Quality Assurance / Quality Improvement
Internal Quality Review Programme

2016-17

Quality Improvement Plan

School of Chemical Sciences

13th June, 2017

Contents

1   Introduction

The School greatly values both the time and effort that the Panel devoted to the review of the SCS Quality Document both before and during their visit. The School was pleased with the proposed recommendations made by the panel - recommendations that we believe will improve both the function and performance of the School.

The School has now reflected on the Panel's recommendations. Outlined below are the School's proposed strategies and course of actions that will address the areas identified by the Panel where improvements can be achieved. It is important to note that a fraction of the Panel's recommendations cannot be resolved within the School but require policy development and resource inputs at the Faculty and University levels.

2   Reponses to the Recommendations in the Peer Review Group Report

These SCS proposed actions/strategies are summarised below:

The following notation is used in the recommendations for improvement.
P1: A recommendation that is important *and* requires urgent action.
P2: A recommendation that is important, but can (or perhaps must) be addressed on a more extended time scale.
P3: A recommendation which merits serious consideration but which is not considered to be critical to the quality of the ongoing activities in the Area.
Additionally, the PRG indicate the level(s) of the University where action is required: A: Area under review U: University Senior Management

No	Priority	Area	PRG Recommendation	Response	University Response
			Organisation and Management		
1	P1	A	Increase the involvement of all SCS members in the management of the School to avoid over-reliance on key individuals, in particular the Head of School.	The SCS has created a series of sub committees that will reduce the over reliance on the HoS. These Committees include: Teaching Committee, Research Committee, Safety Committee, Industrial Committee, Outreach Committee, Postgraduate Committee and Executive Committee. Each Committee will meet no less than four times per annum and will officially report to the SCS at School meetings. This endeavor will be completed by the end of June 2017.	The university welcomes the School's swift response and progress made in addressing this recommendation.
2	P1	A	Formalise the T&L, Research, Postgraduate and Safety functions by reinstating and/or reactivating the committee structures.	This recommendation is covered in the response to recommendation 1.	The university welcomes the progress made by the School in relation to these recommendations. We also suggest and welcome input and representation from SCS to faculty level structures with respect to teaching, research etc
3	P1	A	Establish and maintain a formal schedule of minuted School and committee meetings with standing items from research, teaching and safety conveners, and with presentations from other units in the university, in order to improve the communication within and without The School.	The SCS has decided to run School meetings every six weeks, this began in February 2017.	The university welcomes the swift progress made in relation to this recommendation.

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4	P1	A	Develop and implement a 3 to 5-year recruitment and succession plan informed by the strategic plan of the school, pending retirements, and changes in student enrolments; and to develop new and additional leaders including the appointment of a Deputy Head role and the anticipated rotation of the Head of School role.	The SCS will implement the writing of a new strategic plan that will be in line with the Universities new strategic plan that will begin in the autumn of 2017. The School should have in place a new strategic plan by early 2018. The School also proposes to create the position of Assistant Head for September 2017; the duties of this role will be defined by the School.	The university welcomes the planning currently underway within the School to address this recommendation. We further encourage close work with Faculty structures around the definition of this role in the context of the new School strategy
5	P3	A	Develop a common room space and regular social / informal research events to encourage staff and research students to network and exchange information.	The SCS will first identify (if possible) a common room within the Lonsdale building for the PG students. With respect to social/research events The School has: 1) run the second annual Chemistry Day event (May 5th 2017) which will run annually. 2) the SCS has assigned an academic member of staff to interact with the SCS PGAC society to form the new Post-Graduate Affairs Committee that will organize regular events within the School and to create a network between staff and the post graduate student body.	The university welcomes progress made in relation to this recommendation, particularly in relation to innovative approaches to encourage staff- student exchange at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. We encourage the School, through the Faculty, to work closely with the SPAMG (Space Management and Planning Group) on the identification of potential common room spaces for postgraduate research students.
6	P1	U	Recruit a School Manager to support the Head of School in executive decision-making and management of School operations and finances, and to allow the HoS to concentrate on the strategic development of the School.	This issue will require consensus from the Faculty and the University.	The University Structures provide for a Faculty administrative team lead by the Faculty Manager. The Faculty Manager supports the Dean and the Heads through its Management Board with decision-making. S/he also supports the Faculty and School in developing their strategies. Additional requests for resources to support the Head should be routed through the Dean in the first instance to the University Budget Committee for approval by the University Executive

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7	P1	U	Require that all future SAR reports contain all the information required for the PRG to carry out its task This may require sign-off by the Dean prior to submission to the QPO.	The School agrees with this proposal.	The Quality Promotion Office has developed a list of required information to be made available to future Peer Review Groups, in co-operation with the internal rapporteur of the PRG on this review. This list was also discussed and approved by the university Quality Promotion Committee in March 2017.
			Progress since last Quality Review		
8	P1	U	Review and improve the induction and leadership training processes for newly appointed Heads of School, with particular reference to faculty processes and interactions, budget management, induction content and needs of a given school and contain an ongoing mentoring process (which could be cross faculty).communication. This should be tuned to the specific	The School agrees with this proposal.	HR Learning & Development are currently undertaking a review of orientation, including induction for heads. This will include liaison with the School and Faculty to adopt a coordinated approach to address faculty /school processes etc. A blended learning University Leadership Programme aimed at heads and potential heads has been expanded and will also be reviewed when the current programme is completed in August 2017. In addition, the University currently operates a Mentoring Scheme which is available to mid-career academics and staff taking up leadership and managerial roles. New Heads of School will be encouraged to participate.
9	P2	A	Form an industrial advisory board to ensure regular meaningful representative external stakeholder expertise contributes to the strategic development of the School.	This task, the formation of an industrial advisory board, is already underway and it is anticipated membership of this board will be filled by July 2017.	The university welcomes this proposal, and considers it timely in the context of broader university strategic initiatives in relation to stakeholder engagement in programmatic development and renewal. In designing a structure and terms of reference of any such advisory board, university also suggests examining similar models for

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					industry advisory panels that current exist within the Faculty.
10	P2	U	Address the Technical staff promotion recommendation from the previous quality review.		Earlier in 2017 a *Senior Technical Officer / Chief Technical Officer Grades Review Group* was constituted with agreed terms of Reference. It is chaired by the former Deputy President, Jim Dowling and has representation from Technical and Academic staff.
			Structures, Staffing and Accommodation		
11	P2	A	Share the non-Research related responsibilities of the School in an equitable manner so that all staff have sufficient time and energy to develop their research.	The SCS will review the work load policy/teaching documents and make sure it is in line with University policy. It is projected that this will be completed in 2018.	The university welcomes progress in relation to this recommendation, and further suggests drawing on support from Faculty and central support services were appropriate to ensure the completion of this work on schedule.
12	P2	U	Develop and/or ensure School staff are aware of policies for dealing with bereavement when a staff member passes away in service, so that colleagues and students can grieve as appropriate and can continue to work to their own best potential and to the good of the School and the university.	The SCS will work with HR on this issue for future circumstances.	*A University Protocol Death of a Staff Member* was agreed by Senior Management earlier in 2017 and can be viewed on the HR Website at http://www4.dcu.ie/sites/default/files/hr/pdfs/death_of_a_staff_member_protocol_march_17_final.pdf The HR department will continue to work closely with Heads of School or Unit, and individual staff members in the sad event of the death of a staff member. This includes supporting the organisation of events of remembrance, in line with the wishes of bereaved staff and family. University officers continue to work closely and confidentially with individuals and staff on an ongoing basis, where staff are coming to

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					terms with the loss of a colleague.
13	P2	U	Develop and/or ensure that School staff are aware of supportive policies for dealing with staff stress and overwork so that staff can regain their health and a healthy work-life balance and can work to their own potential and to the good of the School and the university.	The SCS will work with HR on this issue.	The HR department work continually, across all our campuses on a range of options for staff who are dealing with work related stress. The university has a range of leave policies available, as well as working closely and confidentially with staff on a one-to-one basis, where work-related stress has been identified. The HR department would welcome an opportunity to provide further information on the broad range of supports available to SCS staff; Further initiatives including the "Healthy Campus initiative" are in development.
14	P3	U	Ensure in staff promotion policies, that proven teaching excellence is not overlooked, and criteria are transparent, and appropriately reflect excellence in all areas.	The SCS backs this recommendation and will be brought to the attention of the promotions committees.	The DCU staff promotion policy for academic staff is widely available for staff on the DCU website. This includes clear reference to a candidates capacity to demonstrate ability in teaching, research, contribution to curriculum development and teaching method, evidence of interest in and contribution to the development and administration of the School and the University, contribution to industry, commerce and the professions, and contribution to learned societies and public bodies
15	P3	U	Develop an enhanced university-wide programme of training in supporting students for technical staff, given their close interaction with students especially in 1st year.	The SCS will champion this recommendation.	HR Learning and Development will explore this issue directly with the Head of Department as the requirement is not completely clear.
Teaching and Learning					

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16	P1	A	Review both undergraduate (AC & AS) and postgraduate (GTE elements) degrees to meet the current and future needs of Irish BioPharma (including GMP, validation, regulatory environment, soft skills); to streamline cross-over modules; to improve first year progression; and DCU's Generation 21 Graduate Attributes.	The SCS proposes to carry out a thorough review of both the AC and AS degrees. This review process will include significant input from Industry and will address the future needs of industry. It is anticipated that this process will be completed for March 2018 at which point any changes/modifications required can be approved for the following academic year. (we have already initiated the review process)	The university welcomes this proposal, and notes the application for prioritized funding to support the comprehensive review of the programme portfolio.
17	P1	A	Seek formal accreditation by the Royal Society of Chemistry of the UG and PG degree programs.	Once the UG degree review is completed the SCS will then seek accreditation from the Royal Society of Chemistry by the middle/end of 2018 or early 2019.	The university supports this proposal, and looks forward to supporting the School, where appropriate in achieving accreditation from the Royal Society of Chemistry
18	P1	A	Produce a clear, comprehensive, well-informed plan (incorporating costs, benefits and implications) for expanding the laboratory facilities to accommodate the increasing undergraduate (CES) demand for SCS programmes.	The HoS is currently working on this issue with the Dean and this will also be part of our proposed degree review. It is proposed that a workable plan to accommodate more students will be developed by the middle of 2018.	The university notes the current Campus Development Plan which includes considerable investment in teaching and research infrastructure over the next five years. The university considers that future proposals, considering space in the context of programmatic review and future student number planning will bolster future proposals for the expansions of laboratory facilities to meet future demand.
19	P1	A	Develop a strategy to increase the number of PG research students to support and enhance the School's research activities; to act as laboratory demonstrators; and to improve the School's reputation of providing excellent state-of-the-art teaching experience.	The SCS has established a new research committee and industrial committee. It will be the role of both of these committees to strategize approaches to increase both the research income of the SCS and industrial revenue into the School. If successful, this strategy will act to sustain/increase the School's current number of postgraduate students by raising extra monies for PG funding. The SCS will also be looking into	The university welcomes and supports this proposal

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				the development of new MSc programs that may provide PG students from these programs to demonstrate in our UG labs.	
20	P2	A	Review and improve assignments, grading, feedback, co-ordination between lecture and laboratory work, exam paper preparation and grading.	The first step to address this issue has started with the very recent launch of the universities online e-loop for students, which the SCS has been a leader in contributing too. The SCS teaching committee will further develop improved student feedback mechanisms.	The university acknowledges the School's early adoption and leadership in relation to online feedback for students. The university encourages the School to continue their active engagement with the Teaching Enhancement Unit in relation to continued best practice in this area.
21	P2	A	Review minimum entry requirements and approaches to supporting weak students, and address progression in 1st and 2nd year.	The SCS will address this issue during the degree review process that has begun and will be completed in March 2018. The School will look at the introduction the introduction of extra tutorials as a possible solution to aid the weaker students in first and second year level AS and AC degree programs.	The university welcomes the proposals in the context of the broader programme portfolio review
22	P2	A/U	Review the School's reliance on part time teaching staff. Often such staff may not be fully engaged in the whole gamut of the School's activities, which can add considerably to the workload of the permanent staff.	The recent reliance on part-time lecturers over the past 18 months has been a consequence of staff departures. The SCS has just appointed three new permanent members of staff at Lecturer level and will be interviewing for a new professorship by summer. These new appointments will greatly reduce the need for part-time teaching staff.	The university acknowledges the work of the School and Faculty in progressing these appointments in the months since the last review.
23	P2	A	Review / update teaching allocation workload model, in line with the DCU Principles for Academic Workload Allocation.	The School will take a critical look at the current workload/teaching policy document to make sure it is in line with the DCU Principles for Academic Workload Allocation.	The university encourage the School to work closely with Faculty structures in reviewing, and implementing any changes in relation to this recommendation.
24	P3	A	Review insurance and safety policies of laboratory supervision requirements (academics, technicians and demonstrators), in order to make optimal	The School will evaluate the existing insurance policies and how these policies impact staff hours with respect to UG labs. It is essential that the School maintains the highest standards in	The university is confident that structures proposed in response to Recommendations 1 and 2 of the peer review group report, will provide a basis for the comprehensive

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			use of staff while maintaining high standards.	our labs and this will be taken into consideration when reviewing these policies.	evaluation of current School policies
25	P3	A	Reconsider the benefits of placing INTRA students in unpaid placements.	The SCS will interact with both the Faculty and the INTRA office to improve the current situation of unpaid INTRA placements	The university notes continued work of both the School and INTRA office to securing paid INTRA placements for students as a priority of placement. The university welcomes the co-ordination between the INTRA office and the School to increase, where possible, the availability of paid internships as part of the INTRA programme
26	P1	U	Taking into account the long-term benefits for the School, the Faculty should review the School's undergraduate laboratory upgrade plan, for submission to the university's budget committee.	The HoS and the Dean are currently reviewing proposals to achieve this upgrade and this recommendation will be part of the undergraduate degree review process...	The university welcomes the consideration of this recommendation as part of the overall undergraduate degree review.
			Scholarship and Research		
27	P2	A	Review and re-clarify the School's research USP, especially in light of the H2020 and national research priorities.	The newly established SCS research committee will undertake this endeavor as outlined above in recommendations 4 and 19.	The university supports this recommendation, and looks forward to working with the School's research committee to progress this recommendation.
28	P2	A	In light of DCU's stated mission as a University of Enterprise, pursue any income developed from SCS staff's considerable commercialization activities and distribute to the relevant staff/unit.	This process is already underway; the SCS will now be able to fund our three new appointed Lecturers with start-up packages from current industrial research project overheads.	The university welcomes progress in relation to this recommendation.
29	P3	A	Ensure the School Research Committee includes the Research Centre Directors.	This recommendation has been considered by the School in a recent School meeting and is being further developed.	The university welcomes this recommendation and the progress being made the School to address it.
30	P1	U	Review the interaction of the support units within the university to address the	For University consideration.	The university notes its commitment to operational excellence as part of its current

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			perception that the additional layers have increased the work load on the front line academics in the SCS.		strategic plan. In its new phase of planning, it is in the university's intention to commit to further progress in developing systems and structures which enable effective management and reduce, where possible, administrative and bureaucratic burden within the university
Community Relations and Service					
31	P2	A	Publicise (via e.g. newsletters, permanent wall-posters and staff social events) all staff activities, achievements and awards in community engagement.	The School web site is being updated (started late May 2017) and will be completed by August 2017.	The university welcomes progress in relation to this recommendation
Management of Financial and other Resources					
32	P2	A/U	Review existing equipment / instrumentation and implement a five year maintenance plan and lifecycle funding model. Commence discussions with the Faculty Office and Faculty Management Group on a procedure to obtain, allocate and spend the funds for this plan.	The School will be purchasing new equipment starting June 2017 (funded by the University investment fund) it is expected that all new equipment will be in place by September 2019. The School has already taken action on this point and an equipment list has been agreed upon, we will now be entering the procurement stage.	The university welcomes the ongoing progress in relation to this objective, and the planning completion of equipment renewal by September 2019.

3   Summary of the One Year Plan

- Establishment of new School Committees by July 2017 – HoS
- ***Undergraduate degree review*** to be completed by March 2018 – Teaching Committee and School
- ***Re-equipping of undergraduate labs*** to begin – Teaching Committee plus School. (we have already had our first meetings to select equipment)
- Creation of an Assistant Head position – HoS/School
- Updated webpage by August 2017 – Research/Teaching Committee
- Appointment of new Professor - HoS

4   Summary of the Three Year Plan

- Creation of School strategic research plan by 2018 – Research Committee
- Identification of a School Common room – Post Graduate Affairs Committee
- ***Royal Society of Chemistry degree validation*** – late 2018/early 2019 – Teaching Committee
- Completion of work load policy document – HoS, Teaching/Research Committees will lead this endeavour
- ***Expansion of UG number intake*** – Teaching Committee, HoS, Faculty
- ***Re-equipping of the UG laboratories*** – Teaching Committee will lead with School input.
- Possible development of new MSc degree/ MSc level diploma courses.