

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



Quality Improvement Plan

Office of the Vice-President for
Learning Innovation/Registrar

16 November 2007

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Peer Review Group visit took place from 28 to 30 March 2007. The Quality Co-ordinating Committee met on 2 April to review the experience of the visit. Among the issues identified was the fact that reviewing different sub-units in different ways (two sub-units underwent a standard review- the Learning innovation unit and Academic Affairs- and the remaining three a 'light touch' review- Registry, Student Affairs and INTRA) created difficulties both for those being reviewed and for the Peer Review Group. This finding, together number of others, was conveyed to the Director of Quality Promotion.

Following receipt of the final PRG report, a meeting took place (on 8 June) to agree the membership of the Quality Improvement Committee and the methodology to be applied in preparing the draft Quality Improvement Plan. It was agreed that a template would be placed on a shared drive, accessible to the Committee members, on which draft responses to the recommendations could be placed as well as draft items for the 1- and 3-year plans.

A further meeting took place on 29 June to agree the draft material with a view to having it finalised shortly after that. Unit Heads also submitted detailed resource requirements for prioritisation. Given the fact that five units were involved, these had to be even more constrained than would have been the case under regular, full unit review circumstances.

The Quality Improvement Plan was finalised in a meeting on 16th November 2007. The meeting was attended by

- Members of Senior Management
 - Deputy-President, Prof Anne Scott
 - VPR, Prof Eugene Kennedy
 - Secretary, Mr Martin Conry
- Members of the Peer Review Group
 - Dr Caroline Hussey (Chair of PRG)
 - Sheelagh Wickham, Rapporteur
- Representatives of the Unit
 - VPLI/Registrar, Prof Maria Slowey
 - Chair of Coordination Committee, Louise McDermott
 - Head of LIU, Jean Hughes
 - Director of Student Affairs, Dr Claire Bohan
 - Director of INTRA, Maeve Long
- Representative of Quality Promotion Committee, Barbara McConalogue (chairing)

2. Recommendations for Improvement for SCHOOL/UNIT/CENTRE

The following notation is used in the recommendations for improvement.

P1: A recommendation that is important *and* requires urgent action.

P2: A recommendation that is important, but can (or perhaps must) be addressed on a more extended time scale.

P3: A recommendation which merits serious consideration but which is not considered to be critical to the quality of the ongoing activities in the Unit.

Additionally, the PRG indicate the level(s) of the University where action is required:

A: Administrative Unit

G: Group Action

U: University Executive/Senior Management

S: School

F: Faculty

O: OVPR/OVPLI

			PRG Recommendation Draft Report	Unit Response	Time-line
1	U	P1	<p>[a] We recommend the secondment of a senior academic to a new position as Deputy Registrar (or other appropriate senior title)...</p> <p>[b] that the Deputy Registrar should report to the VPLI/Registrar, have a term of office co-terminous with the VPLI/Registrar and</p> <p>[c] that the responsibilities of the position should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Academic Affairs. ○ Registry ○ INTRA Office. 	<p>The university's senior management fully agrees that the OVPLI needs to have and to be able to demonstrate to the wider DCU community strong academic leadership. This should be seen in the VPLI, but is also reflected in the recent decision to appoint a senior academic to steer through the implementation (within OVPLI) of the new Academic Framework for Innovation.</p> <p>Whether there should be an additional appointment of an academic Deputy Registrar, and how any such appointment will impact on other existing posts, will need to be reviewed more fully, with reference to organisational, academic and administrative needs.</p>	<p>Appointment of Director of AFI implementation completed Oct 07</p> <p>Q1 08</p>

2	U/A	P1	Recommend the development (with support from the University) of an E-strategy in Registry and appoint permanent staff to Registry who are familiar with the Registry functions but have an IT background.	<p>A: Registry currently has a list of objectives that include many E-solutions including electronic registration and DCU is the first Irish University to issue the Diploma Supplement in electronic form. A proposal to replace the vacant post of Systems Manager was approved by Budget Committee and Executive and the position has now been advertised.</p> <p>A review of staffing requirements and grades required to achieve this E- Strategy will require consultation with HR.</p> <p>U: An individual has been appointed to evaluate what needs to be done at a University level in the context of developing an e-learning strategy for the university. The evaluation will extend to all areas across the university including the Registry, and will require close liaison with and engagement of key staff in the Registry.</p>	<p>Q4 07</p> <p>Q1 08</p> <p>Completed</p>
3	A	P1	Recommend the development of formal links between the units in the OPVLI, perhaps through a formal management committee.	It is planned to put in place a calendar for monthly meetings of the Heads of Units. In addition to the development of 'formal' links between Heads of Units, it may be useful to establish more 'informal' networking opportunities across the large number of staff involved.	Q4 07 and ongoing
4	A	P2	Recommend improvement of communication within OVPLI and the rest of the University to ensure that staff and students are aware of the functions of the VPLI and Registrar.	<p>OVPLI will liaise with PR and CSD to ensure an integrated profile of constituent units of OVPLI in new DCU web site.</p> <p>Other steps to assist with communication include bedding down of new committee structures; implementation of some of the other recommendations of the PRG report, notably maintaining links between LIU and Faculties and creating plan for communicating Student Affairs activities.</p> <p>Implementation of the Academic Framework for Innovation will provide a vehicle for enabling the work of all units to be made more visible; provision of OVPLI 'information sessions' may be a useful initiative.</p>	<p>Q4 07</p> <p>Q2 08</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

				<p>Improvements have already been made with the launch of the new DCU website.</p> <p>There is a commitment to ongoing development which will be done in consultation with the Director of Public Affairs & Media. The regular meetings of the OVPLI senior staff will assist in addressing internal communications.</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>(see R 4, above)</p>
5	A/U	P2	<p>Recommend the improvement of archiving facilities (electronic and physical), particularly in the Registry and Academic Affairs.</p>	<p>A: Further discussions on this matter are planned between Academic Affairs and Registry. The matter will be considered alongside the recommendations on archiving being drawn up by the University's Records Management Group.</p> <p>U: The University fully supports the review of the responsibilities and associated requirements for electronic and paper archives currently being undertaken by the University's Records Management Group. The requirements of Registry and Academic Affairs are being considered as part of this exercise. In the interim appropriate space has been identified, and is being made available in the Library.</p>	<p>Q1 08</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
6	A	P1	<p>Recommend that the VPLI, and the Deputy Registrar if appointed, give immediate attention to succession planning in all units, but particularly in Academic Affairs.</p>	<p>The matter of risk arising from important information and knowledge being concentrated in one or two individuals has previously been raised by OVPLI. Shadowing and succession planning in relation to key areas will be taken up across all units within OVPLI.</p> <p>In relation in particular to AA, systems and paperwork are already detailed and current, and this standard will be maintained (and enhanced where possible). The unit already shares information with other units as the need arises, but would be very open to looking at ways of proactively sharing information, by means of workshops, etc.</p> <p>U comment: In the context of the AFI knowledge is already being shared across other areas within the University. It was also noted that succession planning is a University level issue identified by Senior Management.</p>	<p>Q1 08</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

7	U/A	P1	A priority for the Deputy Registrar (or Head of Registry) should be a review of IT systems in use in the Registry.	The requirement for a systems administrator with responsibility for IT training for new staff and upskilling for existing staff has been noted as a priority by Registry for some time. This forms an important element within the draft job description for the replacement of the Director of Registry and vacant Systems Manager posts.	Director of Registry appointed Oct 07 Systems manager: see R1
8	U	P2	Recommend that the Director of HR, in consultation with her senior management colleagues, should review the impact of current HR policies on units.	Senior Management support the manpower planning exercise currently being undertaken by the newly appointed Director of Registry (2 year contract) in conjunction with the HR Director. Particular issues identified during the quality review process will be raised with HR.	Ongoing
9 and 11	U	P1 (9) and P2 (11)	(9) Recommend that to be a truly influential and internationally benchmarked unit, the LIU needs academic leadership, perhaps through secondment of a senior academic, active in this space. (11) Recommend the appointment of a leading senior researcher of higher education pedagogy to the Learning Innovation Unit to promote and intensify research.	University management is sympathetic to the need to further develop the research agenda in educational pedagogy and to the need for the appropriate senior academic leadership in order to do so. In line with this the future configuration and leadership of a number of relevant units in the university is currently under consideration.	Ongoing
10	U	P2	Recommend promoting and intensifying research of higher education pedagogy.	University management is supportive of the formation of the Education Research Network. It is also necessary to look at this agenda within the future configuration and leadership of a number of relevant units in the university. This is currently under consideration. The work undertaken by the LIU in respect of the Education Research Network (see A comment, below) was noted and the bringing together of staff from Faculties and SPD staff involved in research in this area was commended. A comment:: A new Education Research Network was launched	Ongoing

				<p>by the VPLI and Registrar on 7 June. This Network is coordinated by the LIU collaboration with a T+L Fellow from DCUBS and member of Educational Studies. The aims and objectives of this Network include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provision of a forum to discuss education research opportunities 2. Dissemination of existing research 3. Identifying opportunities for collaboration 4. Peer support in developing and publishing educational research 5. Pursuit of external funding opportunities 6. Possible small-scale internal funding for education research. 	
12	A	P1	<p>Learning Innovation Unit need to strengthen earlier and seek new ways to create systematic and continuous cooperation with other OVPLI units and DCU faculties.</p>	<p>The LIU is committed to building on the existing relationships between it and the other OVPLI units, and would welcome the establishment of more formal links between the OVPLI units (as per recommendation No.3). The unit is working with the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning to identify Faculty- and School-specific needs so that a wider number of academic staff can be supported in a tailored manner. In particular, the LIU plans to negotiate annual service agreements with the Faculties in order to identify, prioritise and respond to Faculty needs in a strategic, planned way.</p> <p>Permanent appointment of Head of LIU supported by two Project Officers and half-time support person has been made.</p> <p>Appropriate space has been allocated to the LIU.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>
13	A	P1	<p>Student Affairs needs more feedback from students.</p>	<p>Actions have been taken on this recommendation by putting in place scheduled meetings with class reps / faculty convenors for the coming academic year. Research is being carried out into the possibility of further feedback mechanisms and the establishment of forums with students where possible.</p> <p>A survey of postgraduate students (both taught and research) has recently been completed to ascertain the level of service</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Completed</p>

				<p>which they are currently being offered and to highlight shortages in these services.</p> <p>Focus group meetings were also recently held amongst a representative group of first-year students to inform the development of initiatives for this particular group of students.</p>	Completed
14	A	P1	<p>Student Affairs opening hours need to be investigated and a plan for addressing the diverse needs of students outside of the 9 p.m. to 5 p.m. timeframe implemented.</p>	<p>It is proposed to carefully examine information received through surveys / focus groups of the student body in order to ascertain the type of hours which would better facilitate students. It is also proposed that the opening hours of the (currently under construction) Student Information Point be carefully thought through in order to ensure that this new facility can be benefited from by all students, full- or part-time. (See Recommendation 13 Above)</p>	Ongoing
15	A/U	P1	<p>A strategic plan for the communication of the services provided by Student Affairs is necessary.</p>	<p>A: Since the Review, Student Affairs has established a working group to examine current practice and have developed and put in place a Communication Strategy for Student Affairs. This Strategy was discussed with the Students' Union and other representatives of the student body. 'Visibility' of the service is high on the agenda of this strategy.</p> <p>The process to recruit a Manager to manage the implementation of the objectives within the strategy is nearing completion and an appointment will be made within the coming weeks.</p> <p>U: University management are fully supportive of the initiatives of the Director and staff in Student affairs. Support in strategy development has been and will continue to be provided by the Head of Strategy and Administration, The President's Office.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing Completion date: Q4 07</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
16	A/U	P2	<p>The role of Student Affairs in the University's orientation programmes [should] be reviewed.</p>	<p>A: The role of Student Affairs and the general make-up of Orientation have been discussed in recent months within the Unit. There is a strong feeling that there is a need for closer co-operation with the Faculties and Schools in order to provide a more comprehensive and productive Orientation for students.</p>	Ongoing

				<p>There should be a strong distinction between 'academic' and 'non-academic/support' orientation - Student Affairs being responsible for the 'non-academic/support' only. Further discussions with other parts of the University would be helpful and interesting.</p> <p>Student Affairs have also engaged in a joint initiative with the Office of the VP for Research with regard to orientation/re-orientation for post-graduate students.</p> <p>U: University management are supportive of the review of Orientation being carried out by the recently appointed Director of Student Affairs. Orientation for the current academic year indicates a number of new developments. Experience gained from the September Orientation will feed into on-going review in this area.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
17	U	P1	<p>The vacant Computing, Physics, Maths and Fiontar coordinator position should be filled without delay. The uncertainty around the Business/HSS coordinator position should be eliminated.</p>	<p>U: University management is supportive of the integration of INTRA into Student affairs. All review of staffing should be carried out by the Director fo Student Affairs in consultation with the head of INTRA.</p> <p>One INTRA position has been filled on a permanent basis since the review took place</p> <p>The second position is currently being examined in light of the move to Student Affairs and the re-examination of activities. Detailed discussions have yet to take place among the relevant parties before any position could be filled. Key in these discussions will be the level of staffing required in order to provide a high-quality efficient service to the incoming cohort of students in light of increasing student numbers and increasing competition for relevant positions.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
18	U	P1	<p>Given the key advantage that INTRA affords DCU in attracting students to DCU, the budget</p>	<p>U: Tthis budget will remain ring-fenced.</p>	<p>Completed</p>

			should remain ring-fenced to ensure that the office functions efficiently and effectively.	A comment: The Director of Student Affairs has introduced a devolved budgetary model, and each unit within Student Affairs currently has responsibility for its own budget. With the assistance of the Finance Office, Student Affairs is examining expenditure within INTRA with a view to ensuring that the unit can continue with its current activities without undue financial constraints. These discussions are ongoing.	
19	U	P1	The PRG believes that the plan to integrate INTRA into Student Affairs is inappropriate, given the business-oriented ethos of INTRA and the contrasting pastoral mission of SA.	See response to recommendation no 17..	See recomm. 17
20	A	P2	The INTRA office should establish a reliable and effective feedback mechanism to channel employer feedback to relevant Programme Chairs and directors to help them address skills deficits and update curricula.	Following this recommendation, it is intended to amend the tutor visit and employer evaluation form to allow formal communication of skills deficits. An output report will then be produced for the Programme Boards on the issue of observed skills deficits. Formal channels of feedback on other issues will be examined through production of Standard Operating Procedures. Production of SOPs will also enhance succession planning ability.	Ongoing
21	A	P2	The proposal that employers be afforded an opportunity to make presentations to undergraduates in Semester 2 of Year 2 on INTRA positions and opportunities likely to be available to them the following year should receive serious consideration.	(1) Employer presentations to students are currently facilitated, but it is found that generally these are not well attended. It is intended to have closer co-operation with Careers on this issue (they run a series of employer presentations for graduating students). (2) Students are given a facility to state their preference for every vacancy that is advertised (a facility not available in other universities in the State). Often, however, this preference is based on the location rather than the quality of the position on offer. If employers outside Dublin were to be ignored, academic staff in DCU would be required to provide costly and time-consuming INTRA alternatives for an ever-increasing number of students. Degree-relevant positions would be lost to competing universities.	Ongoing Ongoing

22	A	P2	The INTRA office should give serious consideration to designing (in consultation with relevant School INTRA Coordinators) a menu of INTRA report templates appropriate to the placement type.	This has been under way for several years as the reporting requirements of each degree programme diversify. The INTRA co-ordinators are working closely with Programme Boards to meet their needs in this regard, and documentation is reviewed annually.	Ongoing
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2. SUMMARY OF THE ONE-YEAR PLAN

(at Unit level)

1. Prioritise support for implementation of Academic Framework for Innovation across all units of OVPLI. **Ongoing**
2. Develop initiatives to promote awareness and understanding of functions of OVPLI among DCU staff. **Ongoing, see also 4 below.**
3. Replacement for Director of Registry. **Completed**
4. Establish mechanisms to enhance synergies between the constituent units across OVPLI (to include enhancement of organisational knowledge across OVPLI, thereby facilitating succession planning), including a calendar of monthly meetings. **Ongoing.**
5. Contribute to the development of the Education and Learning Academic Theme, working closely with the Theme Leader, if appointed, or **Ongoing**
6. Refine LIU's mission statement, identity and long-term goals in light of resource environment. **Completion: End of Q4 2007**
7. Continue to monitor, evaluate and improve the service provided by Academic Affairs to its client groups. **Ongoing**
8. Continue to implement, as far as possible, the Registry's objectives (2006-2008), as included in the Self Assessment Report. Many of these objectives include E-solutions, e.g. development of an integrated system to manage external examiner data, including contracts and payments. **Ongoing**
9. Request permission from Budget Committee to advertise the now vacant permanent Systems Development Officer post. An IT background will be an essential requirement for this post. **Appointment expected by end Q1 2008**
10. Request additional space to help alleviate the current storage problems with archived material for Registry and Academic Affairs. **Ongoing**
11. Develop Student Affairs student and employer (INTRA) feedback systems and communication strategy which will include targeting postgraduate as well as undergraduate students. **Completion: End Q3 2008.**
12. Complete detailed Student Affairs document for the attention of Senior Management, outlining the vision for the future of the Unit and

recommendations for the improved delivery of service. **Completion:**
end Q1 2008

3. SUMMARY OF THE THREE-YEAR PLAN

(at Unit level)

1. Complete risk assessment exercise in relation to sharing of information, knowledge and skills in identified key areas.
2. Evaluate the progress of the implementation of the Learning Innovation Strategy against key performance indicators, as well as the impact of the implementation.
3. Work with CSD and the University's Records Management Group regarding the introduction of a University-wide electronic archiving system.
4. Develop and implement a comprehensive IT training plan for Registry staff to include IT training for new staff and a continuous upskilling training programme for existing staff.
5. Review the IT systems in the Registry and their interface with other systems in use in the University (it is expected that the implementation of the Academic Framework for Innovation will facilitate this).
6. Review Student Affairs structures with a view to addressing the needs of the student body and potentially expanding the services it currently provides for students.

**Appendix 1: Membership of the Unit Quality Co-ordinating Committee
(for the Self-assessment Report)**

Ms Valerie Cooke (Academic Affairs) – Secretary
Revd John Gilligan (Student Affairs)
Mr Kevin Griffin (Registry) – Chair up to February 2007
Ms Jean Hughes (Learning Innovation Unit)
Ms Maeve Long (INTRA)
Ms Louise McDermott (Academic Affairs) – Chair from March 2007
Professor Maria Slowey (Vice-President and Registrar)

Appendix 2: Membership of the Peer Review Group

Professor John Costello, Head, School of Physical Sciences, DCU
Ms Bernadette Farrell, Education Officer, Union of Students in Ireland
Professor Caroline Hussey, former Registrar, University College Dublin – Chair
Professor Hannele Niemi, Professor of Education, University of Helsinki
Ms Sheelagh Wickham, School of Nursing, DCU – Rapporteur

**Appendix 3: Membership of the Unit Quality Improvement Committee
(for the Quality Improvement Plan)**

Dr Claire Bohan (Student Affairs)
Ms Valerie Cooke (Academic Affairs) – Secretary
Ms Jean Hughes (Learning Innovation Unit)
Ms Maeve Long (INTRA/Student Affairs)
Ms Louise McDermott (Academic Affairs) – Chair
Ms Phylomena McMorrow (Registry)
Professor Maria Slowey (Vice-President and Registrar).

Appendix 4: PRIORITISED RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Unit Heads submitted detailed resource requirements for prioritisation. Given the fact that OVPLI comprises five units and all were involved in the review, these have to be even more constrained than would have been the case under regular, full unit review circumstances. The difficulties arising from reviewing different sub-units in different ways has been conveyed to the Director of Quality Promotion. The areas involved should not be penalised in future peer review exercises.

Note: the following list does not address staffing matters associated with two key replacement posts for Registry (Director and Systems Officer) which are being taken up through Budget Committee and Executive, or the matter of the appointment of the Academic Theme Leader in Education and Learning.

1. Upskilling IT training programme for Registry staff – to be undertaken in conjunction with HR and CSD . Est **E5k** (ref Recommendations 2 and 7).
2. Review of archiving space (**estimate to follow**) (ref Recommendation 5).
3. Development of educational research network (ref Recommendation 10). Joint proposal from LIU and OVPR for **E30k** currently under consideration by QPC for funding from the Quality Improvement Fund
4. Initiation of more structured student and employer feedback systems for Student Affairs and INTRA (ref Recommendations 13 ,14, 15) **Est E5k**