Printing Office

Peer Review Group

     Dr. T. O'Connor, Department of Food & Nutritional Sciences, UCC (Chair)
     Mr. S. Barry, Procurement & Contracts Manager, UCC
     Mr. E. Dillon, Manager, Copi Print, UCD, Ireland
     Mr. S. McLean, Print Procurement Manager, University of Edinburgh, Scotland.

Brief Description of conduct of site visit

The site visit was conducted over 2.5 days from 21st – 23rd June 2004 and included meetings with

    i)   Head and staff of the department as a group and individually
    ii)   Representatives of internal users of the services of the Unit
    iii)   Professor M. Aidan Moran, Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs
    iv)   Mr. Michael Farrell, Administrative Secretary
    v)   Ms. Carmel Cotter, Finance Office
    vi)   Ms. Denise Coughlan, Publications/Communications Officer, Students Union
    vii)   Ms. Mary McSweeney, Finance Officer

and visits to departmental facilities in UCC.

An exit presentation of the principal findings of the Peer Review Group was made to staff of the department in the afternoon of the second day.

Description of Printing Office

Head of Unit: Mr. Edward Burke
No. of Staff: 3
Location of unit: West Wing, Main Quadrangle

Mission Statement

     "To provide the institution with as efficient, comprehensive and cost effective copying, Desk-Top-Publishing and finishing service as possible."

Aims & Objectives

     The role of Superintendent of Reprographic Services in contributing to the overall aims and objectives of the institution would be to ensure that the aims of the department Mission Statement are fulfilled.

General Comment on Quality Review

The PRG was impressed by the commitment and work ethic of staff in the Unit and by the unanimously positive attitude of user departments to the Unit. The PRG was also impressed by the fact that clearly defined written mission and objectives for the Unit that had been agreed by senior management was not available.

The Self-Assessment Report contained significant valuable information and reflected the commitment of staff in the unit. The PRG noted that whilst the report included almost all the information required, the requested format as approved by the University was not followed, particularly in relation to appendices. The financial information provided was not clear and clarification of some points had to be sought during the site visit. Current published prices would have been helpful as a more comprehensive benchmark and to show the transparency and control of charging mechanisms. There were no clear indications of service performance

even though this was an extremely strong point of the unit reflected by high customer satisfaction. There was no statement of the aims and objectives of the unit nor was there evident a clearly defined level of service expectation. The mission statement outlined in the Self-Assessment Report is more a statement of intent than a statement which reflects defined aims and objectives of the unit. The reviewers felt that the Self-Assessment Report could have benefited from a more in-depth analysis of vision and of strategic focus. Staff development was not addressed in any significant way in the report.

The staff of the unit did undertake a SWOT analysis that involved all of the staff. The SWOT exercise was carried out by all the staff within the Unit as a team and a facilitator was employed. It covered many areas and clearly reflected similar opinions of the users and those of the PRG. However the PRG were of the view that it would have helped the Group in its deliberations and to have a more overall balanced view if all staff had been more involved in the creation of the report.

The PRG agreed fully with the staff that strengths of the unit are the experience, contacts and knowledge of the services and equipment available in this specialised area; that the service is sited in a central location within the university; that the staff are helpful and pleasant to all customers; and that the group offers specialist skills in the area of DTP (desktop publishing) advice and outsourcing. Additionally the reviewers felt that a strong willingness and sound work ethic provides a good foundation for future service development and customer satisfaction.

The PRG agreed fully with the unit that particular weaknesses are that the physical environment needs some work (in particular there is a lack of kitchen and bathroom facilities; the office is not accessible to all; the unpleasant odours emanating from the drains); that there is a need for clarification of the mission statement and objectives/strategy for the printing office; and the dependence of delivery on General Services, as each department is expected to make its own arrangements. Presently the efficiency of service is dependent on the goodwill that exists between the Printing Office and the UCC van drivers.

Additionally the PRG were of the opinion that, whilst it is agreed that under the current working practises and procedures, there is a lack of resource requirements and this leads to undue stress and pressures on the staff it is felt that streamlining of processes may lead to the freeing up of resources required to carry out production duties. The lack of standard written operating procedures is apparent. The lack of a clear strategic vision for the future development of the print unit guided by senior management further hinders the development of the services offered by the unit. There is not an efficient use of the existing I.T. potential which could lead to more streamlined process and management of the workflow within the unit. The lack of relevant and understandable project management documentation written for staff hinders communication within the unit.

The PRG agreed fully with the unit that there is a potential for increasing the workload of the unit; the increasing importance e-mail, file transfer and file downloads as a means of sending work to the Printing Office; that development of a website facility and directional signage would advertise the services offered by the unit more widely; that staff training is important in enabling staff to keep up to date with new technologies; the possibilities for automation of the billing system (current methods are paper-based); that potential customers could be targeted (students and new staff who may not be aware of the services offered by the unit); and the acknowledgement of the opportunity for UCC print service providers to come together and pool resources in order to avoid overlap. This latter, if implemented, would also cut down on unnecessary expenditure as an existing department may already have the necessary equipment/expertise.

Additionally, the reviewers were of the opinion that new markets should be investigated and sound business cases provided for the increased support to students and the streamlining of existing transactions. There is a real potential to be a "one stop shop" and advice centre for some key user departments and this should be exploited. There is a potential for more coordination and cooperation of other in-house designers and other skill sets. The direction for a group of related providers and users should be driven by the Print Unit. The unit has an opportunity to build upon the existence of an already committed team and should take advantage of the possibilities available for increased use of technology and web tools.

Unless the future direction of the unit is agreed within the university and the immediate concerns highlighted by the staff and the PRG are addressed, the remaining complement of staff in the unit will continue to feel pressurised and under threat. The Unit may not, in current circumstances, continue to be in a position to compete against external commercial solutions.

The reviewers considered the benchmarking exercise carried out by the unit. Whilst a start, it is possibly not reflective of true costs as each institution is funded in different ways. The benchmark against external suppliers clearly shows a cost/purchase benefit and this is also substantiated by the statements from the departments that the unit is value for money and very often less expensive than the external suppliers. However the true costs to the University are not known, as the cost of the unit does not include the premises costs and other internal services.

The benchmarking exercise should include an analysis of hidden costs on departments if they outsource the services provided by the Printing Unit currently, including the cost of negotiating prices with suppliers, the risk of incorrect specifications and the cost of duplication of effort.

Progress on Implementation of Recommendations for Improvement

A meeting to discuss progress made in implementing recommendations for improvement arising from the review of the Printing Office was held on 19th January 2006.

Present: Mr. E. Burke, Head, Printing Office
                Ms. M. McSweeny, Finance Officer
                Mr. D. Collins, Bursar/Chief Financial Officer
                Dr. N. M. Ryan, Director of Quality Promotion

Abbreviations
PRG: Peer Review Group   *VP: Vice-President*
QPC: Quality Promotion Committee   *UMG: University Management Group*
QPU: Quality Promotion Unit

Recommendations of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report January '06
That a clear and urgent decision is made by the University as to the remit of the unit and whether it should continue to remain in existence or not.	The Committee discussed the current remit of the Unit. The Secretary & Bursar explained that some years ago the future direction of the Unit was examined in detail by the Executive Management Group. It was decided at the time not to update the equipment to digital	Not implemented.

The actions indicated have not been implemented due to the retirement of the Secretary & Bursar in 2005.

The position and role of the Printing Office have not been |

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	standards. The copying machines were upgraded but not to the latest standards of technology. The Committee agreed that there are many factors to be taken into consideration when deciding the role of the Unit. If the Unit is to develop it would need major investment in technology in order to compete with copying services off campus. The Committee agreed that the Secretary & Bursar would initiate action through the Executive Management Group, where a review of all printing, copying, design and provision of web resources in UCC would be requested. The role of the Unit in the provision of these services would be included in this review. An audit and review of all such services in UCC and the possibilities is required. The QPC agreed that a response would be desirable by April 2005. Dr. Ryan added that both externals who served on the Peer Review Group offered their assistance in facilitating the Printing Office after the review had taken place. The Committee agreed that their expertise would be very useful in this situation.	decided. A proposal has been prepared for the UMG for funding for a review of the printing and copying needs of the University, including services offered by all offices in UCC. The review should include an examination of how students print, how staff print, graphic design and desktop publishing. Pending the outcome of this review many of the recommendations in the original quality review have not been implemented.
That a fit for purpose audit be conducted which should include in its considerations any requirements that other administrative units may have for space in the surrounding area. Any possible changes to location should be investigated prior to a decision for renovation.	Any decisions should await the outcome of the review requested above.	Any decisions should await the outcome of the review requested above.
That a clear set of objectives and aims for the unit be established, to include as a	Any decisions should await the outcome of the review requested above.	Any decisions should await the outcome of the review requested above.

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minimum the clear scope of services available now and those which should be developed.		
That clear business plans for unit development are made. These could include possibilities for the Unit to be seen as a one-stop shop.	Action on this recommendation should await the outcome of the review recommended above.	Any decisions should await the outcome of the review requested above.
That the University should consider its reporting structure and specifically to whom the Printing Office should most appropriately report.	Action on this recommendation should await the outcome of the review recommended above.	Any decisions should await the outcome of the review requested above.
That a Business Group be formulated to help develop the Unit's agreed key aims. The PRG recommend that the Group should consist of, among others as deemed appropriate by the University: an I.T. representative, Procurement Representative, External Expert, Administrative Representative. The objective of the group should be, in the first instance, to develop a clear and understandable scope for project implementation.	Action on this recommendation should await the outcome of the review recommended above.	Any decisions should await the outcome of the review requested above.
That improvement to current work practices and procedures within the unit be improved prior to any consideration for any additional resources. Requirement for additional resources should be considered but only as a result of a sound business case being presented.	Action on this recommendation should await the outcome of the review recommended above.	Any decisions should await the outcome of the review requested above.
That, within the team, brainstorming sessions to develop effective ideas should occur, with the aim of informing all users and	Endorsed recommendation.	Regular staff meetings occur where all staff are provided with an opportunity to have an input. Staff discuss the work for the week and efforts are made to

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potential users of the services that can be offered.		engage all staff.
That a business case for additional resources be made to enable time for staff development and development of these additional services.	Staff Development initiatives welcomed by QPC. Applications for additional resources should await the outcome of the review referred to above.	Any decisions on additional resources should await the outcome of the review requested above.
Clear training requirements for staff should be defined, and following this, provision should be planned to allow staff to attend the agreed training program.	Recommendation endorsed and action by unit welcomed.	All staff have participated in training courses in the last twelve months. Specialist desktop training is being investigated for one staff member and it is hoped this will take place in 2006.
Job roles should be defined and clearly communicated to the staff.	Recommendation endorsed	Implemented.
Consideration should be given to changing such practices that may be hindering quality of service being delivered presently. For example, staggering of lunch breaks among the staff could realise an additional 10 hours of operating time per week.	The QPC acknowledged the response of the unit to this recommendation and the concerns expressed on the shortage of staff to cover absences of staff on leave. However the QPC recommended that the unit try implementing this recommendation for a trial period and then review its effectiveness and report back to the QPC.	Not fully implemented. Tea breaks are staggered but lunch breaks are not. It is the view of the Head of the unit that staggered lunch breaks are more compatible with service provision to students than to staff. However, to facilitate the production schedule, the printers are often left running during lunch hour and after office hours.
That an exercise looking at the potential for re-branding the Unit should be undertaken	Endorsed recommendation.	Any decisions should await the outcome of the review requested above.
That a simple web site for advertising be created.	Strongly endorsed recommendation.	Not implemented. Some work has been done but the design of the site is not yet completed due to delays on the part of the Designer.
That a Flowchart of all processes, including all production and	Endorsed recommendation.	Not implemented.

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administrative functions be developed. As well as the obvious benefits, this would also assist in highlighting any required improvements.		
That charges for services be made transparent and published on the web.	Endorsed recommendation. QPC encouraged the unit to implement immediately notwithstanding the concerns expressed in the response of the Unit.	Not implemented. A list of charges is posted outside the office itself. The Unit is waiting to post the charges on the Website as soon as the Website is completed.
That more detailed transaction reporting should be required so the Printing Office and those to whom the unit reports can see the income/expenditure stream relating to particular services offered by the unit.	Endorsed recommendation. The QPC asked that the Printing Office consider the recommendation seriously and seek to clarify the costings of services provided by the unit.	Not implemented. Unit can provide details if necessary. Currently all tracking is done on paper. Application of IT technology is necessary for implementation.
The environment in which the staff work needs to be completely renovated both in its ergonomic use of space and in the quality of the surroundings. Obsolete equipment and obsolete stock needs to be disposed of - also referred to in the Unit's own recommendations.	Strongly endorsed recommendation. The QPC recommended that obsolete equipment be removed immediately from the unit and that this task should be completed by the end of January 2005. This will also help address the Health & Safety issue.	Implemented in part. Obsolete equipment has been removed. The space has not been renovated nor has there been any significant change to how the space is used. Quotations have been received for the refurbishment of the space. Request for funding have not been made as any such expenditure on refurbishment is linked to the outcome of the review.
That a healthy and safe working environment should be promoted within the Unit.	Endorsed recommendation.	Some actions have been taken. A kitchenette is in place in the unit. Any Health & Safety issues that were raised have been addressed.
The unit's accommodation should be refurbished with clear signage to attract potential customers	Endorsed recommendation. The QPC agreed that the unit should immediately erect adequate signage.	Not implemented. Linked to the outcome of the review. In its present state, the Unit does not have adequate resources to

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		advertise its services to the student body per se.
A much-wanted student-focussed service should be developed.	Decisions as to the precise services that should be developed should await the outcome of the review referred to above.	Any decisions should await the outcome of the review requested above.
An IT system should be implemented with the aim of replacing manual transaction recording.	Strongly endorsed recommendation. The QPC recommended that the unit seek to implement actions on this by Easter 2005 and that this be included in the Quality Improvement Plan.	Not yet fully implemented. Job records are now entered into an Excel data base rather than a log book. This at least facilitates easier backtracking. Although the Printing Office has the software and hardware to go online with its print service, serious difficulties are being experienced with the reliability of the current kit and system. The Scheme is being piloted at office level and will be rolled out when fully tested and stable.
On-line ordering should be streamlined and implemented.	Strongly endorsed recommendation.	Not implemented.
Unnecessary red tape/processes should be removed.	Strongly endorsed recommendation.	Not implemented.
Coordination of activities, which are relevant to its mission, should take place.	Action on this recommendation should await the outcome of the review recommended above.	Any decisions should await the outcome of the review requested above.
Guidance from upper level management in the University should be given on an appropriate mission statement and objectives for the services to be provided by the unit.	Action on this recommendation should await the outcome of the review recommended above.	Any decisions should await the outcome of the review requested above.
The logistics of delivery of goods should be considered and improvements put in place.	Endorsed recommendation. The QPC recommended that the Unit consider using student help on a trial basis, to assist with the delivery of goods. Student help could also be used for assisting	Student help is enlisted for the busy period of the summer months. The General Services Officer has included submissions in her own development plans for an

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	in some of the other services of the unit, alleviating the difficulties caused by small staff numbers.	additional vehicle to enable continued facilitation of the delivery of goods from the Unit.
That a chart showing the department/unit structure and staff, and a hierarchical structure showing line management and reporting should be included as part of the guidance to departments and units on preparing their Self-Assessment Report.	Endorsed recommendation.	Implemented.