**Quality Assurance / Quality Improvement
Programme 2005-2006**

Peer Review Group Report
For the
Education Services Unit

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Introduction

This Quality review has been conducted in accordance with a framework model developed and agreed through the Conference of Heads of Irish Universities' (CHIU) Inter-University Quality Steering Committee (IUQSC) and which complies with the provisions of Section 35 of the Universities Act (1997). The model consists of a number of basic steps.

1. An internal team in the Unit being reviewed completes a detailed self-assessment report (SAR). It should be noted that this document is confidential to the Unit and to the Review Panel and to 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 the Unit and conduct discussions with a range of staff, students and other stakeholders.
3. The PRG then writes its own report. The Unit is given the chance to correct possible factual errors before the PRG report is finalised.
4. The Unit 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 Unit draft QuIP are considered by the Quality Promotion Committee.
6. The draft QuIP is discussed in a meeting between the Unit, members of the Peer Group, the Director of Quality Promotion and Senior Management. The University's responses are written into the QuIP, and the result is the finalised QuIP.
7. A summary of the PRG Report, the QuIP and the Executive Response is sent to the Governing Authority of the University, who will approve publication in a manner that they see fit.

    This document is the report referred to in Step 3 above

1. The Unit

Location of the Unit

Education Services has three offices, two storerooms, one videoconferencing room and one print room in the Henry Grattan Building, together with another storeroom in the Business School. Both buildings are located at the west end of the DCU Campus. At the other end of the campus, in the Science Building, the Telephone section occupies one office and one room where the Telephone Exchange is located. Precise locations are setout below:

Physical Facilities –
Henry Grattan Building, First floor:
C161(13.18m^2), Director
C162 (11.77m^2), Administrator
C163a (27.90m^2). Technician and alternating Postgraduate staff
Ground floor:

CAG119 (16.92m^2), Storeroom
CG12C (2.93m^2), Storeroom
CG68 (43.80m^2), Video Conferencing Facility
CG47 (9.01m^2). Print room
Business School, Ground floor:
QG16 (6.68m^2), Storeroom
Science Building,Ground floor:
XG12 (8.44m^2), Senior Technician and General Operative
XG13 (17.38m^2), Telephone Exchange

Staff

The Unit is managed by the Director of Education Services.

Room Booking is carried out by one person, who is also responsible for the financial administration, managing the video conferencing, and room hire.

For Telephone Services the Senior Technician supervises one post. The person currently in this post is a graduate with a DCU degree in Physics with French.

Audio-Visual Services is supervised by a Technician. During each semester he supervises a small team of three postgraduate, international students who work a maximum of 20 hours per week each. During the summer this is reduced to the full-time technician and one postgraduate person working full time.

<u>Product / Processes</u>

The Unit provides the services set out below, as highlighted in the self assessment report. However, from investigation of the Peer Review Group it has been discovered that the Unit has also taken on some responsibility of teaching room refurbishment.

Timetabling and Room Bookings – The Unit co-ordinates the University timetable and provides a room booking service for centrally managed conference rooms and classrooms.

Audio-Visual Services is responsible for the purchase and maintenance of audio-visual equipment provided in classrooms, and the lending of equipment to staff and students.

Telephone Services (including mobile phones) which involves all aspects of the telephone system *except the university switchboard operation*.

Video Conferencing which is offered to the Public as well as to internal clients.

Poster Printing which is a service offered to research Postgraduates and staff.

Signage throughout the Campus is coordinated by the Education Services Unit, which involves dual language provision (Irish/English).

2.   The Self-Assessment Process

<u>The Co-ordinating Committee</u>

The members of the Unit Quality Co-ordinating Committee:

Micheal MacConmara
Theresa Collins
Valerie Davitt
Robert Duffy
Robert Malone

<u>Methodology Adopted</u>

The self-assessment methodology adopted by the Unit was to use both a customer focus group and an online survey of customer satisfaction. This was followed up by an away day held, with the use of an external facilitator to create the SWOT analysis and the recommendations for improvement and development.

3.   The Peer Review Group Process

<u>The Review Group</u>

Richard Bates, Head of Estates Planning, Roehampton University (Chair)
Tony Perrott, Director of Audio-Visual Services, University College Cork
Irene Kilpatrick, Timetabling Manager, Belfast Institute of Further & Higher Education
Professor Eithne Guilfoyle, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dublin City University
Professor Saleem Hashmi, Head of School Mechanical & Manufacturing Engineering, Dublin City University

<u>Site Visit Programme</u>

The timetable for the Peer Report Group visit is set out below:

Day 1 (Wednesday 22 February 2006)

14.00 – 15.00	Meeting of members of the Peer Review Group (Meet in DG11, Bea Orpen Building, organised by QPU) Briefing by Director of Quality Promotion.
15.00 – 16.00	Group agrees final work schedule and assignment of tasks for the following two days
16.00 – 17.30	Consideration of Self-Assessment Report with EducationServices (may include a short 20 minute presentation from EducationServices) (DG11, Bea Orpen Building)
19.30	Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group, Head of Unit and Unit Quality Co-ordinating Committee (Tower Suite, Clontarf Castle Hotel, organised by QPU)

Day 2 (Thursday, 23 February 2006)

09.15 – 10.00	PRG to meet with Robert Duffy, CG35
10.00 – 10.45	PRG to meet with Valerie Davitt, CG35
10.45 – 11.00	Tea/Coffee, CG35
11.00 - 12.00	PRG to meet with Theresa Collins/Robert Malone, CG35, then to XG12.
12.00 - 13.00	PRG to meet with Micheal MacConmara, XG12
13.00 – 14.00	Brief Discussion with the Director of Quality Promotion (if required) followed by working (sandwich) lunch for members of Peer Review Group (Base Room DG11) (Lunch organised by Education Services)
14.00 - 17.00	Meetings with representative selections of: Students / Recent Graduates / Employers, as below

14.00 – 14.45	External Clients
14.45 – 15.30	Non-Academic Staff
15.30 – 15.45	Tea & Coffee
15.45 – 16.30	Academic Staff
16.30 – 17.15	Students

(Base Room)
(tea/coffee at 15.30, organised by Education Services)

17.30 – 18.30	Meeting of Peer Review Group to identify remaining aspects to be clarified and to finalise tasks for the following day (Base Room)
19.30	Working private dinner for members of the Peer Review Group (Templar's Bistro, Clontarf Castle Hotel, organised by QPU)

Day 3 (Friday, 24 February 2006)

09.00 – 09.45   Meeting with Line Manager in case of administrative unit, relevant Vice-President in case of Schools

10.00 – 10.30   Meeting with President, Deputy-President, Registrar, Secretary, Director of Finance and Director of Human Resources (Director of Quality Promotion in attendance) (President's Office, Albert College)

10.30 – 12.00   Tour of Campus (organised by DCU members of PRG)

12.00 – 12.30   Meeting with Head of Unit to clarify any outstanding issues (Base Room)

12.30 – 13.30   Brief Discussion with the Director of Quality Promotion (if required) followed by working (sandwich) lunch for members of Peer Review Group (Base Room) (Lunch organised by EducationServices)

13.30 – 16.00   Preparation of 1st Draft of Final Report (tea/coffee at 15.30, organised by EducationServices)

16.00 – 16.30   Exit presentation to <u>ALL</u> staff of the Unit to be made by the Chair of the Peer Review Group or other member of the Peer Review Group as agreed, summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group (DG11)

Methodology

The methodology of the visit was for the Review Group to meet and discuss with members of the department both as a group and on an individual/pair basis. Further meetings were arranged with the customers and stakeholders of the Unit, as well as the senior management of the University.

The Group also visited the Unit's accommodation, and a number of classrooms and lecture rooms in various buildings. Particular attention was given to the layout and standard of the audio-visual equipment within these rooms.

<u>Schedule of Activities</u>

Meetings were held with Education Services Staff. The Unit staff were fully co-operative, and gave full and frank answers to the questions raised by the Review Group. This meeting confirmed the methodology chosen by the Unit for the Self Assessment Report.

Meetings with senior management, administrators, academics staff and students were equally co-operative and enthusiastic.

Several Issues were raised throughout the visit, with the following key themes:

- Inappropriateness of Telephony & Signage in Education Services.

- Grading of staff within the Unit

- Lack of clarity of role and service of the Unit.

- Working outside remit –refurbishment of the teaching rooms

- Lack of resources highlighted by all staff & clients outside of the Unit

- The condition of the Henry Grattan Building in connection with room booking requests.

- Quality of AV equipment

- Level of communication between Estates and Education Services

Overall Comments on the Visit

The visit followed the timetable arranged by the Quality Promotion Unit, though some changes were made, and additional people were added to the schedule. Notably the Director of Estates, Mr. Mike Kelly.

The information provided for the visit, was comprehensive, and the travel arrangements, and accommodation were excellent. Our hosts in the Quality Promotion Unit, Dr. Heinz Leichleiter and Ms. Fiona Dwyer were welcoming and very supportive.

The timetable itself was intensive, and one suggestion would be to start in the morning of Wednesday, and finishing earlier on the Friday. This would provide some contingency time on Friday afternoon.

The visit showed that the people working within Education Services were perceived by other departments to be both committed to their roles and doing a good job with the resources at their disposal. Given the size of the Unit, all members of staff spent time with the Peer Review Group, either individually, or in pairs. All members of Education Services provided detailed and frank comments on the Unit and the Self Assessment Report.

Of particular value was the afternoon session with the stakeholders in the Unit. There was generally a unanimous belief that all the staff of the department were doing a good job within the resources available. The session also yielded substantial constructive contributions to the process.

View of the Self-Assessment Report

The Self Assessment Report was found to be clear, and comprehensive in describing the Educational Services Unit and its activities. It provided the Group with excellent background information on the unit and on the responses of students and staff to the services it provides. All the information contained in the report was found to be accurate during the course of the visit, except for the omission of timetabling and room-bookings from the management structure (page 3).

A number of other issues were not dealt with directly in the report, and these we believe have important implications for the quality of the service provided by Educational Services. In particular, the report identifies that the role and remit of Educational Services within the University needs to be clarified, but does not propose what that role should be. Also, the issue of the division of responsibilities for some roles between Education Services and Estates came up frequently in discussion with all groups during the panel visit, but was not dealt with in the report.

A second issue that was deemed very important during the visit, and was not covered in the report, is the issue of planning for the future of the service. In particular, the combination of services currently provided within the unit. Whether the mix of services should continue under the umbrella of Educational Services came up many times during the visit. This issue was not mentioned in the report, although during the visit, it became clear to us that this had implications for the qualities of the services into the future.

Finally, while the report discussed the results of a survey of users of Education Services, it did not benchmark its activities against similar units in any other third level institution in this country or in the UK.

4. Findings of the Review Group

Background and Context

As part of Dublin City University's Quality Review process a self assessment report was prepared by the Education Services Unit of Dublin City University. The comments outlined below relate to the information provided in the report on the background of the Unit.

The Unit is involved with a number of activities

1. Timetabling and Room Bookings
2. Audio Visual Services
3. Telephone Services
4. Video conferencing
5. Poster Printing
6. Signage

The physical facilities of the Unit comprises of four offices, three store rooms, Video conferencing suite, print room and Telephone Exchange room.

The telephone services operation is located at one end of the campus and all the other services are operated from the other end of the campus.

The unit comprises of four permanent, one full time contract and two part time contract staff. The Unit is managed by a Director who is also involved with the Timetabling function jointly with the secretary.

The audio visual service is supervised by a technician supported, in the main, by three part time assistants.

The telephone service is run by one technician supported by the contract technical support personnel.

The self assessment report accurately describes the services provided, location of the unit, its facilities and staffing details. However the details of who is responsible for what function are not clearly stated in the report. For example, there is no indication of who is responsible for poster printing and signage services.

Planning and Organisation

1) Planning
The document states clearly that the overall policy of the Unit is "To make it as easy as possible for staff, students and the public to use the most appropriate equipment to meet their needs."

In practical terms this means that:

a) quality standards apply to all services
b) 'ease of use' interfaces are provided
c) adequate levels of reliable equipment are provided
d) all services and products conform to relevant regulations
e) Health & Safety regulations are adhered to
f) that developments are in keeping with the University's strategic plan
g) Promote wider use of video conferencing facilities

However, there appears to be a lack of planning for Education Services, therefore budgetary requests are presented on an ad hoc/urgent needs basis. Funds are allocated as a roll over from the previous year's amount and there are no Life Cycle Planning or New Capital Equipment initiatives.

Whilst the report states that rapid changes in technology makes it difficult to put a long-term plan in place, it should not preclude planning, as this process allows for measuring performance and benchmarking.

A commonly cited issue that highlights the need for strategic as well as financial planning was that the siting of data projectors and whiteboards was poor. It is the understanding of the Review Group that old television mounts were utilised until replacements could be bought in the next financial year. Whilst it can be applauded for the resourcefulness, the impact of siting projectors in less than optimum places has a negative effect on the perception of the service being provided.

A focus group had been formed as part of the self-assessment process with representation from academic staff, estates and computer services.

Organisation

The Unit provides a range of services, which could be described as eclectic, and which do not necessarily create a good synergy, and it is for the University to review whether some services would be better located in other departments.

The commitment of the staff is to be commended; however one of the key issues arising from the visit is that the grading of the staff needs to be reviewed as a matter of urgency. It is not clear to the review panel why technicians would be graded as secretaries.

Furthermore, it is important that the way the Unit is staffed should be reviewed. The use of fixed term contracts means that the Unit is frequently investing time in training staff, who may only be with the Unit for one year. Whilst this may be seen as cost efficient, it also has an intangible cost on the services provided and thus the perception of the Unit to the University as a whole.

The Unit operates mostly in reactive mode and though the team are keen to be more proactive, it will require an increase in the number of staff to achieve this - particularly in relation to Audio Visual Services. It is also clear that there is a significant need for support outside traditional hours.

The Unit is authorised by the University to generate revenues or recoup costs by charging for its services, for example, telephone and room hire charges.

There has been no formal mechanism for regular staff meetings although the Director is easily accessible by any individual staff as and when necessary. Recently a move has been taken to hold regular weekly meetings.

The Unit has regular interactions with Faculty Offices, Estates Office and Computer Service Department and believes that it has good working relationships with them.

Functions, Activities and Processes

There is a lack of clarity of the role of Educational Services and this was highlighted by all customers interviewed. For instance the reporting and logging of faults with AV equipment, was this the role of Computer Services Department or Educational Services?

The review group agreed with all those interviewed that the ES Unit staff did very well with the resources available to them. Indeed, the functions of the telephone service were recognised as excellent, as was the room booking system and the video conferencing facility was found to be of a high standard.

The definition of responsibilities should be reviewed by the University as a priority and should be communicated to all staff, students and customers of the University.

Furthermore, this is exacerbated by the fact that the issue of where the division of responsibilities lies between Education Services and Estates came up frequently in discussion with all groups during the panel visit, but was not dealt with in the report. Furthermore, communication between Estates and Educational Services in relation to rooms being taken out of use due to maintenance work or change of use of room should be improved

Telephony

The telephony service was found to be well run, and providing a good service. There was notable enthusiasm for the service by the members of staff. However, there was also some frustration in that they did not have enough time to investigate/analyse data from other telephone companies with a view to carrying out a cost benefit analysis.

The staffing of the Telephony should also be reviewed by the University. The current staff should be permanent, given the technical nature of the role, and the levels of training required.

Audio Visual Services

As with all parts of the Education Services Unit, staff were commended by their customers, and that there was a good relationship with the Computer Services Department. However, several issues are clearly seen:

- Each classroom is checked between 8 – 9 am. This task is too time-consuming to be carried out effectively in one hour given the present level of staff and the size of the University.
- Staff grades need to be reviewed, as it is unclear to the Review Group why the acting audio visual technician is graded as a secretary rather than as a technician.
- External clients and academic staff expressed concern that there was no audio visual technical out of hours support
- References were made to the poor layout of white boards, screens and data projector positioning
- Customers were critical of the facilities in the teaching rooms and the lack of standardisation of equipment
- Academic staff were frustrated that equipment in some of the teaching rooms did not work and in some instances they had to fetch and return equipment to the Unit themselves
- Having fixed PCs cabled to data projectors in all rooms was stated as a preference by academic members of staff.
- Student representatives had difficulty in getting audio visual equipment

- Lack of awareness by all unit staff of current professional audio visual standards

Timetabling & Room Bookings, Video Conferencing Unit

Timetabling and Room bookings were found to have a good reputation, and also to have staff who were willing to go above and beyond the call of duty, frequently working anti-social hours to ensure that a high quality service to the University and external clients. The grading of the roombooking member of staff should be reviewed given that they are also responsible for financial administration, and video conferencing.

The Video Conferencing service was found to be of a high standard.

However, the main issue that was highlighted was that there was no link between Timetabling system and Student record system, resulting in data having to be keyed into each system separately and there was no quality assurance of data. However, the Director of Education Services stated that there had been uploads in the past, but that they had been no perceived need for this.

The Review Group strongly recommend that a link is created between the Student Record System and the timetabling system, in order to provide better space management, to assist the Schools, and to provide quality assurance.

Other

The following other issues were noted:

- Poor facilities, décor and furnishings of Henry Gratten building was frequently highlighted by stakeholders
- Students did not know of existence of unit and therefore felt that it should promote itself by having perhaps its website link to student portal
- Academic staff commented on amateurish signage
- The office/workshop/store accommodation for AV Services is poor and inadequate

5. Recommendations for Improvement

The Peer Review Group acknowledges the recommendations in the Self Assessment Report, and accepts that efforts have been made to implement them.

The following recommendations are regarded by the Peer Review Group as Priority 1

(A) Administrative Unit
(U) University Executive/Senior Management

The Peer Review Group have the following additional recommendations:

Ref.	P1 Ref.	Main Category	PRG	Unit	Priority	Commentary
A(i)		Self-Assessment Process	One of the key issues that the University faces is the decision of succession to the Director of Education Services and the future of the Unit itself. There are obvious synergies that could be created, such as locating telephony in CSD. There are also possibilities for Audio-Visual to be located there as well, although consideration should be given to having AV Services as a stand alone unit maintaining close liaison with Teaching & Learning Groups, Timetabling & Room Bookings and Estates. There are multiple possibilities for timetabling and room bookings, such as a standalone unit, a department within Audio-Visual, Registry and Estates. It is important that the University carries out a full review of its requirements, and as a part of this consult with the existing staff within the Unit.	QPU		QPU to respond.
(A)			Strategic planning for next 3 years. The Unit should carry out strategic planning over a minimum period of 3 years to include proper budgeting for projects, equipment and staff.			
			As part of this process the preparation of an annual plan and budget should include:			

			o capital equipment funding o life cycle management of existing equipment adequate consumable recurrent spending			
(U)			Rename department. The name of the department is misleading, given the diverse services provided by the Unit.			
(A/U)			Electronic link between Student Record System and Computerised Timetabling System – quality assure data and allow cross academic departmental programs			
(U)			Proper Grading of staff with defined job descriptions			
(A)			Benchmarking of DCU audio visual standards with similar Irish and European Universities. with a view to: • Improving existing standards and practices • Putting in place mechanisms for monitoring these standards • Achieving best practice in all services			
(A)			Develop a more expansive Mission Statement relating to the University's Strategic Plan			
(A/U)			AV Services should be expanded with increased responsibilities for conferences, special events, AV media management, etc.			
(A/U)			Regardless of whether it's a stand alone unit or not, its accommodation and staffing levels should be improved to meet the current campus-wide requirement for quality AV services.			
(A/U)			Improve working relationships with Teaching & Learning Groups, Human Resources, Estates Department and Computer Services.			
(A)			Clarify the fault reporting process by having well publicised, clearly identifiable methods such as an on-line fault reporting system or hard copy log in all class rooms that could			

Ref.	P1 Ref.	Main Category	PRG	Unit	Priority	Commentary
			speed up checking process of classroom equipment each morning			

The following recommendations are regarded by the Peer Review Group as Priority 2

Ref.	P1 Ref.	Main Category	PRG	Unit	Priority	Commentary
(A)			Annual report to senior management on the functioning of unit			
(A)			Provide more Audio Visual support outside 9 –5 and on Saturdays			
(A)			Make more use of features of Computerised timetabling system eg record details of room resources			
(A)			Document procedures for each functional area so there will be reference material should a staff member be off on long term illness			

The following recommendations are regarded by the Peer Review Group as Priority 3

Ref.	P1 Ref.	Main Category	PRG	Unit	Priority	Commentary
(A/U)			**Carry out a Training Needs Analysis review for staff.**			