Quality Assurance / Quality Improvement Programme for Academic Units

2007-2008

Peer Review Group Report
**for the
President's Office Review**
13th – 15th February 2008

Reviewers:
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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 (formerly CHIU – IUQSC) and complies with the provisions of Section 35 of the Universities Act (1997). The model consists of a number of basic steps.

1. An internal team in the Unit being reviewed completes a detailed self-assessment report (SAR). It should be noted that this document is confidential to the Unit and to the Review Panel and to 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 the Unit and conduct discussions with a range of staff, students and other stakeholders.
3. The PRG then writes its own report. The Unit is given the chance to correct possible factual errors before the Peer Group Report (PGR) is finalised.
4. The Unit produces a draft Quality Improvement Plan (QuIP) in response to the various issues and findings of the SAR and PGR Reports.
5. The PGR and the Unit draft QuIP are considered by the Quality Promotion Committee.
6. The draft QuIP is discussed in a meeting between the Unit, members of the Peer Group, the Director of Quality Promotion and Senior Management. The University's responses are written into the QuIP, and the result is the finalised QuIP.
7. A summary of the PRG Report, the QuIP and the Executive Response is sent to the Governing Authority of the University, who will approve publication in a manner that they see fit.

This document is the report referred to in Step 3 above

1. Profile of the President's office

1.1. The Unit: the location of the unit.
The President's Office is the unit supporting the Chief Officer (President) of the university, Professor Ferdinand von Prondzynski, and also the Deputy President Professor Anne Scott. Apart from the President and the Deputy President, the President's Office consists of a small management and administration unit that is based in the west wing on the entire first floor of the Albert College building in DCU. The Albert college building is the oldest building in DCU and served as an Agricultural College from 1838. Later it was the home of the Faculty of Agricultural Science, UCD, until they withdrew from the site in the late 1970s. It consists of four offices, one administration area and the President's private meeting and dining room. It is attached to the main staff dining area and the building also houses a number of boardrooms of various sizes that are suitable for meetings with internal and external stakeholders.

1.2. Support Staff to the President and Deputy President
There are six members of staff in total, whose main task is to support the President and Deputy President. This office remained largely unaltered (apart from some minimum staff turnover) for a number of years until November 2005, when a new head was installed (Gordan McConnell). The table below lists the members of the president's office and includes information regarding years at grade, years at DCU and key responsibilities. The intuitional research and analysis officer did not participate in this review.

Table 1. Staff members in the president's office

Name	Grade	Years at Grade	Years at DCU	Responsibilities
Ferdinand von Prondzynski	President	7	7	President of the University
Anne Scott	Deputy President	Circa 2	7	Deputy President of the University
Gordon McConnell	Head of Strategy & Administration	2	5	Head of the President's Office, Head of Strategic Planning
Jane Neville	Admin Grade V	>1	5	Assistant to the President
Danielle Montgomery	Secretary Grade III	1	3	Assistant to the Deputy President
Ann-Marie Roche	Secretary Grade II	>1	2	Assistant to the Head of Strategy & Administration
Yvonne Duff	Secretary Grade III	13	23	Archive and Support
Aisling McKenna	Institutional Research & Analysis Officer	>1	>1	Institutional Research and Analysis Officer

1.3. Product / Processes

The President's Office encompasses both the senior leadership of the university (the President and Deputy President) and the staff who provide assistance and support to the President and who liaise with the key stakeholders. The President's Office works within a matrix management system with a Head of Strategic Planning and Administration. Therefore several of the staff has more than one reporting line. For example the assistant to the President, who manages the President's diary, meetings and schedule, reports to the head of the office rather than to the President in relation to performance reviews (PMDS) and daily activity. This is also the same for the assistant to the Deputy President. This process has worked well since its inception, as the small office and team approach ensures a smooth line of communication.

The President is the head of the university, reporting to the Governing Authority and responsible for a number of key activities under the Universities Act 1997. His responsibilities include the financial management of the institution and management of the university's strategic plan. The President chairs a number of key committees that form the decision making body within the university although the president has the final say on all matters. These committees include the Senior Management team, the executive team and academic council. The senior management team is headed up by the President and includes the Deputy President, university Secretary, the Vice-President for Research, and the Vice-President for Learning Innovation, the Director of Finance and the Director of Human Resources. The Executive team is an extension of this group and includes faculty deans and other university representatives. In the case where the President is unable to chair meetings, the Deputy President takes the chair in his absence. Although the President chairs the Academic Council, the support for this is managed by the Office of the Vice-President for Learning Innovation. Governing Authority is chaired by the Chancellor of the university.

2. The Self-Assessment Process

2.1. The Co-ordinating Committee
The members of the President's office Quality Co-ordinating Committee were:
- Professor Anne Scott, Deputy President
- Gordon McConnell, Administrator 3
- Ann-Marie Roche, Secretary Grade II

2.2. Methodology Adopted
In accordance with DCU's Quality Assurance Programme for 2007/8, the Self-Assessment Report has been produced with the full participation of all staff in the President's Office. The report outlined current activities, recent changes to the office and plans for the next three years

To facilitate the process and receive feedback from stakeholder groups a number of interviews and focus groups were conducted. Interviews with internal and external stakeholders and a number of campus-wide focus group sessions were facilitated by an external facilitator

This committee met on a regular basis throughout the process. In addition to this, a Quality Feedback item was a standing item on the agenda on the weekly all-staff meetings. This was to ensure that all staff was fully briefed on the process. The key activities included the following:

Key Activities:
- Meetings with the Director of Quality Promotion (August, September, October 2007)
- Peer Group nominations (September 2007)
- A number of staff sessions during November and December (SWOC Analysis etc) were held
- Focus Group Meetings (November, December 2007) via external facilitator
- Interviews (November, December 2007 and January 2008) via external facilitator

The final self-assessment report was issued on 14th January 2008, in advance of the Peer Group visit on 13th – 15th February 2008.

3. The Peer Review Group Process

3.1 The Review Group
The members of the peer review group were:
- Mr. Michael Devane (Chair), Director, Quilly.
- Dr. Gordon Haaland, President Emeritus, Gettysburg College
- Ms. Linda Pollard, Pro-Chancellor, University of Leeds
- Prof. Colette McDonagh, Senior Academic, School of Physics, Dublin City University
- Dr. Sandra O'Neill, Internal Rapporteur, School of Nursing, Dublin City University

3.2. Site Visit Programme

Day 1 (Wednesday 13 February 2008)
Arrival of Peer Review Group and meeting with unit

14.00 – 15.15:	Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group, Briefing by Director of Quality Promotion
15.30 - 16.30:	Meeting with representatives of the President's Office.
19.30	Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group, Head of Unit and Unit Quality Co-ordinating Committee,

Day 2 (Thursday, 14 February 2008)
09.00 – 09.45	Meeting with Senior Management Group.
09.45 – 10.15	Representatives of Heads of School.
10.15 – 10.45	Representatives of Heads of Unit
11.00 – 11.45	Governing Authority Representatives
11.45 – 12.00	Staff Representatives

13.15 – 13.30	Student Representatives
13.30 – 14.00	Alumni Representatives
14.00 – 15.00	Business, Semi-State and Local Government Representatives
15.15 – 16.00	Representatives from Budget Committee and Executive Committee.
16.30 -17.00	Meeting With Deans
19.30	Working private dinner for members of the Peer Review Group

Day 3 (Friday, 15 February 2008)

09.00 – 10.00	Meeting with President and some members of Senior Management Group
10.00 – 11.00	Meeting with Senior Management Group
11.00 – 12.00	Meeting with Deans
12.00-12.30	Meeting with administration staff
12.30-13.30	Meeting with Deputy President
13.30-16.30	Preparation of Exit Presentation
16.30-17.00	Exit Presentation

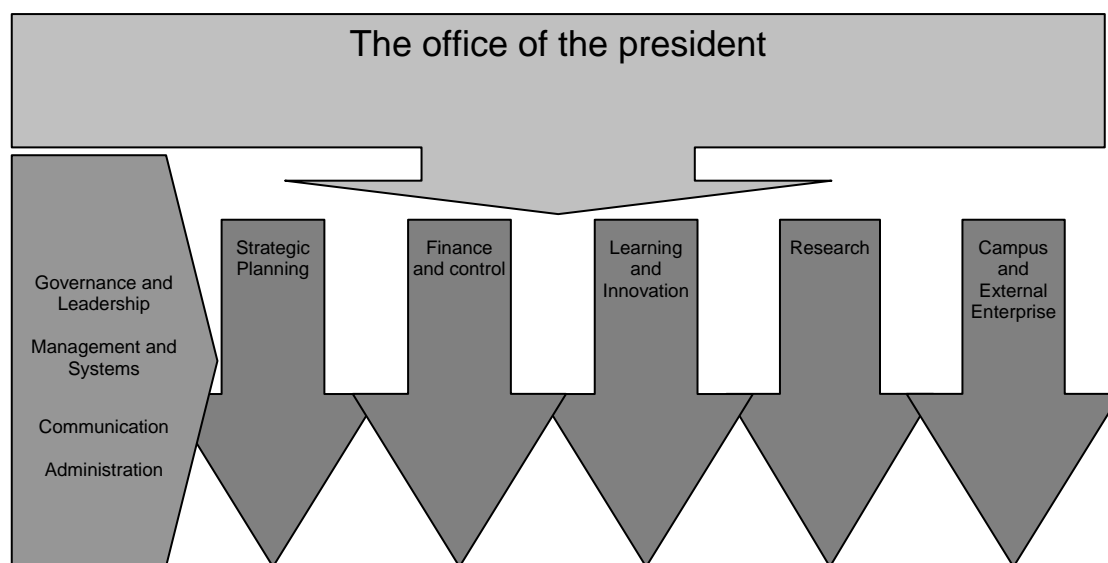## 3.3. Methodology and schedule of activity

Figure 1. This figure illustrates the focus of the peer review group when reviewing the "office of the President". The review focused upon five major areas of accountability 1. Strategic Planning, 2. Finance and Control, 3. Learning and Innovation, 4. Research., Campus and External Enterprise. The PRG focused on the activities and responsibilities of the President's Office with respect to the broad accountabilities set out above and having specific regards to a) Leadership and Governance, b) Management and Systems, c) Communication and d) Administration.

The peer review group (PRG) received the self assessment report together with a summary pre-review report and additional backup, including an appendix of relevant documents and presentations. The PRG met with a representative from the Quality promotions unit who outlined the PRG process and was available throughout the site visit for further consultation as required. In line with practice the group discussed the method of review and elected a chair person for the group.

The review remit as set out in the preparatory document was narrow in its definition and following the initial meeting with the President it was decided to broaden the remit of the review. As this was the first time that an review of the Office of President had taken place the PRG set out the parameters (fig 1) within which the review would be conducted. The Office, for the purpose of the review would include the President, Deputy President and the key senior officers of the University that were charged with the executive governance and management of the university. In addition, the effectiveness of two key instruments of the office, communication and administration, would also be included within the parameters.

In order to maintain a reasonable perspective and derive value from the review it was agreed to examine the interactions of the Office with respect to five major areas of accountability for with the President and the officers were charged. The areas identified included (1)Strategic Planning as this process and its resultant output was utilised as an instrument of change and a means by which the unity of purpose of the university could be agreed and articulated internally and externally. The second area identified was that of (2) Finance and Control as this was the primary process of the Office for managing and controlling the day to day activities of the university. It was the means by which governance of the Office was executed within the university. The third and fourth areas selected were that of (3) Learning and Innovation and that of (4) Research, both being the primary purpose of the university. Lastly, a broad area of both (5) Campus and External Enterprise for which the university was accountable and for which effective governance and management of the Office was necessary, was also included.

It was also agreed that the review was for the purpose of improving the effectiveness of the Office and was concerned with the effectiveness of the interactions of the Office with the wider organisation of the university including a wide set of stakeholders including, staff, students, associated enterprise, the governing body, government departments and agencies, public and private companies, other universities, the community, and other bodies with which the university and specifically the Office had ongoing interaction. The review was not focused on aspects of internal review or control and was not concerned specifically with the effectiveness of other parts of the organisation or the university.

This brief was agreed by the president's office in the first meeting on Wednesday and an examination of these activities and responsibilities formed the basis of all subsequent interviews. The focus of the interviews was explained at the beginning of each interview with the various stakeholders. The members of the PRG stayed together for most interviews and only slight changes were made to the programme of events (section 3.2 lists the final schedule). However the group did separate for some meetings due to time constraints. In most cases an internal and external reviewer was present during the meeting. At the end of the site visit an exit presentation was given by the chair. The President's office was invited to comment on the initial findings at the end of the presentation.

The writing and editing of the peer review report which summarises our finding and recommendations was undertaken as follows. The rapporteur prepared a first draft of the document which was circulated to all reviewers

3.4. View of the Self-Assessment Report

The PGR agreed that the self assessment report defined the administrative role and responsibilities of the members of the President's office. The administrative team were commended for their hard work when putting together a detailed analysis and self-critique which objectively recognised the strengths, weakness and opportunities of the administration team.   However, in relation the Office of the President within the new scope agreed, further clarification was required beyond the contents of the documentation provided.

The documents provided did however give a fair and reasonable account of the strategic planning process and specifically covered in some detail the vision and objectives of the university. This background gave both a factual account of the planning process and its output while it also gave a strong sense of the change being undertaken by the staff and student body as the university set its course for international recognition in learning, research and commitment to it surrounding environment.

While the documentation and pre-review assessment had not catered for an assessment of the Leadership and Governance and Management and Systems, all the necessary information was made available in a prompt and open manner together with supporting evidence as was necessary.

4. Findings of the Review Group

4.1. The office of the President

4.1.1. Background and Context

The review of the Office of the President is part of the overall review process within the university. This is the first review of this Office in any university within Ireland and despite the confidential and strategic nature of the work of this Office, the President is resolute in his view that all parts of the organisation must support the commitment to continuous improvement and be willing to be open to review. Agreeing to broaden the remit of this review is a further indication of a "tone at the top" that is open to new ideas, values other perspectives and is prepared to be publically critiqued in the quest for improvement, international recognition and the respect of its stakeholders.

4.1.2. Office of President – Stakeholders

Office of the President

In assessing the Office of the President significant focus was given to the ability of the Office to influence its stakeholders, define a vision and lead the organisation to execute on that vision. The specific style and approach of the President in this regard was considered in the context of reviewing the management, structures and processes in place within the university. The open style and strategic vision of the President clearly signals to the wider organisation the approach necessary to meet the significant challenge of achieving international recognition. This leadership style on the part of the President requires a complementary balance on the part of the Senior Management team and in particular the Deputy President. The strengths of the entire team were considered in the context of the areas of accountability as set out earlier.

External Stakeholders

The Office of President is the external face of the University and while there will be many interface points in their dealing with external stakeholders, the style, quality and effectiveness of those dealings rest with the President. The external stakeholders include government and its agencies/departments, the community, industry and business, local government, other universities and institutes, public and private partners in education and research, and representative groupings of associated interest.

The PRG met with a wide base of the external stakeholders and the participation of senior executives from many of the key stakeholders (EI, IDA, Forfas, HEA, Chambers, Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council) was in itself clear evidence of both the respect and importance that they associate with the University. Their input into the process involved providing an objective assessment, obtaining an understanding of their perspective and hearing their objective assessment of the effectiveness of the Office. This is critical in the context of the Office in promoting the interest of the university externally. The opinion of external stakeholders was also important to the PRG in assessing the leadership role of the Office as a University acting as an "agent of social and economic change" within the greater North Dublin/Meath region and nationally. Their contribution was in general terms

supportive, candid and had at its core a shared mission to make the University successful and support its development as a key strategic asset locally and nationally.

Internal Stakeholders

As the Leadership of the University the President in consultation with the Deputy President and SMG has a direct responsibility for the working of the university and is accountable for establishing and executing the strategy and ensuring that the process of leadership and management is directed by the strategic intent. The strategic intent of DCU as outlined in its strategic plan "is to be a distinctive agent of radical innovation, within a culture of world class excellence in higher education and scholarship". The president's responsibility for managing this core activity through achieving the strategic intent can be achieved by discovering, analysing, expanding, and translating knowledge in teaching and research, and by fostering creativity and spearheading change.

This clearly imposes on the Office, a need for a good working relationship with all internal stakeholders and through inclusive leadership realise the strategic intent through them. The internal stakeholders are as diverse as their external stakeholders and represent different and often competing constituents, including the staff, student body, alumni, legal entities and campus enterprise, the faculties, support units, and the governing authority. In this context the PRG met with many internal stakeholders and focused the meetings on leadership and governance, with a primary interest in the strategic planning process as the leaderships' instrument of visioning, consensus, and change management. Additionally they were asked to discuss the role of the Office in the governance of the university, from the compliance to statue that regulates the governing body, through to the practice of good governance within the leadership and management of the university. Overall the feed back of staff was positive and most felt that the president was a good external communicator. However, the need for a more inclusive management style was raised during these meetings and a higher level of engagement of the office with the staff in general was also deemed to be desirable.

Communication and Administration

The PRG evaluated both communication and administration as two key functions of the Office and their effectiveness in supporting the leadership and creating one face to both the internal and external organisations. In-keeping with good management processes and an inclusive leadership practice it is imperative to foster and build an excellent communication process at all levels within the organisation. Equally it is important to ensure that it is an effective "two-way" process and the ability of the Office to "listen" and engage is as important as clear, concise and frequent communication to the staff, student body and other stakeholders. The Office has produced an extensive and detailed document regarding internal communication processes but the implementation of this document has yet to be evaluated.

A critical evaluation component of the organisation is the administration of the President's Office and the ability of the administration team to deal in a timely way with requests for access to the President, Deputy President and Senior Officers. The PRG found that the management of leadership time was done in a manner that respects the private and confidential nature of the communication and with vigilance exercised to ensure that there is fairness, priority and sensitivity at all times.

Organisation and Management

The PRG review of the Office specifically reviewed Leadership and Governance and Management and Systems, as the main body of accountability. It evaluated the effectiveness of the Office in this regard as it pertained to the five major categories of 1) Strategic Planning, 2) Management and Control, 3) Learning, 4) Research and 5) Enterprise. It also took into consideration the style and practice of the leadership team and the general state of transition of the entire higher education structure.

When reviewing the Office's role with respect to good and effective governance, the discussion with both governing body and senior staff indicated that there exists a robust and healthy relationship between the President, his senior management team and the Governing Body. This positive relationship is critically important as both the public and private sector now increasingly focus on governance.

While reviewing the Management and Systems the PRG were careful not to confuse their role with that of an internal review but to focus specifically on the interactions and interventions of the Office with the management and control process. Like all universities the management process and systems are changing in response to the changing structures and leadership practice. The critical process of finance and budgeting required the Office to exercise both fair judgement and clear decision making. Discussion with key parties to this process clearly showed that the process, despite short-comings works well and while dealing with constrained resources, clearly demonstrates the painful process of ensuring the constrained resources are managed in a fair way. However it poses a specific challenge for the leadership team to communicate challenges in budget spend in meeting these objectives to the wider community in an informed and collective manner.

4.1.3. Functions, Activities and Processes

As the primary functions, activities and processes of the Office are largely the generic main stream activities of the university there are a number of same that are specific to the Office. In particular the function of overseeing the implementation of Strategic Planning and the Office Administration together with the internal and external leadership activities and the process of communication and management.

The Strategic Planning function is managed directly by the office and is a process that is now in its second cycle. Significant energy and resource has been given to the function and its process in a continuing effort to build support for the vision, make it a reality in the day to day operation and create enthusiasm amongst the stakeholders for the plan. This is a necessary and valid approach to the challenge of managing change but it is a process that can be all-consuming for an organisation resulting in a difficulty to maintain interest over the longer term, with the wider population and also in the connectivity of the overall plan to the plans of individual faculties, schools and units. This dilemma is understood and as the SMG reflect on this challenge it is essential to exercise sound communication practice (both listening and messaging) to ensure that the wider body of student and staff feel that there is balance and relevance in their day to day work environment.

The President's Office Administration is a well run organisation, self directed for the most part and in-keeping with the open style is constantly looking for opportunities to improve. The administration sets the correct balance between managing the resources of the Office (including the time of the President and SMG) and ensuring that the day to day practicalities are dealt with in a competent quality fashion with flexibility and sensitivity to the private and confidential nature of their undertakings.

4.1.4. Management and Staff

It is recognised that there is necessary ongoing organizational change that directly results from a strategic need to change. There are key external influences, including increased participation rates with a change in student profiles, national government strategy to increase investment in research, and a national focus on education in the development of the Human Capital base.

However the challenges that arise from an ambitious strategic plan, while managing within a constrained resource base will require both robust management process, management competence and most importantly a "collective" management decision-making behaviour. This is not a well developed concept with the higher education institute environment and will require significant investment in Leadership and Management with the universities. There is an opportunity for DCU to lead in this regard and develop a pervasive and integrated Leadership and Management program that will set its leaders and managers apart and through their endeavour and innovation successfully attain the challenging objectives they have set.

The development of a management culture that is inclusive, with collective accountability for the decisions of the organisation and that is empowered to take on the challenges at all levels within the organisation is a goal of any large progressive organisation. It is an objective that must be to the fore and must be supported by clear, concise roles and simple line of responsibility. This is a challenge that the office must prioritise as they implement the new strategy.

4.1.5. Management and deployment of Resources

DCU has an impressive success record and as a relatively new university made itself relevant to Irish industry and business from early on. Its success in the current and future environment will require it to be as relevant in the future as it has been in the past. However as in all universities funding and resources are not there to meet all the needs investments and to support the growing cost base. Like many of the universities the role of the Office is to seek funding from alternative sources that range from philanthropic to business patronage. Increasingly many of the strategic objectives require additional funding to provide the necessary resources to make the university internationally relevant.

This presents a significant challenge given the modest and constrained resources. The limited resource base further exacerbates the difficulties in trying to resource strategic planning in area of strategic importance that are not directly supported by government. In support of this critical need the PRG recognise the need for the Office and President to work closely with other university Presidents to develop a shared agenda that address funding deficits but also to develop a more strategic financial approach when dealing with these issues.

4.1.6. Overall Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Concerns

Strengths

People
Clearly the greatest strength of DCU is its people. This is reflected in the Office which consists of a strong team with diverse and complementary experience and background. Investment in this team can only add to the capability and leadership of DCU.

External Profile
The university enjoys a positive external profile and has done so since its foundation. It is viewed by the external stakeholders as a critical asset nationally but in particular to the development of North Dublin and the North-East region. The university needs to capitalise on its success and not loose the momentum it has created.

Strategic Plan
The Strategic Plan is an effective instrument of change within DCU and its importance in attracting investment to the university through grant agencies is evident. Its can also be a vehicle for unifying the internal stakeholders that can encourage the entire team to achieve their mission and goals

Recent Research Success
Re-setting the mission of the university to include a significant research agenda is already showing great success and is providing encouragement to the internal stakeholders and credibility to the external stakeholders. Recent successful research investment wins from SFI (CSET) and the HEA (PRTLI) have continued to support DCU's international reputation in a number of key areas.

Openness and willingness to improve
The willingness of the President and the SMG to engage in open dialogue with stakeholders in order to improve is a cornerstone of any successful organisation. Openness to criticism and a positive disposition towards same, allows concerned and supportive people internally and externally to contribute to the success of the university. It is a critical component of the "tone at the top" and indicative of good leadership

Business informed and applied focus
In-keeping with the open culture and the strong sense of a need to drive towards international recognition the Office and in particular the President connects with the wider world of commerce and business seeking to be informed and ensuring that the strategic plan meets their future need. There is also a strong sense of maintaining a relevance to business in the region and being a strong source of applied Science, Engineering and Technology and supporting this through the Business School and the Humanities.

Community/Region/Social change
DCU has a history of effective participation within the community and has ambitious objectives with respect to social change. It is something that the Office clearly

encourages and is prepared to manage constrained resources to make those objectives a reality.

President's office
The President's office is a well run open environment that leads the campus and ensure the availability of the leaders to the staff and student body. It provides a positive face to both the internal and the external community.

Non-traditional students
This university clearly recognises the changing face of Ireland and encouraged by the Office has focused on critical non traditional student bodies with 25% of it student intake from this sector as a goal. In particular its focus on accessibility for people from disadvantaged backgrounds and students with disabilities and its focus on continuing education are commendable with provisions for better adult learning facilities to support their learning.

Areas for Improvement

Engagement with Faculty Leadership
The visionary leadership of the Office require them to engage the support of management within the wider community. It is their responsibility to ensure that the academic faculty leadership play a meaningful part in the collective management process at the highest level and that their role and responsibilities are clear in the context of the overall management system.

Strategic Finance
Setting an ambitious strategic course requires the Office to continue to make key investments as it has done in the past. Focusing on strategic financial merit of the critical investment choices that must be made will require an additional strategic financial/investment competence and external business experience.

Communication-Internal
While there is a strong focus and commitment to communication within the university it is "broadcast" in nature and needs to develop a more systematic "listening" and inclusive approach. The open-door policy of the President needs to be clearly communicated within the organisation and periodic meetings to be held with staff at all levels within the organisation.

Academic-leadership
The core business of the University is academic in nature and its success in academic terms is critical to the future development of the university at a national and international level. A number of positive changes in the management structure have occurred within the university. However, within the process of change, there is a clear need for strong academic leadership and this role needs to be filled at senior management level.

Unclear Management Structures and responsibilities
The management structures of the University are complex processes and care is needed to ensure that these processes are transparent with clearly defined roles at all management levels.

Governance
Governance and the obligations of executives in both public and private enterprise is something that is increasingly focused on. The universities now attract significant public investment in research and are a key national asset. It is necessary that the Office is fully aware of their obligations and set a sound governance practice within DCU. The initiative on the part of two members of the SMG to participate in a governance program is evidence of their commitment to do this.

Opportunities
Collaboration – business, community, universities
It is clear from the feedback from the external stakeholders that collaboration with business, community and other higher education institutes is both necessary and expected. The Office is clearly committed to collaboration and should focus on collaboration as a significant enabler in its future development, not just in research but in the wider development of business and community. These initiatives need to be continued and developed.

Strengthen political clout of university
Universities have both the need and competence to speak out on social and economic issues and as the custodians of key capital assets be more politically active nationally in driving new economic models. It is an opportunity for the Office to engage more widely, building alliances with external stakeholders and in particular other universities, to create change and face challenges more effectively.

International recognition in unique areas of research
The success in attracting research investment is a critical first step in building an internationally recognised research base. It is opportune for the leadership to continue to build on this investment and seek to agree and focus on a number of unique areas of research for which they will seek to be the global leaders.

Identify and grow leaders
There is strong commitment and capability to improve and be a "best in class" organisation, at all levels within DCU. Executing on that capability and commitment requires a focused investment in the development of managers and leaders at all levels. It is something that has a low priority in most education institutes and something that the Office could lead on nationally. This investment will increase, by an order of magnitude, their ability to execute on their strategic plan.

Develop Science Park
It is clearly a strategic intent on the part of the President to spread out the university campus and be more relevant within the North Dublin and North-East region. There is strong external stakeholder support for this and specifically for the development of a Science Park with DCU at its centre.

Fast/expanding region/ infrastructure
The local region is the fastest growing/developing region in Ireland and as such provides the university with immense opportunities. It is important for the Office to actively consider those opportunities in the context of their strategic plan. In this context the inclusion of external stakeholder input to the plan must now be developed further to incorporate the stakeholder participation in the execution of the plan. It is clear from the stakeholder input to this review that there is significant energy and willingness to do this.

Release campus enthusiasm
The greatest opportunities will be realised when the competence and energy of the university can be released into the local community, industry and business. Finding ways to allow this to happen should be a specific goal of the Office as it executes on this stated objective in its strategic plan.

Challenges

Funding and resources
Funding and the provision of key resources and assets is the primary and most difficult challenge for the President and the SMG. New ways of securing funding will be required and again there was an encouraging input from the stakeholders that signalled their willingness to participate with DCU in the development of new sources of funding.

Rebuild unique values/brand
In a changing higher education environment it is important for DCU to have a unique brand that is recognised nationally and internationally. As a young university it has enjoyed a strong brand within Ireland because of the value it brought to business and industry through the 80's and 90's. This brand needs to be renewed and established for the next twenty years in a way that builds on the success of the past and provides focus for its contribution in the future.

Mature organisation and maintain flexibility
As a growing organisation and institution the Office must address the difficult task of balancing the need to build a mature organisation but ensure that it is empowered and continues to be flexible. This is a difficult challenge for any organisation and the development of leadership and management skills throughout the organisation will greatly support the challenge.

Themes
The concept of using thematic programs as a means of integrating the organisation and developing multi-disciplinary competence is commendable and the potential outcomes strategic. However, it presents with many challenges. In particular the effective management and implementation of the thematic concepts need to be addressed, as well as addressing the purpose of the themes.

Positive engagement
Engaging the organisation at all levels in a positive and proactive way is time consuming and difficult and requires robust organisation structures and sound

management and leadership competence. It is a critical component of implementing the strategic plan and must be central to the Office.

Leadership and governance
The identification and development of strong leaders is the Office of the President's greatest challenge. Development of a sound system of governance and management that is capable of supporting the university into the future and supporting its development is a challenge that will require thought, time and external input. These management structures must include the notion of collective responsibility and clearer inclusive decision making. This is a key aspect in the maturation of the structure and will promote a greater level of integration in both the thinking and execution of the strategic planning process.

Culture and values in growth
Underpinning any mature organisation must be a clear sense of organisation values that are visible within the culture. The ability of the entire organisation to identify with those values and culture is always a challenge. It is an even bigger challenge when an organisation is growing and in the case of DCU opening up its external interfaces such that it is in frequent contact with other organisation and cultures. It is something that the Office must be mindful of and cater for it in future planning.

4.1.7. Interventions – Recommended

P1. Develop a more clearly effective internal communication strategy
P1. An independent assessment of strategic planning process should be carried out
P1. Executive Deans must be more inclusive in the senior management team
P1. Address the management and implementation of the Academic Themes
P1. Address the gap in academic leadership within the management team

P2. Appraise strategic financial management and develop a risk register
P2. Develop closer alliances with other higher education institutions and brand DCU's strengths

P3. Devise and Implement a Leadership Development Program