University College Cork
National University of Ireland, Cork

Quality Improvement/Quality Assurance

Peer Review Group Report

Printing Office

Academic Year 2003/04

9th September 2004

Members of the Peer Review Group:

Name	Affiliation	Role
1. Dr. Tom O'Connor	Department of Food & Nutritional Sciences, UCC	Chair
2. Mr. Sean Barry	Procurement & Contracts Manager, UCC	Internal
3. Mr. Edward Dillon	Manager, Copi Print, UCD	National Expert
4. Mr. Stuart McLean	Print Procurement Manager, University of Edinburgh, Scotland.	International Expert

Timetable of the site visit

The timetable for the site visit was adequate and suited the purposes of the visit. Adequate time was allowed for meeting with staff of the unit, of the university and key stakeholders in the work of the unit. The visit included a detailed guided tour of the facilities of the Printing Office. The detailed timetable is given in Appendix A, attached to this report.

Peer Review

Methodology

Self-assessment documentation was provided to all members of the Peer Review Group (PRG) in advance of the conduct of the site visit to UCC. Meetings of the PRG took place during 21st and 22nd June 2004. The Self-Assessment Report was discussed and commented on at the initial stages of the site visit. Meetings with eight representatives of users from departments and student bodies were carried out on 21st June. Meetings with senior officers and members of the University took place on the afternoon of the 22nd with a tour of the actual print unit on the same day and meeting with line management took place on the morning of the 23rd.

The PRG in its entirety contributed to all aspects of the on site visit, interviews, site visits, resulting synopsis and report creation.

The outcome of the research and analysis of working practices, customer, staff perception and comments were discussed.

The first draft report was created by all members of the PRG with a view to providing a comprehensive exit report and presentation on the Wednesday afternoon of the visit (see Appendix A for full details).

Site Visit

Space available to the Printing Office was deemed to be adequate by the PRG who were of the opinion that the space provided considerable room for expansion and/or alteration of the unit. The unit is centrally located and could be developed to provide for future student access. Access for deliveries is good. It has good natural light, a good sound floor base for heavy machinery and is all on one level.

The PRG recommended that an ergonomic review of the available space should be conducted taking into consideration factors such as promotion of a safe working environment and a space conducive to team working and open communication and also to facilitate a customer focus reception area, which is presently lacking. There is considerable scope to improve space management by clearing obsolete stock, equipment and hazardous storage areas and removal of blockages to the available natural light

The PRG noted that there are no adequate kitchen facilities available for staff; this is compounded by a noticeable smell from a covered drain. There is no welcoming or waiting area for visiting customers. The décor and general maintenance of the unit space is far from ideal. Further improvements in Health and Safety compliance are possible if a general clearout, as mentioned above, is carried out. In the view of the PRG, this is a priority issue particularly in the area around the guillotine.

A general improvement of the working environment would benefit staff and visitors and should be driven by staff preference. Signage should be introduced at all entry areas to the unit. This should be permanent and reflect the quality of a newly refurbished area.

The outdated equipment should be disposed of using contracted electronic waste companies. Paper that is not "live" stock should also be disposed of in line with good environmental

practices. Paper records older than six years should be disposed of with a recurring procedure for annual clearing for old transactions.

The final Peer Review Group Report was generated by all members of the group through analysis of notes, interviews, comments received from the previously mentioned representatives, and through consensus of opinion. The report was finalised following the site visit following several re-iterations using email as the primary means of communication.

Overall Analysis

Self-Assessment Report

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. These points are expanded on in more detail in the following paragraphs.

The Self-Assessment Report contained significant valuable information and reflected the commitment of staff in the unit. On summary of the customer questionnaire, 72% of those who responded used the service and reported a high degree of satisfaction, while 79% of those surveyed would be likely to use networked printing services.

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. Although the role of the superintendent is mentioned, 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.

SWOT Analysis

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 facilitated by Mary O'Flynn. 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 evaluated the SWOT analysis and wished to comment as follows:

Strengths
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.

Weaknesses
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 general untidiness

evident in the unit is not conducive to a safe working environment, in the opinion of the reviewers. 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.

Opportunities

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. The unit should offer expert guidance to relevant users with a view to minimise duplication of effort and reduce print costs. 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. If this were to happen it would increase the profile of the unit, which would increase its control and may result in proactive input into policy decisions. 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.

Benchmarking

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.

Findings of the Peer Review Group

Many of the findings are already highlighted in the text in the section on the Self-Assessment Report and are reflected in the recommendations for improvement detailed below. In addition to the findings discussed above the PRG wishes to comment specifically as follows:

Governance

In the background of dramatic changes both within the print industry and Higher Education as a whole there is a considerable requirement in the medium to long term for the convergence of differing skill areas to ensure implementation of new systems which rely on a mix of procurement, I.T. and the unique skill of the Printing Unit.

It is apparent elsewhere in Irish and UK Higher Education implants that the major change for them is the provision of network digital services. It is also clear that this service is better managed in-house, both from a sound customer knowledge base and also security in I.T. with regard to potentially sensitive documentation being stored/transmitted in electronic format.

With such a complex change of environment in which the Printing Unit operates, there is a need for clear Terms of Reference and Project Scope Documentation that defines key players, internal and external stakeholders and resources/supply. These documents should show the milestones, the key objectives, the person(s) responsible for these and their scope within the implementation project. In general there is a significant convergence between I.T. and Print and the interaction/communication between the two disciplines needs structured.

The current position of this requirement is made complex and difficult to manage for a number of reasons:

(i)   There is a limited skill set within the Print Unit, given the small number of staff.

(ii) There is no TOR (Terms of Reference) documentation, Project Scope documentation or any reference point for agreement on deadlines or responsibilities. It seems apparent that any discussions between relevant personnel were only verbal with no sharing of documentation or live documents which could be amended to show the Unit and its line management the progress of potential problems arising from this implementation.

(iii) Whilst it is agreed and noted that such stringent record keeping and project initiation and management is not embedded within UCC, it is however a weakness in the general process of improvement of quality and efficiency of services provided.

(iv) Similar procedures can be adopted for the development of the Unit or any External/Internal service supply management in the future.

(v) Whilst it is outside the scope of this document and that of the PRG, the current situation in the University where staff are not appraised in any formal and mutually acceptable manner opens up the threat of the miss match of the requirements of the unit and the ability of the staff to meet these requirements.

(vi) There is also an over reliance on the web for communicating wider issues and development possibilities without follow-up implementation and it being a standard requirement of those employed within the University. The web is only a tool to provide support to sound development and communication policies.

Communications

Development of a positive communication ethos within the Printing Office and between the Printing Office and senior management is essential. Mechanisms whereby the staff are allowed to regularly contribute and receive encouragement to do so should be put in place.

Recommendations for Improvement

In general the reviewers agreed with the recommendations made by the staff of the Unit as part of their SWOT analysis, with some reservations concerning some of the details on actions to be taken. The PRG congratulated the staff on their awareness of the general need for improvement. The actions that must be taken to achieve these improvements need to be discussed further internally within the University and agreed.

Recommendations for Improvement made by the Unit and endorsed by the PRG

1. To market and expand the services offered by the unit.
2. To seek funding to
   a. increase staffing levels
   b. to update equipment (hardware and software)
   c. to market and improve services to students
   d. to maintain the quality of publications to an international standard.
3. To improve the working environment – clear out old equipment, paint the office and provide a kitchenette/facilities for staff.
4. To improve the training and development for staff.
5. To develop a dedicated delivery service. This would ease the pressure on General Services, increase quality and turnaround time and necessitate less storage facilities.
6. To work towards ensuring the Printing Office is recognised as part of the core activity of the university.

7. That the University should consult with the Printing Office on proposed changes which might/would impact on the unit.

8. That the access to the unit is addressed - with a view to increasing ease of access by all.

9. That UCC printing service providers pool/share resources and work together to provide the best service for the users.

10. That the unit keeps up-to-date with modern technology and that staff are adequately trained in its use. The Unit should ensure that there are adequate systems for monitoring security, for data protection and back-ups.

11. That a new web page dedicated to the Printing Office should be implemented and regularly maintained.

Additional Recommendations for Improvement made by PRG

1. Governance
   (a) The PRG regards it as absolutely essential 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. This is a top priority and all other recommendations are clearly dependent on this decision.

   (b) A fit for purpose audit is required 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.

   (c) There needs to be a clear set of objectives and aims for the unit, to include as a minimum the clear scope of services available now and those which should be developed.

   (d) Clear business plans for unit development are required. These could include possibilities for the Unit to be seen as a one-stop shop.

   (e) The University should consider its reporting structure and specifically to whom the Printing Office should most appropriately report.

   (f) A Business Group should 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.

(g) Current work practices and procedures within the unit need to 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.

2. Staffing

(a) Within the team, brainstorming sessions should occur to develop effective ideas with the aim of informing all users and potential users of the services that can be offered.

(b) That a business case for additional resources be made to enable time for staff development and development of these additional services.

(c) Clear training requirements for staff should be defined, and following this, provision should be planned to allow staff to attend the agreed training program.

(d) Job roles should be defined and clearly communicated to the staff.

(e) 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.

3. Communication

(a) That an exercise looking at the potential for re-branding the Unit should be undertaken.

(b) A simple web site for advertising should be created.

(c) A Flowchart of all processes, including all production and administrative functions should be developed. As well as the obvious benefits, this would also assist in highlighting any required improvements.

4. Finance

(a) Charges for services should be made transparent and published on the web.

(b) 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.

5. Accommodation

    (a) 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.

    (b) A healthy and safe working environment should be promoted within the Unit.

6. Services

    (a) The unit's accommodation should be refurbished with clear signage to attract potential customers.

    (b) A much-wanted student-focussed service should be developed.

    (c) An IT system should be implemented with the aim of replacing manual transaction recording.

    (d) On-line ordering should be streamlined and implemented.

    (e) Unnecessary red tape/processes should be removed.

    (f) Coordination of activities, which are relevant to its mission, should take place.

    (g) 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.

    (h) The logistics of delivery of goods should be considered and improvements put in place.

Recommendation of the PRG to the University in relation to the Quality Review procedures.

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.

Timetable for conduct of Peer Review Visit

Printing Office

Monday 21st June 2004

18.00 – 19.30   Briefing of members of the Peer Review Group by Director of Quality Promotion Unit, Dr. N. Ryan.
Group agrees final work schedule and assignment of tasks for the following 2 days.
Views are exchanged and areas to be clarified or explored are identified.

20.00   Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group, Head and staff of Department.

Tuesday 22nd June 2004

08.30 – 09.00   Convening of Peer Review Group
Venue: Tower Room 1, North Wing, Main Quadrangle

Consideration of Self-Assessment Report

09.00 – 09.30   Mr. Edward Burke, Head, Printing Office

09.30 – 10.00   All staff of Printing Office

10.00 – 10.15   Ms. Helena Connolly

10.15 – 10.30   Ms. Ciara Roe

10.30   Tea/coffee

Meetings with representative selections of staff and users of the services provided by the Unit

11.00 – 11.15   Ms. Mary MacDonald, Examinations Officer

11.15 – 11.30   Ms. Marita Foster, International Educational Advisor, International Education Office

11.30 – 11.45   Mr. Denis Staunton, Assistant Director (Academic), Centre for Adult & Continuing Education

11.45 – 12.00   Ms. Karen Coughlan, Executive Assistant, Faculty of Arts

12.00 – 12.15   Ms. Regina Murphy, Dept. Manager, Dept. of Nursing Studies

12.15 – 12.30   Mr. Seamus McEvoy, Head, Student Careers Service

12.30 – 12.45   Ms. Yvonne Leahy, Media Manager & Ms. Joanne Treacy, Graphic Designer, Student
Centre

12.45 – 13.00   Ms. Nancy Hawkes, Office of Marketing & Communications

13.00 – 14.00   Working lunch for members of the PRG

Meetings with senior Officers and members of the University

14.00 – 14.30   Professor Aidan Moran, Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs

14.30 – 14.45   Mr. Michael Farrell, Administrative Secretary

15.00 – 15.30	Ms. Carmel Cotter, Business Analyst, Finance Office
15.30 – 15.45	Ms. Denise Coughlan, Publications/Communications Officer, Student's Union
16.00	Tour of facilities of the Printing Office, escorted by Mr. Edward Burke
16.30 – 17.00	Review by Peer Review Group of findings
19.00	Meeting of Peer Review Group to identify remaining aspects to be clarified and to finalise tasks for the following day followed by a working private dinner.

Wednesday 23rd June 2004

08.30 – 09.00	Convening of Peer Review Group Venue: Tower Room 1, North Wing, Main Quadrangle
09.00 – 09.30	Meeting with Mr. Edward Burke, Head, Printing Office
09.30 – 10.30	Drafting of report and including finalisation of arrangements for speedy completion and submission of final report.
10.30 – 11.00	Ms. Mary McSweeney, Finance Officer
11.00 – 12.00	Continuation of drafting of report and finalisation of arrangements for speedy completion and submission of final report.
12.00 – 12.30	Exit presentation made to all staff of the Unit by the international member of the Peer Review Group, summarising the principal findings of the Peer Review Group. This presentation was not for discussion at this time.
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch for PRG
pm	Externs depart