



Office *of the* Theme Leaders

Quality Improvement Plan

1st October 2008



1. Introduction

We would like to take this opportunity to formally thank the Peer Review Group reviewers for their considerable investment of time and effort in the review of the Office of the Theme Leaders. This is especially true of the external reviewers who had to travel and take time away from their normal routines. The OTL welcomes the PRG recommendations and very much appreciates the opportunity that this review process offers.

The Peer Review Group consisted of:

Ms. Miriam Corcoran

(Rapporteur) Sub-Librarian, Library, Dublin City University

Prof. Bernie Hannigan

Pro-Vice Chancellor for Strategic Projects, University of Ulster

Ms. Kathy Quinn

(Chair) Director of Finance, Dublin City Council

Mr. Brian Trench

School of Communications, Dublin City University

Section 2 contains the responses to the recommendations outlined by the Peer Review Group.

This Quality Improvement Plan was finalised at a meeting on 1st October 2008 with the following participants:

Professor Ronaldo Munck (Theme Leader)

Dr Mike Hopkins (Theme Leader)

Dr Niall McMahon (Chair of Coordination Committee)

Professor Anne Scott (Deputy President)

Mr Martin Conry (Secretary of DCU)

Ms Kathy Quinn (external Peer Group member and chair of PRG)

Ms Miriam Corcoran (internal Peer Group member and rapporteur of PRG)



2. Response to PRG Recommendations

#1	Recommendation	Response	Time-line
P1	<p>Addressed to <u>DCU Executive</u></p> <p>The University should confirm the funding arrangements post Atlantic Philanthropy funding, for the OTL to the OTL and to the wider University community immediately</p>	<p>DCU has a clear commitment to continuation of the strategic themes as we move into the final stages of development of the university's next strategic plan (2009 – 2012). The themes have formed a significant element of the past two university strategic plans. The OTL, in partnership with OVPR jointly conceptualised, funded, and ran an ambitious Foresight Exercise with wide participation of the DCU community. The foresight exercise was conducted to help the university re-vision the themes and to ensure that DCU maintained its competitive advantage in positioning itself for the future. The outcomes from the foresight exercise are underpinning the development of the new strategic plan. They will also inform the re-visioning of the strategic themes as a component part of that plan.</p> <p>The support structure and funding arrangement for the themes will be detailed as part of the implementation element of the strategic plan (2009 – 2012).</p>	Q4 2008

#2	Recommendation	Response	
P1	<p>Addressed to <u>DCU Executive and the Office of the Theme Leaders</u></p> <p>A plan should be agreed between the OTL and University Executive setting out objectives, targets and output measurements from Autumn 2008 to the end of the funding period (i.e. 3 years). This agreed plan to be signed off</p>	<p>OTL: The theme leaders have made several presentations to the Executive since the on-site review. These included, importantly, a clear vision of the future mission and responsibilities of the OTL.</p> <p>U: The structure and form of the strategic themes, and the organisational support required to support this is as indicated above, part of the focus of the current university strategic planning exercise.</p>	Q4 2008

	<p>by end of June 2008.</p> <p>The structures for the OTL should be agreed and signed off by all of the Deans.</p> <p>The Human Resource requirement for the OTL should be formalised for the funding period (i.e. 3 years post-Autumn 2008) by the Deputy President with regard to Theme Leaders and by the OTL with regard to other Human Resources by end of July 2008.</p> <p>A statement of role definition of OTL staff should be signed off. This role should clearly define the catalyst, persuasion, facilitating role of the OTL.</p> <p>The Deans and Themes committee meetings should be reconvened, commencing immediately, with the initial business of items set out above.</p>	<p>Clarity on both of these elements should be achieved by December 2008.</p> <p>Structures to facilitate the continuation of the strategic themes, as articulated in the new strategic plan (2009 – 2012), will be approved by Executive. The Deans form part of the university Executive.</p> <p>Human Resource allocation depends on the implementation plan associated with the strategic planning exercise, and will be communicated to staff at the earliest possible opportunity. The DCU structures and processes require that such issues are approved by Executive on the recommendation of the Budget Committee</p> <p>Such role descriptions and job specifications were developed with the inception of the theme leader role and are available from HR. The existing roles will be adapted in the light of the Foresight exercise and the strategic planning process.</p> <p>The new strategic plan, building on the Foresight Exercise, will help the university Executive re-vision the role of the strategic themes and the support structures required. Currently, the DCU committee structure is being reviewed and one likely outcome is the establishment of a Foresight Forum to feed into the strategic development of DCU.</p>	<p>Q4 2008</p> <p>Q4 2008</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
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#3	Recommendation	Response	
P1	<p>Addressed to <u>DCU Executive and the Office of the Theme Leaders</u></p> <p>From the agreed plan, OTL to devise a work programme with specific deliverables to be agreed with University Executive and communicated to OTL staff. A business item for future Deans and Themes meetings (recommendation 4) will be indicators of progress on key deliverables.</p>	<p>OTL: A framework for Foresight and the OTL has been presented to DCU Executive. Discussions about agreed objectives, targets and output measurements are ongoing; this will feed into a work programme and will form the basis for activities of the Foresight Forum.</p> <p>U: As indicated above this is an integral part of the current strategic planning process. Once clarity has been achieved on the structure and form of the strategic themes the Deputy President will agree a plan and programme of work with the Theme Leaders. This will then be presented to Executive for discussion and approval in the normal manner.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Q2 2009</p>

#4	Recommendation	Response	
P2	<p>Addressed to <u>DCU Executive and the Office of the Theme Leaders</u></p> <p>OVPR to ensure that research projects facilitated / initiated by OTL are integrated into the research structure.</p> <p>OVPLI to ensure that teaching based projects including community based projects, be absorbed into the schools, and faculties as appropriate.</p>	<p>OTL: The theme leaders will be involved in projects in partnership with Faculty. All teaching and research involving the OTL will be fully integrated into the University structures. The OTL will act as a catalyst across the University and beyond in promoting Foresight and driving transformation at DCU.</p> <p>U: On Executive approval of the above plan and programme of work, the OVPR and OVPLI (and their relevant committees) will work closely with the Theme Leaders to help ensure that the programme is facilitated and embedded in the appropriate university structures and processes.</p>	

#5	Recommendation	Response	
P1	<p>Addressed to <u>DCU Executive and the Office of the Theme Leaders</u></p> <p>Formalised meetings should be introduced between the OTL and</p>	<p>OTL and U: The Deputy President is chairing a regular theme leaders' update meeting. The theme leaders have met with the Deputy President several times since the review. This is having a very positive impact.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>



	the Deputy President.		
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#6	Recommendation	Response	
P2	<p>Addressed to the <u>Office of the Theme Leaders</u></p> <p>Monthly staff meetings should be held with OTL staff, notwithstanding that it may not be possible for all staff to attend all meetings. A more formal performance management system should be introduced for all staff.</p>	<p>The OTL has initiated a new internal quality process following the DCU review. This will include a quarterly all-staff update meeting as well as monthly meetings of the Office Quality Committee. The DCU Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) has been extended to all staff.</p>	Ongoing

*Recommendation 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.

Abbreviations:

OTL: Office of the Theme Leaders

PRG: Peer Review Group

QIP: Quality Improvement Plan



Summary One-Year Plan

Q2 2008

- Work to implement recommendations from the Peer Review Group - work is proceeding towards implementing the PRG report recommendations.
- Review Draft Peer Review Group Report. A complete list of recommended corrections to the PRG was returned to the QPU in June 2008.
- Present vision for the future of the Academic Themes to DCU Executive [Recommendations 2-4]. This has taken the form of formal presentations to the Executive together with discussions with members of the senior management group in which a map for the future of the OTL, in line with PRG recommendations, was outlined.

Q3 2008

- Agree objectives, targets and output measurements with the University Executive.
- Funding to be formalised depending on the implementation plan (see Recomm. 2) following discussion at Executive of the proposed work plan for the theme leaders. As indicated above this is unlikely to happen until December, due to the timing of the strategic planning cycle.
- Continue regular update meetings between theme leaders and the Deputy President [Recommendation 5].
- Finalise mission and structure of the OTL going forward [Recommendations 1-4].

Q4 2008 to Q2 2009

- October 1st, Quality Improvement Plan Follow-on Meeting.
- Following a formal conclusion to the Foresight process as well as planning for the 2009-2012 DCU Strategic Plan, begin a launch of the revised OTL structure and strategic initiatives [Recommendations 1-4].
- Launch new internal quality process with an Office Quality Committee.
- Initiate regular staff update meetings Begin launch of revised OTL structure and initiatives [Recommendation 6].
- Reconvene Deans and Themes meetings [Recommendation 2]. The relevance of this recommendation, and / or the appropriate manner in which to meet the spirit of the recommendation, will become clearer over the coming months.
- Complete a work programme with clear targets for year commencing 2009.



Summary Three-Year Plan

Q3 2009 to Q4 2011

- 1) DCU's Foresight capability: the OTL will continue to provide thought leadership and joined up thinking in support of the strategic development of DCU. Through Foresight path-finding, or *horizon scanning*, provide a shared intellectual underpinning for the upcoming university strategic planning process for 2009-2011. Align and embed Foresight into mainstream DCU teaching and research.
- 2) Inform and support the development of Teaching and Learning innovation through the Academic Framework for Innovation and beyond
- 3) Support the development of high-profile inter-disciplinary Foresight Research Initiatives through the Office of the Vice-President for Research. Establish the new strategic initiatives, as determined by Foresight, as a solid framework for research and teaching in DCU.
- 4) Act as a catalyst across the University and beyond in promoting Foresight and driving transformation at DCU.
- 5) Encourage DCU to become a leader, nationally and internationally, in relation to each of the new strategic initiatives, most likely including Foresight and Sustainability.