

# DCU

Ollscoil Chathair  
Bhaile Átha Cliath  
Dublin City University

**Peer Review Group Report for Professional Support Areas**

2024/2025

of

**DCU SPORT**

Date: 11th and 12th April 2024

## Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>List of Acronyms</b>                                | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>Introduction and Context</b>                        | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>1.1 Overview of the Area under Review</b>           | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>2 Approach to Self-Assessment</b>                   | <b>6</b>  |
| 2.1 Quality Review Committee                           | 6         |
| 2.2 The Self-Assessment Report                         | 6         |
| 3 Approach Taken By Peer Review Group                  | 7         |
| 3.2 Overview of Approach Taken by Peer Review Group    | 7         |
| <b>4 Approach to Quality Assurance and Enhancement</b> | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>5 Findings of the Peer Review Group</b>             | <b>8</b>  |
| 5.1 Planning and Effective Management of Resources     | 8         |
| 5.2 Effectiveness of Activities and Processes          | 8         |
| 5.3 Communication and Provision of Information         | 8         |
| 5.4 Ongoing Quality Enhancement                        | 9         |
| 5.5 External Perspectives                              | 9         |
| <b>6 SWOC Analysis and Plans for Improvement</b>       | <b>10</b> |
| 6.1 SWOC Analysis for DCU Sport                        | 10        |
| 6.2 Plans for Improvement Identified by DCU Sport      | 11        |
| <b>7 Summary of Commendations and Recommendations</b>  | <b>11</b> |

## List of Acronyms

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| APR    | Annual Programme Review                   |
| ASAS   | Accreditation for Student-Athlete Support |
| CLC    | Club Life Committee                       |
| DCU    | Dublin City University                    |
| DCUBS  | DCU Business School                       |
| GA     | Governing Authority                       |
| MOA    | Memorandum of Agreement                   |
| OSL    | Office of Student Life                    |
| OVPLI  | Office of the Vice President for Research |
| KPI    | Key Performance Indicator                 |
| PPR    | Periodic Programme Review                 |
| PRG    | Peer Review Group                         |
| QA     | Quality Assurance                         |
| QI     | Quality Improvement                       |
| QPC    | Quality Promotion Committee               |
| QIO    | Quality And Institutional Insights Office |
| QQI    | Quality and Qualifications Ireland        |
| QuEP   | Quality Enhancement Plan                  |
| SAR    | Self Assessment Report                    |
| SMG    | Senior Management Group                   |
| SLA    | Service Level Agreement                   |
| SS & D | Student Support & Development             |
| SU     | Students' Union                           |
| TOR    | Terms of Reference                        |

## Introduction and Context

The broad approach to quality assurance and enhancement DCU aims to promote and develop a culture of quality throughout all aspects of the University. The framework derives from the spirit of Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement enshrined in the Universities Act (1997), which is the legislative basis for quality throughout the Irish University sector, and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

The DCU processes for quality reviews at DCU are further aligned to the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the published guidelines of Qualifications and Quality Ireland (QQI).

This Report presents the findings of a quality review of DCU SPORT following a visit by the Peer Review Group undertaken on 11th & 12th April 2024.

### 1.1 Overview of the Area under Review

DCU Sport is a newly re-structured department and plays a key role in enabling the university to support its mission to transform lives and societies and to provide a transformative student experience. DCU is based across six campuses in North Dublin. DCU Sport's primary function is to provide sports facilities and programmes for students, staff, academic programmes, alumni, and the local community. Acknowledging the key role of the university experience beyond the classroom, DCU Sport also plays a crucial role in the broader university context and significantly contributes to positive outcomes in health and well-being, student development, the student experience, recruitment, retention, graduate employability, volunteering, leadership development, and helps foster a community spirit and a sense of belonging. DCU Sport plays an active role in the local community and external engagement.

DCU Sport holds a unique position as a commercial entity within the university, functioning as a campus company and responsible for the management and operations of the university sports facilities. DCU Sport also provides sports development services and programmes to the DCU community. The sports facilities known as **Trispace Sport DAC (Facilities)** report to a campus company Board of Management that is composed of the Deputy President, Chief Operating Officer, Director of Finance, and the Director of Human Resources. The **sports development function** reports to the Deputy President of DCU.

#### Locations of DCU Sport

##### **DCU Glasnevin Campus, McNulty Building - Sports Development function**

The Sports Development function of DCU Sport is located on the Ground Floor of the McNulty Building on the DCU Glasnevin Campus.

##### **DCU Glasnevin Campus - DCU Sports Complex & DCU Soccer Centre**

The indoor facilities at the DCU Sports Complex include a 25m swimming pool and spa facilities, including a sauna, steam room, spa pool and tepidarium, a fitness centre with over 100 pieces of equipment with a cardio-vascular training area, a full range of free weights, wellness studio, aerobic studio, a main sports hall comprising 3 basketball courts, a minor hall, a rock-climbing wall, squash court and handball/racquetball court. The outdoor facilities include the DCU Soccer Centre, which has five 5-a-side pitches for recreational games and leagues and a larger pitch for squad training. Included in this centre is a covered four-lane 75m sprint track.

##### **DCU St Patrick's Campus**

The sports facilities on the St. Patrick's Campus include a newly refurbished gym, two

full-sized sports halls, a full-size all-weather 3G GAA astro pitch and a training area.

**DCU Sports Campus (St Clare’s)**

The DCU Sports Campus is located on the Ballymun Road, a ten-minute walk from the Glasnevin Campus, and spans over thirty-five acres of outdoor sports facilities. There are five grass pitches, two GAA pitches, two soccer pitches, one rugby pitch and an all-weather full-size 3G GAA/rugby pitch, a 50-seat meeting room, a high-performance gym, and offices.

**Morton Stadium**

Morton Stadium is the National Athletics Stadium situated in Santry. Facilities include an 8-lane World Athletics Certified 400m MONDO track, 10 lanes on 100m finish straight, 4 outdoor long jump and triple jump pits, competition throws areas for hammer, shot, discus & javelin, an external all weather throws area and a full-size pitch. Indoor facilities include a 6-lane 60m indoor track, a high jump area, a long jump/triple jump pit and a high-performance athletics-specific gym.

A brief overview of the two units of DCU Sport is summarised in the table below.

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Director of Sport</b><br/>Responsible for managing two units:</p> |  |  |
|   | <p><b>Sport Development</b></p>  | <p><b>Sports Facilities</b><br/>Trispace Sport DAC (Facilities)</p>  |
| <p><b>Reporting Structure</b></p>                                       | <p>University Department reporting to the Deputy President with responsibility for the student experience.</p>   | <p>DCU Commercial Group/Campus Company reporting to a Board of Directors.</p>  |
| <p><b>Summary of Unit Functions</b></p>                                 | <p>The unit aims to lead the strategy and operations of sports’ development at DCU. Functions include developing physical activity, participation, and performance sports at DCU. DCU has two focus sports - Athletics, and GAA. DCU has dedicated Sports Development Officers in athletics, soccer, rugby, and multi-sports, as well as three GAA Development Officers and a Sport Scholarship and Performance Manager.</p> | <p>Manage the operations, development and sustainability of the DCU sports facilities across four campuses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● DCU Sports Complex, Glasnevin Campus</li> <li>● St Patrick’s Campus Sport Facilities</li> <li>● DCU Sports Campus (St Clare’s)</li> <li>● Morton Stadium</li> </ul> |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | The sports development function supports and develops 36 sports clubs with 5,579 members and an average of 250 sports scholarships and dual career athletes annually. | The sports facilities have approximately 5,000 members and a monthly footfall of 65,000. |
|--|---|--|

### DCU Sport Staff Structure

| Area/Facility      | Staff Titles  | Location                           | Total |
|--------------------|---|------------------------------------|-------|
| Management         | 1 x Director of Sport   | Glasnevin Campus, Sports Complex   | 1     |
| Sports Development | 1 x Senior Sports Development Officer<br>1 x Head of Gaelic Games<br>1 x Education and Gaelic Games Development Officer*<br>1 x GAA Games Development Officer<br>1 x Head of Athletics<br>1 x Rugby Development Officer**<br>1 x Soccer Development Officer<br>1 x Sport Scholarship & Performance Manager<br>1 x Administration and Accounts Assistant<br><br><i>*Part funded by Leinster GAA (60% DCU/ 40% Leinster GAA)</i><br><i>**Part-funded by the IRFU (65% DCU / 35% IRFU)</i> | Glasnevin Campus, McNulty Building | 9     |

|  |  |   |           |
|--|--|---|-----------|
| Sports Facilities:<br>DCU Sports<br>Complex                | 1 x General Manager<br>1 x Operations Manager<br>1 x Financial Administrator<br>1 x Membership, Bookings &<br>Systems Manager<br>1 x Membership Administrator<br>4 x Duty Managers<br>4 x Receptionists<br>8 x Fitness Instructors<br>7 x Lifeguards<br>4 x Facility Attendants<br><br><i>Seasonal staff are employed for Sports<br/>Camps</i> | Glasnevin<br>Campus,<br>Sports<br>Complex | 32        |
| Sports Facilities:<br>St Patrick's<br>Campus               | 1 x Duty Manager   | St Patrick's<br>Campus                    | 1         |
| Sports Facilities:<br>DCU Sports<br>Campus (St<br>Clare's) | 1 x Sports Campus Manager<br>4 X Ground staff  | DCU Sports<br>Campus                      | 5         |
| Sports Facilities:<br>Morton Stadium                       | 1 x Morton Stadium Manager<br>3 X Ground staff   | Morton<br>Stadium,<br>Santry              | 4         |
| <b>Total</b>   |  |   | <b>52</b> |

## 2 Approach to Self-Assessment

### 2.1 Quality Review Committee

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

| Name           | Position                        | Contact Details       |
|----------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| James Galvin   | Director of Sport               | james.galvin@dcu.ie   |
| Yvonne McGowan | Snr. Sports Development Manager | yvonne.mgcowan@dcu.ie |

|                  |  |                         |
|------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Paul O'Brien     | Head of Gaelic Games                           | paulobrien.gaa@dcu.ie   |
| Paul Byrne       | Head of Athletics                              | paul.byrne@dcu.ie       |
| Fran Butler      | Soccer Development Officer                     | soccer@dcu.ie           |
| Louise Byrne     | Education and Gaelic Games Development Officer | louisebyrne.gaa@dcu.ie  |
| Gemma Dempsey    | General Manager, Sports Facilities             | gemma.dempsey@dcu.ie    |
| Fergal Smyth     | Sports Campus Manager                          | fergal.smyth@dcu.ie     |
| Alice Griffith   | Membership, Booking and Systems Manager        | alice.griffith@dcu.ie   |
| Niamh Hanley     | Sports Administrator                           | niamh.hanley@dcu.ie     |
| Michael Robinson | Duty Manager                                   | michael.robinson@dcu.ie |
| John Devaney     | Morton Stadium Manager                         | john.devaney@dcu.ie     |

The DCU Sport Quality Review Committee met weekly from December 2023 to March 2024. A project plan was developed to manage the process and a copy of the project plan was made available on the shared drive. Members of the DCU Sport Quality Review Committee were fully engaged in the process and the regular meetings facilitated honest discussions about past challenges and future areas for increased collaboration and quality enhancement of facilities and programmes. The distribution of work was shared with the Committee and all committee members had an opportunity to shape and input into the process. A survey was conducted among the members of the DCU Sport Quality Review Committee to enable them to reflect on both the effectiveness of the change management process and to align the sports development and sports facilities functions.

## 2.2 The Self-Assessment Report

- The SAR focuses primarily on how the constituent sport units work together to deliver a strategic university-wide approach to sport.
- It is important to note that this Quality Review does not include an evaluation of the quality of the sports facilities, as this is a campus company and not considered under the scope of this Review'. The PRG findings and recommendations focus on quality enhancements for the sports development function and how the constituent sport units work together to deliver a strategic university-wide approach to sport.
- This Review preparation represented the first opportunity the new function of DCU Sport had to reflect on what has happened since the two areas dealing with sport in DCU were integrated, and to plan how they can best be aligned.
- The SAR was conducted in a spirit of collaboration, with a view to integrating and aligning two distinct teams, servicing multiple audiences and stakeholders.
- Internal stakeholders were encouraged to reflect on how effective each section is at contributing to the objectives of the function, and how this is to be best achieved into the future.



- This preparation for the Review began a process of communication which reduced misunderstandings that previously caused tension.
- It initiated the breakdown of silos within the Unit, which hampered sharing of knowledge, experience and expertise. This remains a work-in-progress.
- The committee agreed that, given the strategic focus of the quality review, targeting specific informed stakeholders would provide valuable perspectives. 79 stakeholders were surveyed from DCU academic and central support units, external organisations, student leaders and sports facility members. The response rate was approximately 18% with 14 respondents out of 79.
- The PRG Report represents a snapshot in time of a function in transition, which is seeking to define a new identity, and build a suitable structure to best service its clients effectively and efficiently.
- The PRG Report and SWOC analysis represents a staging post on the way to establishing a future strategy, rather than the final destination.
- The process has provided a useful exercise in identifying good practice to be built upon.
- The process has identified the current need to re-define and formalise roles to recognise and future-proof new structures, and to process-map, and document processes, procedures and responsibilities. This will help to clarify ambiguity and prevent misunderstandings and should aim to red-flag risks and identify how they can be mitigated in a controlled, process-driven way.

### 3 Approach Taken By Peer Review Group

#### 3.1 Peer Review Group Members

##### **Membership of the Peer Review Group for the Quality Review was:**

- Ms. Sinead McNulty, CEO of the Camogie Association (Chair)
- Mr. Karl Oakes, Head of Queen's Sport and Physical Wellbeing, Queen's University Belfast
- Dr. Claire Bohan, Dean of Students, Student Support & Development, Dublin City University
- Dr. Colum Foley, Assistant Professor of Management, DCU Business School
- Ms. Meabh Kennedy, PhD Researcher School of Chemical Sciences, Dublin City University

#### 3.2 Overview of Approach Taken by Peer Review Group

A schedule was developed in advance of the first meeting and a proposed list of stakeholder meetings suggested. The Panel was given the option to make changes to the timetable and to request additional staff meetings. The Schedule is set out below.

## Timetable Peer Review Group Visit

### DCU SPORT

DATE: 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of April 2024

| Time        | Peer Review Group (PRG) Activity/Meeting Thursday  | Venue                       |
|-------------|--|-----------------------------|
| 10:00-10:45 | Briefing with the Director of Quality and Institutional Research who will provide guidelines to assist the PRG during the visit and in developing the report   | KA124G,<br>The U            |
| 10:45-11:45 | PRG private meeting time. During this time the PRG will : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Select a Chairperson</li> <li>● Discusses key themes and areas for exploration based on the self-assessment report</li> <li>● Assign tasks and responsibilities among members</li> </ul>  | KA124G,<br>The U            |
| 11:45-12:30 | Meeting with the Director of Sport and Area's Quality Review Committee. This session will also be attended by the Director of Quality and Institutional Research. This session will commence with a short presentation by the Director of Sport, followed by a discussion. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● James Galvin, Director of Sport (Chair)</li> <li>● Yvonne McGowan, Senior Sports Development Officer</li> <li>● Paul O'Brien, Head of Gaelic Games</li> <li>● Paul Byrne, Head of Athletics</li> <li>● Fran Butler, Soccer Development Officer</li> <li>● Louise Byrne, Education and Gaelic Games Development Officer</li> <li>● Gemma Dempsey, General Manager Sports Facilities</li> <li>● John Deveney, Morton Stadium Manager</li> <li>● Alice Griffith, Membership, Booking and Systems Manager</li> <li>● Niamh Hanley, Sports Administrator</li> <li>● Michael Robinson, Duty Manager</li> </ul> | KA124G,<br>The U            |
| 12:30-13:15 | Working Lunch  | KA124G,<br>The U            |
| 13:15-13:45 | Tour of DCU Sport Facilities & Offices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● James Galvin, Director of Sport (Chair)</li> <li>● Gemma Dempsey, General Manager Sports Facilities</li> </ul>   | Meet at<br>KA124G,<br>The U |
| 13:45-14:30 | Meeting with <b>Area Staff</b> : [you should ensure representation from across all the main areas/activities]. This should not be the same group that met at 10:45. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Andy Wood, Rugby Development Officer</li> <li>● Molly Moran, Sport Scholarship &amp; Performance Manager</li> <li>● Emma Tinney, Sports Campus Attendant/ATT Support</li> <li>● Maya Kirby, Receptionist, DCU Sport</li> <li>● Cora Kelly, Duty Manager, DCU Sport</li> <li>● Dara Walsh, Membership Administrator, DCU Sport</li> <li>● Craig Tuite, Swimming Teacher, DCU Sport</li> <li>● Darragh Brogan, Operations Manager, DCU Sport</li> </ul>   | KA124G,<br>The U            |
| 14:30-14:45 | Coffee Break   | KA124G,<br>The U            |

|  |   |                                    |
|--|---|------------------------------------|
| 14:45-15:30  | <p>Meeting with <b>Students</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Thomas O’Dowd, President, DCU Students’ Union</li> <li>● Emma Monahan, VP Community &amp; Citizenship, DCU Students’ Union</li> <li>● Angelina Foley, Chair DCU CLC/Ultimate Frisbee Club</li> <li>● Aoife Guinan, DCU CLC/Ladies Rugby Club</li> <li>● Killian Boggan, DCU CLC/GAA Club</li> <li>● Ciara O’Connor, GAA Scholar</li> <li>● Seán McGinley, Athletics Scholar</li> </ul>   | KA124G,<br>The U                   |
| 15:30-16:15  | <p>Relevant <b>Central Support Units</b> - senior representatives (Finance, SS&amp;D, Estates, HR, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Jane Last, Head of Digital Communications</li> <li>● Ger McEvoy, Head of Estates</li> <li>● Brendan Egan, Head of the School of Health &amp; Human Performance</li> <li>● Áine McNamara, Associate Professor in Elite Performance</li> <li>● Stephen Kirwan, HR Business Partner</li> <li>● Martin Ward, Deputy Chief Operations Officer</li> <li>● Colette O’Beirne, Senior Student Recruitment Officer</li> <li>● Paula Kierans, Health &amp; Safety Manager</li> <li>● Damian Dowdall, Finance Office</li> </ul> | KA124G,<br>The U                   |
| 16:15-17:00  | <p>Meeting with <b>Key Internal Stakeholders</b> - DCU Office of Student Life (OSL) Senior Leadership Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Dr Úna Redmond, Director Office of Student Life</li> <li>● Siobhan Byrne, Head of Clubs &amp; Socs</li> </ul>   | Hybrid Meeting in KA124G,<br>The U |
| 17:00 – 17:45  | Meeting with <b>Area Head</b> , James Galvin, Director of Sport   | KA124G,<br>The U                   |
| 19:00-21:00  | PRG Private Dinner and discussion   | At hotel                           |
| <b>Peer Review Group (PRG) Activity/Meeting FRIDAY</b> |   |                                    |
| 09:00-10:00  | PRG Meeting with members of <b>Senior Management Group</b>  | AG01                               |
| 10:00 – 10.30  | Meeting with <b>Area Reporting Head</b> , Professor Anne Sinnott  | AG01                               |
| 10.45 – 13:30  | PRG working lunch and finalisation of exit presentation   | KA124G,<br>The U                   |
| 13:30 – 14:00  | Briefing with the <b>Director of Sport</b> and <b>Director of Quality</b> on key recommendations  | KA124G,<br>The U                   |
| 14:00 – 14:30  | Exit Presentation - <b>All DCU Sport Staff</b>  | Páirc KA115,<br>The U              |

The Panel was satisfied with the timetable but, in hindsight, felt that smaller group meetings would have been more advantageous for open discussion. It became clear over the course of

the visit that there were elevated expectations of the outcome of the Peer Review visit in terms of providing solutions to existing challenges.

- The Committee met over two days to gather the perspectives of a cross section of stakeholders related to the Unit.
- Sinead McNulty was appointed as Chair by consensus at the initial meeting.
- First impressions of the SAR were prepared in advance of the commencement of the review by each member and discussed at the first meeting of the Committee.
- Topics for consideration during the review were agreed.
- Topics were allocated in advance to Committee members by agreement, for exploration when meeting each stakeholder group.
- Further questions arose through discussions with staff / stakeholders over the course of the visit.
- The review group was located in a suitable room in the DCU Glasnevin campus student U building for the visit.
- Stakeholder groups were met by rotation as set out on the schedule.
- A partial on-campus facilities visit was conducted between sessions (Glasnevin Campus) - a visit to satellite sports campuses would have been advantageous but was not possible due to time constraints.
- There was good, honest engagement with all stakeholders.
- Some overarching themes emerged relatively quickly during the readings and the meetings with stakeholders, which helped focus the Review.

There was a clear recognition by the panel that this is a department which has only recently begun to restructure and is therefore still in a state of flux. DCU Sport staff were completely committed to the Quality Review process and eager to contribute to discussions over the course of the visit, with a view to developing a stronger, more impactful department in the future.

In recognition of this strong desire for change and direction and seeing the potential of the department to make a meaningful impact on the DCU student and staff experience, the panel has provided detailed recommendations for DCU Sport, which should be prioritised according to resource availability and with input from senior management.

## 4 Approach to Quality Assurance and Enhancement

- Engagement with the Quality Assurance process took place through the preparation of SAR by DCU Sport, and engagement with interview processes.
- Systems and processes have been identified as an area of weakness. Individual focus areas in DCU Sport operate in a silo with little evidence of quality controls / consistent reporting / evidence-based decision making/ identification of KPIs for teams or individuals / space for the generation of new ideas and development.
- No clear mechanism is in place to ensure a single direction of travel with clearly defined milestones for the newly formed unit of DCU Sport, although management meetings have begun to take place.
- Quality structures / processes to deliver sport participation opportunities across the whole institution, units, and Schools/Faculties, are not in place and need to be considered.
- SOPs that are in place do not seem to be applied across all Clubs consistently, e.g. scholarship policies and processes, which needs to be resolved.

- Significant work has taken place in the facilities area to address shortcomings identified by the DCU Audit Committee. These should be completed, monitored, and strengthened.
- Ongoing Quality Enhancement - Queries on Athlete support environment could be examined further, and the programme reevaluated and aligned to existing ASAS accreditation with Sport Ireland.
- Limited information is available to demonstrate regular detailed reporting and monitoring of service delivery, evaluation, and impact.
- There has been recognition of the need to invest in sports facilities (e.g. St Pat's facilities / Morton Stadium).
- There is a clear commitment amongst staff in DCU Sport to improve the quality of service and the standing of sport in DCU.

## 5 Findings of the Peer Review Group

The focus for the PRG was to examine how effective the Professional Support area is in planning and managing resources based on the QRC findings and following a series of meetings with staff and students. This included central support units, key internal stakeholders and DCU Senior Management.

The PRG highlighted areas of good practice for commendation and a number of recommendations across a range of functions.

### 5.1 Planning and Effective Management of Resources

#### *Re-alignment*

- There is general agreement from all key areas that students are at the core of all activities.
- The perception should be removed of being solely focussed on Elite/Performance Sport with a transition to the softer side and transformational nature of sport.
- DCU has and plays a significant role working across many areas. This could be harnessed more in terms of articulating the impact and value of sport on a lifelong - basis from cradle to grave.
- Connections between DCU Sport and Facilities have improved. This has provided an opportunity to plan and manage resources which are supported by key stakeholders to support the student experience.
- The Student Voice has been given a space to be heard in relation to the Strategy consultation. This should be harnessed and built upon to support the future direction of DCU Sport.
- Contract and Job description for the Director of Sport to be updated and agreed, in light of structural changes to DCU Sport post realignment. This will enable clear KPI's to be set, reflecting the redesign of responsibilities.
- To achieve the stated aims with a clearly defined plan will require a fresh and holistic approach to how DCU sport is resourced - human, physical, programmes. This should be a collaborative process with senior management involvement.

- Future investment should be tied with commercial models/business. Cases may not be bold enough in terms of university commitment to creating a unique and transformative student experience.

### *Financial Model*

- The finance model needs to be examined, with clear guidelines on ownership of budget.
- More senior staff should be involved in how budgets are forecasted and managed.
- Review of pricing model and payment plans for fitness with a particular focus on students.
- Performance and Facilities appear to be resourced to a good standard. Participation Sport targeting staff, students and community needs to be prioritised with more or a re-aligned resource to support meaningful and transformative interventions.

### *Facilities*

- Facilities appear to have a very positive impact on the local community, which enhances DCU's reputation and visibility.
- Facilities / Estates appear to be operating independently away from a shared approach.
- Capital Plan - clarity on where sport fits within the University Estates Masterplan.
- Creation of a lifecycle/reserve capital fund for sports facilities to ensure maintenance of high-quality standards and which are planned over a long term period.

### *Leadership and Management*

- Cultural renewal for all Sport staff including extended workforce. A revision of standards and values which are communicated and accepted by all. These should form the bedrock for how DCU Sport operates.
- Development of a DCU Sport Management Team which provides opportunities and is representative of all functions within the department.
- Creation of 'Task and Finish' groups to ensure Actions are recorded and progress is being made with a definitive end point.
- Connections between DCU Sport and Facilities have improved. This has provided an opportunity to plan and manage resources which are supported by key stakeholders to support the student experience.
- Clear Accountability and transparency are required across all functions - there are too many blind spots and grey areas which have not been addressed. Clarity of roles and responsibilities will assist this process.
- Clearly defined pathways are required across athletes, teams, clubs, and coaches which provide a basis on how resources are allocated.
- Review of organisational structure in line with strategy to ensure delivery in core areas and enable appropriate line management and resource allocation.
- Draft and implement a new Workforce Plan across all areas with clearly defined roles and responsibilities which will address clear silo culture.
- Focus on retention of staff who are a key asset for DCU Sport. This would include a systematic approach to exit interviews.
- Key staff dependency could be a concern for business continuity. Loss of key personnel may create institutional risk, so a focus on retention and contingency/continuity and succession planning is required.
- Clear individual work plans, aligned to the strategic plan, reviewed on a regular basis with KPIs set (SMART) and reviewed against timelines for delivery need to be developed for each role. Staff and management personnel should receive training in writing and measuring KPIs and work plans.

- Process mapping of workflows and relationships with clear and consistent documented Standard Operating Procedures (SOPS) are required across all areas.

### *Training and Development*

- Specific leadership training, to include mentoring and coaching supports should be put in place for senior management leadership team.
- Training for all staff in relation to their roles, responsibilities, inter relationships across the university, for delivery of strategic plan, and to include conflict resolution should be completed.
- Policies and processes to deal with poor performance and non-compliance should be implemented as necessary.
- Training for all managers in HR processes, including PRD, performance management, and effective utilisation of university processes and systems.
- Management training for managers - including 'having difficult conversations.
- Staff performance reviews with formal feedback processes and a record of training needs aligned to central and departmental resources.
- A leadership mentoring system for senior managers to help them navigate their way through the complex tasks which are ahead and develop strong leadership, structures, processes and systems.

## **5.2 Effectiveness of Activities and Processes**

### *Stakeholder Engagement*

- A stakeholder mapping exercise is required to gain a clear understanding of how all functions operate to achieve a common goal.
- Clearly structured and documented agreement of working relationship between DCU Sports and the OSL is required and should be clearly understood by all stakeholders.
- The OSL and Participation Sport have a very successful working relationship, which caters well for the needs of the students. This is currently based on a good working relationship between individuals rather than an articulated agreement.
- DCU Sport should have a more prominent role in Club Development and Student Leadership, empowering club leaders to enhance lifelong skills supported by sport specific staff.
- Further engagement to promote the benefits of engagement with DCU Sport for the wider student population and positive impact on reputation, student attainment, student health, student performance, recruitment.
- The development of a clear plan on how DCU can collaborate with the Academic community, with targets and milestones, should be developed.
- Current academic collaboration appears to be a success, where in practise but there is a danger that this area is too niche and becomes an island - may not be impactful in terms of the broader student population, representing potential lost opportunities.
- There are significant opportunities for research in public health to support lifelong learning.

### *Policies and Procedures - Compliance and Control Measures*

- Current processes lack transparency and structure (financial model / opportunity to raise ideas or issues).
- There is no clear process for collaboration across the University to enhance sport.
- Where projects or initiatives are proposed, there need to be clear parameters, responsibilities, resource implications identified, and timelines agreed - consider utilising a project management approach.

- An MOA should be developed to formalise the relationship between CLC and DCU Sport.
- Health and Safety appears to be sound but there is an over-reliance on a few staff within a complex environment, which could be an institutional risk.

#### *Business Analysis and Market Intelligence*

- Business Analysis and Market Intelligence could be stronger - fitness memberships, participation rates, benchmarking against sector leading institutions.
- There is a clear requirement to understand capacity of current or alternative membership management systems and utilise to their full extent to ensure effective management information is available to inform decision making.
- Effective collation and communication of Management information across DCU Sport is required (Gladstone, university MIS etc.) and should be utilised in strategic and operational planning.
- Qualitative and Quantitative measurement of activity could be implemented in the form of a balanced scorecard / Power BI etc.
- Currently there appears to be a lack of student club data to support decision making and reporting up to senior management.

#### *Club Development and Participation Sport*

- To create meaningful interventions to improve the student experience requires people and programmes - sport specific staff, coaching framework. Resource planning, guided by the revised strategic plan is required.
- A clear plan of action is required for the delivery of campus-wide initiatives to increase participation in sport at all levels throughout the academic and calendar years.
- A clear understanding of the role DCU Sport has in developing a healthier university and to promote 'healthy learner' ethos. This requires a clear plan and should be resourced appropriately for meaningful and lasting impact.

#### *Focus Sports*

- The rationale for the continuation of two focussed sports is not clear. This needs to be examined, re-defined and transparent in terms of the selection of the focus sports, funding and how the clubs operate. This could be linked to a club development pathway.
- Minimum operating standards should be in place and applied consistently for all Clubs including GAA and Athletics. These focussed sports should have additional layers of compliance as they receive additional DCU funding and support.
- Development of a new Governance model for focussed sports with student, staff, alumni representation with clearly defined criteria. This could take the form of a working group including staff, students, alumni and NGBs.

### **5.3 Communication and Provision of Information**

Effective internal and external communication is vital for the success of any organisation or team. Effective communication and clear messaging across the structure and organisation enhances the experience of all stakeholders. This communication should be two-way, enabling feedback and action loops and will ensure that the DCU Staff team all understand the direction of travel - it is evident that this is an area in need of serious improvement.



### Focus of DCU Sport

- There was general agreement that students are at the core of DCU Sport, to include participation, elite and the important role that DCU sport can play in the local community.
- DCU Sport is currently embarking on a brand development initiative, which is welcomed. The position of elite sport versus participative sport needs to continue to be re-balanced. The intent of the university, i.e. that DCU Sport caters for DCU Students, Staff and the wider community needs to be stated clearly and embedded through regular communications, practice and visibility of participation style events and activities.
- DCU Sport needs to clarify the offering to prospective Sport Scholars and ensure clarity regarding benefits, supports and opportunities available to Scholars on the student scholarship journey.

### Communication Approach

- The concentration on elite sport in promotional activities should shift to recognise and promote the importance of participation in internal and external marketing and communications.
- Communication within the Unit needs to be more transparent and structured, keeping meeting notes of every meeting, detailing actions, and responsibilities, and providing regular updates to all members in the unit in relation to ongoing projects.
- The development of a new website is very much welcomed. Inclusive imagery will be required throughout, indicating participation/ elite and community sport.
- Sport staff dedicated to the delivery of content for social media, comms, human interest stories for DCU Sport is inadequate and requires review.
- Establish a communication strategy, including a Stakeholder Communication Map.
- There appeared to be a lack of clarity in communication regarding the strategy, development and process, and there appeared to be limited engagement of stakeholders in the strategy development process, or updates provided in relation to completion and submission of strategy.

### Partnerships and Supports

- Comms & Marketing appear to have a good working relationship with DCU Sport and provide good coverage from sporting activities.
- There were significant gaps in relation to information available around:
  - sports facility membership,
  - participation in sports clubs and
  - recreational participation opportunities and take up.
- Standard periodical reports of this key management information should be considered by the leadership team. This should be available through effective use of the membership management system.
- Training should be undertaken (peer in the leisure industry or Gladstone formal training) in relation to Gladstone to ensure that effective reports can be produced, enabling effective communication of key management information to various stakeholders.

## **5.4 Ongoing Quality Enhancement**

The focus in this SAR is on the quality of the vision, operations, structures, relationships, approaches, processes, and procedures, rather than the sports facilities per se, which are currently not under review. The panel found the following:

- Although there is an indication that quality enhancement will become a feature in the future, current processes are weak and lack transparency. It is unclear what structures

or processes are available to enhance quality and where responsibility lies for development and delivery.

- Poor leadership / management structures result in lack of accountability and transparency.
- Delivery on the Strategic Plan requires enhanced clarity of vision, mission, and objectives, ensuring that each member of the team understands their role, responsibility and has accountability for deliverables/ KPIs.
- The Strategic Plan for DCU Sport must clearly align with university strategic objectives and have clear KPIs and timelines for delivery in each area, with responsibility assigned to DCU Sport team members for delivery.
- Preparation of a Stakeholder Map to ensure clear understanding of stakeholders, relationships and communication needs will assist in the delivery of the Strategic Plan.
- Clarity is required regarding the University focus on 'elite sport' and 'participation', with quality control measures in place for both areas.
- Internal communication amongst the larger team has improved but much more work is required to improve awareness within the team and key internal and external stakeholders on the strategy and deliverables. KPIs need to be identified and clearly articulated, monitored, and reported on.
- Scholarship criteria and SOP to be applied to all scholarships and communicated to all stakeholders clearly. These should be available on the website.
- Investment and improvement of facilities is welcomed but assessment of best use of current resources should be completed prior to further investment being considered. Current leisure management system will assist, but training is required to optimise outputs.
- Improved relationships with DCU Sport and OSL have and will continue to improve quality of sports clubs and experiences for students.
- Not all clubs are under the same level of controls, rules, and regulations. Clear guidelines need to be developed, outlining responsibilities and accountabilities, and applied consistently across all sports clubs.

## **5.5 External Perspectives**

Over the course of the visit, the Panel met with external stakeholders from a wide range of departments in the University including Estates, Finance, Health & Safety, the OSL and academic departments. It became clear during the discussions that closer relationships need to be built between DCU Sport and all areas of the University. It is also clear that there is no forum for discussion amongst all stakeholders and that processes and progress therefore lacks transparency.

- DCU Sport facilities have an excellent reputation in the community and play an important role at various stages through the lives of the local residents.
- There are opportunities for DCU Sport to achieve higher engagement levels.
- DCU Sport lacks clarity of direction, vision and mission and needs stronger leadership.
- A strategic mapping needs to take place to optimise the offerings through the sports centre and ensure that members have access to the facilities and classes they wish to access. Lack of access on an on-going basis could be a risk to future membership.
- Roll out a strategic facilities masterplan, as part of the overall university plan. Include an infrastructure masterplan and renewal reserve to optimise development to meet needs of stakeholders.
- There is still a perception that sport is for the elite at DCU and that some sports are more highly valued than others.
- Not all clubs are equal, with some clubs not working as well within the agreed structures and not following existing protocols.
- Elite sportspeople require more clarity on the programme of development and support which they will be offered on entering DCU.

- Stricter controls need to be put in place in terms of periodic / annual performance review of Scholars.
- Although some collaboration has taken place between DCU Sport and academic departments, these relationships need to be enhanced and approached in a more strategic manner for delivery of future synergies.
- The role of DCU Sport and the role of the OSL vis-à-vis clubs needs to be clearly defined and articulated, with responsibilities and accountability allocated accordingly.
- There is no forum for communication or ideas generation within DCU Sport and with other areas in the University.

## 6 SWOC Analysis and Plans for Improvement

### 6.1 SWOC Analysis for DCU Sport

The self-assessment report for DCU Sport included a proposed summary SWOC analysis. As a result of the Peer Review Group's analysis of the self-assessment report and findings from the peer review visit, we propose the following to be a true reflection of the area's capabilities and opportunities and identified weakness and threats to future success.

| Strengths  | Weaknesses  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Highly skilled, experienced and driven staff with the shared goal of improving the student experience of sport in DCU.</li> <li>● DCU's strong sporting reputation on a national level</li> <li>● Established and recognised role in the wider local community</li> <li>● High engagement of DCU Students in sports clubs</li> <li>● Increasing demand for sports facilities and programmes</li> <li>● Established and diverse multi-site sports facilities</li> <li>● Recognition by University of importance of DCU Sport as a unique selling point for DCU</li> <li>● DCU Sport's willingness to engage with the Quality review process, be responsive to feedback and deliver on strategic plan.</li> <li>● Staff's readiness to re-imagine, re-position and restructure DCU Sport in a well-thought-out manner after thorough review</li> <li>● commencement of strategic planning process.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lack of direction within DCU Sport leadership to clearly articulate the direction of travel of the department</li> <li>● Clear lack of structure within DCU Sport leadership and management, resulting in key person dependency causing potential issues with business continuity</li> <li>● Direction surrounding vision and mission of DCU Sport Strategy needs improvement, to ensure that a 'Strategy for sport at DCU' is delivered, which includes all stakeholders.</li> <li>● Limited clarity on the roles, reporting lines and expectations of employees within DCU Sport, specifically within the Sport Development Unit</li> <li>● No clear process for DCU Sport staff to bring ideas forward to improve service delivery through a structured process.</li> <li>● Student-focussed design of programmes and flexible payment plans is non-existent in sports facilities.</li> <li>● General absence of evidence and data to inform decision-making within the area.</li> <li>● No clear division of aims for elite versus engagement aspects of DCU Sport - absence of clarity surround whose role it is or how to achieve both.</li> <li>● General problem with transparency, clarity, and accountability</li> </ul> |
| Opportunities  | Challenges  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Authentic collaboration with other areas in DCU which can deliver on the university-wide sport strategy.</li> <li>● To build a unified DCU Sport identity, culture, and brand</li> <li>● Build on existing relations and grow through development of programmes focussed on engagement.</li> <li>● Gather data and trends to aid evidence-based decision-making and show wider impact of activities</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Frustration of key staff due to lack of progress in DCU Sport over many years</li> <li>● Overcoming the flat/siloed structure of management</li> <li>● Access to resources to deliver the new sports strategy with competing departments.</li> <li>● Attracting, recruiting, and retaining high-quality staff and coaches due to the funding model</li> </ul>  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More cohesive working relationship between sports, OSL, SS&amp;D, facilities, and any other relevant units for the overall betterment of the student experience</li> <li>• Opportunities for research in public health to reach a broader population beyond current practice which is focussed on Elite Sport</li> <li>• Re-consider the primary focus on GAA and Athletics, with a view to improving the status of other sports, such as Rugby and Soccer</li> <li>• Use internal expertise and industry benchmarks to develop a Sporting Pathway targeting DCU Student Clubs, Athletes, Coaches and Teams; and to better utilise management information available to enhance the offering of DCU Sport.</li> <li>• Performance Review &amp; Development Scheme should be used as the vehicle to ensure continual development and opportunity for all staff.</li> <li>• establishment of strong leadership team in DCU sport with clear vision</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural renewal for all Sport staff including extended workforce to follow after a strategic revision of standards and values.</li> <li>• Ageing sports facilities with lower investment than competitors</li> <li>• Full mapping of SOPs, processes and stakeholders needs to be undertaken to ensure recommendations are met.</li> <li>• Reliant on relationships as the driver for stakeholder collaboration rather than formal structures</li> <li>• Lack of true and worthwhile engagement and follow through with academic programmes and engagement initiatives.</li> <li>• embedding the culture of planning, KPI setting, responsibility and accountability through regular monitoring and evaluation.</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

## 6.2 Plans for Improvement Identified by DCU Sport

In this section, the plans identified by the Quality Review Committee in the SAR are reviewed and commented on by the PRG. Where the PRG agrees with proposals this is acknowledged, some additions and observations are added, and some gaps are identified.

- **Strategy and Strategic Implementation Framework** - Staff and key stakeholders should be re-engaged to redefine this vision for sport with an associated framework encompassing both the participative and the elite performance goals of the department, to set out and deliver on yearly plans. A new Senior Management Group for DCU Sport with TOR should be integral within this Framework.
- **Structure:** The PRG agrees that a new, robust, clearly defined structure is required with clearly defined manager roles and priorities established. Frequent, minuted meetings between managers and staff should be standardised. A clear management structure is required, with a transparent hierarchical reporting line. Plans with timeline milestones are needed - rather than steering committees; for pillars, specific targets should outline priorities over the short and long term. These should include clarification over who and how they will be spearheaded. A new workforce plan should be developed to support the **Leadership, Design and Delivery** of participation sport through Active Campus, Student Wellbeing, and Club Development, working with key partners to achieve targets and maximise impact.
- **Governance:** Once management structures are in place with clear accountabilities, the unit should explore the function of a governance structure and decide on what is

required to ensure transparency and accountability and to leverage the full potential of sport.

- **Brand & Identity:** The PRG agrees that the positioning of DCU Sport should be addressed, and a strong identity established. The development of a new website is welcomed. A coherent communications and marketing message is a key priority.
- **Change Management:** With clear structures, role definition, targets and accountability / frequent meetings and a well-articulated direction for the department, the culture will evolve. Staff should routinely be given the opportunity to express how their well-being would be improved and to communicate any ideas they have to improve the department. Progress against objectives should be shared regularly, and positive developments celebrated. Fostering a positive organisational culture, promoting staff well-being, and establishing robust internal communications channels will build on successes to date which should be recognised and celebrated.
- **Investment in Programmes and Facilities:** Ongoing investment in facilities and programmes is always key. However, the PRG suggests that no further investment is put in place until the strategic plan has been agreed, the vision more clearly articulated with management, and leadership structures clearly outlined and understood across the department. University investment is required on an ongoing basis to support sport beyond commercial business plans. This is an investment in a healthier, motivated and high performing staff and student community.

#### **Gaps:**

- **Positioning of Sport at DCU:** The Vision for Sport at DCU needs to be clarified. The pillars, enablers, alignment, and resource requirements will then flow. This vision needs to be explained, within the boundaries of what is possible. This will give direction and engender greater confidence and unity, working to an agreed vision and a fully aligned plan. A clear strategic plan that is owned by all levels of staff and key stakeholders with a definite roadmap, should facilitate clear communication and result in less stagnation.
- **Collaboration:** Much stronger collaboration with existing units in DCU is required in order to maximise the impact of DCU Sport and to leverage the expertise within the university.
- **Co-dependency:** The success of DCU Sport depends on strong structures and relationships with various units and departments in the University, e.g. OSL and SS&D. MOAs should be explored to clarify expectations and as a means of ensuring continuity of working relationships.
- **Priority Sports:** The focus on GAA and Athletics should be re-considered. Rugby and Soccer have dedicated development officers who can cultivate these sports but they do not have the fora to do so currently. At the very least, reporting policies, procedures and accountability should be aligned with lessons learned shared, rather than siloed.

- **Clarity on Roles and Responsibilities:** Clear job descriptions detailing responsibilities and reporting structures will give transparency and help to eliminate misunderstanding. There has been a dearth of openness and communication between management and sports development.
- **Stakeholder Relationships**  
Stakeholder mapping is needed to better understand the needs and wants of the many stakeholders that sport in DCU juggles. A data focussed understanding of stakeholders - both internal and external and how that drives targets and goals will make for more evidence-based decision making.
- **Scholarship operations role** - More clarity is required over this whole process including a SOP of overseeing students, expectations and deliverables, and mentorship opportunities. Clear deliverables should be outlined for staff.

## 7 Summary of Commendations and Recommendations

### *Priorities of Recommendations*

*P1= Important and Urgent*

*P2= Important but may be considered over a longer time period*

*P3= worthy of both consideration and implementation, but not “mission critical”*

### *Focus of Recommendation*

*A= Directed at the area under review*

*U= Directed at the “University”*

*A/U= to be led out by the Area, but will require broader University support*

| No  | Commendation | P | Level |   |
|---|--------------|---|-------|---|
| <b>Planning and Effective Management of Resources</b> |              |   |       |   |
| 1.  | Commendation |   |       | Connections between DCU Sport and Facilities have improved with the creation of a unified management team.  |
|   |              |   |       |   |
| <b>Effectiveness of Activities and Processes</b>      |              |   |       |   |
| 2.  | Commendation |   |       | The OSL and Participation Sport have a very successful working relationship, which caters well for the needs of the students. This provides a foundation to create a consistent and clear approach across all areas of DCU Sport. |
|   |              |   |       |   |
| <b>Communication and Provision of Information</b>     |              |   |       |   |
| 3.  | Commendation |   |       | Communication across the unit has improved in recent months and staff are eager to build on this.   |
|   |              |   |       |   |

| <b>Ongoing Quality Enhancement</b> |                     |  |  |   |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|--|--|---|
| 4.                                 | <i>Commendation</i> |  |  | There is a clear commitment to enhance the quality of the structures and governance. This now needs to be implemented urgently as part of the rollout of a new Strategic Plan, ahead of the next academic year. |
|                                    |                     |  |  |   |
| <b>Stakeholder Relationships</b>   |                     |  |  |   |
| 5.                                 | <i>Commendation</i> |  |  | DCU Sport has a very strong reputation in the community and enhances the lives of multiple generations.   |
|                                    |                     |  |  |   |

| No  | Recommendation        | P  | Level |   |
|---|-----------------------|----|-------|---|
| <b>Planning and Effective Management of Resources</b> |                       |    |       |   |
| 1.  | <i>Recommendation</i> | P1 | A     | Development of a new formal and serviced <b>DCU Sport Management Team with Terms of Reference</b> which provides opportunities and is representative of all functions within the department.  |
|   |                       |    |       |   |
| 2.  | <i>Recommendation</i> | P1 | A/U   | Establish a <b>leadership mentorship programme</b> for the senior management team.  |
|   |                       |    |       |   |
| 3.  | <i>Recommendation</i> | P2 | A/U   | <b>Capital Planning</b> - clarity on where sport fits with University Estates Masterplan and creation of a <b>Lifecycle/Reserve Capital fund</b> for sports facilities to ensure maintenance of high quality standards and which are planned over a long term period.   |
|   |                       |    |       |   |
| 4.  | <i>Recommendation</i> | P1 | A     | Review <b>Budgetary responsibility and approval process</b> with more senior staff involved and empowered in budget forecasting and management processes.   |
|   |                       |    |       |   |
| <b>Effectiveness of Activities and Processes</b>      |                       |    |       |   |
|   |                       |    |       |   |
| 1.  | <i>Recommendation</i> | P1 | A/U   | <b>Business Analysis and Market Intelligence</b> could be stronger, utilising existing platforms - fitness memberships, student club data, participation, footfall and benchmarking against sector-leading institutions. This may require additional staff training and support from Central Business Development and Finance Teams, and/ or engagement with external providers (e.g. re optimising use of Gladstone system). |
|   |                       |    |       |   |
| 2.  | <i>Recommendation</i> | P1 | A     | All <b>systems and processes</b> to be re-visited and made more robust and transparent. Create Process Maps for clarity with clearly assigned responsibilities.   |
|   |                       |    |       |   |



|   |                       |           |          |  |
|---|-----------------------|-----------|----------|--|
| 3.  | <i>Recommendation</i> | <i>P1</i> | <i>A</i> | Develop a <b>robust system of monitoring, reporting and evaluating</b> service delivery and impact, measuring progress against strategic objectives and KPIs.  |
| <b>Communication and Provision of Information</b> |                       |           |          |  |
| 1.  | <i>Recommendation</i> | <i>P1</i> | <i>A</i> | The <b>Sports Strategic Plan</b> should be revisited to ensure clarity of vision, mission and objectives, ensuring it aligns with the university strategic plan. The Strategic Plan and associated work plans must provide clarity and transparency on responsibilities and accountabilities of each member of the team. Wider meaningful consultation with key stakeholders is essential before finalising and approval of Strategic Plan document and agreeing key deliverables. |
| 2.  | <i>Recommendation</i> | <i>P1</i> | <i>A</i> | <b>Leadership</b> in DCU Sport needs to be strengthened in order to successfully deliver on a new strategy for sports in DCU. Vision and mission for the Unit need to be more clearly articulated and progress actively monitored.   |
| 3.  | <i>Recommendation</i> | <i>P1</i> | <i>A</i> | DCU Sport should create a <b>transparent forum</b> where issues / quality enhancements can be discussed and ideas generated. This applies both to staff within DCU Sport and with stakeholders across the University. This should incorporate the concept of feedback loops - “we asked, you told us, we did, we told you...”  |
| 4.  | <i>Recommendation</i> | <i>P1</i> | <i>A</i> | <b>Scholarship criteria and SOPs</b> need to be applied to all scholarships equitably and communicated to all stakeholders clearly. This should include an annual review of performance ensuring transparency of process.  |
| 5.  | <i>Recommendation</i> | <i>P2</i> | <i>A</i> | A <b>communications strategy</b> should be developed to ensure broader dissemination of DCU Sport activities within the University. Internal communication channels also need to be strengthened, with meeting notes (incl. actions and responsibility) circulated across the wider DCU Sport team to aid communication and clarity of direction / progress.   |
| <b>Ongoing Quality Enhancement</b>                |                       |           |          |  |
| 1.  | <i>Recommendation</i> | <i>P1</i> | <i>A</i> | <b>Update all SOPs</b> across all key areas of compliance and business operations and map processes.   |

|                                  |                       |           |            |  |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|------------|--|
| 3.                               | <i>Recommendation</i> | <i>P1</i> | <i>A</i>   | Creation of ' <b>Task and Finish</b> ' groups to ensure Actions are recorded and progress is being made with a definitive end point.   |
| 4.                               | <i>Recommendation</i> | <i>P1</i> | <i>A</i>   | Create, resource and implement a new <b>Workforce Plan</b> with defined roles and responsibilities and to support staff training and development, performance and retention. All staff should have an annual PRD to allow for professional development.                                    |
| 5.                               | <i>Recommendation</i> | <i>P2</i> | <i>A</i>   | Develop a <b>mechanism to allow growth and development in other areas of sport</b> , beyond GAA and Athletics. This could be linked to the composition of a new <b>Club Development Pathway</b> with clear criteria across athletes, teams, coaches and focused sports.                    |
| <b>Stakeholder Relationships</b> |                       |           |            |  |
| 1.                               | <i>Recommendation</i> | <i>P1</i> | <i>A</i>   | Establish a <b>Steering Committee</b> with stakeholders from across the University, and develop clear Action Plans based on the DCU Strategy for Sport and data based evidence.  |
| 2.                               | <i>Recommendation</i> | <i>P2</i> | <i>A/U</i> | Develop a clear understanding of the role DCU Sport has in developing a healthier university and to promote 'healthy learner' ethos. This requires a clear <b>Active/Healthy Campus Plan</b> , as part of the Care & Connect initiative, focusing on staff and student physical wellbeing. |
| 3.                               | <i>Recommendation</i> | <i>P2</i> | <i>A/U</i> | Clearly structured and documented agreement of <b>working relationship between DCU Sports and OSL, CLC and the academic community</b> . This could take the form of a SLA or MOA.  |

*The Peer Review Group would like to thank James Galvin, Yvonne McGowan, Gemma Dempsey, the staff of DCU Sport, members of the Senior Management Team and all the other participants in this Review, for their courtesy and cooperation in the compilation of the report.*