

Quality Assurance / Quality Improvement
Programme for Administrative Units
2003-2004



Student Finance Committee

14th November 2005

Contents

- 1.** Introduction
- 2.** Response To Recommendations in the Peer Review Group Report
- 3.** Prioritised Resource Requirements
- 4.** Summary of One-Year Plan
- 5.** Summary of Three -Year Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

Once the Peer Review Report was available it was presented to the Student Finance Committee for consideration. It was also presented to other relevant and interested parties , i.e it was debated at the SU/SFC monthly staff meeting. The SPC and SCC committees also had an opportunity to consider the report and make their observations.

It was noted that in some instances that the recommendations of the Peer Review Group were already under way. Because of timing of the process and the intense involvement of student committees there was little movement on the process between the months of May and September.

The SFC Administrative Officer drew together the responses of the various groups and compiled the QIP for debate at the first SFC meeting of the new academic year- October 11th, 2005.

2. RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT

In comparing the Peer Review Group Report and the recommendations from the SFC itself there are three main areas of common ground. These are the need for strategic planning, the area of training and development and the need for improved communications.

The Self Assessment Report merely identifies these as areas in need of improvement, based on the research carried out. However, the Peer Review Group report makes specific recommendations in relation to these areas.

The following is the SFC response to the Peer Review Group recommendations.

Recommendations for and Responses to Quality Improvement

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Unit Response in Quality Improvement Plan	University Management Response (if applicable)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw up Strategic Plans for each of SFC, SPC, SCC and the Students' Union . It also recommended drawing up a review mechanism for each of the bodies. 	<p>Away day planned for October 18th in order to provide guidance for the development of strategic plans. The SU, SPC, SCC and SFC will then proceed to write their strategic plans for presentation to the next SFC meeting in November. These plans are likely to have a three year perspective, but also to contain specific objectives to achieve within one year.</p> <p>In addition proposals for review mechanisms will be presented, by the Committees to SFC early in Academic year for approval by Committee.</p>	<p>This is an ongoing process and the university encourages the SFC to complete the process a planned.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRG recommend that the two directly elected members be removed from the SFC. 	<p>This will not take effect for this academic year as the two directly elected students have taken their place on the Committee. To be debated by</p>	<p>The university suggests that a reduction of membership of the committee to 9 members might be considered and that a new quorum of 50%+1 be introduced.</p>

	SFC and if agreed change in the constitution to be implemented subject to ratification by two Union General meetings. Currently there is no consensus on this issue.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PRG recommends that the SFC Administrative Officer be entitled as of right to consult with the Director of Student Affairs, 	To be negotiated with the Director of Student Affairs.	The university supports the recommendation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRG recommends that all staff be employed by the SFC. 	This proposal is currently being debated by the staff of the Students' Union. There is unlikely to be agreement on this from SU staff until SFC puts in place an employment sub committee with HR expertise and they are given assurances that continuity of service and terms and conditions as they stand are guaranteed. A decision on this recommendation will be made during the next year and will be implemented accordingly. The SU also has issues in relation to the perceived lack of control over staff, if they are no longer in their direct employment, however the provision of an effective employment sub committee could resolve this issue, proving a mechanism with which to deal with any issues which may arise.	The university supports the recommendation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRG recommends putting in place training and development programs. 	Crossover training for sabbatical officers has been implemented in conjunction with NUIM and UL. This took place in August and September and covered the following topics: Public Speaking and	The university strongly approves and supports the recommendation.

	<p>presentation skills, media training, negotiation skills and effective meetings. It is planned to make this a regular feature of August and September going forward.</p> <p>Class Representative training will not be held of Campus, in order to maximise the value for money. It is scheduled for October 15th and will be facilitated by a professional trainer with first hand experience of the system. It will cover topics such as University structures, leadership and conduct of meetings.</p> <p>There is a commitment to ongoing development of class reps throughout the year, however a concrete plan needs to be put in place to achieve this.</p> <p>Executive training for the SPC and SCC committees took place on September 23rd. It covered topics such as the conduct of meetings, effective planning and problem solving.</p> <p>A Training Plan for individual Clubs and Societies Committees has been put in place with a workshops session planned for 6 out of the ten weeks of Semester 1. These will be mainly skills based with areas such as the law and conduct of meetings, casualty management, public speaking and marketing covered.</p>	
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	<p>In relation to staff development, staff members have been asked to consider areas which they would like covered. In addition staff are being offered the opportunity to avail of funding to travel for short periods to investigate how systems work in other countries. Staff who are interested in pursuing further education will be encouraged. A rota for staff attendance at educational conferences will be drawn up to cover the next number of years.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PRG recommended that the perceived shortcomings in communication, and the lack of a credible presence on the web, should be addressed and formal structures be put in place, with particular reference to inter staff communications, communication between the SU and the general student body, website and communication between the various committees. 	<p>Work remains to be done on inter staff communication, but this has been improved considerably by the reintroduction of monthly staff meetings. New initiatives will be explored over the coming year, with suggestions being solicited from staff. There is a commitment to have these implemented before the end of the current academic year.</p> <p>The SU, SPC and SCC have also committed to undertaking more joint ventures, such as LIFE.DCU.IE.</p> <p>The new student website – Life,dcu,ie has been launched in September 2005. It is intended that this will improve communication at all levels, including</p>	<p>The university strongly supports this recommendation and suggests that the roles of the various representatives for student groupings be more clearly defined.</p>

	<p>between the SU and the general student body as well as between Clubs and Societies and the general student body. At the end of this academic year, a review of the effectiveness of the site will be undertaken by the SFC. In excess of €12,000 has been committed to this project, over the next three years.</p> <p>More frequent meetings between the chairs of SCC, SPC and the SU president will take place during the year. The QIP group also recommends better use be made of the role of the Clubs and Societies (who sits on all three executive Committees) Officer to facilitate communication between the three committees.</p> <p>Consideration will be given to improved training specifically for this role and will be included next year.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PRG recommends that immediate steps be taken to make the HUB more attractive to the student body as a venue. The relationship between the various bodies involved, HUB management committee, Campus Property Limited, the SFC and the various bodies must be reformed and made more effective. 	<p>The SFC has long realised that the HUB doesn't function effectively as a Student Centre. Some small progress has been made in relation to the décor of the smaller bar. The SFC needs to develop a strategy and present it to HUB Management Committee. This is a task the committee will undertake this academic year. As yet there are no definite plans about the optimum way to</p>	<p>The university strongly supports the recommendation and acknowledges the steps that have been taken to make the HUB more attractive for use by students and the wider university community.</p>

	<p>approach this. It will also need to be brought to the attention of the Board of Campus Property. This will be done through the SFC director on the Board.</p> <p>This shortcoming of the SFC is outside its direct control and will require a willingness on behalf of the University Committees involved to take cognisance of any recommendations made by SFC. There are also likely to be budgetary considerations which cannot be met by the SFC solely.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PRG recommends that the SFC and the University put in place formal systems to improve the partnership between them, in order to enhance the student experience which must be a shared concern for both parties. 	<p>Similar to the recommendation above this is outside the direct control of the SFC and will involve input from various University sources. The SFC has yet to consider its response to this, but it will be an agenda item for SFC meetings in the first semester. The SFC will need to ascertain how any initiatives it proposes are received by the University.</p>	<p>The university commits to trying to improve the partnership with the SFC and sees the introduction of the Uaneen module as very positive example for a successful initiative.</p>

3. PRIORITISED RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

This section contains a list, prioritised by the Quality Implementation Committee, of resource requirements necessary to implement the recommendations outlined in the Self- Assessment and Peer Review Group Reports. Estimates of the cost involved are also included.

1. Improvement of the Student Centre – suggestions include the installation of revolving doors to improve the atmosphere in the downstairs atrium and facilitate the provision of social areas and better signage, indicating the range of staff and services in the Centre -€9,000
2. Staff development - €1,000 – to attend further training.
3. Website development, hosting and maintenance - €8,000

4. SUMMARY OF THE ONE-YEAR PLAN

1. Draw up strategic plans and review mechanisms for SFC, SPC, SCC and the SU – to be completed before end of Semester 1.
2. Discuss at SFC and make a decision in relation to the composition of the SFC committee. If necessary make the required constitutional changes.
3. Debate and reach decision regarding the recommendation of the Peer Review Group regarding access of the Administrative Officer to the Director of Student Affairs, in particular in relation to the advisory role. Approach the Director of Student Affairs with any proposal which may emanate from the discussions.
4. Negotiate with staff and reach consensus regarding their employment status with the SFC and /or SU. Implement the decisions reached.
5. Continue with the training programmes currently in place and continue to review their effectiveness, adapting them as required. Specifically, put in place programmes for staff development.
6. Review the new website Life.dcu.ie on an ongoing basis. The usage of the site by Clubs, Societies and the general student body needs to be closely monitored to ascertain if it represents good value for money. This is particularly pertinent given the level of funding committed over the next three years.
7. Through the SFC members on the Hub Management Committee, initiate discussion on the best methods of improving the Student Centre as the true social centre of the Campus, with particular reference to the general areas.

5. SUMMARY OF THE THREE -YEAR PLAN

1. The SFC will continue to review the strategic direction of the Student Finance Committee and its constituent bodies.
2. The SFC will review best practices in relation to the management of the Student Centre, with a view to restructuring the Committee.

3. The SFC will continue to foster the spirit of co-operation and co-ordination between the constituent bodies of the SFC, to facilitate joint projects. For example Life.dcu.ie
4. The SFC will work to maintain its strong links with relevant external bodies in order to maximise the effectiveness of these contacts.
5. The SFC will strive to foster an environment in which learning and development is facilitated, both for staff and students. This will include the provision of access to facilities.
6. The SFC will improve the communication flow both within its own structures and to the student body. It will examine innovative ways of achieving this, through branding and marketing.

APPENDIX ONE

Please list the members of:

- **Unit Quality Committee (for the Self-Assessment Report)**
Paul May, Students' Union President
Yvonne O' Connor, Sports and Recreation Officer
Sarah Farrell, Student Finance Committee Chair
Siobhan Byrne, Clubs and Societies Finance Officer
Una Redmond, Student Finance Committee Administrative Officer
Patricia Wheatley, CEP Project Supervisor.
Riona Judge McCormack, Chair Societies and Publications Committee.

- **Peer Review Group**
Barney Hughes, General Manager, Students' Union, QUB (Chair)
Francis Kieran, President Students' Union, Trinity College Dublin.
Donnchadh Ó hAodha, General Manager, Student Centre, UCC
Professor Michael Ryan, Head, School of Computing, DCU
Celine Jameson, Deputy Enrolment Manager, DCU (Rapporteur)

- **Unit Quality Committee (for the Quality Improvement Plan)**
Yvonne O' Connor, Sports and Recreation Officer
Sarah Farrell, Student Finance Committee Chair
Siobhan Byrne, Clubs and Societies Finance Officer
Una Redmond, Student Finance Committee Administrative Officer
Patricia Wheatley, CEP Project Supervisor.
Brian Smyth, Chair- Societies and Publications Committee.
Peter Denham, Chair – Sports Club Committee
Margaret Kinsella- SU staff member
Sandra McCormack, SU staff member