DCU Quality Promotion Office

Annual Report to Academic Council
Quality Assurance and Promotion Overview, 2015/16

29th, May 2017

Contents

Quality Promotion Office Annual Report 2016

This document reports on quality assurance and enhancement activities across many areas in DCU, including those of the Quality Promotion Office (QPO), Faculties, Committees and several professional support units at DCU.

Quality Promotion and Assurance Developments in 2015/16

Restructuring of the Quality Promotion Office in 2015/16

In November 2015, DCU appointed a new Director of Quality Promotion and Institutional Research, to lead a Quality Promotion Office. The newly extended remit of the Quality Promotion Office now includes Institutional Research and Analysis and support for the strategic planning activities of the university. It is hoped that this restructuring will facilitate enhanced alignment between institutional analysis, quality review and promotion, and support for strategic planning at DCU.

Furthermore, following the completion of the Incorporation process, the requirement for a Quality Officer role was identified. Since September 2016, the Quality Promotion Office team has extended to 3.8 FTEs. More information on the team and their respective roles can be found on the DCU Quality Promotion Office website.

The DCU Incorporation Programme

During the reporting period, the Directors of Quality in DCU and St Patrick's College, Drumcondra in particular, have sought to align, where possible quality assurance processes. The Director of Quality Promotion at DCU has attended the St Patrick's Drumcondra Quality Promotion Committee meetings, and the Directors of Quality in both institutions have worked closely on the alignment of practice between both institutions. It is expected that the Incorporation Programme will continue to impact on the timing, format and outcomes of quality reviews regularly in the coming years.

Development of Procedures for Collaborative Academic Offerings at DCU

In 2015/16 the Graduate Studies Office, on behalf of the DCU Education Committee led the development of a process and system to facilitate the completion and submission of proposals for collaboration on academic offerings with external institutions. In 2015/16, progress was made in the following areas:

- Division of responsibilities agreed with Executive
- Taxonomy of the breadth of academic activities approved
- Protocols for review and approval of proposals agreed
- The development of a prototype using the Guru system to facilitate review & capturing of approvals

Review of the templates for Annual Programme Review

During the reporting period, the template for Programme Chairs to complete Annual Programme Review (APR) has been reviewed by the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning at DCU, with the development of a revised template agreed and rolled-out during the academic year. It is anticipated that a review of the template and documentation required for Periodic Programme Review (PPR) will take place during 2016/17.

Approval of DCU Admission Principles

In February 2016, DCU Academic council approved a set of overarching Admissions Principles, providing a core set of values to underpin admission to the University. Details of the agreed principles can be found at the following link.

Internal Quality Assurance at DCU

Programme Review of Academic Programmes during 2015/16

Annual Programme Review.

The process of Annual Programme Review (APR) for all taught programmes is managed within the faculties at DCU, and the outputs of individual programme reviews are discussed at Faculty Teaching & Learning Committees and, in turn, a summary of the issues raised are considered by Faculty Management Boards. Issues that can be resolved at Faculty level are actioned at that level; issues that cannot be (fully) resolved at faculty level are brought to the DCU Education Committee, where the key issues are discussed and where appropriate issued raised are actioned for response.

Schedule of Periodic Programme Review, 2015/16-2016/17

Dublin City University Business School	
Completed in 2015-2016	**Planned / under way for 2016-2017**
• Whole school accreditation for AACSB	• MSc in Electronic Commerce • Professional Diploma in Accounting
Faculty of Engineering and Computing	
Completed in 2015-2016	**Planned / under way for 2016-2017**
• Engineers Ireland Accreditation of BEng Mechatronic Engineering (in conjunction with the School of Electronic Engineering) • Engineers Ireland Accreditation of MEng in Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering • BSc in Enterprise Computing (EC)	• Nil
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	
Completed in 2015-2016	**Planned / under way for 2016-2017**
SALIS • BA in Applied Languages and Translation Studies • BA in Contemporary Culture and Society	School of Law and Government • MA in International Relations • MA in Development • MA in International Security and Conflict Studies
Faculty of Science and Health	
Completed in 2015-2016	**Planned / under way for 2016-2017**
School of Physical Sciences[1] • BSc in Applied Physics • BSc in Physics with Astronomy • BSc in Physics with Biomedical Sciences • Undergraduate Certificate in the Fundamentals of Plasma and Vacuum Studies • MSc in Plasma and Vacuum Technology **School of Health and Human Performance** • BSc in Sports Science and Health **School of Nursing and Human Sciences** • BSc in Nursing (all pathways) • BSc in Children's and General	**School of Biotechnology** • BSc in Biotechnology • BSc in Genetics & Cell Biology • Common entry into Science • BSc in Horticulture • MSc in Bioprocess Engineering • MSc in Biomedical Diagnostics **School of Mathematical Sciences[2]** • BSc in Actuarial Mathematics • BSc in Financial Mathematics • Common entry into Actuarial and Financial Mathematics • BSc in Financial Mathematics

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[1] This was due for completion in 2014/15 but final report was submitted to FTC in 2015/16.
[2] This was due for submission in 2015/16 but will be submitted in early 2016/17.

(Integrated) Nursing • Higher Diploma in Children's Nursing • Undergraduate Certificate in Homeless Prevention and Intervention • BSc in Health and Society • MSc in Psychotherapy • Doctorate in Psychotherapy • MSc in Nursing/Healthcare practice (all streams) • MA in Sexuality Studies	School of Nursing and Human Sciences[3] • BSc in Psychology

Open Education	
Completed in 2015-2016	**Planned / under way for 2016-2017**
• MSc in Management of Operations • MSc in Management of Sustainable Development • MSc in Management in Clean Technologies • MSc in Management of Information Systems Strategy • MSc in Management of Internet Enterprise Systems	• BA in Humanities • BA in English and History • BA in Humanities (Psychology)

DCU internal Quality Reviews Schedule

2015/16
Library 14th – 16th October 2015
School of Biotechnology 2nd – 4th December 2015
Faculty of Engineering and Computing 22nd – 24th April 2016

2016/17
School of Chemical Sciences 7th - 9th December 2016
School of Nursing and Human Sciences 8th - 10th March 2017
School of Health and Human Performance - 17th - 19th May 2017

2017/2018
President's and Deputy President's Office Review, 7-9th December, 2017.
Office of Vice-President External Affairs, 7-9th March, 2018.
School of Mathematical Sciences- March, 2018

Issues Raised in DCU Internal Quality Reviews, 2015/16

Professionalism and Dedication of Staff
In all the reviews conducted in 2015/16 Peer Review Groups noted and commended the ongoing professionalism and dedication of DCU staff in their teaching, research, engagement and professional support services. The review teams noted the impact of the Employment Control Framework and significant budgetary constraints in contributing to strain on staff attempting to continue to produce and deliver the highest levels of quality, in their work.

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[3] This was due for submission in 2015/16 but will be submitted in early 2016/17.

Engagement of Areas with the Quality Review Process

All Peer Review Groups noted the thorough and comprehensive self-assessment conducted by Areas under review. They further noted that staff were very open with Peer Review Group members in their discussions during the Quality Review visit.

High Quality Learning Experiences

For the two academic Areas reviewed during 2015/16, both peer review group teams noted the very positive feedback received from graduate employers on the quality of DCU graduates from programmes delivered within these Areas. For the Faculty of Engineering and Computing, the continued distinctiveness of the INTRA experience was noted, and the PRG report contained recommendations for the faculty to continue to develop and enhance this experience as a distinctive aspect of the DCU student learning experience. For programmes delivered by the School of Biotechnology, the programmes were identified as being particularly industry relevant, and provided students with a strong "hands-on" approach to learning.

Strategic Planning Initiatives

The importance of the development of a strategic plan, closely aligned with that of the institution where identified by a number of Peer Review Groups. A related issue raised in a number of academic units was the development of a clearly defined and well-articulated sense of *identity* as an important foundation for future development.

Funding Diversity and Financial Planning within Academic Areas

The importance of a clearly articulated strategic plan or set of strategic priorities was noted by several Peer Review Groups, including the development of robust, evidence-based business cases for future development of learning, research and enterprise engagement activities. A number of recommendations focused on the development of plans to increase non-exchequer revenue.

Enhanced Internal and External Communication and Collaboration

Internal communications, both between colleagues within Areas under review, and between the Area under review and the broader university community where raised by a number of Peer Review Group Reports. These led to recommendations on the enhancement of Area structures and committees for consultation and decision-making, and improved communication central administration processes to transparency in how processes are completed.

Equipment and Facilities Maintenance and Planning

The impact of ongoing funding restrictions within higher education is noted in a number of aspects of peer review group reports. One area where this was raised on a number of occasions was with regard to teaching and laboratory equipment, and the funding challenges for maintaining physical infrastructure to a high standard of some campus buildings. A number of recommendations with respect to multi-year lifecycle planning for teaching and laboratory equipment were made.

An Engaged Learning Experience

A number of Peer Group Reports highlighted the positive feedback received from students on the quality of the interactions reported by students of academic programmes. In all reviews, Peer Review Groups noted that students spoke warmly and enthusiastically about their interactions and relationships with the Areas under review. A number of Peer Review Group Reports included recommendations on the development of clear policies and criteria for feedback on assessment. One report recommended the inclusion of student consultation as part of academic programme development.

The following quality review documentation was published on the DCU website:

- DCU Business School- Peer Review Group Report and Quality Improvement Plan
- DCU Library- Peer Group Report and Quality Improvement Plan
- School of Biotechnology- Peer Review Group Report and Quality Improvement Plan
- Faculty of Engineering & Computing – Peer Group Report and Quality Improvement Plan.

Other Quality Developments in 2015/16

DCU AACSB Accreditation

In April 2016, DCU Business School was been awarded accreditation by the world's oldest and most prestigious global accrediting body for business schools, AACSB. AACSB's international accreditation panel highly commended DCU Business School on its spirit of innovation and outstanding level of industry engagement, "*DCU Business School is innovative and distinctive. It has excellent engagement with industry as evidenced in research projects, industry-led or co-developed business internships and consulting projects for Irish and international companies. The school has a clear commitment to infusing an application-oriented, cutting-edge curricula throughout its programmes. There is internal and external validation of outcome measures. The very high employment levels for its students also speak to the relevance of its curriculum*."

External Examiner reports on GURU

In 2016, a system for the online management and submission of external examiner reports using the Guru system was fully implemented across DCU. The system facilitates examination paper review, final report submission, sharing of documentation and secure submission of financial payment information on a single online interface. In addition, Guru provides a complete system for the management of these external examiners, including nomination and approval at an institutional level.

Development of a Quality Enhancement Topic

In 2015/16, the DCU Quality Promotion Committee agreed to develop an Annual Quality Enhancement Topic. The purpose of a topical Annual Theme for quality enhancement at DCU is to,

- Provide a topical focus for discussion at Quality Promotion Committee, particularly in relation to ongoing quality enhancement policies, initiatives and activities at DCU
- Facilitate discussion and the development of initiatives in response to recurring issues from DCU quality reviews and quality related issues currently being highlighted nationally and internationally
- Encourage collaboration and the creation of new initiatives between the QPO and other units and departments tasked with quality enhancement at DCU.
- Provide an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate good practice in relation to quality enhancement across the university in line with particular 'topics'

At its May 2016 meeting, the QPC agreed that the Quality Enhancement Topic for 2016/17 would be "The Student Voice".

1st Year Student Experience Survey, 2015/16

DCU currently conducts a biennial 1st Year Student Experience Survey. In 2015/16, the survey focused on the following aspect of student life for new entrants to DCU:

- Factors influencing a decision to attend DCU or other institutions
- Awareness of Incorporation, and travel between campuses
- Preparedness for aspects of university life
- Satisfaction with a range of pre and post-entry supports
- Interest in availing of study supports

The results of the survey were reported to DCU Education Committee, DCU Heads and Deans Groups and the St Patrick's Drumcondra Quality Promotion Committee and St Patrick's Drumcondra Academic Council.

DCU Participation in the Irish Student Survey of Engagement

During 2015/16 DCU continued its commitment to encouraging relevant student cohorts to participate in the Irish Student Survey of Engagement. In 2015/16 a programme of activities to encourage participation was co-ordinated by the DCU Students' Union and the DCU Quality Promotion Office. For the first time, the ISSE survey fieldwork was co-ordinated simultaneously among all relevant cohorts in DCU, St Patrick's Drumcondra and Mater Dei

Institute of Education. Incentives, funded by both the DCU Quality Promotion Office and the DCU Students' Union were also used to increase participation rates. At 32%, DCU has the highest rate of participation in the 2016 ISSE among Irish universities.

What Works and Why Initiative

In January 2016, DCU initiated work on the *What Works & Why Project*. DCU is the lead partner on the project, which is funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. The project aims to build digital literacy and engagement for students and teachers by exploring the question: "What works and why?"

Focusing on supporting innovative pedagogy through learning technologies in discipline specific contexts, the project partners will offer a range of workshops, technology exploration sessions, formation of teaching groups and funding for TEL Innovation initiatives. Teachers will be supported in redesigning teaching and learning activities through technology integration leading to more rewarding learning experiences for students. The project will have a strong focus on the discipline specific contexts in which teaching and learning takes place, with a common goal of helping to promote better outcomes for learners. To enhance the long-term impact of the project Teaching Groups/Peer Mentoring Circles initiatives to build stronger communities of practice across our cluster and within disciplines will be launched.

Regulatory Initiatives in 2015/16

- Publication by the HEA of the National Framework for Doctoral Education, to facilitate consistent and enhanced excellence in the quality of doctoral education and training including Masters Research programmes
- Outcome of the HEA performance-based Compact Cycle 2 completed, in which DCU was categorised as a category 1 institution, thereby securing release of all performance-based funding in 2016.
- In April 2016, QQI published Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines[4] for use by all providers of higher, further and English language education and training. The 2012 Act further requires providers to "have regard to" QQI's quality assurance (QA) guidelines when establishing their own quality assurance procedures.
- In July 2016, QQI published Sector Specific Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies[5], which, in addition to the Core guidelines. The guidelines are applicable to designated awarding bodies (DABs) as autonomous awarding bodies, responsible for their own programmes of education and training, research and related services and for any programmes offered by linked providers leading to awards by the designated awarding body. Designated awarding bodies are required to have regard to these quality assurance guidelines when establishing, renewing and reviewing their quality assurance procedures and when approving and reviewing the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of their linked providers.

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Prepared by the Quality Promotion Office, May 2017

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[4] https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf

[5] http://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Sector-Specific%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%20for%20Designated%20Awarding%20Bodies.pdf#search=designated%20awarding%20bodies%2A