

Quality Assurance / Quality Improvement

Programme for

Schools/Faculties/Units/Themes



2008-2009

Quality Improvement Plan

*Postgraduate Student (Taught & Research) Experience  
Thematic Review*

*September 2009*

## **Contents**

1. Introduction
2. Response To Recommendations in the Peer Review Group Report
3. Summary of the Immediate Plan
4. Summary of One-Year Plan
5. Summary of Three-Year Plan
6. Appendices
  - A. Thematic Quality Review Committee for the Self Assessment Report (SAR)
  - B. Peer Review Group (PRG)
  - C. Thematic Quality Review Co-ordinators for the Quality Improvement Plan (QuIP)

## **Glossary**

Post Graduate Application Centre	PAC
Post Graduate Research	PGR
Post Graduate Taught:	PGT
Peer Review Group	PRG
Quality Improvement Plan:	QuIP
Self-Assessment Report:	SAR

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1. Following receipt of the draft PRG report, the Co-Chairs of the Postgraduate Student Experience Thematic Review met with the Director of the QPU to discuss the content and deadlines with regards to the QuIP and to include the university wide remit of the recommendations, and how this could be addressed in the Quality Improvement Plan.
2. The final PRG report was received by the QPU and distributed to the University Executive and Co-Chairs / SAR Review Committee.
3. The Co-Chairs met to consider the final PRG Report and draft an initial response to each recommendation.
4. The Co-Chairs met with the Vice President for Learning Innovation and Director of the Graduate Research Office to discuss the development of the QuIP with particular regard to integrating responses from the Executive as well as Offices, Units and Faculties throughout DCU.
5. The Co-Chairs developed an initial draft of the QuIP which was sent to the Vice President for Learning Innovation, Director of the Graduate Research Office for review, comment, and insertion of a University response to recommendations where appropriate.
6. The Quality Improvement Plan presented here was finalised in a meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2009 attended by:
  - Prof. Anne Scott, Deputy President
  - Prof. Richard O’Kennedy, Vice-President for Learning Innovation
  - Prof. Gary Murphy, Director of the Graduate Research Office (Co-Chair of Thematic Review, and QuIP Co-Ordinator - Research)
  - Dr. Joseph Stokes, Lecturer, Mechanical & Manufacturing Engineering (Co-Chair of Thematic Review and QuIP Co-Ordinator - Taught)
  - Dr. Anne Morrissey, Lecturer, OSCAIL (Co-Chair of Thematic Review and QuIP Co-Ordinator - Taught)
  - Prof. John Breen, University of Limerick, external reviewer
  - Dr. Carmel Mulcahy, internal reviewer, rapporteur of PRG
  - Dr Heinz Lechleiter, Director of Quality Promotion (chairing)

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

Recommendations for Improvement for Postgraduate Student Thematic Review

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 indicates the level(s) of the University where action is required:

Aca: Academic units (Faculties or school, specified where appropriate)

Adm: Administrative Unit (specified where appropriate)

ADR: Associated Deans for Research

ADTL: Associated Deans for Teaching & Learning

DP: Deputy President

GRO: Graduate Research Office

OVPLI: Office for Learning & Innovation

OVRP: Office for Research

SO: Secretary's Office

SS&D: Student Support & Development

Sup: Support units (specified where appropriate)

UE: University Executive/Senior Management

Recommendation	Priority	PGR Recommendation	Draft Responses	Co-ordinator of Implementation. (Suggested support/input)	Timeline to implement A = Completed By end Sept 2009 B = Completed in 1 year C = Completed in 3 years
1	P1	<p>The University should frame its support and design of services for PGT and PGR students around a model which employs an integrated, holistic view of the student journey and accommodates the different needs, expectation and experiences of incoming students. In developing this model the University should :</p> <p>a. seek to produce a map of the student journey for the identified student cohorts (e.g. PGT + PGR, full-time + part-time, Irish students + international students, DCU graduates + graduates from other Irish universities, mature students + students who have come directly from an undergraduate programme),</p> <p>b. consider again the isolated nature of University campus and the significant use of core resources at non conventional times by PGT and PGR students including their need for administrative support and their access to the physical infrastructure (e.g. safety, access to labs, library and catering)</p>	<p>Currently SS&amp;D together with OVPLI and GRO are drafting a booklet based on the student's journey and support systems. This will be distributed at orientation events and also be available on-line.</p> <p>Graduate Studies Board has indicated its approval that all PGR research applications should now come through PAC. The Director of Graduate Research has informed the Director of Registry of this decision.</p> <p>Improvements were made and are on-going through 2008/2009 to the online registration system.</p> <p>Expansion of the opening times during registration and fee payment for part-time students will be reviewed. 3 evenings for PT PGT Registration/fee issues (resource request)</p>	<p>OVPLI / GRO (SS&amp;D)</p> <p>OVPLI / DP (Registry / ISS)</p> <p>OVPLI / DP /SO (Registry / Fees/ISS)</p> <p>OVPLI / GRO / DP / SO (SS&amp;D, Catering / Aca / Lib. / Health&amp; Safety)</p>	<p>B</p> <p>B</p> <p>B</p> <p>A</p>

			<p>Allocation of one building for all part-time out of normal hours lectures and study rooms (to free up library opening times) with catering support to improve the part time PGT experience.</p> <p>Access to catering (as above), labs (safety) and library outside working hours is again of great importance to the postgraduate experience which requires timetabling and staff support.</p>	<p>OVPLI / GRO / DP / SO (SS&amp;D, Catering / Aca)</p> <p>OVPLI / GRO / DP / SO (SS&amp;D, Catering / Aca / Lib. / Health&amp; Safety)</p>	<p>B</p> <p>B</p>
2	P1	As part of the University's strategy to grow numbers of PGT students, the Peer Review Group strongly recommends the appointment of a senior officer to champion PGT needs within the DCU community	The intention underlying this proposal is welcomed and is very much in line with developing postgraduate taught support. Due to budgetary constraints, initially OVPLI will provide this support with the intention of seeking approval for a supportive 'senior officer' position to liaise with PGT needs and between the OVPLI and SS&D. The OVPLI will aim to maintain this position into the future to continue this service.	OVPLI / SO/ UE (SS&D / ADTL / HR)	A
3	P2	<p>On the basis of all evidence received, the Peer Review Group recommends that the University:</p> <p>a. prioritise staff development across all relevant units (academic and administrative) in order to reflect the increasing numbers, diversity and complexity of the PGT and PGR student populations</p>	<p>A new and improved <i>Guide for Staff</i> was issued in 2008/2009 which clearly articulates the various roles of all student support units at DCU. This was distributed by SS&amp;D to all School Offices in hard copy in September 2008. It is also available on-line. In line with Recommendation 5 staff training will also be a priority. The orientation and 'Student Map' in Recommendation 1 a. will also benefit this recommendation.</p> <p>A strategy will be developed for the</p>	<p>OVPLI / GRO (SS&amp;D)</p> <p>OVPLI/ SS&amp;D/</p>	<p>A</p> <p>B</p>

		<p>b. develop more effective means of communicating current approved policies to both staff and students and should review the use of the DCU email system as a major means of communication between staff and students</p>	<p>coordination of academic and administrative interactions to support PGT students</p> <p>The Graduate Research Office in conjunction with the Training and Development Unit of Human Resources has initiated a training of supervisors programme which is to be offered to all staff. This programme deals with all aspects of the supervision of research students.</p> <p>ISS are currently reviewing both the DCU website and the Portal Page resource both in terms of navigation and use.</p> <p>The expansion of the e-mail memory space is currently underway by ISS, by way of outsourcing the DCU student e-mail to external 'free' service providers similar to that done by other Irish universities. A pilot study was conducted using students based on their preference of a google and a Microsoft mail system (both integrate calendars etc.) and offer plenty available space. Preference is seen to be the Google offering and a large cohort of students will be trialed on this system from September 2009 and to roll out this to all students over 2009/2010.</p> <p>OVPLI have introduced a 'Student Voice' website which documents problems PGT students are experiencing and logs how the issue was dealt with. This should also be rolled out to PGR students via GRO.</p> <p>Both the Graduate Research Office and OVPLI website needs major content enhancement</p>	<p>Registry/Finance Office</p> <p>GRO (HR)</p> <p>(ISS)</p> <p>OVPLI / GRO (ISS)</p> <p>OVPLI / SO (ISS)</p> <p>GRO /OVPLI / SO (ISS)</p>	<p>A</p> <p>A</p> <p>A</p> <p>A</p> <p>B</p>
--	--	---	---	---	--

			and financial support, which is necessary to enhance the objectives of this unit.		
4	P2	The University should develop and promote effective guidance to define roles and inform conduct in the context of PGR progression and final examination	University is currently re-writing the Rules and Regulations in terms of PGR progression and final examination. This is part of a wider reappraisal of the academic regulations for postgraduate research students. It is anticipated that a full revised set of academic regulations will be issued to Schools and Faculties in the academic year 2009/10 for comment and will then be discussed at University Standards Committee and then Academic Council for final approval.	GRO	B
5	P1	The University should develop a more robust Quality Assurance framework which focuses more on managing the risks associated with the apprenticeship model (PGR) and/or the single point of contact model (PGT)) (e.g. training of Supervisors, Project Managers, Programme Chairs, Heads of School)	<p>Along with the 'Guide for Staff' in Recommendation 3 a. and the support offered now by GRO and OVPLI based on Recommendation 2, the Quality Assurance should be enhanced.</p> <p>The GRO aims to provide PGR Supervisor training in terms of Standard Operating Procedure etc. The current apprenticeship model has significant structured elements in place including annual progression and a rigorous process for transfer to PhD. The revised academic regulations for research degrees will contain robust quality assurance procedures.</p> <p>The OVPLI will develop the provision of PGT Chairperson Standard Operating Procedure training etc. to guide and support the Chairs role in PGT and to enhance the PGT student's experience.</p>	<p>GRO / OVPLI (SS&amp;D, HR)</p> <p>GRO (Registry/HR)</p> <p>OVPLI (Registry/HR)</p>	<p>B</p> <p>B</p> <p>B</p>
6	P2	The University should review workload allocation models across Schools to ensure that the role	The staff workload must be addressed in each academic unit to maintain equity across	UE / Fac. Ex. Deans	B



		and responsibilities of Programme Chairs are managed consistently and equitably across the institution	school/faculty and institution.	(Heads of School)	
7	P2	The University should address anomalies in the Marks and Standards relating to Taught Postgraduate programmes with particular reference to the dissertation/ project.	Marks and Standards have been replaced and such anomalies have been addressed. The new Interim Marks and Standards will be in place from September 2009. Elements relating to dissertations (e.g. number of attempts, change of topic, issues around resits/retakes) will need standardisation across programmes.	Registrar	A
8	P3	In future, the University should consider <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. the inclusion of student representatives on the Self Assessment Committee supporting a thematic review and any equivalent entity</li> <li>b. a methodology for self assessment which secures a broader level of engagement and higher levels of representation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. This recommendation will be taken on board for future reviews</li> <li>b. The Quality Promotion Unit will make efforts to widen engagement in future reviews</li> </ul>	QPU	A

### 3. SUMMARY OF THE IMMEDIATE PLAN

Action	Responsibility	Timeline
Marks and Standards relating to PGT	Registrar	September 2009
Guide for Staff Resource	OVPLI/GRO/SS&D	September 2009
PGR Supervision training	GRO	September 2009
Expand opening times during registration and fee payment for part-time students	Registry, ISS, DP	September 2009
Implementation and support of the Champion for PGT needs	OVPLI, University Ex. and Secretary's Office	September 2009

### 4. SUMMARY OF THE ONE-YEAR PLAN

Action	Responsibility	Timeline
A map of the student journey	OVPLI, GRO & SS&D	September 2010
PGR Application via PAC	OVPLI / DP	September 2010
Improvements to the online registration system	Registry, ISS, DP/Registrar	September 2010
DCU website Navigation and Portal Page Usage	ISS	July 2010
Expansion of the e-mail system	ISS	July 2010
GRO website content enhancement for PGR	GRO, ISS	May 2010
OVPLI website content enhancement for PGT	OVPLI, ISS	May 2010
Rules and Regulations in terms PGR progression and final examination	GRO	December 2009
Quality Assurance framework for staff points of contact	OVPLI, GRO, SS&D, HR	September 2010
Workload allocation models across Schools	Ex. Deans, Heads of Schools	September 2010
Location of PGT outside of normal hours lectures and Study Room availability etc. into one main DCU building with catering support. Access to catering, labs (safety) and library outside working hours.	OVPLI, GRO, DP, Secretary's Office, SS&D, Catering, Faculty timetabling, Library and Health& Safety	September 2010

### 5. SUMMARY OF THE THREE-YEAR PLAN

Action	Responsibility	Timeline
Continuation of the appointment of support to the champion for PGT needs from Immediate plan (Section 3)	OVPLI, University Ex. and Secretary's Office	September 2011

### 6. APPENDICES

- A. Thematic Quality Review Committee for the Self-Assessment Report
- B. Peer Review Group
- C. Thematic Quality Review Co-ordinators for the Quality Improvement Plan

(All presented on the following pages)

## Appendix A: Thematic Quality Review Committee for the Self-Assessment Report

Committee Member	Role in DCU	Contribution
Prof. Gary Murphy	Director of Graduate Research	Co-Chair, Co-ordinator of Research Related Matters and Graduate Studies Input
Dr. Joseph Stokes	Lecturer/Postgraduate Chairperson, School of Mechanical & Manufacturing Engineering	Co-Chair, Review and SAR Co-ordinator and Taught Related Matters
Dr. Anne Morrissey	Postgraduate Chairperson Academic Co-ordinator, Oscail	Co-Chair, Co-ordinator of Taught Related Matters
Dr. Claire Bohan	Director of Student Support and Development	Central Student Support and Development Service Matters
Ms Tanya Keogh	Graduate Research Officer, Graduate Research Office	Research Related Matters and Graduate Studies Input
Ms Aisling McKenna	Research and Analysis Officer, President's Office	Central Statistics and Survey Generation and Compilation of Results

## Appendix B: Membership of the Peer Review Group

Member	Position
Dr. Pdraig O'Murchu	Education and Research Manager Intel Ireland
Prof. Brigid Heywood	Pro Vice Chancellor Research and Enterprise The Open University
Prof. John Breen	Dean, Graduate School University of Limerick
Dr. Carmel Mulcahy	Head of School Education Studies Internal Rapporteur DCU
Prof. Jenny Williams	Director of the Centre for Translation and Textual Studies, SALIS, DCU

## Appendix C: Thematic Quality Review Co-Ordinators for the Quality Improvement Plan

Committee Member	Role in DCU	Contribution
Prof. Gary Murphy	Director, Graduate Research Office	Co-Chair, Co-ordinator of Research Related Matters and Graduate Research Studies Input
Dr. Joseph Stokes	Lecturer/Postgraduate Chairperson, School of Mechanical & Manufacturing Engineering	Co-Chair, Co-ordinator of Taught Related Matters
Dr. Anne Morrissey	Postgraduate Chairperson Academic Co-ordinator, Oscail	Co-Chair, Co-ordinator of Taught Related Matters

### Thematic Quality Review Co-ordinators for the Quality Improvement Plan

1. Co-ordinators for responses to PRG recommendations and development of QuIP document:

**Prof. Gary Murphy, Dr. Joseph Stokes and Dr. Anne Morrissey**

2. Co-ordinators for implementation of QuIP action items and one and three year plans:

**Prof Richard O’Kennedy** - All University level recommendations that fall under the remit of OVPLI

**Prof Gary Murphy** - All University level recommendations that fall under the remit of Graduate Research

**Prof Anne Scott** - All other University level recommendations

**Dr Claire Bohan** - All recommendations related to Student Support and Development

## PRIORITISED RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

1. Funding a Pilot Scheme to Expand of the opening times during registration and fee payment for part-time students, 3 evenings for PT PGT both in September and January of 2009/10

**Estimated cost: €5,000**

2. Further funding for full roll out of training of PGR supervisors (3 year) programme through GRO

**Estimated cost: €10,500**

3. Further funding for preparation and training of PGT chairpersons (3 year) programme through OVPLI

**Estimated cost: €10,500**

4. Funding for the Graduate Research Office website content enhancement

**Estimated cost: €7,500**

5. Funding for the OVPLI website content enhancement

**Estimated cost: €7,500**

6. Funding to support the activities of the PGT champion

**Estimated cost: €20,000**

**Total funding requirement: €61,000**