



Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy

Introduction & Purpose

The purpose of this document is to develop key principles to ensure the consistent management of our Quality Assurance (QA) and enhancement activities when designing, maintaining, renewing and reviewing QA policies and procedures across the university.

At Dublin City University (DCU), our approach to QA and enhancement is in full alignment to the provisions set out in the Universities Act (UA) 1997, the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (QQI) Act 2012, the 2015 European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) and QQI published guidelines.

By providing a fundamental set of principles, which will support key stakeholders in delivering the highest standards across our Academic, Research and Operational pillars of excellence, we are ensuring an inclusive and comprehensive approach to our QA procedures.

The objectives contained within this policy aligns to the university’s mission and objectives outlined in our strategic plan, *Talent, Discovery and Transformation (2017-22)* and will enable a consistent effort in pursuit of excellence through a distinctive approach to learning, for the benefit of our learners, as they prepare to flourish in the world outside the university. As a student centred provider, the university has a responsibility for delivering the highest standard of academic excellence for all awards conferred in its name. To this end, the university has developed an overarching comprehensive quality framework through which it conducts a variety of internal and external reviews (Fig 1).

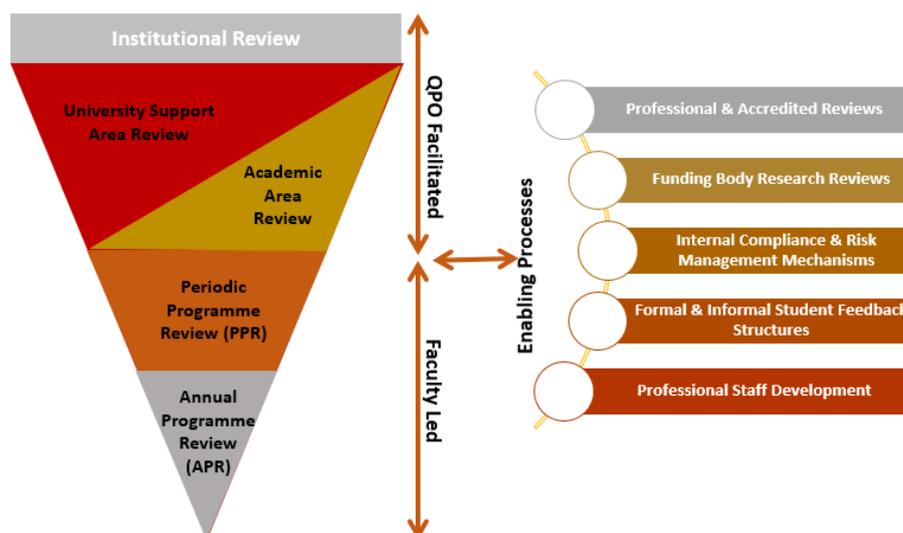


Figure 1. – DCU Quality Framework (revised 2018)



The Quality Framework receives enhancement through a series of enabling processes, which include:

- Professional & Accredited Reviews
- Periodic Funding State-body Research Reviews
- Internal Compliance & Risk Management Audits
- Formal & Informal Student Feedback Structures
- Professional Staff Development

Scope

This Policy applies to all units of the University (both academic and support), including research centres, which are all hereinafter collectively referred to as either the 'University' or 'DCU'.

Policy Statement (Key Principles)

The key principles of DCU's approach to quality assurance rests on three pillars of excellence, which includes Governance, Procedural and Organisational:

Governance

- Developing a quality culture that permeates all aspects of the university for the benefit of its students, staff, local, regional and national communities.
- Encouraging a culture of critical self-evaluation, as a core component, to retain our highest academic teaching standards whilst safeguarding our coherent and cohesive approach to quality assurance.
- Ensuring all quality assurance and improvement activities are conducted in full compliance with national and international guidelines whilst adhering to legislative obligations.
- Ensuring the university's strategic objectives and mission remain closely aligned to and compliant with quality assurance and enhancement activities.
- Ensuring a transparent and solid governance structure to safeguard continuous progress in implementing and supporting quality assurance and improvement measures.
- Ensuring commitment to evidence-informed reflection throughout the quality framework.
- Ensuring the implementation of appropriate procedures for the identification, assessment and management of risk in order to safeguard and sustain the integrity of our academic excellence.

Procedural

- Creating procedures, which facilitate consistency in implementation and transparency at all levels of the quality framework.



- Implementing and sustaining policies and procedures relating to the approval, monitoring, development and review of the entire programme suite.
- Driving best practice through the experience of our independent external peers and organisations, which include external examiners, professional, statutory & regulatory bodies as well as external assessors in both internal and external reviews.

Organisational

- Developing and strengthening the student voice as a key stakeholder in quality assurance and enhancement activities.
- Ensuring inclusion of feedback and input from both students and external peers at all levels.
- Ensuring a framework, which prioritises ongoing improvement and enhancement focused outcomes.

Roles & Responsibilities

Role of the Quality Promotions Office (QPO)

The Quality Promotion Office (QPO), established in 2001, promotes supports and facilitates continuous quality improvement activities across academic and administrative units through the management of the University's Quality Review process for Schools, Faculties and Units. Since 2016, the QPO also has responsibility for the Institutional Research and Analysis function, tasked with institutional level reporting and analysis, including statutory reporting, university rankings, student profiling, performance analysis, and management of student surveys, among other tasks. The QPO also supports the university in monitoring progress in relation to the implementation of the university's strategic plan.

Role of the Quality Promotions Committee (QPC)

The Quality Promotion Committee (QPC) is a committee of Executive. It is chaired by the President or President's nominee. The QPC draws its membership from across the DCU academic and professional support units as well as our student union, to make recommendations to DCU Senior Management, Executive and Academic Council on policies for quality assurance and improvement. QPC advises Senior Management, Executive and Academic Council on the establishment of a framework of principles, policies, priorities, procedures and good practice for the promotion of outstanding quality in teaching, research and administration across the University and reviews the range of quality assurance mechanisms used both at institutional and school / unit levels. The composition of the QPC is representative and university-wide with considerable expertise, experience and institutional / sector knowledge from its members.

Key Stakeholders

Staff

The input of DCU staff is crucial to the development and delivery of the university's QA and improvement procedures. Policies and the implementation of procedures for QA and



improvements, developed in close consultation with staff, form a fundamental part of the quality framework. Staff play a central role in providing valuable feedback enabling the highest standards forward planning as par to our QA system. Further, the university acknowledges and values contributions made by staff towards all quality review and assurance activities within the university.

Students

The QPO continues to work in close consultation with the DCU Student Union (SU) to ensure meaningful participation in university and faculty level decision-making structures, which helps to optimise the impact of the student voice whilst significantly strengthening engagement activities. Further, the university acknowledges the value and importance of building effective relationships with the DCUSU, which helps to maximise the student voice and ultimately enhance the overall student experience.

External Stakeholders

DCU places significant value on the discipline specific and professional expertise, views and experiences of external stakeholders, from both inside and outside the higher education sector, as part of our quality review procedures.

Monitoring and Reviewing Mechanisms

DCU conducts frequent reviews of its approach to quality in order to ensure continued suitability and value. The effectiveness of which is benchmarked and assessed through a variety of mechanisms, for example:

- Outcomes of external QQI Institutional Reviews
- Outcomes of other external reviews by professional and statutory bodies
- Feedback from external and internal quality reviewers
- Reports from external examiners
- Closing the student feedback loop through 'The Student Voice' initiatives
- Key performance indicators agreed with the HEA

Linked Providers

Our systematic approach to QA extends to institutions who have entered into collaborative arrangements with the university. In particular, The QQA Act 2012 requires Designated Awarding Bodies (DABs) (i.e. DCU) to develop QA policies and procedures (P&Ps) for the approval and periodic review of all teaching, research and support activities including

collaborative providers and specifically for the approval and periodic review of the P&Ps of so called Linked Providers. The DAB responsibilities outlined in the QQI Act (2012), are further articulated within the QQI Sector Specific Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines (2016) which outline in further detail the statutory responsibilities for DABs with respect to Linked Colleges.



DCU define Linked Providers as legally independent organisations who enter arrangements with DCU, under which arrangements the provider provides a programme of education and training that satisfies all of the prerequisites for an award by DCU.

DCU fulfils its statutory responsibilities for Linked Provider provision in the following way:

- a) In cases where Linked Providers are subject to independent statutory engagement with QQI under the QQI Act (2012) (Sections 28, 30 and 34-35), DCU shall recognise the findings of engagement with QQI with respect to institutional level procedures and the effectiveness of their implementation. In these instances, DCU shall implement a range of procedures, specifically addressing the approval, and subsequent review of implementation and effectiveness at programme type and/or level of award of programmes leading to a DCU award.
- b) In cases where Linked Providers are not subject to independent engagement with QQI for the approval and ongoing review of QA implementation, such providers shall be subject to DCU led review of the effectiveness of both the establishment and implementation of quality assurance procedures for linked providers, as per Section 32-33 and Sections 37-39 of QQI Act (2012).

Contacts

For further details on any aspect of this policy, please contact Celine Heffernan in the Quality Promotions and Institutional Research Office at Ext. 5575.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every five years or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.

Version Control

Document Name	Quality Assurance & Enhancement Policy	
Version Reference	Version 3.0	
Document Owner	Quality Promotions and Institutional Research	
Approved by	Executive	
Date	29th May 2018	

End.