

Quality Assurance / Quality Improvement
Internal Quality Review Programme
2014-2015



Quality Improvement Plan

Research and Innovation Support

28 May 2015

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the plan of action for Research and Innovation Support in response to the recommendations from the Quality Review Panel arising from the RIS Self Assessment Report and on site review process. We would like to commend the Review Panel for their efforts in understanding the workings of the unit and their engagement during the process. The panel made eight recommendations, most of which relate to Research Support rather than Invent. Five recommendations address issues that were highlighted in the self-assessment report, and the other three highlight issues that were not included in the self-assessment report but they are also of high importance.

In order to put together an action plan, the VPRI met with the directors of Innovation and of Research Support for a brainstorming session and agreed on the approach to be taken for each of the challenges. Based on this discussion, the director of Research Support drafted the response to the recommendations and discussed each of them with the Research Support Team for input and final agreement. The director of Innovation and the VPRI then input to the draft and the VPRI edited it to produce the final version of this document.

2. SUMMARY OF THE ONE-YEAR PLAN

The majority of the actions planned to address the recommendations from the Quality Review Panel will take place in the first and second year, as many of the issues had already been identified and we were in the process of finding solutions as described in the self-assessment report. However, in order to succeed in some of them, we need support from other parts of the university. The actions that will address all eight recommendations are summarised as follows:

- The implementation of new IT systems for the management of research information, which will include a costing tool to aid applicants in the preparation of budgets, will be a large project that will have major impact in how research is currently managed. In addition to improving the operational aspects, it will also contribute to a tighter integration between the Finance Office, Research Support and Human Resources. This will also allow further compliance with internal deadlines, which will help to address the current workload management issue in Research Support. This process is already ongoing and will continue for the next 12 months.
- Better integration with the work of other central units involved in supporting research with the Research Support team (Finance, HR, ISS, Coms and Marketing, Hubs and Platforms) by improving the information flow and the streamlining of existing procedures.
- Bedding down of the new support structures put in place to implement the research strategy (Hubs and Platforms) by clarifying the specific roles of each unit and rolling out an information campaign to staff to increase awareness of the service provision, including in this awareness campaign the Researcher Development Programme. This process will also include the definition of clear KPIs for each unit which will be monitored annually and the roll out of the research support services to the incorporating colleges.
- Coordination of the Research Integrity effort of the university and clarification of roles and ownership.

3. SUMMARY OF THE THREE-YEAR PLAN

All the recommendations will be implemented within the first two years and continue for the foreseeable future.

4. RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT

2 Recommendations for Research and Innovation Support

The following notation is used in the recommendations for improvement.

P1: A recommendation that is important *and* requires urgent action.

P2: A recommendation that is important, but can (or perhaps must) be addressed on a more extended time scale.

P3: A recommendation which merits serious consideration but which is not considered to be critical to the quality of the ongoing activities in the Area.

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

Recommendation	Addressee	Priority	PRG Recommendation (Provided in PRG Report)	Area Response	University Response
1	A	P1	<p>Reconsider, within RIS, methods for allocation of available resources to best address strategic and operational demands. For example, during periods of high demand for support from RIS, such as closure of major research calls, some kind of triage or demand management should be introduced. The workload in managing the internal funding schemes should also be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure its efficiency. These efficiency gains will enable RIS staff to allocate time to higher level strategic priorities and to participate in professional development programmes.</p>	<p>Research Support Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -We will implement a mechanism for monitoring workload and develop further the implementation of the buddy system to alleviate pressure during specific times (deadlines etc) in year one (year 1). -We will roll out more stringent rules in relation to internal deadlines for applications once the new Research Support System is in place (year 2). -Time management training for the team will be provided (Already implemented). -We will introduce a charter agreement with staff to specify the support that will be provided in relation to the lead time available before submission deadlines (year 1). <p>Invent Response: We will roll out and publicise the new Invent Service Level Agreement progressively during 2015.</p>	

Recommendation	Addressee	Priority	PRG Recommendation (Provided in PRG Report)	Area Response	University Response
2	A/ U	P1	<p>Develop enhanced collaborative working relationships between RIS and other key research support areas of DCU (e.g. joint forums with Finance, new matrix structures, Marketing, Human Resources).</p>	<p>Research Support Response: -We have already invited relevant representatives from Finance, HR, ISS and Hubs to attend the RS team meetings every 6 weeks to enable communication among teams. We will ensure that this forum for interaction continues for the foreseeable future.</p> <p>-Communications and Marketing: We propose to recruit a consultant with expertise in Science Communication to work between Comms & Marketing and RS in order to bridge the gap in obtaining research news and to link with the academic community. In order to strengthen relationships with Comms and Marketing, we propose to also invite a relevant staff member to the team meeting once every six weeks as explained above (year 1)</p> <p>-We have set up a management oversight group and a working group for the implementation of the new Research Support System that includes members from Finance, HR and ISS. We commit to work closely with them during the implementation of this project, which will contribute to unify the way the different units deal with the research activity from a systems perspective (years 1 and 2)</p> <p>Other measures proposed for improved interactions: Finance: We propose to create a forum at management level to</p>	<p>The University fully supports the wide-ranging initiatives described in the Area (RIS) response and notes the significant progress made to date.</p>

Recommendation	Addressee	Priority	PRG Recommendation (Provided in PRG Report)	Area Response	University Response
				<p>meet on a regular basis to ensure alignment between Research Support and Finance office in all matters to do with research (possible membership: VPRI (Alan Harvey), Director of Research Support (Ana Terres), Head of Finance Systems (John Kilcoyne), Manager of research finance team (Audrey Barter), Head of Financial Planning (Anthony Feighan)).</p> <p>Human Resources: Many issues have been resolved with stabilisation of staff turnover in the HR research support team and the appointment of HR deputy director. Further engagement with HR will be required for the development of the research support system and other strategic initiatives. The VPRI and Director of Research Support will seek interaction with HR management as required over the coming months in order to progress this collaboration (year 1 and following)</p> <p>Hubs: Research Support team members will meet on a regular basis with the Funding Diversification team in Hubs to facilitate the integration of the operations of both teams.</p> <p>Invent Response: Invent will work with the Finance Office to agree and implement new reporting procedures and automatic summary report generation to streamline the process of grant claims from Enterprise Ireland which involved multiple budget codes with new procedures to be implemented by November 2015.</p>	

Recommendation	Addressee	Priority	PRG Recommendation (Provided in PRG Report)	Area Response	University Response
3	A	P2	<p>Introduce a process of on-going monitoring and develop an evolving portfolio of key performance indicators (KPIs). This refers to the entire process of integration of work between RIS and the new matrix structures of Research and Enterprise hubs and platforms in order to maximise the benefits of this new model to DCU.</p>	<p>A set of targets has already been developed as part of the Playbook and Scorecard for the matrix components. The KPIs will be re-examined for the following matrix components to make sure that the KPIs are sufficiently specific: KPIs will be monitored on annual basis. (year 1, and continuing)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Support; Invent; Hubs • STEP Admin; STEP Facilities • SIP; BIP 	
4	U/A	P2	<p>Strengthen the information systems that support research activities so that strategic objectives are achieved. In particular, the PRG is supportive of the ongoing initiative to introduce a single information system to manage pre- and post-award functions that fully supports the needs of all the stakeholders. It is further recommend that consideration be given by the University to the introduction of a grant costing tool. This would reduce the time that academics spend preparing proposals and help reduce the number of proposals submitted without University approval. A University wide current research information system (CRIS) type system would support DCU's aspirations to raise its level of citations and monitor and benchmark academic performance.</p>	<p>The upgrade of existing Research Information Systems has already started. In particular, the new systems will enable accurate reporting and therefore will facilitate decision making. From all the systems evaluated to date only the Unit 4 system (a Research Award Management System) has a grant costing tool to facilitate proposal preparation. In addition, this solution will enable the integration of procedures between Research Support and Finance that will have a tremendous impact on the University's capability to make informed decisions. We commit to implement the Unit 4 system, but we need broader university support to integrate it with other university systems, namely Agresso financials, Core HR, etc. (year 1 and 2)</p>	<p>The University welcomes this recommendation and will support and facilitate the integration of the Unit 4 system with appropriate systems, in areas such as Registry, Finance Office, HR, DCUBS, where such integration is technically possible; where there are no conflicts relating to Data Protection and/or confidentiality of information; and where resourcing is available.</p>

Recommendation	Addressee	Priority	PRG Recommendation (Provided in PRG Report)	Area Response	University Response
5	A/ U	P1	Develop and execute a further communication campaign to enhance the dissemination and utilisation of the newly developed research and innovation matrix. This could include user case studies and FAQs within the University. These may also assist in the external communication and marketing of the capabilities of the University.	<p>The research support units in the matrix (Research Support, Invent, Hubs and Platforms) will develop an organisational diagram that will visually explain how the support units within the matrix are structured (year 1). Also, we will roll out an internal awareness campaign for staff in DCU and for the incorporating colleges in the near future.</p> <p>In addition to information sessions, other means of informing staff will be put in place including the development of information webinars accessible from the website, etc. (year 1 and 2).</p>	The University welcomes the RIS response to this recommendation and will work with RIS to develop appropriate communications channels, internal and external.
6	U/ A	P2	Establish clear lines of responsibility and ownership in the University for the policies falling under the research integrity umbrella.	Research Support commits to coordinate an effort between the Research Committee, the Research Ethics Committee and the Chief Operations Officer to define the responsibilities in relation to research integrity and to define specific policy ownership (year 1 and following).	The University is currently working on the management of all its policies. A “Policy on Policies” has been drafted dealing with development, format, approval, ownership and maintenance of University policies. When approved, this will deal with the issues raised in this recommendation.
7	U/ A	P2	Further develop the role of RIS in supporting the DCU researcher career development programme. RIS and HR to work together with	Research Support already works with HR in supporting the DCU researcher career development programme. In association with Training and Development, we will develop additional ways of	The University will support the work of RIS and HR in promoting and developing the

Recommendation	Addressee	Priority	PRG Recommendation (Provided in PRG Report)	Area Response	University Response
			Principal Investigators (PIs), Executive Deans, and Research and Enterprise Hub Directors to improve take-up of the researcher career development programme.	increasing awareness of the training opportunities in DCU and also in the incorporating institutions. We need university support to increase uptake on the programme.	framework and training opportunities for researcher career development. The Researcher Career Framework (RCF) that is already in place for the Faculty of Engineering and Computing is being enhanced and will be extended to other faculties. The support of PIs, Deans, Director of Graduate Studies and Hub Directors will be harnessed also.
8	A	P1	Maintain and support, within RIS, an active and engaged participation in the DCU Incorporation process. This is to ensure that the aspirations for research and innovation for DCU post-Incorporation can be fully realised.	<p>We are in the process of recruiting two research support officers with specific expertise in Humanities and Social Sciences and in Education to support the roll-out of research support to the incorporating colleges. A detailed plan of action is already on the way.</p> <p>We will work with the incorporating institutions to evolve the range of supports currently provided to make sure they are fit for purpose during and after incorporation (Year 1 and following).</p>	

APPENDICES

1. Area Quality Committee (for the Self-Assessment Report)

The Quality Review Committee included the following members of the Research Support and Technology Transfer teams:

Steering group: Alan Harvey, Vice-President for Research and Innovation; Ana M. Terres, Director of Research Support; Richard Stokes, Director of Innovation and CEO of Invent Ltd.

Coordination team: Anne-Louise Holloway, Research Officer, RS; Domingo Sanchez Zarza, Research Officer, RS; Maria Johnston, Invent Operations Manager

RS team: Fiona Brennan, Senior Research Officer; Kieran O'Dwyer, Senior Research Officer; Yuliya Shakalisava, Research Officer; Isabel Hidalgo, Administrative Officer; Marguerite Aherne, Secretary.

Invent team: Carolyn Hughes, Business Development Manager; Emma O'Neill, Business Development Manager; Paddy O'Boyle, Business Development Manager; Peter Olwell, IP Manager; Marie Rooney, Secretary (until her retirement at the end of 2014).

2. Peer Review Group members

External Members

Prof. Geoff Rodgers, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research), Brunel University London

Prof. James McElnay, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Postgraduates, Queen's University, Belfast

Dr Keith O'Neill, Director, Lifescience and Food Commercialisation, Enterprise Ireland

Prof. Enda McGlynn, Deputy Head School of Physical Sciences, Faculty of Science and Health, Dublin City University

Dr. Catherine Maunsell (Rapporteur), Director of Quality Promotion and Assurance, St Patrick's College Drumcondra

3. Area Quality Committee (for the Quality Improvement Plan)

The following members of staff were involved in the development of this Quality Improvement Plan:

- Alan Harvey, Vice-President for Research and Innovation;
- Ana M. Terres, Director of Research Support;
- Richard Stokes, Director of Innovation and CEO of Invent Ltd.
- Research Support Team: Fiona Brennan, Anne Louise Holloway, Kieran O'Dwyer, Domingo Sanchez Zarza, Helen Burke, Lisa Griffit, Marguerite Ahern.

4. Prioritised Resource Requirements

Project #	Project Title	Cost Estimate
1	Improvement of the co-operation with Communications and Marketing to increase the visibility of DCU research and innovation in the national and international media.	€20,000
2	Develop of online training material for the new costing tool	€2,000
3	Development of an internal marketing campaign and website presence for the Research Development Programme.	€2,000
4	Development of training modules to enable staff to become research engaged before Incorporation.	€8,000
5	Research Integrity resources.	€8,000