Quality Assurance / Quality Improvement Programme

2010 - 2016

Peer Review Group Report

Information Systems & Services (ISS)

Members of Peer Review Group

Mr. John Murphy, Director, Information Systems Services, Trinity College Dublin (Chair)

Mr. Dominic Byrne, Head of Information Technology, Fingal County Council

Mr. Hugh Lavery, Head of Development and Process, University of Leeds

Ms. Ursula Baxter (Rapporteur), Business School, Dublin City University

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Date: 2 July 2013

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Introduction

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

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

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

Peer Review Group Report for Information Systems and Services

1. Introduction and Overview

Location

Since 2001, ISS has been located in an open plan area of 505m² in the Henry Grattan Building. The office, formerly a reading room and a series of small offices of the library, prior to its move to a purpose built building, accommodates all members of staff within the department. Office space is currently divided using partitions, and staff from specific groups tend to occupy a particular area.

Staff

Currently there are 32 FTEs in the department.
See Appendix 1 – staff details

Product / Processes

The Information Systems & Services (ISS) Department provides IT related services throughout the DCU campus and to the more closely aligned colleges such as Mater Dei and St Patrick's College, and the Innovation Campus. These services and systems are provided for all students and staff, with the exception of some areas of the college such as the Schools of Computing and Electronic Engineering which provide various IT services internally. The range of services and systems provided by ISS is typical of IT departments in other universities, however it is now also responsible for all Telephony, Audio Visual services and High Performance Computing.

2. The Self-Assessment Process

The Co-ordinating Committee

Table 1 below lists the members of the internal Information Systems quality review co-ordinating committee.

Table 1- Co-ordinating committee membership

Barbara McConalogue	Director
Ian Spillane	Co-ordination and delivery of services (CS), Chairperson
Sebastian Dooris	Systems Administration (SCO-C)
Justin Doyle	Service desk Manager (AD1-C)
James Healy	Net-services Team Leader (AD1)
Maria Lyons	Senior Business Analyst (AP3)
Paul O'Connor	ICT Security (AP2)
Avril Smyth	Business Analyst (AP2-C)

Methodology adopted during process

The ISS quality review co-ordinating committee met on a number of occasions between January 2013 and March 2013. These sessions were followed by a series of one-to-one meetings between the chair and individual committee members to facilitate the construction of each section of the Self-assessment Report. Tasks were allocated to committee members based on their areas of expertise.

In order to obtain the opinions and thoughts of ISS customers on the quality, coverage and depth of services provided by the department, two on-line anonymous surveys were undertaken for the following customer groupings;

- All DCU Staff
- All Students

The results of these surveys were provided to the Peer Review Group in the Self-Assessment Report.

During the course of the review ISS staff was kept informed on progress. Each member of the self-assessment Committee were assigned responsibility for keeping the members of their staff and stakeholder groups informed of progress. Periodic update bulletins were also distributed to all staff within the department.

In order to ensure that a broad and representative range of views were included from the internal ISS perspective a number of initiatives took place. A series of facilitated staff workshops were held off site to engage the staff in discussion and document their views of the challenges facing ISS, elements of the strategic planning process and outcomes, and a staff perspective on a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges (SWOC) analysis. Supported by an external facilitator this process provided a robust SWOC analysis for the department.

3. The Peer Review Group Process

The Peer Review Group

Mr. John Murphy, Director, Information Systems Services, Trinity College Dublin (Chair)
Mr. Dominic Byrne, Head of Information Technology, Fingal County Council
Mr. Hugh Lavery, Head of Development & Process, University of Leeds
Ms. Ursula Baxter (Rapporteur), Business School, Dublin City University
Dr. Mark Roantree, School of Computing, Dublin City University

Site Visit Programme

Information Systems and Services (ISS)
1 - 3 May 2013

Day	Time	Peer Review Group (PRG) Activity/Meeting	Venue	Meeting No.
Day 1 Wed	12.30-14.00	Lunch with Director of Quality Promotion and external PRG members	1838 DCU	Arranged by QPO
	14.00-15.00	Briefing by Director of Quality Promotion; Guidelines provided to assist PRG during the visit and in developing the report.	CG35	Arranged by QPO
	15.00-15.45	PRG selects Chair. Discussion of main areas of interest and/or concern arising from the Self Assessment Report (SAR).	CG35	Arranged by QPO
	15.45-16.00	*Coffee*	CG35	Arranged by QPO
	16.00-17.15	Consideration of SAR with Area Head & members of quality review committee. Short presentation by Area followed by discussion of SAR. (Director of Quality Promotion in attendance) Confirmed ISS Attendees: Barbara McConalogue, Ian Spillane, Justin Doyle, Paul O'Connor, James Healy, Maria Lyons and Seb Dooris	CG35	Arranged by QPO
	17:15-17.55	PRG Private meeting	CG35	
	18.00-19.00	Informal Reception – PRG, Members of Quality Review Committee, Director of Quality Promotion Confirmed ISS Attendees: Barbara McConalogue, Ian Spillane, Justin Doyle, Paul O'Connor, James Healy, Seb Dooris	1838 DCU	Arranged by QPO
	19.00-20.30	PRG Private dinner	1838 DCU	Arranged by QPO

Day 2 Thurs	08.45– 09.00	PRG Private meeting	CG35	
	09.00-09.25	Area Head	CG35	1
	09.30-09.55	Area Management Team or other Area staff	CG35	2
	10.00-10.25	Area staff in functional or other groupings, or individually	CG35	3A
	10.30-11.00	*Coffee*	CG35	
	11.00-11.25	Area staff in functional or other groupings, or individually	CG35	3B
	11.30-11.55	Area staff in functional or other groupings, or individually	CG35	3C
	11.55 –12.15	*Break*		
	12.15-12.40	Heads / Senior staff in Support/Service Offices working with Area	CG35	4
	12.45-13.10	Administrative Staff representatives from Schools, Faculties or Research Centres and / or administrative / technical staff representatives from varying levels within Faculty / Central administration	CG35	5
	13.15-14:15	*Lunch*	CG35	
	14.15-14.40	Tour of Facilities	CG35	
	14.45–15.25	Representatives from varying levels of academic staff familiar with Area, including Programme Chairs.	CG35	6
	15.30-16.25	Representatives of students from various academic programmes. Mix of gender, undergrad, postgrad, access, traditional and others	CG35	7
	16:30-16:50	*Coffee*	CG35	
	16.50-17.15	Open forum for any member of Area staff	CG35	
	17.15-17.55	Meetings with external stakeholders (alumni, employers, suppliers, staff of Colleges of DCU, members of Governing Authority, staff of Campus Companies depending on relevance to area…)	CG35	8
	18.00-18.05	Area Head (update and clarifications if required)	CG35	9
	18.05-18.15	PRG private meeting time	CG35	
	19.30	PRG private dinner	Crowne Plaza	
Day 3 Friday	08.45– 09.00	PRG Private meeting	CG35	
	09.00-09.55	DCU Senior Management Group (SMG) (Director of Quality Promotion in attendance)	AG01	10
	10.00–10.25	Area Reporting Head	AG01	11
	10.30-11.00	*Coffee*	CG35	
	11.00-13.00	PRG private meeting time	CG35	
	13.00-14:00	*Working Lunch* Clarification of outstanding issues for PRG if required	CG35	
	14.00-15.40	PRG Prepare Exit Presentation	CG35	
	15.45-16.15	Exit Presentation – by PRG to Area Head and all members of Area staff (Director of Quality Promotion in attendance)	CG86	12

Methodology

The structure of the Self- Assessment Review (SAR) is good. It covers all of the areas required by the Peer Review Group (PRG) and the appendices contain the necessary levels of detail. The SAR was received in good time before the review visit meetings. The time table for the process is adequate but does need to be tightly managed to ensure full stakeholder engagement; the process of interviewing all stakeholders, while arduous and condensed into a short period of time, is more than likely the best means of concluding this process in the time allocated. The report layout and structure is also fine, however, where documents are referenced in the SAR they should be included in the SAR appendices. One example of this is the IT Strategy. If the document had been available in advance of the meeting then there could have been further exploration around future strategic direction of ISS. The document was provided to the review group during the visit.

Schedule of Activity

The Peer Review Group (PRG) initially met the Director of Quality Promotion who outlined the conduct and timetable of the visit, and provided a general overview of aims and goals. Then PRG then conducted a private meeting where John Murphy (TCD) was appointed as Chair. A number of issues and aspects of the report where identified and an overall plan was devised and each PRG member was given a specific aspect or theme to address during interviews. All PRG members attended all of the meetings and at each meeting each PRG member asked a number of questions. All groups responded enthusiastically and provided useful feedback. A number of additional documents requested by the PRG were supplied by ISS and the University.

View of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

It is the view of the Peer Review Group that the SAR provided an outline of the process, planning and organisation of ISS with a large number of appendices allowing the panel to drill down for further details. The SAR methodology was clearly described, as were discussion of the recommendations and actions from the previous Quality Review. Management structures and decision making processes are covered, together with hardware facilities and a service catalogue. The report also provided details of the survey of staff and students. There were no obvious omissions from any of the sections. As mentioned previously significant documents such as the IT Strategy that are referenced in the SAR (even if they are in draft format) should be included in the appendices so the panel can have more time to consider.

Strengths - There is a clear statement of key responsibilities, description of management structure and considerable detail on both staffing and resource facilities. The key objectives of the group, together with the ten core principles demonstrate that the unit has the right focus and is driven by the need for quality in the provision of their services (their survey showed 90% of respondents were satisfied with their services). Finally, the willingness to bring external auditors in to provide a detailed risk analysis for the unit is also a demonstration that the unit are keen to maintain the quality standard set for the unit. This is to be commended.

Weaknesses - In the SAR, the main weakness identified for the unit is one of resourcing. Staffing levels have decreased while numbers of users has increased. Many of the important IT hardware components are very old (highlighted by the 2012 Risk Analysis by Mazars), and there is a general issue with various facilities across the campus (mainly due to age). Lack of staff development and staff opportunities was also highlighted as a major issue.

Previous Quality Review - The previous review, carried out in 2005, made 14 recommendations under a number of headings: organisation and staffing (5), central role of ICT in university's strategic development (3), replacement cycles and investment (2), IT support for teaching and learning (3), interaction with other IT providers in the university (1). Of these, 6 were fully addressed, 2 were partially addressed, and the remaining six while addressed after the review, have become an issue again (mainly due to resources).

4. Findings of the Peer Review Group

Background, Overview, Strategy, Context

The Information Systems & Services (ISS) department provides IT related services throughout the DCU campus and will be key to the provision of support to closely aligned colleges such as Mater Dei and St Patrick's College, and the Innovation Campus. The range of services and systems provided by ISS is typical of IT departments in other universities but in the case of DCU, ISS is also responsible for all telephony, some audio visual services and High Performance Computing. These last three functions may or may not sit with ISS in other peer institutions.

The strategy for the quality review was to begin with an extensive process of consultation and information gathering. A number of workshops were held, and three independent surveys were carried out for (1) all Students; (2) all DCU Staff, and (3) all ISS Staff.

Overall, there was a high level of satisfaction with ISS, its staff and the services provided by the department with recognition of the aging IT infrastructure and severe strain on resources. However, despite the generally positive responses to the surveys, there is inherent scope for improvement in some areas in order to achieve operational excellence. The SAR produced by ISS highlighted a number of problems with day to day operations. A key issue for stakeholders and ISS is the ability to meet the increasing demands for IT services/support in an environment of scarce resources and current funding issues. This is mitigated somewhat by the commitment to an IT Transformation project currently in the early stages of a tender process.

The context for this review takes place in a time of cutbacks in terms of staffing and budget allocation over the last five years, while during the same time period the demand for ISS's service and systems has increased substantially. However, there is also a great opportunity for DCU to rethink how the university delivers IT services and capability and therefore the review is timely. There is a requirement to realise the vision of DCU as a 'digital campus' with the capacity to 'Transform Lives' and create a University of Enterprise that continues its reputation for being at the cutting edge in terms of agility, adaptability and service. The senior management at the university are fully aware and very supportive of the challenges that lie ahead for ISS and their commitment is highlighted by their commitment to fund IT initiatives. Their understanding of the situation and unified support of the ISS team is to be commended.

Organisation and Management

The ISS Department serves the computing, telephony, audio visual and information systems needs of Dublin City University. It delivers a core set of services to all areas of the University including research centres, campus companies and linked colleges – St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, All Hallows College and Mater Dei Institute of Education; the DCU Ryan Academy of Entrepreneurship, Citywest, and DCU in the Community, Ballymun. ISS is one of a number of central services units that reports into the Chief Operations Officer (COO) of the University. The department works with individual Faculties, Schools and Units in planning, delivering and supporting appropriate ICT facilities and services.

The department has three sub-divisions:

- Business Systems & Applications – provides business solutions for the University including the provision of web based resources for the University.
- Technical Infrastructure – plans, manages and operates core ICT Infrastructure Services for DCU and its linked colleges, includes Networks & Telephony.
- Service Desk – delivers first and second level support to users of ICT facilities (including Audio Visual) to the staff and students of DCU and to DCU's linked colleges.

ICT policies and guidelines are developed by the ICT Security implementation group, chaired by ISS, and submitted for approval to DCU's Executive Committee. All policies and guidelines available from the ISS website have either been developed or significantly revised over the last five years.

The structure of the ISS Department is focussed on delivering the transactional ICT needs of the university which it does very effectively. However, the current structure does not facilitate the strategic delivery of ICT. It is hierarchical in nature and the three management teams are somewhat siloed. While the current structure has been adequate to meet demands in the past, it is not optimised to meet the needs of the university in the future as it moves towards the digital campus and blended learning; and new technologies are adopted. ISS management recognise these challenges and initiatives to address them are underway.

ISS has a project delivery section which is small relative to the size of the university. The section has commenced implementation of formal project management methodologies which is to be commended. To date there has been minimal involvement of ISS at the planning stage in projects with IT implications which have been initiated by faculties, schools and offices. The involvement of ISS in all ICT related projects from the beginning was recommended in the 2005 review of ISS. The reported status of this recommendation is that ISS did sit on a number of Strategy Groups. However, this has evidently not been sufficient. ISS have also been unable to deliver on all project requests, mainly due to limited resources and have no formal means of strategically prioritising projects. This has resulted in some projects being paused and others not commencing.

The lack of a formal IT governance process including IT investment, portfolio and project management and project prioritisation is a key issue. The requirement for a governance body was identified in the 2011 review of the Secretary's Office. The PRG are pleased to hear that membership of the governance body has been identified, terms of reference have been drawn up and the first meeting has been scheduled.

There does not appear to be a culture in DCU of carrying out business process analysis - particularly prior to IT system implementation. This is a key component that should take place before IT systems are procured and implemented.

Staffing and Accommodation

ISS currently has 32 FTEs, down from 38 in 2008. At that time the agreed complement should have been 42. During this period the number of students in DCU has increased and the volume of tickets dealt with (requests for IT help) has increased from 21,000 in 2008 to over 30,000 in 2012, an increase of nearly 50%. In 2008, following the retirement of the previous Director, a new Director was appointed from within. The economic situation and the Employment Control Framework have resulted in vacant posts not being filled and these posts will it is likely that these posts may not be filled in the future. This has put strain on staff dealing with the increased workload and a need to use existing resources in the most efficient way possible. During term time (6) PhD students are employed as Student Advisors to staff the student help desk.

ISS staff are continuing to up skill themselves with further study, but feel that promotional opportunities are not becoming available to them. Several staff have moved to new roles within the unit but are still on their original contracts after several years, while others have been at the same grade for quite a number of years. There was an overall feeling that mentoring for career development is missing in the department. Several staff mentioned the absence of cross function groupings in the unit, leading to some staff effectively working in silos. The need for more communication across the teams is recognised by ISS management and there are plans to address the issue.

Currently there are three senior managers reporting to the Director and dealing with the challenges and opportunities which ISS faces will require these managers to work very pro-actively with the Director.

The office accommodation which the PRG visited seems adequate for use, being bright and spacious enough for current needs, having had some work done on it in recent years. There are some issues with cold in the winter due to lack of insulation and being too hot in the summer, due to some on-going issues with the air-conditioning system. This latter was raised in the previous quality review in 2005 but does not appear to have been resolved. There are two meetings rooms and separate offices for the senior managers. The staff helpdesk is located in this area and ISS also operate a student helpdesk in the Library

Management of Financial and other Resources

Approximately 126% of the non-pay budget allocation each year is committed to annual contractual type commitments such as Software Licensing Renewal, Licence Charges, HEAnet charges (network and Internet charges), Hardware Maintenance, Applications Systems Support, etc. The shortfall in the non-pay budget allocation is covered from income secured by the department principally from student printing, hosting and the provision of services to the linked colleges. This lack of funding and the dependency on unknown external income is an area of major concern.

Notable exceptions that do not come out of the ISS budget include: Hardware and Software purchased by the Faculty of Engineering and Computing, Desktop equipment for use in computing laboratories and for use by Staff, Specialist Equipment within Schools, Special

Needs Equipment, Annual Licence/Support for the Finance and HR systems and Research requirements. Renewal of equipment is dependent of the budgets and priority of the user departments/units and ISS have no control over the replacement of obsolete computer equipment in these areas. They have brought in a self -service procurement policy for PC and laptop purchase. PCs come in with the DCU build already loaded, saving ISS and the end users valuable time. It is a concern however, that economies of scale are not being delivered with a decentralised approach to IT Procurement. There is also a concern on increased support costs and duplication of facilities, services and effort.

Functions, Activities and Processes

This section of the SAR covered the areas of the ISS Service Catalogue, student facilities, staff facilities, data-centre requirements, and external services. There does not appear to have been a review of the ISS Service Catalogue in recent times. The ISS Help Desk Service is highly regarded, but customers commented that it may provide a more holistic customer experience if the university had one Help Desk for reporting problems, rather than the customer having to decide if it as Estates issue, an ISS issue, or a Faculty or Service issue. Students and staff were consistent in their praise for the support ISS delivered, however, feedback from students and staff highlighted areas of disquiet in some student facilities, specifically in the area of printing, university desktop PCs reliability, Wi-Fi availability, reliability and coverage, and classroom/lecture room IT/AV technology (inconsistency of delivery and reliability). We were pleased to note the university's plans to address these issues through its Digital Campus initiative and funding will be allocated.

There were concerns raised by the PRG when reviewing the data-centre requirements section of the SAR, specifically on the age profile of critical infrastructure such as servers and network equipment, but the major investment agreed as part of the Digital Campus will address some of these concerns. There does not appear to be a robust disaster recovery / business continuity plan, or indeed the role of ISS in any emergency response plan is not clear. ISS has made progress in the area of disaster recovery provision, providing near real-time back-ups off-site, but some more work needs to be progressed to agree a full Disaster Recovery/Business Continuity Plan. This will be undertaken as part of the Digital Campus investment programme. It is important that ISS is fully engaged with the development and testing of any disaster recovery / business continuity plan implemented by the university.

ISS is actively working to source services in a new way, such as the migration of Staff email to Google and the future hosting of Moodle off-site. The absence of a complete university sourcing strategy to ensure compliance, reduce complexity and deliver value for money is a weakness.

User/Customer/Supplier Perspective

Across all three stakeholder groups, there was a common thread that the ISS department is scoring well in terms of customer service. There was strong agreement across all groups that the department is recognised as being helpful, hardworking and knowledgeable. It was strongly felt by all groups that there is a significant resourcing problem which at times, prevents day-to-day operations and support being delivered in a timely manner. Thus, when a new large-scale project is undertaken (the new website was identified), it has a considerable effect on resources and service response times. This was remarked upon by

all groups. Several attendees at PRG meetings also commented that it is not always apparent who should be contacted for IT / IS support in the first instance. This results in a fragmented approach with no single point of ownership for some issues and has the potential to create additional IT / IS 'silos' in the university.

Aside from these common remarks, there were a number of separate issues/comments at individual group level that are listed below

Management Level Services (Group 4)
At this level (decision makers), it emerged that some units require (or prefer) a certain level of autonomy (e.g. Finance) where they operate their own procurement and maintenance policy. This has perceived benefits in that some units contain the necessary expertise to make the best procurement decisions for their areas. A potential downside is that independent IT assets can emerge outside the scope of the resources of ISS. Another example is where certain units obtained finance and made their own procurement decisions. There is the danger that ISS can be left to "pick up the pieces" in terms of on-going maintenance and support. Careful consideration needs to be given on whether or not this type of approach delivers value for money, optimises scarce resources and meets the new requirements of the university as part of the Digital Campus initiative.
(Refer to recommendations 1, 4 and 8).

Unit Leaders (Group 5)
This group's feedback was very interesting in that they appeared to be most affected by decisions, representing their respective end user groups. The issue with levels of autonomy again provided interesting feedback, and served to highlight the different user groups that represent the ISS customer base. On one hand, one unit reported that their levels of productivity dropped as a result of the introduction of a new technology (Active Directory) where they were unable to manage their own needs. The introduction of Active Directory highlighted the fact that key stakeholders were not adequately consulted on such a significant decision. Thus, when it was deployed and problems were encountered, this created a negative effect among end users.
The group also expressed a need for support in terms of system procurement. Importantly, this also highlighted the lack of overall IT strategy, especially in terms of procurement where there are now multiple systems serving the same (or similar) departments that have difficulty (or cannot) communicate with each other.
The Digital Campus initiative was seen and welcomed as an opportunity to re-engineer business processes to understand current goals and interactions between units. **(Refer to recommendations 7, 8 and 10).**

Heads and Representatives from Schools/Faculties (Group 6)
The discussion with this group focused at an infrastructural level currently outside the scope of ISS. A vision of the Digital campus was expressed by different contributors where it was clear that current resources cannot meet this challenge. There was strong support from the academic community for a more strategic role for ISS in decision making. This group's vision repeatedly mentioned the use of technology (e.g. iPads) that is outside the control framework imposed on the university. This may provide another hidden obstacle in the delivery of the Digital Campus. Final comments made alluded to the lack of governance around acquisition of software such as Course-Builder and infrastructure breakdown (wireless connectivity) failing during lectures and exams.

Student Body (Group 7)
Student issues were along traditional lines and not dissimilar to other 3rd level institutions. The cost and quality of printing was commented on with some students stating that they had actively sought replacement solutions for same from outside DCU (worrying as ISS relies on this income)[1]. Many felt the need for more printing resources to be made available that were reliable and less expensive. There were requests that the loan of hardware be improved. Comments (also related to the Digital Campus) related to misuse of facilities, including students using Facebook in the library. Other requests for resources such as bulletin boards and more information about Google calendar for timetables, project deadlines and exams were also highlighted.
(Refer to recommendations 8 &10)

Various Stakeholders (Group 8)
This group was primarily made up of representatives from other Colleges and DCU initiatives such as the Helix that have a clear dependency on services and IT support provided by ISS. The need for control of their own content and service provision (autonomy) was raised. The concept of partnership (and positive collaborations across the board) was highlighted. They also expressed a need for greater communication on initiatives/upgrades that may affect their users so that they could inform their users of possible outages or performance issues.
(Refer to recommendation 7)

Staff Perspective

The peer review group met with the Director, the senior management team, and all the staff in ISS at different workshops. The meetings were positive, fully attended and engaging and the staff contributed fully to the process for which they are to be commended. The Director and her team are fully aware of the challenges that face the university and the need for closer alignment of ISS with other areas of the university particularly Teaching & Learning and Research & Innovation. The Director also recognised the need for a Deputy Director and the move of the senior management team to more strategic initiatives. The Director advised the group that she is actively pursuing a succession planning strategy for ISS. The peer review group were circulated with a draft copy of the IS Strategy and it is important that this is considered as a contribution to the development of an overarching Information Strategy for the university.

(Refer to recommendations 1 & 2)

The staff while commenting on the fact they regularly receive positive feedback and thanks from the management in ISS, say that they rarely receive recognition from the other university stakeholders to whom they provide technology solutions and services to. The staff are primarily concerned with the lack of advancement and opportunity in ISS and the absence of promotion opportunities. The staff spoke positively about their "operation transformation" process which will change the mind-set and the way in ISS staff work. It is to be commended that this initiative is being driven by ISS staff themselves. Staff felt that they are regularly pulled from one area to another to focus on the "latest priority" and the lack of a prioritisation system on IT initiatives has a significant affect on service and project delivery.

(Refer to recommendation 4)

[1] The Chief Operating Officer recognises the possible income shortfall and has plans to address it.

Overall Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Concerns

Strengths

There is a strong team spirit in the group. They are confident in their own abilities and in the abilities of their colleagues. There is also a strong feeling of shared knowledge and cooperation within the unit. This confidence in their ability to deliver was shared by most/all of their customers. There is an obvious focus on customer relationship with a willingness to learn new technologies and deliver new projects. There is also a clear recognition that change is required to meet the new and increased demand for their services.
(Refer to recommendations 1 & 2)

Weaknesses

The unit is clearly under-resourced. This view was put forward strongly in the Self Assessment Report, but was also endorsed by all of the groupings who met with the PRG. Based on conversations with all of the stakeholders, the PRG is of the view that ISS is currently primarily operational in nature and effectively viewed as a cost centre for the university. The latter point combined with the resourcing issue results in little focus on the strategic side to ISS's planning process and it appears that ISS senior management are not involved as much as they could be in the decision making process for major ICT decisions within the university. This would need to be addressed as part of the Digital Campus initiative.
(Refer to Recommendation 3).

The skill sets in ISS required to meet new demands and deliver new services are not in place. There doesn't appear to be a coherent staff development process in place and succession planning is an issue which is recognised and is being addressed by the Director. The current structure of the ISS organisation is not optimised to meet the future demands of the university and there is an over dependence on the Director. The lack of a formal project prioritisation and project coordination function is a real issue.
(Refer to recommendations 4&5)

Opportunities

Blended learning and the Digital Campus are two initiatives which are part of the overall university strategy. The direct involvement of ISS in all aspects of the deployment of the Digital Campus provides an opportunity to re-engage with ISS staff and provide a wider recognition of their service to the university. Delivery of these new services should create new opportunities for staff in new roles and will help the department in its aim to become a strategic partner to the university. There is also an opportunity to look at the structure of the department with a greater focus on functions such as Teaching and Learning and Research Computing which would enable ISS to be more aligned with the core competencies of the university.
(Refer to recommendations 2 &3)

Concerns

Much of the significant budget for the Digital Campus will be consumed by the immediate need for hardware upgrade (ref. Mazars Report) and the procurement and development / replacement of software systems that are no longer fit for purpose thereby reducing the amount available to pursue truly innovative solutions.

5. Recommendations for Improvement

Indication of Priority:

P1: A recommendation that is important and requires urgent action.
P2: A recommendation that is important, but can, or perhaps must, be addressed on a more extended time scale.
P 3: A recommendation which merits serious consideration but which is not considered to be critical to the quality of the ongoing activities.

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

A: Area under review (Information Systems and Services)
U: University Senior Management

No.	Priority	Level	Recommendation
			Organisation and Management
1	P1	U	Develop and introduce a robust IT Governance Structure for the university that provides oversight and work prioritization and informs investment decisions on the ISS service portfolio. Include in the governance structure the establishment of a Programme Management Office (PMO), with clear mechanisms for tracking the realisation of potential and actual benefits. The work of the PMO should be incorporated into all project plans for major IT / IS projects including the Digital Campus. The establishment of an IT governance structure is deemed of critical importance by the PRG to ensure, among other benefits, promised return on investment is delivered by real and quantifiable cash savings. The governance structure should be in place before the commencement of the Digital Campus initiative.
2	P1	U	Develop and implement a university-wide Information Strategy which is fully aligned with the university's strategic plan and the Digital Campus initiative. As part of the process, 'commodity' IT / IS functions and services, including business analysis, should be reviewed along with identification and optimisation of IT resources across the university. The overall aim should be consolidation, where appropriate, with central management and local delivery.
3	P2	U/A	Review the current positioning of ISS in the university with a view to establishing the department as a strategic business partner. In this context, also consider creating a permanent role for the Director of ISS on the university's Executive.
			Staffing and Accommodation
4	P1	U/A	Conduct, and document, a comprehensive inventory of IS skills, using a matrix or other means, both by individual and ISS grouping. This should be undertaken by the ISS senior management team and should incorporate the IS / IT staff that are currently assigned to Schools and other areas. The analysis should identify the skills that are currently needed and that are already in place to support the existing legacy systems and services (as-is); and also the skills required to develop and support future systems and services (to-be). The analysis should also include an indication of when

			existing legacy skills will no longer be required.
5	P1	U/A	Consider introducing appropriate professional training for ISS management and staff and make plans to provide for any training needs identified. As there are a number of other staffing areas that need to be addressed including workforce planning, the reshaping of central IT, succession planning, career development, and staff mentoring, it is suggested that engagement with DCU's Human Resources department takes place in the first instance, with a view to establishing a plan for improvement of training and other HR activities. Outside facilitation / consultancy may also be helpful for this work.
			Management of Financial and other Resources
6	P1	U/A	Working with the Director of ISS, the Chief Operations Officer should review the current ISS financial requirements with a view to establishing sustainable funding to meet the operational costs of providing 'business as usual services'. It should be a priority that all capital projects, including those in the Digital Campus initiative, have lifetime costs included in any budgetary allocations.
7	P1	A	Develop and introduce an ISS departmental Communications Strategy. This should include an identification of stakeholders and communication 'touch points' into and out of ISS. The implementation of such a strategy should ensure an improved communication of ISS roles and responsibilities to staff and students.
			Functions, Activities and Processes
8	P1	A	Review the current ISS service catalogue with a view to capturing the total cost of ownership of all IS / IT activities. This should be compiled by the Director of ISS and her team. It should be reviewed annually and benchmarked against comparator HEIs as a key mechanism for identifying and eliminating duplication, feeding into the university's planning and budget process and continually improving the IT / IS provision. As part of this exercise, any sourcing decisions, particularly to outsource, should be made transparent to service users, with a seamless service provided. ISS and procurement should take full responsibility for supplier management and service level agreement compliance.
9	P1	A/U	Working with key stakeholders, develop an Enterprise Architecture approach that aligns IT Strategy with the core competencies of the university. The Enterprise Architecture should be the bridge between 'business' problems and technical solutions, and should address business process Improvement techniques underpinned by the replacement of legacy management information systems. Where possible, ISS should lead and drive the process towards simplifying and standardising IT platforms.
10	P2	A	Undertake renewed efforts to build customer relationships as part of a robust stakeholder engagement and communication plan. This should be underpinned by a continuous improvement process, with a clear system for managing change grounded in feedback obtained by means of formal stakeholder communications.

Appendix 1 - List of all core staff in Information Systems and Services

The following chart provides summary details of core staff working within the department. It does not include the Student Advisors who are appointed temporarily on the basis of a term time contract.

Areas	Name	Responsibilities
Office Management	Barbara McConalogue (Director)	Responsible for the staff and activities of ISS.
	Ian Bell (Manager - BSA)*	Responsible for the staff and activities of the BSA team.
	Fergus Donohue (Manager - TI)	Responsible for the staff and activities of the TI team.
	Justin Doyle (Manager – Service Desk)*	Responsible for the staff and the activities of the Service Desk team.
Office Admin:	None	
Area 1 – Business Systems & Applications	**Business Systems:**	
	Maria Lyons	Senior Business Analyst / Projects within ISS.
	Aengus Gordon	Business Analyst
	Avril Smyth	Business Analyst
	Edwin Durkin	Developer
Web Development	Daryl Feehely	Web Team Lead
	Iarla O'hAllmhurain	Web Developer
	Karen O'Leary	Web Developer
	Ciaran Maher (Temp. contract to web team)	Web Developer
Area 2 – Technical Infrastructure	**Systems and Operations:**	
	John Doyle*	Systems Team Lead
	David Packham	Systems Administration
	Seb Dooris*	Systems Administration
	Colin O'Leary	Systems Administration
	Barbara Fitzpatrick	Systems Administration
	Una Matthews	Systems Administration
	Desktop Development:	
	Mahon MacNamara	Deskdev Team Lead
	Paul Gaffney	Desktop Administration
	Ciaran Lyons	Desktop Administration
	Network Communications:	
	James Healy	NetComms Team Lead
	William Murphy	Networks Engineer
	Stephen O'Leary	Networks Engineer
	Theresa Collins	Telephony Support Service Lead
	Genevieve Quinn	Telephony Support Service
	ICT Security:	
	Paul O'Connor	ICT Security
Area 3 – Services Desk	Ian Spillane	Co-ordination and delivery of services
	Stephen Cahill	Co-ordination and delivery of services
	Alan Crean	Service delivery
	Daire Delmar	Service delivery
	Robert Duffy	Service delivery
	Shadi Karazi	Service delivery
	Julian McGovern	Service delivery
	Willie O'Sullivan	Service delivery

* At the time of writing staff in these roles are on contract and receiving an 'acting up' allowance but the posts are due to be regularised, i.e. staff will be put on actual grade associated with role on a permanent basis, following a process.

Appendix 2

Names and roles of those attending meetings with PRG during review visit

Meetings with Peer Review Group – ISS Quality Review Visit 1st – 3rd May 2013

Meeting No:	Name(s)	Position
1	Ms Barbara McConalogue	Director of Information Systems & Services
2	Ms Barbara McConalogue	Director of Information Systems & Services
	Mr Justin Doyle	ISS Service Desk Manager
	Mr Fergus Donohue	ISS Technical Infrastructure Manager
	Mr Ian Bell	ISS Business Systems Manager
3A	Mr Aengus Gordon	Business Analyst
	Mr Edwin Durkin	Developer
	Mr Henry Langton	Assistive Technology service delivery
	Mr Hussam Achour	Service delivery
	Mr Ian Spillane	Service Desk Co-ordination and delivery of services
	Mr Iarla O hAllmhurain	Web Developer
	Mr James Healy	Network Communications Team Lead
	Mr John Doyle	Systems Team Lead
	Ms Magdalena Grejc	Service delivery
	Ms Maria Lyons	Senior Business Analyst / ISS project coordinator.
	Mr Seb Dooris	Systems Administration
	Mr Shadi Karazi	Service delivery
	Mr Stephen O'Leary	Networks Engineer
3B	Mr Abed Alaswad	Service delivery
	Ms Barbara Fitzpatrick	Systems Administration
	Mr Ciaran Maher	Web Developer
	Mr Colin O'Leary	Systems Administration
	Mr Daryl Feehely	Web Team Lead
	Mr Dave Packham	Systems Administration
	Mr Julian McGovern	Service delivery
	Mr Mahon MacNamara	Desktop Development Team Lead
	Mr Paul Gaffney	Desktop Administration
	Mr Robert Duffy	Service delivery
	Ms Una Matthews	Systems Administration
	Mr William O'Sullivan	Service delivery
3C	Ms Avril Smyth	Business Analyst
	Mr Ciaran Lyons	Desktop Administration
	Mr Daire Dalmar	Service delivery
	Ms Genevieve Quinn	Telephony Support Service
	Ms Karen O'Leary	Web Developer
	Mr Mustafa Sajjia	Service delivery
	Mr Paul O'Connor	ICT Security
	Mr Stephen Cahill	Service Desk Co-ordination and delivery of services
	Ms Theresa Collins	Telephony Support Service Lead
	Mr William Murphy	Networks Engineer
4	Dr Claire Bohan	Director of Student Support & Development
	Dr Mark Glynn	Head of LIU
	Ms Norma Wilkinson	Human Resources
	Mr Paul Sheehan	Director of Library Services
	Mr Richard Kelly	Estates Officer
	Mr Eamonn Cuggy	Finance
	Ms Celine Jameson	Registry

5	Ms Goretti Daughton Mr Michael Burke Mr Alan Mangan Ms Miriam Corcoran Mr John Whelan Mr Peter McGorman Ms Amanda Jordan Ms Niamh McMahon Mr Jack Conlon	Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty Manager Faculty of Science & Health Facilities Manager Estates Office Library Head of Collections and Systems Services Electronic Engineering Computing Systems Administrator Human Resources Registry Finance
6	Mr Ray Walshe Dr Mary Rose Sweeney Dr Michael Parkinson Ms Marnie Holborow Dr John Loonam Dr Mark O'Brien Dr Paraic James	Ass. Dean of Education Engineering and Computing Deputy Head of Nursing Biotechnology Chair SALIS Programme Chair Business School Director of executive MBA Communications Chairperson Chemistry School Convenor
7	Gavin Cawley Aaron Clogher Tom Horan Christina Hughes Caroline Keyes Rebecca Kilkelly Killian Martin Dan Mera Ciaran O'Connor Clare O Donnell Sean Rooney	Communications Student Union President Oscail Student - BSc in Management of IT/IS MSc. in Ecommerce MSc. in Marketing MSc. In Ecommerce 2nd Yr. MINT Access Student – Business Studies Communications MSc. In Marketing 2nd Yr. BCL
8	Niall English Brian Nisbet Colm Sharkey Yvonne Hennessy Brian O'Reilly Aria Pour Emmet Jordan	Campus Residences HEAnet - Network Operations Manager Mater Dei Institute Administrator Sports Centre The Helix Building and Technical Operations St. Pats. Drumcondra – IT Services All Hallows College
9	Ms Barbara McConalogue	Director of Information Systems & Services
10	Professor Brian MacCraith Mr Jim Dowling Professor Eithne Guilfoyle Dr Declan Raftery Dr Anne Sinnott Professor John Costello Professor Barry McMullin Ms Marian Burns Mr Ciarán McGivern Mr Ciarán O'Cuinn	DCU President Deputy President Vice-President Academic Affairs (Registrar) Chief Operations Officer Dean of DCU Business School Dean of Faculty of Science & Health Dean of Faculty of Engineering & Computing Director of Human Resources Director of Finance Executive Director External and Strategic Affairs
11	Dr Declan Raftery	Chief Operations Officer
12	See Appendix 1 above	All ISS staff invited