers of postgraduate students, particularly in Masters and Higher Diploma programmes;
- to welcome the emergence of a young, vibrant and creative community of lay theologians;
- to implement many of the recommendations of the previous Quality Review and the Peer Reviewers' Report (2007);

- to consolidate its already well-developed structure for on-going quality assurance, consultation with the Quality Promotion Office of NUI Maynooth and AVEPRO;
- to benefit from its proximity to the NUIM and the excellent facilities and resources available to staff and students who share the same campus (library, student services, etc);
- to consolidate and develop the spiritual and liturgical supports for students and staff.

## 5.4 Weaknesses

The review panel notes the following weaknesses as identified by the Faculty:

- a perception, internally and externally, that the PUM is too “clerical”;
- the lack of a system for external review and evaluation of new and existing courses and degrees;
- problems in governance; no active interest by Trustees in the broader mission of the Faculty and place of theology in Ireland and third level;
- teaching staff burdened with too many administrative responsibilities;
- the decreasing number of students and the low academic ability of some incoming students in recent years;
- fragmentation of courses; an excessive number of courses with small student numbers in each leading to a drain on personnel and financial resources;
- lack of incentive to engage in research and publication;
- small number of fulltime lay / female lecturers

## 5.5 Threats

The review panel notes the following threats as identified by the Faculty:

- reduction and/or abolition of State grants and funding;
- the Trustees’ perceived disengagement from and apparent disinterest regarding the university’s mission apart from its service to the seminary;

- lack of job opportunities for qualified lay theologians
- the increasing marginalisation of theology and in particular the Faculty of Theology from the wider Irish culture;
- the declining number of student applications;
- the negative publicity about Church due to scandals;
- the decline of faith and of confidence in the Church and the progressive secularization of Irish society;
- students' preference for religious studies in contrast to theology;

At the same time, AVEPRO's review panel observes and commends:

- the spirit of collaboration and commitment evidenced among the Faculty;
- the academic expertise and the pedagogical commitment of staff;
- staff availability to students;
- commitment to high quality research by many members of staff in the faculty as evidenced in publications, conferences and two quality in-house journals;
- co-operation between PUM and a number of departments of NUIM, including the FROEBEL Department of Primary and Early Education, and the University's Department of Philosophy;
- the desire for more effective structures of governance, especially in terms of good and effective interaction with the Trustees and processes for prompt and timely decision-making;
- an increase in lay theologians' recruitment, problematic financially, however positive in terms of the place of laity in the Church;
- international relationships - *inter alia* through the Utrecht Group which has resulted from a number of institutions of high repute forming a strategic partnership at the invitation of the Holy See.
- Erasmus Agreements with a number of Higher Institutes of Education as well as collaboration in terms of programme development with UK institutes such as the University of Durham and Heythrop College;
- establishment of a permanent Quality Assurance Committee to implement

the recommendations of the quality Review Reports.

## **6. Mission, Objectives, Strategic Plan**

St Patrick's College, Maynooth, is very much conscious of and conscientious in regard to its mission and objectives at the present time.

The review panel observed that the PUM is actively striving to achieve its principal aims as outlined in the College's Mission Statement. The initiatives taken during the last decades to consolidate academic excellence by setting in place structures of quality control and assurance is having positive results in terms of higher standards at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, in systematic theology, moral theology, scripture, philosophy, canon law, liturgical studies, ecclesiastical history / patrology, mission studies and pastoral studies.

Moreover, the review panel observed the PUM's sustained and genuine efforts to promote excellence and innovation in teaching, research and publication, and to respond to contemporary developments in ecumenical, inter-religious and cultural dialogues in an increasingly complex and diverse Irish society.

The PUM is addressing the ecclesial and civil contemporary needs by rendering a sterling service to both the local church and to civil society by equipping students with the required interdisciplinary academic formation both for ministry and for civil professions.

Furthermore, the review panel notes the PUM's efforts to create a supportive, learning and reflective environment, equipped with the best structures and resources available, to enable the academic, spiritual and human development of the student in an atmosphere which respects diversity and difference.

The SER includes detailed proposals for a Strategic Plan (2013-2018). Immediately prior to the site visit, the review panel received a report on how the Faculty's Quality Assurance Committee co-ordinated the implementation of the recommendations of the

site visit carried out in April 2013. AVEPRO's review panel also received a document with an overview of the academic and administrative activities of the Faculty since receiving the report in May 2013 by the Internal Peer Review Panel.

AVEPRO's review panel notes that a number of recommendations are already in the process of implementation, while others need long-term strategic planning.

## **7. Recommendations**

In a spirit of collegiality, respect and partnership, openness and fraternity, AVEPRO's review panel recommends the following:

### **7.1 Strategic Plan**

- That a five year Strategic Plan be developed for PUM, reviewed on an annual basis, with a detailed progress report to be submitted to AVEPRO by the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2016.
- That a senior Faculty member, who will have sufficient remission of other duties and adequate administrative support, be urgently appointed to lead the design and implementation of the Strategic Plan.
- That the President, in consultation with the Trustees, details the Job Specification of this appointee, with concrete deadlines and measurable goals to be achieved over the next five years.

AVEPRO's review panel also recommends the following:

### **7.2 Governance**

That a Senior Management Team be constituted, to include the President, a Vice-President specifically responsible for academic affairs, a senior officer for research, a senior finance officer, and the Dean(s) of the faculty(ies).

It is the review panel's view that many of the governance issues may be addressed

independently of the proposed establishment of the Pontifical University Consultative Council (PUCC). At the same time it notes the Faculty' concern that the PUM's development may be hampered by the university's governance not including the diversity of experience in education and society now commonly found on Higher Education Institutes' (HEI) governing bodies.

The review panel therefore recommends that the PUM's request for an open dialogue with the Trustees in regard to the future development of the university should take place at the earliest possible opportunity, with a view to establishing sustained and effective communication and prompt decision-making into the future.

While further consideration should be given to the proposed establishment of the PUCC, it is also worth considering whether the role of the College Visitors could be re-examined. Members of the review panel wonder if that body (the Visitors) could be expanded to include various stakeholders, even if only on a consultative basis, thus bringing the diversity of experience sought by faculty to governance decisions.

The review panel noted that in the past SPCM had two Vice-Presidents, one for the Seminary and one for Academic Affairs. The review panel believes that the PUM now urgently needs a Vice-President whose sole responsibility is academic affairs.

The prioritisation of collaborative research among staff and the co-ordination of student research in the PUM is also a matter of urgency (see below). The review panel therefore recommends that a senior officer, with responsibility specifically for the promotion and development of a research culture in the PUM, should also be appointed.

There is a need for consistency and harmonisation in regard to academic (undergraduate, postgraduate, assessment) regulations. There is a need to improve governance by ensuring articulation of general regulations for all programmes that will be specifically applied to each course programme.

A Board of Studies, which includes a student representative, should be appointed for each degree and diploma programme to oversee that the programme's regulation and

operation are being followed and at the same time to function as a quality assurance (see below).

### **7.3 Quality Assurance**

It is the review panel's (considered) opinion that the existing two boards, one each for undergraduate and postgraduate affairs, are too heavily burdened with duties. The setting up the following boards is recommended in order to enable a better distribution of responsibilities as well as student representation:

- A Board of Studies for each programme of studies reporting to the faculty board, with three faculty members and a student representative. Its duties would be to include oversight of regulations as well as co-ordination of assessment and ongoing programme evaluation.

The functions of the Boards of Studies shall include the following:

- a) implementing the regulations and bye-laws governing the Programme of Study, subject to the general directions given by the Board concerned;
  - b) monitoring and evaluating the Programme/s of Study;
  - c) making proposals to the Board for the revision of the Programme/s of Study; and
  - d) monitoring the assessments and the procedures used in the assessment of the performance of the students.
- A Postgraduate Review Board, chaired by the Faculty's research officer. Among the board's duties will be the approval of postgraduate research proposals and monitoring the progression of postgraduate students.
  - An Academic Programmes Review Board to prepare programmes for approval by the Faculty board, and to ensure their continuing quality assurance and external evaluation.

In particular the review panel recommends:

- that this Board reconsiders the relationship of and distinction between the two Masters' Programmes and the viability of providing both, one of one year of one year's duration and the other of two years' duration.
- that this board should also consider how newly proposed programmes will advance the strategic goals of the PUM, including deepening its relationship with the NUIM.
- that, in order to advance the partnership between PUM and NUIM, consideration be given to inviting staff members of the NUIM to sit on these boards, if deemed appropriate.

## **7.4 Research**

Members of the review panel were impressed both by the quality and quantity of research being carried out by individual staff members.

They have recommended above the appointment of a senior research officer to the management team. Making such a senior appointment, at the level of (Associate or) Vice-President for Research or else at the level of a Vice Dean in each of the Faculties, will drive the strategic objectives of the PUM in regard to its research profile and its place in the wider research community, and will also promote a collaborative research culture among PUM staff. The new post will also have the seniority to develop good links with counterparts in other Irish and international Higher Education Institutes, leading to high quality inter-institutional research, especially with NUIM, but also internationally. Expertise in identifying, accessing, writing and processing funding applications for research projects will be a key skill of the post-holder.

This proposal is key, in the review panel's opinion, to establishing parity of esteem between research and teaching at PUM, to the enrichment of both.

Some re-organisation and consolidation of the not inconsiderable research resources

already available in the PUM is also recommended. For instance, clear and transparent processes and guidelines are needed for the selection of sabbatical candidates, with criteria for the award of sabbaticals, and a system of accountability for and evaluation of staff productivity while on research leave.

In addition, the review panel noted that there is already provision for conference funding and for grants for research materials and assistance with publications. Some of these resources are controlled by an external body, the Scholastic Trust.

They recommend that the PUM enters into discussions with the Scholastic Trust to ensure the introduction of processes for the transparent, fair, accountable and timely disbursement of its resources, with regular applications deadlines, and annual review and publication of funding outputs.

A mentoring process should be put in place to enable and encourage all staff to publish at international peer review level and in particular to contribute to the ITQ.

### **7.5 Relations with National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM)**

AVEPRO's review panel notes the observations of colleagues from NUIM whom they met, that the relationship between the universities is good and 'on a trajectory of improvement'. They note the high level of cooperation between NUIM and PUM, albeit often on an informal basis.

In order to consolidate the relationships with NUIM, structures of the PUM need to reflect the academic concerns of a University.

Every effort should be made to enter at the earliest stage into a formal memorandum of understanding with NUIM which will cement and formalise the existing advantageous services and partnerships, while also identifying areas for further collaboration, including postgraduate studies and inter-institutional research collaboration. The proposed changes to how PUM will receive ALL its Higher Education Authority (HEA) funding, that is, through NUIM, make these developments

all the more urgent.

The review panel recommends that the PUM respond positively to the NUIM interest in joint collaboration in regard to attracting foreign students to study in both universities.

The joint SPCM/NUIM working group on inter-institutional co-operation, which already exists, should give consideration to a joint strategic plan for collaborative teaching and research both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

In so far as it is practicable, undergraduate and postgraduate regulations should be aligned with those of the National University of Ireland (NUI) in order to maximise the potential for cooperation and to ensure that all students and in particular those students following programmes of study provided by both institutions would have an integrated learning experience, due regard being paid to the requirements of the Congregation for Catholic Education. In so far as possible the marks, standards, IT administrative and academic services that apply in the PUM should be aligned with those of NUIM, and all examinations results should be available on-line through the same portal. The review panel also recommends that representatives of the NUIM be appointed to the Academic Programmes Review Board and the Postgraduate Review Board.

## **7.6 Affiliated Programmes**

The review panel welcomes the service provided to the wider Church through the provision of accreditation to affiliated programmes. There is a need for clear regulations in regard to the staffing and administration of these and all affiliated programmes, and programmes should be approved through the Academic Programmes Review Board.

The review panel welcomes the emerging close relationship with the FROEBEL department within the NUIM Faculty of Education. Collaboration in the area of preparing teachers to teach religious education will necessitate the development of appropriate resources within the PUM.

## **7.7 Marketing, PR and External Relations**

The review panel welcomed efforts to develop and update the college website and noted the need for easy and speedy processes for staff to post items on a regular basis.

The panel also commends the promotional work done in schools and the open days for second level students and their teachers. This work should be continued, diversified and expanded, making use of the website and new technologies, to maintain and develop the profile of the PUM in the wider community and to promote the consideration and choice of theological studies by future students.

## **7.8 Recruitment, Mentoring, Workloads, Promotions, Remuneration, Appraisal**

The review panel notes the high quality of staff that has been recruited in recent years and their obvious dedication and commitment to scholarship, teaching and administration.

They recommend that new posts should be established in accordance with the Strategic Plan. Particular consideration should be given to senior posts in Religious Education, Patristics and Pastoral Theology.

Grades of remuneration should reflect excellence in teaching, learning, administrative duties, research (publications in international peer reviewed journals) and external service. The review panel recommends the introduction of new academic grades, and a promotions procedure, which would be merit-based rather than seniority-based (e.g. Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor, and Professor). This would enhance staff development and motivation.

Procedures in regard to recruitment of staff need to be clear and transparent, to make possible the recruitment of the best candidates regardless of gender or clerical status. This also requires further work on the development of appropriate remuneration scales.

A workload template for the just and equitable distribution of work must be introduced as a matter of urgency.

A programme of orientation and mentoring for new / junior staff needs to be introduced.

Postgraduate students involved in teaching must also be appropriately prepared and monitored.

### **7.9 Accountability, Transparency, Participation**

The review panel recommends that job specifications for all posts should be devised and be publicly available.

All staff should have clear lines of management and reporting structures.

In accordance with the establishment of a senior management team, the role and authority of faculty dean(s) should be reconsidered, and where practicable, aligned with that of deans in the NUIM.

Consideration should be given to the role of departments in enhancing accountability and participation in the decision-making process within faculties.

The review panel was left somewhat unclear as to how student representatives are elected/appointed to various PUM boards. Members of the review panel recommend that all registered students of PUM belong to one student body which has the right and responsibility to elect representatives to college bodies and which will encourage collegiality between lay and clerical students (this should not preclude their membership of other [national] student bodies).

They noted that following the recent seminary apostolic visitation, renewed efforts are needed to maximise the valuable and indispensable learning opportunities afforded by the theological education of seminarians and lay theological students together. While respecting seminary regulations, we recommend and encourage the PUM to actively

consider both formal and informal teaching and learning opportunities between seminarians and lay students.

Students reported considerable variation in the responsiveness and feedback of staff in regard to submitted essays and continuous assessment materials. Both students and staff need to be encouraged to be attentive to deadlines for the timely submission and correction of work, in order that assessment serves as part of the learning process (assessment *for* learning and not just *of* learning).

### **7.10 Finance**

All of these recommendations will require a distinctive funding and fundraising strategy for the PUM, and the development of this will require urgent and close collaboration between the President, his senior management team, and the College of Trustees.

### **7.11 Academic Resources**

While the panel was impressed with the library facilities available to students, it was agreed, following its visit to the theology section of the John Paul II Library, that the holdings in some areas of theology could be updated, particularly in Scripture and Moral Theology. A question was raised as to what the policy is for acquiring books in theology.

## **8. Conclusion**

Members of AVEPRO's review panel considered themselves privileged to sit as members of the external Evaluation Commission at St Patrick's College, Maynooth, which is recognised nationally and internationally for the quality and value of its contribution to theological learning, scholarship and research since 1795. They believe that this university has a dynamic and living tradition of theology, which has an important role to play in church and society in Ireland and beyond.

The Evaluation Commission thanks the Trustees, the senior management, the teaching and administrative staff, and the undergraduate and postgraduate students for their support, co-operation, openness, transparency and honesty during their on-site visit.

In particular, the external review panel thanks the President, Rev Professor Msgr Hugh Connolly. In addition, they thank the Vice-President, Rev Professor Michael Mullaney, for his continuous assistance before and during the site visit, for answering promptly all their queries before their visit, for accepting their recommendations, and for including them in the final programme of their site visit, and for his constant effort to make their short stay at Maynooth College such an enriching and fruitful experience.

Rev Professor Emmanuel Agius (coordinator)

Rev Professor Eamonn Conway (member)

Rev Professor Jim Corkery, SJ (member)

Rev Luke Macnamara, OSB (member)