Quality Assurance / Quality Improvement Programme

Human Resources

Peer Review Group Report

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Date: 20th November 2013

Introduction

This Quality review has been conducted in accordance with a framework model developed and agreed through the Irish Universities Association Quality Committee and complies with the provisions of Section 35 of the Universities Act (1997) and the 2012 Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act. The model consists of a number of basic steps.

1. An internal team in the School/Faculty/Office/Centre being reviewed completes a detailed self-assessment report (SAR). It should be noted that this document is confidential to the School/Faculty/Office/Centre as well as the Review Panel and senior officers of the University.
2. This report is sent to a team of peer assessors, the Peer Review Group (PRG) – composed of members from outside DCU and from other areas of DCU – who then visit DCU and conduct discussions with a range of relevant staff, students and other stakeholders.
3. The PRG then writes its own report. The School/Faculty/Office/Centre is given the chance to correct possible factual errors before the PRG report is finalised.
4. The School/Faculty/Office/Centre produces a draft Quality Improvement Plan (QuIP) in response to the various issues and findings of the SAR and PRG reports.
5. The PRG report and the draft QuIP are considered by the Quality Promotion Committee (QPC) and University Executive.
6. The draft QuIP is discussed in a meeting between the School/Faculty/Office/Centre, members of the PRG, the Director of Quality Promotion and members of Senior Management. The University's responses are written into the draft document and the result is the finalised QuIP.
7. The PRG Report and the QuIP including the University's response is sent to the Governing Authority of the University, who approve publication in a manner that it sees fit.

This document is the report referred to in Step 3 above.

Peer Review Group Report

1.   Introduction and Overview

Location

The HR Department occupies the top floor of the Administration Building, which is an annex to the DCU Business School.   The Department comprises 9 offices in total.   There are 5 individual offices, which are occupied by the Director of HR, PA to the Director of HR, HR Strategic Projects Manager, HR Operations Manager, Employee Relations Manager.   There are 4 shared/open plan offices that are occupied by the Training & Development Team, the HR Officers, HR Administration Assistants and the MIS & Pensions teams.   In addition to this, there is an Interview Room and 1 waiting/meeting room.   The Department also has a Training & Development room, which is located on the other side of the campus in the Bea Orpen Building (OSCAIL).

With the exception of the Training & Development room, the space occupied by the HR Department is the same now as it was in 1998 despite an increase in staff numbers from 11 in 1998 to 23 (21 FTE) in 2013.   In order to accommodate additional staff, the Training & Development room previously located in HR was developed into an open plan shared office to accommodate 5 HR Officers.   Further staff members have been accommodated in shared offices, which can result in a less than optimum working environment.   The newly refurbished University Reception (completed September 2013), is based on the ground floor of the DCU Administration Building, the annex to the Business School, and provides a very welcoming and positive first point of entry for visitors to the University.

At the time of this review, the Equality Office is a reporting office of the Human Resources Department. This reporting line changed from the President to the Director of HR in 2011. The Equality Office is based in CG67 in the Henry Grattan building and provides an office and meeting room for staff and students wishing to contact the Equality Director.

Staff

There are currently 23 staff (21 FTE) members in HR, which includes the University Reception. Staff levels in HR since the last Quality Review in 2004 have increased by a total of 5, however, these additional posts were deployed to cover essential HR areas/activities not previously resourced i.e. Pensions x 2 (1 FTE), Employee/IR Manager, 1 x HR Officer and 1 x Training & Development Officer.   It should be noted the Department has lost 3 posts since the introduction of the ECF in 2008 which represents an 11.5% decrease in staff. There has been a significant turnover of staff in the past eighteen months which has led to some loss of institutional and sector knowledge, however, the department has recruited a number of HR professionals to bolster the skill gaps and these staff, in particular, benefited hugely from the SAR in enhancing their institutional knowledge.

There is one staff member in the Equality Office, the Equality Director. This post is a contract post, initially for a 3 year period which has been renewed for an additional 3 years. The term of the current post runs to December 2015.

Product / Processes

The HR Department is responsible for providing a comprehensive Human Resources service to approximately 2,500 staff based in the Faculties, Departments, Research Centres and Campus Companies of the University.   HR is responsible for managing the life cycle of staff of the University from the initial application and appointments process to the end of

their employment in the University. In addition, the Department maintains links with and supports its retired community.   The HR Department plays an important role in many of the standing committees and project groups throughout the University. The main functions include: participation at Senior Management level, policy development, recruitment and selection, training and development including organisation development, employee relations, industrial relations, HR services including contract management, pensions, HR policies, provision of a professional HR consulting service at all levels and in various forums throughout the University, maintaining effective HR governance, ensuring compliance with employment and other relevant legislation, ensuring compliance with Government regulations, providing an effective communication with external stakeholders in general and the Department of Education and Skills and the Higher Education Authority in particular.

The Director of HR reports to the President and is also a member of the University's Senior Management Group (SMG), the University Governing Authority (in attendance), University Executive (ex-officio) which is the decision-making body of the University, Budget Committee, Heads & Deans, Academic Promotions Committee and ISS Governance Committee.   The HR Director is also a member of the HR Directors' Group of the Irish Universities Association (IUA), which is the representative body for Ireland's 7 Universities. HR staff are also members of the following Boards and Committees: Quality Promotion Committee, Equality & Diversity Committee, DCU Health & Safety Committee, Age Friendly Committee, Union /Management Committee. The Director of HR and members of the HR team participate in various other steering, working and project groups as the need arises.

The Equality Office monitors processes and procedures within the University to ensure equality of opportunity. The Equality Office updates policy and is responsible for the development, communication, oversight and reporting on policies including the Policy to Promote Respect and to Protect Dignity, Student Complaint Procedure, and Child Protection Policy. The Equality Office provides advice and support for staff and students when dealing with Equality issues. The Equality Office also delivers training and information sessions related to Equality and Diversity issues, and represents DCU at national and international fora.

2.   The Self-Assessment Process

The Co-ordinating Committee

The HR Quality Review Co-ordinating Committee comprised 7 members of staff from the HR Department. To ensure continuity of the work of the committee, each committee member had a back- up representative in the event that they were unable to attend a meeting.

Name	Position
Emer McMahon	HR Manager (Chair)
Karen Brady	HR Assistant
Jennifer Butler	HR Administrative Assistant
Martin Leavy	Training & Development Manager
Joe Maxwell	HR Officer /FOI Officer
Amanda Jordan	HR Assistant
Gareth Yore	Employee Relations Manager

Methodology adopted during process

The Quality Review Co-ordinating Committee met on a number of occasions between May and September 2013. In addition, the Quality Review was discussed at a number of HR

Departmental meetings and in various one-to-one meetings, which were held between HR staff and members of the Quality Review Co-ordinating Committee. Each committee member undertook to update staff in their respective teams regarding on-going developments and progress with the Quality Review. As part of the preparation to develop the Self-Assessment Report (SAR), the HR Department organised individual discussions with the majority of the University's Senior Management Team, which were facilitated by an external consultant. A survey was circulated to all staff requesting feedback on the services and processes of the HR Department. A number of Staff Focus Groups with representative groups of DCU staff were held and facilitated by an external consultant.

The HR Department also undertook a number of activities seeking the views and feedback of HR staff in preparation for the Quality Review Process. These activities included: a series of presentations by HR staff on various aspects of HR activities, which were held over a two day period; HR Staff Focus Groups facilitated by an external consultant; and a number of HR Staff workshops/away days were also facilitated by an external consultant to engage staff in the HR Strategic Plan and include their input in developing the SAR and SWOC analysis from the feedback received both internally from HR and from DCU Staff. As part of this exercise, HR staff were offered the opportunity to meet with the consultant on a one-to-one basis or to submit comments separately in writing.

In preparation for the Quality Review, the Equality Office issued a questionnaire to all staff to obtain feedback on the level of knowledge of policies and supports provided by the Equality Office to staff.

3. The Peer Review Group Process

<u>The Review Group</u>

Mr Matthew Knight, HR Director, University of Leeds (PRG Chair)

Ms Rosaleen McCarthy, Director of Human Resources, National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Ms Brigid McManus, Former Secretary General at Department of Education and Skills

Dr Brenda Daly (Rapporteur), School of Law & Government, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, DCU

Dr Brien Nolan, School of Mathematical Sciences, Faculty of Science and Health, DCU

Site Visit Programme

DATE: 16 – 18 October 2013

Day	Time	Peer Review Group (PRG) Activity/Meeting	Venue	Meeting No.
Day 1 Wednesday 16th October	1230-1400	Lunch with Director of Quality Promotion and available PRG members (Ms Brigid McManus, Mr Matthew Knight, Dr Brenda Daly)	1838 DCU	Arranged by QPO
	1400-1500	Briefing by Director of Quality Promotion; Guidelines provided to assist PRG during the visit and in developing its report.		Arranged by QPO
	1500-1545	Private meeting where PRG selects Chair. Discussion of main areas of interest and/or concern arising from the Self Assessment Report (SAR).	A204	Arranged by QPO
	1545-1600	*Coffee*	A204	Arranged by QPO
	1600-17.5	Consideration of SAR with Director of Human Resources and members of HR quality review committee. Short presentation by HR followed by discussion of SAR. *(Director of Quality Promotion in attendance)*	A204	Arranged by QPO
	1715-1755	PRG Private meeting	A204	
	1800-1900	Informal Reception – PRG, Director of HR, Members of Quality Review Committee, Director of Quality Promotion	1838 DCU	Arranged by QPO
	1900-2030	**PRG Private dinner** with Director of Quality Promotion	1838 DCU	Arranged by QPO
Day 2 Thursday 17th October 2013	0845– 0900	PRG Private meeting	S208	
	0900-0925	Director of Human Resources	S208	1
	0930-0955	HR Management Team	S208	2
	1000 –1025	Training & Development Team	S208	3a
	1030- 1100	HR Ops / MIS – HR Officers Team / HR General Office / University Reception	S208	3b
	1100-1130	**Coffee**		
	1130 -1150	IE / IR Group	S208	3c
	1155– 1215	Pensions Team	S208	3d
	1220 -1310	Heads of DCU Support Service Departments/Offices	S208	5
	1310 –1330	Director of Equality	S208	4
	1330 – 1400 1400 – 1420	**Lunch** Tour of HR Offices	HR Interview Room	
	1420 – 1445	Representatives from DCU Heads of School, Associate Deans and Research Centre Directors	S208	6

	1450-1515	DCU Support Staff Managers from Schools, Faculties, Research Centres and Central administration	S208	7
	1520-1545	DCU Staff Representatives from Schools, Faculties, Research Centres and Central Administration	S208	8
	1550 –1615	Representatives from other university stakeholders familiar with services of HR	S208	9
	1615 – 1645	**Coffee**		
	1645 – 1705	Representatives from varying levels of DCU academic staff /research staff familiar with services of HR.	S208	10
	1710 – 1735	External stakeholders such as retired staff	S208	11
	1735 - 1800	Open forum for any member of HR staff	S208	12
	1800 - 1815	PRG private meeting time.	S208	
	1930	**PRG private dinner**	Crowne Plaza	
Day 3 Friday 18th October 2013	08.45– 09.00	PRG Private meeting		**Meeting No.**
	09.00-09.55	DCU Senior Management Group (SMG) *(Director of Quality Promotion in attendance)*	AG01	13
	10.00–10.25	President of DCU as HR Reporting Head	AG01	14
	10.30-11.00	**Coffee**		
	11.00-13.00	PRG private meeting time	S208	
	13.00-14:00	**Working Lunch** Clarification of outstanding issues for PRG if required	S208	
	1400 - 1555	PRG Prepare Exit Presentation *(Coffee provided 1530)*	S208	
	1600 - 1630	Exit Presentation – by PRG to all members of HR staff *(Director of Quality Promotion in attendance)*	D404	

Methodology

In advance of the Peer Review Group (PRG) visit, members of the PRG received copies of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR), SAR appendices, DCU Quality Review Process – Background & Guidelines 2013, a notebook on the Quality Review Visit process, a copy of "Framework for Quality in Irish Universities", "Transforming Lives and Societies" DCU Strategic Plan 2012-2017, and indicative draft timetable and an outline of the activities of the Human Resources Department.

The PRG visit took place on 16th – 18th October 2013 and conducted the review in line with the site visit timetable provided by the Director of Quality Promotion. At the first meeting, the Director of Quality Promotion provided all members of the PRG with details of the context of the review, and explained the PRG remit. Subsequent to this meeting, Mr Matthew Knight agreed to act as the Chairperson for the PRG. During the periods scheduled for PRG private meetings, the group took the opportunity to identify questions to be raised with the Director of HR and the respective meetings on Thursday 17th October, and with DCU senior management on Friday 18th October. All members of the PRG were in attendance at the meetings on 16th, 17th & 18th October, and the private dinners. The PRG meetings were conducted as structured on the timetable although there was some delay in the timings of certain meetings during the course of the second day as the PRG provided the respective groups ample opportunity to discuss any matters they wanted to raise regarding their engagement either in or with the HR Department as a key stakeholder and this resulted in the timetable running behind schedule.

In addition to the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) the PRG considered documentation provided by the HR team during the course of their visit (for example, data on other university HR staffing numbers, Research Career Framework, Pensions Survey, Training and Development Mentoring Scheme, HR policies and procedures).

Schedule of Activity

At the PRG private meeting on 16th October the key issues arising from the SAR were identified and an approach agreed for the meetings with the Director of HR and members of the HR Quality Review Co-ordinating Committee. The PRG also discussed the schedule for the visit and noted that there was an absence of two external stakeholders in the schedule, namely the third party representative group in the university (SIPTU) and a member from the Department of Education or the Higher Education Authority. The PRG requested to meet with both these stakeholders during the visit, however due to the lateness of the request neither representative was available to meet during the PRG visit.

The PRG allocated areas of questioning based on the SAR and the Group that they were interviewing prior to each session. The PRG allowed time in each session for questions to be asked of them or indeed any additional information a group may have wanted the PRG to take into consideration in their report.

The PRG endeavoured to adhere to the schedule of meetings; however it was very challenging to adhere to the timetable while allowing each group sufficient time during meetings to address any questions raised by the PRG. This was particularly the case on 17th October; however it was felt that it was more beneficial to afford the respective groups extra time to fully engage with the PRG. There was some rescheduling on 17th October as the meeting with the Director of Equality was moved to a later slot of 1.10pm on 17th October to facilitate the meeting with Heads of DCU Support Service Departments/Offices.

<u>View of the Self-Assessment Report</u>

Overall, the PRG found the SAR and the quality review process to be very positive both in terms of the content of the SAR and the approach taken by HR. The PRG noted that HR have embraced the SAR in a very serious and genuine way and have used it as an effective teambuilding exercise, and as an opportunity for self-reflection. The HR staff were very open, honest and realistic and had an understanding of the difficult times that they work in. There was no sense of trying to blame external or internal challenges for the difficult times within the education sector, or to suggest impractical or unachievable solutions to problems. There was a clear sense that the Director of HR and her staff were determined to do the best possible job that they could given the constraints within which they operate. Equally there was an impressive sense of pride and loyalty in working to support DCU's aims and objectives.

The PRG noted that in conjunction with conducting the SAR the HR Department has developed a draft HR Strategy, Mission Statement and Values and Key Priority areas. The PRG noted that the HR Department has been restructured to align to the key areas of the strategy. The PRG considers it would have been desirable to have conducted the all staff survey before the summer period to maximise staff input. In addition the timing was unfortunate given the public service pay context and the implementation of the public sector sustainability agreement (Haddington Road) at the time. In general the PRG impression from the different groups it met was of a more positive view of HR than the staff survey seemed to indicate and a contributory factor may be the staff survey timing. The PRG considers it would have been a useful addition to the SAR process to have included and reflected on data/ indicators on DCU performance in a number of key HR respects. It would have also been useful to include in section 10 more reflection on the additional implications for HR of the new strategic developments in DCU.

However, overall the PRG considered that the SAR and its Appendices adequately reflect and accurately describe the activities carried out within HR. It also provided a thorough assessment of the current HR service delivered to the university.

4. Findings of the Peer Review Group

<u>4.1 Background, Overview, Strategy, Context</u>

A Quality Review took place in 2004 and the HR Department implemented the following key initiatives as a result of this report namely: Communication, Information and Systems, Performance Management, Recruitment Process, HR Strategy, Training & Development, Research Career Framework, Work Life balance and the introduction of HR business advisers.

Since the last quality review in 2004, the nature and focus of the work in HR has changed. There has been sustained growth in the university creating increased demands on the HR department to provide more strategic support to the Senior Management Group and Heads of Department (academic and administrative).

The current context nationally for the public sector and within that for higher education is a challenging one for HR. A number of changes in Government policy, due to the national economic crisis significantly impact on the context in which the HR Department operate. The Employment Control Framework (ECF) places significant restrictions on headcount, recruitment and promotion within the university and requires detailed quarterly reporting against set targets in each of the areas being monitored. In addition the implementation of

the public sector sustainability agreement (Haddington Road) in July of this year has impacted on the local employee relations engagement and has increased the complexity in managing the contractual terms and conditions for existing and new employees to ensure the university is compliant with the terms of the agreement. At the same time there are major strategic changes in higher education affecting DCU and strategic changes at an institutional level DCU wishes to drive. HR will have a key role in implementing the DCU/SPD/MDI/CICE incorporation process and associated development of the Institute of Education, and in supporting the development of the 3U alliance with NUI Maynooth and RCSI.   The HR Department also provides support to the university's campus service companies. HR has key role in the strategic plan for DCU, which will be supported by HR's own plan and their operations.

4.2 Organisation and Management

The HR Department has undergone significant change in the last 12-18 months and there is a strong ethos of flexibility and a willingness to work on diverse tasks. There is excellent team spirit and teamwork within the HR Department as evidenced through the SAR and the meetings that the PRG held with the HR Department and external stakeholders. The HR Department has recently re-organised their activities to ensure key areas of responsibility and staff are aligned to each of the HR strategic key areas. However, the PRG notes that staff engagement is seen a key element in the draft HR Strategy, and there is no specific responsibility for leading on this assigned in the current HR organisation. It would seem desirable that in the organisation of HR staff there should be a clearly assigned responsibility for each key element of the HR Strategic Plan.

The SAR and this review offered the opportunity for HR staff to develop more awareness of the work of the area as a whole, and the PRG notes that a monthly Departmental meeting of all staff provides a forum for such engagement to continue and commends this.

The organisation of staff is strongly affected by the processes relating to contracts which absorb significant staff time, and a more streamlined, IT enabled process might facilitate the deployment of staff in a different way to address other priorities. It is clear that the managers in the university value the business partner model, though the high turnover in recent times has give rise to issues in relation to knowledge transfer and succession planning, and consideration might be given as to how to address such issues in future.

It is widely acknowledged by the majority of staff who avail of the HR services that the department is under resourced for its current workload, but it has a good deal of understanding and trust with staff who acknowledged that the HR Department work above and beyond the call of duty. There is perhaps inevitably, some sense of the HR staff having to react to day-to-day challenges and not always having time to plan strategically and anticipate trends.

4.3 Staffing and Accommodation

The HR staff are highly valued across DCU campus particularly on their one-to-one engagements with Heads of Departments and staff. Different stakeholders met by the PRG commented on the high value of the service offered, frequently commending the expertise and helpfulness of the individual HR staff that they dealt with. Where there were criticisms of service delivery, stakeholders attributed these to constraints on HR staff. There was general acknowledgement for the need to review business and IT processes to enhance the delivery of the service to both staff and management.   There is need to build up systems to support the HR function and managers in turnover/handover situations. Given the expertise requirements in the area and the difficulties caused by recent unanticipated high staff

turnover in the area, consideration should be given to developing systems and information banks that would support the HR function and individual managers in these situations rather than an over reliance on referral to those in function with such expertise.

HR staff are stretched in delivering on all of their requirements posing certain risks to the delivery of key objectives, as well as limiting the opportunity for staff to gain more diverse experience. Improved contract processes (see below) should release staff capacity in the medium-term. In the meantime, based on the workload of the existing members of staff, the PRG considers it desirable to provide additional capacity even on a temporary basis to implement the HR QIP and Strategic Plan. This will be crucial if projects such as Incorporation are to be delivered at the same time as ensuring speedy delivery of the changed business process to improve operational effectiveness and maintaining business continuity. To ensure the HR staff can deliver on the revised strategic direction of the department and meet the needs of the university, a personal development plan should be delivered for each member of the department.

The configuration of the HR accommodation has given rise to criticism from staff in terms of services for staff calling into the HR area. Likewise the effect on HR work of the current arrangements for dealing with such visitors has been negative. The PRG agrees with the HR staff view in the SAR that a reconfiguration of space would help this. The PRG suggests that consideration should be given as to how to make the best use of space and the HR reception area to enhance the 'visitor experience', perhaps making some minor building changes. In addition, contracts should either be sent directly to staff at their departments or moved to the main Reception area for collection, staff could be designated to cover particular periods, and email/web approaches could be set up to deal with queries.

4.4 Management of Financial and other Resources

The HR Department does not have a major budget. The Training and Development team is commended for its excellent practice in leveraging expertise across campus, and for making great use of a very limited budget. The PRG recommend provision of additional financial resources for HR to implement the DCU/HR Strategy and Quality Improvement Plan (QuIP).

4.5 Functions, Activities and Processes

HR is regarded as providing an important role in strategy at Senior Management level. The overall delivery of a HR service across the campus was seen to be at a very high level in the key areas. Support for management in dealing with the day-to-day operational and employee relations issues was also greatly appreciated and acknowledged for the personal and timely service.

The Training and Development team is widely regarded as an excellent unit making a significant contribution to the university as a whole and to individual staff members. It was felt that this team is very responsive, practical and involved. The Pensions Unit was another area that received a high degree of satisfaction both in the survey and during the review.

HR is very valued by DCU campus companies in supporting them in their commercial activities and recognising the different environment they operate in comparison to other DCU activities.

There was consistent feedback that HR should review and improve its operational efficiency in areas of contract management, recruitment, policy and procedures, and employee self-service. A review of the contract management process and an IT based solution for the revised process is essential and urgent. This would bring benefits to all areas of the

university as this impacts all Departments. It should also free up HR capacity when complete, to allow HR to address strategic HR priorities. The PRG considers that addressing this should be a high priority action for HR and for university resources. The PRG recommend that HR are given short-term support to review ways of improving operational efficiency. There are other areas where IT investment could support more efficiencies and more self-service solutions, and the university should prioritise these areas for funding and IT support. In particular, there is a need to update the website for easy access to employee information.

Ensuring a suite of up-to-date, clear policies that are easily available on the HR website would also help improve service delivery. The PRG considered there is scope for embedding gender equality more deeply in HR policies and procedures.

4.6. Offices reporting to main Office

The Equality Office now reports to the Director of HR. This is a recent move, and it seemed to the PRG that the Equality Office operates as a very separate office to the rest of HR. While recognising the need for a function distinct from normal HR functions, the PRG see opportunities for synergies between the equality and diversity agenda and other HR functions. The equality agenda needs to be more deeply embedded in all HR policies and procedures, e.g. gender issue in promotions.

4.7 User/Customer/Supplier Perspective

The personal qualities of HR staff are highly commended across campus, with many staff and management at all levels in the meetings with PRG commenting on the particular help and effort made to assist managers and individual staff when dealing with difficult individual problems. The organisational structures, including the business partner model and particularly where a named HR contact is available, work very well. However, it was noted that the hand-over when staff move or go on leave should be improved to ensure continuity of service.

The PRG noted that user satisfaction survey in the SAR overstated the degree of dissatisfaction across campus for HR based on what they heard from all levels of staff. Nonetheless, despite user recognition of constraints on HR there was evident strong dissatisfaction with certain processes particularly the contract system.

In addition, the HR Department should devise means of improving communication of relevant information on HR services to managers and staff. There was seen to be a gap in readily available information to all staff on issues that arose and regular updating of managers on policy changes/decisions that affect the context of their work e.g. change in length of contract that can be awarded. There was a concern that certain correspondence/communications might inadvertently not present as positive an impression of DCU as it might. The PRG suggests that an 'ask HR' email question facility could help reduce face-to-face questions and improve services. Finally there was a concern that HR may be seen as being responsible for certain national policies when they were implementing issues decided elsewhere. There was also a perception that DCU might not be availing of the same flexibilities as other universities.

4.8 Staff Perspective

The HR staff are aware of the difficulties that currently exist with the processes involving contract management and recruitment in particular. The HR staff expressed disappointment at the results of the all-staff survey but understood that the timing of the survey may have

influenced the negative results as it was issued when the announcement concerning cuts under Haddington Road had been made. HR staff presented as a highly motivated, flexible and hard-working team. The HR staff did express frustration at the lack of opportunity to think strategically and to address underlying issues due to pressure of work. The HR staff are conscious of a need to increase their IT skills.

4.9 Overall Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Concerns

The HR Department plays an important role in DCU, and the work it does and the individuals in it are well regarded for the work they do in all aspects of the University's work including Senior Management. The HR Department has contributed to strategy development and implementation at Senior Management level, by developing particular measures and through training and development initiatives. Building on this and implementing DCU's strategic plan will required developed systemic multi-measure strategies on leadership development, workforce planning and staff engagement. There is also an urgent need to overhaul certain processes and find IT solutions that will provide a better service for the university and reduce the HR staff capacity tied up in delivering these at present. Achieving the necessary process and IT improvements will require focus and the commitment of time and energy. If the strategy development work is not to suffer as a result some injection of short term expertise to support the HR Director in this area is likely to be required.

There is a clear opportunity to develop a prioritised leadership development strategy covering, as priorities, mentoring, succession planning and particularly addressing at the Head of School level. HR's contribution to a leadership development strategy could include proposals on how to promote more flexibility in the terms and conditions and lengths of appointments to academic leadership posts, particularly Heads of School.

In the following table a summary of the Human Resources SWOC Analysis is provided.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Support for leaders and managers – professional advice which adds value	Recruitment & selection processes - timelines and communication
Highly responsive and effective Training & Development function of HR Department	Contracts management and processing – timelines / delays.
Staff Engagement – e.g. *Your DCU, Be Heard, Be Part of It.*	Insufficient staff time/capacity to plan and implement change both at process and strategic level
Openness, transparency and mutual support	Insufficient workforce data and data analysis to Management - more web-enabled solutions required
Integrity, flexibility	Insufficient investment to support HR infrastructure e.g. IT, physical environment and people
Hardworking committed staff in HR	'Reception' service could be improved
Professionalism, realism, practicality	Need to ensure that all HR policies are accurate, up-to-date and available on the HR web page
HR Staff have a strong understanding of how their role supports University objectives	Need to improve profile of equality within the University, particularly by aligning it clearly with HR activities and strategy
Great work ethic and team spirit within HR Team	Gaps currently in the promotions and reward structures for technical administrative and support staff
OPPORTUNITIES	**CHALLENGES**
Leadership Development - development of prioritised leadership development strategy.	Government legislation and policies governing pay and conditions.
Organisational Change Management in the context of the upcoming DCU/SPD/MDI/CICE *Incorporation*	Employment Control Framework
Support for the 3U and new Partnerships / Linkages e.g. Arizona State University	Policies / Regulatory Compliance.
Re-engineering of recruitment and selection and contract management processes	Workforce Sustainability in terms of attracting and retention of talent in current context
Staff Engagement. More of – *Your DCU, Be Heard, Be Part of It.*	Implementing the HR strategy
Communication – promote and increase awareness of what HR does i.e. policies & procedures including pensions.	Gender Imbalance in Senior Staff
Building stronger partnerships & relationships with key stakeholders to improve customer interface.	Staffing levels in HR and turnover
Performance Management & Development Scheme re-focus and re-launch.	HR as the bearer of bad news
Provision of Dashboard of HR Information to University Management	University staff perception of the role of HR
Invest in HR Staff	Capacity problem facing HR – particularly in the short term – and the need to protect capacity to deliver strategic HR responses to support the University's overall strategic plan
Review DCU staff orientation & induction process	
Take advantage of significant goodwill from leaders and managers in DCU who are willing to contribute towards policy and strategy development	

5. Recommendations for Improvement

Indication of Priority:
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.

Level(s) of the University where action is required:
A: Area under review
U: University Senior Management

No.	Priority	Level	Recommendation
			Processes & Procedures
1	P1	U/A	Provide funding for technological Information Systems and Services (ISS) and specialist support, to carry out a business process review and re-engineering exercise with external specialist support, commencing with an analysis of all aspects of the contract process including authorization, recruitment and contract production. This review should be multi-functional and carried out in conjunction with Finance & ISS, leveraging the Digital Campus initiative as appropriate. Led by external specialist support, staff members from the HR, ISS and Finance departments should be involved in this project. Following this process, invest in IT appropriately to help implement solutions.
2	P1	A/U	Develop specific proposals for IT solutions through CORE or otherwise to improve efficiency of other processes including e-recruitment, Employee Self Service functions, records management, staff requisition functionality, and HR website development. Develop individual project plans for use to enable prioritisation of the CORE functions.
			Strategic Development & Implementation
3	P1	U/A	Design and implement a leadership development strategy focusing on the four key areas identified by the DCU strategy: mentoring, gender, development and succession planning; academic leadership roles (particularly for Heads of School)
4	P1	U/A	Allocate once-off resources to support HR strategy implementation, and HR's role in the DCU/SPD/MDI/CICE incorporation programme.
5	P2	U/A	Consider the development and implementation of a promotions and reward structure for technical, administrative and support staff.
6	P2	U/A	Consider ways of recognising and rewarding staff who undertake academic leadership roles and actively engage in administrative roles. As part of this, consider how to be more flexible re: terms & conditions and length of appointments.

7	P2	A	Continue to develop detailed implementation plans for the new HR strategy including the grounding of two areas, in particular: (1) Workforce planning – support medium term workforce planning through more comprehensive provision of workforce data to Heads of units and Executive Deans (2) Staff engagement – configure team and organisational structure to identify specific staff member to take responsibility for staff engagement.
8	P2	A	Integrate the Equality Agenda with HR through an updated Equality Action plan with a particular focus on gender. Clarify the priority actions required to promote equality actions for staff and students. Ensure gender awareness is appropriately reflected in all HR policies and processes.
9	P2	A	Establish, with input from HR Director and Equality Director, an effective Diversity Forum that reports directly to the Senior Management Group.
			Communications
10	P1	A	Set up an email for DCU staff to communicate with HR on routine queries e.g. ASKHR@dcu.ie
11	P1	A	Focus on the use of empathetic language and the provision of contextual material when communicating difficult messages with staff and clarify HR's role in relation to such messages.
12	P2	A/U	Develop up-to-date documentation on HR policies and procedures in accordance with the University's revised policy template, involving Heads of School and senior management as appropriate to undertake this. These should be made available online.
13	P2	A	Review the wording and structure of public-facing documentation to ensure highly professional documents reflective of DCU ethos
14	P2	A	Develop a system to provide succinct and timely information to DCU Heads and Managers concerning all changes and developments in regard to relevant policies / procedures / legislation / senior management decisions, to enable them to best carry out their management duties e.g. email, newsletter, attendance at meetings and other means. Leverage the improved website for this purpose.
			Staffing and Accommodation
15	P1	A/U	Implement structural and other changes to enhance space usage, including a review of space and reception services, to enable the public office to deal with staff queries and members of the public in a more private and confidential setting and also to improve the service for the collection of contracts.
16	P2	A	Ensure that each pillar of the HR strategic plan has a clearly identifiable manager within the HR structure with responsibility for same.

Appendix

Meetings with Peer Review Group

Meeting No:	Name(s)	Position
1	Ms. Marian Burns	Director of Human Resources
2		**Human Resources Management Team**
	Ms Marian Burns	Director of Human Resources
	Ms Emer McMahon	HR Manager
	Mr Martin Leavy	Training & Development Manager
	Ms Norma Wilkinson	HR Operations Manager
	Mr Gareth Yore	Employee Relations Manager
3a – 3d		**Training & Development**
3a	Mr Martin Leavy	Training & Development Manager
	Ms Siobhan Keogh	Training & Development Officer (Temp)
	Ms Amanda Jordan	Training & Development Assistant
		HR Operations inc. MIS (HR Officers)
	Ms Norma Wilkinson	HR Operations Manager
3b	Mr Joe Maxwell	Senior HR Officer / FOI Officer
	Ms Brenda Dempsey	HR Officer
	Ms Fiona Kelly	HR Officer
	Ms Denise Duffy	HR Officer
	Ms Elenora Basile	HR Officer
	Ms Tina Patton	HR Officer / General Office Supervisor
	Ms Susan Healy	HR Assistant
	Ms Frances Fay	HR Assistant
	Ms Paula Hennessy	HR Assistant
	Ms Cathy Daly	HR Assistant
	Ms Karen Brady	PA to Director of Human Resources
	Mr Ian Featherstone	HR Intern
	Ms Mary Hassett	University Receptionist
		IR /ER
3c	Ms Marian Burns	Director of Human Resources
	Mr Gareth Yore	Employee Relations Manager
	Ms Emer McMahon	HR Manager
		HR Pensions Team
3d	Ms Emer McMahon	HR Manager
	Ms Jennifer Butler	HR Officer
	Ms Patricia O'Sullivan	HR Assistant
	Ms Gemma Boyne	HR Assistant
4	Mr Paul Smith	**Director of Equality**
5		**Heads of DCU Support Departments / Offices**
	Dr Claire Bohan	Director of Student Support & Development
	Ms Barbara McConalogue	Director of Information Service Support (ISS)
	Ms Phylomena McMorrow	Director of Registry
	Mr Ciaran McGivern	Director of Finance
6		**Heads of School/Research Centre Directors; Associate Deans**
	Dr Dorothy Kenny	Head of School – School of Applied Languages and Intercultural Studies (SALIS)
	Dr Enda McGlynn	Associate Dean for Research – Faculty of Science and Health
	Dr Joseph Stokes	Head of School of Mechanical Engineering
	Mr Seamus Fox	Head of Oscail
	Prof Richard O'Kennedy	Chief Scientific Officer, Biomedical Diagnostics Institute (BDI)
	Prof Oliver Dolly	Centre Director–International Centre for Neurotherapeutics (ICNT)

7	Mr Brendan Gillen Ms Goretti Daughton Mr Robbie Sinnott Ms Gillian Barry Ms Miriam Corcoran	**Support Staff Managers from Schools, Faculties, Research Centres and Central administration** Finance and Payroll Manager Senior Faculty Administrator, Faculty of Humanities Centre Manager, National Centre for Sensor Research (NCSR) Student Awards Manager (Exams Officer), Registry Sub Librarian, Head, Collections and Systems Services
8	Ms Ger Lardner Ms Celine Heffernan Ms Genevive Quinn Mr Javier Monedero Mr Jonathan Begg	**Staff Representatives from Schools, Faculties, Research Centres and Central Administration** Senior Careers Advisor Institute Administrator, BDI Technical Support, Information Systems and Services (ISS) Technical Officer, School of Health & Human Performance Administrative Assistant, DCU Business School
9	Prof Eugene Kennedy Prof Albert Pratt Ms Susan Folan	**Representatives from other university stakeholders familiar with services of HR – Retired staff** Former Vice-President for Research Former DCU Deputy President and Director General Former Senior Administrative Assistant in President's Office
10	Prof Greg Hughes Dr Debbie Ging Mr Eamonn Cunningham Dr Trudy Corrigan	**Representatives from varying levels of academic staff /research staff familiar with services of HR.** Professor, School of Physical Sciences Lecturer, School of Communications Lecturer, School of Physical Sciences Lecturer, School of Education Studies
11	Mr Deric O'Broinn Ms Cara Ryan Mr Jim Canavan Mr Brian Bates Mr Michael Brady	**External stakeholders including Colleges of DCU, Campus Companies and other external stakeholders** Chief Executive, NorDubco, DCU in the Community HR Manager, St Patricks College, Drumcondra Campaign Director, Education Trust Ltd General Manager, Trispace Catering Ltd General Manager, UAC Management Ltd (The Helix)
12		**Open Forum for HR Staff**
13	Prof. Brian MacCraith, Mr Jim Dowling Prof. Eithne Guilfoyle Dr. Declan Raftery Prof. John Costello Mr. Ciarán McGivern	President, DCU Deputy President Vice-President Academic Affairs (Registrar) Chief Operations Officer Dean of Faculty of Science & Health Director of Finance
14	Prof. Brian MacCraith	President, DCU