

Quality Assurance / Quality Improvement
Programme for Support/Service Offices
2010-2016



Quality Improvement Plan

Office of Student Life

24 May 2012

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Quality Improvement Committee for the Office of Student Life (OSL) was convened early in January 2012 to consider the Peer Review Group (PRG) report. The composition of this was the same as the original OSL Quality Review Committee, with the addition of Yvonne McGowan, Senior Sports Development Officer from Student Support & Development. The Recommendations were discussed at the OSL staff meeting of February 8th 2012 which was the first one held since the publication of the Peer Review Group. Staff members were satisfied with the report overall, and there was a consensus that we should progress as outlined. The Quality Improvement Plan (QuIP) was presented at the April 2012 staff meeting in advance of submission to the University.

The PRG report was also circulated to the Society Life Committee (SLC) and the Club Life Committee (CLC) for comment. Both of these committees were satisfied with the report as presented, and although their term of office will be finished on June 30th 2012, they are confident that the CLC and the SLC for 2012-13 will implement the proposed changes. It is intended that these Committees will be involved in the development of the Strategic Plan and other relevant recommendations.

The Manager of the Office of Student Life also met with Yvonne McGowan, Senior Sports Development Officer to discuss the issues relevant to DCU Sports Clubs. Ms McGowan subsequently joined the Quality Improvement Committee as outlined above.

2. RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT

In comparing the Peer Review Group Report and the recommendations from the Office of Student Life Self Assessment Report, as would be expected there are areas of common ground. These include: strategic planning, training and development, marketing and communication, resources management, and governance.

The Self Assessment Report merely highlights these as broad themes in need of attention, as identified from the research carried out. However, the Peer Review Report makes much more specific recommendations and outlines detailed actions which it advocates undertaking to achieve these objectives.

Recommendations for Improvement

Recommendation Number	Addressee	Priority	PRG Recommendation (Provided in PRG Report)	Response from OSL (A) and University (U) University response in red font.
1	A	P1	Revisit the current OSL mission statement in consultation with all stakeholders (including student members not currently involved in its work)	<p>A facilitator will be employed initially to kick start this process, and the plan will then be devised by the OSL. It is also proposed that the OSL will liaise with the DCU Executive Director of External and Strategic Affairs to inform this process, and to ensure that there is a synergy between the DCU strategic direction and the OSL.</p> <p>This process will include as many stakeholders as possible and a particular effort will be made to include the general student body in the process.</p> <p>The OSL strategic plan will incorporate an OSL Mission and Vision statement, and will incorporate the sub plans of the SU, Club Life Committee and Society Life Committee.</p>
2	A	P1	Create a vision statement for the future which clearly reflects the independent and individual identity of the OSL.	The strategic plan will incorporate an OSL Mission and Vision statement as outlined in the response to Recommendation 1.
3	A	P1	Develop a medium term (3-5 year) strategic plan to deliver the revised mission and values which in turn should be informed by the DCU Strategic Plan.	The strategic plan will incorporate an OSL Mission and Vision statement as outlined in the response to Recommendation 1.
4	A/U	P1	Use the current Board structure to manage the OSL: - expand the Board to include representatives from OSL,SU,SLC,CLC - supplement by recruiting three Independent Board members to bring in external expertise and support, for example in HR, Finance, the not for profit sector or the law	<p>It should be noted that the current OSL committee includes representatives from SLC, CLC, SU, Union Council and the general student body.</p> <p>The OSL will identify suitable external expertise to extend the Board of OSL.</p> <p>University management, in the first instance by the Office of External and Strategic Affairs, will provide advice and support to the OSL in this initiative. It is the intention of University management to clarify the linkage relationships within the OSL structure.</p>

Recommendation Number	Addressee	Priority	PRG Recommendation (Provided in PRG Report)	Response from OSL (A) and University (U) University response in red font.
5	A	P1	The company Board should meet regularly. The Board of OSL should take responsibility for the future proofing of the OSL by ensuring organisational memory is captured and used as part of a programme for the staff and Sabbatical Officers training and development.	A schedule of meetings will be established prior to the beginning of the academic year 2012-13. This will be conveyed to all members in advance and also published on DCU, DCUSU and any other relevant websites. It is envisaged that these meetings will be meaningful and productive, contain action items and allow for follow up on a regular basis. These meetings will be accurately minuted, and the minutes made available to all relevant committees and the general student body.
6	A	P1	Establish a more formal budgetary process for the OSL and its constituent bodies to ensure greater transparency and accountability on expenditure decisions.	A formal budget process will be developed in consultation with the Consultant who has guided the improved financial process put in place in OSL since Summer 2010. This will be actioned by the OSL accounts staff from May 2012. The University is in complete support of this recommendation, and will follow-up with the Office of Student Life to ensure that a robust budget process is developed and implemented as soon as possible.
7	A	P1	Draw up annual budgets so that elected officers can be involved in prioritising spending and activities for members.	This will be implemented in the financial year 2012-13. All the necessary data, staff and systems are in place to enable this to be actioned immediately.
8	A	P1	Budgets to be presented to the OSL Executive Committee and Board on an annual basis for approval in line with current procedures for the distribution of the capitation funds among the constituent bodies.	This has been an agenda item on the first OSL meeting of each academic year. However, with the introduction of a new system, these will contain more detail and will also include a review process.
9	A	P2	Ensure that appropriate financial procedures are maintained and further developed in relation to the distribution and spending of student monies.	The current procedures will be maintained and reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure accountability and transparency.

Recommendation Number	Addressee	Priority	PRG Recommendation (Provided in PRG Report)	Response from OSL (A) and University (U) University response in red font.
10	A	P1	OSL Executive Committee to meet regularly during semesters and clarify the reporting roles within the OSL and its constituent bodies.	The Executive Committee will meet regularly as defined in the meeting schedule for each semester. The Constitution of the OSL will be examined, and the role of each member (representing the constituent bodies) will be made explicit and explained to each member of the Committee prior to the first meeting in each academic year.
11	A/U	P2	Clarify role of HUB Manager (Campus Property Limited). PRG suggests that it would be helpful if the Manager could be given a place on the OSL board in return for student representation on the Campus Property Ltd who manages the HUB.	<p>The OSL is happy to consider the suggestion of the Hub Manager sitting on OSL. It is worth noting that the Students' Union President was a Director of Campus Property in the past.</p> <p>The Chief Executive Officer of Campus Property Limited has confirmed his willingness to become involved with the OSL Board. While there is no objection to the appointment of a student representative to the Campus Property Limited Board, it is however suggested that the most appropriate person for the role be appointed following the clarification of the OSL linkage relationships as mentioned in Recommendation 4 above.</p>
12	A/U	P2	Review of all space currently provided for student activities, with a view to maximizing the potential of this space in the future.	<p>This task has been assigned to a staff member and will be completed in Summer 2012, in consultation with staff, students and student clubs and societies. It will also involve meetings with the Manager of the Student Centre.</p> <p>University management will support this review through input from the Estates Office and / or the Space Planning and Management Group.</p>

Recommendation Number	Addressee	Priority	PRG Recommendation (Provided in PRG Report)	Response from OSL (A) and University (U) University response in red font.
13	A/U	P1	Ensure representatives of each of the OSL constituent organisations work with the University to establish parity of experience across disciplines where possible by preserving Wednesday afternoons for student activities.	<p>An initial step will be undertaken to establish which Faculties and departments are currently not adhering to this agreement, and ascertain if it represents a barrier to participation.</p> <p>Union Council to play a role in this, and all classes will be surveyed. Once the information is gathered the issue will be raised with Programme Boards, Education Committee and Academic Council. It is anticipated that the SU Vice-President - Education will take the lead on this.</p> <p>This issue also needs to be highlighted to Senior Management. Clubs and Societies to be included in any campaign as it impacts directly on their activities.</p> <p>The university has a policy that Wednesday afternoons should be kept free for clubs, societies and sports. This is highlighted at Heads and Deans meetings on an annual basis.</p> <p>University management will support the activities of the OSL in this matter in so far as this is possible, including providing information from the Registry regarding teaching rooms booked on Wednesday afternoons during semester. However it is important to canvass the broad base of student opinion on this issue as students have many competing demands on their time.</p> <p>The student body must clearly understand that attempts to keep lecture / lab timetables free on Wednesday afternoons means that those lectures / labs have to be scheduled elsewhere in the week – including on days and times that may not be totally conducive with distance / travel and / or other commitments.</p>

Recommendation Number	Addressee	Priority	PRG Recommendation (Provided in PRG Report)	Response from OSL (A) and University (U) University response in red font.
14	A	P1	Improve good governance by producing a schedule of formal meetings between the OSL and the University Finance Officer and its Director. These meetings should include discussions on financial issues including, but not exclusively, the capitation budget for the coming year and the presentation of the OSL annual audited accounts.	<p>Manager of OSL will contact the Director of Finance to set up a schedule of formal meetings.</p> <p>The audited accounts for 2011-12 are currently with the Finance Office and will be discussed before returns to Companies Registration Office are made at the end of April.</p>
15	A/U	P2	Produce an Annual Reports of its activities which will also include the audited accounts and present to Governing Authority by the manager of the OSL and its constituent parts.	See response to Recommendation 16 below.
16	A	P2	Publish an annual impact report (which may incorporate the annual report in recommendation 15) which can be used as a marketing tool to inform the academic staff, students and wider university of the activities and achievements of the OSL and its constituent parts.	<p>The Communications and Marketing Officer of the SU will collate the information from all staff members and sabbatical officers. The design and layout will be contracted out to an outside company as we do not have the necessary in house expertise to execute this. We have looked to the Access report, produced as part of their 21st Anniversary celebrations as a good example of an impactful Annual report.</p> <p>University management, in the first instance by the Office of External and Strategic Affairs, will support the OSL in implementing this recommendation and will provide advice to OSL from DCU's Office of Communication and Marketing.</p>

Recommendation Number	Addressee	Priority	PRG Recommendation (Provided in PRG Report)	Response from OSL (A) and University (U) University response in red font.
17	A	P1	<p>Undertake a review, by the OSL and its Staffing Committee, of the relevant positions within its remit so as to ensure that the job specifications are in line with the realities of the job with roles, reporting lines and responsibilities clearly stated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - staff appraisals/Performance Reviews should take place annually (and consider adopting the University's Performance Management Development Scheme) - ensure all reporting lines are clear and create a roles & responsibilities matrix - examine contracts for the Sabbatical Officers for the Students' Union in line with employment legislation policy whilst taking into account local and national budgetary constraints. <p>The review could also examine the issue of re-grading posts and any policies relating to pay, increments, long service, etc.</p>	<p>Annual staff appraisals and performance reviews are currently undertaken for OSL staff (with the exception of the Manager) using the University's PMDS scheme as a guideline. The OSL Employment Subcommittee will be charged with ensuring that this is carried out in a timely fashion each year.</p> <p>A roles and responsibilities chart will be made available to all staff and will also be explained to incoming sabbatical officers to ensure clarity in this area. Best practice in relation to this recommendation will be researched.</p> <p>Contracts will be drawn up for 2012-2013 sabbatical officers.</p> <p>The University will work with OSL to set up a regular performance review process for the Manager.</p>
18	A	P2	<p>Put in place a succession plan for key personnel within its organisation with a view to ensuring the long-term success of the OSL as well as minimising disruption of the activities of the OSL and its constituent bodies in the event key members of staff are absent from their post for prolonged periods.</p>	<p>Within the current staff structure, OSL will undertake to "cross train" staff in various roles so that when absence occurs, critical tasks will continue to be carried out. This cross-over is best achieved by establishing systems which can be operated by a number of individuals, as is currently in place in the accounts department. Detailed staff manuals/handbooks can also improve this process, and these will be examined regularly to ensure that they are kept updated and relevant. It is recognised that this issue is potentially more problematic where unavoidable absences at senior staff level occur. A potentially appropriate process has, however, been identified, in which many of the essential management level duties could be carried out by other staff, overseen by the University representative on the OSL Committee. The DCU HR Department will offer support and advice to the OSL on this matter where required.</p>

Recommendation Number	Addressee	Priority	PRG Recommendation (Provided in PRG Report)	Response from OSL (A) and University (U) University response in red font.
19	A	P1	The OSL to implement, in conjunction with the SU, CLC and SLC, a comprehensive year long training programme for student leaders engaged within the OSL and its constituent bodies.	<p>It has long been recognised by the OSL that there is a void in this area and there is a very strong commitment within the OSL to implement a year long training programme as recommended here. There are some training programmes in place and Clubs and Societies Committees have benefited from these in previous years. There are also various workshops provided for Uaneen students. However, there is a lack of a coherent and comprehensive approach to this issue.</p> <p>It is proposed that the OSL employ outside expertise on a contract basis to identify needs, review what is currently on offer, identify where gaps exist and recommend the type of training which needs to be introduced. The use of technology to deliver these programmes is critical to their success and this will form an integral part of the process. The DCU Generation 21 initiative will also be considered in this exercise.</p>
20	A/U	P1	Consult with the HR/Training and Development in how best to provide support for the OSL Manager and / or an HR expert if appoint to as one of the External Board members (see recommendation 4).	<p>In the first instant OSL will consult with DCU HR Department to ascertain if support is available. If this isn't possible, an outside expert will be sourced.</p> <p>HR welcomes the OSL consulting with it with regard to HR issues and, where appropriate, it can assist the OSL in sourcing additional / specialist assistance as required. (A meeting to discuss the nature of this support has been arranged between the Training & Development Manager and OSL Manager for 18th May 2012).</p>

Recommendation Number	Addressee	Priority	PRG Recommendation (Provided in PRG Report)	Response from OSL (A) and University (U) University response in red font.
21	A	P2	Provide more support to student representatives in their advocacy role by a named post holder (consider certain UK models).	<p>Initially, OSL will identify if this is possible within the remit of a current staff member. It should be relatively easy to provide secretarial support, however support in the advocacy role will prove more problematic as there isn't the skill set available in the current staff composition. When we conduct the audit of the roles and responsibilities of current posts, there may be an opportunity to include some elements of this role in an existing post. This will be the approach adopted initially.</p> <p>HR will meet with the manager of the OSL to discuss the extent and nature of the support it may be able offer with regard to the advocacy role. The University will also ensure that terms of reference and committee guidelines / activities will be provided to sabbatical officers and others representing the student body on University committees.</p>
22	A	P1	Ensure the OSL adopts a similar practice to the university where the university publishes a schedule of all committee meetings at the beginning of each academic year.	<p>This will be implemented from the academic year 2012-13.</p> <p>Manager – Office of Student Life will action.</p>
23	A	P1	Arrange scheduled meetings of the OSL Executive Committee to ensure effective communication between the OSL, SU, CLC and SLC. Each constituent part of the OSL should work to establish an integrated annual programme of work with key performance indicators that take cognisance of their respective strategic plans (if in place).	<p>This will be implemented from the academic year 2012-13.</p> <p>Manager – Office of Student Life will action.</p>

P1 indicates most urgent

P2 indicates important but not urgent

A – Area under review (Office of Student Life)

U – University Senior Management

3. SUMMARY OF THE ONE-YEAR PLAN

Put in place a comprehensive training programme for student leaders, incorporating skills training for SU sabbatical officers and an integrated comprehensive training schedule for leaders in Clubs and Societies. Delivery of this programme will commence in October 2012, with full roll out during the academic year 2012-13. Responsibility will lie with Manager OSL and Senior Sports Development Officer- DCU.

Draw up new Strategic Plan for OSL, incorporating a new Mission statement. Responsibility – OSL Committee. First draft completion date – December 2012.

Implement changes recommended regarding budgetary and financial procedures with immediate effect for financial year 2012-13. Responsibility- OSL accounts staff, with assistance from financial consultant.

Produce Annual Impact report, incorporating audited accounts for presentation to Governing Authority. This project will be led by the OSL's Communication and Marketing Officer, with input from all staff and relevant student committees.

Contracts for Sabbatical Officers. – This is considered to be a priority and we will aim to have this in place by June 2012, when new officers begin their term.

Reform of OSL Committee to include the following – Publish schedule of meetings and include in University calendar (completed), arrange regular meetings with Director of Finance (first one completed March 2012) and expand OSL Board to include external expertise. Manager- OSL to action with a view to completion prior to first meeting of OSL in October 2012.

Review of staff positions and succession planning for OSL. Manager- Office of Student Life – completion date – June 2013.

4. SUMMARY OF THE THREE-YEAR PLAN

Although there is no particular mention of the programmes offered by the OSL to complement the academic work of the University, we consider it an imperative to maintain and improve the Uaneen Module and the Arts Bursary initiatives. Our intention would be to significantly increase the numbers undertaking the Uaneen module (currently just under 100) and also expand the numbers and the scope of the Arts Bursary, so that it more resembles the Sports Scholarship programme. The increase in numbers and the imbedding of the Uaneen Module is likely to take 2-3 years. This project will be the responsibility of the Student Engagement Officer and the Manager- OSL.

Annual reviews of the strategic direction of the OSL will be conducted.

The training programme put in place for Student Leaders will be reviewed annually, based on feedback from those involved. This feedback will be sought at the end of each academic year.

Above all the OSL will strive to foster an environment in which learning and development is facilitated, both for staff and students.

APPENDICES

1 Office Quality Committee (for the Self-Assessment Report)

Committee Member	Role on Committee	Job title
Una Redmond	Chair	Manager- Office of Student Life
Sandra McCormack	Quality Liaison Officer	Reception Supervisor
Ed Leamy	SU representative	SU President
Shea McNelis	Staff representative	Events Co-Ordinator
Emer Fitzgerald	Staff representative	Communications and Marketing Officer
Margaret Kinsella	Staff representative	Accounts Officer
Richie Nolan	Societies representative	Chair- Society Life Committee
Katie White	Sports Club representative	Chair- Club Life Committee
Joan Kinsella	CEP representative	Clubs and Socs Assistant

2 Peer review Group Members.

Ms Diane Boston, Co-Founder of Students' Union Evaluation Initiative (SUEI) in UK, (Chair)

Mr. Ciaran Nevin, President of DIT Students' Union

Mr. Ian Russell, Student Activities Officer, NUIM

Dr. Carmel Mulcahy, Senior Lecturer, School of Education Studies, DCU

Mr. Martin Leavy, Training & Development Manager, HR, DCU (Rapporteur)

3 Office Quality Committee (for the Quality Improvement Plan)

Committee Member	Role on Committee	Job title
Una Redmond	Chair	Manager- Office of Student Life
Sandra McCormack	Quality Liaison Officer	Reception Supervisor
Ed Leamy	SU representative	SU President
Shea McNelis	Staff representative	Events Co-Ordinator
Emer Fitzgerald	Staff representative	Communications and Marketing Officer
Margaret Kinsella	Staff representative	Accounts Officer
Richie Nolan	Societies representative	Chair- Society Life Committee
Aaron Clogher (replaced Katie White)	Sports Club representative	Chair- Club Life Committee
Joan Kinsella	CEP representative	Clubs and Societies Assistant
Yvonne McGowan	CLC representative	Sports Development Officer

4 Prioritised Resource Requirements

Project 1:	Production of 2011-2012 Annual report	€5,000
Project 2:	Training Programmes for Student Leaders	€7,000
Project 3:	Expert Finance and HR consultancy assistance	€5,000
Project 4:	Modification of identified space to maximise student activities	€10,000
Project 5:	Marketing and promotion of extra curricular activities and associated modules	€2,000