

Internal Quality Review Process



Peer Review Group Report

Estates Office

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Introduction

This Quality review has been conducted in accordance with a framework model developed and agreed through the Irish Universities Association Quality Committee and complies with the provisions of Section 35 of the Universities Act (1997) and the 2012 Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act. The model consists of a number of basic steps.

1. An internal team in the School/Faculty/Office/Centre being reviewed completes a detailed self-assessment report (SAR). It should be noted that this document is confidential to the School/Faculty/Office/Centre as well as the Review Panel and 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 DCU and conduct discussions with a range of relevant staff, students and other stakeholders.
3. The PRG then writes its own report. The School/Faculty/Office/Centre is given the chance to correct possible factual errors before the PRG report is finalised.
4. The School/Faculty/Office/Centre produces a draft Quality Improvement Plan (QulP) in response to the various issues and findings of the SAR and PRG reports.
5. The PRG report and the draft QulP are considered by the Quality Promotion Committee (QPC) and University Executive.
6. The draft QulP is discussed in a meeting between the School/Faculty/Office/Centre, members of the PRG, the Director of Quality Promotion and members of Senior Management. The University's responses are written into the draft document and the result is the finalised QulP.
7. The PRG Report and the QulP including the University's response is sent to the Governing Authority of the University, who approve publication in a manner that it sees fit.

This document is the report referred to in Step 3 above.

Peer Review Group Report for Estates Office

1. Introduction and Overview

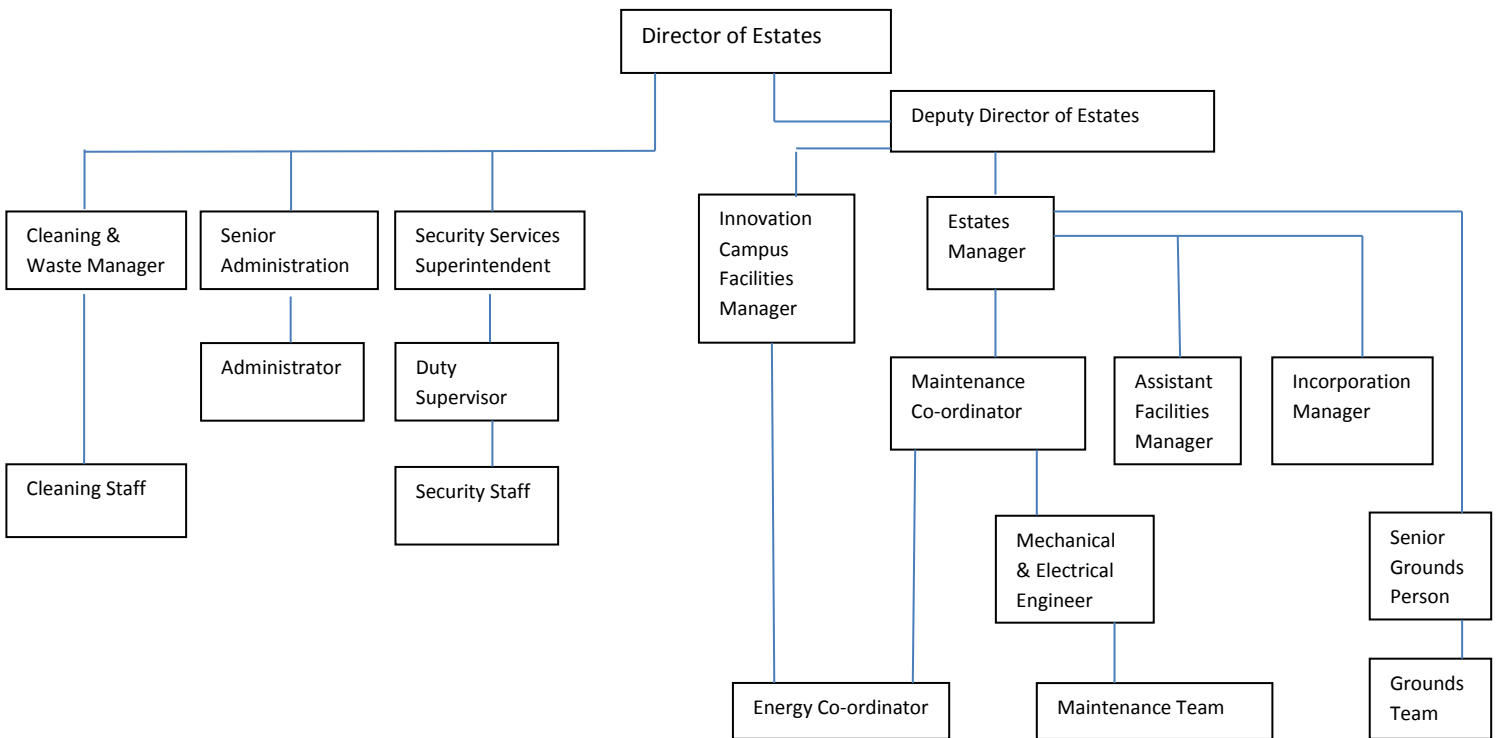
Location

The Estates office is located in a purpose built building on the DCU campus. The ground floor offices house the administration team and offices on the first floor are staff offices. In addition there are storage facilities and a yard surrounding the building.

Staff

The total number of staff working in the Estates Office is 44, headed by the Director and including one part-time staff member. The staff group are made up of a variety of professionals including: engineers, maintenance staff, security operatives, administrators, grounds staff and cleaners.

The organisation chart for the office is provided below:



Products / Processes

The Estates office provides the following services to the University:

- Maintenance.
- Grounds.
- Security Services.
- Project Management and Planning.
- Master Planning.
- Cleaning, Waste Management.
- Health and safety provision for the above activities.

The main functions and activity areas within the office are summarised below and include:

- **Project Management** ranges from minor building works to major capital developments.
- **Energy Management** includes procurement, consumption reduction strategies, bill payment, analysis and compliance.
- **Space Management** across the campus.
- **Administration & Financial Management** for estates and campus companies involves: procurement of supplies, services and works, minor and major capital projects financial management, facilities and estates budgeting and invoicing & re-charging.
- **The Maintenance Section** is responsible for 170,000 sq. m. of buildings on the main campus alone. Maintenance is carried out year round on a re-active and pro-active basis and includes work on for example: Air Conditioning, Electrical, Lifts, Emergency lighting, Carpentry.
- **The Estates Helpdesk** is a web based online helpdesk system where customers can log a request to the Estates Office. It currently deals with approximately 12,000 requests each year.
- **The Grounds Section** is responsible for management of the university grounds, overseeing contractors on the campus, landscaping, and dealing with waste collections.
- **The Security Services Section** is responsible for 24 hour security for both the main University campus, Sports Grounds, Innovation & City West campuses, mail delivery and collection, Lock-up and open all of the buildings every day. Respond to all fire and intruder alarms and deal with all aspects of traffic management including car parking and clamping.

2. The Self-Assessment Process

Methodology adopted during process

As part of the preparation for the Peer Review Group (PRG) visit, the Estates Office established a Quality Review Co-ordinating Committee with across office representation (see below).

Committee Member	Position
Richard Kelly	Deputy Director of Estates
Gerard McEvoy	Estates Manager
Coreen Malone	Senior Administrator
Kathleen Whelan	Cleaning & Waste Manager
Michael Woods	Mechanical & Electrical Engineer
Dave Faherty	Assistant Facilities Manager
Alan Mangan	Incorporation Manager
Aidan Kearns	Innovation Campus Facilities Manager
Seamus Keating	Duty Security Supervisor

The activities involved in preparation for the site visit over a period of nine months are summarised below.

Key Activities	Date
Presentation to Estates Office by Director of Quality Promotion	June 2014
Peer Group Nominations	October 2014
Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings	Dec '14 / Jan '15
Estates Office In-House Focus Group Meetings	January 2015
Online All-Staff Questionnaire	February 2015
Self-Assessment Report issued	March 2015
Peer Review Group Visit	April 2015

This preparation process involved consultation with university staff and customers to elicit how the Estates Office serve and interact with the wider university community. A series of campus-wide focus groups took place and an online survey for staff was conducted. The findings were provided as part of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR). Additionally there were a number of internal staff meetings and two specific review sessions as part of the preparation process.

3. The Peer Review Group Process

The Peer Review Group (PRG)

Mr. Chris Abbott - Director of Facilities, University of the West of England (Chair).
Mr. Mark Kelly - Managing Director, Healy Kelly Turner & Townsend.
Mr. Robert Reidy - Director, Buildings and Estates, University of Limerick.
Dr. Denise Proudfoot School of Nursing and Human Sciences, Dublin City University (Rapporteur).
Ms. Barbara McConalogue Director, Information Systems & Services, Dublin City University.

Site Visit Programme

The timetable for the review visit is provided below. Additionally details of those who met with the PRG during the visit are contained in Appendix 1.

DATE: 15th – 17th April 2015

Day	Time	Peer Review Group (PRG) Activity/Meeting	Venue	Meeting No.
Day 1 Wed	12.30-14.00	Lunch with Director of Quality Promotion and available PRG members	1838 DCU	Arranged by QPO
	14.00-15.00	Briefing by Director of Quality Promotion; Guidelines provided to assist PRG during the visit and in developing its report.	A204	Arranged by QPO
	15.00-15.45	PRG selects Chair. Discussion of main areas of interest and/or concern arising from the Self-Assessment Report (SAR).	A204	Arranged by QPO
	15.45-16.00	<i>Coffee</i>	A204	Arranged by QPO
	16.00-17.15	Consideration of SAR with Director of Estates and members of quality review committee. Short verbal presentation by Estates followed by discussion of SAR. (<i>Director of Quality Promotion in attendance</i>) Mr Michael Kelly, Director of Estates; Ms Kathleen Whelan, Cleaning and Waste Manager; Ms Coreen Malone, Senior Administrator; Mr Richard Kelly, Deputy Director of Estates; Mr Ger McEvoy, Estates Manager; Mr Alan Mangan, Incorporation Manager	A204	Arranged by QPO
	17:15-17.55	PRG Private meeting	A204	
	18.00-19.00	Informal Reception – PRG, Director of Estates Marketing, Members of Quality Review Committee, Director of Quality Promotion Mr Michael Kelly, Director of Estates; Ms Kathleen Whelan, Cleaning and Waste Manager; Ms Coreen Malone, Senior Administrator; Mr Richard Kelly, Deputy Director of Estates; Ms Linda Martin, Secretary; Mr Ger McEvoy, Estates Manager	1838 DCU	Arranged by QPO
	19.00-20.30	PRG Private dinner	1838 DCU	Arranged by QPO
Day 2 Thurs	08.45-09.00	PRG Private meeting	DG11	1
	09.00-09.25	Director of Estates	DG11	2
	09.30-10.00	Estates Management Team	DG11	3A
	10.10-10.40	Estates staff – Maintenance, Projects and Energy	DG11	3B
	10.40-11.10	<i>Coffee</i>	DG11	
	11.15-11.45	Estates staff – Security, Grounds and Cleaning	DG11	3C
	11.45-12.15	Heads or Senior staff in DCU Support / Service Offices working with Estates	DG11	4
Day 2 Thurs	12.25-12.55	Administrative Staff representatives from DCU Schools, Faculties or Research Centres.	DG11	5
	13.00-13:55	<i>Lunch</i>	DG11	
	14.00-15.00	Tour of Facilities and DCU Campus with Mr. Michael Kelly Director of Estates	DG11	

	15.10-15.40	Representatives from varying levels of DCU academic staff familiar with Estates	DG11	6
	15.45-16.15	Representatives of DCU students from various academic programmes.	DG11	7
	16:15-16:45	<i>Coffee</i>	DG11	
	16.50-17.10	Open forum for any member of Estates staff regarding the SAR	DG11	
	17.15-17.45	Meetings with external stakeholders	DG11	8
	17.45-18.15	PRG private meeting time	DG11	
	19.30	PRG private dinner	Crowne Plaza Hotel	
Day 3 Fri	08.45-09.00	PRG Private meeting	DG11	Meeting No.
	09.00-09.55	DCU Senior Management Group (SMG) <i>(Director of Quality Promotion in attendance)</i>	AG01	9 Arranged by QPO
	10.00-10.25	Estates Reporting Head	AG01	10
	10.30-11.00	<i>Coffee</i>	DG11	
	11.00-13.00	PRG private meeting time	DG11	
	13.00-14:00	<i>Working Lunch</i> Clarification of outstanding issues for PRG if required	DG11	
	14.00-16.25	PRG Prepare Exit Presentation <i>(Coffee provided at 16.00)</i>	DG11	
	16.30-17.00	Exit Presentation – by PRG to Director of Estates and all staff members <i>(Director of Quality Promotion in attendance)</i>	TBA	11

Methodology

In advance of the PRG visit members received copies of the Estates Self-Assessment Report (SAR), supporting appendices, DCU Quality Review Process – Background & Guidelines 2013, a notebook on the Quality Review Visit process, a copy of “Framework for Quality in Irish Universities” and “Transforming Lives and Societies” DCU Strategic Plan 2012-2017. The PRG also were sent an indicative draft timetable for the visit in advance.

The PRG visit took place between 15th -17th of April 2015. Following an initial meeting with the Director of Quality Promotion on Wednesday 15th, the PRG met privately to elect a Chair and identified key issues from the SAR for further exploration during the visit. The PRG also reviewed the timetable for the visit to identify any omissions and following a request from the PRG a representative from the Health & Safety Office was included in the meetings (DCU’s Fire Safety Officer). During the visit, the PRG did not have an opportunity to meet external contractors.

Schedule of Activity

A comprehensive timetable was provided for the visit and this resulted in a busy, stimulating day of meetings on the 16th April with staff and stakeholders drawn from the University community. Throughout the various meetings, it was evident that the Estates office had put a lot of work into preparing the SAR and the scheduled meetings were focused and contained a lot of common issues/concerns (to be elaborated on in section 4). During the visit, the PRG requested some additional documentation from the Estates and this information was provided fully and promptly.

View of the SAR

On review of the SAR, the PRG felt that it presented a comprehensive overview of the Estates Office and was heavily focused on the main functions and activities of the office. It also referred to issues highlighted as part of the previous quality review during the academic year 2006/2007 and contained an update on developments from this. It would have been beneficial to read more about the role Estates has as a strategic university department which was manifested during the review meetings.

The SAR was supplemented by appendices which detailed the preparation process for the visit, quality enhancements and initiatives. It was evident that all relevant stakeholders were invited to contribute to the SAR. The PRG acknowledge the efforts by all within Estates to engage with the development of the SAR.

4. Findings of the Peer Review Group

4.1 Background, Overview and Context

Observations:

The Estates Office is responsible for implementation of the Campus Development Programme and for various services to the University including Maintenance, Grounds, Security, Project Management and Planning, Master Planning, Energy and Space Management, Cleaning, Waste Management and the provision of health and safety initiatives across these activities. The remit of the Office also includes the provision of a range of specific services to DCU's Campus Companies.

The last few years have been a particularly challenging period for public sector organisations in Ireland and within that for higher education institutions. The Employment Control Framework has placed significant restrictions on headcount, recruitment and promotion while at the same time income reductions have resulted in significant budgetary constraints. Over this period there has been sustained growth and development in the University which has significantly increased the demands on the Estates Office.

Within this context the University is implementing its new strategy, *Transforming Lives and Societies*. The strategy is ambitious and articulates the strategic intent of the University to expand and enhance the range of facilities and provide the DCU community with the best possible education and research environment. There is therefore a key role for the Estates Office in the development and strategic planning of all campuses in order to achieve these key strategic objectives.

Issues for Consideration:

The University is currently involved in a significant Incorporation Programme¹. The Incorporation process is proceeding apace, and will see the establishment of a single legal entity in September 2016. A Senior Project Manager from the Estates Office has been seconded to the

¹ The DCU Incorporation Programme is the planned coming together of St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Mater Dei Institute of Education and Church of Ireland College of Education with Dublin City University. The vision of the DCU Incorporation Programme includes a new Institute of Education and an enhanced Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences that will incorporate the combined strengths of the four institutions.

process as Incorporation Manager. Other staff from Estates are also providing assistance in key areas of the incorporation process.

The activities being coordinated by the Incorporation manager include: the planning of the integration of estates functions; implementation of systems and processes to align operations; and the management of various stakeholders. These activities also have a significant impact on the overall Estates Office. In light of this situation, the previous Estates QulP (2006) should be formally closed down and issues from it that still need attention should be addressed within the PRG recommendations in Section 5 of this report. Therefore, all recommendations made within this report, are in the context of the challenging future environment for the Estates Office and the Strategic plans of the university.

Commendations:

- Staff at all levels in DCU recognise the positive contribution being made by the Estates Office team in a very challenging environment where resources are significantly constrained, while at the same time all areas of the University continue to grow.

4.2 Strategic Planning and Management of Financial and other Resources

Observations:

The University is going through an unprecedented period of change with ownership of the Innovation Campus taking place in 2013 and the planned Incorporation of St Patrick's College, Mater Dei Institute and Church of Ireland College of Education into DCU in 2016. The PRG acknowledges that University resources are constrained and that Estates, alongside every other department, is arguably doing more with less.

Issues for Consideration:

The University has an ambitious strategy and the University senior management acknowledges the key strategic role that Estates plays and has to play. It is therefore important that The Estates Office review and consider how its own strategy aligns with the overall University strategic direction. A cohesive and comprehensive approach should be adopted toward the strategic and the operational, covering both existing and future requirements of the university and the Estates office.

The Estates Strategy should be based on tangible needs both in terms of the hard infrastructure (buildings) and the day to day delivery of a range of facilities and support services to meet the needs of the University's core functions at the academic interface – teaching and research (students) and the staff interface enabling staff to work and deliver effectively. The question of ownership was raised in the majority of the stakeholder meetings, specifically around the teaching interface in terms of AV equipment, general furniture and equipment provision and furniture repairs. It appears to be very unclear who does what and where the budget is. A key feature of the overall Estates Strategy will be a number of sub and enabling strategies; for example Space and Energy requirements. **See recommendation 1, Section 5.**

It is important to link the larger more strategic projects with the day to day running of the University and whilst the PRG got a sense that the major capital projects are being planned for and delivered very well and to a high standard, there appears to be a definite disconnect with operational work streams including strategic maintenance. Therefore a three-pronged approach to planning needs to be considered to adopt a more strategic approach to planning by linking

the strategy with campus development, strategic maintenance and an annual repairs and maintenance plan. A suggested methodology for the formulation of all three main planning streams would be to take account of industry best practice alongside pragmatic judgement and then develop a DCU Estates Office best practice approach. For example, industry best practice/design guides may specify the life expectancy of a roof to be 25 years; this wouldn't mean that after 25 years the roof would automatically be replaced if it was deemed functional and in reasonable condition. **See recommendation 2, Section 5.**

Consideration should be given to the aspirational standard for capital projects and exploring whether there is any scope in reducing the capital estimates to divert more resource to future refurbishment, maintenance and day to day operations. In developing a strategy and associated plans for the major capital projects, maintenance and the operation in a more joined up manner certain efficiencies may be realised alongside the potential for freeing up resource which will then enable quick wins for example a room management process which should be part of the aforementioned space strategy to be introduced from within the Estates Office budget rather than having to approach the University for extra funding.

Whilst the Estates Office has demonstrated an excellent track record when it comes to managing energy performance and the University's utilities budget which currently forms part of the Estates budget, it would appear that Estates are being penalised as a result in overall budgetary terms. Estates, whilst performing an energy management function, ultimately cannot be in full control of the University's energy costs given unpredictability and fluctuations in energy prices. It is the view of the PRG, that consideration should be given to moving the utilities budget to a University core expense. **See recommendation 3, Section 5.**

Considering the accountability and responsibilities of the Estates function in relation to buildings and plant, coupled with the constraint on university resource which has been a factor for some years, there are a number of key Estates risks which carry a business critical impact especially in relation to strategic maintenance. As highlighted earlier, following completion of the strategic maintenance plan for each of the next five years to include business critical items of infrastructure, a review and amendment of the Estates Risk Register is undertaken with the help of University management, to clarify in particular, the priority level assigned to strategic business areas. **See recommendation 4, Section 5.**

Commendations:

- During the PRG review every stakeholder group fed back that the commitment and attitude of all of the Estates staff is second to none and that given the resource constraints they are managing in often very difficult circumstances. In particular, the delivery of major capital projects is achieved consistently to a very high quality both in terms of how these projects are managed and the standard of the finished product.
- The PRG commends the Estates Office for the delivery of its current range of services to the standard it attains. The passion amongst every member of the team across all areas of the Estates Office can be clearly felt through both the standard of the physical environment to the human interaction through very good customer service, all of which is very evident.
- The PRG commends the Estates Office for their approach to management and outstanding performance in relation to energy management.

4.3 Organisation and Management

Observations:

The Estates Office is led by the Director of Estates and is principally structured around two main areas of activity: (1) Major Capital Works and incorporation of new campuses, (2) Maintenance and security of the University Estate. The management team comprises the Director of Estates, supported by the Deputy Director of Estates, Estates Manager and various other management functions such as Cleaning and Waste Manager, Security Services, Incorporation Manager, Facilities Manager all of whom either report to the Director or Deputy Director directly.

It is apparent from stakeholder meetings and from the SAR that there is a need to organise the various activities of the Office in a more coordinated and integrated way. To that end, there is a need to review the current reporting structure so that a more cohesive and inclusive approach is taken to all areas of activity.

Issues for Consideration:

It is noted from the current organisation structure that there is no direct reporting connection between some operational functions such as cleaning, security, administration, with project management and maintenance functions. Additionally, the appropriateness of some operational functions reporting directly to the Director should be reviewed. In that regard, it is clear to the PRG that in reviewing the reporting structure, the competencies and training needs and the actual resource level in the Estates Office should be assessed by external experts, using, for instance LEAN Six Sigma techniques to best deploy current resources and identify resource gaps. This is a priority in the context of imminent major expansion plans both on and off campus. **See recommendation 5, Section 5.**

The Director and others operate an open door policy regarding issues as they arise. However, it is the view of the PRG that this approach needs to be complemented by very regular (weekly/fortnightly) cross-functional meetings, with formal agendas and minutes. This will improve internal communications and open up positive dialogue opportunities across all of the team. **See recommendation 6, Section 5.**

Commendations:

- Excellence in project management of major capital works which is universally acknowledged
- The successful integration of the Innovation Campus into the University estate.

4.4 Functions, Activities and Processes

Observations:

The knowledge, helpfulness, commitment and passion of the Estates Office staff is very evident. While it was clear from the University Strategy that the Estates Office has a key role in the achievement of objectives relating to the strategic planning and development of the DCU campuses, the principle focus for the activities of the area is 'fire-fighting'. It is also clear from the SWOC that the Estates Office staff are of the view that 'Estates are not seen as Strategic Asset'.

The management by Estates Office staff of activities associated with events on campus was very positively commended although staff within the office feel that the management of such activities would be enhanced with improved communications between all key stakeholders. Based on the tickets / calls received to the Helpdesk in some instances it is clear that staff across the University are not clear as to what is not the responsibility of the Estates Office. The

Quality Handbook developed in 2009, outlines to all staff working within the Estates Office the aims and roles of the Office, and the processes used therein. This is an important resource for staff working within the Estates Office, but also for staff working elsewhere in the University in terms of their understanding of the role of the Office. As the role of the Estates Office has evolved to meet the changing requirements of DCU as a dynamic, growing university there would be significant benefit in updating this key resource.

The Helpdesk System which supports the management of tickets and PPM work no longer meets the needs of all stakeholders, and does not support the prioritisation of tickets/ associated activity. This in-house IT helpdesk system has been operational for at least six years was developed by members of the Estates team and has made a big difference to the customer experience. Additionally, it has reached a point where further development is now necessary and due to resource constraints this has not been possible. Thought should be given as to how this is progressed as it is questionable as to whether developing a bespoke IT system is the function of Estates. The PRG suggests that this should be done in partnership with the ISS Department. Adopting this approach has the potential to free up Estates senior staff time thus enabling Estates to focus on their core activity. It is worth noting that the Campus Residences had previously offered up some financial support for help desk development and have confirmed that they are still willing to do so.

Administrative staff, who were commended by staff across the University, are dealing with significant amounts of paper based activities, a sizeable increase in procurement activity while also managing the significant footfall of callers to the office. The potential impact of the increasing demands on the administration staff within the office is highlighted in more detail in Section 4.5 – Staffing and Accommodation. The Estates Office outsources certain activities to external contractors which require significant proactive management. Some processes, e.g. the Work Permit process, are seen as being significant overheads by staff external to the Estates Office.

Issues for Consideration:

The Incorporation Project presents an opportunity to review the functions, activities and processes within the Estates Office and using an approach such as Lean Six Sigma would yield opportunities to optimise the effectiveness and efficiency of existing processes and procedures. This exercise would identify duplicate and/or non-value add activities and support, where appropriate, the implementation of standard functions, activities and processes across the enlarged DCU entity. The provision of maintenance services to campus companies, from receipt of the initial request through to charge back process, is a candidate function for review in terms of consistency of approach, elimination of non-value add activity and the adoption of a best practice approach. **See recommendation 7, Section 5.**

An updated Estates Office Quality Handbook based on the agreed updated/re-engineered functions could then be used to underpin general staff training for the Estates Office staff as part of a Staff Development Plan, or as part of the Incorporation Programme. A web version of this updated resource would also inform staff within and external to the office on the role and activities of the area. The updated Quality Handbook together with the enhancing of the Services and Facilities information available on the Estates Office website will help address this issue. **See recommendation 8, Section 5.**

As the existing Helpdesk system is no longer meeting all of the requirements of the Estate Office Helpdesk function a review, in conjunction with key stakeholders, of the current and future requirements for this system should be undertaken. This should include the requirement,

identified by staff within the Estates Office, for continuous improvement. To identify all potential options and the associated investment required, an external review should also be undertaken with a view to identifying potential options. **See recommendation 9, Section 5.**

The University operates a number of subsidiary/commercial operations under a different governance model such as Residences and Sport. Consideration should be given to developing a consistent approach in relation to Estates work carried out in these areas as in some instances they are being forced to use Estates and in others they can procure goods and services independently. The consensus is that in being forced to use Estates for various things it can be inhibitive both in terms of cost and operational efficiency (process through help desk and service level in terms of timeliness). Information from the helpdesk should also be used by reviewing the total number of “tickets” passing through the system in any given year. This will ensure that the plans are evidenced based and robust therefore providing strong justification for resource. **See recommendation 10, section 5.**

Commendations:

- The Project Management function within the Estates Office was identified as an area that was excellent. It was recognised that the effective operation of this function was dependent on a small number of key people with the Estates Office.
- The maintenance of an aging estate with limited budget was seen as a challenging role but the strength and ‘can do’ attitude of the people working within the area was recognised.
- The work of the Administration staff is highly regarded in what is seen as a very demanding and sometimes difficult environment. They deal with significant amounts of paper, as well as a sizeable increase in procurement activity while also managing the significant footfall of callers to the office.

4.5 Staffing and Accommodation

Observations:

As described in section 4.3, a review of the current organisation structure, internal reporting structure and staff key competencies should be undertaken to confirm and underscore any deficiencies and identify emerging future resource requirements. It is clear to the PRG and confirmed by all stakeholder groups and indeed the Estates Office itself, that the current resources are very stretched. This has been compounded by the necessity to redeploy senior personnel on an effectively full time basis to manage and oversee the incorporation of the Innovation Campus into the University Estate. While this process is nearing completion, it is being undertaken concurrently with many activities in relation to the significant challenges presented by the Incorporation Programme.

If these challenges are not adequately resourced, it will lead to an inevitable diminution in the ability of the Estates Office, which is already stretched resource-wise, to carry out its core responsibilities in an effective manner. In relation to the management of Human Resources within Estates, consideration needs to be given to how the best use of resources can be achieved. In order to do this a balance between internal staff and external staff needs to be reviewed, part of which should not rule out looking at alternative ways of service delivery including outsourcing

The PRG viewed the current accommodation of the Estates Office block, together with other storage and security monitoring stations. It is clear that, in many respects, the Estate Office accommodation is inadequate. The Administration Office also serves as a general reception, a meeting space for a plethora of contractors and suppliers and other functions. There is no formal meeting space apart from a temporary prefab.

The entire record archive of the University Estate is housed in an adapted shipping container and a basement room in Car Park 1 that may be vulnerable to flooding. This vital archive should be properly accommodated in a permanent structure. There are two offices (satellite maintenance staff offices), located in a basement, with no external windows and are considered not to be fit-for-purpose.

Issues for Consideration:

It is noted that the administration personnel (two plus a part-time administrator) are acknowledged as doing a tremendous job but there is a risk that this modest resource will be over-whelmed by the sheer volume of issues to be dealt with going forward. In particular, new and onerous externally imposed requirements regarding major changes in public procurement have been highlighted as being a significant issue. This problem will, no doubt, be further compounded by recent and imminent further expansion of the University estate and the consequent additional administration requirements that will arise from it. **See recommendation 5, Section 5.**

It is the view of the PRG that the Estates Office has a strategic role and should be accommodated in a more central location. The accommodation should provide for all office-based current and projected staff in a single central location, with adequate reception and meeting room space to interface with the campus community, contractors/suppliers etc. Separate space to hold internal communications meetings, project management meetings, design team meetings and the like should be provided. **See recommendation 11, section 5.**

The records archive should be co-located with other accommodation to facilitate updating of and retrieval from the archive on an on-going basis. Arising from a recommendation from the previous Quality Review, the initiation of digital archival and indexing of all as-built drawings and maintenance manuals should be commenced. **See recommendation 12, section 5.**

Commendations:

- The clear commitment of staff at all levels to provide a quality service to the campus community

4.6 Customer perspective

Observations:

Note: Customers include all non-Estates staff such as staff in DCU Support/Service Offices, Schools, Faculties or Research Centres, Student representatives and External Stakeholders such as campus companies and St. Patrick's College.

The Estates Team are highly regarded and well respected within the University by their customers and have continued to produce high quality outputs in very challenging circumstances. The general consensus is that the Estates office is under-resourced and overstretched but yet continues to provide a high quality service.

The high quality of staff and the work carried out by admin, security, grounds, maintenance, cleaning, energy co-ordinator and the Estates Team themselves has been commented on positively by all of the customer groups met with during the review process.

External communication to customers was commented on and a planned strategy of external communication from the Estates office was seen as much more beneficial than the current system of ad-hoc and part re-active communication; the wish is that this strategy would include regular meetings with the Estates office.

The customer's view is that the Helpdesk system is considered to work well generally; however some aspects of the Helpdesk are considered cumbersome and will need to be reviewed and improved e.g. issuing of work permits, ongoing tracking of progress and closure of jobs, more personal interaction, etc. To assist in managing customer expectation further clarification is required on what the campus companies are allowed to carry out independently and what works have to be carried out through the Estates office.

While there is an awareness from customers and suppliers about the upcoming campus development works, the Draft Development Plan needs to be finalised and rolled out to ensure visibility about future campus plans.

The ongoing Incorporation Programme will affect the running and operation of the Estates office and more visibility is needed about how this will affect existing customers of the Estates office.

It is felt that the maintenance strategy currently being implemented is re-active in nature and that in future years budgets need to be set aside for a full planned maintenance strategy to be owned by the Estates office.

Issues for Consideration:

Potential collaboration opportunities for data collection and manipulation (by internal departments such as the ISS) and which would be useful to the development of a more efficient Helpdesk system should be explored.

There seems to be confusion amongst customers and suppliers over who in DCU exactly is responsible for what e.g. decoration, maintenance, loose furniture, etc and this needs to be reviewed, clarified and communicated both internally and externally. **See recommendation 13, section 5.**

A 'one stop shop' should be considered for all shared spaces within DCU to integrate the inputs of Estates, ISS and their contractors into maintaining these spaces.

Commendations:

- The willingness of the staff to go the extra mile and continue to provide an enthusiastic and high quality service was noted by the PRG panel.
- The customers view is that the Estates Team seem to undervalue their role and status within the University and that they need to champion their expertise more e.g. raise the profile of the Estates office – who they are, what they do, successes, accomplishments, awards, statistics etc.
- Administrative staff deal with a considerable amount of paper, as well as a sizeable recent increase in procurement activity, while also managing the significant footfall of callers to the Estates office.

Apart from recommendation 13, recommendations which have relevance to this section include recommendations no. 1, 8, 9, 15 in Section 5.

4.7 Estates Staff Perspective

Observations:

Note: Staff includes direct Estates staff including administration, security, grounds, maintenance, cleaning, energy co-ordinator and the Estates Technical Team

The Estates Team are a close knit, highly competent and efficient team. They feel that they are well respected within the University and have continued to produce high quality outputs in very challenging circumstances. In adhering to the constraints of the austerity measures imposed by the Government the team strongly feel that they are currently under-resourced and over-stretched.

The high quality of staff and the work carried out by admin, security, grounds, maintenance, cleaning, energy co-ordinator and the Estates Team itself has been commented on positively by all of the internal staff groupings met with during the review process.

The DCU Incorporation Programme, and the implications this will have for the university in regard to the two campuses, is a concern for the Estates staff, especially around future resourcing levels and the integration of systems and processes and how it will affect the Estates team.

The Helpdesk and BMS systems would seem to work reasonably well but are in need of a thorough review, overhaul and upgrade.

Generally it was felt that the role of the Estates office is recognised and understood by customers and staff, however there are areas, such as ownership of space planning and loose furniture, which need to be clarified and agreed with the various departments and schools and communicated internally and externally.

Issues for Consideration:

Internal communication within the Estates Team and external communication with customers and suppliers was raised as an issue and needs to be reviewed with a view to implementing a more transparent communications structure; this would also enable confirmation of implementation of PRG recommendation measures to staff members as they arise. **See recommendation 13, Section 5.**

The commitment of the team to address energy conservation is commendable and it is suggested that they take steps to involve the wider university community in pushing this agenda. **See recommendation 14, Section 5.**

Many of the staff have been with the Estates Team for a considerable time and, while this has helped to produce a highly efficient and knowledgeable team, succession planning will become an issue in the very near future. Current skills and competencies should therefore be assessed versus future skills and competencies with a view to identifying staff development needs, succession planning, while taking into account the significant emerging core business needs. The security staff can end up dealing with difficult customers and members of the public on an ongoing basis; refresher training for the security staff to assist in dealing with such issues should be considered. **See recommendation 5, section 5.**

Staff perception is that the existing Estates office premises are not fit for purpose and plans for more suitable premises should be looked into. **See recommendation 11, Section 5.**

Commendations:

- The Estates Team have a particular appetite for energy conservation initiatives and have recently won various awards and have also been shortlisted finalists in the 2013 UK CIBSE Energy Awards; this commitment to excellence and saving money is to be commended. Such initiatives and their success need to be celebrated more within the University.
- The willingness of the staff to respond positively to issues and to problem solve was also commented on positively by all of the internal groups met with during the review process.

4.8 Overall Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Concerns

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Quality of the Estates Office staff who work well as a team.	Too reliant on too few individuals.
Experienced staff with a strong campus knowledge.	While the Helpdesk system is in place and works reasonably well, a thorough review, overhaul and upgrade is needed.
Helpdesk System in place.	Insufficient resources.
Working very efficiently and deliver a high quality service with limited resources available	Estates Team do not see themselves (mistakenly) as a strategic asset of the University. This mind-set needs to be changed.
	Communication – internally and to the external customers/stakeholders.
	Utilities budget is not ring-fenced.
OPPORTUNITIES	CHALLENGES
DCU Incorporation Programme and upcoming capital development – opportunity to improve and re-structure Estates office and shape the team to suit and to raise Estates Office profile.	Ongoing lack of resources.
Confirm and clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Estates office at a strategic level and of each of the component parts of the Estates office; communicate this to customers	Financial restraints in being able to properly plan for maintenance and refurbishment of aging building stock and infrastructure
Re-introduce cross disciplinary forums within Estates office to improve internal communication	Incorporation / integration of additional campuses.
Promote and celebrate energy conservation and other Estates relevant DCU awards.	Increased time spent on corporate governance compliance and procurement issues
Identify and implement a staff development programme, based on current and future requirements.	
Move to more suitable premises as staff numbers have increased due to additional responsibilities including DCU Incorporation/campus development plan	

4.9 Quick Wins

As part of subsequent discussions following the various meetings on the 16th April, the PRG has identified some suggested 'quick wins' that, if capable of being implemented at low cost, should be actively considered for the benefit of staff, students and customers. These are:

- Increase levels of lighting to the Avenue leading from the Ballymun Road entrance.
- Provide readily available and published information on opening hours of buildings.
- Introduce staff access to barrier at Albert College to enable easy access from one side of the campus to the other.
- Review the work permit system.

It is envisaged that these 'quick wins' will improve the working activities, relationships and effectiveness with the various stakeholders in the university and the Estates Office itself. **See recommendation 15, Section 5**

5. Recommendations for Improvement.

Indication of Priority:

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.

P3: A recommendation which merits serious consideration but which is not considered to be critical to the quality of the on-going activities.

Level(s) of the University where action is required:

A: Area under review U: University Senior Management

No.	Priority	Level	Recommendation
			Strategic Planning and Management of Financial and other Resources
1	P1	A/U	Develop a cohesive and comprehensive Estates Strategy covering existing and future requirements of the overall university estate, including a number of supporting and enabling strategies e.g. Space Strategy.
2	P1	A/U	Adopt a more strategic planning approach by linking the Estates Strategy (ref Recommendation 1) to specific plans for: (a) Campus development to include capital and significant refurbishment of items above one million euro for existing buildings. (b) Strategic maintenance for each of the next 5 years to include business critical items of infrastructure. (c) Annual repairs and maintenance.
3	P1	U	Give consideration to moving the utilities budget to a University core expense.
4	P1	A/U	In conjunction with University management, review the current Estates Risk Register. Confirm, in particular, that the risk weightings applied accurately reflect the likely and potential impact of the strategic / operational / financial / reputational perspectives within the defined DCU risk assessment criteria.

Organisation and Staffing			
5	P1	A/U	Undertake a review of the Estates Office from an organisational structure perspective with a view to identifying: (1) Current and future reporting structure needs along with associated skills and competencies requirements, which should take into account the Incorporation Programme and Innovation Campus administrative requirements. (2) A staff training/development plan to address any skills and competencies deficits and requirements for succession planning. In relation to staffing requirements, consider the need for a systems manager type role to roll out and integrate various systems, particularly to support the Incorporation programme and future needs and taking account of possible developments referred to in recommendation 9.
6	P2	A	Introduce regular, cross-functional staff meetings.
Functions, Activities and Processes			
7	P1	A	Optimise the effectiveness and efficiency of existing processes by reviewing and re-engineering Estates Office functions, in conjunction with users, using a standard industry approach such as Lean Six Sigma.
8	P2	A	Develop a new Estates Office Quality Handbook and improve the website in respect of the new developments.
9	P	A	Working in partnership with Information Systems and Services (ISS), review the future of the Estates helpdesk in conjunction with key stakeholders to include a requirements brief and a full appraisal of solution options.
10	P2	U/A	Review governance arrangements of subsidiary / commercial entities with a view to developing a more consistent approach to Estates works that will enable increased efficiencies and cost effectiveness.
Accommodation			
11	P1	A/U	Undertake a review of current and future Estates Office space requirements with a view to identifying a more appropriate building / location which reflects the strategic role of the Estates office.
12	P2	A	Commence digital archival and indexing of all as-built drawings and maintenance manuals following on from a recommendation in the previous quality review.
Customer / Stakeholder Perspective			
13	P2	A	Develop a comprehensive communications plan from both internal and external perspectives.
14	P2	A	Progress and communicate the energy conservation agenda across the university.
15	P2	A	Consider implementing some 'quick wins' (ref Section 4.9) to improve and build on relationships with the various stakeholders in the University community.

Appendix: Meetings with Peer Review Group – Quality Review Visit Estates Office

Meeting	Name(s)	Position
1	PRG Members	Internal and External
2	Mr Michael Kelly	Director of Estates
3A	Mr Michael Kelly Ms Kathleen Whelan Mr Richard Kelly Mr Liam O'Reilly Mr Ger McEvoy Ms Coreen Malone	Director of Estates Cleaning and Waste Manager Deputy Director of Estates Building Facilities Co-ordinator Estates Manager Senior Administrator
3B	Ms Linda Martin Mr Aiden Kearns Mr Paddy Browne Mr Alan Mangan Mr Mark Argue	Secretary Innovation Campus Facilities Manager Maintenance Supervisor Incorporation Manager Energy Co-ordinator
3C	Ms Marie Creevy; Ms Selve Dobrus Ms Margit Mallo Mr Liam Gaughran Mr Brendan Howard Ms Paula O'Hanlon Kirwan Mr Kevin Moran; Mr Mark Roache	Cleaning Supervisors Cleaning Supervisor Security Services Supervisor Security Services Operative Secretary Grounds
4	Mr Gareth Yore Dr Claire Bohan Ms Phylomena McMorrow Mr Eamonn Cuggy Mr Noel Prior Mr. Paul Smith	Employee Relations Manager, Human Resources Director, Student Support & Development Director, Registry Finance Officer, Finance Risk & Compliance Officer, Office of the Chief Operations Officer Director International Office
5	Mr Mick Burke Ms Jane Neville Ms Ursula Baxter Ms Michele Pringle Ms Gaye Crowley	Facilities Manager, Faculty of Science & Health Assistant to the President, President's Office Faculty Administration Manager, DCU Business School Faculty Administration Manager, Faculty of Engineering & Computing Administrator, Office of the Chief Operating Officer
6	Prof Dorothy Kenny Dr Xiaojung Wang Dr Mark Roantree Mr Renaat Verbruggen Mr Seamus Fox	Head, School of Applied Languages & Intercultural Studies Lecturer, School of Electronic Engineering Senior Lecturer, School of Computing Lecturer, Faculty of Engineering and Computing Head, Open Education Unit
7	Ms Eniola Raiwo Mr Gabor Romhany Mr Steven Flynn Ms Michaela Gaffney	BNGL 1, BSc in Nursing (General) EPL 1, BA in Economics, Politics and Law EE 3, BA Electronic Engineering ET 1, BSc in Education and Training

8	Ms Sarah Emerson Mr Ken Robinson Mr Tim Buckley Ms Dorota Wengrzyn Mr Oliver Dooley	DCU Operations and Services, Campus Residences Chief Executive, DCU Sport Operations Manager, Helix Assistant Director of Studies, DCU Language School. Building Maintenance Officer, St Patrick's College
9	Prof Brian MacCraith Mr Jim Dowling Professor Eithne Guilfoyle Mr Trevor Holmes Dr Declan Raftery Prof John Costello Prof Barry McMullin Ms Marian Burns Mr Ciarán McGivern	DCU President Deputy President Vice-President Academic Affairs (Registrar) Vice-President External Affairs Chief Operations Officer Dean of Faculty of Science and Health Dean of Faculty of Engineering & Computing Director of Human Resources Director of Finance
10	Dr Declan Raftery	Chief Operations Officer
11	Estates Office	All staff invited