

**Self-Assessment Report for Academic Areas**

(Insert Academic Year here)

Of

(Insert Name of Area here)

Date:

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# 1 Executive Summary

Guidance Note:

The guidance note shall be **around one page in length** and include the following:

* A summary of approach taken to Self-assessment in the area
* A summary of the key issues arising from self-assessment
* A summary of the key issues arising from the SWOT analysis
* A summary of the key areas for improvement identified as a result of the process.

# 2 Introduction and Context

Guidance Note:

This section should be used to provide contextual information to assist the Peer Review Group in understanding both the structure and core activities of the area.

**This section should be 2-3 pages in length.**

## 2.1 Structure of the Area under Review

Guidance note:

This section should include information on the structure of the area under review, including;

* Information about the management and organisational structure of the area and how it relates to the university more broadly (make sure to include any recent structural or organisational change)
* Information on the number of staff (core academic, contract research, technical, administrative, other) and on any changes in staff numbers in recent Information on the number of students in the area (UG/PGT/PGR) and any changes in student numbers in recent years.
* Information on any research centres directly aligned to the area.
* Information on the location of the academic area- including location on one or more campuses, and physical space used for teaching, research, engagement, administrative and other activities.

Provide a summary of staff roles and responsibilities which should include staff in the main School as well as those in associated areas.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Role** | **Years in current role** | **Years at DCU** | **Academic Discipline (where relevant)** |
| Academic Staff | | | | |
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| Contract Research Staff | | | | |
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| Technical Staff | | | | |
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| Professional Support Staff | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |
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## 2.2 Information on the Academic Discipline Mix of the Area under Review

Guidance note:

This section should include a brief overview of the discipline mix within the area under review. It should contain information on,

* Taught programme portfolio and awards delivered by the area, including any aspects of programmes or programme delivery which are unique or unusual to the area under review.
* Recent changes in the programme portfolio delivered by the area.
* Research activity, in particularly the research themes and sub-disciplines which are particularly notable or reflective of national or international research strengths for the area.
* Recent changes to the research profile of the Area.

# 3 Approach to Self-Assessment

Guidance Note:

Summary explanation of how the Self-Assessment Report was developed and an overview of what was included.

This section should include information on the Quality Review Committee, including the name and role of each member of the committee whilst identifying the Chair of the group.

A brief overview of the methodology used by the Quality Review Committee Process which, should include the,

* Number of meetings held by the committee
* Allocation of tasks and areas of responsibility during self-assessment
* An outline of how the process was communicated to other staff in the area, or how were other staff involved in the review.

This section should aim to be **no longer than 1-2 pages in length**

# 4 Progress Made Since the Last Review

Guidance Note:

Include here an outline of the progress and/or the developments / enhancements made in the area, and areas reporting in where relevant.

This section should include an indication of how the area addressed the recommendations made by the Peer Review Group Report and Quality Improvement Plan in the last quality review, and reflect on how well the recommendations were able to be addressed.

**This section should aim to be** **no longer than 3 pages in length**.

## 4.1 Progress Since Last Quality Review of the Area

Guidance Note:

Include here an outline of the progress and/or the developments / enhancements made in the area, and areas reporting in where relevant.

This section should include an indication of how the area addressed the recommendations made by the Peer Review Group Report and Quality Improvement Plan in the last quality review, and reflect on how well the recommendations were able to be addressed.

## 4.2 Outcomes and Progress from Area Programme Reviews (DCU Reviews)

Guidance Note:

This section should include an indication of how the area addressed the key issues arising from Annual and Periodic Programme Reviews, and the ways in which quality improvement plans or recommendations were implemented and reflect on if / how well these recommendations were addressed.

## 4.3 Outcomes and Progress from Professional Accreditation Reviews

Guidance Note:

This section should include an indication of how the area addressed the key issues arising from reviews of programmes made by external accreditation bodies or associations relevant to the area. This section should also include a discussion of any recommendations made as a result of a review and report on progress regarding implementation of these recommendations.

## 4.4 Outcomes and Progress from Reviews of Research Activity

Guidance Note:

This section should include an indication of how the area addressed the issues arising from the review of research activity and performance within the area, either internal review of activity, or externally-led reviews of research projects or research centres. This section should also include a discussion outlining the progress made in relation to any recommendations made as a result of these reviews.

## 4.5 Outcomes and Progress from Other Reviews

Guidance Note:

Where relevant, this section can be used to include information on other reviews of the area in the last five years, and progress made in relation to any recommendations made as a result of this review.

# 5 Self-Reflective Analysis

Guidance Note: This is the main body of the Self-Assessment Report. In all sections, please keep in mind that the focus should be on a reflection of the effectiveness of activities, rather than a description of the activities and processes themselves. This section is divided into 6 subsections. Depending on the nature of the review, each section may differ in terms of its lengths.

The entirety of Section 5 should be **around 15-18 pages in length.**

## 5.1 Planning and Overall Strategic Direction of the Area

Guidance Note:

This section should include a reflection on the ways in which the area plans and sets goals for itself, and the extent to which these goals and plans align with those of the institution, or other relevant strategic plans.

Areas for Consideration/ Questions to Address include:

* To what extent is strategic planning undertaken within the area? Who is currently involved in developing a plan for the area?
* Is the current strategy or strategic statement a living document within the area? To what extent does it drive activity within the area?
* Is the current plan broadly reflective of all activity undertaken within the area?
* Is the current strategic plan/ strategy statement sufficiently aligned with other plans in the university, and in particular the university’s strategic plan?
* Is there a balance between short-term execution of planned activity and creating a longer term vision and priority plan for the area?
* How is s the current strategy implementation monitored within the area? How are challenges regarding the implementation of the strategy identified, and what action is taken to address these challenges?

## 5.2 Effective Management of Resources

Guidance Note:

This section should review the effectiveness of the management of resources within the area e.g. Financial, Space, Human, Capital etc. In addition, an analysis of how the area utilises and, where appropriate, develops its resources to meet the challenges of delivering on its organisational responsibilities should also be provided.

Areas for Consideration/ Questions to Address include:

Structure and Management

* To what extent is the current organisational structure of the area effective in delivering its key responsibilities?
* Comment on the effectiveness of committees and other consultation structures within the School to enable successful management of its core activities.
* Comment on the effectiveness and appropriateness of executive and management structures within the area.
* Comment on the effectiveness of reporting structures and relationships between the area and other academic and central support units to support effective management.
* Can you comment on the appropriateness of current available work spaces within your area which support your efforts in achieving key responsibilities?

Financial Planning

* How are financial priorities established? What changes have been made in recent years (if any) to manage changes in budget allocations?
* What are the arrangement for Financial Planning, and the capacity within the area to project future resource requirements?

Staffing/ People Resources

* Comment on the appropriateness of workload planning within the area, and where relevant, how administrative duties are rotated within the area.
* How effective is the staff planning process, including the filling of vacant posts?
* How effective is the process for allocating specific tasks to member(s) of the area?
* To what extent are staff aware of, and avail of relevant professional development opportunities within the area?

Space/ Sustainability

* Can you comment on the appropriateness of current available space to facilitate the teaching, research and administrative functions of the area?
* Comment on the appropriateness of resources and equipment to support both teaching and research (equipment, audio-visual, digital learning facilities) and technology resources (library, IT infrastructure and software etc.
* What factors are considered with respect to resources in relation to environmental and broader operational sustainability, including reducing waste (financial, environmental, energy etc.), and encouraging sustainability broadly within the areas activities and processes?

Other Resources

* Comment on the adequacy of other resources including, but not limited to Library, conference funding, technical and other research support where appropriate?
* Comment on resources received from other sources, other than university core income, including how these have changed since the last review

## 5.3 Overall Approach to Teaching and Learning

This section should include a reflective analysis of teaching and learning within the area. It should focus on broad, area-level issues in relation to teaching and learning, and the overall capacity of the area to deliver on, and further develop its programme portfolio.

Areas for Consideration/ Questions to address may include:

* Does the School have a Teaching and Learning Policy? If so, how effective is it on establishing a framework for teaching within the area.
* Are there effective processes in place for developing new programmes, reviewing the current portfolio, and protocols for considering the retirement of programme offerings? Comment on the adequacy of these.
* Are there disciplines or programmatic offerings within the discipline which the area may consider for future development?
* Are there effective services in process to provide the required support services for curriculum choice, induction, tutoring and remediation for students studying on programmes delivered by the area?
* Comment on the effectiveness of the current methods for reviewing the quality of the learner experience within the area. What feedback mechanisms and policies are in plan for the collection and use of student feedback?
* Are there area-wide policies on the provision of student feedback on assessment? How effective are current processes for student feedback on assessment?
* To what extent are students supported in developing DCU Graduate Attributes and the use of E-Portfolios?
* Comment on the use of DCU Loop, and other approaches to digital learning, including the application of blended learning by the area?
* Comment on the use, where appropriate, of external expertise to information programme design, development and review within the area?
* Comment on the effectiveness of current frameworks for in-service teaching, and collaboration with other School and Faculty members in relation to the delivery of programmes or modules?
* To what extent does the area consider or reflect on international best-practice to inform pedagogic styles and approaches, which may be relevant within the area?
* How is teaching excellence recognised, acknowledged and supported by the area?
* How is the Area’s research agenda and strengths integrated into the taught programme curriculum? Comments on opportunities for students on ‘taught’ programmes to participate in research, or gain exposure to research as part of their programme.

## 5.4 Research and Scholarship

This section should include a reflective analysis of research and scholarship in the area. It should contain a broad analysis of the current research areas, how research activity is organised, supported and reviewed within the area. It should also include a reflection on the relationship between the School and key research centres across the broader University, where staff are research active.

Some of the key considerations and questions may include:

The Area Research Portfolio

* Considering the area’s policy and approach on Scholarship’s and Research, are there any specific areas targeted to ensure the appropriate calibre of applicants? Describe the strengths of the School with respect to Scholarship and Research, including any changes that have occurred during the last 5 – 10 years?
* Comment on the scale of critical mass specific to the area under review.
* Reflect on the extent and effectiveness of external, and in particular, international research collaboration within the Area.
* How effective is the School at progressing its research activity. (e.g. formal review of progress, policies on the allocation of administrative and teaching responsibilities and of resources).

Management and Organisation of Research Activities

* Comment on the effectiveness of the organisation of research- in Research Groups, Formal Research Centres etc., and how these research groups/centres connect with the Area under review.
* Consider the impact of staff participation in professional bodies across all academic domains, journal editorial boards, and scientific memberships on the area’s overall performance?
* Does the School actively encourage group-based collaborative research and peer review?
* Are there mechanisms in place for staff to share their research and receive support/reviews from their peers?
* To what extent does the research agenda and

Research Income

* Describe and evaluate the approach adapted by the area to identify and secure funding mechanisms through the various National and International funding sources? Describe the support received from both within the area and across the broader University, to compile research funding applications?
* Provide a summary of recent funding successes within the area?
* Describe the challenges, if any, in securing research funding for the area.

Research Outputs

* Comment and reflect on research outputs during the last 5 years
* How is benchmarking carried out within the area?
* What supports or policies are in place for the dissemination of research, and how adequate are these structures and supports?

Post Graduate Research Programmes, and Early Stage Researchers

* How has the post-graduate research student body changed in the last 5 years? What factors are driving any changes in the number of postgraduate research applications?
* What supports and facilities are available within the area which specifically target postgraduate research or early career research staff?

This section may also include information on how research success and research excellence are acknowledged within the area.

## 5.5 University Service and External Engagement

This section should consider the effectiveness and impact of internal and external engagement, including civic engagement, activity with 2nd level schools, NGO advisory, discipline specific professional bodies, state advisory boards etc.

**Engagement and Service within the University**

* Consider the extent of area’s engagement on university committees and decision-making fora, and the associated impact.
* Comment on the area’s involvement with university projects or initiatives during the last five years, including if the Area has been involved in developing developing or piloting new approaches to pedagogy, research, administration or strategic initiatives.
* Comment on co-delivery of programmes or research collaboration with colleagues outside the Area under review, and the effectiveness of these relationships
* Reflect on the effectiveness of working with other areas in the university in relation to teaching, research, engagement, administration and management of the area.

**Engagement Activities outside the University**

* Does the area have a policy or over-arching approach to external engagement and contribution to the broader community external to DCU?
* Describe the breadth of engagement activity, and how priorities are established for building external relationships in teaching, research and other activities
* Describe any relationships with our Linked Colleges or programmes delivered in collaboration with other providers of Higher Education.
* Reflect on the overall approach to engagement, the key activities undertaken, and its effectiveness and impact to internal and external stakeholder.
* Comment on the scale and scope of engagement activities, while considering the level of support provided by the broader University.

Some of the key considerations and questions may include:

## 5.6 Communications and Provision of Information

Guidance Note:

This section should include a critical analysis of the structures and processes for communication, both internally within the area under review, with the wider university community, and where appropriate, externally. It should also include an assessment of how information is generated, stored and used for the purposes of self-monitoring, planning or as a tool for enhanced processes.

Areas for Consideration/ Question to Address include:

* A review of communication structures within the area, the university and (where relevant) externally.
* A reflection on how the views of staff and other stakeholders are included in planning and decision-making.
* A review of how the current communication structures and methods keep staff informed on information within the area, and relevant information from the university.
* A reflection of the provision of information to key internal and external stakeholders.
* A review of the extent to which area staff participate in university fora and decision-making committees
* In what way does the area keep abreast of national or international best practice?
* Do staff attend or present at relevant national and international conferences?
* Does the area implement a specific citation strategy for research publications?
* Does the area attempt to benchmark its activities relative to other institutions or relevant external benchmarks
* A reflection on how the School interfaces with prospective students and the general public

## 5.7 External Perspectives

This section should include a commentary on the outputs from self-assessment which relate to the input from other areas across the university, including colleagues in other academic areas. This should include the perspectives and a summary of the feedback received from students during self-assessment. It may also include, where possible, feedback received from external stakeholders and collaborators, e.g. industry partners, professional accrediting bodies, graduate employers, INTRA or work-placement employers.

# 6 SWOT Analysis

Guidance Note:

This section should outline an area level SWOT. Guidance on conducting a SWOT analysis is available from the Quality Promotion Office website. The issues raised within the SWOT should be reasonably high-level with a focus on the broad strategic level aspects of current activity within the area.

It is recommended that the SWOT be **no longer than one page in length**

Sample Table below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| * Add content here * Add content here * Add content here | * Add content here * Add content here * Add content here |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| * Add content here * Add content here * Add content here | * Add content here * Add content here * Add content here |

# 7 Summary of Identified Areas for Improvement

Guidance Note:

This section should build on the SWOT table, and also include an overall analysis of the Area’s activities. Strengths should be emphasised, effective Area responses to weaknesses and opportunities considered and challenges discussed.

Since the goal of this overall process is quality improvement and enhancement, it is very important that the formulation of strategies / recommendations for improving the work of the Area in the future should also be highlighted in this section. In this section you may consider using a set of bullet points to suggest, in light of self-assessment, some key areas where you believe the Peer Review Group could provide the Area with advice and possible recommendation for future improvement.

This may include:

* Questions which the Area would like to the PRG to consider during their review of Self-Assessment materials and during the PRG visit
* Requests for input and advice from the PRG in relation to specific identified issues
* Proposals for improvement within the Area as a result of self-assessment, which may be ratified by the PRG.

It is recommended that this section be **no longer than 1-2 pages in length**

# Appendices

*Guidance Note: If large (more than 30 pages) the appendices should be submitted as a separate document, or submitted digitally to the Peer Review Group on a USB drive, as appropriate.*

*Material for Appendices may include:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Academic Area- Data for Inclusion in Appendices | |
| Staff Information | Information on Staff   * Staff Number Profile- Trend information- 5 years if available (including anonymised summary data on grades/ seniority, gender, age profile) * Information on accolades received by Area staff in the last 5 years, including external awards, President’s Awards * Area organisational structure chart, and DCU organisational structure chart |
| Policies | Copies of relevant policies and strategies including,   * Current area strategy statement, or strategic plan * Benchmarking information, or other performance indicator information * Relevant operational policies for the area, which may have been referenced in the SAR * Information on current schedule of area team meetings/ committee structures |
| Facilities/ Resources | * Budgetary information for last 5 years, including pay and non-pay costs * Information on teaching, lab, office space allocated to area under review * List of equipment (if relevant) and lifecycle/ date of purchase |
| Research | * Research Support Services research activity stats- % research active, % research outputs in top quartile * 3- year publication output list including authors and journal titles * Research Income, within information on source of income if possible * Knowledge Transfer Activities |
| Teaching and Learning | * Irish Student Survey of Engagement- School/ Faculty Report * List of schedule of annual and periodic programme review * Summary outputs from APR/ PRR since 2014 * Examples of outputs from recent PPR or external accreditation reviews |
| Self-Assessment Research | Survey and other SAR research methodology   * Questionnaires * Statistics * Focus-Group protocols * Full results of Surveys, Focus groups, interviews, Away Days |
| Information on Other Assurance Activities | * Internal Audit reports of the Area * Risk Register reports for the area * Other reports or reviews undertaken by the Area or a third party * Summary findings / recommendations from previous quality reviews |
| Space/ Other | * Budgetary information for last 5 years, including pay and non-pay costs * Information on teaching, lab, office space allocated to area under review * List of equipment (if relevant) and lifecycle/ date of purchase |