Dublin City University

Report to Governing Authority

of

the Quality Reviews of Units and Schools

conducted in 2002-2003

Approved by Governing Authority, 12 February 2004

Background

The Quality Reviews are conducted in accordance with the legislative requirement set out in Section 35 the Universities Act (1997) and with a framework model developed and agreed by the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB).

The model in operation at DCU for 2002-2003 consists of a number of basic steps:

1. An internal team in the School/Unit under review completes a detailed **Self-Assessment report**
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 School or Unit and conduct discussions with a range of staff, students and other stakeholders
3. The PRG then writes a report (termed the **Peer Review Group Report**).
4. The School/Unit produces a plan of action in response to the various issues and findings (termed the **Quality Improvement Plan**)
5. Both the Quality Promotion Committee and the University Executive consider the Review Group Report and Quality Improvement Plan
6. The University Executive (in consultation with the School/Unit under review and the Dean of Faculty (where appropriate) produces a response to the above reports (termed the **Executive Response**).

Publication

Under Section 35(2) of the Universities Act, the Governing Authority is required to provide for the publication in such form and manner as it thinks fits of findings arising out of the application of the quality assurance procedures.

On an annual basis, for the quality reviews conducted during that year, the Governing Authority will be presented with (for each individual review):

- A brief background to the School/Unit under review with salient statistics
- The responses to the Review Group Report of the Unit or School (in consultation with the Dean of Faculty) and the University Management

The Conference of Heads of Irish Universities (CHIU) at a meeting on 31 May 2002, agreed that the reports on all quality reviews would be published, in cases where the Peer Review visits took place after 1 January 2002.

Following approval by the Governing Authority, the following will be published on the university website

- Summary Report on the Quality Review to the Governing Authority (this document)
- Full text of the Peer Review Group Report
- Full text of the School Quality Improvement Plan

DCU published the outcomes of the quality reviews (one review) conducted in 2001-2002 on 14 November 2002.

Universities Act (1997)

Section 35. Quality Assurance

(1) A **governing authority**, in consultation with the academic council, shall, as soon as practicable after the governing authority is established under this Act and at such other times as it thinks fit, require the chief officer to establish procedures for quality assurance aimed at improving the quality of education and related services provided by the university.

(2) The procedures shall include—

 (a) the evaluation, at regular intervals and in any case not less than once in every 10 years or such longer period as may be determined by the university in agreement with An tÚdarás (the Higher Education Authority), of each department and, where appropriate, faculty of the university and any service provided by the university, by employees of the university in the first instance and by persons, other than employees, who are competent to make national and international comparisons on the quality of teaching and research and the provision of other services at university level, and

 (b) assessment by those, including students, availing of the teaching, research and other services provided by the university,

and shall provide for the publication in such form and manner as the **governing authority** thinks fit of findings arising out of the application of those procedures.

 (3) A **governing authority** shall implement any findings arising out of an evaluation carried out in accordance with procedures established under this section unless, having regard to the resources available to the university or for any other reason, it would, in the opinion of the **governing authority**, be impractical or unreasonable to do so.

 (4) A **governing authority** shall, from time to time, and in any case at least every 15 years, having regard to the resources available to the university and having consulted with An tÚdarás, arrange for a review of the effectiveness of the procedures provided for by this section and the implementation of the findings arising out of the application of those procedures.

(5) A **governing authority**, in a report prepared in accordance with *section 41*, shall publish the results of a review conducted under *subsection (4)*.

[*In 2002, the individual governing authorities (including DCU on 11 April 2002) of the 7 CHIU universities delegated to IUQB the power to establish the protocols for the conduct of the periodic reviews of the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures as required under subsection (4) above, including the approval of the agencies who will conduct the reviews. The individual governing authorities have also delegated to IUQB the responsibility to publish the reports of the periodic reviews (as required under subsection (5) above) and to report on these to the Council of CHIU, to the HEA and, as required by the Act, to the Minister.*]

In December 2003, The IUQB and the HEA initiated a joint review [under Sections 35(4) and Section 49 of the Universities Act] of the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures in place in each of the seven universities in Ireland and of the quality assurance procedures in the university sector, as a whole.

Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Programme 2002-2003

Report to Governing Authority

Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Programme 2002-2003

Report to Governing Authority

Review of the Office for Innovation and Business Relations

Self Assessment Report Received by Quality Promotion Unit (QPU)	15 October 2002
Review Group Visit	6-8 November 2002
Draft Peer Review Group (PRG) Report received by QPU	9 December 2002
Unit Response to draft PRG Report received by QPU	21 January 2003
Final Peer Review Group (PRG) Report received by QPU	4 February 2003
PRG Report considered by Quality Promotion Committee (QPC)	5 February 2003
PRG Report considered by University Executive	22 July 2003
Unit Quality Improvement Plan (QuIP) received by QPU	5 August 2003
Unit QuIP considered by QPC	3 September 2003
Unit QuIP considered by University Executive	23 September 2003
Response of University Executive finalised	27 January 2004
Summary Report presented to Governing Authority for approval	12 February 2004

This report is presented for members of the Governing Authority of Dublin City University as a short yet comprehensive account of the above review and the responses to the review by the Unit and the various University Committees and Bodies. The presentation of the Review Group Report and the Unit Quality Improvement plan are précis conforming as closely as possible to the intent and wording of the full Review Group Report and Quality Improvement Plan. Following the approval of the Governing Authority of this report, the following will be accessible on both the DCU and the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) websites:

- Summary report to Governing Authority
- *Full text* of the Peer Review Group Report
- *Full text* of the Unit Quality Improvement Plan

The links are given as follows:

DCU Website: http://www.dcu.ie/~qpu/Publication.html#2002-2003

IUQB Website: http://www.iuqb.ie/IUQB_Reviews.html

Dr. Padraig Walsh, Director of Quality Promotion, February 2004

Members of Review Group

- Mr. Peter Franks, Chief Executive Officer, World Association for Co-operative Education, North Eastern University, Boston, USA (Chair)
- Ms. Sue Final, Research & Industry Officer, University of York, York, England
- Prof. Saleem Hashmi, Head, School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering, DCU
- Dr. Robert O'Connor, Senior Research Scientist, National Institute for Cellular Biotechnology, DCU (Rapporteur and Member of the Quality Promotion Committee)

Profile of the Office for Innovation & Business Relations (as at November 2002)

Unit: The Office for Innovation & Business Relations (IBR) is an autonomous office in the University with its own devolved budget. The Office is headed by a Director, who reports to the President through the Vice-President for Research.

Location: The IBR Office is located at the eastern end of the University Campus situated on the ground floor of the Innovation and Enterprise Centre (INVENT).

Staff Numbers	
Director:	1
Administrative support to Director:	1
INTRA (Integrated Training Programme)	7
Intellectual Property Management & Technology Transfer Services	1
INVENT* (Innovation and Enterprise Centre)	3
Total	**13**

*The INVENT Centre was defined as being outside the remit of the review

The Review Process
Methodology: The visit followed the timetable developed by the Unit Quality Co-ordinating committee in collaboration with the QPC office. The self-assessment report and background information on the process was provided to the PRG in advance. The two days of the review were spent in interview and discussions with some of the personnel of the Co-ordinating committee, various users of the services of the unit and the senior management of DCU. The significant findings of the group were communicated in a final briefing to some of the quality coordinating committee.

Overview of the Visit: The members of the PRG were enthusiastically welcomed by the Unit. The group found the facilities and timetable very satisfactory for the two days of the process. The committee indicated that they would like to have had an opportunity to meet all staff in the Unit. They also felt that some aspects of the process could have been more completely discussed in the internal quality review. However, the flexibility of the timetable allowed for a fuller discussion of all aspects of the operation of the IBR unit.

Methodology used to produce report: The PRG relied heavily on interviews and discussions with the various stakeholders. Specific documents including the research desk review, compiled from responses by DCU staff, the booklets associated with research and INTRA guide, as well as the Internal Quality review document provided specific and general background data.

Review Group's view of the Self-Assessment Report
The PRG found the Self Assessment extremely useful to describe the complex relationships of the IBR office within DCU. In general, all the primary aspects of the functions of IBR were described in the report. However, the report contained a fuller description of the review of the INTRA programme.

FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW GROUP
The PRG recognised that DCU is emerging from a tremendously rapid evolution and developmental phase in its life. Discussions with all parties involved in the review indicated that the quality of services provided by IBR and the individual and collective dedication of its staff were a significant contributor to the success of the university and its students.

The PRG did form some impressions with respect to the historical management of the functions of IBR. Primarily on the Research and Technology management side, there are indications that the rapid changes in DCU have led to an unnecessary complexity in the relationships between IBR and the various sectors within the university, and particularly with certain senior management functions. In places this has either led to duplication of effort or important points falling between various jurisdictions or not been resourced adequately for the good of DCU. Thankfully, individual reactions have maintained a core competence and professionalism and there are strong indications that the various roles undertaken within IBR are now, and will be in the future, the subject of clear and specific direction. Better resourcing and structure should see proactive instead of reactive direction.

The PRG found that the review naturally fell into a discussion of two general divisions of the function of IBR. These are the Research & Technology Management Services and the INTRA Programme.

FINDINGS BY PEER REVIEW GROUP (RESEARCH/ TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT SERVICES)

The review took place at an evolutionary crossroads for IBR, particularly in its research and technology responsibilities. The services outlined are to be rationalised under the direction of the VP Research and it is apparent that this centralisation can provide a clear vision for the future significance of these processes particularly within the university. The Research Desk function is to be transferred to the VP's office. In addition the Director of IBR now reports to the VP for Research. All services relating to research will be integrated with the strategy/policy making function within the University. This will make for a more streamlined and intelligible service. A survey conducted by the Research Desk amongst academic staff clearly indicated that there is currently some confusion regarding roles and, in some cases, a lack of knowledge of the functions and services provided by IBR. This is partly due to IBR's lack of resource to proactively promote itself and its services within the DCU community.

It is to be hoped that the move to VPR will provide the opportunity for a review of requirements in terms of personnel. While the IBR office has lost some functions over the last few years, the increasing emphasis placed on the importance of research, the increases in faculty numbers, external research income and size of the patent portfolio, has put severe pressure on the Research Desk and the Director. In addition, the Director has recently had to spend time on the development of INVENT. While the resource is understaffed, the PRG felt that a more detailed review of this section in its proposed new environment would be necessary to give an accurate picture of the additional resource requirements. It is clear that a strong personal relationship with the active research and technology driving staff has been a cornerstone of the function of IBR to date and maintenance of such a relationship is perceived as a vital component of any future restructuring. As a result, IBR has been unable to be as proactive as it would like. On research support it has confined itself to dissemination of information, responding to rather than generating enquiries from academics, ensuring compliance with sponsor terms and the university's regulations through contract review and negotiation and keeping records of research activity. The VP for Research also has the responsibility for promoting research across the university, which implies a more proactive approach. The Guide to Research is an excellent document in hard copy, but it has not been updated for two years.

IBR has received around 3 invention disclosures per annum. Unusually for a university technology transfer office, all of these have been judged novel and worth patenting. This was explained by the fact that these have all been generated by the most experienced researchers, who are well versed in the patenting system. There are now 15 patents within the IBR portfolio and €30,000 investment tied up in them. However, additional costs have been borne by external companies. Only two of these patents have been licensed and produced any revenue to date, a total of €212,000.

There has been no move to date to set up a process to encourage disclosures or to actively audit research groups with a view to identifying IPR, although the processes required for improving awareness, were all identified. The Review Group's consultation with a limited cross section of research active faculty conveyed the strong impression that there is far more intellectual property being generated within research groups than is being actively disclosed to IBR. We suggest that a formal review at the end of research projects should be instituted without delay. Given the applied nature of the research, a substantial number of the 26 projects funded so far may provide results worthy of commercial exploitation, and the University/researchers have a responsibility to see that the opportunities are not wasted by inaction. As the sub-set of research with the highest probability of commercial application, this should take priority over a more general procedure for audit and review.

The generation of greater awareness amongst Faculty, both of research opportunities and technology transfer, requires more regular contact through meetings with individuals and groups, a revamped web site, and the institution of an induction programme for new staff. All of these will help, but require appropriate manpower to put into practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AND *RESPONSES* TO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (RESEARCH/TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT SERVICES)

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	*Unit Response in Quality Improvement Plan*	*University Management Response (if applicable)*
The Panel would suggest that the University should examine the possibility of recruiting an experienced technology transfer professional.	*The University has agreed to recruit a Technology Transfer Executive. This executive will be based in IBR (INVENT) and will be involved in the implementation of the technology transfer and research commercialisation policy of the University as agreed (May 2001) and further developed in the INVENT Business Plan.*	*The Executive agrees with the recommendation to recruit a Technology Transfer Officer, as technology transfer is an integral part of the University's commercialisation strategy.*
Although the evolution of the Research and Technology Management functions is reaching a new and specific phase, which appears to be much more focused. It is important that some effort and time be spent producing a written policy clarifying responsibilities and jurisdictions associated with the various constituents.	*As indicated in the self-assessment report, the University already has a written policy regarding the responsibilities and jurisdiction of the Vice President for Research's Office and its associated IBR Office. The distribution and promotion of the policy is now being implemented.*	*The OVPR has appointed a Director of Research Support Services to enhance the service the OVPR offers to academic staff in terms of research support, which had previously been offered by the Research Desk within IBR.*
The Technology Transfer Officer (TTO) would have responsibility not only for assisting with technology implementation plans at the proposal stage, but also for follow-up auditing and appraisal of results and recommending those to be actively pursued to commercialisation. This should include a process of due diligence, including not only novelty searching but also market evaluation before funds are committed.	*The goals and objectives and job specification of the Technology Transfer Executive have been clearly communicated to the Executive.*	
Where licensing was agreed to be the appropriate route, the TTO would be expected to actively seek out potential licensees and market the technology to them.	*The Unit agrees with this recommendation*	
Other activities that have been identified as requiring improvement include a host of measures regarding policy development and implementation, including the drafting of IP guidelines for postgraduates, conflict of interest policy, procedures for dispute resolution and monitoring and ensuring compliance with these and other policies such as the university's consultancy policy.	*These issues are currently being discussed by the Research Committee. The consultancy document is currently with the Executive for consideration.*	*Executive recognises the importance of such research policy guidelines and procedures and has asked the University's Research Committee to develop and/or update all such policies. The university has recently approved policies in relation to research ethics and research misconduct.*

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Unit Response in Quality Improvement Plan	University Management Response (if applicable)
More information on and monitoring of the research funding and contracts process is recommended.	*The University has purchased the Info-Ed Proposal Tracking and Technology Transfer modules to enhance this process.*	
The management of the research, development and tech transfer roles in universities, and indeed in commercial organisations, has been traditionally less than straightforward and DCU is no different from equivalent national organisations in this regard. Clearly there are huge but ever changing drivers, economic, cultural and social, which may merit a complete re think of the process on a national level. It is important that DCU engages with and conveys its needs and opinions to the national players.	*This is being implemented via CHIU and its Committees*	
DCU has the potential to significantly capitalise on its operations, to boost performance, to motivate and stimulate staff and to generate much-needed revenue to fund its continued development as it sees fit. Some aspects of this function require flexibility and a dynamic management style to add quality to the working lives of those in DCU and essentially have no direct cost. However, it must be recognised that sufficient financial support for commercial activities must be provided.	*Agreed, but as stated by the PRG, cannot be implemented without the relevant financial support. These issues have previously been raised at Heads/Executive level, and would need to form part of the external income earnings and staff incentive systems of the university.*	*Executive is conscious that the appropriate financial supports, including incentives, will form part of the commercialisation strategy.*

FINDINGS BY PEER REVIEW GROUP (INTRA)

Background and Context: The PRG notes that, from the inception of the University in 1981, the INTRA programme has been an important strategic method of differentiating DCU from some competitive institutions. It is an integral part of the educational philosophy of the institution. This placement programme considerably enhances the education received by undergraduates of DCU and provides for stronger relations with industry partners associated with the University

The PRG schedule provided for meetings with all major client groups of the INTRA placement office. The schedule included meeting time with the Director of the Unit, three members of the INTRA professional staff, a select group of employers, students, and a representative group of academic faculty and senior management of DCU. The PRG believes that the time allotted for these meetings was well designed and sufficient for a good working knowledge of the unit functions.

Management and Organization: A Business Liaison Executive employing a team based management style manages the INTRA unit. The three coordinators expressed their satisfaction with the participative management and activities of the unit. All clients expressed high satisfaction levels with the staff's positive attitudes, professional demeanour and fine follow up when issues arise.

Services Offered: The INTRA programmes cross all areas of the University and through positive actions and detailed follow up on specific issues it is functioning well with students, employers and academic faculty.

Staffing, Accommodations and Resources: The INTRA staff articulated their belief that the amount of staff is adequate for the job functions. They place 800 students annually (200 students each – in the experience of the PRG, this is likely reaching maximum proportions without new software becoming available to make placements more efficient. Accommodation in the new INVENT centre is excellent with good interaction with employers available in a professional and pleasant environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AND *RESPONSES TO* QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (INTRA)

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	*Unit Response in Quality Improvement Plan*	*University Management Response (if applicable)*
Continue to provide positive information on benefits of student flexibility in accepting positions away from Dublin and more international employment. This should be included and strongly encouraged in the orientation program.	*We will continue to point out the benefits; both during and following orientation, of obtaining degree-relevant work in Ireland. Students do not need much encouragement to work abroad if the conditions and remuneration are adequate.*	
Create policy document on health and safety issues for students on employment.	*We will meet with the DCU Health & Safety Officer to draw up a Health & Safety Document for INTRA*	*Executive understands that meetings have taken place between the Health & Safety Officer and IBR to progress these issues.*
Create more opportunities for international work placement experiences to broaden the career aspirations of students and opportunities for meaningful employment as well as to better prepare students for the global economy.	*Both the Director and the Business Liaison Executive have attended many conferences organised by WACE. They are useful for networking with other institutions that organise co-op or internship programmes. However, they have not proved useful to date in sourcing employers who wish to employ Irish students as generally few employers attend. Experience to date would also suggest that wage levels for placements abroad are lower than those offered in Ireland. Coupled with the expense of flights and in some cases, visas, many Irish students cannot afford to consider placements abroad. In the IBR's experience, organising "exchange programmes" would require many more personnel and bigger resources than are currently available. We contact employers in the rest of the EU and the USA in particular every year with information on INTRA.*	
DCU should take the leadership role in establishing a National organisation to promote work-integrated learning experiences in Ireland.	*The question of establishing a National Organisation is beyond the remit of this Review.*	*Executive does not believe that the establishment of such an organisation is appropriate for the University at this time.*

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Unit Response in Quality Improvement Plan	University Management Response (if applicable)
1. Computer system improvements are needed to make the program's management more effective. The current Access database system is relatively old technology. New systems, such as those utilised by the University of Waterloo in Canada, and Drexel University and Northeastern University in the United States provide for effective management of the job selection process. DCU might consider becoming more web-based in its student selection process to make the time utilisation of co-ordinators more efficient. 2. Create a more formal orientation process for students to the INTRA program. 3. Attempt to create a method for fuller completion of employer evaluations for students at the end of the work period.	1. At the time of the review DCU was the only third level institution in the country using a web-based recruitment system for internships. Plans to replace the current ITOL web system and management information access database, with a new integrated fully web-based system, were underway before the quality review began. The web sites of Universities mentioned above were reviewed as part of this process. The project is currently at the proposal stage and it is envisaged that the new system will be up and running by 2004. 2. It is our intention to implement a web course with information on how best to prepare for a work placement as part of the new INTRA on line (ITOL) system. 3. We specify to employers that their assessment forms part of the student's exam result. We will be providing web forms as part of the new ITOL system	1. The development of a new integrated fully web-based system is vital for the future operations of the INTRA programme. IBR should make a submission to Budget Committee for the additional resources sought, under the HEA QI Fund or the University QI Budget. This system should be consistent with the approved policy of developing an integrated campus computer architecture. 3. Executive is conscious of the importance of full engagement of academic tutors in their crucial role in the INRA process.
Provide funds for job training development courses and marketing training for co-ordinators so that they may more effectively create new job opportunities for the students – particularly during more difficult labour market conditions.	It is questionable whether further Marketing training for co-ordinators would result in companies and organisations changing their recruitment policies with regard to hiring internships. However, we acknowledge that it is important that such skills in the IBR be up to date and would therefore welcome such training. This is dependent on resources becoming available from University funds.	Executive notes that IBR and the Training & Development Officer in the Human Resources Office have agreed a training programme

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Unit Response in Quality Improvement Plan	University Management Response (if applicable)
Obtain the agreement for an executive-on-loan from a corporation to assist with job development. This might include a senior executive or a professional with years of human resource management experience who would be knowledgeable on the benefits of the INTRA program for corporations and have significant contacts within industry.	IBR to meet with IDA to explore the possibility of identifying an individual, resident in the USA, who would act as INTRA co-ordinator, perhaps a retired executive from one of the top IT companies. This is dependent on the success of a search and on resources becoming available from University funds.	Executive is conscious of the need to provide more INTRA placements outside of Ireland. Executive notes that a multi-pronged approach to this may be necessary. Identifying an executive-on-loan from a corporation to assist in procuring further INTRA placements abroad is one approach. Prior to consideration by Budget Committee under the HEA QI Funding and the University Quality Improvement Budget, this should be subject to a cost-benefit analysis.
When placing a student resume on an employers interview schedule which has been pulled from the applicant pool but for which the student has expressed no prior interest, the co-ordinator should continue to insure through communication with the student that the student is aware of the benefits of the job.	We will continue to point out the benefits of degree-relevant work placements to students, no matter where they are located.	Executive understands the difficulties IBR faces in securing and filling places once they become available, and the need on occasions to place resumes of students on interview schedules. Executive strongly encourages IBR to review its operations to ensure that students are aware of the need for IBR to operate such a practice.
Provide for more timely distribution of tutor interview sheets so that the visits to the employment sites might be accomplished during the first month of the student starting work when the transition is the greatest.	We disagree with this point. It has always been the view that the student should be allowed time to settle in to a position before the tutor visit, i.e. 6-8 weeks. In any case, for work placements starting in February or April, tutors would generally not have time to visit one month after the start.	
Allow academic tutors password access to the INTRA data base system so that they may better advise students.	The Academic Liaison Committee has access to ITOL.	

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Unit Response in Quality Improvement Plan	University Management Response (if applicable)
Require returning students to DCU from work experiences to meet with students preparing to go through the process. The purpose of the meeting is to allow returning students to share their experiences and benefits from the program. The example within DCU is the Biotechnology program that has found the program to be very worthwhile.	*This should be decided on a school-by-school basis. The IBR intends to award a prize to the best INTRA work-term report in each degree programme and perhaps have a compulsory presentation by all award winners to the incoming INTRA group. This may ensure that unnecessarily negative feedback is minimised.*	*Executive encourages all Schools, in liaison with the INTRA Office, to organise sessions where students returning from INTRA can share openly their experiences with the class who are preparing to go out on INTRA.*
Provide more flexibility in the placement system to allow students with resources to find their own jobs. Such placements would require the approval of the co-ordinator concerned and the academic department where applicable.	*Since the inception of the programme, over 20 years ago, students have been actively encouraged to seek their own degree-relevant work placements. Such placements must be ratified by the IBR in conjunction with the relevant school. Students with relatives or friends working in relevant industries or those who have already gained prior work experience with companies are a valuable extra source of new work placement opportunities for the programme, which can be capitalised on in subsequent years. Each year, around 5% of students on the programme secure their own placements.*	

COMMENTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE (UNRELATED TO SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS) FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT) IN THE OFFICE FOR INNOVATION AND BUSINESS RELATIONS

The Executive noted the Peer Review Group report, and acknowledged the large amount of detailed work that underlay its recommendations, and expressed its appreciation of the time and effort expended on behalf of the university by the members of the PRG.

The efforts of all staff in IBR in preparing for the review and in interacting with the PRG were acknowledged. The Executive noted with great satisfaction that the PRG reported on the effective management of the Office, and the highly motivated nature of the staff. Executive has noted the actions already implemented by the Office in its QIP.

In making its response, Executive is mindful of the changes which have taken place in relation to the creation of INVENT, the relocation of the Research Desk to the Office for the Vice-President for Research (OVPR), and the current development of a commercialisation strategy for the university. The report itself did not involve any assessment of INVENT.

INTRA
Currently, the main function of IBR is in the management of the INTRA programme, which Executive views as having played a critical role in the success of the university to date. Executive views the INTRA programme as a major reason why students choose to come to DCU, and one, which must be of the highest quality and professional standards in all its operations.

Executive has therefore examined in close detail the recommendations of the PRG for improvement and IBR's response to them. Executive notes that in many cases, action has or is being taken to address the PRG recommendations.

The Future
Looking to the future, it is strategically important that DCU builds on the success of the "INTRA experience" and expands on its ability to place students at home and abroad. The university recognises the positive benefits that such work placements can have for all its alumni, and the opportunity it gives faculty to build external relationships with both the public and private sectors. Some thought therefore needs to be given as to how to maximise the benefits that the programme could provide the university as a whole in such contexts.

PRIORITISED RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS in the Unit Quality Improvement Plan

Technology Transfer	
Technology Transfer Officer	*c. €60,000*
INTRA *The implementation, roll out and maintenance of the new ITOL web based recruitment system* • *Initial outlay* • *Maintenance per annum*	 *€40,000* *€2,000*
Marketing training for 4 co-ordinators	*€4,000*
Recruitment and annual salary of US based executive • *Recruitment* • *Annual salary*	 *€1,500* *€30,000*

Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Programme 2002-2003

Report to Governing Authority

Review of the Registry

Self Assessment Report Received by Quality Promotion Unit (QPU)	18 March 2003
Review Group Visit	9-11 April 2003
Draft Peer Review Group (PRG) Report received by QPU	2 May 2003
Unit Response to draft PRG Report received by QPU	14 May 2003
Final Peer Review Group (PRG) Report received by QPU	22 May 2003
PRG Report considered by Quality Promotion Committee (QPC)	4 June 2003
PRG Report considered by University Executive	22 July 2003
Unit Quality Improvement Plan (QuIP) received by QPU	27 August 2003
Unit QuIP considered by QPC	3 September 2003
Unit QuIP considered by University Executive	23 September 2003
Response of University Executive finalised	27 January 2004
Summary Report presented to Governing Authority for approval	12 February 2004

This report is presented for members of the Governing Authority of Dublin City University as a short yet comprehensive account of the above review and the responses to the review by the Unit and the various University Committees and Bodies. The presentation of the Review Group Report and the Unit Quality Improvement plan are précis conforming as closely as possible to the intent and wording of the full Review Group Report and Quality Improvement Plan. Following the approval of the Governing Authority of this report, the following will be accessible on both the DCU and the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) websites:

- Summary report to Governing Authority
- *Full text* of the Peer Review Group Report
- *Full text* of the Unit Quality Improvement Plan

The links are given as follows:

DCU Website: http://www.dcu.ie/~qpu/Publication.html#2002-2003

IUQB Website: http://www.iuqb.ie/IUQB_Reviews.html

Dr. Padraig Walsh, Director of Quality Promotion, February 2004

Members of Review Group

- Mr. Brian Boyle, Principal Officer, Strategic Planning, Change Management and Internal Communications, Revenue Commissioners, Dublin (Chair)
- Ms. Florence Bergeron, Registrar, Boston University, Boston, USA
- Ms. Paula Tarrant, Assistant to the Registrar (Operations), University College Dublin, Dublin 4
- Prof. Alan Smeaton, Dean, Faculty of Computing & Mathematical Sciences, DCU
- Ms. Maeve Long, Programme Manager, Office for Innovation & Business Relations, DCU (Rapporteur and Member of the Quality Promotion Committee)

PROFILE OF THE REGISTRY (AS AT APRIL 2003)

The term of office of the (former) Registrar finished on the 31 March 2003.

At the time of the review visit (April 2003) the following pertained:

- The post of Registrar has been combined with the new position of Vice-President for Learning Innovation and had just been advertised in the national press (*This position was filled in October 2003 but the appointee will not take up office until after January 2003*).
- The statutory position of Registrar was held on an interim basis by the Deputy-President
- A new post of Director of Registry had recently been created and advertised in the national press ([*The position of Director of Registry was filled on a full-time basis from September 2003*)
- At the time of the Review, the Registry was headed by the interim Director of Registry (a position held temporarily by the current Assistant Registrar (Academic Management).

At the time of review, the Registry was organised around seven functional sub-units or 'teams', each with a Team Leader. Operational decision-making was normally the preserve of each Team Leader. A Management Committee consisting of Team Leaders and the (former) Registrar's Office staff (11 people in total) met on a fortnightly basis. The teams at the time of the review were:

- Admission and Information Office
- Education and Management Analysis Office
- Examinations and Academic Awards
- International Office
- Post Graduate/External Examiners Desk
- Student Records and Information Systems Office
- Registrar's Office and Executive Education Function

The Registry is an autonomous unit in the University with its own devolved budget. The Director of Registry reports to the Vice-President for Learning Innovation (Registrar).

Location: The Registry is located on the ground floor of the Henry Grattan Building Extension. This location is fairly central within the University campus and has been occupied by Registry since July 2001.

Staff: At the time of Review, the staff complement of the Registry was 36, comprising 32 full-time personnel in place and 4 vacant positions.

SUMMARY OF THE PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT ON THE REGISTRY

Self-Assessment Process: A (nine-person) Unit Quality Co-ordinating Committee was established in late 2002. The committee was formed with a view to securing representation from all Grades of staff in the Registry, rather than to ensure that all current functional areas were represented. The committee met 11 times in all.

Review Visit: The visit was organised by the Quality Promotion Unit and involved a preliminary meeting on day one, at which the Director of Quality Promotion briefed the members of the PRG on their duties and the proposed format of the review. Days two and three were spent in meetings with: all members of the Registry functional teams (apart from those individuals on leave); members of the Management Committee; the outgoing Registrar; the interim Registrar and Director of Registry; other Registry staff who requested individual or group meetings.

Meetings were also held with Registry stakeholders comprising: DCU staff outside the Registry, two students in a formal meeting and an impromptu "vox pop" by the PRG with 15 others; the President, Secretary, Directors of Finance and HR of the University. A total of 40 individuals excluding the Registry staff were met during this process. Time was set aside for the reviewers to "go walkabout" in the Registry. A brief tour of the University facilities was also scheduled. The PRG found the facilities made available to them to be more than adequate during the visit. Support from both the staff of the Registry and the Quality Promotion Unit was superb and requests for extra documentation and changes in the order of meetings were met immediately.

Peer Review Group Report Methodology: A Chairman and a rapporteur were appointed. A first iteration Peer Review Report was composed by the rapporteur and forwarded to the other members of the PRG. Amendments and inputs were collated and a final draft report was compiled. Sources of information used in compiling the PRG Report included: the Self Assessment Report; the University Strategic Plan, a typical student portal page; the International Office Business Plan; samples of briefing documents on the Registry review to the staff by the Review committee; email feedback to DCU staff on Registry Quality questionnaire; email from DCU President on the new Management structure for the Registry.

View of Self-Assessment Report: The Registry Self Assessment Report was found to be clear, comprehensive and objective. During the two days of meetings, it was notable that no significant areas of criticism were identified, which had not already been noted in the report. The quality of the methodology used resulted in a self-assessment document that is to be highly commended.

There would, however, appear to have been a lack of emphasis and analysis on the academic management and academic quality function of the Registry in the Self Assessment Report. The report listed the outputs with regard to academic policy and a list of the Registrar's participation in internal and external groups and committees, but failed to provide an in-depth analysis of these outputs. It was not ultimately clear to the PRG whether this was due to a lack of functionality or ability to influence the Academic policy and direction of the University, perhaps resulting from an over concentration on the administrative aspects of the function, or whether it was just that the report was deficient in this regard.

The Executive Education function was not well represented in the Self Assessment report. There was also a lack of emphasis on the functions of the International Office, beyond a description of its current services.

FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW GROUP

Background and Context:
It is necessary to distinguish between two periods with regard to the background of the Registry Self Assessment exercise. The first period relates to the last three years as a whole, which is the term covered by the present review, and the second is the more recent background encompassing an announcement in March of 2003 by the DCU President, regarding a new senior management structure for the Registry:

Period of 2000 – 2003
- The most recent 3 years have seen much improvement in the external perception and internal organization of the Registry.
- The morale of staff has improved.
- The working conditions of staff have improved.
- The staff turnover, which had led to a loss of expertise and knowledge of how Registry systems operate, has largely been reduced.
- There has been a significant investment in the documentation of processes in the form of Standard Operating Procedures.

Recent Background
- Registry is entering two fresh periods of change:
  - Firstly, a transition from the top level Registry management structure comprising the Registrar and two Assistant Registrars (working with Team Leaders) to the an interim arrangement whereby the role of Registrar is being split and the two key areas of responsibility assumed separately by the Deputy President of DCU and an acting Director of Registry by the Assistant Registrar (Academic Management).
  - Secondly, following the completion of recruitment competitions, the appointment of a Vice President for Learning Innovation (Registrar) and a Director of Registry.

These two periods of transition will each generate uncertainty and unease among the Registry staff. These feelings were evident in meetings with Registry staff and other staff within DCU. It would appear that this new structural arrangement for the Registry has only recently been finalized. The PRG thinks that, in order to avoid uncertainty and confusion among Registry staff and the University community as a whole, it would have been desirable if this new structure had been finalized and the competition to seek replacements had begun sometime last year. Given the strides that have been made to improve structures, procedures and services from within the Registry over the last three years, it is regrettable that the same care was not taken by the University management when planning the future organization and management of the Registry.

While acknowledging that the University as a whole is undergoing a period of structural change in its management, the PRG was surprised that such a major change in the Management of the Registry would appear not to have been discussed with key people in the Registry. The decision, when taken, was presented to the Registry's management staff, with no opportunity for practical input. This is regrettable and does not support the University's distinctive values of collaboration & networking; accessibility & openness; development & supportiveness (Strategic Plan 2001-2005).

The question as to how the two existing Assistant Registrar posts will fit into the new Management structure remains unresolved at this point.

The PRG was mindful that the recent announcement of Management changes would be to the forefront of Registry staff's concerns, but every effort was made by the PRG to avoid these concerns dominating deliberations and discussions, given that the Review spans the last three years.

Frequent Issues Arising:
Several issues recurred during PRG deliberations and discussions with Registry and other staff. In no particular order, these are:

- There is unease throughout the Registry that there has to be an interim management arrangement. There is a desire for strong and secure leadership and management as quickly as possible.
- Expressions of regret that Prof. Barker is leaving the Registry were voiced by many individuals, both within and from outside the Registry.
- The creation and documenting of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) is a very positive development by the Registry and the teams should be commended and thanked for the effort put into their development and maintenance.
- Event management by the Registry, notably the graduation ceremonies and the registration process, is seen to be efficient and professional.
- Stability within the Registry has been achieved with the formation of functional teams, which operate efficiently. This stability has been a notable achievement of the last 3 years. The Registry is now seeking to improve the overall structure, where possible, and the obvious support from Registry staff for the "meta-process" concept is a really strong indication of their team spirit and commitment.
- This staff goodwill and enthusiasm should not be lost through any gap in the drive to move to a "cross-Registry" mode of operation resulting from the current interim management arrangement, or the eventual new management structure.
- The ITS system is regarded as an invaluable resource and a powerful tool in the management and administration of the Registry.
- The Registry does very good work in supporting students with special needs and students with disabilities. This was not highlighted in the SAR, but is to be highly commended.

Staffing, Accommodation and Resources
- Current unfilled vacancies puts pressure on existing teams. However the opportunities for efficiencies identified may allow for changes to the staffing structure. It is recommended that a comprehensive staffing needs analysis be conducted following the completion of the re-engineering process and the improvement of linkages with faculty offices.

Planning and Resource Management
- The development of a Cross-Registry approach to business planning has been delayed as a result of functional consolidation in the team structure. The PRG endorses the recommendation in the SAR that a cross-registry approach, based around the identified meta- processes, will characterize the next phase of development.
- An aspiration to establish clear lines of communication both internally and with other functions in the University was articulated, but requires careful planning.
- The Registry staff have benefited from a close collaboration with the Training & Development team in the HR Department to date.
- The new Executive Management team as proposed in the SAR will improve overall operations management.

Functions, Activities & Processes

- It is acknowledged by the PRG, that the current functional teams have been excellent in delivering the basic functions and processes of the Registry over the last three years.
- It would have been useful for the PRG to meet with members of Academic Council, the Executive Committee, Governing Authority and other key University committees in order to be in a position to form an opinion on this aspect of the work of the Registry.
- The students interviewed by the Peer Review Group expressed a relatively high level of satisfaction with the service being provided by the Registry.
- Despite the Registry's desire to move to web-based Registration, the students interviewed by the Peer Review Group viewed Registration as a quick and efficient procedure.
- The Registry has undertaken to establish workshops with students each year with a view to delivering improvements in all areas of the service.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AND *RESPONSES TO* QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	*Response in Unit Quality Improvement Plan*	*University Management's Response (if applicable)*
Structure and Organisation		
1. Continue internal structural review and the re-engineering of the functional teams to a more "meta-process" based structure.	*This will be taken forward through the Staffing Needs Analysis beginning in October 03 followed by the Structural Review with the necessary restructuring being completed for the most part by July 2004.*	*Executive endorses the specific implementation plans outlined in the QuIP. It will consider funding to support these actions under the HEA QI Fund and the QI Fund subhead of the University Budget.* *It is anticipated that specific outcomes from the Staffing Needs Analysis and the Structural Review will be presented to Executive as they become available. It is specifically re-iterated that, to be effective, both these activities must involve close and authentic engagement with relevant stakeholders.*
2. Change from current Management Team to a smaller operations focussed Executive Management Team.	*This will be implemented through the same processes, primarily the reactivation of the Structural Review, as well as discussions within the current management team and Registry as a whole. These will start soon after the new Director takes up position and be underway during Autumn 2003.*	*Executive understands that the restructuring process is ongoing and firm conclusions will be reached by March 2004.*
3. Appoint an 'IT champion' from within the existing staff to drive the development of web-based services.	*This will be taken forward as part of the Registry's staffing needs analysis and functional reorganisation. The Staffing Needs Analysis will highlight how best IT development can be supported and undertaken in the Registry in future.*	

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in Unit Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
4. While recognizing that the current vacancies put pressure on staff in the existing structure the PRG note that there are a significant number of potential efficiency gains identified which may impact on staffing. We recommend the filling of these vacant posts on a temporary/contract basis with a formal staffing needs analysis to be conducted in six months time.	This will primarily be addressed through the Staffing Needs Analysis due to begin by early-October 2003. Cover for permanent staff on extended leave (e.g. maternity leave) will be filled as quickly as possible as failure to do so could have serious ramifications. Temporary appointments, where necessary, will be made for vacant permanent posts pending the outcomes of the Staffing Needs Analysis.	Executive understands that, following an informal staffing analysis, a small number of permanent replacement appointments have been made in key areas.
5. The commitment to cross-registry structure needs to be formalized and the model for achieving it to be developed in consultation and with the support of, Registry staff. .	This will be taken forward through the Staffing Needs Analysis and the Restructuring process. This should be complete by July 2004. Essential to successful cross-Registry working will be the training programme and activities outlined in the next section 'Staff conditions'. This level of change will require that staff be fully involved from the beginning of the process with the opportunity to feed in throughout all phases of the project. This will be addressed through Registry-wide meetings, full consultation with existing teams and will be supported by the activities of the facilitator engaged to work with the Registry on this project.	

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in Unit Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
6. The International Office business plan to be re-examined and strides taken towards a self contained International Student Centre.	This will be addressed on foot of the revised business plan and discussions at Registry and Senior Management levels and will be included in the Registry restructuring debate. Strides have already been taken towards a self-contained student centre with the designation of new office space and a student drop in and information space. Foundation programme numbers are doubling in 2004 while international occasional numbers are increasing and agencies and advertisers have been engaged to support a recruitment drive outside the EU. DCU's Junior Year Abroad programme has been given approval and three definite partners have been identified with more at the discussion stage. The internationalisation of the DCU campus is being progressed with workshops for Chairs of Programme Boards, Intercultural competence workshops for staff and a mentoring system beginning in the 2004 academic year. An additional post is currently being recruited for the office with a projected start date of October 2003. The new post is at Grade IV level and will deal primarily with International Admissions. This will bring the number of posts in the office to 5.	Executive is pleased to note that the International Office is now physically self-contained and envisages that this will assist in the development of this area of strategic importance. Executive notes that the appointment to the additional post identified in the QuIP has been made, bringing the staffing in the International Office to 5.
Staff Conditions		
7. The interim period of Management of the Registry should be as short as possible (while acknowledging the need for a careful selection process), in order to avoid the stalling of current development initiatives.	This is in the process of being completed with the recent appointment of the Director who will take up office in September and the process for appointing the Vice President is ongoing. The long period without a complete and permanent management structure has naturally caused developmental activities to be stalled. However, the majority of these will be reactivated following the Director's introduction to the Registry.	This recommendation related to the appointments of the Director of Registry, who took up office in September 2003 and the Vice President for Learning Innovation (Registrar), who took up office in February 2004.
8. Changes in the current University career structure, with particular reference to career progression for non-academic staff, to be implemented following audit by external consultants	As evidenced by the SAR and PRG report, this is of great importance to the continued successful operation of the Registry and further Quality Improvement therein. This is one of the issues the Registry cannot resolve itself. Information on progress, consultation and an implementation plan are anticipated. Implementation of a policy for career progression for non-academic staff is a very important issue regarding staff conditions.	Recommendation 8 deals with career progression for non-academic staff. Executive notes that this is being addressed in the context of the University Partnership Forum.

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in Unit Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
9. A sustainable training programme to be implemented to support the acquisition of cross-Registry skills and to include training of trainers.	*This is something the Registry continues to work on, often with the support of the University's Training and Development function. An outline plan is in existence already and will be reviewed and reactivated once the level of cross-Registry activity desired has been agreed upon and resultant skill- and knowledge-based requirements have been identified. Existing training requirements identified will also be augmented with a significant dimension focussing on DCU's continued emphasis on becoming a multicultural campus. The training programme will be started in time to prepare for increased cross-Registry activity and to facilitate customer-focussed restructuring.*	*This recommendation is concerned with staff development and training needs; Executive notes that discussions are ongoing with the University's HR Training and Development Office*
10. A move, when the University budget allows, to more suitable accommodation with adequate space provision for all necessary functions, including meeting rooms and a reception area, to include maximum natural light and fresh air.	*This is outside the control of the Registry itself. Staff are in agreement that all that can be done has been done to maximise light and air quality. Further improvements on this issue will require a move. In the probable absence of a move in the near future, this is likely to be part of a five year plan and certainly not a one year plan, the issue of access to meeting rooms could potentially be resolved. University management should undertake a review of space availability in the locality of the Registry. This review should prioritise the need for making space available within the current structure for a reception area, as well as the provision of meeting rooms.*	*As recognised in the QuIP, recommendation 10, dealing with further improvement in office accommodation, can be addressed only through longer term planning.* *Improvement to the current space can, in the short term, be addressed by consideration of a submission to the HEA QI Fund and the QI Fund subhead of the University Budget. Executive would stress the priority of the provision of a reception area.*

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in Unit Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
11. Registry staff morale to continue to be a priority to new management.	While the issue of maintaining and improving morale remains a priority consistently, it will be considered a top priority by the Registry's new managers and within the new management structure once developed. The capacity to have energy, initiative and commitment rewarded in professional terms is important to staff member's sense of their work and personal investment in the Registry being recognised and rewarded. Obviously, professional progression is not the only issue pertinent to staff morale, but it is the one that has been raised most frequently and passionately. Other issues the Registry will address will include: • Improved mechanisms for the communication of decisions made to all staff, • Increased staff consultation on registry-wide issues, • Greater transparency on the reasoning behind decisions made, and • Improved mechanisms for staff input to decision-making and policy development. All of these measures will be built into the processes developed to support restructuring following the staffing needs analysis.	The important concern for staff morale and motivation, highlighted in recommendation 11, is shared by Executive.
Communications and Interaction		
12. Improvements required to internal and external communications. 16. A less insular approach to functions is required and a more inclusive attitude to other services and departments.	The necessary phase of building up staff numbers and structures in the Registry contributed to an impression of insularity and to some extent a genuinely insular culture that needs to be overcome. The Registry's aforementioned review of its own structures and organisation will include the manner and methods by which communication takes place within and with those outside the Registry, taking particular cognisance of changing structures in the University, notably the new Executive Faculties. As part of this process, and with specific references to staffing and resources, opening hours will be reconsidered in light of the Unit's increasingly customer-focussed approach.	Executive notes the open and honest appraisal in the QuIP that there is significant need and opportunity to improve communication and interaction with stakeholders and Executive is pleased to note that there is evidence that this is already underway.
13. Tighter monitoring and management of response times to queries. A re-appraisal of the benefits of the Symposium telephone management system to be carried out, following mixed reviews.	The currently informally active policy on response times will be reviewed, formalised and published before January 2004. The existing draft policy has proved effective in many ways but has not been universally achieved. Adherence to the revised and formally enacted policy will have to be monitored regularly alongside reviews of information provided by the symposium telephone system and a review of the functioning of that system itself. The response time policy will be reviewed from early October 2003 and will be considered alongside and subsequent to the Staffing Needs Analysis.	Executive understands that this is being tackled systematically (and in a prioritised manner) on the basis of function.

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in Unit Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
14. The development of more formal and frequent communications channels with Faculty Offices. 15. Duplication of work with Faculty Offices to come to an end. 16. A less insular approach to functions is required and a more inclusive attitude to other services and departments.	In tandem with the review of communications and formalisation of policy, discussions will be started with the Faculty Administrators Peer group in the first instance to identify preferred methods for enhancing communications. This has already begun with agreement to include a Registry representative on this group. However improvements will require a more in depth debate and an exploration of areas where work is duplicated and agreement to adjust work practices to bring this to an end. Specific attention will be paid to changes to Faculty structures with the new Executive Faculty structures driving some changes. Discussions will be opened with the Faculty Administrators in October and will be carried on alongside internal reorganisation and practice development within the Registry.	These three recommendations relate specifically to interactions with stakeholders including Faculty Offices. Executive welcomes the strong engagement by Registry with these recommendations. Executive notes that Issues to do with duplication of work are currently being tackled.
17. A project to implement an 'electronic purse' function to be fast-tracked and the necessary IT links with the Finance Office to be implemented.	This is currently progressing. This function will be key to enhancing the Quality of Student service provision by reducing the need to travel back and forth between the Registry and the Finance office, which are not adjacent. An initial meeting has taken place with the Finance Office to explore how this can best be implemented and further meetings are planned. It is not possible to indicate exactly when this will occur or what the costs will be as the plan involves another Unit.	Executive encourages Registry and Finance Office to progress the issue of an "electronic purse, identified in recommendation 17.
18. Physical access improvements to be carried out according to the original accommodation plan, subject to necessary security considerations.	This will be pursued following discussion on the best way forward. One option is to return to original plans for further development of 'the street'. This area, important because the Information Point opens onto it and because it is the location where visitors queue, or could potentially collect information and forms without having to queue, is not the sole preserve of the Registry. To this end, discussions will cover the possibility of an enclosed Information Point within the broader confines of the Registry (which would improve contact greatly and remove the impact of problems associated with queuing on the street) as well as possible renovation and refurbishment of the street including the provision of additional information resources.	This recommendation deals with a variety of issues relating to physical access to the Registry. Executive endorses the ongoing review of queuing, information point, and related needs; Executive will consider the priority of the provision of a reception area in any submission to the HEA QI Programme and the University QI Fund. Executive understands that the question of physical access to the Registry Office areas is being addressed and that the solution has to lie in a balance between ease of access and preserving the integrity of the Registry staff work space.

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in Unit Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
19. Continue to develop web initiatives and improved interfaces with, and access to, the ITS system, for internal and external stakeholders.	This is part of a constant drive to improve web-based services. A number of projects to increase the level of service provided via the web and to improve such services are currently in development, including online biographical update and online registration. Local data resources will also be greatly enhanced by the recently launched data archiving system, digitally recording and storing data previously unavailable due to problems migrating to the core ITS system, or incompatibility with that system. The entire DCU website is currently being redesigned and Registry information provided via the web enhanced. This first stage of the redesign will be active by September 2003. The Registry's site is being reconstructed to provide more customer focussed views with layout and links set up to reflect what different customer groups require. Statistical information and Quality support data and services are also being added to and enhanced as part of this process providing quantitative information about the University for those within the institution and interested parties outside. Increased capacity to use ITS for Registry staff will be facilitated by the cross-Registry working training programme. External stakeholders (within DCU) will also see enhanced access to ITS based information via enhanced web provision of information and particularly by the Computer Services Department's innovations using Discoverer as a friendly interface via which ITS data can be accessed.	Ongoing development of the Integrated Tertiary Software (ITS) system is addressed in this recommendation. Executive welcomes the continuing improvements in services and interfaces being provided and will consider any request for funding in this area under the HEA QI Programme and the University QI Fund; Executive is pleased to note steps are being taken to extend direct access to ITS and an enhanced interface through the roll-out of Discover.
20. When time allows – the Registry to inform other areas in the University of the strengths of their team practices and SOPs etc which may be of wider benefit. 21. Future reviews of the Registry to include meetings with representatives of Academic Council, Governing Authority, Executive and other relevant University committees.	As part of ongoing developments. This will be addressed and incorporated into the schedules of future reviews. The Registry has agreed to hold a workshop and information exchange for Student's Union class representatives early in the new academic year, in the vein of workshops already developed for Chairs of Programme Boards to apprise them of services available and procedures.	Executive welcomes the specific communication initiatives planned in response to these recommendations and notes that workshops have already taken place with Chairs of Programme Boards.

COMMENTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE (UNRELATED TO SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT) IN THE REGISTRY

Introduction
The Executive noted the Peer Review Group report, and acknowledged the large amount of detailed work that underlay its recommendations, and expressed its appreciation of the time and effort expended on behalf of the University by the members of the PRG. The efforts of all staff in the Registry in preparing for the review and in interacting with the PRG were acknowledged. The Executive noted, with great satisfaction, comments from the PRG on the very high levels of enthusiasm and depth of knowledge on issues under review from all staff in the Registry, and the reported broad consensus from DCU staff that the Registry's service to the University was of a high standard and that it had seen significant improvement during the period under review.

General Comments
In making its response, Executive is mindful of significant structural changes which are underway; specifically, appointment of the Director of Registry, with direct operational responsibility, and of the Vice President for Learning Innovation (Registrar) (VPLI/R), who will have senior strategic and policy responsibility for all aspects of DCU's academic mission, including relevant activities of the Registry. The Director of Registry, Mr. Kevin Griffin, took up this post on 1st September 2003. The VPLI/R, Prof. Maria Slowey, took up office on 2nd February 2004.

As a general point, in responding to the QuIP, Executive reiterates the need for Registry to engage very closely with its stakeholders and recognises that this is already underway. A particular issue here is the overall restructuring of the University into Executive Faculties. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity to review the interactions between the Registry and Faculty Offices. As emphasised by the PRG, it is important that the distribution of all administrative activities of the University be effective and efficient, eliminating duplication, and exploiting information systems to the maximum extent. This will require an explicit, and ongoing, commitment to maximise subsidiarity, prioritising the Registry's role into those activities, which specifically require centralised co-ordination. Executive is therefore mindful that any diversity in Faculty structure should be balanced by the need to maintain comparable structures, compatible with the efficient and effective interaction with the remaining central services such as Registry.

In formulating its Quality Improvement Plan (QuIP), the Registry has responded to each of the specific recommendations of the PRG.
Given the substantive nature of the recent structural management changes, Executive wishes to schedule a review of the implementation of the Registry QuIP in the Autumn of 2004. Ideally, this might involve inviting at least one external member of the PRG, and the internal members, to meet with both the Director of Registry and the VPLI/R. This follow-up should be arranged in close consultation with the Director of Quality Promotion and the outcomes should be reported to Executive.

Conclusion
In the specific context of the major structural changes underway in the University, directly affecting the Registry, Executive has recommended a review of the implementation of the QuIP. This should be carried out in Autumn 2004. This review should, *inter alia,* specifically address the efficiency and effectiveness of Registry's interactions with its stakeholders, particularly the new Executive Faculties. Outcomes of the review should be formally reported to Executive.

PRIORITISED RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS in the Unit Quality Improvement Plan

Items requiring funding to proceed are not outlined by recommendation (as per the Peer Review Group report) but rather by the combined activities the Registry plans to recommendations comprehensively as can be seen in the Recommendations and Actions section and in the following timetable of work.

Improvement Element	Trainer	Accom	Total
1. Registry Restructuring (submitted in QI funding application to the HEA). Complete customer focused reorganisation of operations management within framework of restructure of operations and management in the Registry. Review of operational structure including consideration of position/integration of activities of International Office and Education & Management Analysis. *	14,400	5,200	19,600
2. Staffing Needs Analysis: Facilitated internal staffing needs analysis to permit customer focussed reorganisation of operations and to identify feasibility of development of new roles such as IT champion as suggested in the Peer Review Group report. (submitted in QI funding application to the HEA) *	10,000	1,200	11,200
3. Change implementation and development of Registry-wide skills and knowledge based training programme. (submitted in QI funding application to the HEA) * **	4,000	500	4,500

4. Development of integrated training and activities specific to development of multicultural environment including (development of pilot programmes to be run internally in future, including training of trainers):
    a. staff training in intercultural communication
    b. academic staff training on 'working with   International student groups'
    c. new and improved induction period for incoming students
    d. intercultural training for all in-coming students
    e. international Days (events on campus)
	7,200		7,200

5. Extended contact service provision including:
    a. provision of materials and information outside information point
    b. improved waiting area
    c. improved reception/access function
    d. equipping contact service area for international students
	2,800
	
	7,000
	2,500
	3,400
			2,800
			
			7,000
			2,500
			3,400

6. Implementation of online registration System Costs Installation V.A.T. @21%	15,4000 1,040 3,452		15,4000 1,040 3,452
Grand Total	**71,192**	**6,900**	**78,092**

*Training costs are based on advice from the Training and Development Office

Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Programme 2002-2003

Report to Governing Authority

Review of the School of Computing

Self Assessment Report Received by Quality Promotion Unit (QPU)	4 March 2003
Review Group Visit	19-21 March 2003
Draft Peer Review Group (PRG) Report received by QPU	19 April 2003
School Response to draft PRG Report received by QPU	30 April 2003
Final Peer Review Group (PRG) Report received by QPU	20 May 2003
PRG Report considered by Quality Promotion Committee (QPC)	4 June 2003
PRG Report considered by University Executive	22 July 2003
School Quality Improvement Plan (QuIP) received by QPU	19 August 2003
School QuIP considered by QPC	3 September 2003
School QuIP considered by University Executive	23 September 2003
Response of University Executive finalised	10 February 2004
Summary Report presented to Governing Authority for approval	12 February 2004

This report is presented for members of the Governing Authority of Dublin City University as a short yet comprehensive account of the above review and the responses to the review by the School and the various University Committees and Bodies. The presentation of the Review Group Report and the School Quality Improvement plan are précis conforming as closely as possible to the intent and wording of the full Review Group Report and Quality Improvement Plan. Following the approval of the Governing Authority of this report, the following will be accessible on both the DCU and the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) websites:

- Summary report to Governing Authority
- *Full text* of the Peer Review Group Report
- *Full text* of the School Quality Improvement Plan

The links are given as follows:

DCU Website: http://www.dcu.ie/~qpu/Publication.html#2002-2003

IUQB Website: http://www.iuqb.ie/IUQB_Reviews.html

Dr. Padraig Walsh, Director of Quality Promotion, February 2004

Members of Review Group

- Prof. Ronal Reilly, Head, Department of Computer Science, National University of Ireland, Maynooth (Chair)
- Prof. June Verner, College of Information Science & Technology, Drexel University, Philadelphia, USA
- Ms. Karen Forte, Head of Information Technology, Allianz Insurance, Dublin
- Dr. Bill Richardson, Head, School of Applied Languages and Inter-cultural Studies, DCU
- Dr. Barry McMullin, Dean of Teaching & Learning (Rapporteur and Member of the Quality Promotion Committee)

Profile of the School of Computing (as at March 2003)

School: At the time of review (in March 2003) the School of Computer Applications was one of two schools that comprised the Faculty of Computing and Mathematical Sciences. The School was an autonomous unit in the University with its own devolved budget. The Head of School reported directly to the President. A major restructuring of the university has occurred concurrent with the review. The School has been renamed the School of Computing. The School is now one of three Schools within the newly-established Faculty of Engineering and Computing. The Head of School will report to the Executive Dean of the new Faculty (when appointed) to whom the budget will be devolved. There are four research groups within the School: Dependable Systems; Modelling & Scientific Computing; Information Management; Language & Intelligence. Members of the Information Management group established and direct the Centre for Digital Video Processing, a University Designated Research Centre (UDRC) of DCU. Members of the Language and Intelligence group established and direct the National Centre for Language Technology.

Location: The School of Computing occupies a relatively new building (1992, extended in 1999) which houses academic staff offices, undergraduate and post-graduate laboratories and administrative and technical staff.

Staff Numbers:

Academic staff	- permanent	35
	- temporary	2
Administrative staff	- permanent	1
	- temporary	0.5
Technical staff	- permanent	4
	- temporary	2
Research staff (postdoctoral)		3

Student Numbers:

	Programme	School involvement	Total numbers	Full-time Equivalents
Home degrees	B.Sc. in Computer Applications	Full	824	822
	B.Sc. in Computer Applications (Evening)	Full	81	41
	Graduate Diploma / MSc. in Information Technology	Full	96	130
	Graduate Diploma / MSc. in Computer Applications	Full	3	3
	Graduate Diploma / MSc. in Computer Applications for Education	Full	4	4
	MSc. in Security and Forensic Computing	Full	(planned for 2003)	
Shared Degrees	B.Sc. in Applied Computational Linguistics	Joint with SALIS	60	30
	B.Sc. in Mathematical Sciences	Joint with Maths	53	13
	MSc. in Electronic Commerce	Joint with DCUBS	46	52
	MSc. in Electronic Commerce	To be delivered off-campus in CityWest Business Campus, starting 2003		
	MSc. in Bioinformatics	Joint with Biotech	(planned for 2003)	
Service Teaching	BA in Accounting & Finance	3 modules	128	16
	B.Sc. in Financial & Actuarial Mathematics	5 modules	65	17
	B.Sc. in Applied Physics	2 modules	20	3
Research	MSc and PhD by research		56	168
		TOTAL		**1299**

Self-Assessment Process: An 8 person School Quality Co-ordinating Committee was formed in February 2002.

Peer Review Process: The PRG met with the Director of the Quality Promotion for an initial briefing on the evening of the visit, at which time key tasks were identified and a Chairperson agreed. This meeting was followed by an informal dinner with the Head of School and members of the School's Quality Co-ordinating Committee, which was useful in terms of enabling the PRG to familiarise itself further with the work of the School.

On the morning of Day One, the PRG reviewed the contents of the self-assessment report with the Head of School and members of the School's Quality Co-ordinating Committee. Some additional documentation was requested. Most of this was quickly provided.

The PRG had separate meetings with two further groups of academic staff (one concerned primarily with research issues and the other concentrating on teaching-related issues) and with technical and secretarial staff. These meetings served to broaden the PRG's understanding of the issues raised by the self-assessment report. In the afternoon, the PRG met with student representatives. These ranged from first year students to research postgraduates.

The PRG met with senior University management on 21st March. Those present included the President, Secretary, Registrar, Director of Finance and Director of Human Resources. Dr Barry McMullin then accompanied the three external members of the PRG on a visit to the O'Reilly Library where they met with the Director. This was followed by a visit to the School's teaching facilities and computer laboratories, and further discussions with the Head of School and a small number of other academic staff. The day concluded with a presentation to the School by the PRG, in which the main points of this Report were outlined.

Review Group's view of the Self-Assessment Report: The PRG found the self-assessment report extremely useful and informative. It was generally well-structured, comprehensive and accessible. While it provided ample detail on the School and its activities, the PRG felt that it could have addressed more clearly the following two areas:

- The issue of the distinction, or lack of, between those academics who are research-active and those who are not research-active or only minimally active. Not all academic staff had associated research statements. Of these statements, some were quite extensive while others were confined to one or two lines. It was not clear what significance, if any, these discrepancies might have.

- The important role played by technical staff in this School. Given the School's dependence on technical staff, and given the evident strength of this area in the School, the PRG felt that the role of the relevant staff-members could have been made clearer in the self-assessment report and that they could have been more involved in the Quality Review process itself.

However, there were many positive points about the self-assessment report, including the large amount of detail provided and the convenient way in which the information was presented, including, for example, an excellent breakdown of teaching and administrative responsibilities.

FINDINGS BY THE REVIEW GROUP

Overall, the Review Group found that the School of Computer Applications (CA) compares well against national norms. Teaching is particularly strong, and there is evidence of substantial, and growing, research activity earning an international profile. The School is developing against a background of sharply constrained public investment, and exceptional volatility in demand for undergraduate programmes. In this challenging context, the staff of the School have shown considerable flexibility and initiative, combined with a clear commitment to maintaining academic quality and standards.

Organisation and Management

The School of CA is in transition as it is shortly to be merged with the Schools of Electronic Engineering and Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering in a new executive Faculty structure.

The PRG was impressed with the academic workload allocation process, which has been recently revamped and appears very transparent.

Programmes and Instruction

The willingness of CA staff to engage in substantive reviews of the teaching programmes is a very positive aspect of the School. The appointment of year-heads is working well. This structure provides students with a clear point of contact for problem resolution.

The School has an excellent teaching record and there is a positive learning climate. Lecturers use innovative approaches to teaching, despite high student-staff ratios. Examples include the use of Web-CT, the provision of online lecture notes, and the use of electronic messaging. Several lecturers have competed successfully within the University for grants and fellowships in the area of teaching and learning.

The taught MSc in CA programme displays good flexibility, while students also think very highly of the MSc in eCommerce programme.

There was general consensus that the INTRA programme was very beneficial both academically and in terms of career prospects.

First and second year students appreciated the definite timetables of lab exercises during the semester. They suggested that compulsory attendance at lectures and labs was a positive advantage in managing the transition from secondary education.

Scholarship and Research

The recent consolidation of the School's research activities into four distinct research groups is viewed by the PRG as a welcome development. We believe this is already having positive effects on the work of research postgraduate students. For example, the revised physical layout along research group lines is conducive to mutually supportive interactions among postgraduates.

The School and the University are to be commended on the constructive sabbatical and travel support policy. Many staff commented favourably on its benefits. Of particular merit was the opportunity for staff to re-invigorate their research activities using these mechanisms.

The PRG was impressed by the quality of postgraduate student supervision. Overall, the PRG felt that research activity and the structures supporting it in the School are operating well and developing in a very positive direction.

Social and Community Services

A noteworthy success of the School has been the initiatives taken to enable students from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter DCU programmes, and the ongoing assistance given to them by certain individuals in the School

The provision of the part-time evening CA programme constituted a significant contribution to second-chance education. There was no intake to this programme in the current academic year. However, the PRG is pleased to note that the School has secured funding to support significant redevelopment of the programme into the future.

Staffing, Accommodation and Resources

Computing education and research depends critically on advanced, and continuously updated, technological infrastructure. The PRG found that the core facilities available in the School were of a very high standard, and uniformly recognised as a strength.

The centrally provided facilities - lecture rooms etc. - were considered to be adequate.

The library is located in a modern custom-designed building with excellent facilities. The services provided to students and staff appear to be of a very high standard, with good channels of communication to the School. The PRG would encourage early collaboration between the School and the Library in the area of open-archive scholarly publication.

While the technical support team in the School is currently below its allocated staffing level, the quality of service is very highly regarded and appears to be working very effectively

The ACL year abroad and the INTRA programme work well.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AND *RESPONSES TO* QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

To facilitate planning of quality improvement measures, each recommendation has been qualified by an indication of priority as follows:

- P1: A recommendation, which is important *and* requires urgent action.
- P2: A recommendation, which is important, but can (or perhaps must) be addressed on a more extended timescale.
- P3: A recommendation which merits serious consideration but which is not considered to be critical to the quality of the ongoing activities in the School.

Additionally, the PRG has attempted to indicate the level(s) of the University where action is required:

- S: School of Computer Applications
- F: Faculty of Engineering and Computing (when constituted)
- U: University Executive/Senior Management

Where considered appropriate, action at multiple levels is recommended: this should be considered as inclusive, indicating a need for co-ordinated, complementary, actions at *all* the indicated levels (rather than, e.g., at "any one level").

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
Organisation and Management		
P1-U: Expedite/complete the Faculty re-structuring.	*This action is dependent on the appointment of an Executive Dean for the new Faculty, and is urgently awaited by the School.*	*Executive takes due note of the impact of the recent merger with the Faculty of Engineering. Executive recognises that the absence of a distinct Faculty Office with appropriate supports and the absence of an Executive Dean pose particular problems for the School of Computing.*
P2-SF: Prepare written strategic plans at both School and Faculty levels. Ensure that this is effectively communicated among all staff. Monitor and update on a rolling, annual basis.	*The School has been developing a comprehensive strategy over the past year or so through key policy decisions discussed and agreed at School meetings. Most significant among these has been the decision to rationalise our teaching portfolio (see above), to incentivise research activity among academic staff, to be a strong player in winning research funds, to develop our taught postgraduate programmes partly as a compensation for reduced undergraduate intake, to seek new sources of undergraduate students, to increase our number of research students, to encourage linkage with other schools in the University, and to develop teaching and research partnerships with industry. These decisions, and their underlying guiding principles, will be codified in a single document, with additional strategic elements still to be decided. Strategy at Faculty level awaits the completion of the faculty re-structuring.*	*Executive notes that there appears to be a proliferation of strategic plans at University, Faculty and School level, without any apparent linkage to one another. Executive would advise that any recommendations made in relation to strategy development in the one year and five-year plans take inputs from all concerned parties.*
P2-S: Complete re-organisation of structures within School. Schedule regular School meetings. Clarify research support and development roles.	*School meetings are now held once a month during semester. The Teaching Committee has been re-formed and meets regularly. A new structure for managing research has been approved by the School Meeting, and implemented.*	

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
P2-SFU: Critically review programme board system.	The Head of School participated in a University committee on management of academic programmes, one of whose recommendations was a major overhaul of the system of programme boards. However, Academic Council has put off implementing the recommendation pending the appointment of a Vice-President for Learning Innovation. The School looks forward to progressing this through the new VP.	Executive views the input of the Head of School to the committee on management of academic programmes as being a very welcome one. As the VPLI has now been appointed, Executive anticipates that work will be undertaken to address this issue.
P1-S: Review the operation of the GD/IT Programme	This recommendation arises out of a number of administrative problems in 2002, which were drawn to the attention of the PRG by a group of students on the programme. The PRG drew attention to a failure to give the students a suitable induction to the course and to DCU. A successful induction has operated in previous years, and the question will be addressed by the Programme Board for the 2003 intake. The Programme Board will also ensure that regular meetings take place, at which class representatives will have an opportunity to raise issues of concern. In addition, the School intends to make a dedicated lab available for this programme.	Executive recognises the importance of the active involvement of students in the PRG visit as emphasised by the comments received in relation to the operation of the Graduate Diploma in Information Technology programme. As the School outlines in its response the comments received have already provided the basis of an improved induction process for students of this course. Executive notes that the School has already actioned this item for the 2003 intake.
P2-S: Clearly "brand" the two BSc in CA streams for the benefit of students and employers, paying special attention to the need to avoid any perception of disparity in academic quality.	The structures of the Software Engineering and Information Systems streams have been comprehensively reviewed, and they have been redefined to make them more distinct from each other and more comprehensible to the students. The Computer Science stream has been discontinued as it was found to be indistinguishable in practice from the Software Engineering stream. Additional resources (including additional optional modules) have been allocated to the Information Systems Stream to make it more distinct and improve the content for the students. The School has employed a marketing executive for one year to develop and execute a marketing campaign to promote the degree in schools. While the marketing person is in place, there is as yet no funding in place for advertising and printed material costs.	Executive notes that as there is a Communications and Marketing Office for the University it is important that, where possible duplication of effort should be avoided. It is also imperative that a co-ordinated and consistent message about the DCU brand and product offering is given to all potential customer groupings.

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
P2-SF: Investigate opportunities for flexible, online, distance based provision; explore possible synergies with Oscail.	At present almost all of the courses delivered by the School are 'web-enhanced', i.e. our courses are supported by on-line provision of lecture notes, exercises, model answers, electronic submission of exercises, and on-line interaction between students and tutors. Indeed the School is one of the most advanced in the University in its use of web-based technology. Fully on-line delivery is an expensive delivery mode that needs substantial student numbers and new costing models; the School is well-positioned for on-line delivery when a University framework and appropriate resources are in place. In the meantime, we are happy to discuss sharing our know-how with Oscail. Flexible access to course material is particularly important for the part-time BSc in Computer Applications, which is the subject of a re-development exercise at the moment.	Executive notes that in the School response it outlines that the School is one of the most advanced in relation to its use of web-based technology. While Executive endorses, that as a cutting edge department, the School of Computing has a vital role to play in the development of web strategy in the University. Executive feels that there is also strategic buy-in required to the University strategy being followed by the office of the Vice President of Learning Innovation (VPLI). Any project relating to the evaluation of the most suitable tools in this area should be supported by the OVPLI. Executive welcomes the Schools proposal on a flexible working arrangement in relation to Oscail in the area of web-enhanced course delivery. Executive anticipates huge benefit to other Schools in the University, and encourages the School of Computing to work with other Faculties to provide greater benefit to the University community. Again Executive would feel that any proposals in relation to the use of this technology should work closely with the OVPLI.
P2-SFU: Enhance systems for gaining regular feedback on the student experience in all programmes.	A number of mechanisms are in place to allow students to make their views and concerns know. These include student participation in the Programme Boards, the Surveys of Student Opinion undertaken by the Registry and the personal tutor system. At the level of individual modules, academic staff are at present responsible for getting their own feedback from students in a suitable form, and acting on it as they see fit. They are required to report that they have carried this out. The School intends to review these arrangements so that the system is more transparent, and it is easier to ensure that action is taken when feedback identifies a weakness.	

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
P3-SF: Develop an integrated, strategic, approach to the overall module and programme portfolio, both undergraduate and postgraduate.	The School has undertaken a large exercise to rationalise its portfolio of modules at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. The number of taught modules is now substantially reduced thanks to the elimination of low-demand modules and substantial sharing of modules across programmes. It is now School policy that any new programme must draw significantly from the pool of existing modules, and any additions to the pool will need to justified in academic and resource terms. The School has closed or suspended programmes that do not pay their way; in the past year we have decided to take no input to any of the following programmes: (i) MSc in Computer Applications; (ii) BSc in Computer Applications (Evening); (iii) BSc in Applied Computational Linguistics; (iv) MSc in e-Commerce (Corporate); (v) the Computing Science stream in the BSc in Computer Applications. In their place, we have developed and vigorously marketed new postgraduate programmes, to the extent that the number of applications for taught MSc's (about 320) significantly exceeds the number of CAO first preferences for our undergraduate programmes (about 250). As a result our SCRs are projected to increase next year.	Executive also commends the School on critically evaluating its programme offerings and on the rationalisation process already undertaken. Executive notes that the School report states 'that any new programme must draw significantly from the pool of existing modules'. While Executive supports the School in its desire to maximise its resources, this maximisation must be done in such a way that protects course content. Executive would caution against any approach, which may limit the development of innovative course content.
Scholarship and Research		
P1-S: Focus research publication on peer-reviewed journals and high quality peer-reviewed conferences. Promote early parallel dissemination through open e-print archives (in collaboration with Library). Incentivise these policies (e.g., via local funding supports and the workload allocation scheme).	The School has embarked on a vigorous programme to enhance its research profile, and the results are already evident. For example, since the visit of the PRG the School has secured four Basic Research grants from Enterprise Ireland and six research scholarships from IRCSET (Irish Research Council for Science Engineering and Technology) – in each case this is more than any other school in the University and more than any other computing school nationally. The School is operating new policies that incentivise staff to improve their research output, including publishing in peer-reviewed journals and high-quality conferences. Additionally, we will install a mechanism whereby the School will collect links to online copies of our publications, subject to copyright considerations, to make them accessible on the web.	

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
P1-SFU: Introduce dedicated administrative support for preparation of external research proposals.	*The School has established a support system for academics writing research proposals through talks on "grantmanship", tips from previously successful grant winners, and a buddy system for critically reviewing each proposal. This is proving successful (see above). The continued absence of a school manager leaves a shortfall in administrative support that should be addressed. The School is aware of the additional services provided by the Office of the Vice-President for Research, and will make use of these.*	
P2-SF: Provide formal research skills training for new postgraduate research students.	*Responsibility for providing a supportive framework and a helpful environment for research students and managing their progress within the School is now a dedicated administrative task for a member of academic staff. The duties of this member of staff include training students in research skills. The School is aware of the existence of the University working group, which is examining the inclusion of taught modules and research skills modules as part of PhD programmes throughout the University.*	
Social and Community Services		
P1-SF: Develop more flexible access provision to better facilitate and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Explore possible collaboration on this issue with Oscail.	*The School has long participated in the North Dublin Access programme, and will continue to do so. It has in addition developed an access programme with Colaiste Ide, which is just now coming on stream. Arrangements will be made, possibly through the personal tutor system, for more active support of students entering the School through the Access programme. The CA Evening degree caters for students who come mainly from non-traditional sources and who are unable to take up full-time study. This programme is being re-designed at present and in its new version it will seek to increase flexible access.*	
P2-SFU: Make a co-ordinated effort to develop and recognise social and community service. Reflect this in strategic plan(s).	*The School will make provision in its strategic plan to recognise contributions by staff to social and community service.*	
Staffing, Accommodation, & Resources		

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
P1-SFU: Address the serious shortfall in administrative staffing as a matter of urgency. This minimally requires the appointment of a senior administrator plus a second full time secretary. This is imperative to avoid dissipating the energies of the Head of School in administrative tasks to the detriment of the strategic drive that is essential to the development of the School.	It is a major requirement for the School, that this issue be addressed by the University.	Executive believes that this issue will be addressed as part of the faculty restructuring. As with all requests for additional staffing the request will need to be submitted to the budget committee for approval.
P2-SFU: Explore all feasible means, institutionally and nationally, of improving the student-staff ratio to reflect relevant international norms.	The staff/student ratio is grossly out of line with international norms and results in high marking & tutoring loads on staff. We believe strongly that we are unreasonably disadvantaged within the faculty by having a low SCR multiplier in comparison with our fellow schools (0.65 for Computing in comparison with 0.8 for both Electronic & Mechanical Engineering). It is anomalous that the School gets fewer resources when in many cases it offers courses entirely comparable to those in our fellow schools. We ask that this anomaly be addressed urgently.	The School report identifies a standardised approach to the SCR multiplier as an issue relating to the School's equity within the new faculty. The University Budget Committee is continually monitoring its policies in this regard.
P2-S: Review the adequacy of the complement of the technical support team to ensure that it is not over-extended	The Head of School and the technical support team have formulated a plan to ensure adequate technical support at a level of staffing that is commensurate with the resources brought in by the School. The plan has been submitted to the HR (July 1st 2003) and a response is awaited.	

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
P2-SF: In the context of strategic planning, develop concrete initiatives and measurable goals to address gender imbalance.	Male academic staff in the School greatly outnumber females, but it is not easy to remedy this to any great extent in the short-term. This is partly because academic posts in the School are currently frozen, and partly because we attract much greater numbers of male applicants when lectureships are advertised. At 15% female academics, the School is not out of line with other computing schools and with the proportions of females graduating with research degrees in computing. The School is performing better with respect to attracting female research students: currently about 20 of our 70 research students are female. Of the six female staff, one is an Associate Professor and another is a Senior lecturer, but of the four most junior academics three are female. The School will follow a policy of encouraging and supporting female staff who apply for promotion within the procedures laid down by the University and will work with the University's Equality Office towards this goal.	It is encouraging to note from the QuIP that the issue of gender balance will be reviewed with the University's Equality Office.
P2-S: Adhere to hardware and software refresh schedules.	Hardware and software renewal is now on target, thanks to new funding made available for the purpose from the Higher Education Authority.	Executive is pleased to note that hardware and software refresh schedules are now on target, thanks to new funding made available for the purpose from HEA. The University indicated in a recent meeting with the HEA Capital Review and Prioritisation Working Group that "renewal of equipment" was one of its priorities for capital expenditure. This is a matter of general concern within the sector. The university will continue to press for a sustainable funding model for this purpose.
P3-SFU: Support all staff in planning personal development. Articulate explicit career pathways for academic staff specialising in teaching.	Staff are supported on a personal basis by the Head of School in planning and managing their careers. However, there is no framework within the University for it. Action on this recommendation requires a University policy on staff appraisal.	Executive recommends that the School should liaise with the staff development officer in relation to this issue. Executive is also aware that as part of the Framework for Sustaining Progress the University is obliged to introduce a performance appraisal/development programme. The focus of this programme will be to provide training and development for all staff of the University.
P3-SFU: Review current out-of-hours policy with a view to making it more researcher and student friendly.	The School supports 24/7 access but recognises that provision of this is constrained by availability of security and maintenance staff in the University.	

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
P3-S: Provide enhanced facilities for informal networking among staff and postgraduate research students.	The School considers this to be an important issue for staff and research student development, primarily to encourage the exchange of ideas and collaborative working. As a matter of urgency it is seeking to utilise the space in L239 and L240 for social contact, by installing social furniture and group interaction space, and extending the restricted access area on the second floor to include L239 and L240. The current use of L240 as a University classroom is inappropriate. It is difficult to access for anyone except School of Computing Staff and research students, and adjacent areas both horizontally and vertically are dedicated to School of Computing staff and postgraduates.	Executive notes that this is one of the key elements that requires its input. The proposed action in relation to the conversion of classrooms to a communal meeting area only accessible by CA staff and postgraduate students, would seem to be taking an insular approach to the new faculty structure. Executive has also noted that the request for communal space is not unique to the School of Computing and would encourage Schools to use existing University resources to facilitate this requirement.

Executive feels that with the opening of the new staff dining facilities and common room all staff will be provided with space to meet and interact in a non-School based environment.

Executive notes the importance to students of the physical environment in which they are asked to work. Executive also notes that as the area identified in the report relates to labs that are not accessible by all student groups thus providing limited added value to the University, the School should self-fund this request.

Executive notes the importance of informal meeting areas to the advancement of scholarship. This need could be addressed though an application to the Quality Improvement Fund. |

COMMENTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE (UNRELATED TO SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS) FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN THE SCHOOL OF COMPUTING

INTRODUCTION
The Executive acknowledged the work undertaken by the School in addressing the recommendations put forward by the PRG, and appreciates the moves taken to date in implementing these recommendations. The Report provided to Executive outlines the recommendations to be addressed by the School, the Faculty and the University. The purpose of this report is to primarily address the issues identified as requiring University input. In assessing the Quality Improvement Plan (QuIP) from the School of Computing, Executive is mindful of the restructuring being undertaken at Faculty level and the recruitment process currently underway for Executive Dean to the Faculty of Engineering and Computing.

OVERALL COMMENTARY ON REPORT:
Executive welcomes the thorough approach taken by the School of Computing in formulating its QuIP. The School has already undertaken a number of key initiatives and has put in place processes, which will support the one and five year plans outlined in the QuIP.

IDENTIFICATION OF OUTCOMES FOR ONE AND FIVE YEAR PLANS:
Executive appreciates that given the current situation with the restructuring process there is very little detail provided for the five-year plan. The University is working to appoint the Executive Dean for the Engineering and Computing Faculty. Executive anticipates that the appointment of the Executive Dean will clarify the issues relating to long term planning.

CONCLUSION
In summary Executive has been impressed by the overall engagement by the School of Computing with the Quality Improvement Process. Executive acknowledges the open way in which the School approached this process and the level of detail contained in the resulting reports. The School of Computing is to be commended on the course of action already undertaken in the areas of potential improvement identified by the PRG. Given the structural changes that are currently underway in the Faculty, Executive looks forward to the strategic developments that will emerge from the School becoming part of the Faculty of Engineering and Computing. As identified in the report Executive acknowledges that the School of Computing has worked towards the delivery of cutting edge courses via implementing emerging technologies, while at the same time not losing sight of its student requirements. Executive looks forward to the effective implementation of the plans outlined in the QIP from the School of Computing.

PRIORITISED RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS in the School Quality Improvement Plan

> *A request for these resources has already been submitted in June 2003 as part of the University's submission to the HEA Quality Assurance Programme (Quality Improvement Measures Section) 2003.*

1. *Branding of streams in the CA degree. As recommended by the PRG, the CA degree structure has been reviewed and the three streams reduced to two, Information Systems and Software Engineering, each with a distinctive character. These streams while retaining a common are entry and a common first year are much more distinct in their final three years than heretofore. It is now necessary to promote awareness of this new structure in the schools and in industry. For this purpose we need a budget to support a marketing effort, particularly in the period prior to the date for students to make decisions on their CAO applications. **Cost €15,000.***

2. *Improvement of the facilities, already being developed, for flexible, on-line delivery of courses. These facilities are particularly important for the Part-time BSc in Computer Applications, which is the subject of a re-development exercise at the moment. There are a number of products available on the market that assist in delivering material on-line, and work has been done in-house on developing more suitable on-line delivery and assessment methods. What is now needed is an evaluation of the most suitable tools for the School, and a project to integrate the tools available, and extend them from the courses where they are being used successfully to other courses in the programme. This is a suitable project for development by an intern or a research student. **Estimated cost €15,000**.*

3. *Improving facilities in School Social Area (L239). The PRG commented: "There are limited opportunities for informal interaction between staff and students. While the CA building has some informal social areas, it seems that these could be made more effective through modest further initiatives." This is a requirement that is important to the school, and opportunities for interaction could be greatly improved by the installation of social furnishings in L239. **Estimated cost: €5,000**.*

4. *Refurbishing the computer labs – replacing broken chairs, blinds etc. While the PRG recognised that the standard of equipment in the laboratories is high, there has been considerable wear and tear on the lab furnishings since they were equipped. A number of chairs need to be replaced, and the blinds in several labs also need replacing. **Estimated cost: €5,000**.*

*Total funding requirements amount to **€40,000**.*

Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Programme 2002-2003

Report to Governing Authority

Review of the School of Communications

Self Assessment Report Received by Quality Promotion Unit (QPU)	3 March 2003
Review Group Visit	26-28 March 2003
Draft Peer Review Group (PRG) Report received by QPU	13 May 2003
School Response to draft PRG Report received by QPU	19 May 2003
Final Peer Review Group (PRG) Report received by QPU	29 May 2003
PRG Report considered by Quality Promotion Committee (QPC)	4 June 2003
PRG Report considered by University Executive	22 July 2003
School Quality Improvement Plan (QuIP) received by QPU	27 August 2003
School QuIP considered by QPC	3 September 2003
School QuIP considered by University Executive	23 September 2003
Response of University Executive finalised	10 February 2004
Summary Report presented to Governing Authority for approval	12 February 2004

This report is presented for members of the Governing Authority of Dublin City University as a short yet comprehensive account of the above review and the responses to the review by the School and the various University Committees and Bodies. The presentation of the Review Group Report and the School Quality Improvement plan are précis conforming as closely as possible to the intent and wording of the full Review Group Report and Quality Improvement Plan. Following the approval of the Governing Authority of this report, the following will be accessible on both the DCU and the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) websites:

- Summary report to Governing Authority
- *Full text* of the Peer Review Group Report
- *Full text* of the School Quality Improvement Plan

The links are given as follows:

DCU Website: http://www.dcu.ie/~qpu/Publication.html#2002-2003

IUQB Website: http://www.iuqb.ie/IUQB_Reviews.html

Dr. Padraig Walsh, Director of Quality Promotion, February 2004

Members of Review Group

- Dr. Mary Corcoran, Senior Lecturer in Sociology, National University of Ireland, Maynooth (Chair)
- Prof. Denis McQuail, Visiting Professor, University of Southampton, England
- Mr. Adrian Moynes, Managing Director, RTE Radio, Dublin 4
- Dr Anne Sinnott, Senior Lecturer, DCU Business School
- Mr. Kevin Griffin, Senior Administrator, Faculty of Science & Health, DCU (Rapporteur and Member of the Quality Promotion Committee)

PROFILE OF THE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATIONS (as at March 2003)

School: The School of Communications was one of the original elements of the National Institute of Higher Education (later Dublin City University), at its foundation in 1981. At the time of review (in March 2003) the School of Communications was one of two schools that comprised the Faculty of Humanities. The School was an autonomous unit in the University with its own devolved budget. The Head of School reported directly to the President. A major restructuring of the university has occurred concurrent with the review. The School is now one of four Schools within the newly-established Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The Head of School will report to the Executive Dean of the new Faculty (who has recently been appointed) to whom the budget will be devolved.

The School currently has one University Designated Research Centre (UDRC) in the form of the Centre for Society Technology and Media (STeM). The BioSciences and Society (BSS) Group, based in the School of Communications is part of the National Institute for Cellular Biotechnology, a PRTLI-funded national research centre in DCU. The BSS Group represents an unusual interdisciplinary connection between the natural and social sciences.

Location:

The School is located in the Henry Grattan Building, occupying one of the older sites on the DCU campus. Specialist teaching for the School's programmes take place in the Henry Grattan Building, with more generalist lectures dispersed in accordance with the need to share lecture rooms with other units of the University.

Staff Numbers:

Staff	Permanent	Temporary	Part time	Total
Academic	23	4	14	41
Administrative	1			1
Technical	2	1		3
	26	**5**	**14**	**45**

Student Numbers:

Programme	Abbreviation	Start year	Students (2002- 2003)
BA Communications Studies	BACS	1980	193
BA Journalism	JR	1992	144
BSc Multimedia	MMA	1999	184
MA Communications and Cultural Studies	MCS	1989	17
MA Film and Television Studies	MTV	1991	19
MA Journalism	MAJ	1982 (Grad Dip); 1990	26
MSc Science Communication[1]	MSC	1996	19
MA Political Communication	MAP	1999	24
MSc Multimedia	MMM	1999	25
MA/PhD Research Students			31
			691

1. The MSc in Science Communication was until recently delivered jointly with Queen's University Belfast, the latter withdrawing as part of an overall rationalisation of its Masters programmes and collaborative and outreach activities. The School of Communications now has sole responsibility for this programme.

The School also provides modules on the MA in International Relations. This programme started in 1997 as a joint initiative between the School of Communications and the DCU Business School, but with the establishment of the School of Law and Government in 2002 the programme became the responsibility of that School.

SUMMARY OF THE PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT ON THE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATIONS

Self-Assessment Process: The School Quality Co-ordinating Committee was formed during Spring 2002 but the School was very soon thereafter immersed in a major review of its undergraduate programmes. The Quality Committee (comprising 8 persons) was reconstituted in December 2002 and quickly set about the work required to prepare for the Quality Review.

Peer Review Process: An initial meeting of the PRG on the evening of the visit to receive a briefing from the Director of Quality Promotion. This meeting provided the opportunity to raise any general issues, to allocate key tasks to members of the Group and to agree the schedule of activities for the site visit. At this stage, a Chair and Rapporteur were appointed.

Day One began with a meeting of the PRG with the School Quality Committee to discuss key elements of the Self Assessment Report. This meeting was essentially exploratory in nature and helpfully provided elucidation for the PRG on many issues raised in the Report. A meeting with other School staff followed, which was equally open and informative. There then followed a visit to the core facilities of the school, in particular the specialist equipment, facilitated in a very enthusiastic manner by a member of the technical staff. In the afternoon, a series of meetings was held with undergraduates, taught postgraduates and research students. Members of the PRG also met with a number of chairs of the School's academic programmes.

On the second day, the PRG met with the President and other senior officers of the University. This provided the opportunity to raise the main issues of strategic importance the PRG had identified from the Self Assessment report and from the various meetings the previous day. There then followed a meeting with senior members of the Library staff and a tour of the Library facilities. Following this the PRG met with the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and the Vice President for Research.

In terms of the many meetings held, the PRG was impressed by the open and honest way the many stakeholders put their views forward. The staff and students treated the Review very seriously, clearly seeing it for the quality improvement opportunities it presented. The President and other senior officers provided clarification on a number of issues and impressed the PRG with their stated commitment to the future development of the School of Communications. In conclusion, the range of meetings organised, together with the openness of those involved, made for a very successful site visit.

Review Group's View of the Self-Assessment Report: The documentation provided was informative and candid. The main Self Assessment report was supported by two annexes, the intention clearly being to provide the PRG with as much detail as might be required.

The Self Assessment report was well crafted, being impressively and perhaps refreshingly self-critical and analytical. To its credit the School did not seek refuge in ambiguity when dealing with difficult issues, preferring to acknowledge areas of concern and setting out plans to deal with such issues. From the Self Assessment report, it is clear that the School has much to congratulate itself on, not least its high standing in its academic area, but the School avoids – perhaps overly so - any kind of self-congratulatory stance.

The PRG therefore highly commends the Self Assessment report, and was pleased to note the intention of the School to build upon it in the next phase of its strategic planning.

FINDINGS OF THE PEER REVIEW GROUP

Organisation and Management
The PRG noted the positive way the School had approached the Review process, and in particular the level of participation by staff and students in the preparatory stages. Evidently, much valuable work had been done in documenting the present state of the school, its major ambitions and its various concerns and anxieties. The PRG welcomed the intention of the School to build upon the Self Assessment process to assist in short and longer-term curriculum and strategic planning.

The PRG found the School to be vibrant and was impressed by the committed professionalism of all staff and the articulate enthusiasm of the students. The President and other senior officers of the University confirmed that the School of Communications and the Faculty of the Humanities are key development areas for DCU and that they constitute one of the significant opportunities for its future success.

The PRG recommends that the School engages as fully as possible in the development of the new organisational structures that are emerging, and in particular the move to a devolved Faculty model, with an Executive Dean. A new organisation dynamic is emerging, and it is important that the School is actively involved and influences its development.

The PRG hopes that, after a period whereby a number of staff have occupied the Headship over just a few years, there will now be a period of stable leadership.

Programmes and Instruction
The School offers three undergraduate and six postgraduate taught Masters programmes. The PRG was satisfied that the programmes were well designed and kept under review in terms of structure and module content. The Masters programmes, in particular, were judged to be intellectually demanding and relevant. This impression was confirmed by the broadly positive endorsement that emerged from discussion with a group of the current taught masters students. The PRG noted the high CAO points of students on the undergraduate programmes. The PRG was highly impressed by the students it spoke to during the site visit, finding them to be articulate and committed, and caring deeply about the quality of their respective courses.

The PRG commended the move to new teaching and learning methods, in particular the team teaching on the 'mega modules'. This team teaching, in particular, has provided a new avenue to staff for intellectual exchange and is seen to have added value to programmes. This approach has also given the staff involved an overview of the contents of their colleagues' modules, which ensures that content overlap is avoided.

The PRG was impressed by the dedication of the School to a student-centred approach. This was evidenced by the school's commitment to the retention of undergraduate theses/projects and the value placed on the INTRA programme.

The flexibility available in terms of transfer between programmes for undergraduates at the early stages of their study was also seen as a positive factor. Students studying at postgraduate level felt well supported by the School, particularly through the provision of dedicated study space, scholarship funding and the opportunity to contribute on the teaching programme.

Scholarship and Research
The PRG recognises the commitment of the staff to scholarship and research across a broad range of subject areas and types of research. Creative production from a professional practice perspective and

participation in public life are also well represented in the range of staff activities that complement teaching and research. The PRG sees these as an important component in the work of the school.

The PRG appreciates the efforts of the School to stimulate research and to develop appropriate structures for co-operation and concentration of effort. The formation of STeM as a designated research centre has been beneficial in this respect. The PRG was impressed by the number and size of research grants that had been attracted by members of the School since 2000.

In respect of future research planning the PRG sees advantages in the effort to profile the School more clearly in terms of its main foci of research interest. Discussions with current PhD students led the PRG to conclude that they are well served by current arrangements in terms of facilities and supervision. The idea of a Centre for media policy and professional practice is commendable as it further acknowledges the increasing importance of collaborative research and the benefits of a strong themed research identity.

The PRG notes that the School, through its range of undergraduate and graduate programmes, delivers a large number of high calibre students to the University. These students, on graduation, have high employability skills. The PRG believes that this places the School in an excellent strategic position to enhance its profile both within and outside the University.

The PRG notes that the current research climate dictates that collaborative research must become an integral part of the School's research programme.

Staffing, Access and Resources
The PRG found it commendable that the School has retained a small-class teaching structure. The team-teaching approach has created a vehicle for closer collegial collaboration and intellectual exchange. There is a very good match between staff specialisms and expertise, and the academic programmes offered by the School.

The library facilities are excellent. There is a high degree of motivation on the part of Library staff to support school staff and students. The subject librarian is keen to contribute actively to the planned Writing and Research module in year one, which the PRG would endorse.

The technical facilities on the audio were judged to be good, capable of providing adequate training for students wishing to pursue a career in that sector.

Social and Community Services
The PRG noted and commended the School's long record of interaction with the local community of North Dublin and with many elements of the public, non-profit and corporate sectors through advice, consultancy and committee membership. Members of the School have undertaken various forms of public service as members and senior officers of public bodies developing policy for media and communications.

The PRG also commended the School for its involvement, over several years, in a community employment scheme, under which long-term unemployed people were engaged part-time in various support roles to School staff. The School's intention to offer a Certificate/Diploma in Information Media and Internet for community and voluntary organisations was also noted with interest by the PRG.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AND *RESPONSES TO* QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Recommendations in Peer Review Group Report	*Response in School Quality Improvement Plan*	*University Management's Response (if applicable)*
	Organisation and Management	
The PRG recommends the development of a School strategic plan, which should include the prioritisation of teaching and research and articulate the Mission of the School. The PRG also recommends that documented processes for strategic planning and operational administration be maintained.	*The School considers the work undertaken for the self-assessment report and in the continuing quality improvement process as first steps towards the development of a strategic plan. The preparation of such a plan will be a priority for the School in 2003-2004. The School is seeking financial support to allow visits to and from the School, in exchange with comparable departments elsewhere, to learn from others' experiences of strategic planning. Target date for completion: February 2004*	*Executive notes the School's intention to formulate a strategic plan over the coming year. Given the extensive review already undertaken as part of the quality review exercise Executive believes that this process should be focused and that it should build upon the Quality Improvement Plan submitted in response to the PRG Report.* *Executive welcomes the strategic intentions of the School and recommends that attention be given to mapping the School's strategic plan with that of the University. This exercise will also need to be coordinated with the path of development that will be pursued at Faculty level by the newly-appointed Executive Dean.*
The PRG recommends a period of consolidation in terms of programme development. Any expansion of programmes, particularly at postgraduate level, should be considered very carefully and in the light of the level of resources available.	*The School has committed itself to support the development of a new cross-faculty BA programme for possible implementation from 2004. Any additions to postgraduate offerings, in the short term, are likely to take the form of new pathways through existing programmes, with minimal additional elements. A strategy for programme development and/or expansion will be spelt out in the School strategic plan. Target date for completion: June 2004*	*Executive notes the identified need to consolidate programme offerings. However, it believes that it is vital that the School continues its development – through, for example, innovative pathways through existing programmes -in the areas for which it has earned a much deserved national reputation and that it seeks to build on its leadership role in postgraduate development.*
	Programmes and Instruction	

Recommendations in Peer Review Group Report	Response in School Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
The PRG recommends that the School retains a small-class teaching structure, which has clear benefits in terms of the quality of teaching that can be provided to students.	*The School acknowledges relatively small class sizes as an advantage over other humanities and social sciences departments. It notes that trends in resource allocation have already made it increasingly difficult to adhere to this principle. The School will need to be flexible in interpreting this recommendation, more particularly as the recent introduction of larger class-groups at years 1 and 2 has brought some benefits as well as disadvantages.* <u>*Target date for completion: Under way*</u>	*Executive notes the comments of the PRG Report in relation to class size. It commends the School's intention to be flexible in interpreting the recommendation that the School retain a small-class teaching structure. Executive notes the School's belief that benefits have been achieved from the introduction of larger class sizes at first and second year level.*
The PRG recommends that the School continues to embrace new teaching and learning methods.	*: The School is committed to continuing reflexivity and innovation in teaching and learning methods. It will expand the role of its Teaching and Learning Committee in fostering creative thinking on pedagogy and it will draw on the experience and insights of staff members who have secured fellowships to allow development of new methods and aids to teaching and learning. In the very short term, the School is seeking financial support to help develop resources for, and competence, in, web-based teaching and learning.* <u>*Target date for completion: Under way*</u>	
The PRG recommends that the School continues to work closely with library staff to deliver a high quality service to students. To this end, the PRG recommends that the subject librarian actively contribute to the planned Writing and Research module in year one, which the PRG would endorse.	*The School is aware of the Library's wish to be more actively involved in teaching and learning, and will ensure, during 2003-2004 that such contributions have been incorporated into suitable modules.* <u>*Target date for completion: October 2003*</u>	

Recommendations in Peer Review Group Report	Response in School Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
	Staffing, Accommodation and Resources	
The PRG recommends the continued monitoring of the staff-student ratio in the School of Communications and comparative schools in the University.	*The School notes that the PRG refers, in the main text of its report, to the absence of information about staff:student ratios. In fact, the Self-Assessment Report provided information on the School's staff and student numbers as compared with another school in DCU, and with four schools of communications/ media in Ireland and Britain. The internal DCU comparison shows the effect on the School of Communications of the differential allocation of financial resources by a mechanism, which, in the School's view, requires revision. The external comparisons show the School of Communications as having the second highest student:staff ratio of the 5 sampled departments. The School will expand and update these and other relevant comparisons. Target date for completion: March 2004*	*In the short-term the "Incentives Model" provides a mechanism for re-allocation towards areas achieving targeted objectives beyond the base on which historic allocations were determined.*
The PRG recommends that the School develops a personnel development model to ensure that the current good match between expertise and programmes is maintained, so that future demands and developments in the School can be met.	*The School interprets this recommendation as relating to "the very good match between staff specialisms and expertise on the one hand, and the academic programmes offered by the School on the other" (PRG Report). There are, in the School's view, significant staffing needs in areas of specialism that are under-resourced, e.g. science communication and multimedia production. Proposals have been made, and will continue to be made, to senior management to address these deficiencies. Target date for completion: Under way*	*The "Incentives Model" described above is again relevant here.*
The PRG recommends an ongoing audit of technical facilities in order to prioritise the upgrading of facilities.	*The School reviews its technical facilities continuously through its Technology Committee. In line with the PRG's observations elsewhere in its report, the School is giving priority to the upgrading of its television facilities and is seeking financial support to achieve this. The School anticipates a need for significant upgrades of computer equipment from 2004, and will seek, with support from the University management, to identify funding sources for those upgrades. An audit of facilities will plot these needs forward over five years. Target date for completion: January 2004*	*Executive notes the School's intention to maintain and review an audit of its technical facilities. It is recommended that a response plan for achieving appropriate technical facilities and support would be a suitable candidate application for the Quality Improvement Fund.*

Recommendations in Peer Review Group Report	Response in School Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
The PRG recommends the immediate appointment of a dedicated technical support person on-site to service, maintain and trouble-shoot the technical equipment.	*The School interprets this recommendation as relating to the audio-visual services and computer-based services, e.g. software applications for image- audio-, video- and publication-editing that are specific to the School. It intends to press the case with senior management of the University for the creation of a vacancy matching this description. It notes that the level of on-site technical and demonstration staff reported by comparable departments in four other higher education institutions was higher in all cases except one. The School is satisfied that the expansion of its technicians' roles as demonstrators has brought benefits to the students and staff; this development could continue with the recommended appointment. Target date for completion: December 2003*	*Executive notes that the appropriate technology in various disciplinary areas, and in consequence the profile and composition of administrative and technical support staff, will continue to change. In the short-term maximum flexibility should be afforded in deployment of budget while in the longer term it is desirable that the determination of the distribution of staffing needs be made at local level within Faculties*
The PRG also supports the School's case for an additional member of staff for the loans facility.	*The School notes the critical comments in the main body of the report about the loans service of the School's technical department. The School has sought to improve the service while at the same time having the technical department provide more support to teaching, as mentioned above. The existence within the School of a community employment scheme, funded by the state training agency FÁS, has made this possible. With the ending in summer 2003 of this community employment scheme, it becomes even more urgent that the position be recognised and be filled on a permanent basis. A formal proposal to this effect was made in January 2003, April 2003 and August 2003. The School will continue to press the case. Target date for completion: September 2003*	*The "Incentives Model" provides a framework for addressing this issue.*
The PRG recommends clarification at the earliest opportunity on the future of the building that houses the School. The physical environment does not compare well with other Schools on campus and is in need, at the very least, of total refurbishment.	*The School is joining with other elements of the Faculty of Humanities in pressing, in the first instance, for a clear statement of the options for refurbishing, rebuilding or replacing the Henry Grattan Building. The School will also press for a Faculty view to be determined and put forward forcibly to senior management of the university. Target date for completion: October 2003*	*The University has already indicated in a recent meeting with the HEA Capital Review and Prioritisation Working Group that one of its major priorities is "for major work in refurbishing or replacing the Henry Grattan Building".*

Recommendations in Peer Review Group Report	Response in School Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
Scholarship and Research		
The PRG recommends that the Head of School and Vice President for Research work together to develop a strategy for validating the productive work of staff, such that a validation system can be put in place for those whose work does not fit easily into institutional categorisations of research.	*Through its annual Activity Reports, and its workload allocation scheme (see item 21 below), the School has instituted its own procedures for validating a broad range of intellectual and expressive work as legitimate and significant contributions to the School, University and wider community. The School will, as recommended, seek to have such validation inscribed into the university's own systems, e.g. for research support, for recording of expertise, and for promotion. Target date for completion: December 2003*	*Executive commends the School's response to this recommendation from the PRG and notes the importance of bottom-up initiatives in areas such as this.*
The PRG recommends that the profiling of the School in terms of its major research interests should be a major determining factor in the selection of PhD students.	*The School has already moved in this direction by establishing, through 2002-2003, new procedures and policies for recruitment of postgraduate research students and for processing of scholarship applications from such students. These procedures are intended to move the School from a laissez-faire approach, based on the availability and interests of individual supervisors, to a more structured approach, based on collectively agreed research priorities. With the establishment of a second research centre (see below), the focusing of this recruitment on selected areas of interest will sharpen further. Target date for completion: September 2003*	*Executive notes the School's priorities for research. In particular Executive commends the intention to develop its research profile and reputation through focused PhD research, enhanced methodological training for postgraduates, promulgation of its research output, and the development of critical mass. Executive recommends that the School use, insofar as possible, internal sources of research support as seed funding for these ventures. In order to advance this process Executive believes that there is a need for a wider understanding of the process whereby the Research Committee determines internal allocations.*
The PRG recommends that the School build on the strengths of the postgraduate 'school' and seek to give it more identity.	*The School has progressively strengthened the profile of its research students in recent years through expansion of numbers, through more frequent research seminars (at which research students are frequently presenters), through the increased use of research students as tutors and teaching assistants, through encouragement of research students' participation in research conferences, and through support for students' applications for Government of Ireland scholarships. However, in order to maintain a reasonable number and level of research student scholarships, and thereby a continuing throughput of research students, the School has had to take from its non-pay budget. This budget is now under increased pressure and the scope to allocate scholarships from it is greatly reduced. With the effective cancellation this year of the Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences project funding and a reduced number of PhD scholarships, the external funding environment has also deteriorated. Target date for completion: Under way*	

Recommendations in Peer Review Group Report	Response in School Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
The PRG recommends that there should be more structured provision at the start of the PhD process on matters of methodology and work practices especially in the light of the diversity of academic backgrounds.	*The School plans to introduce from autumn 2003 a series of workshops and seminars on "methodology and work practices" targeted at first-year and second-year research students. The School is also opening discussions with other elements of the Faculty of Humanities on a possible inter-school part-taught doctoral programme. Target date for completion: Under way*	
The PRG recommends that in planning for a Centre for media policy and professional practice the School should take into account Faculty restructuring and the institutional commitment toward developing more integrated relationships across Schools and Faculties.	*The School is seeking financial support to allow more focused attention be given to developing a programme for the centre, and to identifying prospective funding sources. The programme for the centre will define the relationships between that centre and the already established Centre for Society Technology and Media (STeM). The School is actively promoting cross-Faculty research initiatives that link existing and prospective centres based in the schools within the faculty. The School intends that the plan for the new centre should take full account of the need to develop such relationships further. Target date for completion: December 2003*	
The PRG recommends that the School takes a more proactive stance in advertising its research strengths, activities and performance within the University.	*The School has become more visible in the wider research community of the University through its active participation in the Research Advisory Panel. It aims to strengthen its profile further through in-house publications, the School's re-developed website, and through encouragement to School staff to take up internal and external fellowship and project funding opportunities. Target date for completion: Under way*	
The PRG recommends that the School actively seeks to further develop synergetic relationships with cognate Departments within and outside the University.	*The School acknowledges the benefits of the increasingly close ties between the Schools within the Faculty of Humanities, and will continue to play its part in further developing those relationships. The School has, through its teaching and research in science communication, built relationships with Schools in the Faculty of Science and Health. The School aims to develop co-operation with departments in other third level institutions, especially in the Dublin area, on topics of mutual interest. Other such relationships are being forged continuously through international exchanges. The School has adopted a strategic approach to international exchanges that aims to privilege those departments and universities with which a multi-layered relationship, encompassing student exchange, staff exchange and research collaboration, can be built. Target date for completion: Under way*	

COMMENTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE (UNRELATED TO SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS) FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN THE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATIONS

Executive notes the attention given in the School's deliberations and in the quality exercise to the issue of workload management. The School is to be commended for its intention to establish a transparent approach to workload allocation to academic staff. Executive recommends that the School be mindful of norms used within and across universities in general while recognising the need for local academic management.

PRIORITISED RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS in School Quality Improvement Plan

Recommendations to be implemented within one year

Recommendation 1 Appointment of technical support person

Estimated cost: €40,000 per annum

Recommendation 2 Appointment of additional member of staff for the loans facility

Estimated cost: €25,000 per annum

Recommendations to be implemented within five years

Recommendation 1 Upgrade of television facilities

Estimated cost: €100,000

Recommendation 2 Refurbishment, extension or replacement of Henry Grattan Building

Estimated cost: €5-€15 million

Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Programme 2002-2003

Report to Governing Authority

Review of the School of Biotechnology

Self Assessment Report Received by Quality Promotion Unit (QPU)	11 March 2003
Review Group Visit	2-4 April 2003
Draft Peer Review Group (PRG) Report received by QPU	30 April 2003
School Response to draft PRG Report received by QPU	9 May 2003
Final Peer Review Group (PRG) Report received by QPU	21 May 2003
PRG Report considered by Quality Promotion Committee (QPC)	4 June 2003
PRG Report considered by University Executive	22 July 2003
School Quality Improvement Plan (QuIP) received by QPU	18 August 2003
School QuIP considered by QPC	3 September 2003
School QuIP considered by University Executive	23 September 2003
Response of University Executive finalised	10 February 2004
Summary Report presented to Governing Authority for approval	12 February 2004

This report is presented for members of the Governing Authority of Dublin City University as a short yet comprehensive account of the above review and the responses to the review by the School and the various University Committees and Bodies. The presentation of the Review Group Report and the School Quality Improvement plan are précis conforming as closely as possible to the intent and wording of the full Review Group Report and Quality Improvement Plan. Following the approval of the Governing Authority of this report, the following will be accessible on both the DCU and the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) websites:

- Summary report to Governing Authority
- *Full text* of the Peer Review Group Report
- *Full text* of the School Quality Improvement Plan

The links are given as follows:

DCU Website: http://www.dcu.ie/~qpu/Publication.html#2002-2003

IUQB Website: http://www.iuqb.ie/IUQB_Reviews.html

Dr. Padraig Walsh, Director of Quality Promotion, February 2004

Members of Review Group

- Prof. Emer Colleran, Head, Department of Microbiology, National University of Ireland, Galway (Chair)
- Prof. Andrew Booth, Professor of on-line learning, Faculty of Biological Sciences, University of Leeds, England
- Dr. Barbara Cantwell, Operational Risk Manager, Diageo Ireland, Dublin 8
- Prof. Tony Moynihan, School of Computing, DCU
- Ms. Muireann NiDhuigneain, Careers & Appointments Officer, Student Affairs (Rapporteur and Member of the Quality Promotion Committee)

School: At the time of review (in April 2003) the School of Biotechnology was one of 4 Schools and one Centre that comprised the Faculty of Science and Health at Dublin City University. The School was an autonomous unit in the University with its own devolved budget. The Head of School reported directly to the. A major restructuring of the university has occurred concurrent with the review. The Head of School now reports to the Executive Dean of the new Faculty to whom the budget is devolved. The main Research Groups in the School are affiliated to four centres: National Centre for Sensor Research (NCSR), National Institute for Cellular Biotechnology (NICB), Vascular Health Research Centre (VHRC) and the National Cell and Tissue Culture Centre (NCTCC). The groups include virtually all members of the School. A number of enterprises have developed from the research interests of particular members of staff. City Biologic, a public microbiological testing laboratory, was initiated in the late 1980's, followed by the campus companies Archport, Ildana and BioObservation Systems.

Location: The School is located in a relatively new (1999) building that incorporates both teaching and research facilities together with a bioprocessing pilot plant.

Staff Numbers:

Staff	Permanent	Temporary	Total
Academic	16	1[1]	17
Administrative	1		1
Technical	6	6[2]	12
Research (Postdoctoral)	5[3]	13[4]	18
Research (Other)	1[3]	5[3]	6
Other	1[5]	2[5]	3
	30	27	57

1. Contract covering permanent member of staff seconded elsewhere in DCU
2. includes 3 contracts covering permanent members of staff on leave of absence from DCU
3. in National Cell and Tissue Culture Centre (NCTCC)
4. includes 5 in NCTCC
5. in City Biologic

Student Numbers:

	Programme	Total Numbers	FTEs
Home Degrees	BSc in Biotechnology	162	121
	Grad Dip/MSc in Biological Sciences	9	18
Joint Degrees	BSc in Analytical Science (Common 1st & 2nd Year)	82	21
	BSc in Analytical Science (Chemistry Option in 3rd & 4th Year)	29	4
	BSc in Analytical Science (Biology Option in 3rd & 4th Year)	37	18
	BSc in Environmental Science and Health (to commence 2003)		
Service Teaching	Common Entry into Science (1st year only)	54	13
	BSc in Chemical & Pharmaceutical Sciences	47	8
	BSc Science International	5	1
	BSc Science Education	45	5
	BSc in Sports Science & Health	106	15
	BEng in Medical Mechanical Engineering	39	2
	BSc Nursing	163	2
	Grad Dip/MSc in Instrumental Analysis	18	3
	Grad Dip in Safety & Health	22	5
	MSc in Science Communication	12	0
Research	MSc and PhD by Research	**69**	**207**
	Totals	**899**	**443**

SUMMARY OF THE PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT ON THE SCHOOL OF BIOTECHNOLOGY

Self-Assessment Process: A nine-person School Quality Committee was established early in 2002 to oversee the preparation of the self-assessment report. Membership of the committee was representative of all the constituencies within the School. The committee met once a week for approximately one hour in order to review progress of the report and to plan future activity.

Review Process: An initial meeting of the PRG was held on the evening of the site visit with the objectives of allocating key tasks and to agree the schedule of activities for the site visit.

Day One began with a series of meetings with the staff of the School to consider and validate the self-assessment report. This provided the PRG with the opportunity to meet a wide representation of academic, administrative and technical support staff. These meetings were followed by a visit to the core facilities of the School. A further series of meetings was then held with Undergraduates (1st, 2nd and Final Year), Postgraduates, Postdoctorates, Researchers, Graduates and Entrepreneurs of the School.

The PRG noted the enthusiastic and open discussions held with representatives from both staff and students. This contributed to a successful and comprehensive site visit and optimised the validation of the self-assessment report.

On the second day, the PRG met with the President, and other senior officers of the university including, Deputy President, Secretary, Director of Finance and Director of Human Resources to discuss strategic issues arising from the group's analysis of the self-assessment report. This was followed by a meeting with the Director of Library Services and the Science Librarian to discuss information delivery and service provision to the School. The meetings phase of the site visit concluded with a discussion with the Vice President for Research and Dean of the Faculty of Science and Health.

View of the Self-Assessment Report: Clearly, a tremendous amount of work was put into the preparation of the self-assessment report, and the members of the team are to be congratulated on the result of their efforts. The style of reporting is both open and refreshing. The report has a very authentic and honest feel about it. The involvement of all the stakeholders in the gathering of information for the report is apparent, and adds substantially to the credibility of the report. It is worth noting that the conclusions and recommendations in the self-assessment report almost invariably mirrored those reached by the PRG. Subsequent to the scheduled meetings with staff, two groups, the technical staff and the postgraduate research students, helpfully provided the PRG with additional material that they wished it to have.

The self-assessment report had a few shortcomings. A little more description and evaluation of the management structures and processes in place within the School, and of the 'interface' between the School's management system and that of the Faculty, and of the wider-University would have been welcome in the report. The PRG had some difficulty in estimating workloads of staff members from the self-assessment document. Finally, the PRG would like to have seen more comment and recommendations on the adequacy (or otherwise) of the financial resources made available to the school, and on any 'gaps' in resources such as laboratories, plant and equipment. All of these points were pursued over the two-days the PRG spent in the School.

FINDINGS OF THE PEER REVIEW GROUP

Organisation and Management:
The School of Biotechnology has in place a good set of processes and roles for the administration of individual academic programmes.

In terms of its teaching and research mission, the school is highly effective, and given its level of resourcing, is doing an excellent job.

Programmes and Instruction
The School of Biotechnology is involved in teaching undergraduate degree and diploma programmes and also in taught postgraduate degree programmes. Graduates and students at all levels confirmed that the School staff were 'very approachable' and 'student-friendly'. The PRG compliments the School on the introduction of effective innovative teaching methods, such as peer tutoring and e-learning and urges the School to extend their use as widely as possible.

The School's flagship course is the B.Sc. in Biotechnology. The PRG notes that this received praise from previous graduates and the School should feel justifiably proud of this course and its rigorous attention to the practical aspects of the subject.

The four-year Biotechnology and Analytical Science degrees include a six-month industrial placement at the end of the third year (INTRA). The graduates regarded INTRA as a highlight of their degree course at DCU and they were very appreciative of the exposure it provided to a diverse range of employment prospects both in Ireland and abroad. During the placement period, students are visited by a member of the academic staff, which helps to focus the students' efforts and also serves to strengthen the links with industry, which are so essential for the continuation of the programme. The PRG acknowledges the burden this programme places on academic staff members but, nevertheless, believes it to be very worthwhile and wishes to strongly support the efforts made to ensure the experience is positive and rewarding.

In view of the problems in maintaining the quality of student intake to undergraduate courses, the PRG urges the School to consider the development of courses at MSc. level, where the quality of entrants may be more easily controlled. In this respect, the PRG notes the favourable comments of the students enrolled on the MSc. in Biological Sciences.

Scholarship and Research
The School of Biotechnology has promoted excellence in scholarship and research since its foundation in 1980. This is evidenced by the fact that the first Ph.D. graduates from DCU, in 1985, came from the school of Biotechnology. All academic staff are research active and the School has reason to be proud of its high complement of MSc. and Ph.D. and post-doctoral researchers, its peer-reviewed publication record, and its proven ability to attract significant national and international research funding.

The varied disciplines and research interests of the School academic staff have allowed the development of significant research strengths in a number of different and relevant fields and have also promoted interdisciplinary and collaborative research activity within the School and other Schools and Faculties within DCU. Members of staff also have active collaborative links with researchers in other Universities and Research Institutes both within Ireland and abroad.

Members of the School of Biotechnology have played a central role in the submission of DCU proposals to the HEA PRTLI funding programme, which resulted in the establishment of the National

Centre for Sensor Research (NCSR) and the National Institute of Cellular Biotechnology (NICB) in 1999 and 2000, respectively. Staff from the School are engaged in the supervision of postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers in the NCSR and the NICB and benefit from the facilities, equipment and specialist technical support provided under the PRTLI funding. The establishment of the National Cell and Tissue Culture Centre (NCTCC) in DCU in 1987 and its subsequent growth and development of expertise in oncology and cell culture also facilitates and supports the research of school academic staff and their postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers. Involvement of School staff in the Vascular Health Research Centre (VHRC) enhances the interdisciplinary nature of ongoing research and provides the opportunity for staff to engage in the exciting new application of proteomic and functional genomic technologies.

The applied nature of the research activities of School academic staff, together with the encouragement of entrepreneurship, has led to the development of campus companies. The presence of these companies on campus contributes significantly to the research experience of postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers in the School of Biotechnology. Given the applied nature of the B.Sc. in Biotechnology, the presence on campus of these companies also provides a unique experience for undergraduate students to gain an appreciation of their potential careers in Biotechnology.

Social and Community Services
The School of Biotechnology is committed to promoting its activities at local, national and international levels and does so by contributing to a wide range of initiatives.

Members of the school are also involved in consultancy work, have engaged in on-site training in industry and have facilitated in-service training for Biology secondary school teachers. In addition, all members of staff are contributors/participants at the DCU Open Day.

All of these activities serve to encourage potential young scientists and afford an excellent opportunity to recruit new students into the School of Biotechnology.

Staffing, Accommodation and Resources
Staffing: The School is unique in having a multi-disciplinary team comprising Process Engineers, Biochemists, Microbiologists, Geneticists, a Molecular Parasitologist and a Pharmacologist all working within a single unit.

Accommodation: The School is located in a new spacious and well equipped Biotechnology and Chemical Sciences building on the east side of the campus, which incorporates both teaching, research and office facilities.

Resources: The standard of lecture theatres and laboratory facilities is good and the School's students have access to computers in the basement (belonging to the School), the third floor (belonging to the School of Nursing) and in the library.

The School is served by a University Library that provides an up to date service with good facilities including well-designed computer clusters and teaching/mentoring accommodation. The Library also provides induction in information management to all students in the School and an individualized web-based portal to its services for each student. Other areas, which were commented on favourably by staff members, were the Faculty administration and the INTRA office. .

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AND *RESPONSES TO* QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in School Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
Organisation and Management		
1. There is an urgent need for a coherent overall management structure for the school. 2. The sooner the new faculty management structure (and that at school-level) is agreed and implemented the better. The Heads of School in the faculty and the new Dean should pursue the debate on new structures without delay.	*The School of Biotechnology is part of the Faculty of Science and Health, which is currently being established as an executive faculty. A constitution has been drawn up by the Executive Dean, which will deal with many issues including the management of the Faculty. When the constitution has been adopted a management structure for the School will be drawn up bearing in mind the role of school members in management at Faculty level. The new management structure will encourage real involvement from all members of the school – academic staff, technicians, post-docs and post-grads. There will be post-doc representation in the new executive Faculty Structure.*	*1.2. The new constitution has been adopted by the Faculty and Executive. This incorporates a new Faculty management structure, which will impact on the future management structure for the School.*
Any new school management structure must promote an increased sense of real involvement in the various stakeholder groups, including the technical staff.	*Members of the technical staff have been invited and encouraged to work on research projects of their choice in the School.*	
Researchers in the affiliated research centres should be more actively involved in the teaching mission of the school. Suitable budgetary arrangements might need to be put in place to facilitate this.	*The considerable contribution from research to teaching is recognised. A mechanism will be put in place by using suitable financial/budgetary arrangements to facilitate researchers in the associated research centres contributing to the teaching programme in the School.*	*The School identifies the very important need to integrate researchers into the career structure of the University and, insofar as possible, to provide opportunities for research-track personnel to contribute to the teaching mission. The new Faculty structure integrates affiliated Research Centres and Schools. This will facilitate the putting in place of suitable budgetary arrangements and will permit more active involvement of research centres in the teaching mission of the School and Faculty.*

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in School Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
There is a pressing need for an uncomplicated and transparent 'system' for calculating and assigning staff workloads.	*A formula for calculating workloads for the academic members of staff will be devised following discussion at School level. Loads will be calculated based on teaching, research, administration and community service. Advances in the calculations of workloads have been made for the technical staff and an agreed duties schedule for each semester has been achieved for each individual. Further discussions need to take place with regard to the role of technical staff in the research activities of the school to include the appointment of dedicated technicians to specialised pieces of equipment.*	*Executive notes the attention given in the School's deliberations and in the quality exercise to the issue of workload management. The Faculty, mindful of school needs, is currently developing a framework for an equitable faculty workload.*
Staff workloads across the School are high, and are probably unsustainable in the medium to long-term. For this reason, the school should be very cautious about taking-on additional programmes.		*Executive notes that a major effort, on the part of the Faculty and School, has resulted, in the most recent intake, in a large increase in the popularity of programmes offered by the School and Faculty.* *The School and Faculty are currently reviewing workloads within the framework mentioned above.*
The level of administrative and secretarial support available to the school seems to be very much on the 'light' side. The needs of the school in these respects should be reviewed.	*It is intended that the integrated approach to administration currently in place in the Faculty will be extended to the secretarial support provided to Schools so that the Faculty is supported in the most efficient and effective way possible.*	
Programmes and Instruction		

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in School Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
The PRG is aware of the current problems with respect to student recruitment, entry standard and student retention within the BSc in Biotechnology Programme, The PRG strongly recommend the retention of the Biotechnology degree but suggest that attention be paid to the following: More accurate portrayal of course content and objectives in promoting and marketing the programme (A better balance between the engineering, chemical and biological aspects) Revision of the 2nd year programme with respect to the engineering and chemistry syllabi, without altering the programme objectives.	*The withdrawal and failure rates in first year and failure rates in second year of Biotechnology degree course are higher than we would like. In conjunction with the First year student Retention officer and the Education and Management Analysis unit, we are developing a longitudinal study to attempt to determine the factors associated with withdrawal and progression.* *We have remodelled the Biology components of first year to provide a more focused, relevant and integrated introduction to Biotechnology that should be more motivating for the students.* *Peer tutoring is being developed and refined to provide more student support. A member of staff in Biotechnology has been appointed as a Teaching and Learning Fellow with a specific remit to develop Peer Tutoring. A supervisor has been appointed to help to manage the Peer Tutoring. An extended training programme has been developed, and an external expert trainer appointed to run the training.* *Peer tutoring is being promulgated university-wide and a support network in Peer Tutoring is being developed.* *The promotional literature for the degree of Biotechnology will be examined and amended to provide a more accurate portrayal of course content and objectives in promoting and marketing the programme with a better balance between the engineering, chemical and biological aspects. The involvement of Biotechnology staff/graduates in marketing the course will be addressed. Second level students and teachers will be invited to visit the School and to attend lectures and laboratory sessions to gain a better insight.* *Discussions have taken place with the School of Chemistry regarding possible alternatives to 2nd year Organic Chemistry.*	*Executive notes the School's concerns regarding student retention and commends the intention to review the content of promotional literature with a view to matching its offerings to student preferences.* *Executive notes the innovative approach that has been taken by the School to the definition and development of an undergraduate programme in Biotechnology over the last two decades.* *However, further innovation is required if the reputation of the School is to be maintained and enhanced.* *In this regard, the considerable success of the School's recently-initiated programme in Biology Laboratories for Leaving Certificate pupils is to be commended.*

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in School Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
The PRG recognises that the proposed B.Sc. in Genetics and Cell Biology will complement the B.Sc. in Biotechnology, respond to student demand and maintain school undergraduate numbers. The PRG advise proceeding with caution with respect to any significant contribution to the proposed B.Sc. in Environmental Science and Health. Environmental undergraduate programmes are already available from other Universities and the proposed B.Sc. may not attract students of a high calibre. Alternatively, consideration could be given to a focused Masters programme in Environmental Science building on existing strengths within the school.	*Two new MSc courses will begin in 2003. The MSc in Bioinformatics and the MSc in Science Education.*	*Executive notes the successful introduction, in collaboration with School of Computing, of the MSc in Bioinformatics and the strong interest from prospective applicants for the new BSc in Genetics and Cell Biology.*
Scholarship and Research		
Ensure that the regulations governing progression from MSc. to Ph.D. are understood and implemented within the School by staff and that graduate students are correspondingly informed.	*An indicative timetable/ flowchart for postgraduate progression has been compiled and submitted for comments before its adoption. The procedure will encompass a set time frame for submission of transfer material and compliance with the requisite regulations.*	*Executive notes the extensive consultation that has taken place with postgraduate students. It is important that this consultation process should continue.* *Executive is also mindful of the engagement of the university, at sectoral level, through the Irish Universities Quality Board, with the development of good practice in the area of the administration of PhD programmes and inter alia, with best practice in the MSc to PhD transfer process.*

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in School Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
Ensure that clarity and fairness in the allocation of practical demonstration duties of postgraduate students is implemented and that an equitable and transparent remuneration system is put in place.	*The allocation of demonstrating hours will be discussed prior to the beginning of the academic year. In allocating hours agreement will be reached between the researchers and the Head of School with regard to payment and duties to the School.*	
An induction programme for postgraduates, with the provision of a Postgraduate Handbook, should be provided. This would create the opportunity for postgraduates to gain experience of research techniques and develop expertise with specialist equipment, while also providing the training needed for their role as undergraduate practical demonstrators.	*Postgraduate representatives are elected and attend regular School meetings. It is the responsibility of the representatives to convey information pertaining to the post-graduate students to and from a school meeting. All information relevant to postgraduate students is also sent via a postgraduate mailing list, which has recently been updated.* *A pilot orientation programme will be offered by the University this Autumn to the post graduate students attending taught programmes. It is recommended that this programme be extended to accommodate the research post-graduates.*	*Executive is also mindful of the engagement of the university, at sectoral level, through the Irish Universities Quality Board, with the development of good practice in the area of the administration of PhD programmes and inter alia, with the publication of a booklet on best practice in the administration of Research postgraduate degree programmes.*
Social and Community Service		
The members of the School are to be commended for their involvement locally, nationally and internationally in various external activities. The PRG advocate the continuation of these activities and trust that their value will be recognised with respect to staff promotion.	*In-service training for second level teachers of Biology has taken place. Lectures and practicals have been arranged for Biology teachers and pupils for the coming year.*	*In particular it commends the School on its social and community services.* *It also commends the intention to involve staff more directly in interactions with the second-level sector. It is essential that the School be proactive in these and other areas so that its programme offerings can develop.*
Staffing, Accommodation and Resources		

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in School Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
The current target senior:junior academic staff ratio (40:60), which is operated on a University wide basis is an unreasonable constraint on academic staff promotion and is leading to a lowering of morale within the School. The PRG urges University management to actively lobby for a review of the HEA imposed rules governing this ratio. The PRG also recommends that University Management introduce some flexibility to reward particular excellence in research and teaching. Teaching, administration and student support should be considered on an equivalent basis when considering candidates for promotion.	*The allocation of staff to the School is carried out at University/Faculty level. The School will strive to ensure that promotional opportunities in the School of Biotechnology are maximised in order to retain high calibre staff.*	*Executive notes the contribution of the members of the School to the University research profile. It notes the commentary regarding the split between senior and junior grades both at academic and technical levels.*
Put in place, as a matter of priority, a career structure, with appropriate benefits and entitlements, for postdoctoral researchers. The PRG understands, from discussions with the Vice-President for Research, that this issue is currently being addressed.	*The establishment of a scheme, which specifies benefits and entitlements for postdoctoral researchers, is being actively pursued at University level. The School will do all it can to facilitate the establishment of such a scheme.*	*The University has recently approved a policy in relation to life of centre contracts for research staff, which should provide appropriate benefits to postdoctoral researchers.*
Address the current lack of a promotional career structure for School of Biotechnology technicians i.e. provision of promotional scientific officer positions; specialist technical support positions etc.	*A new structure will be put in place at Faculty level, which will provide for promotional opportunities for the technical staff.* *While individual technicians are currently responsible for various pieces of instrumentation, the appointment of dedicated technicians to specialist facilities and equipment will be addressed.*	*Executive notes that this is a generic issue that must be addressed over the coming years*

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in School Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
Consideration should be given to replacement of the aging computers in the School within the next year and the replacement of the IT facility on the third floor when the School of Nursing moves to its new building.	The need for adequate computing facilities will increase with the introduction of the MSc in Bioinformatics. It is planned to invest in new hardware, up to 25 new computers and new software in the next few years.	Executive notes the School's priorities for replacement of computer equipment.

The University has, indicated in a recent meeting with the HEA Capital Review and Prioritisation Working Group that "renewal of equipment" was one of its priorities for capital expenditure.

The absence of an adequate equipment replacement system through core HEA funding needs to be resolved at governmental level. This will facilitate Faculties, Schools and Units in maintaining an adequate quality of provision of service to its students. |
| Designation of a suitable area to be used as a common room by all members of staff and postgraduates would provide an opportunity for groups within the School to interact socially. | The provision of a common room within the School is viewed as very necessary in order to provide a social focal point and to facilitate communication and good working relations between all constituencies of the school – the academic staff, the technical staff and the researchers. Space within the school will be considered for the development of this facility. | Executive notes the School's priority for a common area for staff and postgraduates in its submission under the HEA QI Fund and the University QI Fund.

Executive notes, however, the recent investment by the University in providing institution wide common room facilities and recommends that any development of local facilities be such so as to maximise interaction between staff and postgraduates. |

Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Response in School Quality Improvement Plan	University Management's Response (if applicable)
There is also a need to review security particularly at night when students are working alone in the building. It is understood that a new after hours policy has just been launched – it is recommended that feedback is sought on this policy when it has been is operation for about 6 months to determine if it has been effective in addressing the concerns expressed by postgraduates within the School.	*While a new out of hours policy is in place, the post-graduate students in particular continue to have concerns about the system. Given that the School is in the same building as Chemical Sciences these issues will be raised at Faculty level with a view to improving the system.*	*A number of the issues raised by students have now been resolved and the out-of-hours policy is dealt with are best dealt with at Faculty level, viz access and security, where the appropriate coordination with central university services can also be managed.* *The out-of-hours policy is being continually monitored and improved.*

COMMENTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE (UNRELATED TO SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS) FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN THE SCHOOL OF BIOTECHNOLOGY

The Executive acknowledged the work undertaken by the School in addressing the recommendations put forward by the PRG, and appreciates the actions taken to date in implementing these recommendations.

Executive notes that the Government has earmarked substantial funds to support research in Biotechnology. It is vital that the School of Biotechnology at DCU wins a significant share of this funding. In this regard, Executive is pleased to note that a strategic review is underway within the School into the approach being taken to identifying potential external applications through DCU to SFI schemes. It also notes the recent success of the School of Biotechnology in a major Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) award and the restarting by government of Cycle 3 of the Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions (PRLTI), resulting in the flow of significant funding to the National Institute for Cellular Biotechnology (NICB), an entity which involves half of the School's academic staff.

PRIORITISED RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

- *Replacement of computers €25,000*

- *Common Room €4,000*

- *Capital Equipment for the Pilot Plant €50,000*