

OFFICE OF CORPORATE & LEGAL AFFAIRS (OCLA)

QUALITY REVIEW FOLLOW-UP REPORT

A meeting was held on the 6th of February 2012 to discuss the progress of the Office of Corporate & Legal Affairs (OCLA) in implementing the recommendations for improvement arising from their quality review.

Present: Dr Michael Murphy, President
Mr Michael Farrell, Corporate Secretary, Office of Corporate & Legal Affairs
Ms Nora Geary, Deputy Corporate Secretary, Office of Corporate & Legal Affairs
Ms Bridie Hartnett, Office of Corporate & Legal Affairs
Ms Valerie Hill, Office of Corporate & Legal Affairs
Ms Mairead Loughman, Office of Corporate & Legal Affairs
Ms Anne Mallon, Office of Corporate & Legal Affairs
Ms Catriona Mulcahy, Office of Corporate & Legal Affairs
Ms. Deirdre O'Brien, Administrative Officer, Quality Promotion Unit
Dr. Norma Ryan, Director, Quality Promotion Unit

General comment

The Quality Review was generally held to be a useful exercise and one that both triggered actions and focussed on potential improvements. The handbook in particular took a lot of time and effort and has proved to be a valuable source of information for the office staff as a whole.

Abbreviations

PRG: Peer Review Group

QPC: Quality Promotion Committee

OCLA: office of Corporate & Legal Affairs

VP: Vice-President

QIP: Quality Improvement Plan

PRG Recommendation		QPC Recommendation	Follow-up Report February 2012
	<i>GENERAL</i>		
1.	The process of clarifying roles and responsibilities within the OCLA should be continued and completed as soon as possible. This should include clarifying deputising responsibilities for the Corporate Secretary. Reporting lines should remain under review.	QPC endorsed recommendation.	Roles and responsibilities have been clarified with individual staff members in one to one meetings. Details of roles and responsibilities are laid out in the staff Handbook A Deputy Corporate Secretary role is now in place with clear responsibilities defined. Reporting lines remain under review
2.	In the interests of staff development and the provision of cover, back-up for each role where this does not currently exist should be considered.	QPC endorsed recommendation.	This has been implemented with the development of the staff handbook
3.	A handbook should be developed to provide OCLA staff with information on standard operating procedure, in particular with the information needed to fill in where necessary for another staff member.	QPC endorsed recommendation.	Implemented since September 2011 – review date to be agreed.
4.	Information on the Office non-pay budget should be available for the monthly OLCA staff meeting.	QPC endorsed recommendation.	Non pay budget agenda item at monthly OCLA Staff meetings

PRG Recommendation		QPC Recommendation	Follow-up Report February 2012
5.	Opportunities should be taken to raise awareness of the services provided by OCLA (such as insurance and legal advice) and the general profile of the Office.	QPC endorsed recommendation. QPC also reiterated the need for more permanent solutions to the awareness raising of all staff and stakeholders re the services provided, including an updated website with regular monitoring to ensure currency of information.	Implemented OCLA has delivered seminars on all of its areas of responsibility over the last 2 years. All seminars are available on the OCLA website.
6.	OCLA website links should be completed as soon as possible and consideration be given to the designation of a member of staff as webmaster with overall responsibility for OCLA's website.	QPC endorsed recommendation.	Partially implemented All website links have been fixed. However, no staff member has been delegated responsibility for the website.
	<i>GOVERNANCE AND GOVERNING BODY</i>		
7.	OCLA should have an advisory role to colleges and schools on governance matters to help ensure consistent governance across the university.	QPC endorsed recommendation.	Ongoing OCLA continue to act in an advisory capacity when contacted by any unit in the university. However, due to time constraints their interactions have been reactive rather than proactive. OCLA are working with HR on this issue and hope to progress the matter in the next year.
8.	Draft agendas for meetings of the Governing Body should be set by the Chairman and the Secretary, in consultation with the President, one month before the Governing Body meeting.	QPC endorsed recommendation.	In place, agendas are agreed in advance of Governing Body meetings by Chairman, President and Secretary

PRG Recommendation		QPC Recommendation	Follow-up Report February 2012
9.	The deadline for submission of papers for Governing Body meetings to OCLA should be two weeks before the meeting to allow adequate time for circulation and consideration by Governors.	QPC endorsed recommendation. The QPC also noted that the dates of meetings of GB should be set with recognition of the overall University schedule of meetings, including Academic Council	Implemented and on-going work to improve compliance to timelines.
10.	A secure website for Governing Body papers should be established.	QPC endorsed recommendation. QPC noted action already planned by OCLA.	This has been discussed with GB members and found to be unworkable as the majority of members indicated that they would prefer to get hard copies of the documentation as well as electronic copies.
11.	Consideration should be given to the Corporate Secretary attending UMT(O) meetings in the interests of good governance.	QPC noted this recommendation and decided to forward it to UMTO for consideration and response. The QPC agreed with the response of the OCLA.	Implemented
12.	Consideration should be given to the OCLA providing the secretariat for the Audit Committee.	The QPC noted this recommendation. The QPC agreed to send the PRG finding and recommendation plus the OCLA response to the Chair of the Audit Committee, Mr. Humphrey Murphy, for consideration.	Not implemented The Audit Committee did not feel that it would be appropriate to implement this recommendation.
	STAFF		
13.	Existing individual staff six-monthly reviews with the Corporate Secretary should continue and include career development issues.	QPC endorsed recommendation.	Implemented and ongoing

PRG Recommendation		QPC Recommendation	Follow-up Report February 2012
14.	To enhance efficiency, consideration should be given to allocating adjacent offices to the Corporate Secretary and his PA and to other OCLA staff.	QPC endorsed recommendation.	Ongoing The Corporate Secretary and the Bursar are currently discussing the feasibility of swapping offices. If implemented this would allow for both Finance Office staff and OCLA staff to have adjacent offices.
15.	With appropriate management support and recognising budget constraints, staff should be encouraged to take personal responsibility for identifying appropriate training and developmental opportunities.	QPC endorsed recommendation.	Implemented This has been implemented as part of the 6 monthly review meetings with staff. There has been an increase in the number of courses taken by staff.
	<i>LEGAL AFFAIRS</i>		
16.	The post of Solicitor should become a permanent core-funded post at the earliest opportunity.	QPC noted this recommendation. Consideration of this recommendation is for the UMTO. The present employment restrictions imposed by Government preclude permanent appointments.	Not implemented
17.	Consideration should be given to the recruitment of an additional lawyer to provide advice to the University on employment law and more generally. This post should be funded from the legal services budget, the largest portion of which is spent on employment law.	QPC considered this recommendation and endorsed any circumstances by which best value for money can be achieved. Evidence and analysis required before any approval could be given for such a post.	Not implemented Additional legal backup is being sourced on a contract basis.

PRG Recommendation		QPC Recommendation	Follow-up Report February 2012
18.	The position in relation to the storage of all formal agreements should be clarified and communicated as appropriate.	QPC strongly endorsed recommendation. QOPC noted that there is a need for physical storage of all formal agreements. Action is needed immediately on this recommendation.	Implemented An additional column has been added to the Signing Authority policy to show where documents are stored. This policy can be accessed on the OCLA website. Briefing sessions were given on the Signing Authority policy.
19.	Staff should be informed that all non-standard/bespoke research contracts and other agreements to be signed on behalf of the University should, as a matter of good risk management, be checked by the Office of Corporate and Legal Affairs before signing.	QPC endorsed recommendation.	Implemented and ongoing OCLA has and is working with the Research Office in relation to contract. Research Office should be the first point of contact for research contracts and Research Office then sends contracts for review by OCLA as appropriate. Weekly meetings take place between OCLA and the Research Office to ensure contract queries are being actively managed. All contracts which legally bind the University are referred to OCLA for opinion. The process is outlined in the Signing Authority and Approval Process policy. This policy can be accessed on the OCLA website
	<i>COMPLIANCE</i>		
20.	Briefing on Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Copyright legislation should be provided periodically to all UCC staff.	QPC endorsed recommendation. QPC also suggested that reminders could be sent to staff via the email system of information available on the OCLA web site in relation to these and other topics.	Implemented and ongoing

PRG Recommendation		QPC Recommendation	Follow-up Report February 2012
21.	Data Protection policies and procedures should be developed for UCC.	QPC endorsed recommendation. QPC noted that UCC already has such policies in place and recommended that the existing policies be reviewed and updated as necessary.	Not implemented It was noted that policies need to be developed in line with current legislation.
22.	Existing FoI procedures should be examined to find ways of improving efficiency / response times	QPC endorsed recommendation.	This has been implemented but requires re-examining as the current internal review procedures are cumbersome. This will be reviewed by the end of 2012.

	<i>RISK MANAGEMENT</i>		Follow-up Report February 2012
23.	The process of 'embedding' risk management in UCC should be further enhanced by the inclusion of regular monitoring and business continuity planning.	QPC endorsed recommendation.	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>There are two separate projects underway, 'embedding risk management' and 'emergency and business continuity planning'.</p> <p>The emergency planning project (phase 1) will go for approval to Governing Body on the 14th of February and has also been sent out for external review.</p> <p>Embedding of risk management –a formal project plan for rolling this out to the University as a whole is currently in progress.</p> <p>OCLA will have a project planning training session shortly to assist with this project.</p> <p>There is a pilot project underway with the College of Medicine & Health and the School of Economics to identify risks associated with the Strategic and Operational plans and to put in place controls and actions to mitigate these risks.</p>
24.	A risk analysis should be included as part of every proposal to the University Management Team [Strategy or Operations], Finance Committee and the Governing body, with the assistance where required of the Risk Management Officer.	<p>QPC endorsed recommendation.</p> <p>Implementation of this recommendation is a part of the 'embedding' of the risk management in UCC.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>This will form part of the embedding project.</p> <p>Large projects have had risk management and registers.</p>

	<i>ARCHIVES / RECORDS MANAGEMENT</i>		
25.	Reference to Archives and Records Management should be added to OCLA's mission and vision (and similarly Risk Management and Health & Safety when appropriate). The availability of the University's database of archive materials and records management policies should be included on OCLA's website and opportunities should be taken to communicate these to the University.	QPC endorsed recommendation.	Partially implemented All records management policies are available on the OCLA website. Work is on-going to make collections available online.