Peer Review Group Report for Professional Support Areas

ISS Department

Quality Review Visit Date: 27th April – 30th April 2021

Contents

1   Introduction and Context

The broad approach to quality assurance and enhancement at DCU aims to promote and develop a culture of quality and continuous improvement throughout all aspects of the University. The framework derives from the spirit of Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement enshrined in the Universities Act (1997), which is the legislative basis for quality throughout the Irish University sector, and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

The DCU processes for quality reviews at DCU are further aligned to the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the published guidelines of Qualifications and Quality Ireland (QQI).

This Report presents the findings of a quality review of the **ISS Department**, following a visit (virtual) by the Peer Review Group undertaken on **27th - 30th April 2021**.

1.1 Overview of the Area under Review

Information Systems Services (ISS) are a critical component of professional services in Dublin City University (DCU). ISS provides general IT advice and guidance, consultancy, process redesign, project management, systems analysis & design, software package evaluation, maintenance, and broad IT support services to the university. ISS is also charged with the support of all Digital operations and operational responsibility for cyber security across DCU. This is a substantial and critical brief, which has increased over recent years due to the growing ubiquity of digital solutions and specific initiatives and activity at DCU.

The ISS service desks are the key 'front of house' to the staff and students, supporting their use of DCU IT systems in teaching, research and administration. ISS are responsible for the entire physical and virtual IT infrastructure, which supports the wide range of business activities across all DCU campuses. This incorporates a very wide range of technologies such as the wired and wireless network, storage area network, server virtualisation, backup and disaster recovery, classroom teaching equipment, laboratory PCs etc. Many of the key business applications (e.g. Core, Agresso, and Scientia) operate on this local infrastructure, ISS also work closely with the business to assess, procure and deploy cloud-based services with trusted partners.

ISS is a key partner in the new Student Information System (SIS) programme, contributing to the implementation of this critical new system for DCU, in which the integration of systems and data is a key component. Another critical area for the department is cybersecurity, as the operational, financial and reputational risks in this area continue to grow year on year. ISS continue to improve DCU cybersecurity and protect the university and all digital assets. ISS are also responsible for the development, implementation, training and support of the web-based content management system (Drupal) helping the marketing department with pushing the DCU brand online.

The ISS department is part of the Office of the Chief Operations Officer (OCOO). The Chief Operations Officer (COO), Declan Raftery is a member of the senior management team of the university, reporting directly to the University President, Professor Daire Keogh.

The Director of the ISS department, Peter McGorman, reports to the COO and was appointed to his role in December 2019. Peter has subsequently restructured the department since taking up this post and the management team is now made up of four managers responsible for the four functional areas.

ISS Support
The normal support channels available to the DCU community are walk-in, phone, service desk ticket creation (email/online). Walk-in support is typically available on both the Glasnevin and St. Patrick's campuses for both staff and students with the same opening hours (08:30-17:30).

The student service desks are located in the library building on each campus as these areas normally have the highest student footfall. Postgraduate students who work for ISS part time usually staff these service desks.

However, due to the COVID pandemic, the support channels and operations were reviewed and adjusted to cater for the on-going and developing situation. As such, walk-in support is now only available by appointment in order to ensure compliance with COVID regulations. The student desks in the library buildings have not been operational during COVID.

The largest ISS office, hosting the majority of ISS staff, is on the Glasnevin campus. This large, mainly open plan office is located close to the centre of the Glasnevin campus. The office is in a good location for customers who need to visit the service desk or attend a meeting. ISS also has a small open plan office space on the St. Patrick's campus, which was fully renovated at the time of Incorporation. Support staff from the service delivery area generally staff this office. Approximately five staff would normally be located in this office depending on the time of year and current demands.

During COVID, a small number of essential staff maintained an on-site presence and operated an appointment system to provide face-to-face services when needed. Most ISS staff have worked remotely during the emergency.

ISS have responded rapidly to the digital demands as the organisation pivoted to deal with the Covid pandemic and subsequent changes that remote working and online learning have brought. ISS was able to rapidly provide a secure and stable online environment, provide IT support to staff and students remotely and provide the required on-site support to staff. This was a significant effort under high pressure and tight deadlines.

As part of this work, the demand for the provisioning of laptops for staff hugely increased, secure VPN capacity and two-factor authentication were rolled out as a priority to support secure remote working. ISS also facilitated a number of priority initiatives to support the move to online delivery, including an online exam environment, the exams support centre, new internal websites, an online student registration solution, changes to the marks entry system and a new online student ID card production system. The Unified Communications project was also expanded to provide soft client phones allowing for remote telephony in the exam support centre negating the need for staff to physically come onto campus.

At the time of this review, the great majority of ISS staff were still working from home.

2   Approach to Self-Assessment

2.1 Quality Review Committee

An internal quality review committee led the self-assessment phase of the Quality Review. Committee membership the committee was formed in January 2021 comprising of nine members of staff from the ISS Department.

Members of the committee were drawn from across the department as follows:

Committee Member	ISS Role	Functional Area
Justin Doyle **(Chair)**	Deputy Director	Engineering & Innovation
Peter McGorman	Director	Director
Ian Bell	Manager	Operations & Applications
Theresa Collins	Chief Technical Officer (Telephony)	Operations & Applications
Ian Spillane	Manager	Service Delivery
Larry Aherne	Student Service Desk Supervisor	Service Delivery
Paul O'Connor	Manager	Business Engagement
Maria Lyons	Senior Business Analyst	Business Engagement
Will McDermott	Senior Network Engineer	Engineering & Innovation

The ISS quality review committee met on 10 occasions (weekly between January 25th and April 6th). A project plan for the production of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) was agreed at the beginning of the process where different members of the committee were assigned tasks and sections to complete.

A number of focus groups were used to determine the internal department feedback and perspective. All members of the department were invited to attend a focus group where a set of previously agreed powerful questions were used to promote open discussion. Focus groups with staff and students were also undertaken, facilitated by an external facilitator, Sean Mcloughney from Learningcurve.ie.

Student focus groups were facilitated by the DCU quality promotion office and were held with the DCU Students Union and faculty student representatives to gain their insights and feedback on the powerful questions.

The ISS management team also undertook a SWOT analysis over two separate 90-minute meetings.

All members of the ISS management team reviewed the draft and final report over a two-day period to arrive at the final self-assessment report.

2.2 The Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

The SAR document is a comprehensive, detailed and helpful overview of the role and duties of ISS; the SAR itself is well presented and a structure which is clear and logical.

There was a well-defined strategy to the self-assessment using facilitated focus groups with powerful questions across a number of key stakeholder groups. There was a conscious decision not to use surveys in the collation of data and a qualitative approach was beneficially used to gain greater insights into the issues and priorities.

The SAR narrative was clear and made for ready identification and classification of a number of themes throughout the document by the external Peer Review Group (PRG). The SAR gave a very good overview of the ISS departments recent structural changes including the formation of five cross functional groups in key areas designed to improve collaboration across the department.

The report acknowledges the support received from HR to date and highlighted the difficult work carried out by the ISS staff particularly during the Covid restrictions, which cannot be underestimated and understandably has significant impact on some of the findings and recommendations in this report.

The PRG have also fed back to the DCU Quality Promotion representatives on other aspects of the SAR and the quality process where either good practice was in evidence or improvements could be considered.

The PRG are of the opinion that it would have been helpful if the SAR was more self-reflective with less narrative devoted to recent issues and current actions. It is somewhat understandable given the radical change in the criticality of ISS during the pandemic, and the additional pressures of recent Cyber Attacks that a visible bearing on the SAR narrative would be evident. This is reflected in the SWOT analysis, which details the work of an operationally highly capable unit, working extremely hard, but under growing pressure, driven by workload and growing cyber threats. The PRG believe that this has partly been responsible for some uncertainty as to the strategic role of ISS within DCU, and what the future expectations of the unit are. The PRG feel that there is an opportunity to bring more clarity to this matter, to the benefit of both ISS and DCU.

3   Approach Taken by Peer Review Group

3.1 Peer Review Group Members

Membership of the Peer Review Group for the Quality Review included the following:

- Dr. Gerard Culley, Information Technology Services, University College Cork. (Chair)
- Mr. Brian Henderson, Director Digital and Information Services, University of Aberdeen.
- Ms Laura Mahoney, Head of Public Service Reform, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
- Dr. Sally Smith, Director of Research, Dublin City University
- Mr. Callaghan Commons, DCU Postgraduate Taught Student, MSc in Public Policy, Dublin City University
- Mr Alan Mangan, Estates Project Manager, Dublin City University (Rapporteur)

3.2 Overview of Approach Taken by Peer Review Group

Hard copies of the ISS SAR were posted to the members of the PRG on the 7th April 2021 prior to their initial briefing meeting. A soft copy of the SAR and additional Quality Review documents were circulated electronically to the group on the 8th April 2021

The group responded with their initial impressions of the SAR, which were collated by the Quality Promotion Office and shared via Google Drive.

At the first briefing meeting held on the 23rd April, the Quality Promotion Office briefed the PRG on the role of the members and outlined the general composition of the Peer Review Group Report. Dr. Gerard Cully was selected as chair of the PRG.

The PRG made good use of their private meetings and discussed the various themes emerging from the SAR and their initial impressions. The group discussed the different headings of the template document under "Findings of the Peer Review Group" and agreed to compose and ask/initiate questions using their experience and areas of interest.

For the first meeting the PRG composed open-ended questions to encourage discussion with the ISS Quality review committee, which followed with a more formal sequence of questioning for the following meetings over the "remote" visit. The Approach taken by the Peer Review group was to pose key thematic questions, to explore the key topics of Governance, Funding, Culture, Planning etc. On Wednesday 28th April, detailed meetings with the Staff in ISS and management of ISS helped this data gathering exercise greatly.

The board were impressed with the largely open, candid and detailed discussion from the stakeholders. This was followed on Thursday 29th April by further detailed discussions with Academic and Professional services stakeholder groups. The PRG group gathered the data from these interviews, and then collated this data into emerging findings and themes. Throughout the process detailed notes were kept ensuring that findings and recommendations were linked to the data emerging from the process.

The panel discussed the emerging themes with the Director of ISS. On Friday 30th April, the PRG group discussed some of the thematic findings with the DCU Senior Management team, again the positive regard for the work of ISS was very evident and discussions with Senior Management and helped the PRG to develop its initial recommendations. Further discussions with the Chief Operations Officer, helped to crystallise and develop the initial recommendations further.

The PRG set out to build the findings and the recommendations from the ground up feedback and interview process, but also to try and triangulate these findings from strategic consideration of key issues, as articulated by the Senior Management team. The wide-ranging experience of PRG members of the external environment was also utilised. The findings in the report and associated recommendations are the output from this process of triangulation and reflection.

4   Approach to Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Progress made since last review

The PRG to some degree recognised the progress made since that last review, however in some areas it has been difficult to really get into the detail of how well progressed specific improvements truly were. Limited documentation, and the fact that the ISS Director changed since the previous review, made it more challenging to get a detailed position on progress made against the specific recommendations from the previous ISS quality review. It is the view of the panel that the reality is that the COVID emergency and associated Cyber threats have emerged as key drivers of change, perhaps more so than the 2015 review or associated quality improvement plans. This is not an unexpected position but was felt to be worth noting by the PRG group.

Although not completed from the previous review, a Digital Strategy would be beneficial to the morale of the staff and the management of the ISS department. This brief strategy could offer a single organising plan, to give ISS a greater sense that it is in control of its trajectory and destination, and agree a single but co-created vision about the University's digital transformation. Alignment with DCU institutional strategy is crucial, and given the importance of digital technologies and services in the future, this is a key issue.

While an initiative is due to begin in June 2021 to develop training plans for staff development, this has not been put in place yet. Worryingly, there is clear evidence that staff do not currently have the time to engage in significant development, which is a constraint on development of services and a potential risk to the institution moving forward in a more digital age. Training has a key role in staff retention as well as innovation, service delivery and cyber security.

The skills matrix work was completed, but part of the action was a move to a "to be" situation. Given some of the reported staffing gaps, this requires further exploration. This issue appears to be currently live as part of the 3-year update.

A positive response was the formation of the IS Governance Committee as a sub-group of Executive. It would be good to gain further understanding of the regular business that flows through this committee, how the information from the regular meetings is disseminated throughout ISS, and how effective the group is in setting the overall direction and investment of Digital across DCU. The PRG have made a formal recommendation on this matter.

Overall, the PRG recognise that the ISS Department from, management to staff at all levels, are managing significant change during a difficult time. The department has demonstrated an impressive level of success through the recent "President's Staff Recognition Awards" and Quality Improvement Funding awards. On one level, the activities related to quality enhancement are viewed very positively. There is, however, a perception held by the PRG that the activities are predominately dealing with immediate operational issues rather than taking a step back to consider a tactical or strategic view of service provision and direction. It would be good for ISS explore this further and identify where opportunities for the higher-level direction setting can take place.

Effectiveness of Quality Assurance

The previous quality review made eleven recommendations across Governance, Strategy, Skills, Positioning and Processes. As identified in the SAR there was a lot of progression on a number of recommendations - most notably strong progress around positioning and the new organisational structure. Since completion of the last review, DCU has grown considerably in size mostly driven by the Incorporation Project and now operates across five campuses. This growth and the larger more distributed campus has also driven greater operational workload and pressures to ISS. Coupled with the pivot to online and increased Cyber threats, workload also appears to have also grown significantly over the period since the last review, perhaps reducing the space required to complete other recommendations from the previous review.

ISS appear to be actively aiming to improve Quality enhancement. Plans to implement a new Enterprise Service Management (ESM) platform and the introduction of the Cross Functional Groups are very proactive measures and shows good strategic thinking and opens the potential for a joined up cross-University approach. The PRG have made recommendations on this matter and see the new ESM platform as a tremendous opportunity for driving change and consistency across a broad range of areas of ISS (and the wider University) to drive real service improvements.

The high standards of ISS staff and their commitment to DCU staff and students have received consistent recognition, with students and colleagues recognising their great work and dedication to the University. However, there are growing signs of fatigue and rising stress driven by workload, staff levels, Covid adaptions and the rising cyber threat.

5 Findings of the Peer Review Group

5.1 Planning and Effective Management of Resources

Given the increased demands and their criticality, the PRG observed that there was an opportunity and a growing necessity to develop more effective institutional planning around Digital / IT initiatives. In order to ensure appropriate organisational progress, it is necessary to understand the capacity and experience constraints in this crucial space and how initiatives can be prioritised and resourced appropriately.

Some of these early cracks were also identified in the previous quality review, and partially addressed through IS Governance, however the renewed dependency on Digital and the growing threat of Cyber Security (and the workloads these are driving), make it critical for the institution that the resources within ISS are sufficient and are working on the agreed priorities of the institution.

The PRG recommends a more institutional and integrated annual approach to digital initiatives planning involving schools and directorates. This would help ensure appropriate resourcing and prioritisation, increasing the likelihood of initiative success and helping ISS to continue to provide high quality operational services to staff and students.

5.1.1 ISS Recruitment and Staffing

The PRG recognise that the strong calibre of ISS staff is a key strength of the unit, however we found that the ISS department have key dependencies on individuals and expertise on which they are over reliant. This single point of dependency is common in institutions with relatively low staff and low turnover, but with the additional pressures on the functional area and their impact on the operation of the organisation, it is prudent to try to alleviate these single points of risk through recruitment, training and process changes.

ISS recognise they lack sufficient staff for succession planning and covering leave/illness and their larger projects (SIS, Cyber and Covid) are placing additional pressure on staff. The challenge of staff retention of some key areas such as Security and Networking also features highly on their risk register and is recognised by senior management. ISS are trying to mitigate this risk through recent benchmarking which they hope will help with retention in a competitive market, but they will remain constrained by public sector pay bands.

The PRG recommend a review of staffing requirements to identify bottlenecks cause by a reliance on key staff or expertise. It does appear that ISS have immediate needs to grow their staffing and consider options to improve attraction and retention of key people.

The PRG recommend that some additional steps be put in place to ease the resource pressures on ISS. Examples of initiatives that may be explored include,

- Considering the greater use of students as IT part time Staff within support desks, student support or as junior analyst resources. This can be further extended to using students as Interns for a year to ease workload pressures from operational duties. This could result in some quick relief of workload and a positive employment training initiative for students.
- Working more closely with Students as staff, can help with student feedback on ISS Digital products, thereby further enhancing the product feedback loop, and working with your student staff on early product feedback and testing.
- With HR support establish IT recruitment panels (of 10-15 appointable candidates) at the lower 3 grades, this allows ISS and DCU to establish panels at these lower grades, which can be used to fill vacant posts for IT or Digital Staff anywhere across DCU. This panel process (already used for EA and SEA posts) is highly effective in addressing backfill of posts. This has the effect of greatly speeding up the recruitment process, it also provides alternative staffing means for other units looking to grow their Digital Capability, without diluting the central team. This would reduce a major operational risk faced by DCU.

- Given the very positive feedback received from across DCU on the staff, there needs to be investment in staff wellbeing through a return to more social interaction, away days, team building etc. Again we recognise that this is severely hampered by current Covid restrictions, which when lifted should be addressed as quickly as possible, and some funding budgeted to support this.
- Formal structured training for staff is recommended. Although training is addressed in the SAR the PRG found it needed to be more ambitious and was relying on the upcoming PRD system. The training process can and should form part of the recent ISS restructuring/strategy. The PRG believed that ISS staff would feel a dedicated training plan would be an investment in them in return for all of their efforts, and should not be delayed.
- Innovative approaches may need to be considered to support capacity development, which may include practice sharing with other stakeholders within the sector.

5.1.2   Digital Vision for DCU - alignment with ISS Vision

The PRG believes that the ISS need to be involved in the construction of a new Digital Strategy for DCU and there needs to be further clarification around the terms of reference of this strategy. The panel believes that there is an opportunity for the Director of ISS to restart the process of developing a Digital Strategy for DCU and to use this process as a platform to communicate a digital vision to key stakeholders and ISS Staff. This would also serve as a platform for collaboration and consultation with other key stakeholders in the digital arena.

The Digital Strategy should also incorporate a vision for data governance and usage in the institution and would frame the position that the SIS programme has in terms of enabling that vision. This could provide a means of enhancing communications and understanding within the ISS team, and ISS's role across the University.

This Digital Vision or Strategy should also be a framework for ISS getting a sense that it is in charge of its own destiny and thereby developing more confidence in its role – something that the PRG felt was under threat.

This Digital Strategy must also set out how the change management capability and digital transformation capability being developed within the Registrar's office as part of the SIS implementation, can be harnessed and deployed across all functional areas of the University. This is not to suggest the Digital Strategy and its outputs can be owned by ISS, but it would establish a clear role for ISS as a "partner" or "enabler" to help achieve DCU digital transformation and therefore support the institutions' Strategic Digital Ambitions.

ISS has constantly received praise for their responsiveness. It would be valuable for ISS to be ambitious and innovative in creating a digital vision that has multiple strands; this would help ISS to clarify their role as a key enabler to deliver the vision. The idea of a digital vision, supported by various strategies or action plans, would provide ISS with a clarification of its role within the various strands of the University's strategy, and therefore help move ISS from being a highly capable operational unit to one that has a strategic role within DCU.

5.1.3   ISS and Digital Funding

The PRG recommends that ISS develop and approve an on-going annual capital plan, and an associated on-going Op-Ex forecast. This will summarise the needs and the requirements of the ISS from;

1. A capital Lifecycle perspective (Cyber, Labs, Datacentre), this funding will in the main be under the direct control of ISS, and
2. The operational expenditure required to appropriately undertake maintenance, licensing and other op-ex activity, and
3. Digital Transformation perspective (SIS, CRM, DATA). The funding here is more likely to sit with the Units undergoing the transformation, with ISS as key delivery partners.

These holistic plans will give a greater sense of an integrated vision for digital activity across DCU, which is agnostic of units, or who controls the budget, but offers a visible institutional wide approach to funding and governing this transformation. This Capital plan should be approved by a revised IS Governance, and ultimately

signed off by Senior Management and Finance Committee. The future Campus development plans offer an upcoming opportunity to develop the priority elements of this multi-annual plan from a capital lifecycle perspective. The PRG consider than a sustained commitment to a funding lifecycle for IT capital investment is crucial, and will contribute significantly to managing current and future risks associated with cyber-attacks.

Capital projects will not only require funding, but they will need to be resourced, so some capital funding may also be used to address existing resource shortages within ISS to enable them to complete project work and support existing ISS resourcing levels.

5.1.4 Bedding-in ISS Restructuring

A consistent theme of PRG interviews were the repeated commendations in this report pertaining to the DCU staff and their central role in supporting the staff and in particular the students of DCU through the pandemic. It was also noted that it was difficult to affect a restructuring during a pandemic and ISS management are to be commended for their efforts in this regard amidst the obvious challenges. The panel recommends that a focus be placed on clarifying roles, processes, and duties as part of a return to campus/hybrid working in September. A detailed internal communication plan should be factored into this process to establish more regular town hall type communications. The panel feel that the creation of the previously mentioned Digital Strategy/Vision might offer the ideal opportunity to bed in the new structures, engage ISS staff, and clarify what exactly these new structures means for their daily roles without revisiting the restructuring itself.

The panel suggest that a Services Catalogue should also be developed as a suggested way of bringing the roles and responsibilities to life. This catalogue would describe available services from ISS, the workflow required for completion and the staff responsible for that workflow. Related scenario planning and training around the Service Catalogue would assist staff to understand their roles in the new structure and add impetus to the new training plan.

5.2 Effectiveness of Activities and Processes

The PRG note that various groups interviewed as part of the review including those at Senior Management Group expressed high satisfaction with the operational systems of the ISS department. Particularly during the change to online lecturing and remote working as a response to Covid. The current ISS organisational structure is very new and will need time to develop, and again it should be recognised that the restructuring took place during a busy and stressful period as the department responded to the demands of increased online teaching and remote working. The cross-functional teams may need reassessment or re-communicating to confirm their value to the team, their operational visibility and the expected impacts / understanding of the issues they are trying to address. The correct mandate and communication would make them an asset to ISS, or perhaps a new focus on hybrid teams that are goal orientated.

The panel also recommends that a clear focus be placed on team building, team away days, events etc. so that the new teams get an opportunity to work more closely together. Their fit with the cross functional groups can be worked through and the value of these groups can be explored and clarified to all staff.

5.2.1 Digital Transformation

There is desire within the ISS Department to be engaged in how the strategic digital future of the University will be achieved and actively play a part in its delivery.

Discussions about the future trajectory of DCU, it's associated digital strategy and the governance of delivering that strategy, was a recurring theme throughout the review. The role of ISS in helping define and enable this strategy is key for ISS staff and services to underpin the delivery of strategic objectives at DCU. The panel feels that this needs further clarification, which could be achieved through the multi-stakeholder development of a digital strategy, owned by a revised IS Governance group, enabled by ISS and other key stakeholders to help ensure delivery for DCU.

ISS should have a key decision-making role in digital transformation across DCU including all major digital investments and digital governance. This offers DCU the best chance at taking an institutional approach to digital transformation and ensuring that lessons learned in one part of the organisation can be leveraged and of benefit to other parts. Redeveloping the Digital Strategy offers an opportunity to further establish the role of ISS whilst and sharpening the governance in this area.

5.2.2   IS Governance Group

The PRG recommend that the IS Governance Group needs to be expanded and re-focused beyond its current primary remit on ISS initiatives, to play a true oversight role for Digital across DCU. The PRG group picked up a sense that the ISS team need agency over their future and the workload. The opportunities and the risks presented by the pandemic has accentuated this sense.

The ISS team, working with other Digital stakeholders, require a strategic, as well as an operational mandate in order to support the digital transformation of DCU. IS Governance might consider a new name, i.e. 'Digital Oversight and Planning Committee', which has the responsibility to initiate and oversee projects. This will help ensure success and ensure all stakeholders, including ISS, have the capacity to deliver them. ISS, as a strong partner to the University, need the opportunity to suggest improvement, and where required to challenge the faculty, be part of the solution and ensure value and success.

The Panel therefore recommends that the Terms of Reference of the IS Governance group are revised with a view to pivot its focus from purely ISS initiatives, towards including all University wide Digital Transformation initiatives, the following suggested amendments within their terms of reference can facilitate this scope

- Oversight of all IT / Digital Expenditure, more than 25K is approved by IS Governance
- All Digital Transformation agenda initiatives are within the remit of IS Governance
- Data Governance matters are also within the Terms of Reference of IS Governance

This Governance group should have oversight and approval against all major IT expenditure, whether that funding is controlled by ISS or by functional area. This will help drive economies of scale, greater consistency of expenditure and full transparency on the digital agenda. The PRG recommend a report is issued to University Senior Management monthly on IS Governance decisions outputs, and a bi-annual presentation on IS Governance outputs, agreed via an Annual SLA is presented to the Senior Management team. This will serve to raise awareness also on key institutional risks such as Cyber.

There is also a role for an ISS based Project Management Officer (PMO) to support the IS Governance group (this is also tightly coupled with planning). This role would act as a gatekeeper of how ISS resources are allocated to support University wide initiatives, and give governance and reassurance by gathering the right stakeholders together to plan on multi-annual basis. As well as contributing to the IS Governance agenda, this would help ensure that the 'big ticket' items identified in the SAR; cyber-security, internal and external communications, planning and service delivery, are effectively enhanced and supported.

The panel therefore recommends the establishment of a strong Project Management Office (see below) which can help IS Governance to:

- Establish the project pipeline
- Prioritise the pipeline alongside University Priorities
- Ensure functional areas are capable of delivering the changes needed
- Ensure that there is a systems landscape that can support the needs of the business in a secure cost-effective manner.

A Digital Transformation PMO reporting into IS governance – can be the gatekeepers of the ISS resources and help bring structure to the annual planning cycle. It will make it very clear and transparent what capacity within ISS exists, and which work should be prioritised.

The PMO process can also provide the data behind any multi annual capital plans, providing clear forecasts of what it would cost to do everything that is being requested, and allowing DCU to progress with what it can afford or sustain in any one year.

5.2.3 Staff Engagement

Investment in ISS staff is very important, so that ISS staff feel supported in adopting the new roles that are set out in the structures. There is a need to provide staff with a clear direction of where the department is going and previous recommendations on strategy will help with this. The PRG recommends improved staff engagement on the ISS decision-making process and outcomes; this is also aligned to staff communications. The staff would benefit from a vision/mission statement from ISS Management and the University, from which they can develop detailed service catalogue and service level agreements. Additionally, better defined roles and responsibilities will emerge from an engaged staffing perspective.

In addition, the cross-functional teams may need re-viewing or re-communicating to the wider team to clarify the value from their establishment. The terms of references for the cross functional groups should be completed as soon as possible, with an opportunity for staff to review and provide feedback on the effectiveness and impact of these groups following a period of implementation.

5.2.4 Planning (Business Partnerships)

In the course of the review, the various interviews suggested that individual faculties speak to HR and Finance in relation to project resources but do not currently engage as coherently with ISS in terms of the resource impact that initiatives and programmes might have on ISS operations. This approach inevitably leads to reactive and not proactive relationships and resource planning, where each unit engages with ISS separately such as now, each negotiates separately and it appears no-one is deciding on the strategic priority of these interactions or leveraging the ability to learn and scale from each other.

The current challenges with ISS in forming an annual planning process for the teaching and learning environment is evident. Estates and ISS seem to have a clear and inter-related planning agenda, as service areas under the same overall office, however this seems less well defined with other areas. In addition, major development projects are business lead, which itself is not an issue, but this heightens the importance of an ISS PMO, which can help ensure that compliance functions, systems of internal control are followed and adhered to, such as PCI, GDPR, DPIA are all completed and addressed consistently. This approach also helps ensure that economies of scale are effective. ISS should have a greater development function to enhance the project management support it is able to give.

Therefore, the PRG recommend a tighter coupling between University plans and developments and their direct impact on the resources, funding and capacity within ISS. This can be supported by a more formal development of Business Partnership with other University departments, which from feedback to the panel would be welcome. This would help with improving external communications and give a better understanding of the role and responsibilities of ISS.

The establishment of business partners for faculties and professional services functions enabling a single point of contact could be helpful in dealing with operational issues, but also bigger advice / strategic questions. The points of contact could then liaise with the faculties and professional services areas to provide updates on services and developments. They can also help nudge projects or requirements towards the PMO Process therefore wrapping a better governance model around the needs of the business and give tangible data to the on-going capital and op-ex funding process.

5.3 Communication, Provision of Information and Culture

The PRG explored both internal and external communications as well as broader matters connected with ISS culture. The SAR identified a number of different methods of communication employed throughout the department and acknowledged that there was a lot of effort being expended to enhance communication in the department, however the panel felt that this was an area where additional attention was required, particularly in light of a new structure coming into being in the unusual pandemic context.

The PRG recognised that some elements of the communications efforts appear to be at an early stage of development and commend the department's acceptance of the current communications need. The PRG also commended the breadth of communication efforts in evidence, specifically staff presentations and other forms of engagement with the wider DCU community. Similarly, there was strong recognition from across the stakeholder groups that communications from ISS to the wider institution throughout the Covid period had been consistently helpful, honed and of high quality.

5.3.1   Internal Communications

The review found clear evidence of effective intra-team communication. However, there was a clear feeling from ISS staff that communication was currently not optimum at a strategic and operational level. It is the case, recognised by the ISS leadership team and borne out by the PRG's work, that an increase in department-level communication efforts was needed. The PRG recommends an increased focus on ensuring that the ISS management team links in well and effectively to the wider staff group. Specifically, efforts to communicate and engage the wider team with the management team meeting agenda and outcomes is recommended (the production of the SAR is an example of where the PRG found not all team members to be equally informed). In addition, and in terms of specific change projects, the PRG found that elements of the cross-functional team initiatives and the recent restructure had not been communicated optimally to all staff. This is leading to some internal doubts regarding the efficacy and sustainability of the groups.

The PRG recommends that regular communication methods (for example, monthly 'town halls') be instituted in order to enhance communication flows at a departmental level. It is important that these be dialogical so that all staff are facilitated to both receive and contribute information, views and suggestions. A further suggestion is technical lighting talk presentations once a month, where staff are invited to present to the broader team on technical projects or work they are doing for units. This can help make these sessions into two-way interactive dialogues between management and teams. These sessions can all be recorded and saved for team members that cannot attend. Another option is to consider a short virtual morning scrum for operational teams to discuss live issues, updates and requests for change that are due to be undertaken.

5.3.2   External Communications

The review found that operational communication to many key external stakeholders in the university is excellent and very well received; in fact, all external stakeholder groups commended strongly the department's clear and effective communications effort. However, student stakeholders, while evincing very positive views of ISS communications in general, did mention that closer working liaison with the Student Union may increase the effectiveness of ISS's student communication efforts as this stakeholder group's favoured communication channels can vary year to year. This is a course of action that the PRG recommends.

Regarding the student body, the PRG also recommends that ISS consults with the institutional owner of the University's VLE in order to ensure both that ISS communications are appropriately positioned within that environment and also that that IT skills training for students is effectively offered therein alongside other student training modules. It may be that the partnership relationship in relation to provision of IT skills needs to be clarified in order for this to be implemented. However, it is felt that this would be beneficial in terms of student employability skills, helpdesk call levels and student protection from cyber-attacks on a personal level. Ideally, this training would be available in an accessible digital format.

It is notable however, that the (rightfully) commended external communication efforts could almost universally be described as being predominately operationally focussed in nature and the review found that the full range of ISS' activities is far less understood within the wider university community. It is the PRG's view that one consequence of this lack of visibility of the department's wider contributions and activities is that the ISS brand is fundamentally understood within a support related or 'help desk' paradigm which impacts upon its ability successfully to position itself as a strategic digital partner. The PRG therefore recommends that ISS develop an external communication plan to address this lacuna. Thought should also be given to developing a monthly Newsletter of ISS tips, Tricks, News and Features for staff. Better use of Social Media, Twitter, and Instagram also recommended in terms of getting the message out about the value of ISS services, its value-add role in the University and key messages for any digital vision and associated initiatives.

This communication could help position ISS in more of a strategic partner role in terms of Digital transformation and form part of an external communications plans to communicate the full range of their activities and its impact on the University. This would likely have benefit for staff and ISS confidence levels.

In addition to this, as described above, a monthly update from IS Governance could be prepared for the University Management team, and presented by the COO or Director of ISS to the management team. Again, this would increase visibility and an understanding at SMT of the work of ISS on key matters, such as Cyber Protection, Digital Transformation and service performance. Finally, the PRG is of the view that on-boarding of University academic and teaching staff - with respect to ensuring understanding of the full range of systems they will be expected to engage with – needs to be improved. Once again, the partnerships arrangements and relationships related to this need to be clarified to maximise efficacy, which may differ across the different audiences.

5.3.3 Culture

The PRG found that individual teams within ISS had a strong and positive esprit de corps and it was frequently commented upon that the physical environment and spatial layout of the office environment, for example, actively promoted a warm and supportive work environment in the pre-Covid period. It is evident that several teams rightfully take pride in their very strong customer service ethos and this was very positively remarked upon by all stakeholder groups. The PRG wishes strongly to commend all staff within ISS for the development of an exceptional customer orientation, which was valued by the entire University communication, particular commendations were noted in the feedback for Students for the work of ISS staff.

Overall staffing levels and concomitant 'stretching' of current staff was frequently commented upon, some also highlighted concerns around short-term contracts persisting and creating an uncertainty that didn't support retention of key staff. There was a general sense that staff were very (and, at times, excessively) busy and that this situation was not sufficiently understood within the wider university. In addition, difficulties in terms of both recruitment and retention at several levels/grades was consistently highlighted. Staffing will always be challenging for IT units, but when the entire enterprise has such as dependency on these units, and cybersecurity is so critical, it becomes an institutional operational risk. The availability and retention of appropriately skilled IT staff to manage this risk perhaps needs to be reflected in the institutional risk register. A benchmarking exercise would help to establish if the levels of staffing within ISS need to be readjusted post incorporation and post COVID.

The PRG is of the view that staff in ISS are currently operating in a very constrained environment in terms of human resource. It seems likely that workload issues are at least partially and potentially significantly responsible for the variable reaction to the cross-functional groups (in which there was some concern expressed about the possibility of their impact upon core work) as well as the 'lived experience' of the recent restructure. The PRG is of the view that the impact of these constraints should be the subject of sustained attention on the part of both DCU and ISS management.

Associated with the low level of resourcing the PRG noted difficulties in implementing succession plans, in developing stronger layers of responsibility and management capacity below the direct senior management

level within the department, and in fostering a strong outward-looking focus on wider sectoral and technological developments. In conjunction with the recommendation mentioned above which deals with remediating the resourcing issue, the PRG is of the view that the staffing levels overall are low, especially post-incorporation and recommends that the University undertakes some comparative benchmarking work to ensure that these levels are right for DCU in the context of the increasing importance of digital in institutional planning, delivery and risk mitigation.

5.4 Ongoing Quality Enhancement

5.4.1   Shadow IT:

Shadow IT has been identified as a risk to quality and IT Security, colloquially this was stated as "If ISS leave a void someone else will fill it". This finding circles back to previous recommendations on what is needed to deliver on a digital strategy and the recommendation of annual planning and a more formal relationship to individual units throughout DCU. Feedback from one of the groups noted while some initial systems development work may be supported by ISS, longer-term development and support of solutions is sometimes outsourced. Again this may speak to the need for more formal relationships and clear expectations setting with external units, having them engage with ISS on their project needs and support at an earlier stage rather than having ISS react to project requirements which they may not be able to immediately support.

5.4.2   Audit Findings Implementation and tracking (quality, security, financial, Cyber)

During the review, the PRG found that ISS undertook a wide variety of audits, and there was a lack of clarity among some staff on how the audit findings were being used to drive improvement in quality, service delivery and risk mitigation. Staff feedback indicated that the variety of audits completed were time consuming and often budget approval is required to action the findings. Rolling audits of the ISS function, which are planned up to 3 years in advance, are used to manage the risks and provide mitigations within ISS. These audit recommendations are brought through IS Governance, with funding cases developed in response to audit findings, where required. In discussions with staff, the PRG found that some staff reported being unaware of the initiatives implemented in response to audit findings. In order to ensure that the value of the audit process is fully understood and valued by staff, the PRG recommends that an enhanced and ongoing process for providing feedback to ISS staff on the outcomes of the audit process, and actions taken to address audit findings.

5.4.3   Links between Quality, Support and Funding

From feedback, there appears to be little visibility on budgetary spend on the University wide digital / IT commitments that are of direct relevance to ISS. For example, there is currently no visibility of the University wide desktop infrastructure envelope, requirements or procurements plans.

A University wide oversight of the expenditure, coupled with a direct rolling 5-year capital budget and plan, with ISS Director input, would aide efficient management of these resources. Major capital and IT projects (such as the new Library system) should be seen by the new IS Governance Committee and their approval should be part of the existing approval processes, to ensure these investments align with security, infrastructure and other transformation plans. ISS advice can inform existing systems of internal control and can assist in mitigating significant risks.

Additionally, these purchases directly affect the operations of ISS, as all consumables at Departmental or Faculty level will ultimately most likely fall to ISS to support these assets. The last year has shown the need for coordination and alignment of priorities to manage and maximise the learnings from the pandemic. There is senior management acknowledgment of the need for more formalised planning and communications. Remote delivery will continue to be a core element of the DCU Futures project. Duplication of spend and the security of the network, the existence of shadow IT systems and spend, signals the need for stronger checks and balances, especially around procurement, to ensure the resilience of the system. The proposed enhancement of governance will support the need for the transparent visibility of purchases and reflect the broader risks in addition to the recognised financial and reputational issues re cyber security.

The PRG found that on one level the activities related to quality enhancement come over very well. The current feedback on the ticketing system was repeatedly receiving a five-star rating and although this metric cannot be measured during the pandemic, it is assumed the same level of rating would be recorded. There is a suggestion that the activities are predominately dealing with immediate operational issues rather than taking a step back to consider a tactical or strategic view of this service provision. It would be good to explore this and where opportunities for the higher-level discussions are currently being taken. The ESM platform is a clear opportunity to enhance operation quality and user centric service. Overall quality enhancement needs to get above the operational level and ensure a strategic institution wide perspective.

The newly formed cross functional groups were established to improve the quality of how ISS operate in key areas such as project management, service delivery, innovation and security to improve collaboration across the department and reduce the risk of siloes. Previous recommendations in this report touched on how these groups may require further "bedding in" once back on campus.

5.5 External Perspectives

Following the visit of the PRG, it was evident that the ISS staff were held in high regard across the university and had an incredibly positive reputation amongst academic and professional support staff as well as students, especially during the transition to remote learning/working. Many individuals noted the strong work ethic of the staff in the department and how they were always willing to help no matter what the problem was. The students all praised the hard work of the staff in the department and commented on the successful relationship between ISS and the Students' Union. Students also commended ISS for their attention to the varying accessibility needs of all students and how this has assisted them in their education while in DCU.

5.5.1 Interactions with Staff (Academic Professional Services) and Students

The findings of the PRG were that there was a need for ISS to engage in more creative and meaningful ways of gathering feedback from all stakeholders. ISS noted themselves that their current ticketing system limited them in what metrics and feedback they could receive on their service. While the department with stakeholder groups conducted focus groups, most feedback was received on an anecdotal and ad hoc basis. By capturing the feedback on their stakeholders in new and on a more regular basis will give ISS a better idea of the needs of the stakeholders and the opportunity to improve the delivery of their service. The new ESM platform that ISS has planned to put in place will also help achieve feedback that is more effective. It is also important that any changes made to improve the service delivery based on the feedback of stakeholders are communicated back to the relevant stakeholder group to ensure that the feedback loop is closed and maintain stakeholder satisfaction. Regular upward and peer-to-peer reporting of performance is a critical element of this work.

Throughout the visit of the PRG, it was seen that there was a slight confusion around what services that ISS delivers and how staff and students can avail of them. This was particularly of concern for new staff and new students.

New students knew that they received information on the services of ISS in their orientation, but they felt that as so much information was given to them during this week, it was easy for them to forget certain details that may be more useful to them as they progress through their academic career. Moreover, the students mentioned that there was a desire for a more streamlined communication channel with the university through the DCU VLE, Loop.

Many students have had to interact with ISS in a way that they would not have had before, this has positively increased the awareness of ISS and what they do. In relation to students with disabilities, the review found that the ISS website was very clear in terms of Universal Design and easily navigated.

As for the new staff, it was mentioned how they feel as though they find out about the services that ISS have as they are faced with IT-related problems. ISS must reimagine how they plan to communicate clearly what services they provide to both staff and students going forward. By effectively communicating what work ISS does, this will help to manage expectations of the department from the stakeholders. Perhaps engaging with

HR to use the staff induction process and considering using the Core HR portal for new starts, could be an opportunity to provide new staff with material, training and information, as part of their onboarding within the University. Furthermore, this will ensure a continued meaningful engagement between the department and stakeholders.

Overall, the PRG commend ISS in relation to access and using Loop, which became critical to the student learning experience during the Covid pandemic. ISS were well prepared and kept staff informed of technical issues, and helped students with instructions to update software, e.g. Zoom updates.

6   SWOT Analysis and Plans for Improvement

6.1 SWOT Analysis for ISS

The self-assessment report for the ISS Department included a proposed summary SWOT analysis. As a result of the Peer Review Group's analysis of the self-assessment report and findings from the peer review visit, we propose the following to be a true reflection of the Areas capabilities and opportunities, and identified weakness and threats to future success.

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Capability and technical competence of existing staff - Professional customer service ethos - Strong operational focus - Strong collaborative and supportive culture - Responsive to known business needs e.g. COVID, SIS - Highly regarded staff - Broad organisational knowledge - Good understanding of business processes - Good technical agility - Willingness to support institutional initiatives (security, SIS) - Good partner relationships and strong vendor management - Support from senior management - Positive relationship with SU	- Insufficient human resources - Over reliance on key individuals and single points of dependency - Ability to attract new high calibre staff - Constant pressure on staff – capacity, bottlenecks & workload - Lack of metrics and KPIs across department - Insufficient time for staff to research and learn new technologies - Lack of a formalised ISS strategy - Internal and external communications - ISS not seen as strategic digital partner across all the institution - Viewed as operational service partner - Need to embed cross cutting groups in new structure - Lack of visibility of academic and professional service plans / projects - Fragmented future resourcing plans for ISS - Fragmented group of institutional digital stakeholders - Staff and student "on-boarding" process
Opportunities	Threats
- University strategic plan and the involvement in a digital strategy - Business transformation progress as a result of COVID - New enterprise service management platform to improve university wide operations and customer experience	- Cyber and Data Governance institutional risks - Staff retention - Competition for IT talent / Attraction - Shadow IT - Fragmented digital planning and expenditure - Requirement to deliver a 24x7x365 enterprise environment for the University

● Roll out of new 'Performance Review and Development' (PRD) process to develop staff in line with unit goals ● Organisational recognition of the need for stronger digital governance ● Ongoing development of ISS strategy ● Increasing focus on innovation ● Improve knowledge sharing ● Greater business engagement once team vacancies are filled ● Improved ISS operations and customer experience when new structures are fully realised ● Development of department level KPI's ● Improve communications ● Expand IT training offerings ● Creation of PMO and improving project management culture ● Review of IS Governance group ● Staff career and succession planning needed	● Securing the investment necessary to deliver on the University's and ISS strategies ● Missed service improvement and risk mitigation opportunities due to lack of staff ● Scale of SIS project impact on resources ● School and Professional Service plans undermined through ISS resourcing issues

6.2 Plans for Improvement Identified by the ISS Department

There is a clear statement in the self-assessment document that shows ISS management understand the under-pinning link required between the ISS strategy and DCU over-arching vision/strategy. This is reassuring as the lack of an existing Digital strategy needs to be addressed to help DCU thrive in the future and help the ISS team understand their role in this journey. Reading the self-assessment report, it is clear that a number of strategic issues are being considered and work done to make progress: standardisation, rationalisation, cyber risk to name but a few.

There is potentially insufficient focus on University level strategy and planning elements within the SAR. It might be useful to explore if there are time/capacity/experience constraints here. It is important to position and develop the ISS Management team as transformation partners for the business and for ISS to be involved in the direction and shaping of these initiatives.

The panel found a potential gap, not identified in the SAR, which relates to a recommendation that ISS develop and approve a multi annual capital and op-ex plan, which summarises the needs of the institution from a project Lifecycle perspective (Cyber, Labs, Datacentre) and also from Digital Transformation perspective (SIS, CRM, DATA). These plans should be approved and governed by IS Governance and discussed\approved with Senior Management. The upcoming future Campus development plan provides a valuable opportunity for this work.

The PRG agree that Staff retention is a recurring issue throughout the SAR and an institutional risk without a clear solution. ISS recognise they lack sufficient staff for succession planning and covering leave/illness and their larger projects (SIS and Covid) are placing additional pressure on staff. The challenge of staff retention features highly on their risk register and is recognised at senior management.

Although training is addressed in the SAR, the PRG found that these plans required stronger and more immediate attention by management and cannot solely depend on the PRD development process.

In the SAR, the ISS communications are well addressed, using different styles of communication for different situations from internal staff, students, presentations etc. However, the PRG note that their SWOT analysis identifies improved communication needs in some areas, this is expanded upon in Section 5.3.

The SAR identified that new ESM platform is a tremendous opportunity for driving change across a broad range of areas of ISS and beyond.

The PRG would agree with the majority of improvements identified by ISS in the SAR, the report has explored these findings in greater detail to make a number of further recommendations to support the ambition of ISS and how they can best support the University strategic goals.

7   Summary of Commendations and Recommendations

No	Commendation	P	Level	
**Planning and Effective Management of Resources**			
1	Commendation			ISS is a highly professional Service Unit with very operationally competent staff and excellent technical capabilities. Services are typically reliable and resilient.
**Effectiveness of Activities and Processes**			
2	Commendation			Response to Covid was outstanding and should not be under estimated in terms of its impact on DCU Staff and students. ISS rapidly responded to the demands that remote working and online learning have brought, providing a secure and stable online environment, for staff and students.
**Communication and Provision of Information**			
3	Commendation			The PRG commended the breadth of communication efforts in evidence, specifically staff presentations and other forms of engagement with the wider DCU community. There was strong recognition from across the stakeholder groups that communications from ISS to the wider institution throughout the Covid period had been consistently of good quality.
4	Commendation			The review found that operational communication to key external stakeholders in the university is well received with all external stakeholder groups commending the department's typically clear and effective communications effort.
**Ongoing Quality Enhancement**			
5	Commendation			ISS are planning to implement a new Enterprise service management platform that will provide the ability to produce detailed reporting on ISS metrics allowing them to set goals, monitor KPIs and look for continuous improvement.
**Stakeholder Relationships**			
6	Commendation			Throughout the PRG review, the team consistently received positive feedback from every stakeholder group interviewed, particularly the student group. ISS are seen as Incredibly hard working, very customer centric with a positive "Can Do" attitude.

No	Recommendation	P	Level	
**Planning and Effective Management of Resources**
1	**5.1.1** **ISS Recruitment and Staffing**	P	A	**ISS Recruitment and Staffing** Staff retention and succession is a risk for ISS and in turn DCU. Work has been carried out on benchmarking staff, but ISS need the capacity to reduce the risks of over reliance on key personnel and should consider a range of options to improve responsiveness of recruitment to key skills areas The Panel also recommends leveraging Student Support infrastructure and develop an intern ecosystem (Staffing panels). A number of Alumni already work in DCU and understand how DCU operates; this is a potential source for staff support. The panel also recommends that some benchmarking exercise with comparable institutions would be beneficial to asses if indeed ISS were correctly sized to meet its operational and project needs.
2	**5.1.2** **Digital Vision for DCU alignment with ISS Vision**	P	A	**Digital Vision** The panel recommends that the Director of ISS engage in the creation of a DCU Digital Strategy/Vision. Under the auspices of a reinvigorated and expanded IS Governance Group with a new formalised remit and reporting line. This should be a single organising Strategy to facilitate a joined up Digital Vision for DCU, with ISS and other key digital stakeholders co-creating a powerful vehicle for the University to achieve its strategic goals.
3	**5.1.3** **ISS and Digital Funding**	P	A	**Formalise an Annual/Multi Annual Planning Process**. Establish a multi-annual capital and op-ex plans for digital, as part of any campus investment plan. Oversight of these plan should be part of the reformed IS Governance group remit. Funding is directed by a newly formed ISS PMO process, annual forecasting and planning with other DCU Departments and Faculty, with the objective to move away from reactive planning and resource allocation. Also IS Governance should have oversight of all significant Digital investment across DCU, not just the ISS investment.
4	**5.1.4** **Bedding-in ISS Restructuring**	p	A	**Embed roles & responsibilities** The panel recommends that a managerial focus be placed on clarifying roles, processes, and duties as part of a return to campus. The panel feel that the recommended creation of a Digital Strategy might offer the ideal opportunity to give context to and frame the work above and provide further clarity on what exactly these structures mean to staff daily roles. **Development of ISS technical Service catalogue**.

				A technical service catalogue should be produced, which will help define the operations carried out by ISS. This will help ISS staff in terms of role and service clarity, and will also help the DCU user community with regard to service and support expectations.
			Effectiveness of Activities and Processes	
5	**5.2.1** **Digital Transformation**	P	A/U	The panel recommend that the role of ISS within Digital Transformation should be clarified and formalised. This could be done through ISS working with other key digital stakeholders in establishing a Digital Strategy for DCU. This is not to suggest that ISS should own Digital Transformation, but it should have a key partnership role. This needs to be formalised as it is currently a source of risk and uncertainty within ISS staff. Adjusting IS Governance to give it a University wide remit, including funding and PMO governance would assist in clarifying the role that ISS should play in DCU Digital transformation.
6	**5.2.2** **IS Governance**	P	A	**Reform and Rebrand IS Governance** Expand scope of IS Governance as a strategic oversight group for all Digital/ IT initiatives in DCU. Including • Oversight of all IT / Digital Expenditure, more than 25K is approved by IS Governance • All Digital Transformation agenda initiatives are within the remit of IS Governance • Data Governance matters are also within the Terms of Reference of IS Governance Consideration should be given to renaming the group to the "Digital Oversight Group" or similar, and the work of the group being in keeping with this title. A monthly report from IS Governance to University management team is also recommended.
7	**5.2.3** **Staff Engagement**	p	A	**Improved Engagement** The panel recommend more use of Town hall sessions, as well as senior ISS management ensuring that matters such as technical lightning talks could be driven across the department (and potentially the institution) to increase staff engagement. Operational daily scrums are also suggested as a potential improvement to aid communication and engagement.
	5.2.4 **Planning (PMO Process: Annual Planning Cycles and Multi-Annual investment Cycles)**	P	A	**Setup ISS PMO process** A Project Management Office (PMO) should be established to provide governance and project management for all Digital projects across DCU. This will

				help with transparency and balance of workload, and help improve cost effective delivery. The PMO should report into IS Governance and will • Establish the project pipeline • Prioritise the pipeline against University Priorities • Ensure functional areas are capable of delivering the changes needed • Ensure that there is a systems landscape that can support the needs of the business in a secure cost-effective manner.
	Communication and Provision of Information			
9	**5.3.1** **Internal** **Communications**	P	A	**Enhance internal Communications**. In addition to recommendation 7, initiatives should be planned and delivered which enable a review of the cross functional groups and the recent restructure with a focus on roles and responsibilities. The PRG also recommends improved transparent staff engagement on the ISS decision-making process and outcomes. The PRG recommend that a it would be healthy to have a forum whereby staff feel that common staff issued can be feed into the Management team meetings
10	**5.3.2** **External** **Communications**	P	A/U	**Enhanced External Communications** Thought should be given to developing a monthly Newsletter of ISS tips, Tricks, News and Features for external staff. Better use of Social Media, Twitter, Instagram and other channels should form part of a plan to communicate the full range of services provided by ISS, their value and role in the University and key messages for any digital vision. This communication could help position ISS in more of a strategic partnership role in terms of Digital transformation. In relation to the student body, the PRG also recommends that ISS consults with the owner of the University's VLE to ensure that ISS communications are appropriately positioned within that environment and also that that the University ensures that IT skills training for students is effectively offered alongside other student training modules.
11	**5.3.3** **Culture**			The panel has already commended the can do and hardworking culture within ISS. When staff return to campus, the panel recommends Investment of time and resources in staff wellbeing. Staff have received high praise; Covid has had an impact on Staff Morale and added an additional stress with the

				quick move to online teaching and remote working. Staff wellbeing requires investment and it was felt that perhaps a benchmarking effort of the size of ISS against comparable institutions would give staff confidence that this was being addressed by management.
		Ongoing Quality Enhancement		
12	**5.4.2** **Audit Findings Implementation and tracking (quality, security, financial, Cyber)**	P	A/U	**Existing Audit Recommendations** Rolling audits of the ISS function to manage the risks and mitigations are held within ISS, however, there is a lack of clarity among some staff on how audit recommendation are tracked and implemented. It is recommended that the process for progressing issued raised in audits is more fully understood by staff, and the outcomes and initiatives developed in response to ISS audits are broadly communicated and discussed within the department
		Stakeholder Relationships		
13	**5.5.1** **Interactions with Staff (Academic Professional Services)**	P	A	**Formal Engagement with Stakeholders** Engage with HR to identify the possibility of using the CORE HR system for staff inductions, by gathering material and including some short videos to assist staff with the induction process.
14	**5.5.2** **Interaction with Students**			Similarly, to avoid information overload during orientation an "Induction Zone" could be setup on Loop, so that all of the induction material and videos can be stored on the University VLE for students.

Conclusion

Through its work, the Peer Review Group found the ISS Directorate to be highly operationally competent, and typically highly regarded by staff and students of Dublin City University. It was pleasing to hear the significant praise that the ISS deserve in recognition of their excellent work in helping DCU move through the Covid pandemic in an effective way. The level of commendations in the report is testimony to a hard-working, professional group of staff with a strong customer service ethos.

The panel have some modest operational recommendations, which we are confident that the ISS team will address once back on campus. The priority findings are focused on matters of Strategy, Governance and funding, at both ISS and an institutional level. That panel felt that given the radical changes that COVID has brought to the mission and role of Information Technology within a University, that reality has brought institutional approach to Digital to the forefront. In a post COVID world, issues such as Digital education, Cyber Security and Digital Transformation, are destined to grow in strategic priority. Therefore, the panel recommendations are an attempt to help ensure that the enablers for success are put in place now. This will greatly assist ISS is fulfilling its part as a key enabler in achieving those ambitions.

The PRG would like to thank all staff at DCU and particularly in ISS for their openness and willingness to participate in this review. It has been panel's privilege to perform this review and meet so many people who are passionate about this University. We hope that these findings will support the future success and development of a very hardworking, well regarding and capable part of the DCU organisation.

Appendices

DCU ISS Quality Review Timetable 27th April – 30th April 2021

Time	Meeting	Attendees
Day 1- Tuesday 27th April 2021		
1400-1415	Briefing with the Quality Promotion Office on process	1. Aisling McKenna, QPO Director 2. Celine Heffernan, Quality Officer 3. Fiona Dwyer, QPO Coordinator
1415-1545		Private Meeting
1545-1600	Break	
1600-1700	Quality Review committee Members Meeting	1. Peter McGorman, Director ISS 2. Justin Doyle, Deputy Director ISS 3. Ian Bell, Operations and Applications Manager 4. Theresa Collins, Chief Technical Officer 5. Ian Spillane, Service Delivery Manager 6. Larry Aherne, Student Service Desk Supervisor 7. Paul O'Connor, Business Engagement Manager 8. Maria Lyons, Senior Business Analyst 9. Will McDermott, Senior Network Engineer
1700	Close of session	
Day 2- Wednesday 28th April 2021		
0845-0915	Private Meeting Time for PRG to plan morning meetings	Private Meeting
0915-1000	Members of ISS Management Team	1. Peter McGorman, Director ISS 2. Justin Doyle, Deputy Director ISS 3. Ian Bell, Operations and Applications Manager 4. Ian Spillane, Service Delivery Manager 5. Paul O'Connor, Business Engagement Manager
1000-1015	Break/ PRG Meeting time	
1015-1100	ISS Staff Members	1. Alan Frances Doyle, Service Delivery 2. Barbara Fitzpatrick, Engineering & Innovation 3. Darragh O Heiligh, Engineering & Innovation 4. Genevieve Quinn Browne, Operations & Applications 5. James Healy, Operations & Applications 6. Lynne Breivik, Service Delivery 7. Niall Spollen, Business Engagement 8. Robert O'Neill, Service Delivery 9. Victor Niebles, Operations & Applications 10. Wallison de Sousa Barroso, Engineering & Innovation
1100-1115	Break/ PRG Meeting time	
1115-1215	ISS Staff Members	1. Christopher Tyrrell, Operations & Applications 2. Darragh Murphy, Service Delivery

		3. Gerald Cannon, Operations & Applications
		4. Jody Collins, Business Engagement
		5. John Doyle, Engineering & Innovation
		6. Mario Andrade, Engineering & Innovation
		7. Noel Jackson, Service Delivery
		8. Una Matthews, Engineering & Innovation
		9. William Murphy, Operations & Applications
1215-1330	PRG Private Meeting time Consideration of findings	Private Meeting
1300	Close of Session	
Day 3- Thursday 29th April 2021		
0845-0915	Private Meeting Time for PRG to plan morning meetings	Private Meeting
0915-1000	Academic staff with interactions with ISS	1. Enda Donlon, School of STEM Education, Innovation & Global Studies 2. Jennifer McManis, School of Electronic Engineering 3. Alan Smeaton, The Insight Centre for Data Analytics 4. Enda McGlynn, School of Physical Sciences 5. Gary Conway, School of Computing 6. Geraldine French, School of Language, Literacy & Early Childhood Education 7. Niamh O Sullivan, School of Mathematical Sciences 8. Damien Hickey, School of Communications 9. Caroline McMullan, DCU Business School
1000-1015	Break/ PRG Meeting time	
1015-1100	Professional support staff with interactions with ISS	1. Mark Glynn, Head of the Teaching Enhancement Unit 2. Alison Byrne, Head of Internal Audit 3. Yvonne McLoughlin, Head of Careers Service SS&D 4. Annabella Stover, Deputy Director SS&D, 5. Ger McEvoy, Head of Estates 6. Phylomena McMorrow, Director of Registry 7. Gareth Yore, Deputy Director, Operations & Employee Relations HR 8. John Kilcoyne, Deputy Director of Finance 9. Goretti Daughton, Faculty Manager, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences 10. Miriam Corcoran, Associate Director, DCU Library 11. Annabella Stover, Deputy Director, Student Support and Development
1100-11.15	Break	Private Meeting

1115 - 1200	Students Meeting with Peer Review Panel	1. Lucien Waugh-Daly, Vice President for Academic Affairs 2. Chloe McMorrow, Vice President For Education And Placement 3. Ross Boyd (incoming SU sabbat) 4. Kate Goodman (incoming SU sabbat) 5. Dylan Mangan, Vice President For Engagement And Development
1200-1230	Break	
1230 – 1300	Follow meeting with ISS Director	Peter McGorman, ISS Director
1300-1330	Private Meeting	
Day 4- Friday 30th April 2021		
0845-0900	PRG Meeting time	Private Meeting
0900-1000	Meeting with DCU Senior Management Team	1. Prof. Daire Keogh (President, DCU) 2. Prof. Anne Sinnott 3. (Deputy President, DCU) 4. Prof. Lisa Looney (Vice-President Academic Affairs / Registrar) 5. Prof. Greg Hughes (Vice-President, Research & Innovation) 6. Dr. Declan Raftery (Chief Operations Officer) 7. Prof. Derek Hand (Acting Executive Dean, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences) 8. Prof Colm O'Gorman (Acting Executive Dean, DCU Business School) 9. Prof. Michelle Butler (Executive Dean, Faculty of Science & Health) 10. Prof. Brian Corcoran (Acting Executive Dean, Faculty of Engineering & Computing) 11. Prof. Anne Looney (Executive Dean, Institute of Education) 12. Mr. Ciaran McGivern (Director, Finance)
1000-1045	Meeting with DCU OCOO Director Declan Raftery	Declan Raftery, Chief Operations Officer
1045-1100	Break	
1100-1230	PRG Meeting time- finalisation of findings	Private Meeting
1230-1300	Break	
1300-1320	Exit Presentation	All ISS Staff Invited
1320-1400	PRG Private Meeting time Preparation for Peer Group Report	Private Meeting
1400	Close of Session	