Registry Department

Peer Review Group Report

Date: 15th December 2020

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1   Introduction and Context

The broad approach to quality assurance and enhancement DCU aims to promote and develop a culture of quality 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 Registry, following a (virtual) visit by the Peer Review Group undertaken on 17th – 20th November 2020.

1.1   Overview of the Area under Review

The Registry in DCU delivers administrative services to the University community, supports the implementation of academic policies and regulations and manages major student related activities including admissions, registration, examinations and graduation. The Registry reports to the Vice President Academic Affairs/Registrar.

Registry is a large central professional services unit with responsibility for the provision of academic administration services to the University community. The unit supports 17,354 students through the student life cycle, from time of application through to graduation. Registry enables the implementation and application of academic policies and regulations and manages major student related activities. The Registry is divided into two teams: student enrolment and student awards.

Student Enrolment Team

The student enrolment team is responsible for the administration of the following areas: Information Services, Undergraduate Admissions, Postgraduate Admissions, Programme Academic Structures, Registration, Garda Vetting and Room Bookings. The team provides customer service to current students, prospective students, staff and the wider community, by phone, email and face to face. In addition, they provide core Registry services such as provision of copies of transcripts, student ID cards, form stamping, qualification verifications and confirmation of registration letters. The team is responsible for the assessment and admission of approximately 3,500 students, across 65 undergraduate taught programmes and over 1600 postgraduate students across 300 postgraduate programmes. In addition, the team manages the University room booking service for over 200 centrally booked rooms across three campuses.   The enrolment team manages the online registration process for all DCU students, which in 2019 was over 17,000 students. The team also manages the ID verification and ID card collection event for over 5000 first year students. All members of the team play a role in the academic structure project, the team manages other student record changes e.g. change of module, deferral of academic year and withdrawal requests).

Student Awards Team

The Student Awards team is responsible for the administration of the following areas: University examination sessions, Promulgation of Results, Pre-1996 and historical transcript requests, Organisation and delivery of University Graduation ceremonies, Progression, examination and

award for postgraduate research students.   The team organises three annual examination sessions to include scheduling, preparation of materials, logistics, recruitment and scheduling of invigilators, organisation of exam accommodations for students registered with Disability and Learning Support Services and temporary accommodations for injuries.   The team also supports four sessions of Progression and Award Boards per year, providing secretarial and regulatory support to these meetings, quality assurance of amendments and promulgation of results.   The team is responsible for the progression and administration of post-entry processes for postgraduate research students and it coordinates two annual sessions of Faculty Awards Boards for research degrees.   It is also responsible for the organisation and delivery of all elements of the University conferring ceremonies.

Staffing and Structure

There are currently 39.5 permanent FTE in Registry consisting of 38 full-time posts and 3 half-time posts.   The Registry includes a Director of Registry, a Student Enrolment Manager, a Student Awards Manager and relatively new positions of a Deputy Director of Registry, and a Curriculum and Registration Manager.   The Registry Records Officer and Senior Officer for Registry Systems are part of the Student Awards Team.

Locations

Registry has two offices; the main office is located at the Glasnevin campus and a satellite office is located at the St Patrick's campus. All Registry team members are situated at the Glasnevin campus and relevant team members work at the St Patrick's campus on a rotational basis. Registration and examination activities are conducted over two campuses and an information services desk for students operates daily on both campuses.

2   Approach to Self-Assessment

2.1   Quality Review Committee

The self-assessment phase of the Quality Review was led by an internal quality review committee. The Committee was formed in September 2019 and represented a broad range of roles and areas within Registry.

Committee membership was as follows:

Staff Name	Area within Registry	Staff Name	Area within Registry
Phylomena McMorrow	Director of Registry - Chair	Paul Gaffney	Student Awards
Georgina Roberts	Student Enrolment Manager	Mary McKiernan	Student Enrolment
Gillian Barry	Student Awards Manager	Michelle Smyth	Student Enrolment/Awards
Grainne Fagan	Student Awards	Stefanie Woodhead	Student Enrolment
Lisa Buckley	Student Awards	Triona Kirwan	Student Enrolment
Niamh McMahon	Student Awards	Vikki Doyle	Student Enrolment

The Committee meetings commenced in October 2019 and meetings were arranged on a regular basis. There were 11 meetings between the 4th of October 2019 and the 13th March 2020.   The Committee worked together to map out key dates, tasks for completion and a detailed project plan was drafted. This initial planning phase was followed by a number of self-reflection actions, the outcome of which has formed the basis of some sections of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR). The process included: a review of 2012 QUIP and review of SAR structure, periodic meetings with all Registry staff to keep them informed of the stages of the process and seek feedback, a Registry Away Day, a survey of Registry staff, a survey of DCU staff and surveys of DCU students

Members of the committee were given responsibility to organise meetings and take notes on a rotational basis. An agenda was shared prior to each meeting, providing a clear focus for each meeting. The committee discussed items such as the project plan, the self-assessment report, organisation of the staff away day, survey design, survey output analysis and preparation for the quality review visit. Committee members shared responsibility for follow up actions and tasks, such as drafting sections of the SAR. The management team combined the SAR sections in to one cohesive report.

All members of Registry were kept informed during preparation for the quality review process. All Registry staff were invited to an away day to update on progress so far and review the output of the surveys carried out. These discussions informed the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges (SWOC) analysis included in the report. All documentation relating to the quality review was shared with all Registry colleagues through a shared drive. The quality review has been a

standing item on monthly team meeting agendas. The Quality Review Committee have provided regular updates on progress by email and notes from each meeting were shared with all Registry colleagues.

2.2 The Self-Assessment Report

The Peer Review Group (PRG) was impressed with the comprehensive nature of the SAR and with the self-reflective nature of the discussion and analysis. The supporting documentation provided with the SAR provided a strong evidence base from which to analyse the conclusions drawn. The additional information on the Covid-19 response was also helpful.

There was strong evidence of engagement with staff within the Registry Team and cross-area representation of stakeholders, including students, academics and professional staff from across the university. The structure of the SAR is logical and well-presented and this facilitates an understanding of the current situation of the Registry and the issues that it faces.

It is evident that the SAR is a self-reflection document, which adequately assesses the effectiveness of the Registry in relation to all its areas of activity.

3 Approach Taken By Peer Review Group

3.1 Peer Review Group Members

Membership of the Peer Review Group for the Quality Review was as follows:

Mrs. Ruth Wasson, Director of Student Administration, University of Ulster
Ms. Jill O'Mahony, Director of Admissions & Enrolment Planning, UCD Registry
Mr. Stephen R Lopez, Academic Registrar, Glasgow Caledonian University
Ms. Caroline Spencer, Head of Medical Records, Beaumont Hospital
Mr. John Kilcoyne, Deputy Director of Finance, Dublin City University
Dr Monica Ward, School of Computing, Dublin City University

3.2 Overview of Approach Taken by Peer Review Group

Background

The SAR, Appendices and related background documents about the Quality Review process were circulated electronically by email to the Peer Review Group (PRG) on 29th September 2020. The site visit was originally scheduled to take place from 22nd, 23rd & 24th April 2020, but was deferred due to COVID-19 restrictions. An alternative online model and schedule by the DCU Quality Review Office as used instead. Hard copies of the SAR and appendices were posted to the PRG in advance of the online review.

Schedule and Activities

The new model consisted of a preliminary meeting with the internal members of the panel and the QPC officer on 2nd November 2020, short pre-review meeting of the PRG on Tuesday 17th November, followed by the main schedule of activities from 18th to 20th November. To support the process, the Quality Promotion Office facilitated a note taker for some of the meetings. At the first session on 17th November, Stephen Lopez was confirmed as Chair. Although the PRG was not able to visit the campus physically, Zoom meetings were organised to allow the PRG to engage with staff and stakeholders online, albeit in shorter sessions. A small number of private sessions were pre-scheduled and the PRG found these sessions useful. In addition to the SAR and Appendices, the PRG requested additional information and are grateful to colleagues for sourcing and providing it in a timely manner.

The adjusted timetable largely followed the original site visit schedule in terms of groupings. Themes emerged from the SAR and areas for exploration were identified in advance of the meetings. Individual informal observations from the PRG were collated by the QPC team and circulated and reviewed before the sessions with the Registry staff and stakeholders. These themes were explored over the three days of the PRG (virtual) site visit.

Feedback and Learnings

Communication with the QPO was excellent throughout the evolving circumstances and during the virtual visit. It was reassuring to have the support of the QPC members present in each session to take notes and also in the 'waiting room' in the online sessions just in case support was required. Given the necessary restrictions arising from COVID-19, the PRG found the reduced meeting times, length of online activity and time to synthesize the information challenging, but reasonable given the tiring nature of continuous online session The PRG have made some additional suggestions directly to the QPO team.

4   Approach to Quality Assurance and Enhancement

4.1 Effectiveness of Quality Assurance

The last Quality Review of the Registry was in 2012. Based on the report of the PRG Quality Review report, the Registry Quality Committee developed and shared with all Registry staff the responses to the recommendations and the one year and three-year quality improvement plans.   A large number of the recommendations were deemed priority one recommendations.   Many of the recommendations have been implemented by the Registry including addressing the need for resources for Records administration to support teams; review of the professional development of staff and the impact on Registry of large scale movement of staff. Following on from the review, a new Records Officer post was created, the Registry Student Information Area underwent a major renovation, there has been a consolidation in the number of systems in use around the university. There have also been improvements in records retention, Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) standardisation, information around the student life-cycle via a mapping process and improvements to the graduation ceremonies.

4.2 Progress Since Last Review

Systems, Process and Procedures

There have been considerable changes in the Registry since the last quality review, including the Incorporation Programme (2016). Student numbers in 2012 stood at 11,882 and current 2020 registrations are at 17,354. Apart from the increase in both staff and student's numbers, there has been an increase in the complexity of the role of the Registry and there have been changes to processes and procedures. There is a new Student Information System (SIS) currently being rolled out in the university and while this has the potential to address many of the issues being faced by the Registry at the moment and into the future, it causes challenges for the Registry as it will have to support the current system in parallel with the new system. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Registry had to pivot its operations and carry out a lot of its processes digitally rather than via paper as had been the case to date. Changes that would have taken place over a longer period of time, were enacted very quickly. The Registry demonstrated agility in this regard and it is a testament to the Registry staff and their team spirit that they managed to accomplish this under difficult circumstances.

Strategic Development and Implementation

The Registry strategic plan was drafted to align with the DCU plan, the constituent strategies and faculty strategic plans. This living document and associated implementation plan provides the Registry with an opportunity to review and amend the plan. The Registry Strategy Committee meets twice a year to review progress and adjust the plan, as appropriate, in line with any changes to DCU or Registry goals and priorities. The Director of Registry met individually with each of the Deans of Faculty and their Faculty Manager to ensure the Registry priorities aligned with the relevant priorities in each of the faculties.

Staffing and Accommodation

There has been a considerable increase in staffing numbers in the Registry since the last review. The Registry Student Information Area has been upgraded to allow for more personal interaction with the callers to the office. Work was also carried out to bring more natural light into the office by removing storage offices adjacent to "The Street". However, following the increase in staff numbers post incorporation, the Registry required further workspace and storage. Registry has also refurbished a student information desk and office on the St Patrick's Campus.

4.3 Areas Remaining

There are still some areas that need to be addressed by the Registry. These include the online registration system which is very outdated and cumbersome. However, the new SIS system will go a long way to addressing many of these issues. There is a need to enhance internal communications within the Registry and external communications with staff and students.

5 Findings of the Peer Review Group

5.1 Planning and Effective Management of Resources

5.1.1 Planning

In terms of planning for the multiple university wide projects and initiatives currently being undertaken, and those that were due to start, the PRG were assured not only of the university's financial commitment to capital projects, but also the significant oversight, governance and approval frameworks and structures set up within the committee and subcommittee structures. In addition, projects were prioritised at the highest level of SMG and communicated through the normal channels. The PRG **commends** the robust governance structures in place for these projects and the oversight of timelines, deadlines and staff resources needed for each.

The PRG **recommends** that in addition to the practices in place above, that the Registry department should develop a calendar of Business as Usual (BAU) activities for each month within the academic cycle, and the staff capacity needed for each task or project, including the proposed changes to the academic calendar and the time needed for changes to the curriculum for example. This would give the Registry team a clear view of peak times where activities overlap or run in parallel and the numbers of staff needed to plan for, prepare and achieve each activity. In addition, this could then be mapped onto the timelines of specific projects such as SIS, CRM Recruit, CMS, Academic Calendar, and so on giving a clear indication of potential clashes, or competing deadlines and times when dedicated expert registry support is required for projects. This would allow for clearer advance planning and allocation of staff to areas of work as required as well as showing the feasibility of dealing with ad hoc queries or tasks that may clash with other priority work.

The PRG also **recommends** that as part of the proposed staff development budget in 5.1.3, consideration be given to include a portion for training staff in Project Management skills to assist them with this initiative and assist them with the coordination and planning required with the management of multi complex projects and activities.

The PRG **recommends** that the Registry team also engage with other institutions in the sector to take advantage of their good practice, guidance and expertise in project management.

Human Resources

The PRG welcomed the detailed information contained in the Self-Assessment Report and **commends** the Registry department on the addition of staff already recruited since the previous review. The PRG team **commends** and recognises the high level of professionalism in the work that was being done under pressure and in difficult circumstances in terms of Covid and available resources.

Observations

The university is embarking on an ambitious and complex set of projects designed to meet the strategic objective of expansion, particularly in international recruitment and the development of an enhanced provision of renowned courses, teaching and research.

Following the detailed meetings throughout the review period with both Registry and Senior DCU staff, the PRG were pleased to note that reliance on a static staff resource will not allow the institution to meet its strategic objectives. There was a general consensus that the addition of further human

resources was required for the Registry department in order to ensure that the change, challenges, expansion and projects planned for the future, could be adequately met by the team.

Given the nature and complexity of the multi-faceted projects already in train, and the necessity to involve many of the same staff for multiple projects, there had emerged within the department, single points of failure and discrete areas where only a small number of staff were based.

By their very nature, Registry teams are required to be involved in most university-wide projects and DCU is no exception. In order to maintain the single point of truth for SIS, and to satisfy the needs and aspirations of the university in terms of Data Migration, Academic Calendar, CRM Recruit, CMS and changes to curriculum and delivery, Registry needs to be involved in the early project planning stage and throughout.

Areas of single point of failure and limited staff complement would need to be addressed going forward to ensure that there was an efficient and effective means of continuing multiple Business as Usual activities in parallel as well as providing expert staff to align with the current and upcoming projects.

Opportunities to allow staff to learn other aspects of Registry functions were not possible in the current climate, and there was not sufficient time between BAU tasks to take stock, review and learn to empower the staff to improve functions in their own area.

The PRG members were keen to ensure that the institution and the Registry department, did not underestimate the size and complexity of change and the major pieces of project work that were planned for the university, and therefore the impact on human and other resources for at least the next five years.

The PRG therefore **recommends** that the current staff complement is reviewed in order to take account of the expertise needed for the multiple projects that are underway, via secondment and backfill for example. In addition, PRG **recommends** that the areas of single points of failure and low numbers of staff in certain areas, are reviewed with a view to allowing staff to learn other aspects of work outside their own specific registry function.   The current complement of staff should also be reviewed in terms of the strategic objective of expansion and increasing student numbers and to allow the teams to respond to university and external initiatives proactively rather than reactively. The PRG also **recommends** in order to prepare the department for the future, that staff are supported and developed in terms of their work skills, so that they are agile and competent enough to work in other functional areas of Registry at peak times and to ensure the smooth operation of parallel BAU activities

5.1.2 Physical Environment

Observations

The PRG noted that there were challenges associated with multi campus locations and the provision of service at each location to ensure that one particular campus or group of students is not disadvantaged. However, it was also noted that there are constraints of the physical space available and the potential to re-purpose spaces at a cost. PRG **recommends** that Registry continue their engagement with Estates in terms of the campus master plan, availability of suitable physical space, bearing in mind the possible increase in staff as articulated in 5.1.1. It was noted from the SAR and from meetings with staff, that there was concern over the air quality and bathroom facilities for

Registry staff. PRG **recommends** that Registry clarify these issues with Estates and communicate the results to all staff in the affected area.

5.1.3 Financial Resources

Observations

The university has already committed to spending substantial amounts of money on the new SIS and associated packages such as CRM Recruit and CMS in order to advance the institution's capabilities, digital enhancements and to ensure that the university is in an opportunity ready space for expansion of student numbers and to meet its strategic objectives. The commitment of the university in this regard was clearly articulated to the PRG members at multiple meetings with the Senior staff. The PRG **commends** them for this clear vision. Given that the institution has already committed financially to their vision for the future, part of this commitment should include the desire to recruit and retain professional staff. PRG **recommends** therefore, that there should also be provision of a recurrent budget sufficient for the ongoing training and development (CPD) of the Registry staff.

Change in any organisation is continuous and the PRG were informed of a further significant opportunity for the Registry department to ensure it is capable and ready to meet the needs of the university through the DCU Operating Framework. PRG **recommends** therefore, that the Registry department takes the opportunity to look again and refocus its strategies and priorities to ensure that there is excellence and equality in all aspects of provision of service to students. The department will also need to ensure that it is focused and able to support any curriculum reform and other university-wide strategic priorities. The revised, refocused strategies and priorities will also need to articulate how Registry will support the university in the achievement of its vision for the future of DCU.

Aligned to this is staff health and wellbeing. Implementation of any new systems or change management can be an extremely uncertain and stressful time for staff. Given the transformational SIS and other projects as well as the organisational strategies and proposed operational changes, PRG **recommends** that as part of the overall budget for staff development, a portion is set aside for the support of Registry managers and all staff in terms of the management of change, management of stress, health and wellbeing.

PRG further **recommends** that in order to ensure that the Registry team understands how the changes apply to them, the Registry management considers the development of a change management network within the department. Change 'champions' could work on the ground with staff and provide feedback to managers. This would be a useful means of celebrating activities or changes completed as well as a forum for staff to suggest change and support each other through the process, again linking to health and wellbeing.

5.1.4 Recruitment and Selection Processes

Observations

The PRG members recognised the difficulty in continuing Business as Usual while carrying out a recruitment exercise, although it was noted that three months was not out of step with the sector. The PRG team **commends** Registry on their ability to maintain Business as Usual, particularly at peak times, when the staff complement was in a state of flux. It was noted that the recommendation

of a review of staff in 5.1.1 may alleviate these difficulties. However, PRG also **recommends** that, where possible and within DCU HR recruitment guidelines, internal recruitment from within the 57% of Registry team members at entry-level grades would be advantageous for the department and for the staff themselves in terms of recognition, motivation and obtaining opportunities to advance their careers. The ability to employ staff who can 'hit the ground running' and who are already familiar with Registry operations and functions is a great advantage, particularly in times of change.

5.2   Effectiveness of Activities and Processes

Operational Excellence

Each year Registry admits, registers, examines, issues results for and graduate's students, while dealing with ongoing change, flexibility and new developments. It is clear from evidence presented in the SAR report and backed-up by feedback presented during review meetings, that the Registry team consistently delivers on their key deadlines and milestones. It was acknowledged that they were the 'backbone 'for many of the University's processes and could be relied upon to operate their processes effectively, in a controlled and measured manner.

System difficulties aside, many events and activities (e.g. Graduations, Strategic Plan, Risk Register, responses to student/staff queries) were described as 'polished, professional, clear and meticulously planned. The PRG team **commends** Registry for their commitment to supporting critical business activities during a time of significant change (e.g. Incorporation project) since last internal review and for establishing and maintaining substantive Standard Operating Procedures that are core to carrying out business in a consistent and accurate manner.

Registry have made effective use of project reviews and the PRG **commends** the discipline instilled in the team, to pursue excellence in operations. In addition, the engagement with the different stakeholders is evidenced in the number of different fora that Registry staff participate in. (e.g. committees, Deans and school meetings).

While it is evident that there are many different channels for supporting both students and staff, this can often lead to unnecessary hand-offs or duplication. With the universal goal of providing an excellent service to students and staff, the PRG **recommends** that consideration be given to the merits or otherwise of

(a) establishing a more formal business partner model between Registry and faculties/support services and

(b) creating a single DCU student hub to channel all queries that span the full student life cycle.

Engaging in the early stages of new academic programme developments was identified by Registry as a potential gap in satisfactorily meeting the operational requirements requested. The PRG **recommends** the inclusion of consultation with Registry, as a standard step in the programming planning and development process. This may ensure that Registry has an opportunity to engage with the stakeholders early in the design process, ahead of proposals being approved. The PRG suggests that the procedures for Programme Validation be amended to ensure that consultation with Registry forms part of this standardised procedure ahead of sign-off by an Executive Dean, and submission to Education Committee.

Technology and Processes

In keeping with many universities, processes and systems have been designed around a traditional academic year. The team acknowledges that the design of many of their processes may not be optimal with the constraints of DCU's current student record and supporting systems but there is a great air of optimism with the IT opportunities that lie ahead and the chance to redesign and configure workflows to suit the current and future needs of DCU.

Covid 2020 environment did ask some critical questions of the many manual processes and forms that underpinned many of the Registry activities/processes, but it presented the opportunity to begin the journey of digitising and streamlining such processes. Echoed by many of Registry's stakeholders, the PRG team *commends* the manner in which they stood up to this challenge and for their ability to quickly and successfully adapt and pivot many processes that were previously dependent on staff presence on campus (e.g. Application assessments and allocation, On-line exams and exam Boards, Registration and Student support, Graduations). The PRG **recommends** that Registry continue the roadmap of replacing manual processes with leaner and digitised workflows (e.g. Registration, Grade approvals/changes, Student Vetting). With the management of parallel processes and timelines in the new Academic Calendar and the provision of support to sustain future and more complex strategic plans, the effectiveness of current control points should be examined to see that all are warranted (e.g. system for validating ID's at registration) . Registry's implementation plan (2018-2022) references end-to-end reviews using lean methodology and it could be beneficial to invest in Lean or another operational excellence framework to support this work.

With the limitations of current systems, it was iterated in both the SAR and review that retrieving data to establish 'a single source of truth' was a real challenge. As DCU chooses a reporting tool in conjunction with the SIS roll-out, the PRG **recommends** that Registry identify clear reporting requirements that will serve the specific needs of Registry. This tool should enable them to validate key operational processes and to create one-off queries that can inform the analysis and decision making required to enrol and support a growing and diverse student population

Student Enrolment

This team has been key to aiding the growth in student numbers seen over the last number of years and the PRG **commends** their attention to detail over this past review period. They will be one of the first teams to benefit from the new IT roll-out, with Phase 1 of Ellucian CRM Recruit and they are committed to playing a key role in the redesign and mapping of processes such as Registration with SIS implementation. As referenced above, many changes made during COVID have given them an insight to the possibilities of establishing more flexible processes. PRG **commends** the efforts employed to create an alternative solution for 2020 registration and for being one of the first HEI's to move assessment of all Mature applicants to the on-line CAO system.

The PRG had noted some challenges with the crossover between fees and Registry processes (e.g. Fees assessment for EU/Non-EU applicants, Fee payments and registration status, Enrolment planning and different sources of funding) and **recommends** that the links between the different fees and Registry processes are examined to determine if they are serving the student and University in the most efficient way.

Student Awards

As well as widespread praise from stakeholders the PRG **commends** the precision in planning and execution of large scale events such as examinations, records maintenance and graduations. It is also recognised that consistently applying University regulations and standards can be an arduous task and the PRG **commends** *the* team for their inputs and resolve in this area. With resources specifically assigned to Postgraduate research, the level of support provided to these students is also deserving of mention. With the move to on-line exams and progression and award boards, it is foreseeable that many aspects introduced to operationalise these virtual processes in 2020 will continue. In many cases, it was advocated that they had become more streamlined and that there was opportunity to make further enhancements. The introduction of the New Academic Calendar will post particular challenges and the PRG **recommends** that an opportunity is taken to review responsibilities between Registry and Faculty and where practical identify single points of ownership and quality control, which may reduce some overlap and allow easier management of parallel processes (e.g. grade approval and PAB's, exam papers and sittings including resits).

5.3 Communication and Provision of Information

The PRG reviewed the effectiveness of the communication and provision of information by the Registry both internal to the team itself and external to the wider University community. The SAR identified the need to enhance communication and noted that this would be a priority for the management team. They recognise that communication and provision of information on Registry services is an area with opportunities for improvement and the PRG agrees with them on this.

Internal Communication within the Registry Team

There is obviously a good team spirit in the Registry and staff help out colleagues in other areas within the Registry when the need arises. The PRG *commends* the Registry in this regard and ***recommends*** that they continue to nurture this team spirit as things continue to change going forward. This may be in the form of social or informal team opportunities across teams throughout the year so that colleagues are familiar with staff on other teams, what their roles are and what are their current short-term and medium-term projects. Suggestions include an informal newsletter, a 3-monthly session hosted by different teams where they give a 5-minute overview of activities.
There is a need for team collaboration tools to help the Registry manage their processes and activities in a more concurrent rather than linear approach. This is especially important in the context of changes brought about by the change in the academic calendar.

External Communication within the Wider University
The PRG acknowledges that it can be difficult for academic staff and students to really understand the role of the Registry. Students may only know it as the unit that looks after their ID card and where they register their modules at the start of the academic year. They may not realise all the other services the Registry provides or what do they when they have a Registry issue.

The Registry information is good and relevant to students, but it can take time to find it and to understand it all. Students reported that email is their preferred method of communication with the Registry and in response to this they have improved their email communication with the use of Mail Chimp and have been supported by the DCU's internal Communications and Marketing team in relation to this. The PRG *commends* the Registry on their desire to enhance their communications, improvements in their communications to date and their engagement with the Communications and

Marketing team. It also commends the Registry for the way in which it deals sensitively with students with extenuating circumstances.

The PRG *recommends* that the Registry review their communications channels with students and staff. It may be useful to discuss the overarching topic of student-facing services with other relevant units in the university. This includes their website, particularly in relation to navigation and how staff and students find the information they require. Students reported that the pages are text heavy in nature in certain areas. The Registry may like to consider the use of infographics and quick guides for students. For example, it might be helpful for postgraduate research student to have a clear guide on the key milestones during a typical programme of study. Also, it would be helpful for students to have a 1-2-page guide showing the post-registration services that are provided by the Registry. The PRG suggests that the Registry review their phone interaction with students to ensure that they have an efficient system for dealing with telephone queries. The PRG suggests that the Registry evaluate the use of tools for channeling and managing queries relating to the Student Awards team, migrating from a central email system to perhaps mirror the technology already in use by the Student Enrolment team.

Staff, particularly academic staff, may not have a full understanding of the role of the Registry and what the different teams within the Registry do. The business partner model has been recommended above and this would help in regards to Staff-Registry communication.   The PRG **recommends** that the Registry strengthen their communication with academic staff particularly Programme Chairs (e.g. in advance of PABs).

While there may be difficulties in some instances, the Registry might like to consider the use of online forms for forms that are still manual. This would facilitate communication between students, staff and the Registry and make for a more streamlined process for all.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the variety of different funding agencies and many new programme funding initiatives (e.g. Skillnet, Springboard and Human Capital Initiative). These initiatives require input from Faculties and Registry and can sometimes be complex. The PRG suggests that the Registry set up a template for new programme funding initiatives in order to make best use of resources.

5.4   Ongoing Quality Enhancement

From the documentation and the engagement of staff across the University during the visit It is clearly evident that Dublin City University, and in particular Registry, takes ongoing quality enhancement seriously and embeds the concept into routine activities – seen by staff from senior management down as a positive process, part of the continuous drive to enhance the experience for staff and students.

From the SAR and PRG panel engagement with staff, it is obvious that Registry do embrace the mantra of ongoing quality enhancement, not just via their cyclical activity but also the manner in which it is embedded into the various projects and activities for which they are responsible, via the various processes of post project reviews, the annual review of Standard Operating Procedures allows for reflection. These are discussed at various team meetings and with other relevant areas. The panel wishes to **commend** Registry for this and the way in which quality enhancement is a major theme through Registry's Strategic & Operational Implementation Plans, although it was noted that outside of Registry, these plans were not perhaps as well-known as potentially they could be. It was recognised that the current IT systems hinder the opportunities to revamp and enhance

processes, and that the priority of transforming manual paper processes to online variants due to covid-19 had to be undertaken within a timeframe that did not allow for the optimum processes to be devised and implemented. Staff are hopeful that the new SIS project will allow for opportunities to fundamentally review processes, to both streamline and enhance the quality of data and staff/student experiences.

The PRG **commends** Registry for the work undertaken as part of their innovative approach to managing records and reviewing processes as a result of the Incorporation Project for which Registr**y** received the President's Award for Innovation in 2018 due to the innovative approach taken to managing records as part of the Incorporation project. Within the internal Registry staff survey, undertaken as part of their self-reflection, 24% of respondents stated that they had not been given an opportunity to explore opportunities around how they could improve processes. It may be that these staff have the opportunity but were not explicitly asked to contribute. The PRG therefore **recommends** that Registry considers including the expectation of staff engagement in quality enhancement within all role profiles and that, as part of an annual staff development/objective setting exercise at team and individual level, all are encouraged to proactively review and suggest improvements to processes. The institution may want to consider this as a core expectation for all.

As Registry does not operate within an enclosed bubble, it is vital that it and other associated departments and Faculty continue to work in close cooperation to review processes and activities that span areas of single responsibility and it is hoped that the recommendation above regarding a business partner model will play a major factor in the continuation of the review and enhancement of processes and working partnerships.

At an institutional level, in order to achieve success, recognition of and the investment in resources around change management both in terms of encouraging innovative thinking and supporting change will be a vital component of their major institutional projects and aims. The PRG **recommends** that the University continues to ensure that Change Management is given the necessary focus and resources to ensure success and that engagement from all staff is proactively sought to review and enhance processes for the good of the institution

5.5   External Perspectives

It is clear from the SAR that Registry is an extremely busy unit taking on average 950 telephone calls and managing 2,300 email queries per month with this number rising to 3,000 telephone calls and 6,000 emails in the peak period - September 2019. The PRG reviewed the surveys carried out by Registry and the PRG *commends* the Registry that each of the external groups surveyed reported a high satisfaction rate for interaction and information supplied by Registry and its response to Covid 19 by moving registration online. It is encouraging for Registry to know that 91% of staff are satisfied or very satisfied with the interaction with Registry across a wide range of activities, processes and teams. Following feedback from students, enhancements to key issues are now in the process of being explored/developed for access to exam paper archive, a review of opening hours of the Information Desk and the cost of replacement ID cards.

The PRG *recommends* that the Registry engage in consultation with students and staff on a regular basis to check on their information needs and the clarity of communication.

Consideration also needs to be given to the equality of access for all students to the Registry's on-campus services. In this regards, the PRG suggests that the Registry review its service provision

on all three campuses so ensure that all students have access to face-to-face consultation with Registry staff when required (post Covid 19).

Registry has professional relationships with colleagues in other Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). Colleagues work together in groups such as, the Admissions Officers Association, Examination Officers Group, CAO Operations Group, Institute of Guidance Counsellor Meetings, PAC Operations Group and Garda Vetting Liaison Group. Registry also engages with colleagues in other Universities on common areas of interest, for example, Assessment of European Qualifications working group, inter-institutional partnership agreements. The PRG notes the important role the Registry plays with their engagement in these groups and it suggest that the Registry continue to ensure that any information/decisions made by these groups are communicated clearly to the relevant stakeholders in DCU.

As has been mentioned above, the graduation ceremonies organised by the Registry showcase DCU in a very positive light from the point of view of parents and families. It is important to try to retain their unique character as DCU continues to grow.

6   SWOC Analysis and Plans for Improvement

6.1 SWOC Analysis for Registry

SWOC

The self-assessment report for the Area included a proposed summary SWOC analysis of the Area. 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 challenges to future success.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Teams knowledge, expertise and commitment Supportive environment; strong working relationships between colleagues Solution focused mind-set able to implement new regulations and procedures within technology constraints in an agile and responsive manner Team work well with multiple tight deadlines Effective use of limited resources during peak activities within constraints of available technology Supportive service provided to staff and Students	Reliance on multiple stand-alone legacy systems, that are no longer fit for purpose with limited flexibility to meet today's requirements, requiring some inefficient manual and work around solutions Current Operating Structure does not allow for parallel running of projects/activities. Lack of clarity regarding the remit of Registry particularly with students leading to queries being passed to different areas. Lack of understanding of institutional leadership role of Registry and potential for greater inter-area collaboration and working. Limited time for reflection, feedback and review between core activities Single points of failure and functional areas with small numbers of staff Communications are text heavy; website is challenging to navigate to find key information Lack of opportunities for informal team gatherings and 2 way communications

Opportunities	Challenges
Transformational Change Opportunities that the new SIS will bring in terms of	Maintaining business as usual while simultaneously supporting and engaging with the SIS & other substantial institutional Projects
Potential revised operating model across the institution relating to Registry led activities & functions	Expertise of a few individuals required for multiple projects running at the same time
Re-Engineering of business processes	Transitioning to a new Academic Calendar in 2021
Enhancements to the student experience	Sufficient time and capacity to pause, reflect, review and enhance operations and processes
Enhanced co-operative working and engagement with other areas of the University, staff and students	Impact on BAU and available resources due to institutional and sector wide initiatives that impact on complexity and volume
Increased involvement of Registry at early stages of new education developments	Competing deadlines and operations running in parallel in relation to current operating model
Staff Development opportunities for Registry staff to upskill, and ensure they are flexible, agile and opportunity ready for the future	Multiple systems, with limited support and development opportunities until implementation of new SIS.
Opportunity to review and future proof Registry functions, operating systems and processes	Ability to offer comparative student facing services across all campuses to ensure equality of service provision for all students
Revamp of communications, internally and externally across various mediums, including the website	
Review provision of Registry student support across campuses	
Continue and develop the digitalisation footprint following from the rapid changes implemented due to Covid-19	
Enhance staff engagement with continuous review via local and individual objectives	

6.2 Plans for Improvement Identified by Registry

Registry Resources and Change Management: The Registry has knowledgeable and committed staff and it will be critical to the Registry to retain expertise and supplement this as necessary to enable participation in the projects and maintain business as usual. The PRG **recommends** that the Registry pay particular attention to keeping its staff on-board with and informed of changes, using an internal communications strategy that should be developed in conjunction and in collaboration with members of the Registry team. This may include a CPD roadmap for how they are going to navigate the challenge of dealing with large complex change projects while simultaneously delivering core operations.

Registry Office Environment: There are some on-going concerns with regard to space, the air quality and the toilet facilities. The PRG **recommends** that there is on-going engagement and communication with the office of the COO on these matters.

Information Systems: The Registry welcomes the new SIS project and the improvements it will bring. The PRG **commends** the Registry on its solution-focused mind set approach taken to find a way to support new initiatives, while they continue to support the current system and the PRG **recommends** that the Registry continue to keep this solution-focused mind set as it navigates the introduction and rollout of the new system.

Communications Strategy and Registry Branding: Communication was identified as an area for improvement in the SAR. The Registry identified the need to improve both internal and external communications. The PRG **recommends** that the Registry consult more regularly with their stakeholders on a regular basis. The PRG **commends** the Registry on their desire to improve the process of developing educational initiatives by being involved in an earlier stage of the process than the current system. The PRG **recommends** that the Registry be part of the development planning process and that it works closely with Faculties on their initiatives and are part of the Programme Validation process before they are presented to the Education Committee.

Strategy and Planning: The PRG **commends** the Registry's desire to add value to strategic educational initiatives and developments and suggests that being part of the development process is the best way to achieve this.

Financial Resources: The PRG recognises the difficulties faced by the Registry in light of increasing student numbers while at the same time dealing with the elimination of discretionary spending. The Registry may consider liaising with the Finance Office and HR on how best to manage costs around CPD for staff.

Possible gaps: The curriculum management and academic structure was mentioned briefly in the SAR. The PRG **recommends** that curriculum management is an area of focus and that there should be continued cooperation between the Registry and the relevant stakeholders.

7   Summary of Commendations and Recommendations

No	Commendation/ Recommendation	P	Level	
				Planning and Effective Management of Resources
1	Commendations			Robust governance structures and project oversight Addition of staff since previous review in 2012 High level of professionalism among Registry staff The clear vision and strategic plan for the future of DCU and financial commitment to achieve this. The continued operation of Registry BAU, particularly at peak times, during exceptional operating environment, under pressure and limited resources
2	Recommendation	P1	A	*Planning* - Development of calendar of BAU activities and staff capacity
3	Recommendation	P2	A/U	Budget for Registry Staff Development to include Project Management Skills; management of change; management of stress; health and well-being.
4	Recommendation	P3	A	Registry team engage with other institutions in the sector regarding good practice in Project Management
5	Recommendation	P3	A	*Human Resources* - Review current staff complement taking account of single points of failure; discreet work areas with few staff; the strategic objectives of the institution. Staff development opportunities for Registry to upskill staff for the future.
6	Recommendation	P3	A	*Physical Environment* - Continue engagement with Estates regarding campus master plan, physical space for Registry based on staff numbers

No	Commendation/ Recommendation	P	Level	
7	Recommendation	P2	A	Registry take the opportunity to refocus strategies and priorities in terms of the provision of services to students; alignment with curriculum reform and university strategies; and support of the university to achieve its vision Consideration of the development of a change management network within Registry to include change ambassadors/champions.
8	Recommendation	P3	A	*Recruitment and Selection Processes* - Internal recruitment opportunities from within Registry, utilising current staff expertise, where possible
				Effectiveness of Activities and Processes
	Commendations			Effectively supporting critical business activities during a time of significant change Valuable use of SOP's and project reviews. Quickly and successfully pivoted many processes to online platforms to support 2020 business operations Attention to detail and professionalism to running large scale activities from Admissions through to Graduations
9	Recommendation	P1 P2	U/A U/A	Consideration be given to the merits or otherwise of (a) establishing a more formal business partner model between Registry and faculties and support services (b) creating a single DCU student hub to channel all queries that span the full student life cycle.
10	Recommendation	P1 P2	A A	Continue the roadmap of replacing manual processes with leaner and digitised workflows New Academic Calendar - take opportunity to review responsibilities between Registry and Faculty and where practical identify and implement single points of ownership and quality control so that any unnecessary overlap can be reduced
11	Recommendation	P2	U/A	Include consultation with Registry as a standard step early in the academic programme planning and development process.

No	Commendation/ Recommendation	P	Level	
				Procedures for Programme Validation be amended to ensure that consultation with Registry forms part of this standardised procedure ahead of sign-off by an Executive Dean, and submission to the Education Committee.
12	Recommendation	P2	A	In conjunction with SIS roll-out, identify clear reporting requirements that will serve the specific needs of Registry, to enable validation of operations and creation of one-off queries
13	Recommendation	P3	A	Review links between the different fees and Registry processes to determine if they are serving the student and University in the most efficient way.
**Communication and Provision of Information**			
	Commendation			Positive feedback from staff and students Aware of need to improve (e.g. recent use of Mail Chimp to improve comms with students). Deal sensitively with students with extenuating circumstances Good team spirit within the Unit
14	Recommendation	P2	A/U	Need to improve communications - Internally (suggestions: informal newsletter; 3-month session hosted by different unit, 5 min overview of activities) - External - review their communications channels with students and staff e.g. website, infographics, sessions with Chairs before PAB Leverage Comms & marketing where possible
**Ongoing Quality Enhancement**			
	Commendation			The way in which Quality Enhancement is a major theme through Registry's Strategic & Operational Implementation Plans.

No	Commendation/ Recommendation	P	Level	
				The work undertaken as part of their innovative approach to managing records and reviewing processes as a result of the Incorporation Project for which Registry received the President's Award for Innovation in 2018.
15	Recommendation	P2	A/U	Inclusion of engagement in quality enhancement within all role profiles Staff proactively encouraged to review processes as part of team and individual development/objective setting process. That the University may also wish to consider this as a core expectation for all
16	Recommendation	P2	U	The University continues to ensure that Change Management is given the necessary focus and resources to ensure success and that engagement from all staff is proactively sought to review and enhance processes for the good of the institution
	Stakeholder Relationships			
	Commendation			High satisfaction rating from students and staff
17	Recommendation	P3	A	Engage in consultation with students and staff on a regular basis

Appendices

REVIEW VISIT OUTLINE TIMETABLE

17th-20th November, 2020

Time	Peer Review Group (PRG) Activity/Meeting	Meeting No.
Day 1- Tuesday 17th November		
1400-1430	Briefing with the Quality Promotion Officer on process	QPO Team
1430-1545	Private meeting of the Peer Review group to finalise themes to, • PRG Selects a Chair • PRG discusses key themes, areas for exploration based on the SAR • PRG assigns tasks and responsibilities amongst members	
1545-1600	Break	
1600-1700	Consideration of the SAR with the **Area Head and members of the Quality Review committee** Shall commence with a short presentation by Area head, followed by discussion (Director, QPO to attend) (PRG Report Section- Overview of Area, Approach to Self-Assessment)	Phyl McMorrow, Gillian Barry, Georgina Roberts, Niamh McMahon, Stefanie Woodhead, Triona Kirwan, Paul Gaffney, Mary McKiernan, Lisa Buckley, Michelle Smyth, Gráinne Fagan
1700	Close of session	
Day 2- Wednesday 18th November		
0845-0915	Private Meeting Time for PRG to plan morning meetings	
0915-1000	Planning and Effective Management of Resources/ Ongoing Quality Enhancement **Members of Registry Management Team**	Phyl McMorrow, Gillian Barry, Georgina Roberts, Niamh McMahon, Darren Myler
1000-1015	Break/ PRG Meeting time	

1015-1100	Effectiveness of Activities and Processes/ Communication and Provision of Information 1 – Student Enrolment **Registry Team Members**	Georgina Roberts Mary McKiernan, Olivia McGinn, Noeleen Smullen Paul Gaffney, Triona Kirwan Stefanie Woodhead, Karen Butler
1000-1115	Break/ PRG Meeting time	
1115-1215	Effectiveness of Activities and Processes/ Communication and Provision of Information 2 – Student Awards **Registry Team Members**	Niamh McMahon Lisa Buckley, Paul Moore Isabelle Caulfield, Carol Grehan, Orna Heuston Marian Tucker, Cian Conroy
1215-1300	PRG Private Meeting time Consideration of findings	
Day 3- Thursday 19th November		
0845-0900	Private Meeting Time for PRG to plan morning meetings	
0900-0945	External Perspectives 1 **Academic staff with interactions with Registry**	Ken McDonagh Martin Molony Orla Feeney Anna Logan Briege Casey Anne Matthews Blanaid White Tamaz Szecsi Ciarán Dunne Joe Stokes
0945-1000	Break/ PRG Meeting time	
1000-1045	External Perspectives 2 **Professional support staff with interactions with Registry**	Claire Bohan Paul Smith Ross Munnelly Noel Prior Goretti Daughton Justin Doyle Michele Pringle Gareth Yore Anthony Feighan
1045-1115	Private PRG Meeting Time	

1115-1200	External Perspectives 3 **Meeting with Students**	Caitlin Grant Elif.tugrulz Niall Henry Edy Nastase Aoife Merrins Colette.Kirwin Lucien Waughdaly
1200-1215	Private PRG Meeting Time	
1215-1230	Follow-up Meeting with Registry Director	Phyl McMorrow
1230-1300	Meeting with **DCU Registrar** (Meeting with SMG Member with line management responsibility for Registry)	Prof Lisa Looney
1245	Close	
Day 4- Friday 20ᵗʰ November		
0845-0900	PRG Meeting time	
0900-1000	Meeting with **DCU Senior Management** Team (Senior Management Team Perspective- Broad ranging on Registry within institutional context and strategic goals)	Prof. Daire Keogh (President, DCU) Prof. Anne Sinnott (Deputy President, DCU) Prof. Lisa Looney (Vice-President Academic Affairs / Registrar) Prof. Greg Hughes (Vice-President, Research & Innovation) Dr. Declan Raftery (Chief Operations Officer) Prof. John Doyle (Executive Dean, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences) Prof Barbara Flood (Acting Executive Dean, DCU Business School) Prof. Michelle Butler (Executive Dean, Faculty of Science & Health) Prof. Brian Corcoran (Acting Executive Dean, Faculty of Engineering & Computing)

		Prof. Anne Looney (Executive Dean, Institute of Education) Mr. Ciaran McGivern (Director, Finance)
1000-1045	Follow meeting with **Registry Director** (Discussion on proposed findings to date, clarifications)	Ms Phylomena McMorrow
1045-1100	Break	
1100-1230	PRG Meeting time- finalisation of findings	
1230-1300	Break	
1300-1320	Exit Presentation	
1320	Close	