

Quality Assurance / Quality Improvement  
Programme for Schools/Faculties/Units/Themes  
2007-2008



Quality Improvement Plan

*President's Office*

24th September 2008

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This Quality Improvement Plan was discussed and finalised at a meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2008 attended by

Prof Ferdinand von Prondzynski (President)  
Prof Anne Scott (Deputy President)  
Mr Gordon McConnell (Head of Strategy and Administration)  
Dr Sandra O'Neill (Peer Group member, Rapporteur)  
Prof Colette McDonagh (Peer Group member)

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The President's Office Peer Group Review took place 12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> February 2008. The Office is now pleased to respond to the Peer Group's subsequent report.

The President's Office would like to take this opportunity to thank the Peer Review Group, the Quality Promotion Unit and the DCU academics and staff who participated in the peer review process.

## **2. RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT**

The President's Office agrees with the recommendation of the Peer Review Group Report. This was the first President's Office in the Irish university system to take part in a quality review and so the process was largely experimental and highly valuable. The President is of the view that he should set an example in relation to DCU's commitment to quality improvement, and so the President's Office engaged constructively with the process. During the initial meeting of the Peer Group and the President's Office, the parameters of the review were agreed and broadened, and the Office of the President was commended for being prepared to be publicly assessed in the quest for continuous improvement.

We note that the Director of the Quality Promotion Unit has stated that "The School (and the University) is required, under the Universities Act (1997) to implement the recommendations of the Report, unless they are unreasonable or impractical". For its part, the President's Office is fully committed to acting on the findings of the Peer Review Group; this plan is formulated with the knowledge that a matching commitment exists at Faculty and university level.

### **General Comments from Self-Assessment Report**

It was noted that the President's Office Self Assessment Report identified the following as key issues which could be addressed:

- Clarification of the role of the President's Office in certain contexts
- Formalising the structure of the President's Office
- Improving communications with internal and external stakeholders
- Balancing workload with growing stakeholder needs over time

The SAR was conducted on the basis of the operations of the President's Office rather than the overall role of the President and Deputy-President. However, the Peer Review Group widened the remit as they felt that the original remit as set out in the preparatory document was narrow in its definition, and following an initial meeting with the President it was decided to broaden the remit of the review.

As this was the first time that a review of the Office of President had taken place the PRG set out the parameters for the review. 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. The effectiveness of two key instruments of the office, communication and administration, would also be included in the parameters

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. The review would not focus on aspects of internal review or control and was not concerned specifically with the effectiveness of other parts of the organisation or the university.

## Peer Review Group Comments

The PRG report highlighted a number of *positive comments* about the President's Office including:

- That the office is a 'well run open environment...provides a positive face to both the internal and the external community'.
- The office consists of a strong team with diverse and complementary experience and background
- That the strategic plan is an effective instrument of change within DCU....also a vehicle for unifying the internal stakeholders
- An openness and willingness to improve
- Effective participation within the community

The Peer Review Group made the following recommendations:

- *Engagement with Faculty Leadership*
- *Strategic Finance*
- *Internal Communications*
- *Academic Leadership*
- *Office Management Structures*
- *Continuing awareness and updating of governance*

The Peer Review Panel outlined the following areas for improvement:

- *Engagement with Faculty Leadership*
- *Strategic Finance*
- *Communication-Internal*
- *Academic-leadership*
- *Unclear Management Structures and responsibilities*
- *Governance*

## **2 Recommendations for Improvement for SCHOOL/UNIT/CENTRE**

The following notation is used in the recommendations for improvement.

**P1: A recommendation that is important *and* requires urgent action.**

**P2: A recommendation that is important, but can (or perhaps must) be addressed on a more extended time scale.**

**P3: A recommendation which merits serious consideration but which is not considered to be critical to the quality of the ongoing activities in the Unit.**

**Additionally, the PRG indicate the level(s) of the University where action is required:**

**A: Administrative Unit**

**U: University Executive/Senior Management**

**S/F: School and/or Faculty**

Or other units, for example OVPLI, OVPR as applicable.

	Addressee	Priority	PRG Recommendation (Draft Report)	Response	Expected time for completion
1	U	P1.	Develop a more clearly effective internal communication strategy	DCU has an Internal Communications Strategy which was developed as one of the component strategies in <i>Leadership through Foresight</i> in 2005. A new internal Communications Strategy is being developed for the new strategic planning cycle this summer (2008) and the drafting is being led by Public Affairs and Media Relations. Measures of effectiveness will be identified and used to monitor effectiveness of this new strategy.	Q4 2008
2	A	P1.	An independent assessment of strategic planning process should be carried out	Due to the timing of the new strategic plan, an 'independent' assessment of planning will not be possible at this time. An internal assessment (strategic scorecard) is being prepared at the moment for reporting to the Executive and the Governing Authority. A final review of the implementation of the last plan will be carried out in early 2009.	Q1 2009
3	U	P1.	Executive Deans must be included more in the discussions of the senior management team	The Deputy President is meeting the Deans bi-monthly at present. This was at the request of the Deans who stated that monthly meetings were too frequent and unlikely to be productive. However this will be kept under review by the Deputy President. In addition, monthly meetings have been arranged between the Deans and the full Senior Management Group.	ongoing
4	U	P1.	Address the management and implementation of the Academic Themes	This is currently under review, taking on board the comments of the recent review of the Office of the Theme Leaders and is to be finalised through the new Strategic Plan.	Q4 2008
5	U	P1.	Address the gap in academic leadership within	The roles and functions of both the university Executive and Academic Strategy Committee is currently under review as we begin the next cycle	Q4 2008

	Addressee	Priority	PRG Recommendation (Draft Report)	Response	Expected time for completion
			the management team	of strategic planning. This is also likely to lead to a review and restructuring of the role of the Deputy President, and potentially other roles within the management team, to ensure we have the appropriate mix of leadership roles required for the continued success of DCU into the future.	
6	U	P2.	Appraise strategic financial management and develop a risk register	(a) Foundation work currently underway for the full economic costing exercise will help us evaluate and strengthen strategic financial planning and management. (b) The issue of development of a risk register for DCU is recognised as urgent and some work has already been undertaken.	Q1 2009 (pilot)  Q3 2009
7	U	P2.	Develop closer alliances with other higher education institutions and brand DCU's strengths	(a) The DCU submission to SIF cycle 2 involved the development of strong strategic links with a number of Irish Higher Education institutions in the greater Dublin Region, where our strengths in e learning and modularisation, for example, were key to the collaborative bid. This submission was very successful and we plan to build on these collaborations in future competitive funding rounds, potentially including the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTL). (b) The initial alliance with Arizona State University is continuing to develop rapidly, and a working group set up by the Executive is looking at International Linkages and is due to report back to the Executive in the coming months. (c) An Internationalisation Strategy is due to be completed by the end of 2008 as one of the component strategies of the new strategic plan, and	ongoing  ongoing  Q4 2008

	<b>Addressee</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>PRG Recommendation (Draft Report)</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Expected time for completion</b>
				this will include the recommendations from the International Linkages group.	
8	U	P3.	Devise and Implement a Leadership Development Program	One of the SIF (Strategic Innovation Fund) proposals from the Irish University Association (IUA) funded by the HEA is around Leadership Development of the academic management community in Ireland and DCU will be part of this.	2010/11 depending on progress of IUA led project (Leadership Academy)

**3. SUMMARY OF THE ONE-YEAR PLAN (2008/2009)**

Develop a more clearly effective internal communication strategy

- DCU Internal Communications Strategy being developed for the 2009-2011 period with strong involvement from the President's Office

Executive Deans must be included more in the discussions of the senior management team

- This is being discussed and progressed with Executive Deans for immediate implementation

Address the management and implementation of the Academic Themes

- Being reviewed as part of the new planning process and results of the Foresight Exercise.

Appraise strategic financial management and develop a risk register

- As part of IUA/SIF funded Full Economic Costs (FEC) project

Develop closer alliances with other higher education institutions and brand DCU's strengths

- Being developed as part of new planning process, through the Internationalisation Strategy.



**4. SUMMARY OF THE THREE-YEAR PLAN**

An independent assessment of strategic planning process should be carried out

- Review of strategic planning implementation taking place in DCU at the moment as part of development of new strategic planning process, full review of planning by an external group will be conducted in 2009 as part of one year implementation review.

Devise and Implement a Leadership Development Program

- Being developed under the SIF/IUA programme at national level with DCU involvement.

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**APPENDICES**

**1. Unit Quality Committee (for the Self-Assessment Report)**

Professor Anne Scott  
Gordon McConnell  
Ann-Marie Roche

**2. Peer Review Group**

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 (Rapporteur)  
School of Nursing  
Dublin City University

**3. Unit Quality Committee (for the Quality Improvement Plan)**

Professor Anne Scott  
Gordon McConnell  
Ann-Marie Roche