Appendix III. Professional Support Services (PSS) Strategic Review

INSTITUTE *of* TECHNOLOGY CARLOW

Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Cheatharlach

Policy & Procedure Title:

IT Carlow Professional Support Services (PSS) Strategic Review Policy

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Approved By	Senior Management Governing Body	**Date Approved**	26th November 2018 29th November 2018

Form(s)	Responsibilities/ Owner
	Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar Senior Management Professional Support Service Managers
Superseded or Obsolete Procedures	
Version 03 – December 2016 - Review to reflect requirements under GDPR.	
Version 02 - September 2016 – update to procedure pertaining to the Panel Report and reflect changes to title of Faculty	
Version 01 - December 2015 – updated to add Panel Report to the document	

Professional Support Services (PSS) - Strategic Review Policy

1.0   Introduction

Maintaining and developing the quality of academic excellence within the Institute of technology Carlow (IT Carlow) is supported by a large number of professional support services (PSS's) and functions including Academic Administration & Student Affairs (AASA), Library & Information Services (LIS), Learner Support & Student Services (LSSS), Sport, Teaching & Learning (T&L), Quality Assurance & Collaborations (QA&C), Human Resources (HR), Estates, Finance, Computer Services (CS), External Services, Postgraduate Studies and International Affairs.

These professional support services PSS's are key factors in the provision of the unique student centred and supportive environment of IT Carlow which has been emphasised in the detailed strategic peer reviews of each academic unit completed in 2015. They provide a complex and coherent support structure which, despite a lack of visibility in many cases, consists of and involves a large volume of activity and personnel.

The Strategic Review process is not an inspection of individual performance, nor is it part of any performance management system. Rather it is an opportunity for all staff in each PSS to reflect on and highlight the quality of the service being provided to learners, other institute staff and to the wider region and to plan for the development of the service to contribute to the continued growth of the entire Institute.

Policy

Higher education providers are required by Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI) to review the effectiveness of both academic and support services related to their programmes of higher education and training on a five yearly basis.

2.0   Procedure

This document provides guidelines to this review and evaluation process which involves the following stages:
- Creation of 'Terms of Reference' for the review in order to decide in advance what will be considered as part of the process.
- The self-review process itself, who to involve and what is to be considered.
- Preparation of a report based on the review process undertaken
- The Panel review
- The panel report and the opportunity for each PSS to respond
- Follow up consideration of progress after 12-18 months

2.1   Terms of reference

The terms of reference shall cover the evaluation of the following:

2.1.1 Organisation and management of the PSS: Resources, roles and reporting structures shall be considered to determine whether they are fit for purpose to

support the activities and role of the evolving PSS. Functions and procedures shall be considered and recommendations made by PSS staff members. The availability and suitability of staff training and support shall also be considered and the importance of innovation and quality in the culture of the PSS shall be reflected on by PSS staff members and representatives of those who the PSS supports.

2.1.2   Functions and services supporting internal and external stakeholders: Each PSS shall detail the aims and objectives of the PSS and determine and detail the user experience of the function, both internal and external via questionnaires, focus groups and surveys to gain feedback and identify areas which the PSS may wish to develop.

2.1.3   Evidence based decision making and communication: The decision making process utilised by the PSS shall be considered. For example, consideration shall be given to what information is routinely gathered and stored by the PSS, what information or input is typically used to make decisions relating to the PSS including staff input. Internal communication systems within each PSS and between the PSS and other academic units, departments, management structures and other PSS's shall be considered. Information management systems and communication tools shall be considered to ascertain their suitability.

2.1.4   Institute wide engagement: The PSS contribution to IT Carlow shall be reviewed to include items such as participation in IT Carlow committees, reviews and other internal and external activities. Where relevant, each PSS shall also consider how it engages with relevant external agencies and its contribution to external bodies.

2.1.5   Integration of all function users: Each PSS shall review how it ensures the integration of and equity of support for, for example Life Long learning, Wexford and Wicklow campuses and the external campus.

2.1.6   Quality assurance: Awareness of relevant IT Carlow quality systems and Institute policies in the PSS shall be considered. Existing PSS specific policies and procedures shall be described and their implementation in the PSS shall be described.

2.1.7   Specific area: Review of specific areas or functions unique to the particular PSS.

2.1.8   Strategic plan for the PSS: Based on the feedback receive, each PSS shall develop and detail their strategic plan and describe its alignment with the IT Carlow Strategic Plan 2019-2023 and implementation targets.

2.2   The self-evaluation process
2.2.1   The self-evaluation process shall be conducted in a manner that promotes innovation and improvement and shall involve all members of staff in the PSS from

the outset. It shall be evidence based (this may involve some or all of the following: analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges (SWOC), surveys or questionnaires to users, focus groups, interviews with stakeholders, benchmarking against best practice in similar PSS's.), reflect national and international best practice and involve all stakeholders, both internal and external including learners. Each PSS shall consider all aspects of its function and how it operates, and decide whether it is operating successfully and efficiently, where necessary identify any changes required and plan how and when identified changes shall be implemented and prepare a self-evaluation report (SER).

2.2.2   Each PSS shall have a steering group typically chaired by the head of the function or area. This group shall oversee the evaluation process, facilitate input from all PSS staff, and liaise with senior management via the registry at IT Carlow. The registry shall assist with the facilitation of focus groups, planning the self-evaluation process, review of documentation, project planning for change implementation and organising the peer review panel.

2.2.3   The review process shall take no longer than 9 months from initiation to completion (PSS response to the panel review group). The timeline shall reflect an analysis of the resources available to compete the review and shall be agreed at the commencement of the self-evaluation process.

2.2.4   The self-evaluation process shall result in the completion of a self-evaluation report, information gathered during the process on which decisions are based; an action plan outlining timelines for any PSS identified changes, referenced to the IT Carlow Strategic Plan.

2.3   <u>The peer review group and the review process</u>

2.3.1   A peer review group (PRG) is responsible for performing an independent evaluation of the PSS based on the SER and a site visit to meet with PSS staff and stakeholders representatives. The PRG shall be independent and consist of a maximum of 6 members and shall typically consist of at least*:
   ▪ A chairperson experienced in Irish higher education
   ▪ 2 external experts with experience in the PSS area
   ▪ Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar's internal nominee
   ▪ PSS stakeholder representative
   ▪ Secretary to the panel

Every effort shall be made to ensure gender balance in the PRG and an international specialist shall be included where possible.

2.3.2   The Registry at IT Carlow shall contact PRG nominees to confirm their participation and independence and shall act as liaison between the PRG and the PSS and shall

organise the review panel. The output following the panel visit shall be a report which shall be considered by the PSS.

2.3.3 The objectives and functions of the PRG are as follows:

2.3.3.1 Consider the SER

2.3.3.2 Visit the PSS to meet with staff, user representatives and other stakeholders of the function, Institute senior management and to observe facilities and consider the activities of the PSS in the light of the SER

2.3.3.3 Consider analysis provided in the SER and discuss any relevant areas which may not have been addressed in the report

2.3.3.4 Verify and report on how well the aims and objectives of the PSS are fulfilled having regard to the available resources

2.3.3.5 Comment on the appropriateness of the PSS mission, objectives and strategic plan

2.3.3.6 Consider the suitability of the working environment and facilities

2.3.3.7 Make recommendations having due regard to resource implications

2.3.3.8 Present any key findings at the end of the visit and prepare a peer review report. This report shall comment formatively on the PSS and make any recommendations which shall support the quality enhancement of the PSS. It shall also comment on the SER; give an overview of the present state of the PSS and its activities; acknowledge achievement and highlight examples of best practice; identify critical resource limitations; comment on the strategic plan put forward by the PSS or on any other items deemed appropriate by the PRG.

2.3.4 The PRG panel report shall be sent by the PRG chairperson to the head of the PSS and the relevant member of the senior executive team via the registry, for consideration and response.

2.3.5 The PRG panel report and function response shall be submitted, by the head of the PSS, to IT Carlow senior executive for noting. It shall then be presented to both Academic Council and Governing Body, for noting.

2.3.6 The final report and function response shall be published on the IT Carlow website under Quality, Publications and Outcomes.

2.4 **Follow up**

2.4.1 The PSS shall subsequently prepare a short update 12-18 months after the production of the final report and response outlining progress made, any significant and relevant changes in circumstances within the PSS in the intervening period, strategic developments and outlook and timelines for remaining targets. The PRG report, PSS response and PSS interim report shall be made available to subsequent PRG panel members during the next review cycle

References

1. QQI: Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines. December 2014/QP.10
2. National College of Ireland: Quality Assurance: Services Quality Assurance Framework
3. Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2019-2023
4. QQI: Quality Assurance Guidelines and criteria for provider access to initial validation of programmes leading to QQI awards. September 2015 – VI

Appendix 1

IT Carlow Professional Support Services (PSS) Strategic Review Panel Report Template

- **PSS under review:**

- **Date of Panel visit:**

- **Date of report:**

Section 1.0 Introduction and overarching feedback on the self-evaluation report (SER) and panel visit

Section 2.0 Peer review group (PRG) visit

2.1. Peer review group (PRG) membership

	Panel member	Name and Affiliation
1	Chairperson experienced in Irish higher education	
2	External expert 1 with experience in the PSS area (IoT) under review	
3	External expert 2 with experience in the PSS area (Uni) under review	
4	Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar's internal nominee	
5	PSS stakeholder representative	
6	Learner Representative	
7	Secretary to the panel	

2.2 Agenda for the peer review group (PRG) visit

2.3   Documentation

Documentation provided to the PRG before and/or during the visit:

2.4   Attendance

IT Carlow staff and other stakeholder who met with the PRG are listed below:

Staff Member	Function/Department/Affiliation

Section 3: Peer review group findings and recommendations

3.1 Findings and on the self-study process, provision of documentation and presentation of the self-evaluation report (SER)

3.2 Findings on the aims, objectives of the PSS

3.3 Findings on the service provided to students, researchers and staff of IT Carlow

3.4 Findings on the organisational structure of the PSS including roles and functions, quality processes, standard procedures, staff support and development and PSS culture

3.5 Findings on the resources, facilities and physical environment available to the PSS

3.6 Findings on the communication and decision making processes utilised by the PSS

3.7 Findings on internal and external engagement including cross campus and centre integration

3.8 Findings on strategic development and planning within the PSS