



UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK

OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

Quality Review of the **Library & Information Services Division**

The University of Limerick (UL) follows an established process for Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Improvement (QI). This involves a seven-year cycle during which all Support Departments develop a quality management system, undergo a rigorous self-evaluation prior to a quality review by internationally recognised experts in the field.

The process itself has evolved as a result of the Universities Act, 1997 in which the responsibility for QA/QI was placed directly with the individual universities. The UL Quality Support Unit (QSU) web site provides an elaboration of this process and the state of progress.

The review process is designed to satisfy the requirements of the recent Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, meet the expectations of QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) and most importantly, assist support departments in meeting their obligations to maintain an effective QMS (quality management system). The European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) require all institutions to develop formal quality procedures designed to achieve continuous enhancement of quality.

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UL-QSU Web Site	www.quality.ul.ie
LISD Web Site	http://www.ul.ie/library
QQI Web Site	www.gqi.ie

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1.0 Background

1.1 Legislative Framework

The University of Limerick, in common with all the universities in the Republic of Ireland, falls within the Universities Act, 1997. This Act specifies the responsibilities of universities in Ireland for Quality Improvement and Quality Assurance. Section 12 stipulates that, 'The objects of a university shall include - ... to promote the highest standards in, and quality of, teaching and research'.

Section 35 (1) of the Act further requires that each university Governing Authority 'shall...require the university to establish procedures for quality assurance aimed at improving the quality of education and related services provided by the university'. The Act provides a framework for the universities to develop their quality processes. Section 35 requires each university to review the quality of the work of all faculty, academic Departments and service (including administrative) Departments on a ten-year cycle. In particular 'The procedures shall include ... assessment by those, including students, availing of the teaching, research and other services provided by the university'.

Although each university is free to develop its own procedures in fulfilling its obligations under the Act, close co-operation has been achieved through the co-ordinating role of the Irish Universities Association Quality Committee, (IUAQC). Accordingly, the universities have developed a framework comprising a set of common principles and operating guidelines for quality improvement and quality assurance. These principles and guidelines have been integrated into each of the universities procedures, which ensure coherence through the university system, while maintaining the autonomy of each university and its individual institutional culture.

More detail is available at www.quality.ul.ie/The_Act.htm.

1.2 Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

Quality and Qualifications Ireland was established on 6 November 2012 under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. The new Authority is being created by an amalgamation of four bodies that have both awarding and quality assurance responsibilities: the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) and the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB). The new Authority will assume all the functions of the four legacy bodies while also having responsibility for new or newly-statutory responsibilities in particular areas.

The role and general functions of QQI incorporate the previous functions of FETAC, HETAC and the NQAI in relation to the maintenance and development of the National Framework of Qualification, the validation and awarding of qualifications, and the monitoring and review of providers. QQI also has responsibility for the external quality review of the universities; a function performed previously by the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) in conjunction with the Higher Education Authority (HEA). In addition, the authority has been assigned some new functions. It is responsible for the development and implementation of a register of programmes leading to awards in the NFQ. It will also establish a Code of Practice and International Education Mark for the provision of education to international learners.

1.3 The Quality Review Process

The common framework adopted by the Irish universities for their Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement systems consistent with both the legislative requirement of the Universities Act 1997 and international practice comprise the following stages:

1. Preparation of a self-assessment report by the unit taking into account feedback from students and customers.
2. Quality (Peer) Review involving external experts, both nationally and internationally, who have visited the Department, met the students and studied the Self-Assessment.
3. Quality Review Report, made publicly available by the Governing Authority of the university, incorporating the reactions and quality improvement plans of the Division and University.
4. Continuing improvement through implementation within the resources available to the university.

More detail is available at www.ul.ie/quality

1.4 Committee for the Establishment of Quality Management Systems

The Vice President Academic and Registrar has overall responsibility for implementation of Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement policy and implementation at the University of Limerick. Implementation is carried out by the Director of Quality. In 2006, the Deans' Council established the Committee for the Establishment of Quality Management Systems (CEQMS) to oversee the development of quality management systems across the university and to provide support for the review procedures.

The first round of reviews for support departments took place between 2005 and 2008. Copies of the review reports are available on the [QSU website](#).

In 2006, the CEQMS confirmed an earlier decision by the university to implement ISO9000 as a quality management system (QMS) in all support departments. The committee decided, however, that a UL bespoke QMS would be more widely acceptable and developed a suitable template with the assistance of external quality experts. This system is described in the document "Quality Management Systems – Standard Framework for Support Departments".

The second round of reviews is scheduled to take place between 2013 and 2016. The review will take account of significant developments in the design and implementation of quality management systems across the University since the first round of reviews. As a consequence, the reviewers will now expect to see a fully functional QMS which is seamlessly embedded into department operations and drives decision making processes.

2.0 The Library & Information Services Division

The [Library and Information Services Division](#) (LISD) is a key university division that advances the success of the university in its core mission in learning, teaching, research and engagement. As a key campus partner, LISD is focused on improving the status and impact of the University of Limerick (UL): its strategic direction is informed by the vision, goals and objectives set out in the university's strategic plan, [Pioneering and Connected: Strategic Plan 2011-2015](#). Aware of the vital role the library plays in successful learning and research, LISD is committed to user-centred development and to providing all members of the university with a global range of information wherever they are.

LISD provides full access to high-quality academic information and resources, such as books, journals, media and data, which are the fundamental building blocks of learning and research. The division is the critical link that connects academic staff and students to a world of information. The library's information skills programme and one-to-one support equip library users with the competencies necessary for learning, research, employment and lifelong empowerment in an information-intensive world.

With almost one million in-person visits annually and over one million documents downloaded each year, the UL Glucksman Library is one of the most popular and heavily used places on campus and is a defining feature of student life. The library's facilities, physical and virtual, provide environments in which effective learning takes place. Providing learners with the space and support to maximise the use of learning resources, the library is the pre-eminent out-of-classroom place of learning on campus. LISD provides leadership on campus on key issues that affect scholarship, such as information literacy, publishing strategies, open access, copyright and information management. The library deploys its expertise to manage, preserve and promote the information assets of the university, including theses, archives and academic publications. LISD plays a strong leadership role on the Irish Universities Association Librarians Group (IUALG) and the Irish Consortium of National and University Libraries (CONUL) and is the Irish representative on the executive board of the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL), which represents third-level libraries in the UK and Ireland.

Library Mission

The mission of LISD is "to advance the university's teaching, learning and research activities by providing high-quality academic information resources, education and facilities to students, staff and researchers". To achieve this, the library will:

- Build collections for current and future needs
- Provide quality services and ensure continual improvement
- Provide a welcoming and supportive learning environment that inspires exploration and discovery
- Listen and respond to customers' needs promptly and efficiently
- Treat all customers with fairness and courtesy
- Provide appropriate training courses and guidance to enable each reader to make the most productive use of all information resources
- Cooperate with resource sharing, research and other initiatives at regional, national and international levels

Library Vision

The library's vision is "to enable the University of Limerick to achieve excellence in teaching, learning, research and community service by providing a vibrant and pioneering library service and an environment that encourages reflective and collaborative inquiry".

3.0 The Follow-up Process

The Quality Review process occurs on an approximately seven-year cycle at the University of Limerick. An average of six Departments are reviewed annually. Once the Quality Review report is finalised, the Department concerned immediately sets about planning its response to the issues raised therein.

The self-evaluation process is intended to be a reflective exercise in which a Department/Division should identify many of its strengths and weaknesses and develop plans to strengthen and grow as appropriate. Quite often, the Quality Review Group (QRG) will reinforce these issues and may identify areas of concern that were overlooked. In many cases, the QRG will also highlight the strengths of the Department and encourage faculty and staff to take advantage of these.

After the division and the university have been given time to respond to the issues raised; the Quality Review Group's report will be made available to the wider community through the University's web site. Normally, the report is available within the University less than four weeks after the QRG visit. Responses and plans for action are incorporated into the report and are subject to the approval of the Deans' Council.

Presentation to the University's Governing Authority usually follows within six months of the QRG visit. The Governing Authority will publish the Quality Review report, including reactions and plans, immediately following approval.

It is expected that a review of progress in implementing recommendations and investigating issues raised would occur quarterly for the two years following the Quality Review Visit. Progress Reports will be published as deemed appropriate.

Date	Action
Date of Review	LISD division is issued with Quality Review report and required to prepare reactions and plans for Quality Improvement as appropriate. The report is circulated to all members of Management Committee for comment.
Date of Review	QRG Report, incorporating reactions, is presented to UL Executive Committee for discussion, as appropriate.
+ 2/3 Months	Reactions and plans incorporated into the Quality Improvement Action Plan and circulated to GA Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance Committee. QRG Report with Responses and Quality Improvement action Plan are tabled at GA-SPQAC meeting for discussion.
+ 1 Year	Director, Dean, Vice President Academic and Registrar and Director of Quality discuss progress with resolution of recommendations and outstanding items are referred to Executive Committee, Academic Council and/or Governing Authority as appropriate.

4.0 Preliminary Comments of the Quality Review Group (QRG)

4.0 Preliminary Comments of the Quality Review Group (QRG)

The QRG found the self-assessment report (SAR) of the Library and Information Services Division (LISD) to be a clear account of the division's activities and a thoughtful analysis of its current environment and context. The report was supported by a wide range of relevant evidence and we are grateful for the helpful way in which the division responded to our requests for additional documentation. The SAR formed a very helpful basis for our engagement with the division.

In our discussions with members of LISD, we found staff to be very helpful, open and reflective. They engaged actively with all the issues we raised, answered our questions clearly and patiently and provided us promptly and efficiently with all the additional information we requested.

LISD demonstrated a clear and consistent commitment to addressing the needs of its users and stakeholders. Staff had a strong focus on service delivery for faculty and for students, in support of a wide range of institutional priorities in teaching, research, community engagement and engagement with relevant national and international activities and organisations. The work of LISD and the professionalism and helpfulness of individual members of staff were very warmly praised by both the students and the faculty representatives met by the QRG. We wish to express our gratitude for the hospitality and cooperation we received, and our admiration for the passion, professionalism and strong team spirit demonstrated by all of the staff we met.

Staff in LISD are working hard to deliver a good service to the library users, in a context where financial and staff resources have been subject to cuts and continue to be under strain. There is an admirable focus on developing metrics and benchmarks across a wide range of performance areas in order to monitor and manage services. The QRG thinks there is now scope to further extend the division's approach to performance management in order to maximise alignment of services with the new LISD strategic plan for 2014-18. In particular, we think the division could benefit from a more strategic consideration of priorities and milestones in order to ensure that all areas within the wide-ranging strategic plan can be appropriately addressed on realistic timescales. As LISD takes forward this important work, we would encourage the university to consider additional ways of embedding the planning and management of LISD services within a broader strategic planning and resource framework.

5.0 The Report of the Quality Review Team

5.1 Quality Management System

Commendations

The QRG commends the following:

- 5.1.1 The implementation of a quality management system (QMS) since the last quality review in 2005.

- 5.1.2 The use of external data sources such as SCONUL and the Student Barometer to benchmark the library against other organisations.

- 5.1.3 The introduction of *Ask Us/Tell Us* as a quality improvement initiative.

Recommendations

The QRG recommends the following:

- 5.1.4 Update the LISD website to ensure it serves effectively as the public face of the library.

- 5.1.5 Review the portfolio of training currently offered by the library to identify gaps and the scope for improved modes of delivery.

5.2 Customer Focus

Commendations

The QRG commends the following:

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| 5.2.1 | The impressive range of quality systems and survey tools, such as LibQUAL, which are used by LISD to provide user feedback. |
| 5.2.2 | The library's responsiveness to customer needs through services such as <i>Ask Us/Tell Us</i> and <i>You said - We did</i> , which function also as a knowledge base for developing staff skills. |
| 5.2.3 | The achievement by LISD of the best overall score on customers' perceptions in LibQUAL 2012 in a comparison with other Irish universities. |
| 5.2.4 | The use of creative solutions to the acknowledged library capacity problem through measures such as the student noise monitor system, improved Wi-Fi and new signage and zoning. |
| 5.2.5 | The introduction of the peer advisor programme to assist students in finding their way in the library. |
| 5.2.6 | The implementation of collection development policies, department by department, linked to an overarching general collection development policy. |

Recommendations

The QRG recommends the following:

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| 5.2.7 | Review the scope for making more use of internal feedback channels such as focus groups and student representative groups, with less reliance on quality survey mechanisms (such as LibQUAL). |
| 5.2.8 | Review the LISD communication strategy to ensure that all library users are fully aware of the wide range of services and facilities that LISD offers, such as other available study spaces on campus, Twitter, training courses, LISD staff advisors and A-Z on the UL website. |
| 5.2.9 | At university level, ensure that the LISD link is included on the main UL homepage. |
| 5.2.10 | Develop a more responsive library opening hours policy in consultation with the student body, taking into account the diverse needs of the library's users. |
| 5.2.11 | Consider the scope for using co-op placement students to provide additional enhanced services for library users. |

5.3 Leadership

Commendations

The QRG commends the following:

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| 5.3.1 | The LISD alignment of direction with the University of Limerick strategic plan, evidenced particularly through focus on the student experience and the research agendas. |
| 5.3.2 | The active participation of LISD staff on a number of UL committees and boards. |
| 5.3.3 | The evidence that the LISD staff is working effectively as a team in difficult budgetary circumstances. |
| 5.3.4 | The awareness of LISD staff of the specific challenges and opportunities for library operation, design and layout in an increasingly digital environment. |
| 5.3.5 | The contributions of the director and other library staff to key national and international initiatives and bodies. |

Recommendations

The QRG recommends the following:

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| 5.3.6 | Ask the university to review the current committee structures and remits in order to provide a better forum for the consideration of strategic and policy decisions involving LISD. |
| 5.3.7 | Ensure that the director of LISD or a library nominee has a voice at relevant senior university committees such as teaching & learning and research committees. |
| 5.3.8 | At university level, systematically embed information skills training in faculty and departmental curricula, building on existing examples of good practice that LISD has developed. |
| 5.3.9 | Establish stronger shared channels of communication between professional services divisions, thereby enabling a shared services approach to strategic goals, initiatives and funding. |
| 5.3.10 | Enhance LISD's capacity to strengthen interdepartmental networks and relationships at a senior level in order to facilitate more strategic debate on relevant issues such as research data management. |
| 5.3.11 | As a matter of urgency, ensure at university level that an LISD competency framework mechanism is approved and implemented. |

5.4 Involvement of Staff

Commendations

The QRG commends the following:

- 5.4.1 The consistent good work of library staff in relation to customers and their significant contribution to the library's friendly and helpful environment.

- 5.4.2 The increased customer satisfaction levels with all areas of library services from 2007 to 2012.

- 5.4.3 The effective and wide range of communication channels used by LISD, including regular divisional meetings, monthly staff updates and informal team discussions.

- 5.4.4 The effective teamwork across the division in the preparation of the SAR.

Recommendations

The QRG recommends the following:

- 5.4.5 Ensure that LISD staff training plans support the library's aspirations for the future through developing appropriate skills and competencies.

- 5.4.6 Investigate the scope for more effective liaison with and management of externally contracted services working within LISD.

- 5.4.7 Ensure that the LISD strategic plan is understood by all staff, aligning strategic objectives to the PDRS.

5.5 Continual Improvement

Commendations

The QRG commends the following:

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| 5.5.1 | The structured process of continual improvement which is based on operational plans deriving from the strategic plan. |
| 5.5.2 | The extensive collection and analysis of feedback by LISD from various user groups through a wide range of survey mechanisms including focus groups and the recently introduced <i>Ask Us/Tell Us</i> service. |
| 5.5.3 | The evidence of many improvements since the last quality review which have been communicated through the <i>You said - We did</i> approach and, more formally, through the annual report process. |
| 5.5.4 | The participation in external benchmarking exercises charting performance against that of similar institutions. |

Recommendations

The QRG recommends the following:

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| 5.5.5 | Redesign the LISD web pages to be more user-friendly and customer-focused. |
| 5.5.6 | Pending the building of the new library extension, promote and publicise existing additional study spaces outside the library, in particular in the lead-up to exams. |
| 5.5.7 | Explore the feasibility of delivering a one-stop library/IT helpdesk to achieve efficiencies and better service. |

5.6 Process Approach to Services Provided

Commendations

The QRG commends the following:

- 5.6.1 The engagement of all the LISD staff in the preparation and ongoing development of the division's quality processes.

- 5.6.2 The constructive way in which the division has implemented and benefited from the PDRS process.

Recommendations

The QRG recommends the following:

- 5.6.3 Ensure that the audit plan includes all levels of process and that these are listed in the QMS quality manual.

- 5.6.4 Create a process such as service level agreements between customer and service departments in order to ensure alignment of service to the university community.

- 5.6.5 Implement a system for more frequent monitoring of maintenance needs to ensure that library user desk spaces are fully functional in terms of, for example, power points and network points.

- 5.6.6 Review the scope for real-time online collection of feedback data at the customer service desk.

- 5.6.7 Ensure the implementation of a systematic version control process for all LISD documentation.

5.7 Systematic Approach to Management

Commendations

The QRG commends the following:

- 5.7.1 The proactive embracing of change by the library staff in the current difficult climate.

- 5.7.2 The systematic review of Wi-Fi availability in the library building in response to customer feedback.

- 5.7.3 The enhancement of the QuestionPoint functionality and its integration into LISD business processes to control and manage customer interactions.

Recommendations

The QRG recommends the following:

- 5.7.4 Develop a systematic architecture for future LISD systems, including the LISD web presence, the library management system and QuestionPoint.

- 5.7.5 Develop a set of library service KPIs, defined with input from students and academics and updated in line with service needs.

- 5.7.6 Investigate creative ways of publicly displaying current occupancy and availability of library facilities.

- 5.7.7 Ensure that library data warehouse requirements are fully taken into account in the university's data warehouse project.

5.8 Factual Approach to Decision Making

Commendations

The QRG commends the following:

- 5.8.1 The use of recorded activity data to assist in staff deployment, such as in the case of inter-library loans staff.

- 5.8.2 The role of the faculty librarians in liaising with academics to ensure that book purchases and journal subscriptions are relevant.

- 5.8.3 The responsive approach to customer feedback to implement maintenance and repair of equipment.

Recommendations

The QRG recommends the following:

- 5.8.4 Ensure that new and existing initiatives (such as *Ask Us/Tell Us*, chat rooms and newsletters) are evaluated according to predetermined criteria, with decisions regarding their continuance or withdrawal being based on these.

- 5.8.5 Consider improving the collection of data on books taken from shelves but not loaned out as a means of informing the collections development policy.

- 5.8.6 Collect statistics from the proposed new access control system and use these to inform LISD on policy and KPI improvement initiatives.

5.9 Supplier, Partner & Community Relationships

Commendations

The QRG commends the following:

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|-------|---|
| 5.9.1 | The participation by LISD in the quality reviews of all academic departments and the support it provides to these. |
| 5.9.2 | The collaboration of LISD with national bodies (such as the Shannon Consortium, ALCI, IUA, CONUL) and the development of the library's profile at national level. |
| 5.9.3 | The development of the electronic journal collection in partnership with other academic institutions at national level. |
| 5.9.4 | The participation by LISD staff in national strategic development, such as through membership of the CONUL Research Support Group, publishing papers and presenting at conferences. |
| 5.9.5 | The hosting of events by the Special Collections department, such as those planned for Limerick City of Culture 2014. |

Recommendations

The QRG recommends the following:

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| 5.9.6 | Ensure that the 2014-2018 strategic plan takes full account of the important role of partnerships and collaborations. |
| 5.9.7 | Actively seek external sponsorship and donor funding for the cataloguing and management of special collections with the involvement and support of faculty and UL management. |
| 5.9.8 | Publish a list of presentations and publications by staff members. |
| 5.9.9 | To address the short-term accommodation shortage for library users, review the use of space in the library building by non-LISD staff. |

Appendices

A Membership of the Quality Review Group:

Dr. Chris Fogarty	Energy Manager, University of Limerick
Mr. Declan Hanley	Business Development Manager, MAPS Ltd, Galway
Dr. Bill Harvey	Chairperson, Director, QAA, Scotland
Ms. Maria Heijne	Director of Libraries of University of Amsterdam and HvA. University of Applied Sciences
Ms. Ailish O'Farrell	Technical writer, Ballybrown, Clarina, Co Limerick (recording secretary)
Mr. John Tuck	Director of Library Services, Royal Holloway, University of London
Ms. Monika Zacharska	Research Postgraduate, University of Limerick

B Membership of the LISD Quality Team:

Ken Bergin	Siobhan Morrissey
Evelyn Doherty	Breda Murphy
Helen Enright	Donna O'Doibhín
Helena Feighan	Gobnait O'Riordan (Director)
Aoife Geraghty (Team Leader)	Noel Tobin
Sinead Keogh	

C Contact

The Review Team were given the opportunity over three days to talk to the LISD Quality Team both formally and informally. Meetings with staff, postgraduate & undergraduate students and employers were scheduled as group sessions. Meetings with a number of partners and contractors were scheduled individually. The Review Team was given the opportunity to meet all LISD staff during a visit to the facilities of the division and this was most helpful.

All the meetings provided extremely useful additional information to support the SAR.