Peer Review Group Report for Professional Support Areas

2018-19

of

Student Support & Development

Date: 27th – 29th March 2019

Contents

1 Introduction and Context

The broad approach to quality assurance and enhancement DCU aims to promote and develop a culture of quality throughout all aspects of the University. The framework derives from the spirit of Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement enshrined in the Universities Act (1997), which is the legislative basis for quality throughout the Irish University sector, and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

The DCU processes for quality reviews at DCU are further aligned to the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the published guidelines of Qualifications and Quality Ireland (QQI).

This Report presents the findings of a quality review of **Student Support & Development (SS&D)**, following a visit by the **Peer Review Group** undertaken on **27th – 29th March 2019**.

1.1 Overview of the Area under Review

Student Support & Development (SS&D) is the central unit in the University which provides ongoing support and developmental opportunities to all students in DCU, under- and postgraduate, on campus and on-line. Its role is to provide opportunities to the student body, which will help them develop the skills, experiences and knowledge which the University has committed to in the 2017-2022 DCU Strategic Plan Talent, Discover, and Transformation. SS&D is informed and guided by the Constituent Student Experience Strategy, which has major components relating directly to the provision of initiatives by SS&D and which was co-authored by the Director, with input from all units in SS&D. This Strategy provides SS&D with the roadmap for its on-going work.

Given the broad remit to support and develop the personal, professional and academic skills of DCU's students, SS&D is made up of a broad range of diverse units, each of which has a discrete area of focus and expertise, but which work collaboratively with other units in SS&D and across the university to provide the student with, as far as possible, a seamless student experience.

Core responsibilities of each area:

- **Student Advice Centre (SAC):** one-stop-shop which holds and distributes all information regarding SS&D services.
- **Mature Student Support:** located within the Student Advice Centre but a discrete function which focuses specifically on mature students' needs.

- **Counselling & Personal Development (CPD):** provides one to one psychological counselling to students, addressing personal, social, family and mental health difficulties with crisis and at risk support/containment intervention.
- **INTRA**: sources and places students on mandatory INTRA Work Placements in Ireland and abroad.
- **Financial Assistance Service:** responsible for the assessing, processing and allocation of the ESF Student Assistance Fund to students in financial difficulty during their studies. Allocates the 1916 Bursary to the recipients.
- **Disability & Learning Support (DLSS):** works with potential students to help them assess their suitability for university and discusses and provides the supports which they may need to help them complete their studies.

- **Careers Service:** enables students to make informed careers decisions, realise their career potential and actively contribute to the evolving workplace.
- **Access Service:** through its outreach work and post entry support, the Access Service targets potential students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds with a view to raising aspirations and enhancing their readiness for college.
- **Student Health Centre**: responsible for the primary healthcare of all DCU students who present with an illness to the Centre; manages incidents of contagious diseases with the HSE; provides vaccinations for students taking part in labs as part of their academic programmes, refers to hospitals and specialist services externally and provides advice to students and staff.
- **Chaplaincy:** provides care, creates community and nurtures spirituality. This Unit provides hospitable spaces for both social encounter and faith practice on all three teaching Campuses.
- **Student Learning:** Responsible for providing one-to-one and in-class support and guidance on all academic skills associated with university life.

SS&D is part of a cluster of units including the Registry, the Teaching Enhancement Unit, HERC (Higher Education Research Centre), the Open Education Unit and the National Institute for Digital Learning, which report into the Office of the Vice-President for Academic Affairs.

Area	Glasnevin Campus	St Patrick's Campus	Total
Number of Staff	39.4	12.5	51.9

Structure of SS&D
- The Structure of SS&D is largely flat, with each Unit made up of a Head, who reports directly to the Director. The Deputy Director reports to the Director, who in turn reports to the Vice President Academic Affairs / Registrar, through the Deputy Registrar / Dean of Teaching and Learning.
- In recent years, special responsibility for the Student Advice Centre and Student Learning was given to the Deputy Director (a new role following Incorporation) to allow a stronger focus to be placed on the development of these areas across the multi-campus environment. The Student Advice Centre is crucial in that it is the hub of all student supports and the bridge across the campuses. Student Learning has recently become a separate Unit, being formerly part of the Disability & Learning Support Service, and manages two Student Writing Centres on two campuses. As the Deputy Director is located primarily on the St Patrick's campus, this allows for cross-campus fertilization and the assurance of continuity in terms of service offering to the students on all campuses.

- **Location**: SS&D Offices and staff are physically located on two of the three DCU teaching campuses, i.e. the Glasnevin campus and the St. Patrick's campus. Chaplaincy has developed a presence on the All Hallows campus but, other than this service, students from All Hallows campus are largely catered for on the St Patrick's campus.

2   Approach to Self-Assessment

2.1   Quality Review Committee

The self-assessment phase of the Quality Review was led by an internal quality review committee. Committee. Membership was as follows:

Dr Claire Bohan (Chair)	Director, Student Support & Development / Chair
Ms Annabella Stover	Deputy Director, Student Support & Development
Ms Deirdre Moloney	Senior Student Support Office, Student Advice Centre
Ms Cathy McLoughlin	Head of Access
Ms Maeve Long	Head of INTRA
Ms Karina Curley	Student Learning Officer
Ms Helena Ahern	Head of Counselling & Personal Development
Ms Jessie Byrne	Head of Student Health Centre
Dr Carol Ellis	Disability Officer
Ms Yvonne McLoughlin	Head of Careers
Fr Seamus McEntee / Fr Paul Hampson / Philip McKinley	Chaplains (rotating Heads)

The Committee met at frequent intervals and distributed tasks to be completed amongst the group. Individuals were asked to collaborate with other relevant staff members outside of the Committee to assist them with the work or provide feed-in, where appropriate. At subsequent meetings, updates on tasks were provided to the larger group. Each representative from the Units fed back to their team at their Unit meetings (monthly or weekly). The Chair provided frequent updates to the whole SS&D staff body via email and links to Google Docs. Staff were invited to feed-in or seek clarity on any issues from the representative in their Unit or the Chair.

Apart from the summer strategic planning days, all staff met on two further occasions as a full group to discuss pieces of work which had been completed and/or drafts of the Self-Assessment Report. Staff were also invited to complete a Survey, allowing them to provide anonymous feedback on their own experience as a member of staff in SS&D and in the wider DCU community. Sub-groups across the Units continued to work on discrete pieces of the Quality Review preparation. Two drafts of the Self-Assessment Report were circulated to the entire staff body, to allow each member feed-back and have full oversight of the final Report. The final report was agreed with the SS&D Quality Review Committee before submission.

Whether through the planning days, cross-unit working groups, local unit updates or the anonymous survey, all staff were provided with an opportunity to feed into the Quality Review process and final SAR. This multi-faceted approach was crucial, due to the diversity of the Unit and individual areas of focus, the multi-campus location of SS&D staff and the varying levels of experience in a Quality Review Process.

2.2   The Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

Overall, the PRG commended the thoroughness and comprehensiveness of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and accompanying documentation. The PRG considered that in the preparation of the SAR there was extensive involvement of all staff and additionally each unit had a representative on the SS&D quality review committee. The use of a Google Folder also ensured transparency and

effective communication within SS&D throughout the process. Input was obtained from wider University colleagues through a staff survey and provided insights into areas of improvement in communications and collaboration. A dedicated student survey was not undertaken, due to the large number of recent surveys (FUSE and CINNTE). The emphasis on ISSE, which provides limited direct information on SS&D activities, also impacts on survey fatigue within the student population and informed this decision. Given DCU's commitment to NStEP, the SAR might have included a student representative to ensure that a student perspective was reflected. Employer feedback was obtained through formal and informal interactions at fairs and at interview sessions. SS&D demonstrated that it has very effective relationships with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and philanthropy to fund disadvantaged students and the DCU Leadership and Life Skills Centre.

There was evidence of a self-reflective approach throughout the self-assessment report. There was clear alignment with the University Strategy in all areas of its activities. The PRG would have welcomed a complete organisational chart showing the relationship of the Director to the Senior Management Group and the reporting responsibilities of the Deputy Director. (It is acknowledged that this was given in the text.) Further comments on the SWOT Analysis and Plans for Improvement are given in Section 6.

3 Approach Taken by Peer Review Group

3.1 Peer Review Group Members

Membership of the Peer Review Group for the Quality Review included:

- Dr Manuel Alonso, Associate Chief Operating Officer (Director of Student Services) Loughborough University, Loughborough (Chair)
- Dr Pat Morgan, VP for Student Experience, National University of Ireland, Galway
- Ms Fíona Ní Chinnéide, Executive Director, Irish Penal Reform Trust
- Ms Goretti Daughton, Faculty Manager, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, DCU (Rapporteur)
- Professor Pádraig Ó Duibhir, Deputy Dean, Institute of Education, DCU

3.2 Overview of Approach Taken by Peer Review Group

The Peer Review Group was largely self-organising in its approach. A Chairperson was chosen through discussion on the first morning of the visit and they were tasked with: ensuring appropriate timekeeping during the visit; ensuring members of the PRG were clear on their roles; and ensuring members of the SRG were clear on their specific areas of questioning for individual sessions. In order to maximise the outputs from each session, the PRG spent time at the outset of the day (or the conclusion of the day before) discussing and agreeing lines of enquiry. This was done for the entire days' worth of sessions in order to avoid duplication of questioning and to enable triangulation of lines of enquiry across sessions.

There was good communication between the PRG and the QPO throughout the visit and on a number of occasions specific information or clarification of a point of fact sought by the PRG was provided by the QPO or by a member of SS&D team in a timely manner. This ensured the visit was able to proceed on time and that the PRG was able to form judgements on key issues and areas of activity.

4   Approach to Quality Assurance and Enhancement

SS&D has demonstrated the centrality of quality assurance and enhancement to its endeavours both through its comprehensive response to the Quality Improvement Plan (QUIP) which was completed on foot of the previous Quality Review in 2012 and also through its ongoing success in securing quality enhancement funding. The following comments relate the SS&D Quality Improvement Plan (QUIP) which was completed on foot of the previous Quality Review in 2012:

Completed
- Responsibility for the development of an integrated Sports Strategy for DCU moved from SS&D to a new unit of the university which includes the DCU Academies. A Sports Strategy for DCU was launched in this academic year by this unit.
- The provision of guidance to staff about potential liabilities associated with providing advice and interventions outside normal working hours is covered under the DCU "Lone and Out of Hours Working Policy" and all SS&D staff are briefed on the policy. Staff are advised, where possible, to conduct their business during working hours and to follow the Lone and out of Hours Working Policy, including downloading SafeZone - a free app service to give round-the-clock safety reassurance to DCU staff and students.
- Issues around personal and other emergencies on campus and outside normal working hours have been addressed in a number of ways including the adoption of the Framework Safety Statement at institutional level. The Director of SS&D is a member of the university-wide Emergency Management Group. One of the initiatives of this Group was the adoption of SafeZone. Use of the app is a personal choice but is an important resource at the disposal of all staff and students. SS&D has created guidelines for SS&D staff in relation to dealing with distressed students, how and when to escalate a problem and when to seek help if necessary.
- While the recruitment of mental health mentors has not been progressed within SS&D, this role has been taken on by a number of student societies. SS&D Counselling and Personal Development staff provide training and support for the participating societies. DCU staff including SS&D staff have had the opportunity to participate in Suicide Awareness training facilitated by the Human Resources Learning & Development Unit. The 24/7, 365 days a year, Freephone for students to register and when urgent to speak with a counsellor on the phone is a recent and very important development in the area of mental health support.
- SS&D systematically collates data through its CRM and other local systems to ensure that there is a clear focus on student issues and effective responses. The planned deployment by the University of a new Student Information System and centralised support for CRM will greatly enhance the capacity of SS&D to collate and analyse data and to work across units.

Work in Progress
- As part of the implementation of the DCU Strategic Plan 2017-2022, a new Student Experience Committee will be established with a view to developing a coherent and visible pathway to the network of support arrangements for students at all stages of the student life cycle.
- Developments in relation to INTRA, the Careers Service, Faculties and Employers including the SME sector are ongoing.

5   Findings of the Peer Review Group

5.1   Planning and Effective Management of Resources

Over the course of the visit, the PRG observed a number of areas of strength relating to planning and the effective management of resources. SS&D is to be **commended** on the following:

- There is demonstrably strong and dynamic leadership across SS&D. This begins with the Director of Service who sets a clear vision for the service and who demonstrates considerable tenacity and energy in delivering positive change for the benefit of students. This was remarked upon by colleagues from across other areas of DCU during the review process. This strong leadership clearly extends beyond the Director, however, and is evident in the way in which individual areas of SS&D pursue their agendas.

- Over the period under review there have been some very significant changes at DCU, most notably Incorporation. It was clear to the PRG that SS&D had engaged positively and proactively in responding to this changing environment. The Director and her colleagues evidenced a pragmatic approach to the challenges faced and had successfully adapted their services to meet changing demands.

- One challenge posed by Incorporation is clearly the need to operate an equitable service for students across multiple campuses. It was clear to the PRG that SS&D had met this challenge effectively, with very good provision of services across the two main sites. Students did not report significant variance in their experience across the campuses and SS&D had worked to ensure cross-reference between the campuses by, for example, basing some roles across the two sites.

- During the period under review SS&D has had to operate within significant resource constraints. In this context they should be commended on the way they have deployed their resources (staffing and otherwise) for maximum benefit. The scale and breadth of activity covered on their present staff base is remarkable and staff are clearly motivated to provide an excellent service to students.

SS&D are now in a good position to build on the strengths above to ensure they are able to meet future challenges and continue to provide an excellent service. To support future developments, the PRG **recommends** the following:

Over the period under review, SS&D has needed to respond organically to staffing restrictions and challenges faced. Some sections have been added to their area of activity and others removed. Given the significant changes the services have been through, there is an opportunity now for reflection. The PRG recommends that SS&D review their current structures to ensure they are fit for purpose and fit for the future and should consider the consolidation of functions in order to deliver a seamless experience for stakeholders (students, DCU staff, business/ employers).

SS&D is to be commended for its strong and dynamic leadership and also for the breadth of its activity given its present staff base. However, the current operating structure can lead to reliance on individuals either as inspirational leaders or as single points of failure. The PRG therefore recommends that SS&D should ensure clear succession planning across SS&D to maintain quality and ensure the resilience of services in as far as possible.

Over the course of the review the PRG heard concerns from SS&D management that provision had not been made to support international students with a disability due to funding constraints. This will be a matter of concern for the DCU senior leadership team and should be rectified in order to ensure parity of experience for international students. The PRG therefore **recommends** that DCU senior leadership should ensu

re the provision and immediate availability of funding to support international students with a disability. This funding should be ring-fenced for this specific purpose.

DCU is known for its innovation and its willingness to engage in new projects or developments, often driven by senior management. Over the course of the visit the PRG heard very clearly that this was 'part of DCU's DNA'. Given their centrality to the student experience, a number of new institutional developments will inevitably require input from SS&D and changes to the services provided. The PRG found that on some occasions there was insufficient line of sight and engagement for SS&D on the pipeline of new institutional projects and how they would affect the services they provide. This had led to situations which might expose DCU to significant reputational risk in not being able to deliver against stated priority projects. The PRG therefore **recommends** that, where new projects are being instigated, there should be an adequate impact assessment of senior management decisions on the capacity of SS&D to deliver its core functions alongside proposed new developments.

5.2   Effectiveness of Activities and Processes

It was the view of the PRG that the organisation and management of SS&D is effective. Staff members demonstrated a positive engagement in their work and a clear understanding of their own roles and responsibilities. The PRG noted that the SS&D units have regular communication/meetings and also communicate regularly with key stake holders including the Office of Student Life and the Students Union, INTRA placement providers, and employers.

It was noted that the structures, systems and processes in place were developed to meet the needs of a smaller university at an earlier stage in its development, and while still fit for purpose, would now benefit from review and revision to meet the needs of the next phase of the university's development. In particular, given the significant growth in student numbers and the complexity of presenting cases, it was **recommended** that multidisciplinary case conference meetings for high risk students are reintroduced to support students and also to enhance the effectiveness of SS&D across its constituent units.

While the communication strategies deployed by SS&D were considered to be very effective, it was **recommended** that consideration is given to the further development of information online for both internal and external stakeholders.   The PRG commended the very significant resources that have already been developed as part of the Discover DCU Pre-Orientation courses available via Loop at http://loop.dcu.ie and the methodology used for the development of the online Student Assistance Fund (SAF) application process. By adopting "think online first" approach to the provision and communication of resources and services and layer on top of this, SS&D will be well placed to address the requirements of all student cohorts, staff and external stakeholders on an ongoing basis. SS&D will have opportunities to pursue developments in this area in conjunction with the introduction of a new Student Information System (SIS) by the university.

5.3   Communication and Provision of Information

SS&D communications are continuously adapting and evolving to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body. Information about SS&D services is made available through the Student Advice Centre, DCU website, orientation programmes, plasma screens, among other modes including email; SS&D also works with the Students Union to facilitate two-way information flow with students. SS&D draws on a range of technology to respond to changing communication needs, including: webinars, screencasts, Skype, Google hangouts, and social media (Snapchat / Facebook / Twitter / Instagram). There is an opportunity to further enhance communications with students through engagement with the class rep system and peer-led communications, including student blogs about service experiences.

Examples of excellence include the Discover DCU series of online modules, which is exemplary; this online orientation helps new student navigate the campus and is an innovative response to a First Year intake that grew by over 50% from 2012 to 2019. It is suggested that Discover DCU could be included at offer stage (rather than on acceptance of a place, as it is currently) to encourage potential students to choose DCU on the basis of the significant support and development services offered by SS&D. Other areas of innovation, such as access to Writing Centre support via video conferencing, are very positive. Increased use of online modules, interactive courses and video-conferencing will facilitate an increasingly diverse student body, including students who are commuting over long distances.

There is wide recognition across the university staff of the important positive role that SS&D plays in supporting students. However, there is a need for increased awareness about the range of services available and how to access these, along with information on how to respond to students in crisis, especially students who are out of the country. Scheduling of SS&D information sessions for academic staff during the first week of exams could be explored, along with the development of an online 'tool kit' on services available.

SS&D would like to do more in terms of communicating their impact, and the SAR process has improved the collation of cross-unit data. In terms of campus identity, SS&D branding is in transition. There is no designated internal communications resource at university level to support SS&D communications or internal marketing of services to students; this is a challenge.

Overall, the PRG commends the proactive approach taken by SS&D in employing new technologies to meet the demand of increasing numbers of students, and recommends continuing development of communications at internal and external levels.

The PRG **recommends** the following:

A broad review of information sharing, both within and outside SS&D, should be undertaken. Formal and informal communication across SS&D units works well, particularly as it relates to meeting individual students' needs. This is largely reliant on direct personal contact between SS&D staff, however, and individual units are not always aware of a student's engagement across other services. The current inadequate CRM system presents particular risk, and the lack of in-house expertise is a strain on resources. Additionally, INTRA and the Careers Office maintain different databases. Implementation of the new SIS should be prioritised, with access to central support and staff training in the system. To complement this, a review of data collection, collation, access and privacy statements should be undertaken to ensure adequate information is available to inform service planning, while remaining GDPR compliant. Access to aggregate anonymised data on, for example, religious affiliations would assist the university in ensuring adequate facilities are available to meet students' needs.

SS&D information sections on the DCU website are not all optimised for mobiles, and crisis supports are not clearly sign-posted from the home page. SS&D sections on the DCU website would benefit from reorganisation from the user perspective, and should be upgraded to ensure information on services offered by all units is mobile-enabled with easy access to information, including on crisis management and out of hours' services in particular. The introduction of the 24/7 free phone access to counselling registration and support is a very positive development, and has significantly reduced waiting times for services. SS&D should continue to monitor emerging trends in modes of communications and plan accordingly to future-proof delivery of services, for example, responding to user preferences of students for text-based communications and supports.

A range of external stakeholders, including employers and second-level schools, experience significant difficulty engaging with DCU through bespoke portals – including INTRA, mentoring, and the Access Achievement Awards scheme. Stakeholders reported not being able to complete sign-up processes on some of these portals, which represents opportunities missed for DCU and for students. This was

within the context of otherwise highly positive experiences of DCU and SS&D programmes and supports. Upgrading of these external-facing interfaces to support seamless DCU engagement for external stakeholders is therefore a priority, and must integrate with the new CRM to maximise efficiency and opportunities.

5.4   Ongoing Quality Enhancement

The PRG was very impressed with and commends the ongoing commitment to quality improvement from the SS&D team. The PRG detected a general openness and responsiveness to changing environments. The level of quality improvement grants awarded to SS&D since the last quality review in 2012 has been very significant. The team made 19 successful applications and was awarded €47,000 in funding. While many of the awards have been relatively small, they have enabled SS&D to make changes to systems, processes and infrastructure that have had a positive effect on the experience of many students. As noted by the SS&D team, receiving quality improvement funding of this kind serves the dual function of not only improving particular aspects of their work, but also, of heightening the awareness of initiatives in the area across the wider university.

Examples of the projects that received funding were:

- The development of an online application and processing system for the Student Assistance Fund;
- The introduction and development of Sexual Consent workshops for students;
- Chaplaincy trips to Glendalough, Knock and Dublin Cathedrals to provide opportunities for students to develop relationships with peers;
- Re-development of the Access Outreach programmes;
- Development of online workshop on healthy eating.

The development of these initiatives and others such as Discover DCU, Head Start Writing - Orientation Week for Mature Students, a 24/7 Counselling Phone Line are highly commendable and demonstrate a commitment to quality enhancement and innovation.

The PRG **recommends** the following:

A Theme that emerged from the SS&D staff survey and in review meetings with the SS&D team was the welfare of SS&D staff. The nature and intensity of the work which staff in the Student Advice Centre and in other front-line areas has changed greatly in recent years. There are lots of projects and demands on the staff and they are engaging with the very significant problems which students present. While there is a formal de-briefing twice per semester and staff support each other informally, there is a need to provide appropriate supports, on a more formal basis, for SS&D front line staff to support staff wellbeing and effectiveness. It is likely, that different approaches will be required by staff depending on circumstances.

The SS&D team should investigate ways to benchmark its activity against the work of peers nationally and internationally. Having undergone unprecedented change as part of the Incorporation process and an increase in staff numbers from 30 to 55, we think that it would be timely now to engage in a benchmarking process to ensure that the DCU community is deriving maximum benefit from resources in this area. There are also many examples of excellent practice highlighted in this report which should be shared with counterparts nationally through the Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education (AMOSSHE) and internationally through other fora. Visits might be undertaken to universities nationally and internationally to audit SS&D services and to compare and contrast good practice. Engagement at this level would help to ensure that SS&D continually evolves and innovates.

Members of academic and support staff are often the first to pick up the signs that a student is in need of support or is in distress. It is important, therefore, to enhance the delivery of training and resources for academic and support staff across the university community to develop their capability and confidence in dealing with students presenting issues within appropriate professional boundaries. We appreciate the time constraints on staff across the university in attending face-to-face sessions. There is no single solution to addressing this issue and it will require innovation by the SS&D team to meet this need. Ultimately, the greater the competence and confidence of staff across the university in dealing with these issues, the more positive the experience will be for students.

5.5 External Perspectives

The PRG acknowledge and commend SS&D for the very positive regard in which it is held by the students and staff of the University and external stakeholders.

Students who had used the services complimented the staff for specific supports in their areas of need, and the support for social encounters provided by the Interfaith Centre. Students indicated that they would welcome the opportunity to share their very positive experiences through testimonials and as student ambassadors and also recommend that class representatives could help deliver information about the services. The diversity of the student population has generated particular needs. As part of the Internationalisation strategy of the University, SS&D needs to consider the implications and demands on resources for this cohort of students who are more mature (PGT and PGR), and on campus throughout the weekend. It was reported that there is a perceived gap in careers services for PGR students. The use of online resources to reach distance students, as outlined in Section 5.2 and 5.3, is endorsed. While there are many informal interactions with the SU officers and the Office of Student Life, it was apparent from the lack of awareness of the increased counselling provision, that there would be a benefit from more formal interactions. **Therefore, the PRG recommends that the Director of SS&D meets formally with the SU and Office of Student Life at least once a month**. Inclusion of a student representative on the 'Heads Plus One' might also be considered.

A broad range of **University staff** also spoke highly of the services provided by SS&D. There are well established working relationships with *inter alia* Library staff, the Teaching Enhancement unit, Registry and the Fees Office. The Careers service implements a programme of curriculum and co-curriculum delivery to a range of degree programmes. Membership of influential committees also assists two-way communication about developments. Formalised short workshops for staff (academic or support) who deal with distressed students would be welcomed.

Feedback from a diverse range of **external stakeholders** was very positive.

With regard to Access, DCU was commended for its support of 2nd level students in local schools and of young people receiving aftercare support from Tusla, thus opening up to them the prospect of progressing to third-level education. Perhaps opportunities to develop routes to DCU via PLCs, etc. should be expanded. Access has been influential in the development of the DARE and HEAR programmes and sits on a number of advisory and working groups.

Employers were very positive about the INTRA and Careers services. The mentorship programme offered by Careers/Alumni is an excellent initiative but needs better IT support. It would be a potential selling point for DCU to demonstrate the strong employability outcomes for students who participate in INTRA. The Careers Service could also further build on the relationships developed with INTRA from the student and employer perspective. Feedback from employers was there was scope for DCU to further exploit relations between INTRA and graduate employment opportunities. Smaller scale employers, in particular, would welcome a stronger link to Careers to that they might recruit students who had previously been on placement with them. Employers recommended that an examination of

the current timing of INTRA placements, including the timing of the recruitment phase in relation to other institutions is carried out to ensure that DCU students can avail of all opportunities.

While it is recognised that the Careers Service and INTRA engage regularly with employers, it is **recommended** that an Employers Forum is established to support strategic developments within both INTRA and the Careers Service.

Overall, it was considered that while both services were effective, that greater synergies would result from the provision of a unified structure across INTRA and Careers which would be welcomed by users of the service such as staff, students and employers. Professional advice should be sought on how to structure the new entity (Section 5.1).

The development of external partnerships through HEA and philanthropy is to be lauded. The support garnered from a range of external bodies has greatly enhanced the range of services that SS&D provides.

6 SWOT Analysis and Plans for Improvement

6.1 SWOT Analysis for Student Support & Development

The self-assessment report for the Area included a proposed summary SWOT analysis of the Area. As a result of the Peer Review Group's analysis of the self-assessment report and findings from the peer review visit, we propose the following to be a true reflection of the Areas capabilities and opportunities, and identified weakness and threats to future success.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Commitment and Quality of staff Commitment to personal and professional development in pursuit of excellence Breadth of knowledge and expertise Collaboration across Units and wider University – opportunities to do this better Flexibility & Readiness to Work with Change Receptive to on-going feedback from students and staff / eagerness to act on feedback Creativity in terms of resource use Willingness to use and experiment with Technology opportunities to do this better Trust and support from wider DCU community Support from Senior Management Excellent relationship with the Students' Union / Office of Student Life opportunities to do this better / more effectively High regard for Director and SS&D staff from internal and external stakeholders INTRA / Careers / Mentoring tells a very good story about DCU to employers in the main	IT Systems instability Lack of Time to reflect and take a more systematic approach Lack of expertise in digital technology Lack of time to develop ideas / projects Necessity to 'react' rather than plan, due to the fast pace of the University and increasing complexity of student issues Insufficient professional support for frontline staff dealing with students in crisis Uncertainty regarding future of funding for the Writing Centres Insufficient opportunity to provide training of DCU staff to assist them support students Space Restrictions Insufficient access to expertise in some key areas including marketing, data analytics Insufficient time for reflection and planning Coherence of employability strategy / coherence of engagement across INTRA and Careers Technology interface with employers and mentors Lack of caseload management review process
Opportunities	**Threats**
CRM System with unlimited potential Potential funding for and implementation of Leadership & Life Skills Centre Potential funding for an enhanced mental health and wellness initiative Much improved data collection and mainstreaming of monitoring and tracking of activities Commitment to more support for staff in SS&D Mainstream 'Discover DCU' into the initial offer to First Year Students New Student Information System Leverage opportunities with employers and alumni Demonstrate effectiveness of SS&D through peer assessment	Limited support for IT systems in SS&D (CRM and INTRA Work Placement System) Mistakes could be made / student issues not addressed due to workload and lack of time also due to lack of connectivity and capacity for oversight Loss of AGOO, a key workshop space for SS&D to offer group activities to students. Recommended to take what is on offer in SU as is and demonstrate need for additional by demand for services as per student engagement and participation in activities. No ESF or other funding stream to support international students with disabilities. Missed opportunities due to minimum staffing and impossibility of developing excellent initiatives identified Noted that SS&D is delivering initiatives despite constraints.

6.2 Plans for Improvement Identified by Student Support & Development

The Peer Review Group endorses the concept of the Leadership and Lifeskills Centre and supports the mainstreaming of the initiative subject to an evaluation of its effectiveness in meeting student needs. Given its location in the U Building, the Leadership and Lifeskills Centre should support and facilitate the ongoing development of close collaborations with both the SU and Office of Student Life. The challenge will be to ensure and facilitate students located on the St. Patrick's and All Hallows campuses to avail of the resources.

The Peer Review Group endorses the requirement for suitable SS&D space in the U Building and recommends that SS&D takes up the space being assigned, not least to demonstrate the need for a larger space by monitoring and evaluating usage following deployment of workshops in the space available on offer.

The Peer Review Group supports the deployment of a new CRM to facilitate the sharing of information across units to the benefit of all stakeholders, not just within SS&D but also with other key stakeholders across the university in order to deliver a seamless experience from a student perspective.

The Peer Review Group agrees that the loss of the INTRA system would be a significant reputational risk and that in as far as possible its replacement should be prioritised. The new system should facilitate a seamless interface for all employer related activities regardless of the unit which is delivering or engaging with the provision, e.g. mentorship, employer engagements, academic, student recruitment, alumni, etc.

The Peer Review Group supports the request for funding to carry out an external audit of mental and physical health and it also recommends that an audit of the INTRA and Careers services is undertaken.

The Peer Review Group recommends that the need for a larger "central" team should be considered as part of its recommended review of the SS&D structures.

7   Summary of Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations

1. Thoroughness and comprehensiveness of the SAR and accompanying documentation
2. Level of commitment to ensure participation in SAR
3. Reasonable recommendations arrived at in SAR process and modest conclusions
4. Evidence based SAR

Planning and Effective Management of Resources

5. Strong Leadership across the service
6. Delivery of service despite challenges of economic and working environment
7. Award of funding for Student Leadership & Life-skills Centre

Effectiveness of Activities and Processes

8. Commitment to and delivery of supports on both the Glasnevin and St. Patrick's campuses
9. Development of Graduate Attributes – Generation 21

Communication and Provision of Information

10. Development of CRM – to help identify students at risk
11. 24/7 Counselling Phone Line
12. Discover DCU / engagement with students prior to arrival on campus / registration

Ongoing Quality Enhancement

13. Award of QUID funding year on year – always seeking to improve, very dynamic and innovative
14. Head Start Writing - Orientation Week for Mature Students

Stakeholder Relationships

15. General openness and responsiveness to changing environments
16. Overall strong staff commitment, people enjoy working with each other
17. Commitment to and delivery of supports on both the Glasnevin and St. Patrick's campuses

No	Recommendation	P	Level	
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No	Recommendation	P	Level	
Planning and Effective Management of Resources				
1	Recommendation	P1	A/U	Review structures to ensure they are fit for purpose / fit for the future and consider consolidation of functions in order to deliver a seamless experience for stakeholders
2	Recommendation	P2	A/U	Ensure clear succession planning across SS&D to maintain quality and ensure resilience of services in as far as possible
3	Recommendation	P1	A/U	Ensure the provision and immediate availability of funding to support international students with a disability
4	Recommendation	P2	U/A	Ensure there is adequate impact assessment of senior management decisions on the capacity of SS&D to deliver and to mitigate risk
Effectiveness of Activities and Processes				
5	Recommendation	P2	A/U	Think online first in the provision and communication of resources and services and layer on top of this
6	Recommendation	P1	A	Reintroduce multidisciplinary case conference meetings for high risk students
Communication and Provision of Information				
7	Recommendation	P2	A	Review information sharing within and outside SS&D and use of data to inform service planning and delivery
8	Recommendation	P2	A/U	Update SS&D website to ensure information on services offered by all units is mobile enabled and to include easy access to information, including on Crisis management, out of hours in particular **Note**: A number of SS&D Units' content are already migrated to mobile enabled format but not Chaplaincy or Counselling & Personal Development Service
9	Recommendation	P1	A/U	Upgrade the outward facing interfaces e.g. INTRA portal, mentoring portal, 2nd level student achievement awards, to make them fit for purpose.
Ongoing Quality Enhancement				
10	Recommendation	P2	A	Benchmark SS&D activity v. peers nationally / internationally (Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education [AMOSSHE])
11	Recommendation	P2	A	Enhance delivery of training and resources for academic and support staff across the university community to develop their capability and confidence in dealing with presenting student issues within appropriate professional boundaries
12	Recommendation	P1	A	Provide appropriate supports for SS&D front line staff to support staff wellbeing and effectiveness
Stakeholder Relationships				
13	Recommendation	P1	A	Systematise and formalise meetings and engagements with internal and external stakeholders, e.g. SU, Office of Student Life and employers

Appendices

Outline Timetable Peer Review Group Visit
PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT AREA

QUALITY REVIEW OF: Student Support & Development
DATE: 27th – 29th March 2019

Time	Peer Review Group (PRG) Activity/Meeting	Venue	Meeting No.
Day 1- Wednesday, 27th March			
1000-1030	Arrival of PRG Members, coffee on arrival- Albert College	CG35	
1030-1130	Briefing by Director of Quality Promotion; guidelines provided to assist the PRG during the visit and in developing its report	CG35	
1130-1230	*PRG Private Meeting Time* • PRG Selects a Chair • PRG discusses key themes, areas for exploration based on the SAR • PRG assigns tasks and responsibilities amongst members	CG35	
1230-1330	Lunch with Director of QPO / Director & Deputy Director of SS&D (Light lunch)		
1330-1445	*Consideration of the SAR with the Area Head and members of the Quality Review committee. Shall commence with a short presentation by Area head, followed by discussion* Aisling McKenna (Director, Quality Promotion & Institutional Research Office) Dr. Claire Bohan (Director, Students Support & Development) Annabella Stover (Deputy Director, Student Support & Development) Deirdre Moloney (Manager, Student Advice Centre) Cathy McLoughlin (Head, Access) Maeve Long (Head, INTRA) Karina Curley (Learning Support Officer, Student Learning) Helena Ahern (Head, Counselling & Personal Development) Jessie Byrne (Head, Student Health Centre) Dr. Carol Ellis (Disability Officer, Disability & Learning Support) Yvonne McLoughlin (Head, Careers) Fr. Paul Hampson (Chaplain, DCU Chaplaincy)	CG35	1
1445-1500	PRG private discussion time	CG35	
1500-1555	*Meeting with students who use the services of SS&D* Emma Brezing (Bachelor of Religious Education and Music) Sally Coffey (Bachelor of Arts, JH) Eric McAuliffe (BSc in Multimedia) Patricia Prizman (BA in Contemporary Culture & Society) Muireann Byrne (BSc in Marketing, Innovation & Technology) Peter Hand (BSc in Children's and General Nursing) Claire Joyce (Bachelor of Arts, JH) Chloe Fowler (Bachelor of Education) Cathal Blake (BSc in Psychology) Niamh Marie O'Donnell (Bachelor of Arts, JH) James Onochie Akpu (PhD-Track) Aisha Siwar (BA in Economics, Politics & Law)		2

	Sorcha Casey (Bachelor of Arts, JH)		
Time	**Peer Review Group (PRG) Activity/Meeting**	**Venue**	**Meeting No.**
1500-1555	***Meeting with students who use the services of SS&D, contd.*** Jane Gonnelly (BSc in Chemical & Pharmaceutical Sciences) Michael O'Connor (MA in International Security & Conflict Studies) Oskars Veide (BSc in Physics with Astronomy) Liam Quinn (BSc in Education & Training) Sula Awad (MSc in Management (Strategy)) Paulina Trzeciak (BSc in Marketing, Innovation & Technology) Ryan McMahon (Bachelor in Religion Education and History)		2
1600-1700	***Meeting with external stakeholders*** Bob O'Murchu (Student Administration Manager, TU Dublin) Sinéad Quinn (Admissions, CAO) Patricia Dwyer (Principal, Mercy College, Coolock) Ian Doyle (Aftercare Manager, Dublin North, Tusla) Nessa Kiely (Trainee and Intern Recruitment Manager, A&L Goodbody) Hélène McArdle (University Recruitment & Programmes Manager, Workday) Alan Fahey (Cooperative Learning Consultant, HR, SAP) Eoin McCrosain (IT and Innovation Director, Playprint Group) Tony Murphy (Senior Software Engineer, Cellusys) Cillian Nolan (Communications Manager, Pigsback) Gary Purcell (Director, Allgo)	CG35	3
1700-1730	PRG private discussion time		
1800-1930	PRG Private Dinner and discussion	1838 DCU	Arranged by QPO

Day 2- Thursday, 28th March			
Time	**Peer Review Group (PRG) Activity/Meeting**	**Venue**	**Meeting No.**
0900-0940	***Area Staff - Meeting 1*** Paula Harrison (Administration, Student Health Centre) Seamus McEntee (Chaplain, DCU Chaplaincy) Anne O'Connor (Head of Disability & Learning Support) Susan Madigan (Occupational Therapist, Disability & Learning Support) Ruan Kennedy (Senior Counsellor, Counselling & Personal Development) Dr. Aida Keane (Senior Counsellor, Counselling & Personal Development) Celine Geraghty (Financial Administration Service)	CG35	4
0945-1025	***Area Staff - Meeting 2*** Elaine Daly (Careers Adviser, Careers) Siobhan Murphy (Careers Adviser, Careers) Carol Power (INTRA Coordinator, INTRA) Vanessa Wade (INTRA Coordinator, INTRA) Colette Keogh (Access Officer, Access) Margaret Lamont (Access Officer, Access) Cillian Murphy (Learning Support Officer, Learning Support) Caroline Bowe (Student Adviser, Student Advice Centre)	CG35	5

Time	Peer Review Group (PRG) Activity/Meeting	Venue	Meeting No.
	Orla Stafford (Mature Student Officer, Student Advice Centre)		
1030-1100	PRG Coffee/ Private Meeting Time		
1100-1140	*Theme: The Impact of the work of SS&D on the Internal DCU Community* Una Redmond (Manager, Office of Student Life) Billy Kelly (Deputy Registrar, Dean of Teaching & Learning) Martin Leavy (Learning & Development, Human Resources) \James Galvin (Director, Sports & Well Being) Phyl McMorrow (Director, Registry) Vito Moloney Burke (President, DCU Students' Union) Dr Gabriel-Miro Muntean (Academic Staff, School of Electronic Engineering) Barbara McConalogue (Director, Information Systems Services) Caroline Magee (Senior International Officer, International Office) Pauline Mooney (Academic Secretary, Office of Vice President Academic Affairs) Prof. Catherine Furlong (Academic Staff, School of Policy & Practice) Prof Caroline McMullen (Academic Staff, DCU Business School) Dr. Martin Crane (Academic Staff, School of Computing)	CG35	6
1145-1230	*Theme: The Impact of the work of SS&D on the Professional Development of the Student* Dr. Aisling De Paor (Law Firms Liaison Officer, School of Law & Government) Claire Whelehan (Director of Philanthropy, DCU Educational Trust) Assoc. Prof. Ciaran Fagan (Academic Staff, School of Biotechnology) Dr. Blanáid White (Academic Staff, School of Chemical Sciences) Ross Munnelly (Director of Alumni, Alumni Office) Therese Danaher (Academic Staff, School of Nursing & Human Sciences) Yvonne Crotty (Academic Staff, STEM Education, Innovation & Global Studies) Martin Moloney (Academic Staff, School of Communications) Prof. Bernadette Ní Anglais (Associate Dean for Placements and Related Partnerships, Institute of Education) Dr. Stephen Carroll (Graduate Training Coordinator, Graduate Studies Office) Prof. Anne Looney (Executive Dean, Institute of Education)	CG35	7
1230-1300	Tour of Facilities	Glasnevin	
1300-1400	Lunch/ PRG Private Meeting Time (St Pat's by Taxi)		
1400-14.40	*Theme: The Impact of the work of SS&D on the Personal and Academic Development of Students* Dr. Siobhain Mc Govern (Academic Staff, DCU Business School) Aisling Fagan (Vice President for Welfare & Equality, DCU Students' Union) Dr. Monica Ward (Academic Staff, School of Computing) Triona Kirwan (Student Enrolment, Registry) Dr. Mark Glynn (Head of Teaching Enhancement Unit) Dr. Dónal Mulligan (Academic Staff, School of Communications) Dr. James Brunton (Academic Staff, Open Education) Dr. PJ Sexton (Academic Staff, School of Policy & Practice) Dr. Susan Hegarty (Academic Staff, School of History & Geography) Ellen Breen (Associate Director, Research & Teaching, Library)	St Pat's campus C204, Belvedere House	8

Time	Peer Review Group (PRG) Activity/Meeting	Venue	Meeting No.
	Yvonne McGowan (Snr Sports Development Officer, Sports Development Service)		
1440-1500	Tour of Facilities	St Pat's campus	
1500 – 1520	Open SS&D Staff Session	C204, Belvedere House	
1520-1630	PRG Private Meeting Time	C206, Belvedere House	
1630-1715	***Meeting with SS&D Management Team*** Dr. Claire Bohan (Director) Annabella Stover (Deputy Director) Deirdre Moloney (Manager, Student Advice Centre) Helena Ahern (Head, Counselling & Personal Development) Maeve Long (Head, INTRA) Anne O'Connor (Head, Disability & Learning Support) Yvonne McLoughlin (Head, Careers) Cathy McLoughlin (Head, Access) Jessie Byrne (Head, Student Health Centre) Fr. Paul Hampson (Chaplain, DCU Chaplaincy)	St Pat's campus (C204, Belvedere House)	9
1715-1800	Meeting with Area Head (Dr. Claire Bohan)	St Pat's (C204, Belvedere House)	10
1830-2000	PRG Private Dinner and Meeting	Crowne Plaza	

Day 3- Friday, 29th March			
0900-0955	PRG Meeting with SMG		11
1000-1025	Meeting with Area reporting head, Prof. Eithne Guilfoyle (Vice-President, Academic Affairs / Registrar)		12
1030-1300	PRG Private Meeting Time- final discussion on recommendations	CG35	
1300-1345	PRG working lunch and finalization of exit presentation	CG35	
1345-1400	Briefing with Area Head and Director of QPO on key recommendations (Dr. Claire Bohan / Aisling McKenna)	CG35	
1400-1430	PRG Exit Presentation (all SS&D staff to attend)	CG86	