

# DCU

Ollscoil Chathair  
Bhaile Átha Cliath  
Dublin City University

**Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs**

**Quality Enhancement Plan**

**February 2024**

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# 1 Introduction

This enhancement plan is the culmination of both a comprehensive self-reflection by colleagues across all of the units which comprise the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs (OVPAA) and the input of an expert external and internal peer group. We would like to particularly acknowledge the engagement and commitment of the Peer Review Group (PRG) both during the Peer Review Visit and throughout the various stages of the quality review process. It is of note also that the extent of alignment between priorities identified in the self assessment and recommendations from the Peer Review Group bears testimony to the high quality of engagement across OVPAA in the process.

We are pleased to receive the commendations outlined in the PRG Report which identify many of OVPAA's strengths. We also welcome the recommendations in the Report which will assist OVPAA effectiveness as we deliver on DCU strategy and navigate current and future challenges.

The PRG Report was circulated to all colleagues in OVPAA, and meetings held firstly with the Quality Review Committee and subsequently with the OVPAA leadership team at which all the commendations and recommendations were discussed. Following these initial meetings an OVPAA Quality Enhancement Committee was established to consider, refine and adopt a draft plan. This committee consists of the leadership team which is collectively responsible for all of the areas reviewed.

The responses and draft actions developed and discussed and are outlined in the subsequent sections of this plan. As many of the recommendations were linked to setting the priorities of a senior committee within OVPAA, these have been grouped in presenting our responses and plans.

Finalising this plan aligns with the first year of the new DCU strategy, *Transformation for an Unscripted Future*. The coincidence of timing is fortuitous, but we will certainly capitalise on it to deliver quality enhancement activities that align closely with delivering on that Strategy.

## 2 Responses to the Recommendations in the Peer Review Group Report

The following notation is used in the recommendations for enhancement.

**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

Rec	Priority	Addressee	Peer Review Group Recommendation	Area Response	DCU Senior Management Response
1	P1	A	<p>Establish an OVPAA Management Board</p> <p>The OVPAA would benefit from the collective leadership experienced so positively at the University Senior Management level. The formation of an OVPAA Management Board, comprising the heads of the functions/units within the OVPAA, would help eliminate the siloed planning and management evident in the SAR and during the Quality Review Visit.</p>	<p>This recommendation arises because of the distinct structures within OVPAA, and aligns with our self assessment of how they can be better aligned. Establishment of this senior committee is a priority in 23/24.</p> <p>The committee's terms of reference and operation will be reflective of and support the University's underpinning philosophy of collective leadership. ToRs will include collective setting of priorities and planning, and oversight of progress in respect of same, as well as ensuring cross-unit events /away days /working groups which support delivering on priority areas of focus take place.</p>	<p>Senior Management recognises the diverse nature of units within OVPAA, but also the shared agenda.</p> <p>It welcomes the approach of adding a layer of collective oversight to enhance coherence and efficiency in the management of the portfolio, and the emphasis on quality culture, well-being, harnessing data and effective stakeholder engagement.</p>
7	P1	A	Develop a quality enhancement culture	OVPAA units have a critical focus on supporting quality in the University, but recognise that this is distinct from actively monitoring our own effectiveness.	It is noted that the establishment of this senior committee will enable progress

Rec	P r i o r i t y	A d d r e s s e	Peer Review Group Recommendation	Area Response	DCU Senior Management Response
			Continue to further develop a quality enhancement culture based on continuous improvement, including systematic collection, analysis of feedback and action.	<p>The senior team/committee will collectively own this priority, ensuring what it is (our shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitments toward quality) is articulated and reinforced at all opportunities especially at onboarding stage, but also in the context of PRD.</p> <p>In addition, and consistent with our responses to recommendations 8,3 and 9, structures will be in place to ensure that feedback is routinely sought and relevant data analysed and acted upon.</p>	in relation to a number of the recommendations. It is furthermore noted that this recommendation aligns closely with the intended trajectory of the OVPAA, as outlined in the self-assessment report.
8	P1	A	<p>Identify and agree annual priorities for focus and enhancement.</p> <p>Collective agreement by the OVPAA management team on annual priorities for focus and enhancement. Monitor progress in these key areas &amp; close gaps identified.</p>	The senior committee referred to above will define processes and effect changes to enhance quality, and will coordinate efforts and monitor progress in specific areas.	
3	P2	A	<p>Implement more systematic use of data for monitoring and decision making for the OVPAA as a whole.</p> <p>A more aligned and systematic use of the available data for evidence-based decision making and quality enhancement across the OVPAA is</p>	OVPAA routinely uses data and data analysis to inform its work, particularly as it relates to the University as a whole. The systematic use of data and data analysis to inform OVPAA- and/or unit-specific decision-making and quality enhancement will be addressed. In the context of and aligned with data-related developments at institutional level, we will identify key data, explore the development of reports to capture these, ensure colleagues have necessary tools and skills at their disposal, and	

Rec	P r i o r i t y	A d d r e s s e	Peer Review Group Recommendation	Area Response	DCU Senior Management Response
			essential. Implementation of SIS will help facilitate this, but is only part of the solution.	include review of these data and related analysis in the working of the senior team.	
9	P1	A	<p>Establish formal fora for consultation with key stakeholders.</p> <p>Enhance informal relationships by establishing formal fora for consultation with key stakeholders.</p>	<p>As identified in our SAR, this is a priority for the units that comprise OVPAA and, in some cases relevant fora and structures are in place. We will review existing structures for engaging and collaborating with key stakeholder groups and the efficacy of these. We will clarify the purpose of a range of engagements, by stakeholder, (which will go beyond consultation) with a view to agreeing and implementing new and/or enhanced structures, as appropriate.</p>	
2	P1	A	<p>Prioritise the well-being of OVPAA staff given the ongoing change environment</p> <p>Utilise data from staff well-being surveys, DCU Fuse etc., while preserving anonymity, to inform where opportunities for enhancement may exist.</p>	<p>Building on a strong culture of collegiality but recognising the intensity of change impacting on OVPAA, this recommendation will be taken forward by the senior committee as a continuing priority which will increase the visibility, and facilitate coordination of efforts and their impact in relation to staff well-being, as well as enabling collective oversight of this.</p> <p>We will partner with Human Resources to identify data available, using it to enhance opportunities to foster well-being.</p> <p>Since the panel visit we have already secured investment to co-locate and improve the physical work environment of colleagues across several units, and that work has been completed.</p>	

Rec	Priority	Addressee	Peer Review Group Recommendation	Area Response	DCU Senior Management Response
				That investment was focused on structural and other remediation works, but did not include development of community space for social interactions, community building and collaboration.	
4	P2	A/U	<p>Ensure sustainability of strategic projects</p> <p>DCU Futures and DCU Studio are exciting initiatives. Care must be taken to ensure these activities are mainstreamed so they are embedded and sustainable after specific funding has ceased.</p>	<p>OVPAA will continue to support DCU to reach a sustainable steady-state in strategic programmes (such as DCU Futures, and SIS) and initiatives like DCU Studio which build strategically important capacity and capability.</p> <p>That support toward a sustainable steady state will continue to be manifest in the leadership, project management approach and ongoing evaluation that we employ in respect of strategic projects that are led by OVPAA.</p>	This is a high priority for Senior Management and is critical to our strategic commitments to supporting a transformative student experience and the goals of our Teaching and Learning strategy.
5	P2	A	<p>Delineation of TEU and DCU Studio</p> <p>TEU and DCU Studio are complementary units. Careful delineation of their remits should ensure the value of each is recognised to the full.</p>	<p>As identified in our self assessment, this is key to enhancing Faculty engagement with both units, and will be undertaken.</p>	Senior Management welcomes this recommendation. The University, through Phase Two Organisational Structure Review, will work with the OVPAA in reviewing the structure and operations of both areas.
6	P2	A	<p>Enhance communication with students and SU, and the students' knowledge of systems, especially the officers when they first come into the role.</p>	<p>Consistent with our SAR, CINNTE commitments and the teaching and learning strategy this is a key priority.</p> <p>We will formalise existing, less formal regular engagements with the SU.</p>	Senior Management welcomes this response which is in line with the partnership with students approach outlined in

Rec	Priority	Addressee	Peer Review Group Recommendation	Area Response	DCU Senior Management Response
				It is planned to develop an orientation and support programme for student leaders, both sabbatical officers and student (Faculty) representatives.	the University's Teaching and Learning strategy.

### 3 Summary of the One Year Plan (WIP)

Rec	Priority	Addressee	PRG Recommendation	Action	Timeframe	Lead
1	P1	A	Establish an OVPAA Management Board	Establish a senior committee, agreeing its terms of reference.  Organise professional development for Senior Committee and key reports relating to building and sustaining organisational culture.	Q 1 2024  Q 3 2024	VPAA
7	P1	A	Develop a quality enhancement culture Continue to further develop a quality enhancement culture based on continuous improvement, including	Place Quality Culture on the agenda of the senior committee.  Articulate and continue to develop a strong quality enhancement culture (our	Q 2 2024	



Rec	Priority	Addressee	PRG Recommendation	Action	Timeframe	Lead
			systematic collection, analysis of feedback and action.	shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitments toward quality).  Establish an OVPAA cross-unit action plan.		Senior OVPAA Committee and individual Heads of Unit
8	P1	A	Identify and [collectively] agree annual priorities for focus and enhancement Monitor progress in these key areas & close gaps identified.	Define processes for quality enhancement in OVPAA.  Agree most immediate priorities for focus and enhancement to support realisation of DCU's Strategy.	Q2 2024	
3	P2	A	Implement more systematic use of data for monitoring and decision making for the OVPAA as a whole.	Collate an overview of key data sets, repositories and use cases within OVPAA.	Q 3 2024	
9	P1	A	Establish formal fora for consultation with key stakeholders. Enhance informal relationships by establishing formal fora for consultation with key stakeholders.	Review and clarify the purpose of existing structures for engaging and collaborating with key stakeholder groups, and review the efficacy of these.	Q3 2024	
2	P1	A	Prioritise the well-being of OVPAA staff given the ongoing change environment	Establish staff well-being and community building as a standing item on the agenda of the senior committee.	Q 2 2024	
			Utilise data from staff well-being surveys, DCU Fuse etc., while preserving anonymity, to inform where	Complete refurbishment of and occupy Bea Orpen.	Q 4 2023	

Rec	Priority	Addressee	PRG Recommendation	Action	Timeframe	Lead
			opportunities for enhancement may exist.	Scope out what data may be available to inform establishing a baseline regarding staff well-being.  Schedule a well-being focused event.	Q 3 2024  Q 3 2024	
4	P2	A/U	Ensure sustainability of strategic projects. DCU Futures and DCU Studio are exciting initiatives. Care must be taken to ensure these activities are mainstreamed so they are embedded and sustainable after specific funding has ceased.	Continue with a range of evaluation approaches regarding DCU Futures and map out future costs to embed learnings and sustain the trajectory of the initiative.  Review DCU Studio's contribution to inform and develop a strategic business roadmap including business case and finance plan for DCU Studio and its activities beyond current HCI funding.	Q 3 2024	Institutional Lead for DCU Futures  Director of Micro-Credential Strategy & Innovation
5	P2	A	Delineation of TEU and DCU Studio TEU and DCU Studio are complementary units. Careful delineation of their remits should ensure the value of each is recognised to the full.	Delineate TEU and DCU Studio remits in a way that is meaningful to both units and to stakeholders.	Q 3 2024	VPAA in consultation with Dean of Teaching and Learning, Head of Teaching Enhancement Unit, Director of Micro-Credential Strategy & Innovation
6	P2	A	Enhance communication with students and SU	Formalise existing, regular engagements with the SU.	Q3 2024	Academic Secretary

R ec	P r i o r i t y	A d d r e s s e e	PRG Recommendation	Action	Timeframe	Lead
			Enhance communications with students and the SU, and the students' knowledge of systems, especially the officers when they first come into the role.	Develop an orientation and support programme for student leaders, both sabbatical officers and student (Faculty) representatives.		

## 4 Summary of the Three Year Plan

Rec	Priority	Address	PRG Recommendation	Action	Timeframe	Lead
1	P1	A	Establish an OVPAA Management Board	Review effectiveness of functioning of the senior committee, adjusting ToR and ways of working, if/as needed.	Ongoing.	VPAA
7	P1	A	Continue to further develop a quality enhancement culture based on continuous improvement, including systematic collection, analysis of feedback and action.	Maintain Quality Culture on the agenda of the senior committee. Implement the OVPAA cross-unit action plan which will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- put mechanisms in place to reinforce quality enhancement culture (at onboarding stage, performance and development review (PRD) and other opportunities).</li> <li>- put structures in place to ensure that feedback is routinely sought and relevant data analysed and acted upon (in addition to, and consistent with our responses to recommendations 8,3 and 9 below)</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Senior OVPAA Committee and individual Heads of Unit
8	P1	A	Identify and [collectively] agree annual priorities for focus and enhancement Monitor progress in these key areas & close gaps identified.	Update quality enhancement priorities annually.  Monitor and review efficacy of quality enhancement processes in specific	Ongoing	

Rec	Priority	Addressee	PRG Recommendation	Action	Timeframe	Lead
				areas, revising those processes if/as needed.		
3	P2	A	Implement more systematic use of data for monitoring and decision making for the OVPAA as a whole.	In the context of institutional developments in this area and of SIS implementation, review effectiveness of data use for evidence-based decision making within OVPAA, identify areas of improvement, build up tools (including specific reports) and skills to capture, maintain and monitor key datasets, and include review of these data in the working of the senior team.	Q3 2026	
9	P1	A	Establish formal fora for consultation with key stakeholders. Enhance informal relationships by establishing formal fora for consultation with key stakeholders.	Agree and implement new and/or enhanced engagement structures, as appropriate following review of existing mechanisms.  Review efficacy of operation of formalised stakeholder engagement structures, adjusting them if/as needed, in light of experience and feedback.	Q2 2025  Q3 2026	

Rec	Priority	Addressee	PRG Recommendation	Action	Timeframe	Lead
2	P1	A	<p>Prioritise the well-being of OVPAA staff given the ongoing change environment</p> <p>Utilise data from staff well-being surveys, DCU Fuse etc., while preserving anonymity, to inform where opportunities for enhancement may exist.</p>	<p>Maintain well-being as an agenda item for the senior committee</p> <p>Develop a community space for social interactions, community building and collaboration and evaluate its usefulness.</p> <p>Establish events that support well-being and community.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Q 3 2026</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	
4	P2	A/ U	<p>Ensure sustainability of strategic projects DCU Futures and DCU Studio are exciting initiatives. Care must be taken to ensure these activities are mainstreamed so they are embedded and sustainable after specific funding has ceased.</p>	<p>Lead and monitor the implementation of the DCU Teaching and Learning strategy which relies upon embedding the achievements of both DCU Futures and DCU Studio.</p>	<p>Q3 2026</p>	<p>VPAA T&amp;L leaders in the university and DCU Education Committee</p>
5	P2	A	<p>Delineation of TEU and DCU Studio TEU and DCU Studio are complementary units. Careful delineation of their remits should ensure the value of each is recognised to the full.</p>	<p>Review the effectiveness of delineated TEU and DCU Studio remits.</p>	<p>Q 4 2025</p>	<p>Dean of Teaching and Learning, Head of Teaching Enhancement Unit, Director of Micro-Credential Strategy &amp; Innovation</p>
6	P2	A	<p>Enhance communication with students and SU</p>	<p>Review efficacy of formalised structures for engagement with SU.</p>	<p>Q 3 2025</p>	<p>Academic Secretary</p>

R ec	P r i o r i t y	A d d r e s s e e	PRG Recommendation	Action	Timeframe	Lead
			Enhance communications with students and the SU, and the students' knowledge of systems, especially the officers when they first come into the role.	Review efficacy of student leader orientation and support programme.	and Q 3 2026	

## 5 Appendices

### 5.1 Quality Committee (for the Self-Assessment Report)

The self-assessment phase of the Quality Review was led by an internal quality review committee. Committee membership was as follows:

- Chair - Professor Lisa Looney, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Registrar)
- Professor Brian Corcoran, Deputy Registrar
- Dr Rachel Keegan, Academic Secretariat
- Dr Mairéad Ni Giolla Mhichíl, DCU Studio
- Mr Olivier Kazmierczak, Academic Systems
- Ms Sharon King, Graduate Studies Office
- Ms Fiona Deane, DCU Placement
- Mr Ian Harrison, Guru Development Unit
- Mr Rob Lowney, Teaching Enhancement Unit
- Recording Secretary - Ms Megan Howell, Academic Secretariat

### 5.2 Peer Review Group members

Membership of the Peer Review Group for the Quality Review was as follows:

- Prof. Pól Ó Dochartaigh (Chair), Deputy President and Registrar, University of Galway
- Prof. Marja Sutela, Vice President for Education, Tampere University
- Prof. Caroline McMullan, Full Professor of Business & Society, DCU Business School
- Dr. Thomas Ekman Jørgensen, Director for Policy Coordination and Foresight, European University Association
- Mr. Glen Scanlon Tims, DCU Student Representative, DCU Humanities & Social Sciences Faculty Representative
- Dr. Deirdre Nic Mhathúna, Assistant Professor, DCU Fiontar agus Scoil na Gaeilge

### 5.3 Quality Committee (for the Quality Enhancement Plan)

Membership of the Quality Enhancement Committee is as follows:

- Professor Lisa Looney, Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Professor Blánaid White, Dean of Strategic Learning Innovation / Dr Susan Hegarty Institutional Lead for DCU Futures (from mid Dec '23)
- Dr Monica Ward, Dean of Teaching and Learning
- Professor Joseph Stokes, Dean of Graduate Studies / Prof Sharon O'Brien (from Feb 24)
- Dr Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichíl, Director of Micro-Credential Strategy and Innovation
- Ms Pauline Mooney, Academic Secretary
- Ms Paula Murray, Director of Placement