



UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK

OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

**Report of the Quality Review Group
to
Plassey Campus Centre (PCC)**

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Quality Review Group (QRG)	Appendix A
UL QSU website	www.ul.ie/quality
Division website	http://www.campuslife.ul.ie/
QQI website	www.qqi.ie

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1 **The UL Quality Review Process**

The University of Limerick (UL) follows an established process for quality assurance (QA) and quality improvement (QI) in line with that originally developed jointly by the Irish Universities Association (IUA) and the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB), the latter whose functions are now carried out by Quality and Qualifications Ireland ([QQI](#)). The review process involves an approximate seven-year cycle during which each unit works to improve the quality of its programmes and services and undergoes a rigorous self-evaluation prior to a quality review by internationally recognised experts in the relevant field.

The common framework adopted by the Irish universities for their QA/QI systems is consistent with both legislative requirements and international good practice. The process itself evolved as a result of the Universities Act, 1997, in which the responsibility for QA/QI was placed directly on the individual universities. The process now complies with the [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012](#). The UL Quality Support Unit (QSU) website (www.ul.ie/quality) provides details on the process.

Support units are reviewed against international standards as described in the document *Quality Review Process for Support Units: Guidelines and QMS Framework*, which is available on the [QSU website](#). The planned schedule of quality reviews for both academic and support units is available on the [QSU website](#).

The UL quality review process comprises the following three phases:

1. Pre-review phase, in which the unit under review conducts a self-evaluation exercise and writes a self-assessment report (SAR).
2. Review phase, in which a quality review group comprising external experts, both national and international, review the SAR, visit the unit, meet with stakeholders and produce a report (this report), which is made publicly available on the [QSU website](#).
3. Post-review phase, in which the unit considers the recommendations of the QRG, devises plans to implement them and reports implementation progress to a Governing Authority subcommittee and UL senior management.

The recommendations made by the quality review group (QRG) form the basis of a quality improvement plan (QIP) prepared by the QSU for the unit under review. Once the site visit is over, the unit sets about evaluating and implementing the recommendations, as appropriate.

Approximately six months after receiving the QIP template from the QSU, the head of unit provides a summary overview of progress to the university's Governing Authority Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance (GASPQA) sub-committee. GASPQA members are afforded the opportunity to discuss and evaluate progress.

Approximately 12 months after receiving the QIP template, the head of unit, Vice President Academic & Registrar and Director of Quality meet to formally review progress and to agree on any remaining actions to be taken.

2 **Plassey Campus Centre**

Plassey Campus Centre (PCC) was established in 1985 to develop residential social and recreational facilities for UL on a self-funding basis. PCC was developed as an autonomous entity trading as a company limited by guarantee and reporting to its own board of directors, who are drawn from UL, the [UL Students' Union](#), the [University of Limerick Foundation](#). The PCC directors are nominated by the members of their respective entities. There are currently eight directors, six of whom represent UL, one of whom represents the UL Foundation and one of whom represents the Students' Union. The board's chairperson, managing director and company secretary are all members of UL.

While PCC's primary role is to develop and manage residential accommodation on a self-funding basis, the company also takes responsibility for developing and managing outsourced retail services, restaurant cafés, club bars and the main catering contract.

The company is required to put innovative and dynamic funding mechanisms in place for capital projects and to be entrepreneurial in the generation of additional revenue to support facilities and services under its management. While operating under strict financial controls, the company is driven by market forces and has a strong customer focus.

PCC is effectively a subsidiary of UL. To develop effective marketing strategies, the company operates under two brand names, Campus Life Services and University of Limerick Conference and Sports Campus. [Campus Life Services](#) is the umbrella and trading name adopted to cover all of the company's accommodation, retail and catering service activities. [University of Limerick Conference and Sports Campus](#) is the brand name used to promote summer conferences and events.

Plassey Campus Developments Limited is the company within the Plassey Campus Centre group of companies that provides financial planning and management for all campus-based capital projects, including residential projects.

The mission of Plassey Campus Centre is to support UL by delivering an excellent and distinctive campus experience and by establishing and sustaining an outstanding campus environment.

Core activities of the company

The activities of PCC centre around the following areas:

- Residences
- Residential life development
- Summer conference & events
- Capital projects development
- Catering services development
- Retail services
- Financial management services
- University Concert Hall
- UL Sport

Residences: The largest part of the company's activity is the management of six village residences comprising 2,697 rooms in housing and modern apartment-style complexes.

Residential life development: Part of the company's strategy is to develop a distinctive student living experience and to add value to services. Our focus on campus living has created vibrant residential communities where the needs of students, from first years to mature and international students, are served. A number of activities and events are organised as part of our campus life programme. The programme promotes engagement between residential communities through extra-mural activity such as sporting events, social events and events of interest.

Summer conference and events: From the end of May to the end of August, the company aims to maximise occupancy in residence and catering revenue by promoting the University and all its facilities and services for conferences and events. The benefits include:

- Additional income to support capital investment and refurbishment
- Sustainability of services for the campus community throughout the summer as restaurants, shops and cafés can remain open
- Additional income to subsidiary organisations, such as UL Sport and the University Concert Hall
- Employment of contract service staff on 12-month rather than 9-month contracts; additional employment for up to 60 local students
- Additional income for the Limerick/Shannon region by providing the capacity to host international events of up to 5,000 participants

Capital projects development: Through its subsidiary Plassey Campus Developments, PCC provides financial planning, management and reporting for all University capital projects on campus. Since 2000, 41 projects, totalling €374 million in capital investment, have been completed.

Catering services development: The University's policy is to outsource catering and bar services. In association with the [Procurement Office](#), as appropriate, PCC recruits all café, restaurant and bar services for UL. Bar restaurants are operated under club licences, and an operator is appointed to manage the service.

Retail services: The company cooperates with UL and the Students' Union in identifying and developing required retail services. A partnership approach based on investment has been put in place between the three entities to manage the Student Centre, where most of the retail services are located. The partnership works to identify needs, tender retail services and develop the agreements, which take the form of licence agreements. The processes are managed by PCC.

Financial management services: PCC provides financial management services to five separate entities: UL Foundation, UL Sport, University Concert Hall, UL [Alumni Association](#) and [UniJobs](#).

University Concert Hall: The University Concert Hall (UCH) operates as a subsidiary of PCC and is led by its own board. The core mission of UCH is to provide a performance and entertainment centre of national and international standing in the mid-west region.

UL Sport: PCC incorporates the operation of its subsidiary UL Sport, which is led by its own board. UL Sport is the new and simple brand that heralds 'Ireland's Sporting Campus' and encapsulates over 40 years of dedicated professional service that has changed the face of sport in Ireland. UL Sport comprises world-class sports facilities, which makes it an obvious destination of choice for sports teams and training camps across multiple disciplines.

3 Preliminary Comments of the Quality Review Group (QRG)

The Quality Review Group (QRG) thanks the staff of Plassey Campus Centre (PCC / the company) for their cooperation during the review process. The self-assessment document was well written in an analytical and self-critical way, identifying strengths, but also areas for improvement. Additional documentation requested by the QRG was supplied in good time and the staff who met with the team were open and engaged enthusiastically in discussion.

There has clearly been a focus on reviewing and updating the quality management system (QMS) in the last two years and this has intensified following a change of leadership in 2015. The current senior managers provide strong and enthusiastic leadership committed to ongoing development; staff are clearly valued and their input to the design and use of appropriate quality management processes is encouraged. In one meeting, staff unanimously agreed that PCC is 'a great place to work'.

Three major themes which underpin many of the QRG's recommendations arose:

- 1) The company has a diverse portfolio, but no single, identifiable campus presence or brand. Many stakeholders see it as being responsible only for student accommodation and a range of different names is associated with its other activities. The QRG believes that a repositioning exercise is needed to substantially increase the visibility of the company and redefine the brand. PCC should raise its profile as the key provider of a range of professional services that underpin both student life and campus events for both internal and external clients.
- 2) Many of the services which are managed by the company and key to its future success are contracted to outside providers and there is a need for greater oversight and control of the quality of these operations.
- 3) There is a need also for a more holistic and integrated approach to the further development of business processes, supported by effective IT systems, to ensure the company is well positioned to achieve its ambitions for future growth.

In addition to its recommendations, the QRG has made a number of commendations. The common thread running through many of these - strongly evidenced by comments from all classes of stakeholders, as well as in discussions with the company's quality team - stems from the tremendous and unstinting commitment of company staff to the campus community, visitors and the student experience.

4 QRG Commendations and Recommendations

4.1 Commendations

The QRG commends the following:

1.	The clearly evident involvement of PCC staff in the QMS and their understanding of the process.
2.	The significant development of the QMS since it was reviewed in 2014, as demonstrated in the company's self-assessment report (May 2016).
3.	The comprehensive review and updating of the quality documentation and the manner in which this has been communicated throughout the company.
4.	The identification of QMS goals and objectives, the updating of the quality manual to include the QMS processes and the identification of PCC's key business processes.
5.	The establishment of a management review and the development of a quality improvement plan (QIP) to capture information that will drive continual improvement.
6.	The development and launch of the company's five-year strategic plan with its clear set of objectives and targets.
7.	The level of investment planned and committed to student accommodation over the next five years, which sends a very positive message to students, visitors and the University authorities.
8.	The very motivated and driven PCC workforce, which is fully committed to providing excellent levels of service to its diverse customer base at all levels.
9.	The high level of customer service achieved by PCC staff, with feedback from a wide range of stakeholders confirming this.
10.	The introduction of a comprehensive customer charter which inspires a high level of confidence in the facilities and services provided by the company.
11.	The extremely healthy 'team' ethos that is embedded across all levels of the company.
12.	The strong leadership of PCC and the clear vision of senior management, which is shared by the team, to drive customer service forward.
13.	The discussion of customer feedback at all levels of the company to drive action, and the sharing of information across units to ensure best practice.
14.	The restructuring of the conference and events team which is creating clear market sector responsibilities that will enhance customer service and support business growth in the future.
15.	The company's commitment to maximising income during vacation periods and its recognition that this income stream is crucial to the strategic aims of the company.

16.	The company's very positive attitude towards training and development. Continual professional development (CPD) is openly encouraged and staff have a clear understanding of the benefits this approach brings to the company, its employees and its customers.
17.	The clear understanding of the PCC senior management team of the major contribution the company makes to the overall 'student experience' and its recognition that PCC services and facilities will become even more crucial as customer demands and expectations increase over the coming years.
18.	The use of evidence from a number of sources to make key decisions.
19.	The regular meeting and reporting structure which is in place at all levels and is seen by the management team as adding value to the business.

4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1 Level 1 recommendations

The QRG recommends the following:

No.	Recommendation	Brief Justification
1.	<p>Review the document management system to include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All required processes and procedures; 2. A record matrix that details all required records; 3. Documents of an external nature which are required to meet compliance with external regulations. 	<p>Requirements and standards relating both to legislation and to compliance with regulations should be listed on an external document list and copies of external assessments and reports carried out by government or external regulatory bodies should be controlled as a record, with the information being used as an input to continual improvement activities.</p> <p>Documentation control procedures require the following information to be captured on the record register:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record name • Record type • Location • Reference procedure • Owner • Minimum time kept <p>Information is communicated at the weekly and monthly meetings, but it is not clear how changes are communicated, updated in other procedures and linked to training.</p>
2.	<p>Identify the metrics for service at all customer touch points and develop key performance indicators (KPIs) for customer service which include a targeted response rate for questionnaires.</p>	<p>The company is currently receiving excellent feedback, but targets for satisfaction are not fully defined in some areas. Response rates are low with no way of gaining feedback from passive customers. Consideration should be given to using a Net Promotor Score (NPS).</p>
3.	<p>Identify performance indicators that allow for the effective operation and control of identified processes and establish measurement criteria for each critical area.</p>	<p>The company is not capturing critical data for a review process that would drive continual improvement in some key areas in the core processes identified.</p> <p>It is important to have performance measures in place for all third-party service providers.</p>

4.	Review and update the document management system to include all required processes and procedures, with particular emphasis on developing robust standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the conference and events operation.	<p>Financial management services and capital projects development, which are identified as primary activities, are not formally captured in the system. There is no reference to these on the document matrix.</p> <p>The conference and events management process is documented as a core process but the supporting operating procedures have not been completed.</p> <p>There are no clear operational standards of how an event or conference is delivered. These standards should cover all operations from first enquiry through to the timescale in which a client should receive the post event invoice.</p>
5.	Review the rate policy for the conference and events business.	The conference and events business represents a significant opportunity for growth. Without adopting a packaged day delegate rate (DDR) and residential rates it will be very hard to measure performance against the wider conference sector. This in turn will make it difficult to make evidence-based tactical and strategic decisions.
6.	Undertake a full campus review of catering provision to get an overall understanding of the number of outlets required, and benchmark this nationally and internationally against the broader catering business sector.	Whilst the QRG has an understanding as to why there are so many outlets, there is a view that this area is becoming uncompetitive. Consideration should be given to what other universities, large corporations and high-street retail outlets provide.
7.	Undertake a complete repositioning and rebranding of the company.	The company brand does not clearly articulate the wide range of activities undertaken by the company and the important role these play within the University. The current PCC brand is not understood by the vast majority of its customers and stakeholders and the QRG strongly advises a rebranding to a single company name that will address this issue and aid company growth both internally and externally.
8.	Source an appropriate centre for PCC operations.	Members of the company are spread far and wide across campus and existing office provision is both disparate and not fit for purpose from both a staff and client perspective. The company is currently hidden

		away but as a key professional service department it should be highly visible to its customer base. New offices that are customer-focused will help raise the profile and awareness of the company and the activities it provides.
9.	Ensure that Garda vetting takes place for all relevant staff members.	Given the nature of the work in the student villages, it is vital that staff have been approved via the Garda vetting process.

4.2.2 Level 2 recommendations

The QRG recommends the following:

No.	Recommendation	Brief Justification (Optional)
1.	In relation to document control, consider introducing a numbering system which could be of value in linking records to specific procedures.	
2.	Develop one feedback system across the company to be used in all areas of PCC's activities.	The company currently operates several different feedback mechanisms across its areas of operation. One feedback system would allow better identification of service shortfalls and allow common themes to be identified.
3.	Evaluate the effect of having village managers live off campus during the pilot project and analyse the impact both on the staff member and the student experience.	It is noted that the live-in policy for village managers may be a contributing factor to staff turnover in this role.
4.	Implement a formal exit interview procedure for staff members leaving the company.	
5.	Develop a robust system (non-IT initially) to monitor all complaints and faults for internal operations as well as for third-party contracted services, suppliers and contract catering and retail services. This system should have the capacity to feed back progress on each step of resolution to both providers and complainants and include the following: uptime/downtime, response time	There is no evidence of feedback mechanisms for complaints and faults – a unified approach is required for all.

	and fix time.	
6.	Develop and circulate a community satisfaction catering survey which has been benchmarked nationally and internationally. This should be circulated twice a year to the whole campus community with feedback provided directly to the community in a timely manner with planned actions documented. The survey should also include multiple focus groups within the wider campus community.	There is currently no such survey in place, although plans are in place for September. It is important to ensure that this survey is benchmarked for best practice.
7.	Develop robust service level agreements (SLAs) and KPIs for the company's internal operations and also for all third-party contracted services, suppliers and contract catering and retail services.	SLAs and KPIs are not consistently in place. A unified approach is required so that the company can benchmark its performance.
8.	Engage with senior UL management to ensure that the executive management of PCC, which manages the delivery of catering services for the University, has representation on the Capital Development Programme Committee in circumstances where it is intended to extend or amend the provision of catering services on the University campus.	
9.	Develop an in-house HR function (perhaps part-time) to support the recruitment, induction and learning and development function of the company.	To meet the ever-increasing demands placed on the HR function for the entire company portfolio, the QRG feels that making such an appointment would add depth to the PCC team and free up existing managers from some of the HR functions.
10.	Develop a concise mission statement that has full buy-in from all employees to sit alongside the customer charter.	
11.	Undertake and maintain a detailed risk analysis of the summer vacation business across all market sectors.	Given the current economic climate and ongoing global incidents affecting the tourism market in general, a risk analysis would be very beneficial in future decision making processes.

12.	Integrate and implement the web-based Kx event management registration module within the company's property management software.	This implementation will greatly enhance the conference and events offer to both the internal and external markets and will drive business and income generation for the company.
13.	Develop the IT systems across the company to allow real-time customer feedback and improved response rates.	The company struggles with reaching out to its customers due to the limitations of its current system capabilities. An improvement in this area would also improve business data and maximise the use of current systems such as Kx.
14.	Investigate the use of a software solution to manage document control, updates and training requirements.	When an update of a document takes place, this should trigger a training requirement.
15.	Recruit appropriate in-house IT expertise to take ownership of this area and to advise the management team on all IT processes and procedures across the company portfolio.	The QRG feels that this action would ensure the company is well positioned to take maximum advantage of existing and future IT solutions.

Appendices

A Membership of the QRG

Gaynor Taylor (Chair)	Quality Consultant, UK and France
Kevin Stuckey	Head of Residences and Conference Services, University of Kent
Richard Harrison	Head of Conference Centres, University of Warwick
Soraid McEntee	Operations & Quality Manager, Excellence Ireland Quality Association (EIQA)
Adam Moursy	Sales Executive, Brightflag
Gavin Connell	Head of Careers, Cooperative Education & Careers Division, University of Limerick
Ms. Ailish O'Farrell (Recording Secretary)	Technical Writer, Limerick

B Membership of the Unit's Self-Evaluation Team (SET)

Gillian Costelloe	Sales and Marketing Manager, Conference and Events
Ellen Fitzmaurice	Manager Student Residences
Katie Hourigan	Thomond Village Manager
Denise Keehan	Management Accountant
Carol Moloney	Accommodation Co-Ordinator
John O'Rourke (Team Leader)	General Manager, PCC
Noreen O'Shea	Assistant Manager Student Residences
Helen Walsh	Financial Controller, PCC