

Quality Assurance / Quality Improvement  
Internal Quality Review Programme

2017-18



Quality Improvement Plan

**Office of the Vice President, External Affairs**

*December, 2018*

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## 1 Introduction

This report responds to the Peer Review Group (PRG) Report prepared in respect of Office of the Vice-President External Affairs, following the PRG site visit to DCU, 7-9<sup>th</sup> March, 2018

The Office of the Vice-President External Affairs would like to record their thanks to the Peer Review Group and the Quality Promotions Office for their time and engagement with the Office in support of this review. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the staff, students and external stakeholders who met with the PRG in March and all those who took part in self-assessment activities as part of the review

In May, the PRG Report was circulated among the OVPEA staff. The Report findings and recommendations were subsequently discussed and all members of the team were invited to contribute their comments.

The Quality Improvement Plan has been drafted by the VP External Affairs in full consultation with the respective offices and VPEA Senior Management Team.

## 2 Responses to the Recommendations in the Peer Review Group Report

The following table outlines the OVPEA and University's responses to the recommendations proposed by the Peer Review Team in their Peer Review Group report.

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 Area.

Additionally, the PRG indicate the level(s) of the University where action is required: A: Area under review U: University Senior Management

Rec	Priority	Addressee	PRG Recommendation	OVPEA Response	University Response
1	P1	A/ U	<i>Explore and develop a DCU-wide approach to supporting Internationalisation. Ideally this should be led at a senior level (initially led by the President) and recognise the breadth of elements that are included within internationalisation. Delivery of this work should then be embedded into all of the constituent strategies as they are developed and might benefit from ongoing University wide governance.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A University Internationalisation Strategy (UIS) has been completed and was adopted as a constituent part of the University Strategic Plan (2017-2022) - Talent, Discovery and Transformation. The strategy is conceived around four key pillars, Partnerships, Recruitment, Mobility and Experience, supported by three university foundations of Campus, Community and Curriculum.</li> <li>A University Level Operational Plan, in support of the Internationalisation strategy, is in the process of being adopted. This plan projects the student population mix by type (e.g. Undergraduate (UG) and Postgraduate (PG)) and by domicile (Domestic, EU and Non-EU) over a five and ten-year period. The faculty plans outlining their contribution to agreed targets over the time horizons in the Operations Plan have been agreed with DCU Senior Management Group</li> <li>The terms of reference for a central Internationalisation Oversight Group (IoG) responsible for charting and directing the University in the delivery of the UIS have been drafted for formal adoption. The IoG will oversee the implementation of the Internationalisation strategy across the 4 pillars of Partnership, Recruitment, Mobility and Experience. A further cross-institutional Operational Review Group shall be constituted to provide a forum to review progress on international recruitment activity based on established targets</li> </ul>	<p>The University notes the finalisation of the Internationalisation Strategy, a constituent strategy of the DCU Strategy, <i>Talent, Discovery and Transformation</i>.</p> <p>The University considers an International Oversight Group to be an important mechanism for driving strategic initiatives in relation to the University's internationalisation agenda, and considers the cross-institutional membership of this Group to be an important factor in driving initiatives within each of the four identified pillars.</p>
2	P1	A	<i>Directorate to develop clear plans and targets, aligned to the overall DCU strategy and the constituent strategies as they are developed. As part of this there should be a</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An initial 'kick-off' planning meeting for the entire VPEA team was held in July 2018 to initiate the new annual planning process, outlined in the Self-Assessment report (SAR), whereby cross-team inputs will be sought, cross departmental working groups establishment, key projects identified and a plan with key KPIs developed.</li> </ul>	<p>The University welcomes this recommendation and the opportunity for staff working within the OVPEA Directorate to align their activities to supporting the</p>

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			<i>clear review of the resources available to deliver required activity, and where relevant, the case for added resource. Ensure team/individual personal development plans and KPIs are mapped against the agreed targets.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within Marketing, Student Recruitment and Civic Engagement the current informal SLA protocol(s) will be formalised in discussion with each faculty, in line with the Strategic Plan and its constituent strategies, before the CAO application deadline for AY 2019.</li> <li>• A proposal has been made to utilise some QUIP funding to gain the expertise of a suitably qualified facilitator to engage cross functionally within OVP EA and to work with the External Affairs, Senior Management Team (EA SMT) to establish an appropriate KPI(s) dashboard for each functional area and OVP EA, to be in place for the commencement of AY 2019/2020.</li> </ul>	<p>achievement of goals in these respective strategies.</p> <p>The University values the establishment of clear goals and targets in relation active across the Directorate; of particular importance are the establishment of goals for international recruitment which shall contribute to the University's to grow non-Exchequer revenues during the lifetime of the current strategy</p>
3	P2	A	<i>There is significant work that needs to be undertaken in order to consider optimum working arrangements for the Directorate. We would recommend that there is a full review of team roles and job descriptions aligned to work-plans; that a range of measures are introduced to support joint working and planning across the Directorate (including the development of a Directorate SMT as an information sharing and decision-making forum with shared responsibility for prioritisation across the Directorate); and, that the review of joint working considers how shared working space and practice could be developed between campuses (including considering options such</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent restructuring and re-organisation activities in the International Office and Marketing, include work already undertaken in which clarity of team/work-roles in line with new job descriptions is an integral part. A recruitment process has commenced for a new Head of Undergraduate Student Recruitment and following that appointment, a similar exercise will be commenced within that team.</li> <li>• Following post-review consideration, the External Affairs Senior Management Team (EA-SMT) will be re-established and will meet a minimum of once per quarter commencing in September 2018.</li> <li>• The EA-SMT will annually hold a planning meeting, following which an annual 'away day' for the full staff complement of OVP EA will be convened, to review the attainment of agreed KPIs from the previous year, and to plan all activities for the coming year. It will also set a communications/ planning calendar for the group and agree such modifications to ensure communications and collaborative project and cross-team work processes are operating satisfactorily.</li> <li>• The VP EA has been provided with hot desk facilities on the Glasnevin campus. Following the initial quarter of work-group meetings, we will review with Estates, by January 2019, our requirement for 'hot-desks' across the campuses and any other supports to meet our work needs.</li> </ul>	<p>The University welcomes a renewed focus on the alignment of activities across the Directorate to maximise the effectiveness of activities on identified projects and initiatives.</p> <p>The University notes the creation of hot-desk facilities for staff frequently working across DCU's multiple campuses, and encourages the relevant individuals and areas to continue to work with the Estates Office in relation to space requirements and hot-desking facilities.</p>

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			<i>as hot desking; hosting of teams one day a week, bringing the Directorate together in one location and ensuring that collaboration and communication is facilitated by proximity).</i>		
4	P2	A	<i>Consideration should also be given to appointing an additional senior team member, possibly a Head of Recruitment. It is probable that this work would benefit from strategic project support in advance of the 'Operational Excellence' initiative or some other change process support external to the Directorate.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following a review of Student Recruitment, the position of the functional head has been regraded and a recruitment process has commenced. The post holder will report into the VP External Affairs. The appointee will be responsible for strategic planning and projects within the Student Recruitment function, including integrating international aspects, with the core domestic student recruitment activities, namely the recruitment of EU UG/PG students.</li> <li>Additional staffing for the International Office (IO), in support of the UIS and Operationalisation plan, was approved by the University Executive in July 2018 and the recruitment processes are underway</li> </ul>	The University notes the approval, and ongoing competition for the recruitment of a Head of Recruitment, focusing on the strategic development of domestic and EU recruitment activities.
5	P1	A/ U	<i>Conduct a lean review of all systems, policy and processes in use across the Directorate, (and more widely across DCU) – to ensure that they are fit for purpose for current and future operations and that can build a more collaborative, efficient and resilient unit. The Directorate needs to be structured for growth and addressing Strategic Goals 6 and 9.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The importance of ensuring all processes are efficient and future proofed is accepted and key processes had already been identified and prioritised as the initial project(s) for cooperating with the newly established Operational Excellence unit. A pilot project to re-engineer the 'PAC application and assessment process' for International applicants was initiated and the agreed process resulting from this process will be implemented by December 2018. It is envisaged that a second prioritised process will be selected and should be completed in Spring 2019. Key learnings from these initial process improvement activities will be shared for all future OVP EA Op. Ex projects</li> <li>To enhance collaboration, improve efficiency and eliminate duplication, the administration of common processes within OVP EA (e.g. Agresso, CORE, Travel Planning, Budget Reconciliation etc.) will be consolidated into a centralised support function. VP EA will work with HR to develop a plan to implement and have the function operational by March 2019.</li> <li>The VP-EA and EA-SMT together with HR will develop a plan to identify individual and team training needs including those required to further enhance the team "collaboration, efficiency and resilience". This work is scheduled to commence in AY 2019/2020.</li> </ul>	<p>The University welcomes the initiation and initial progress made on an Operational Excellence project, focused on the processes that support international postgraduate recruitment through the PAC application system.</p> <p>The University suggests identification and planning of initiative to enhance systems and processes across the OVPEA should be planned, cognisant of strategic priorities for the OVPEA, and in line with other institution-wide developments, such as the new Student Information System (SIS)</p>

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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As an initial part of restructuring for growth and meeting enhanced compliance requirements, it has been recognised that the current structures in support of the Internationalisation Strategy in China need immediate attention, followed by America.</li> </ul>	
6	P1	A	<p><i>The Directorate should focus on clarifying its role and purpose and communicate this effectively across DCU. This should include developing clarity on the support and professional expertise they can provide; reviewing their overall mission and values aligned to the new strategic plan. The focus of this work should be to help manage expectations of the Directorate, and specifically manage expectations around delivery vs direction and leadership. As part of this work, the Directorate SMT could conduct DCU wide profile-raising workshops. Re-word departmental mission statement to reflect current breadth of operations.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The current Mission and Vision Statement for the OVP-EA will be reviewed with the President, SMG and EA-SMT in light of the new Strategic Plan (2017-2022), “Talent, Discovery and Transformation”, and its constituent Internationalisation and Engagement Strategies. Subsequently, the individual functional/departmental statements will be reviewed and modified, by end of AY 2018/2019, as required, to reflect same.</li> <li>On completion of the above, the EA-SMT will develop a communication ‘roll-out plan’, commencing in AY 2019/2020, to ensure a wider understanding and appreciation of the role, mission, professional expertise and support available to the university at large.</li> <li>The division of responsibilities for Communications and Marketing and the monthly marketing meetings with faculty which commenced in June 2018 have been used to clearly delineate the role of the marketing team and to agree project deliverables and timeframes.</li> </ul>	<p>The University welcomes the progress made to date in relation to this recommendation, and the alignment of the mission and purpose of the constituent offices of the OVPEA to the new DCU strategy.</p> <p>The University welcomes opportunities to support the OVPEA in ensuring that staff, students and external stakeholders have a clear understanding of the role and purpose of the Directorate.</p>
7	P2	A/ U	<p><i>Review how the breadth and diversity of Civic Engagement activity might be more fully utilised in support of DCUs strategic priorities, potentially considering some form of overall coordination/board. This work should consider how internal and external communications reflects (and markets/facilitates engagement with) DCU wide civic</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The new Engagement Strategy was approved during Summer 2018 as a constituent element of, and in alignment with, the University Strategic Plan (2017-2022), an integral component of which is the establishment of a University co-ordination board to be chaired by VP EA, and responsible for the strategic oversight of the engagement agenda at University level. The terms of reference and composition of which will be drafted and published by Q1 2019.</li> <li>As the current engagement forum, chaired by Head of Civic Engagement, will continue to actively manage its agenda, drive cross university learnings, share best practice, deliver workshops and maintain the relationship management of its external stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<p>The University welcomes the completion of the DCU Engagement Strategy, a constituent strategy of DCU Strategy, Talent, Discovery and Transformation.</p> <p>The University notes its commitment within the DCU Strategy for the development of a cross-institutional University</p>

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			<i>engagement activity and student involvement. We would also recommend that the opportunity to capture the breadth of Civic engagement activity undertaken within the research community is considered (possibly alongside the 'research engine' repository?)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A detailed plan to be drafted with the research support office approved by both VP Research, Development &amp; Innovation and VP External Affairs will be developed, including the potential for utilising their systems as a repository of engagement activities. An application for QULP funding has been developed to assist in the necessary systems work.</li> <li>A small cross EA working group including Marketing and Communications will develop a 'mini-campaign' to communicate our engagement leadership to both internal and external audiences for implementation during Semester 2, AY 2018/2019. This will include a dynamic, digital showcase to showcase the breadth of DCU activities.</li> </ul>	<p>Engagement Committee to stimulate and support staff engagement.</p> <p>The University further welcomes the development of a repository for the management of information on the range of engagement activities undertaken by DCU staff.</p>
8	P2	A	<i>Keep need for close working between Communications and Marketing under review in light of recent structural changes; consider where and how internal communications will be managed.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work review meetings were instigated following the structural change and are being held on a weekly basis between the wider Marketing and Communications Teams. As a result of this structural change, Internal Communications is a function of the communications team.</li> <li>A bi-weekly meeting between the Head of Communications and Head of Marketing has already been implemented.</li> <li>The need to ensure that messaging and promotion emanating from both teams is consistent and appropriate is of paramount importance. To that end a need exists to develop and undertake a level of awareness training both within the two teams and across units to ensure that all outputs, messaging and activities align with our brand and values, while being cognisant of the perceptions of DCU held by students, stakeholders and partners. A request for QUIP funding to enable this has been made.</li> </ul>	<p>The University welcomes progress to date on this recommendation, and notes the importance of an effective working relationship between Communications and Marketing teams.</p> <p>The University note that responsibility for progressing internal communications will be progressed through the Communications Office in DCU, working closely with Schools and Units across the University.</p>
9	P2	A	<i>Explore requirement for a strategic programme support resource to ensure that a structured project management methodology (e.g. PRINCE2) drives strategic project management and assists the Directorate SMT with risk</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The team concurs with the recommendation and recognises the need for an EA-SMT Operations Head / Strategic Programmes role, with the appropriate project management experience, to co-ordinate and drive activities across the team in a timely and holistic manner including, resourcing, work-flow prioritisation, communications, identification of training needs, and support for VPEA strategic initiatives.</li> </ul>	<p>The University notes the approval and appointment of a number of recent senior posts under the OVPEA constituent Offices. The University suggests that the development of these posts provides an opportunity to</p>



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			<p><i>management, progress chasing, operational plan delivery, ensuring quality procedures are followed and existing good practice is shared and exploited.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To validate the need for any anticipated role, it is intended to have the new Head of Student Recruitment role cover many of these responsibilities during AY 2018/2019. Following an anticipated validation, the Directorate will develop a role specification, which would be advanced through the existing University staffing and funding processes, for sanction and approval prior to implementation.</li> </ul>	<p>strengthen capacity for strategic project management within the Directorate.</p>

## Summary of Key Actions

### Office of Vice President External Affairs- Year 1 Implementation

	<b>Actions</b>
R. 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development and agreement of structure and ToR of DCU Institutional Oversight Group</li> <li>• Development and agreement of a University-level operational plan in support of the Internationalisation strategy, including the establishment of agreed targets for international student recruitment</li> </ul>
R.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of annual Cross-Directorate planning event</li> <li>• Development of common KPIs for OVPEA and constituent offices aligned to the DCU strategic plan and constituent strategies</li> </ul>
R.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of regular senior management team meetings within the Directorate</li> <li>• Initiate restructuring activity to align structure and activities to the delivery of strategic plan</li> <li>• Identify and agree the availability of hot-desking facilities for OVPEA staff across all campuses</li> </ul>
R.4	Budgetary approval and appointment process completed for a functional Head of Student Recruitment.
R.5	Completion of initial project in collaboration with Office of Operational Excellence and Strategic Intelligence on the re-engineering of the PAC application and assessment process.
R.6	Development of a communication “roll-out” plan to ensure a widening understanding of the role, mission and support available through the offices of the OVPEA
R.7	Establishment of a University Civic Engagement co-ordination board for the University.
R.8	Establishment of bi-weekly meetings meeting the Head of Marketing and Director of Communications
R.9	Review of project management capacity across current constituent offices

### Office of Vice President External Affairs- High Level Year 3 Implementation

	<b>Actions</b>
R. 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversight structures for International Oversight Group and Operational Review Group well established</li> </ul>
R.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful implementation of KPIs across all constituent Offices of OVPEA complete and embedded within work plans.</li> </ul>
R.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restructuring of all constituent offices (where appropriate) complete</li> </ul>
R.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification and implementation of further Operational Excellence projects across the Directorate</li> </ul>
R.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structures for DCU Civic Engagement Committee well established</li> <li>• Roll-out of communication plan on DCU engagement leadership to both internal and external audiences</li> </ul>
R.9	Following review and anticipated validation of requirement for strategic project lead within the OVPEA, finalisation of business-case for approval of sanction and approval of dedicated role

## Appendices

### 5.1 Quality Committee (for the Self-Assessment Report)

- Paul Smith International Office
- Deirdre Wynter Marketing
- Bernadette Dalton OVP-EA
- Caroline Magee International Office
- Eimear Brady Communications
- Prof. Ronaldo Munck Civic Engagement
- Trevor Holmes OVP-EA

### 5.2 Peer Review Group members

- Mr. Alf Desire, Director, Delcer Consulting, Dublin (Formerly Director British Council Ireland -Chair)
- Ms. Josephine Page, International Education Division, University of Limerick
- Ms. Vanessa Potter, Director, Communications and External Relations, University of Essex
- Mr. Eamonn Cuggy, Head of Financial Planning, DCU
- Dr. Neil O'Boyle, School of Communications, DCU (QPC Rapporteur)

### 5.3 Quality Committee (for the Quality Improvement Plan)

- Trevor Holmes, OVPEA
- Paul Smith, International Office
- Deirdre Wynter, Marketing
- Prof Ronaldo Munck, Civic Engagement