

Quality Assurance / Quality Improvement  
Programme for Academic & Administrative  
Units  
2003-2004



Quality Improvement Plan

for Student Affairs

January 25 2005

Peer Review Group (PRG) visit	25 – 27 February 2004
Final PRG Report received	6 May 2004
Unit Quality Improvement Plan received	15 September 2004
Follow-up Meeting held	8 December 2004

## Follow-up Process

- Following receipt of the finalised peer review group report on 6 May 2004, the Director of Quality Promotion sent copies to:
  - the Director of the Unit, who ensured that a copy was made available to all members of staff and informed the unit of the requirement to produce a unit response (in consultation with the reporting senior officer, the Vice-President for Learning Innovation / Registrar)
  - the President, other member of Executive and the Quality Promotion Committee
- The Director of the Unit sent the Unit Response to the Director of Quality Promotion on 15 September 2004.
- The Director of Quality Promotion convened a follow-up meeting on 8 December 2004 which involved the following participants:
  - *Representing the Quality Promotion Unit*
    - Dr Pdraig Walsh (Chair)
  - *Representing the Unit*
    - Mr Barry Kehoe (Head of Unit)
    - Ms Helena Ahern
  - *Representing line-management*
    - Prof. Maria Slowey (Vice-President for Learning Innovation / Registrar)
  - *Representing Senior Management*
    - Ms Marian Burns (in place of the Deputy-President)
  - *Representing the Peer Review Group*
    - Prof. Jurgen Burzlauff (School of Mathematical Sciences)
    -
- Following the above meeting, the Quality Improvement Plan was drafted and sent for consideration by Executive on 25 January 2005
- Following approval of the Quality Improvement Plan, the Director of Quality Promotion will prepare a summary report incorporating the Peer Review Group Report and the Quality Improvement Plan for consideration (and approval) by the Governing Authority on 10 February 2005
- The Peer Review Group Report, the Quality Improvement Plan and the Summary Report to Governing Authority will then be published on the university website.

## **Contents**

- 1.** Introduction
- 2.** Response To Recommendations In The Peer Review Group Report  
(from Unit and Executive)
- 3.** Prioritised Resource Requirements (from Unit)
- 4.** Summary of One-Year Plan (from Unit)
- 5.** Summary of Five-Year Plan (from Unit)

Appendix One - Membership of Quality Committees and Peer Review Group

Appendix Two – Student Affairs Heads and Officers Group

Appendix Three – Student Affairs Organisational Chart

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Peer Review Group Report was discussed at a meeting of all staff of the Unit. It was decided not to form a new quality committee to co-ordinate the Unit's response and to draw up the Unit's Quality Improvement Plan, but rather that this would be done by the entire staff of the Unit. This has been done through a series of Unit meetings, utilising the shared drive and the e-mail system to develop the plan.

This ensured that there was maximum collaboration by everyone in the unit in the evolution of the response and the plan.

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

### Recommendations for and Responses to Quality Improvement

<b>Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report</b>  (The appropriate level of the response is given in brackets, be that at the level of the Unit ( <b>UNIT</b> ), or University Executive Senior Management ( <b>ESM</b> ))	<b>Response in Quality Improvement Plan</b>
<b>1.</b> Overall, communication needs to be improved with emphasis on the removal of the 'bottleneck' system of vertical communication that currently prevails. ( <b>UNIT</b> )	<p><b>Note: The text and numbers in bold after each Unit response below represent the timeline for implementation</b></p> <p>1.1: <u>Student Affairs</u> will ensure better utilisation of the Heads and Officers (H &amp; O) Group (see Appendix two) in order to develop the vision, mission and objectives of Student Affairs and as a forum for discussion, decision-making, and vertical communication. <b>Done</b></p> <p>1.2: In order to achieve this, <u>Student Affairs</u> has defined the purpose, terms of reference and modus operandi of this group (Attached in Appendix Two are the terms of reference of the Heads &amp; Officers Group, plus, for information, the Student Affairs organisational chart is given in Appendix Three) <b>Done</b></p> <p>1.3: <u>Student Affairs</u> has set up a schedule of meetings with the Vice President for Learning Innovation / Registrar, to include meetings both with the whole unit and with the H &amp; O Group, and utilise this new reporting relationship to enhance communication from and to Student Affairs. <b>Done</b></p> <p>1.4: <u>Student Affairs</u> will seek better feedback from the Executive, Budget Committee and Human Resources by clarifying what the feedback mechanism is, agreeing an acceptable timeframe for feedback, and seeking reasons for decisions. The recently completed process review by the President will facilitate this. <b>03.05</b></p>

<p><b>2.</b> The PRG felt that the unit needs to work on ensuring that the functions of Student Affairs need to be more visible within the overall University system, e.g. by branding Student Affairs materials and outputs. <b>(UNIT)</b></p>	<p>2.1: <u>Student Affairs</u> has already met with the Communications &amp; Marketing Office to discuss Unit identity, logo and profile within the University community and the branding of Student Affairs materials and outputs. Further meetings will be held to progress this. <b>Initial meeting held, process to be completed by 04.05</b></p> <p>2.2: <u>Student Affairs</u> will review all Student Affairs publications, including the Student Handbook, using a matrix approach, with particular reference to language and communication <b>03.05</b></p> <p>2.3: <u>Student Affairs</u> will employ a web editor to review and maintain Student Affairs website (half of whose time will be given to the Careers Website) <b>Meeting has been held with Director of Computer Services to agree duties, duration and level of post Appointment to be made 03.05</b></p> <p>2.4: <u>Student Affairs</u> has already agreed a new logo the unit <b>Done</b></p> <p>2.5: <u>Student Affairs</u> will produce a summary flyer on the unit for staff <b>04.05</b></p> <p>2.6: <u>Student Affairs</u> will propose that the name of The Pavilion be changed to 'Student Affairs Building' <b>03.05</b></p> <p>2.7: <u>Student Affairs</u> will continue the process of improving signage for all the services within the unit, ensuring that service signs also carry the Student Affairs logo. <b>Some already done (e.g. Health Service), process to be completed by 08.05</b></p> <p>2.8: <u>Student Affairs</u> will produce a poster summarising the services and activities of the unit <b>09.05</b></p> <p>2.9: <u>Student Affairs</u> has erected a new Student Affairs notice board in the Hub concourse <b>Done</b></p> <p>2.10: <u>Student Affairs</u> now ensures that the name 'Student Affairs' is included in the address of each service <b>Done</b></p> <p>2.11: <u>Student Affairs</u> has commenced the process of appointing alternates to the Director of Student Affairs to attend programme boards and other committees of the University <b>In Progress, to be completed 09.05</b></p> <p>2.12: <u>Student Affairs</u> will draw up a communications and marketing strategy for the unit, incorporating the above proposals and including other measures within an integrated plan. <b>08.05</b></p>
---	---

<p><b>3.</b> Student Affairs should prioritise its activities in line with its role and function as agreed with the senior management of the university. <b>(UNIT)</b></p>	<p>3.1: <u>Student Affairs</u> will agree the role and function of the unit, and its integrated structure with senior management <b>05.05</b></p> <p>3.2: <u>Student Affairs</u> will revisit the unit strategic plan and the strategic plan of each service and prioritise in line with the agreed role and function of the unit. <b>05.05</b></p>
<p><b>4.</b> Heads and Officers Group currently in operation in the unit needs to be more active and more utilized, particularly with respect to enhancing communication within and beyond the Student Affairs unit. <b>(UNIT)</b></p>	<p><i>[Covered under first recommendation above, on communication]</i></p>
<p><b>5.</b> The unit needs to ensure that all services work more closely together through this forum and to utilise potential synergies that may exist between services within the unit, between the Unit and academic departments and through relationships that exist between services and external agencies. <b>(UNIT)</b></p>	<p>5.1: <u>Student Affairs</u> will investigate the feasibility of multi-service programmes (e.g. a Student Wellness Programme) <b>06.05</b></p> <p>5.2: Each service within <u>Student Affairs</u> will produce a plan on how it can liase with and work with other services within the unit in the performance of its function <b>06.05</b></p> <p><i>Note: While ensuring a greater degree of co-operation and synergy between the services, we will also recognise that not all the activities within the unit are unit-wide, and that different services have different client bases</i></p> <p>5.3: <u>Student Affairs</u> will continue to utilise programme board representation and other committee memberships (see 2.11 above) <b>In Progress, to be completed 09.05</b></p> <p>5.4: <u>Student Affairs</u> will investigate the feasibility of a unit-wide charitable fundraising initiative <b>03.05</b></p>

<p><b>6.</b> The University should appropriately include the Student Affairs expertise in the relevant University committee structures. <b>(UNIT)</b></p>	<p>6.1: <u>Student Affairs</u> will continue the process of more fully utilising the existing committee and programme board memberships (see 2.11 and 5.3 above) <b>In Progress</b></p> <p>6.2: Members of <u>Student Affairs</u> will continue the process of volunteering for working parties where appropriate and in so far as priorities allow. <b>In Progress</b></p> <p>6.3: <u>Student Affairs</u> will continue to emphasise that the unit has its own professional viewpoint and expertise, and that the representation and input of Student Affairs is very distinct from student representation <b>In Progress</b></p>
<p><b>7.</b> There is a continuous need to monitor, and develop the management and leadership skills of the key people in the unit. <b>(UNIT)</b></p>	<p>7.1: <u>Student Affairs</u> will submit a funding request for Quality Improvement funding to the Budget Committee to seek to obtain an adequate staff development / management development budget <b>Funding requested in Section 3</b></p> <p>7.2: <u>Student Affairs</u> will request a specific management and leadership course for those in the unit with management responsibilities within the unit, similar to the generic course offered in the past through the Inter-University Training Network. Student Affairs notes the roll out by <u>Human Resources</u> of a significant management development programme for Heads in late 2004 and early 2005 and notes that this will be rolled out to middle managers in the near future. <b>02.05</b></p> <p>7.3: <u>Student Affairs</u> will utilise the potential of the proposed Performance Management and Development Scheme (PMDS). <b>When it is implemented</b></p> <p>7.4: All those in <u>Student Affairs</u> who have a management function within the unit will seek appropriate feedback on their management role from those who report to them. <b>Ongoing, with initial feedback by 03.05</b></p>
<p><b>8.</b> Individual members of the unit need to find strategic ways to set boundaries on their activities and not to spread them too thinly. <b>(UNIT)</b></p>	<p>8.1: This will be covered during the annual PMDS interviews. It will also be borne in mind by each line manager in <u>Student Affairs</u>.</p> <p>8.2: <u>Student Affairs</u> will list the roles and functions of the unit and present them to senior management for agreement. <b>05.05 (related to 3.1)</b></p>



<p><b>9.</b> Review processes needs to be embedded more actively and consistently into the ongoing activities of the unit <b>(UNIT)</b></p>	<p>9.1: <u>Student Affairs</u> will ensure that the bi-annual reviews of each service (around the beginning of each semester), which have not always taken place consistently in the last few years, will, commencing at the beginning of 2005 be carried out consistently and without fail</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>In Progress</b></p>
<p><b>10.</b> The creation of generic advice services for students on matters such as finance and tenancy agreements. <b>(UNIT)</b></p>	<p>10.1: The <u>Heads and Officers</u> group of <u>Student Affairs</u> will investigate the need for an information &amp; welfare officer to answer general queries and advise on practical welfare matters.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>03.05</b></p> <p>10.2: <u>Student Affairs</u> will also make a proposal to the University for the establishment of a one-stop-shop for students to handle all routine administrative transactions between students and the university. This would handle many functions currently carried out separately by, for example, the Registry, Finance Office and the Buildings Office.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>04.05</b></p> <p><i>Note: The two functions given in the recommendation are already being performed: the Student Financial Assistance Service within Student Affairs already gives advice on finance, and the off-campus accommodation office in Campus Residences gives advice on accommodation (including tenancy agreements).</i></p>
<p><b>11.</b> Put a complaints procedure in place. <b>(UNIT)</b></p>	<p>11.1: <u>Student Affairs</u>, in liaison with relevant colleagues will draft a protocol on complaints, indicating the various resources available for handling complaints on various matters (both academic and otherwise), and advising students of their rights.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>09.05</b></p> <p>11.2: <u>Student Affairs</u> will review, in liaison with the Students' Union, the system of class representatives and make recommendations on making it more effective.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>04.05</b></p> <p>11.3: <u>Student Affairs</u> will also seek to ensure that student representation is not diluted within the new academic structures</p>

<p><b>12.</b> There is an urgent need to clarify the position of the Sports Complex in the Student Affairs portfolio, as this is the only area within its remit that operates as a campus company. Senior Management needs to clarify the operational relationships in this area. <b>(ESM)</b></p>	<p>This review has now taken place and <u>Executive</u> has decided that the Sport &amp; Recreation Service within Student Affairs will continue to be responsible for maximising student participation in sport, supporting and developing our sports clubs, supporting elite sportspersons (including management of the sports scholarship scheme), and co-ordinating access by student clubs to our sports facilities. The sports facilities are now under a DCU company, with a board of management consisting of the Director of Student Affairs, the Director of Finance and the Director of Estates. The company has appointed a Chief Executive and other staff to manage the facilities.</p>
<p><b>13.</b> University Senior Management needs to define and communicate the role and function of Student Affairs both to the unit itself and to the wider University <b>(UNIT, ESM)</b></p>	<p>13.1: Prior to this happening, <u>Student Affairs</u> will engage in further dialogue with Senior Management and the Executive in order to convey its vision of Student Affairs and what it can contribute to the university. Student Affairs sees this as not only important but also urgent, as – in common with the PRG – <u>Student Affairs</u> feels that there is a lack of clarity and of understanding on the part of Senior Management as to our role.</p> <p>For its part, <u>Senior Management</u> wishes: (a) to reaffirm its endorsement of the integrated role that the unit plays within the university (b) to continue the process of assisting the unit with the development of its vision and (c) continues to be open for dialogue with the unit.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>In Progress, to be completed by 06.05</b></p>
<p><b>14.</b> The University should set out in a clear way the mechanisms for re-grading positions and work with Student Affairs to establish priorities and to clarify when re-grading is possible as well as the processes via which re-grading can be achieved. <b>(ESM)</b></p>	<p>14.1: <u>Student Affairs</u> agrees with the PRG and believes that this is an urgent and long-overdue priority and notes the commitment given by the President at a recent meeting with the unit. <u>Human Resources</u> is developing a reward and recognition scheme and competency-based assessment for non-academic staff through the Partnership process. This will be rolled out in 2005.</p>
<p><b>15.</b> Appropriate quality review procedures need to be agreed and pursued. <b>(UNIT)</b></p>	<p>15.1: <u>Student Affairs</u> will achieve this through the PMD Scheme, the bi-annual review of each service, and the enhanced role for the Heads and Officers Group.</p> <p>15.2: <u>Student Affairs</u> will continue to develop appropriate quality indicators for each service and for the overall unit, and in pursuit of this we will liaise with the Quality Officer and the IUQB. This has already been progress in the case of the careers service</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Already done with one service and ongoing with others</b></p>

<p><b>16.</b> There is an urgent need for a review of the structure and function of the Health Centre. <b>(UNIT, ESM)</b></p>	<p><u>Student Affairs</u> has already effected a major improvement by entering into an agreement with a local medical centre who are not only providing an increased number of hours of doctors' attendance per week, but are also contracted to provide a medical directorship role and medical back-up for the nurses.</p> <p>16.1: <u>Student Affairs</u> will carry out a review of the structure, function and scope of the Health Service, having regard to best practice in other universities, the needs of the students and other potential clients, and the availability of resources.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>06.05</b></p> <p>16.2: In this context, <u>Senior Management</u> undertakes that the unit will be consulted about any new developments in the provision of health service on campus</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>03.05</b></p>
<p><b>17.</b> There is a need to clarify the situation with respect to the development plans for the chaplaincy and the current use of the chaplaincy space for non chaplaincy related activities, such as the National Chamber Choir. <b>(E/SM)</b></p>	<p>17.1: <u>Student Affairs</u> will raise the issues of the extension of the Inter-Faith Centre and the reinstatement of the Garden of Remembrance with the <u>Executive</u>.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>03.05</b></p> <p>17.2: <u>Student Affairs</u> has already raised the issue of the National Chamber Choir, and are awaiting a response from the <u>President</u>, who is pursuing the matter.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>In Progress</b></p>
<p><b>18.</b> There needs to be an appropriately negotiated benefit structure to incentivise the Student Affairs team for any additional income generation undertaken by the Unit. <b>(E, SM)</b></p>	<p>18.1: <u>Student Affairs</u> believes that the primary purpose of the nine services within the unit is to provide services to students, which generate many important benefits for the University in terms of student satisfaction, student retention, student learning, development of student transferable skills, graduate loyalty (which is important for fundraising), and student recruitment/general university public profile. Direct income generation is not feasible for most of the services, and even where it might be possible it is important to ensure that it does not divert personnel from responding to the needs of our students.</p> <p>18.2: Where income generation is appropriate, <u>Student Affairs</u> agrees with the recommendation.</p>
<p><b>19.</b> PRG noted the potential of a faculty review process to inform decisions about the role of Student Affairs in the context of the University Strategy. <b>(UNIT)</b></p>	<p>The meaning of this is not clear to <u>Student Affairs</u>, but the unit would welcome any recognition of our role in the academic development of students and any strengthening of our links with faculties.</p>



### **3. PRIORITISED RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS**

**(1) 2.3:** Web Editor for eight months (Analyst Programmer 2): **€29,500**

The duration of this post and the level of appointment have been decided following discussions with the Director of Computer Services. The web editor would spend half of his/her time developing and maintaining the Careers Service website and the other half on completely re-designing the entire Student Affairs website (including making it more interactive).

**(2) 16.1:** Review of Health Service **€5,500**

We have identified a suitable person, a doctor who has worked in a university health centre in the past, and we are advised that this would be the cost of such a review (including two day's site visit and benchmarking).

**(3) 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9:** Marketing of Student Affairs: **€13,000**

This sum is based on costing received for the review of all Student Affairs publications (2.2), development of our logo and branding (2.4), staff summary flyer (2.5), signage for all the services within the unit (2.7), design and printing of the Student Affairs poster (2.8), the new Student Affairs notice board in the Hub (2.9)

**(4) 7.1, 7.2:** Management and leadership development **€4,000**

This is the estimated cost for courses in the various aspects of management for the seven members of the unit who have a management role.

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

At Unit Level

As clarified by the Director of Quality Promotion, this one-year plan is limited to the implementation of the recommendations of the Peer Review Group, and is without prejudice to the overarching Student Affairs strategic plan, which is already in place.

In section 2 a time line has been attached to each proposed response to the various recommendations. From this it can be seen that we envisage implementing all the responses within the 2004-2005 academic year.

In particular we will have an emphasis during the coming year on making progress on what we see as the three main thrusts of the nineteen recommendations: clarifying the role, functions and rationale for Student Affairs and reaching agreement on this with senior management, better marketing of Student Affairs, and improving the management structures of the Unit through strengthening the role of the Heads and Officers Group and through management development and other measures.

#### **5. SUMMARY OF THE FIVE-YEAR PLAN**

At Unit level

As said in section 4, we envisage all the responses being implemented within one year.

## **APPENDIX ONE**

### Membership of Quality Committees and Peer Review Group

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

Martina Crehan, First Year Student Support Facilitator  
Barry Kehoe – Director of Student Affairs  
Ruán Kennedy – Counsellor  
Colette Keogh – Secretary III  
Sinead Mahon - Nurse  
Muireann NiDhuigneáin – Head of Careers Service  
John O’Carroll – Sport & Recreation Officer  
Ita Tobin– Access Officer  
Catherine Roche – Administrative Assistant (Co-ordinator)  
Ian Russell – Societies Officer  
Gillian Smyth – Secretary II  
Agostino Sogaro - Chaplain

- **Peer Review Group**

Mr. Matt Doran - Student Services Administrative Officer - NUI  
Dr. Sarah Moore - Dean of Teaching & Learning (University of Limerick)  
Mr. Keith Cooper - Head of Student Services (Oxford Brookes University)  
Prof. Jurgen Burzlaff - Head School of Mathematical Sciences (DCU)  
Mr. Paul Smith – Desktop Services Manager (DCU)

- **Unit Quality Committee (for the Quality Improvement Plan)**

Helena Ahern, Head of Counselling Service  
Martina Crehan, First Year Student Support Facilitator  
John Gilligan, Chaplain  
Barry Kehoe, Director  
Sinead Mahon, Nurse  
Yvonne McLaughlin, Student Activities Officer  
Muireann NiDhuigneain, Head of Careers Service  
Catherine Roche, Administrative Assistant  
Ita Tobin, Access Officer

## **APPENDIX TWO**

### **Student Affairs Heads and Officers Group**

#### **Purpose of the Group:**

- To develop the vision, mission and objectives of Student Affairs;
- To enhance unit identity, cohesion, co-operation and communication within Student Affairs;
- To elaborate and propose recommendations on student policy and university policy on behalf of the unit;
- To promote a more collective approach to decision-making;
- To enhance communication with the senior management of the University, university decision-making bodies, and the wider university community;
- To support the Director in his leadership role;
- To provide Student Affairs representation on committees and working parties and at events and functions.

#### **Composition of the Group:**

- Director of Student Affairs;
- Administrative Assistant (secretary to the group);
- Heads of Service;
- Officers (e.g. Student Activities Officer, First Year Student Support Facilitator – these are typically one-person services);
- Where there is no clear Head of Service (e.g. Chaplaincy Service), the H&O group will decide on the representative.

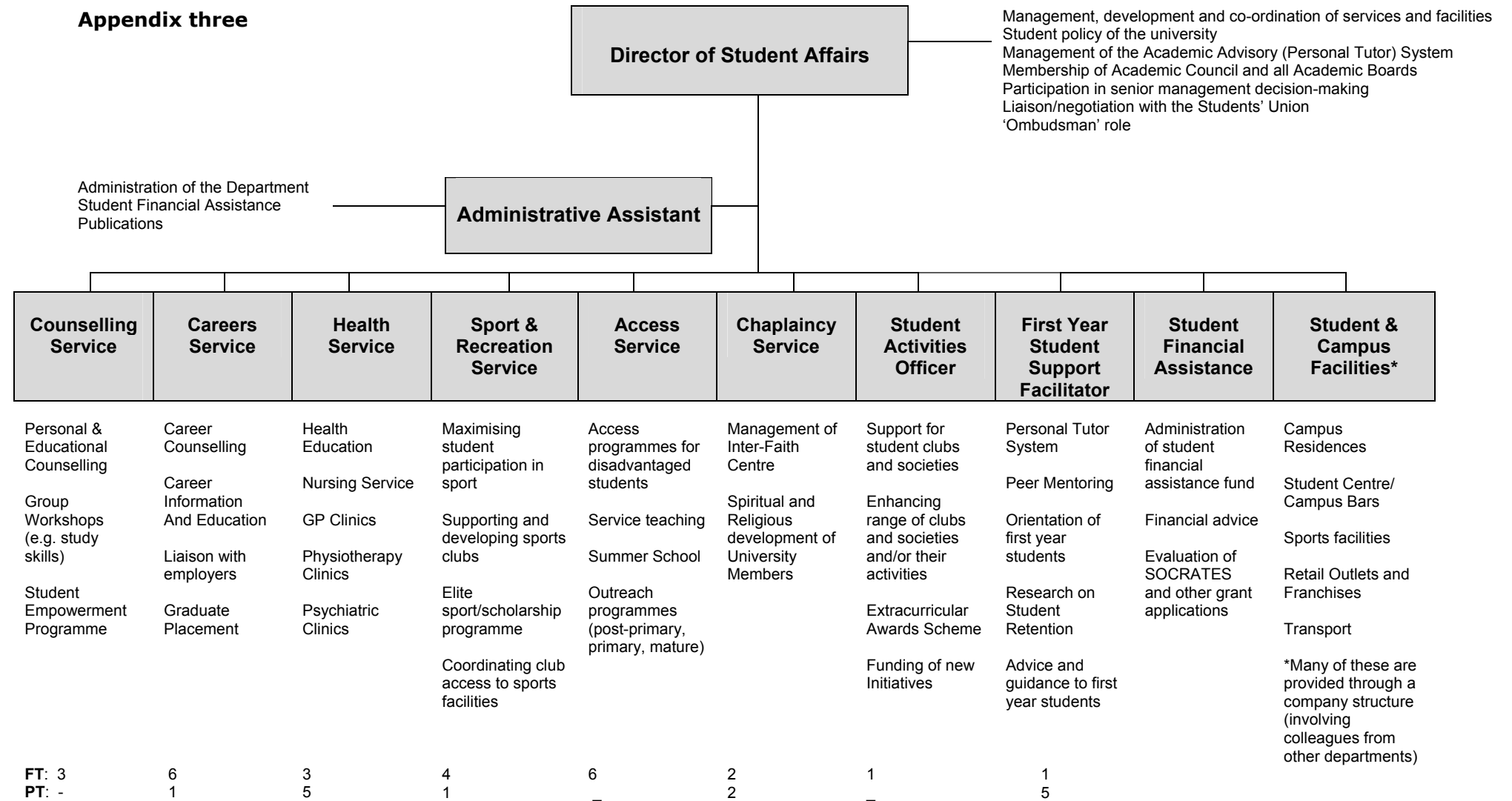
#### **Procedural Issues:**

- Meetings will be held every three weeks from September to June.
- The schedule of meetings and the names of the chairs for the coming academic year will be sent to all in June.
- There will be a rotating chair and each member will chair two consecutive meetings.
- The secretary to the group will take notes and place them on the shared drive (L:\Student Affairs\Meetings) so that all Student Affairs staff can access them.
- Items for the agenda will be requested on the Monday and the agenda will be circulated on the Thursday before each meeting.
- The first and last meetings of the year (September and June) will be strategic meetings.
- There should not be an undue emphasis on briefing items.
- In addition to whatever items are on the agenda, there will be a focus on one service per meeting.
- There may be a need for a single item meeting over and above the normal schedule and this will be notified if necessary.
- There will be an agreed implementation plan at the end of each meeting, with clear ownership of each action item.
- It is recognised that in some instances the Director of Student Affairs will make final decisions. However, for the majority of issues, decisions will be made by consensus.
- Working parties may be set up as required, and these working parties may include other members of Student Affairs, colleagues from outside Student Affairs, and/or other appropriate persons.





**Appendix three**



The Student Affairs Unit at DCU, as a team of professionals, is committed to promoting the holistic development and empowerment of students and to engaging in a proactive and integrated manner with those who affect this process, acting as an agent of change at individual, structural and policy level.



