University of Medicine and Health Sciences

RCSI

Peer Review Group Report

The Student Services Office
November 2022

DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

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1 CONTEXT FOR REVIEW

1.1 Introduction

This report presents the findings of a quality review of the Student Services Office, at the RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences, which was undertaken in November 2022.

The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) was established by Royal Charter in 1784 to set and support professional standards for surgical training and practice in Ireland. RCSI has evolved considerably in the intervening years and is now both a university and a postgraduate training body in surgery and related specialties. This dual role brings many advantages to the institution, not least of which is the ability to offer education and training at all career levels (i.e. undergraduate, postgraduate & professional) in medicine, surgery and related disciplines. In fact, it is the only surgical or medical Royal College in these islands to have university status. RCSI is the largest medical school in Ireland and awards medical degrees in Ireland, Bahrain and Malaysia. RCSI also provides undergraduate degree programmes in Pharmacy and Physiotherapy in Ireland, undergraduate Nursing degree programmes in Bahrain and masters (taught & by research) and doctoral programmes variously in Ireland, Bahrain, China and Malaysia. RCSI became a Recognised College of the National University of Ireland (NUI) in 1978. Following an institutional review commissioned jointly by the Higher Education Authority and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, RCSI independent degree awarding powers were activated by ministerial order in 2010 pursuant to the terms of The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (Charters Amendment) Act 2003. The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 established RCSI as a Designated Awarding Body. In 2019 RCSI received authorization to use the description 'University' and to style itself accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Amendment Act 2019.

RCSI is an independent, not-for-profit health sciences institution with charitable status in the Republic of Ireland. The institution operates a primarily self-funding model, with State funding accounting for less than 20% of total income. The model is based on the education of a substantial cohort of international students alongside Irish/EU students.

1.2 Methodology for Review

1.2.1 Purpose of the Review

The self-assessment exercise is a process by which a Unit reflects on its mission and objectives, and analyses critically the activities it engages in to achieve these objectives. It provides for an evaluation of the Unit's performance of its functions, its services and its administration. In line with the RCSI strategic plan 'Growth and Excellence' it provides assurance to the University of the quality of the units' operations and facilitates a developmental process to effect improvement. The fundamental objectives of the review process are to:

- Monitor the quality of the student experience.

- Identify, encourage and disseminate good practice, and to identify challenges and how to address these.

- Provide an opportunity for units to test the effectiveness of their systems and procedures for monitoring and enhancing quality and standards.

- Encourage the development and enhancement of these systems, in the context of current and emerging provision.

- Inform the University's strategic planning process.

- Provide an external benchmark on practice.

- Provide public information on the University's capacity to assure the quality and standards of its awards. The University's implementation of its quality procedures also enables it to demonstrate how it discharges its responsibilities for assuring the quality and standards of its awards, as required by the Universities Act 1997 and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

1.2.2 The Review Process

The key stages in the internal review process are:

1. Establishment of a Self-assessment Committee

2. Preparation of a Self-assessment Report (SAR) and supporting documentation

3. Site visit by a peer review group that includes external experts both national and international

4. Preparation of a peer review group report that is made public

5. Development of a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for implementation of the review report's recommendations (that is made public)

6. Follow-up to appraise progress against the QIP

1.2.3 Membership of the Peer Review Group

- Mr William Kelly, former Deputy Registrar and Dean of Teaching & Learning, Dublin City University

- Ms Marianne Dunne, Director of Student Services, Maynooth University

- Mr David Giles, Student, University College Cork

- Ms Sinéad Jennings, Head of Student Centre Operations, UL Student Life, University of Limerick

- Dr Kenny Winser. Head of Medical Physics and Academic Director of Admissions, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

- Mr. Mark Collins (Technical Writer & Rapporteur)

1.2.4 Terms of Reference for the Peer Review Group

The terms of reference of the PRG are to:

- Evaluate critically the SAR and the supporting documentation

- Verify how well the aims and objectives of the Unit are being fulfilled, having regard to the available resources, and comment on the appropriateness of the Unit's mission, objectives and strategic plan

- Comment on how well the Unit fits with the strategic plans for the University as a whole

- Evaluate the Unit's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges as outlined in the SAR

- Discuss any perceived strengths and weaknesses not identified in the SAR

- Assess the suitability of the working environment(s)

- Comment on any recommendations proposed by the Unit in its SAR

- Make appropriate recommendations for improvement, with due consideration of resource implications

The Peer Review Group visited RCSI from 8th November to 10th November 2022 and held meetings with representatives and staff from:

- Student Services Office

- RCSI Undergraduate Students' Union Officers

- RCSI Undergraduate Students

- Officers from RCSI Clubs and Societies

- RCSI Academic and Professional Services Units

- Recent Graduates

- RCSI Senior Management Team

2 PROGRESS MADE SINCE THE LAST REVIEW

The PRG was provided with a copy of the recommendations from the last Quality Review of the Student Services Office in 2012 and the accompanying Quality Improvement Plan along with a commentary indicating progress on implementing these recommendations.

The period since the last review has seen organisational changes that have brought changes to some of the services offered by the Student Services Office while at the same time the university has seen a period of expansion and growth. These factors have had implications for the implementation of some of the 2012 recommendations.

Almost all of the recommendations have been actioned to one degree or another with a considerable proportion identified as completed. However, in some cases, initial success at implementation is not seen as having been sustained in the longer term due to factors outside the control of the Unit. Further, in a small number of instances, recommendations have not been fully actioned due to a perception that responsibility for progress lies more broadly or elsewhere in the organisation.

The PRG was impressed by the commitment of all the staff in the unit to a culture of quality enhancement and improvement. Initiatives beyond the commitments of the 2012 Quality Improvement Plan that contribute to an enhanced student experience have been identified and implemented. There is considerable evidence of a very strong team commitment to the provision of quality services to its stakeholders with team members working over and above the norm to achieve operational outcomes.

2.1 Commendation

- The PRG commends the flexibility, commitment and knowledge shown by the staff in support of their mission.

3 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THE UNIT

The RCSI was established by Royal Charter in 1784 to set professional standards for surgical training and practice in Ireland and has evolved considerably since that time and is now a world leading, international, health sciences university and research institution. In 2019 RCSI was granted university status, currently ranked among the top 250 universities worldwide (Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2022). RCSI's student body is represented by more than 70 nationalities, consists of >2,500 undergraduate students, >1,100 postgraduate students and almost 500 surgical and emergency medicine trainees. Currently, there are more than 21,000 alumni working across 97 countries around the world.

At RCSI, student facing supports and services are structured in three key areas: The Student Academic & Regulatory Affairs Office (SARA) - which is effectively the university Registry, The Centre for Mastery: Personal, Professional and Academic growth (CoMPPAS), and the Student Services Office (SSO). Supports available to students through CoMPPAS include: academic support, career readiness, communication & language, student welfare and well-being, learning access and facilitation. The Student Services Office delivers a range of non-academic services which include (but is not restricted to): accommodation (on-campus, off-campus and peripheral), financial assistance, gym & fitness, immigration & visa support, induction & orientation, merchandising, student publications, scholarship supports, sports clubs & teams (x35), societies (x52), student events, student union (SU) support, visiting students supports.

The SSO has evolved over a number of decades, and currently provides support services (listed above) to undergraduate students in the Schools of Medicine, Pharmacy and Biomolecular Sciences, and Physiotherapy. The number of undergraduate students has grown from 2,103 in 2012 to 2,510 in 2021. The remit of the SSO does not currently extend to provision of support services to postgraduate (masters and doctoral) students. The needs of this specific cohort of students are largely catered for by the School of Postgraduate Studies.

At RCSI, the Student Union (SU) consists of 8 officers elected (as a team) by the undergraduate student body. Unlike other universities, SU officers do not take sabbaticals and continue their course of study while undertaking their SU roles. They do not receive salaries or any other form of payment for their SU responsibilities. The undergraduate student body are represented on all university committees, working groups and are actively involved in university ceremonies etc. They are also responsible for organizing a wide range of social activities. Their work is supported by the SSO.

Physical Facilities

The main Student Services office is currently located in a prominent location on the ground floor of 123 St Stephen's Green, adjacent to the Admissions and Student Recruitment offices and close to the main reception area at the York Street entrance. The office is open plan containing dedicated desk space for all unit members of staff. There is also a meeting space, separate office for the Head of Unit and limited storage space. Some merchandise is displayed and sold within the office. The office operates an 'open door' policy for students during normal working hours.

In addition to the main Student Services office, there is an SU office located in the basement area of 123 St Stephen's Green. In addition, there is a Sports Union office which is also used for producing the students' college newspaper (DiveRCSIty). The latter office is small, has no windows and contains structural columns. Both offices have very limited storage space.

The SSO also operate a merchandise 'pop-up' shop two days per week in an unused squash court within the basement area.

The SSO also have management responsibilities for a modern gym and a large sports hall located in No. 26 York Street.

Unit Staff
Overall responsibility of the unit lies with the Director of Admissions, Recruitment and Student Services (who reports directly to the Vice Chancellor/CEO). All operations and management of the unit (including staffing) is undertaken by the Head of the Student Services Office.

The SSO comprises of:
- Head of the SSO
- Accommodation Manager
- Gym Manager
- 5 x Student Services Coordinators (all with different responsibilities)
- 4 x Gym Specialists

The length of service of the staff that make up the unit (in their current roles) varies from 21 years to 3 months.

In addition to the permanent staff (see above), the unit contracts with external service providers with very specific and defined roles, but are not involved in the day to day operations of the unit. They provide services such as: coaching, classes, workshops etc.

Benchmarking
The unit has benchmarked the range of services and supports it offers against those offered by all of the main Irish universities, a number of smaller HEIs, and one UK university. The benchmarking process also included a review of Student Satisfaction Survey results (StudentSurvey.ie). In 2020 ~44,000 students from 26 higher education institutions participated in the survey.

3.1 Commendations

- The PRG saw clear evidence of the team's willingness to engage with the Quality Enhancement process.
- The PRG commends the excellent, enthusiastic working relationships within the SSO team.

3.2 Recommendations

4 PLANNING, ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

Student Services Office Mission
The mission of the Student Services Office is *to deliver a comprehensive range of quality non- academic supports and services which are responsive, accessible, inclusive, and user-friendly, which serve to support student engagement and enhance the student journey*.

Overview
In the self-assessment report (SAR) the Student Services Office (SSO) team has demonstrated a good understanding of their role in supporting the overall RSCI mission to 'Educate, nurture and discover for the benefit of human health'. Their student-centred approach is evident, and it is informed by a strong understanding of the student journey in RCSI with a focus on the student out-of-classroom learning and development. Stakeholders from across the wider RSCI community spoke with respect and gratitude for the work and role the SSO team plays in the student journey. There was a sense of cohesion across the SSO team in their commitment to deliver a positive student experience.

Current context
In contrast to many students and staff speaking with gratitude for the work the SSO team do, there were occasions during the meetings with the PRG that key stakeholders were unclear as to exactly what activities the SSO held responsibility for. Some staff misunderstood what unit SSO sat within, or thought they were part of CoMPPAS, while other staff and students referenced SSO as the intuitive place to go when they needed something. Staff in the SSO team felt much of the work they do goes under the radar. There was a consensus among the team that their current name SSO does not accurately reflect the work they do and that the name should change.

The SSO has evolved over time in response both to students' needs and other factors such as Covid, staff and organisational changes, and changes in the wider HEI national context. Consequently, the PRG felt it is timely for the SSO to engage in a strategic review of its activities and resources, to ensure alignment with university strategy. It is recommended this review be completed in partnership with the SMT, HR and the SSO with the goal of identifying the necessary areas to prioritise. Currently the organisational structure in the SSO is very flat and is heavily reliant on the Head of SSO.

There is a profound sense of pride across the Student Services team for the work that they do and the unique role they play in supporting students, recognizing the support they provide to the large cohort of international students based at RCSI. It was evident that the team understood the impact Covid has had on the student experience and since the removal of Covid restrictions the team has experienced challenges in managing the increased demands on their time. There was acknowledgement from across the SSO team that the current operational structure and delivery of service would benefit from review and change. While there was agreement among the team there is a need for change, and an articulated willingness to engage in change, there was an element of nervousness and concern that changes may negatively impact on the students.

The PRG were of the view that the SSO decision to be available to students in a welcoming and support manner, whilst maintaining an open-door policy, was impacting on the team's ability to manage the demands on the services. The PRG recommend this 'open door' policy be reduced to allow more time for focused activities along with reconfiguring the 'front of house' as an information hub / reception. In its current structure it was felt the 'front of house' is not clearly defined. The PRG also recommend the current SSO structure be reviewed with a recommendation of considering 'pods' of shared activity to ensure greater operation continuity of specific support activities.

Staffing & Reporting Structures

The SSO comprises of:
- Head of the SSO
- Accommodation Manager
- Gym Manager
- 5 x Student Services Coordinators (all with different responsibilities)
- 4 x Gym Specialists

The two manager posts and five Coordinator posts all report directly to the Head of the SSO, who in turn reports to the Director of Admissions, Recruitment and Student Services. The Director reports to the Vice Chancellor/Registrar/CEO. The Gym Specialist posts report to the Gym Manager.

Responsibility for all operational aspects of running the unit sits with the Head of the Student Services Office, which results in little time being available for the longer-term strategic planning elements. There was a consensus there is an overreliance on the Head of Service role for day-to-day operational matters. This reliance results in challenges when the Head of Service is on leave as matters such as approvals for payments have no clear escalation route when the Head of Service is not available.

The Student Services Coordinator roles work very closely together and 'cover' for each other in the event of annual leave or absence due to illness. The office space is open plan and the team described learning on their feet about each other's roles because of this. Weekly 'Heads up' meetings provide opportunities for the team to keep each other up to date with what is happening and there is excellent communication across the team, with a shared goal of meeting the students' needs. However, when there is an absence on the team it has a knock-on impact on colleagues in the SSO. There are practices in place whereby staff are often contacted while on annual leave, for issues such as approvals for payments or where student issues arise. The PRG have the opinion that in the long term this is not best practice or sustainable.

Concern was expressed by the SSO team regarding the current SSO structure both on career progression opportunities for staff and on staff retention. This structure does not lend itself well to succession planning. The impact the high turnover of staff (in roles such as the Front of House) has on quality of service is an area the team worry about and one they hope to address. The SMT and HR indicated they have been consulting with the Director and Head of Service on these matters and they would continue to work with the SSO to review the current staffing structures once the QIP has been completed.

Service Delivery and staffing:
The SSO team offer administrative support for new strategic projects on a wider organisational level, including the Student Leadership Initiative and Learning Communities. The SSO have supported these additional initiatives willingly and their contributions have been acknowledged and greatly appreciated by other staff involved. It is recommended by the PRG that to meet the needs of staff and students the resourcing of these initiatives should be explicitly addressed.

Alongside this there was a consistent narrative that the SSO team felt they had reached their workload capacity. It is hoped that the engagement in a strategic review of the current organisation of SSO activities and resources will assist in addressing this.

Staff induction/ training:
All new staff at RCSI complete an induction programme which is managed by the Human Resources Department. In the SSO the Head of Service oversees a period of induction within the SSO team for new colleagues. This process was described as learning by doing and is supported by the SSO team and takes place over time. The Head of Service would like to work on a formal SSO staff induction programme. There are SOPS in place for all the SSO functions, but the team described these as limited when it comes to 'learning the ropes.'

All team members in the Student Services Office receive annual training supported by the RCSI Learning & Development Team and can avail of further learning opportunities and CPD from external agencies. The team participate in the Professional Development Planning (PDP) which is overseen by the HR office. The SSO team are committed to conducting reviews and setting improvement objectives.

Decision making in the unit:
There is effective team cohesion across the SSO and a shared commitment to the delivery of quality services to the students. Decisions are made both individually and collectively. The open plan nature of the SSO, and the open-door policy for students was a source of immense pride for the Team. The PRG agreed the space felt welcoming and inviting for students. While it is recognized there are limitations to how it can be configured, the PRG felt the office would benefit from creating a front of house zone with areas or pods within the office. The PRG also agreed the open-door policy should be reduced to ensure more time for focused activities. Students spoke of dropping in and calling by for a chat to the SSO,

which in an open plan office can become counter-productive when it comes to creating space for decision making and focused work.

Apart from the Gym team who reside in No. 26 York Street, the SSO team operate from the central office space in 123 St Stephen's Green, which is an open plan space with workstations and seating areas. There is an open-door policy in place with a view to facilitating strong communication and engagement with students and staff. This is noted in the SAR as a method 'to facilitate feedback – both positive and negative'

Throughout the PRG meetings the SSO was often referred to by both staff and students, as the 'go to' place if you had a query. This is somewhat of a doubled edged sword as it is a contributor to the success of the SSO, but also a source of constant interruptions. There was some confusion expressed by some staff and students about the role of the SSO team and CoMMPAS, with many clearly not understanding the structures in place. Staff and students agreed this was an area that would benefit from additional information promotion.

4.1   Commendations

- The PRG commends the flexibility, commitment and knowledge shown by the SSO staff throughout this process. There is an excellent working relationship between the team which is experienced positively by students who avail of the supports.
- The willingness of SSO to support others in the implementation of new initiatives e.g. StEP and the introduction of Learning Communities.

4.2   Recommendations

- Engage in a strategic review of the current organisation of SSO activities and resources to ensure alignment with university strategy; the review should have inputs from SMT, HR and the SSO and identify necessary prioritisations.
  The review should include the following:
    - o   The name of the unit which best reflects their activities and services e.g., Office of Student Life or RCSI Student Life.
    - o   The risk to the continuity of services in the absence of specific staff; and the need for clearly defined escalation processes in these absences
    - o   Reduce the 'open door' policy to ensure more time for focused support activities and reconfiguring the front of house as an Information Hub/Reception
    - o   Consider 'pods' of shared activity to ensure greater operational continuity of specific support activities.
    - o   Consider the introduction of an Operations Steering Group comprising Finance, IT, HR, Estates, Students' Union and Admissions
- Provide clarity on the current complementary activities being undertaken by separate units, e.g., CoMPPAS and SSO, with the aim of more clearly articulating to staff and students where responsibilities lie for the range of student supports.
- The resourcing of support for new strategic projects such as the Student Leadership initiative and Learning Communities should be explicitly addressed to meet the needs of staff and students.

5 FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES AND PROCESSES

The SSO has a diverse set of responsibilities ranging across many aspects of undergraduate student life in RCSI. These include:

- Induction/orientation of new students including immigration and visa support
- Accommodation, on-campus and off-campus
- Peripheral accommodation for student on clinical rotations
- Support for Students' Union activities
- Support for Students' Union Officers
- Supports for Student Societies (and related External Speaker policy)
- Student Sports Clubs including Sports Scholarships
- Publications/Communications (guidebooks, handbooks, weekly digital newsletter)
- Gym & Fitness
- Merchandising including Club and Society Apparel
- Scholarships and Bursaries
- Student Hardship matters

Some of these areas are the sole responsibility of the SSO; others involve shared responsibilities with others in RCSI. In addition to its formal responsibilities, the SSO, due to its visibility on the Ground Floor, informally acts as a 'front of house' for students seeking assistance in relation to services outside its remit and may re-direct students to other relevant RCSI services such as SARA and CoMPPAS.

Student stakeholders that the PRG met were universally positive about the SSO staff and supports offered by SSO staff. Accommodation supports, term-time and peripheral, were praised by students as were the activities of the Gym & Fitness team.

To a large extent, the SSO represents the 'institutional memory' for the Students' Union given the part-time (and time poor) nature of all the SU Officers. In these circumstances, the absence of a dedicated support for the SU was seen as an impediment to its effectiveness.

The SSO are central to the operation of Clubs and Societies in RCSI, in both the organisation of activities and supports and the funding and approval of associated expenditures. SSO support for activities was recognised and much appreciated by the leaders of Clubs and Societies. SSO's development of the Student Life HQ was seen as a great innovation by ordinary members of Clubs and Societies as well as their Officers, making organisation of events simpler and less complex and allowing ease of sign-up by members. Notwithstanding their praise of SSO's work, students involved in the Clubs and Societies expressed a wish to have a better understanding of the process involved in determining budgets for the year. They are eager to have more involvement and for Clubs and Societies Leaders to have greater agency and autonomy in the operations of their club/society. The PRG cannot see a case for limiting membership of Clubs and Societies to undergraduate students and believe that the RCSI student community could gain from the presence of interested postgraduate students within club and society membership.

Merchandising activities have grown considerably in recent years, catering to both student and alumni markets. This growth has happened in an unplanned way, creating challenges in its operations, storage, and stock control. The PRG do not believe that the current operation is fit for purpose and recommend that it be reviewed.

5.1 Commendations

- The critical role that SSO plays in the success of clubs and societies.

- The successful introduction of the Student Life HQ portal. This is an excellent resource for students.
- Within the national context of the housing crisis, their success in securing accommodation.
- The expertise of the gym staff and the quality of the delivery of the service.

5.2 Recommendations

- The PRG recommend a review of current merchandising activities with consideration for an online or outsourced operation for all merchandising with appropriate links from RCSI Student Life HQ
- Implement a dedicated secretariat in order to support the SU in their activities and to ensure retention and continuity of corporate memory.
- Provide greater transparency to Clubs and Societies on the process for determining annual funding allocations.
- Review current procedures to create learner processes to give Clubs and Societies leaders greater agency and autonomy in the operations of the club/society.
- Review (with any necessary university stakeholders) current barriers to the creation of new societies.
- Extend the membership of clubs and societies to postgraduate students.

6 MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES

The financial procedures and day to day finance activities were the focus of much discussion with the Unit's staff over the course of this review. The finance operations in the unit have proved challenging in terms to delivering efficient payment timelines to service users and external stakeholders. The financial procedures and processes are robust and adhere to all RCSI guidelines in terms of approval processes, but the approval of all payments is dependent on the Head of the Unit. The Head of the Unit is required to approve all payments, regardless of the amount and the panel felt this was an unreasonable expectation on one person. It also left the Unit unable to approve any payments if the Head of the Unit was absent. The panel agreed that the introduction of a layered approval process would be more efficient for the unit, i.e. where a coordinator could approve a spend under a certain financial amount and over this amount, the payment would be referred to the Head of SSO.

The Self- Assessment report highlighted the significant numbers of hours in the working week, which the Unit's staff spend on managing budgets and spending. The staff advised the panel that, on average they spend 1-2 days per week solely on financial activities, and the staff member who manages the peripheral accommodation budget can spend even more time on this activity alone. The staff within the Unit are open and willing to engage in a review to create a leaner financial process within the parameters of the finance process in RCSI. They advised that if this cannot be achieved, they felt that the introduction of a dedicated financial management resource would reduce the significant amount of time spent on financial activities.

The Unit have balanced their budget year on year, without being able to view the bank accounts or transactions in real time. Through discussion with Unit's staff, the panel identified the need for a less formal payment structure for small expenditure, which is required daily for the operation of clubs and societies. The timelines for approval of desired expenditures have meant that, on occasion, Club and Society Officers have purchased items for the club or society from personal funds and then sought retrospective r reimbursement through formal channels. This practice leaves students out of pocket until reimbursement and is an undesirable departure from formal approval processes. The PRG recommend that processes should be reviewed to ensure that this practice does not arise in future. It was also noted, through discussion with the Unit staff and Club and Society Officers that these officers are dealing with cash from fundraising and event ticket sales on a regular basis. The panel felt this handling of cash was a security concern and that the introduction of an online payment system, through the already established Student Life HQ, would be more efficient going forward. The introduction of access to a payment processing platform through the Student Life HQ would facilitate the sale of event tickets and allow fundraising monies collected to be deposited through a cashless 'tap to donate' facility, paid directly into the online account.

6.1 Commendations

- The flexibility, commitment and knowledge shown by the staff.

6.2 Recommendations

- Review of required processes from user perspectives with the aim of implementing lean processes including simpler and shorter approval cycles. In the absence of leaner processes, a dedicated financial management resource is recommended to support expenditure approval processes for current SSO operations.
- Implement necessary procedural changes to allow cashless payments through RCSI Student Life HQ.
- In the context of current financial procedures, review with Finance the introduction of a layered approval process at coordinator level.

7   SERVICE USERS AND FEEDBACK

The Student Services Office engage with stakeholders from across the university community and while their primary 'service users' are students; their support is integral to the operation of projects which benefit cohorts of both professional and academic staff members. The Unit is very student-facing, both due to its location on the ground floor, and due to the reputation of the staff as kind-natured and helpful such that students are encouraged to seek guidance from the SSO team.

Engagement with students begins as early as pre-admission when students engage with the accommodation staff and continues throughout the time spent at RCSI. The diverse and significant international student population, the majority of whom have never lived in Ireland before means that the SSO becomes a 'home away from home' for many. Student expectations about their experience are high and against this backdrop, feedback from stakeholders has been overwhelmingly positive, across all service provisions.

Each member of the office team has a strong working knowledge of the supports and services that others provide, and this was commented on by many service users. While all students engaged in the review process were complimentary of the work of SSO, it appeared that several were not aware of the line between the services provided by SSO ended and those provided by CoMPPAS began. The panel heard several accounts to the tune that while the "CoMPPAS team are very good, SSO is more convenient". This results in the SSO, particularly those at front of house providing an interim counselling and triage service for those which for those who either did not feel the need to attend CoMPPAS or are not aware of the service this distinct unit provides. The 'open door' policy and open-plan office layout, while it certainly contributed positively to the excellent and enthusiastic working relationship the staff had with one another, lends itself to this additional welfare assistance provided to service users. From a student perspective, there appears to be a lack of clarity in the services which fall upon the SSO to provide to postgraduate students and the degree to which they can benefit from the supports and services provided.

The primary method of feedback collection is through the *Student Pulse-* an evaluation survey programme which is managed by the Quality Enhancement Office. The detailed reports, including the most recent from January and April 2022 show high rates of student- satisfaction, with consistent rates over the past five years of over 70% of students either 'agreeing' or 'strongly agreeing' that the level of support is satisfactory. This was reflected in in meetings with clubs and societies representatives and the Students' Union.

Services users, while expressing suggestions for improvement across many areas (accommodation, gym, SU Support), all acknowledged that the unit is working at saturated capacity. Frustrations were not with individual staff members but rather at processes which could be more efficient. Students expressed great appreciation for the members of the team they engaged individually with, citing their 'above and beyond' efforts as fundamental to their student experience at RCSI. That said, there does not appear to be a clear feedback loop where suggestions gathered through the *Student Pulse* programme are incorporated into practice. Given the specialised nature of some services and the number of requests for change which could be addressed without major financial or time investment, it may be best to facilitate this 'loop' at a localised level with individual coordinators given the necessary autonomy to respond to feedback.

A further challenge which the office encounters is that they work on students' time and meeting the 'expectations' referred to above. However, in the gym if students have a preference for lighting/hours/use of space, a localised feedback loop actioning the suggestions where approach could add to student satisfaction. Similarly, in the context of 52 clubs and 35 societies, the layers of approval to run and make event-related payments constituted the main concerns raised. Greater transparency in decision-making related to annual funding allocations and room-bookings, incorporated into a feedback loop would be welcomed and could reduce related student queries.

Representatives of clubs and societies also sought greater autonomy in their operations and the logistical feasibility of this should be considered. In relation to accommodation and hardship, feedback expressed great appreciation for the work done to secure places for students both in Dublin and in peripheral accommodation, particularly during a housing crisis. The lack of engagement with postgraduate students in the course of the review made it difficult to assess their levels of engagement with the unit, yet it is understood that the unit is often responsible for redirecting their queries.

Overall, there was universal recognition of the value of the variety of services provided by the SSO office in the students' journey which although very clear to students can go under-recognised by fellow staff.

7.1 Commendations

- The stakeholders – students and staff – within the wider RCSI community expressed their appreciation and value of their work and the role the team plays in the student journey.

7.2 Recommendations

- Put in place a feedback process that 'closes the loop' on issues raised by students in relation to SSO operations.

8 ONGOING QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

The PRG saw evidence of consistent and ongoing commitments to Quality Enhancement by the SSO in areas where it had direct responsibility as well as areas where it supports the activities of wider RCSI initiatives.

The PRG were impressed with the variety of methods used by the SSO to communicate with students and were particularly impressed with the progress made on the successful implementation of the Student Life HQ portal. Initially developed as a response to the impact of lockdown on student experience, allowing continuing interaction with clubs and societies, it has proved a highly valuable resource for students post-lockdown. It was consistently mentioned by students as a 'go to' source for information and planning of student activities.

The implementation of Clubwise – a third-party CRM system – by the RCSI Gym has allowed consistent and targeted communication and management of student interactions with the gym and fitness activities. The Gym's 'No Cook' cookbook, an initiative for students on clinical rotations with limited access to cooking facilities was another example of commitment to improvement of the student experience.

In contributing to other RCSI activities, the PRG was told of the importance of the SSO in assisting the organisation of the Student Leadership Development Programme); without SSO goodwill and support, it would not be able to deliver on its objectives.

While the development of its merchandising activities was identified by the SSO as an area of ongoing Quality Enhancement, the PRG was not persuaded that this service should lie within the range of SSO activities.

8.1 Commendations

- The willingness of SSO to support others in the implementation of new initiatives e.g. the Student Leadership Development Programme and the introduction of Learning Communities.
- The implementation of the Student Life HQ portal.
- The expertise of the gym staff and the quality of the delivery of the service.

8.2 Recommendations

- Review of current merchandising activities with consideration for an online or outsourced operation for all merchandising with appropriate links from RCSI Student Life HQ.

9 SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Commendations

- The team have been very willing to engage with the Quality Enhancement process.

- The flexibility, commitment and knowledge shown by the staff.

- They have an excellent, enthusiastic working relationship with each other.

- Their commitment to the students and creating a welcoming environment, especially for new students.

- The stakeholders – students and staff – within the wider RCSI community expressed their appreciation and value of their work and the role the team plays in the student journey.

- Their willingness to support others in the implementation of new initiatives e.g. StEP and the introduction of Learning Communities.

- Their critical place in the success of clubs and societies.

- Within the national context of the housing crisis, their success in securing accommodation.

- The implementation of the Student Life HQ portal.

- The expertise of the gym staff and the quality of the delivery of the service.

9.2 Recommendations

University level
Business planning/strategy
- Engage in a strategic review of the current organisation of SSO activities and resources to ensure alignment with University strategy; the review should have inputs from SMT, HR and the SSO and identify necessary prioritisations.

  The review should also include the following:

  - The name of the unit which best reflects their activities and services e.g. Office of Student Life or RCSI Student Life.

  - The risk to the continuity of services in the absence of specific staff; and the need for clearly defined escalation processes in these absences.

  - Reduce the 'open door' policy to ensure more time for focused support activities, and reconfiguring the front of house as an Information Hub/Reception.

  - Consider 'pods' of shared activity to ensure greater operational continuity of specific support activities.

  - Consider the introduction of an Operations Steering Group comprising Finance, IT, HR, Estates, Students' Union and Admissions.

SSO and CoMPPAS

Context: Lack of clarity on the part of students (and some staff) on the intended respective roles of these units in supporting the student learning journey.

- Provide clarity on the current complementary activities being undertaken by separate units with the aim of more clearly articulating to staff and students where responsibilities lie for the range of student supports.

Supports for new strategic projects such as the *Student Leadership initiative* and *Learning Communities*

Context: *These initiatives currently rely in part on ad hoc supports from SSO.*

- To meet the needs of staff and students the resourcing of these initiatives should be explicitly addressed.

- Extend membership of clubs and societies to postgraduate students.

Merchandising

Context: Current merchandising operations have grown in an unplanned way and are not fit for purpose.

- Review of current merchandising activities with consideration for an online or outsourced operation for all merchandising with appropriate links from RCSI Student Life HQ.

Finance/Financial Management

Context: Multiple small ticket expenditures to support clubs' and societies' expenditures and payments to peripheral accommodation suppliers; current systems/processes requiring excessive time commitment by SSO staff in generating required documentation and necessary approvals to support these multiple small ticket purchases/orders.

- Review of required processes from user perspectives with the aim of implementing lean processes including simpler and shorter approval cycles.

- In the absence of leaner processes, a dedicated financial management resource is recommended to support expenditure approval processes for current SSO operations.

Finance/Financial Management

Context: Student Clubs and Societies collecting cash and cashless payments (to students' personal accounts) for events and activities with attendant personal and financial risks.

- Implement necessary procedural changes to allow cashless payments through RCSI Student Life HQ.

Unit level

Current Operating procedures:

- In the context of current financial procedures, review with Finance the introduction of a layered approval process at coordinator level.

Clubs and Societies

- Provide greater transparency to Clubs and Societies on the process for determining annual funding allocations.

- Review current procedures to create learner processes to give Clubs and Societies' leaders greater agency and autonomy in the operations of the club/society.

- Review (with any necessary university stakeholders) current barriers to the creation of new societies.

Other

- Put in place a feedback process that 'closes the loop' on issues raised by students in relation to SSO operations.

- A dedicated secretariat in order to support the SU in their activities and to ensure retention and continuity of corporate memory.

University of Medicine and Health Sciences

APPENDIX 1: SITE VISIT SCHEDULE

SITE VISIT | Day 1 |Tuesday 8 November 2022

Date	Time	Dur. Mins	Sched. No.	Mtg. Title	Venue
Tues 8 Nov	09.00 – 09.20	20 mins	4	PRG: Review of preparatory work	Robert Smith Room
	09.20 – 10.30	70 mins	5	**Meeting with Director Student Recruitment, Admissions & Student Services and Head of Student Services** 10 minute presentation by SSO followed by questions and discussion.	Robert Smith Room
	10.35 – 10.55	20 mins	6	Break for PRG Tea/coffee	Robert Smith Room
	11.00 – 12.00	60 mins	7	**Meeting with SSO staff (Group 1) Clubs, Societies, Events, Gym, Tours, Hardship, Scholarships** **Meeting Theme:** Overview of roles, working environment; career development and opportunities; collaboration and support; challenges and future potential.	Robert Smith Room
	12.00 – 12.10	10 mins	8	10 minute preparation time between meetings for PRG	Robert Smith Room
	12.10 – 13.10	60 mins	9	**Meeting with SSO staff (Group 2) Peripheral & On Campus, Front of House Services, Student Union Support Accommodation** **Meeting Theme:** Overview of roles, working environment; career development and opportunities; collaboration and support; challenges and future potential.	Robert Smith Room
	13.10 – 13.50	40 mins	10	Lunch for PRG joined by QEO Staff	Robert Smith Room
	13.50 – 14.40	50 mins	11	**Review defined meeting #1: Meeting with academic and professional services colleagues from across RCSI.** **Meeting Theme:** Student Engagement and the role of SSO in the delivery of student engagement initiatives	Robert Smith Room
	14.40 – 14.45	5 mins	12	5 minute preparation time between meetings for PRG	
	14.45 – 15.35	50 mins	13	**Tour of Facilities**	RCSI SSG Campus

University of Medicine and Health Sciences

Date	Time	Dur. Mins	Sched. No.	Mtg. Title	Venue
				Student Services Office, Student Union Office, Squash Court, Sports Union Office, Sports Facilities & Gym	
	15.35 – 15.55	20 mins	14	Break for PRG Tea/coffee	Robert Smith Room
Tues 8 Nov	16.00 – 16.45	45 mins	15	**Review defined meeting #2: Meeting with members of the Undergraduate Student Union** **Meeting Theme:** Role of the Student Services Office in supporting students and students' union	Robert Smith Room
	16.45 – 17.15	30 mins	16	PRG Review of afternoon's meetings; draft commendations & recommendations; planning for next day	Robert Smith Room
	18.00 – 21.00		17	Dinner for PRG	

SITE VISIT | Day 2 | Wednesday 9 November 2022

Date	Time	Dur. Mins	Sched. No.	Mtg. Title	Venue
Wed 9 Nov	08.45 – 09.15	30 mins	18	PRG: Review of preparatory work	Robert Smith Room
	09.15 – 10.05	50 mins	19	**Review defined meeting #3 Meeting with u/g students from across RCSI programmes** **Meeting Theme:** Arrival & Orientation, Accommodation, Bahrain Exchange Programme, Student Life, Clubs, Societies, Events & Gym Current Students (Group 1)	Robert Smith Room
	10.05 – 10.15	10 mins	20	10 minute preparation time between meetings for PRG	Robert Smith Room
	10.15 – 10.40	25 mins	21	**Review defined meeting #4 Post Graduate Student Union** **Meeting Theme:** Role of SSO with PGSU and potential for developing future provision and implications for resources.	Robert Smith Room
	10.40 – 11.00	20 mins	22	Break for PRG - **DVCAA will meet the PRG** Tea/coffee	Robert Smith Room
	11.00 – 11.50	50 mins	23	**Review defined meeting #5 Meeting with Professional Services staff representatives and business partners with a focus on operational provision**	Robert Smith Room

				Meeting Theme: Relationships; interdependencies; success inhibitors/enablers; and recommendations. Operations: Activities, Events, Finance, Staff Resources, Facilities, IT	
	11.50 – 12.00	10 mins	24	10 minute preparation time between meetings for PRG	Robert Smith Room
	12.00 – 12.50	50 mins	25	Review defined meeting #8 Meeting with academic an d professional services colleagues from across RCSI. Meeting Theme: The role of SSO in supporting the operational aspects of the Student Journey from Orientation to Graduation	Robert Smith Room
	12.50 – 13.30	40 mins	26	Lunch for PRG	
	13.30 – 14.20	50 mins	27	Review defined meeting #6 Hybrid Meeting with recent graduates of RCSI Meeting Theme: Graduate experience and reflections on student life and SSO supports with a focus on pre-Covid activities.	President's Meeting Room and MS Teams
	14.20 – 14.30	10 mins	28	10 minute preparation time between meetings for PRG	Robert Smith Room
Wed 9 Nov	14.30– 15.20	50 mins	29	Review defined meeting #7 Meeting with SMT members and Heads of School Meeting theme: SSO alignment with current strategy and future directions; resourcing; SSO services and service users	Robert Smith Room
	15.20 – 15.40	20 mins	30	Break for PRG Tea/coffee	Robert Smith Room
	15.40 – 16.30	50 mins	31	Review defined meeting #9 Meeting with u/g students from across RCSI programmes Meeting Theme: Student experience of Student Life, Clubs, Societies, Events & Gym and the role of SSO in supporting activities Current Students (Group 2)	Robert Smith Room
	16.30 – 16.40	10 mins	32	10 minute preparation time between meetings for PRG	Robert Smith Room
	16.40 – 17.10	30 mins	33	Meeting with Head of unit / management team (if required)	Robert Smith Room

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				Follow up meeting with unit management team – opportunity to explore aspects arising from stakeholder meetings	
	17.10 – 17.30	20 mins	34	PRG Review of afternoon's meetings; draft commendations & recommendations; planning for next day	Robert Smith Room

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SITE VISIT | Day 3 | Thursday 10 November 2022

Date	Time	Dur. Mins	Sched. No.	Mtg. Title	Venue
Thurs 10 Nov	08.45 – 09.00	15 mins	35	PRG: Review of preparatory work	Sir Thomas Myles Room
	09.00 – 09.30	30 mins	36	Time slot for additional meeting (s) (if required by PRG)	Sir Thomas Myles Room
	09.30 – 11.45	135 mins	37	PRG meeting to finalise commendations and recommendations *Tea/coffee served at 10.30*	Sir Thomas Myles Room
	12.00 – 12.30	30 mins	38	PRG meeting with QEO for clarification and discussion of main findings	President's Meeting Room
	12.30 – 13.00	30 mins	39	Meeting with Head of Unit & QEO to present main findings	President's Meeting Room
	13.00 – 13.15	15 mins	40	Exit presentation to unit staff – key commendations & recommendations	President's Meeting Room
	13.30 – 14.30	50 mins	41	Lunch and private meeting time with QEO	Sir Thomas Myles Room
	14.30			Review ends	

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Internal Quality Review

Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

The Student Services Office January 2024

Quality Improvement Plan
The Student Services Office
DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

Name of Unit	Student Services					
Project Title	Quality Improvement Plan					
Document Title	Quality Improvement Plan					
This Document Comprises	DCS	TOC	Text	List of Tables	List of Figures	No. of Appendices

Rev	Status	Author(s)	Reviewed By	Approved By	Office of Origin	Issue Date
24/03/2023	Draft 1	SSO				
11/5/2023	Draft 2	SSO				
05/09/2023	Draft 3	SSO				
13/12/2023	Draft 4	SSO				

Quality Improvement Plan 2024

Recommendation in order of the PRG Report	SAR Reference PRGR reference	Response / Action Planned	Responsibility for Action	Resources Implications	Deadline / timeframe	Measurement / Benchmarking	Outcome / Status

University Level							
Business planning/strategy							
1	(1A) Engage in a strategic review of the current organisation of SSO activities and resources to ensure alignment with university strategy; the review should have inputs from SMT, HR and the SSO and identify necessary prioritisations. The review should include the following:	University Level Recommendation (PRGR, 9.2 pg. 16)	SSO will engage with relevant stakeholders from SMT and HR to determine the best approach in progressing these recommendations to include the following: Revisit the SSO Organisational Structure Review and benchmarking exercise carried out previously in conjunction with HR Dept., in light of PRG recommendations to identify and analyse commonalities in findings across both processes. In consultation with SMT and HR, agree a process for prioritising and aligning SSO activities with university strategy with regards to current or additional resource requirements to meet the needs of key stakeholders.	SSO SMT HR	To be determined	Q1 2024	Activities and resources align with university strategy.	

Quality Improvement Plan 2024

Recommendation in order of the PRG Report	SAR Reference PRGR reference	Response / Action Planned	Responsibility for Action	Resources Implications	Deadline / timeframe	Measurement / Benchmarking	Outcome / Status
(1B) - The name of the unit which best reflects their activities and services e.g. Office of Student Life or RCSI Student Life.	University Level Recommendation (PRGR, 9.2 pg. 16)	The SSO will rename the office to better reflect its activities and services. The SSO will launch the new rebranded office. SSO will engage with Design and Communications in the rebranding and launch of the office under the new name.	SSO	Rebrand costs to be identified.	Q3 2024	Rebrand complete	
(1C) - The risk to the continuity of services in the absence of specific staff; and the need for clearly defined escalation processes in these absences.	University Level Recommendation (PRGR, 9.2 pg. 16)	Revisit benchmarking exercise in light of PRG recommendation to identify staffing requirements to ensure continuity of service delivery. In consultation with HR, agree the criteria for an additional higher grade role within SSO to provide the required senior level support and oversight in the provision of services.	SSO HR SMT	Review current posts and salaries to determine how higher role can be funded	Q2 2024	Staff resourcing in place appropriate to service delivery requirements.	
(1D) - Reduce the 'open door' policy to ensure more time for focused support activities, and reconfiguring the front of house as an Information Hub/Reception.	University Level Recommendation (PRGR, 9.2 pg. 16)	SSO believes that the 'open door' policy is a unique and valued service to students and therefore wants to continue this service. SSO will engage with Estates Department re optimal reconfiguration of the office space to facilitate continuation of the 'open door' policy whilst allowing for a more	SSO SMT	It is expected that minor refurbishment work is required. SSO will work with the Estates	Q3 2024		

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Recommendation in order of the PRG Report	SAR Reference PRGR reference	Response / Action Planned	Responsibility for Action	Resources Implications	Deadline / timeframe	Measurement / Benchmarking	Outcome / Status
		conducive work environment for staff. The office reconfiguration will create distinctive zones to best serve student engagement and support the proposed new "pod" structure.		Dept. to cost the works			
(1E) - Consider 'pods' of shared activity to ensure greater operational continuity of specific support activities		Create a pod system of services with clearly defined leaders in each pod which will serve to address the flat structure. The SSO will restructure to cluster services into "Pods" to reduce operational reliance on individuals and thus, maintaining continuity of service delivery. SSO will work in partnership with HR Dept.	SSO HR SMT	Cost of any potential adjustments to staff contracts and benefits as required to support Pod structure. To be determined.	Q2 2024	Staff retention. Staff feedback on career opportunities and longer staff tenure.	
(1F) - Consider the introduction of an Operations Steering Group comprising Finance, IT, HR, Estates, Students' Union,	University Level Recommendation - (PRGR, 9.2 pg. 16)	Engage with SMT to discuss the possibility of using the membership of the Student Affairs Committee to meet on a scheduled basis to discuss and manage operational and delivery challenges. Chaired by a nominated representative of SMT.	SSO	None	Q2 2025	Operational Steering Group meet once/twice each semester	

Recommendation in order of the PRG Report	SAR Reference PRGR reference	Response / Action Planned	Responsibility for Action	Resources Implications	Deadline / timeframe	Measurement / Benchmarking	Outcome / Status
		(This need was recommended in the SSO Quality Review 2012)					
SSO and CoMPPAS							
2 - Provide clarity on the current complementary activities being undertaken by separate units with the aim of more clearly articulating to staff and students where responsibilities lie for the range of student supports.	SSO and CoMPPAS (PRGR, 9.2 pg. 17)	Develop an infographic/ media campaign with CoMPPAS and SARA to map services provided by each department. Distribute to all staff and students on completion.	SSO	Budget for visual communications to be determined	Q3 2024	Infographic is published	
Supports for new strategic projects such as the Student Leadership initiative and Learning Communities							
3 - The resourcing of support for new strategic projects such as the Student Leadership initiative and Learning Communities should be explicitly addressed to meet the needs of staff and students.	Supports (PRGR, 9.2 pg. 17)	Decisions surrounding strategic projects need to evaluate the operational impact and resource implications on SSO at the planning stage and prior to implementation. SMT to consider process.	SSO & SMT	Resource implications may vary between projects. Resources to be determined in consultation with SMT during project planning phase.	Address as part of the strategic review – Q1 2024	Operational support requirements are factored into the planning process for strategic projects.	

Quality Improvement Plan 2024

Recommendation in order of the PRG Report	SAR Reference PRGR reference	Response / Action Planned	Responsibility for Action	Resources Implications	Deadline / timeframe	Measurement / Benchmarking	Outcome / Status
4 - Extend membership of clubs and societies to postgraduate students.	(PRGR, 9.2 pg. 17)	Extend membership of clubs and societies to postgraduate scholar students (Students from the SPGS).	SSO	Staffing and budget – delivered within new pod structure.	Q3 2023	Successful implementation and integration	
Merchandising							
5 - Review of current merchandising activities with consideration for an online or outsourced operation for all merchandising with appropriate links from RCSI Student Life HQ.	Merchandising (PRGR, 9.2 pg. 17)	Review of merchandise service delivery to better serve relevant stakeholders. Areas for review: - Model of the service – internal v outsourced - Location & Space - Staffing & Budgets Partnering with SMT, HR, Estates and Finance	SSO & SMT	Strategic and Operational Plan required. Finance, facilities & staff resources -v- outsourced model which may require on line portal for purchases.	Q1 2025	New model implemented	
Finance/Financial Management							
6 - Review of required processes from user perspectives with the aim of implementing lean processes including simpler and shorter approval cycles.	Finance/Financial Management (PRGR, 9.2 pg. 17) Management of Resources (PRGR, pg. 12)	Review finance workflows to implement lean processes for SSO staff and students to include simpler and shorter approval cycles, and a faster payments system. Partnering with Finance	SSO	Staff training may be required in lean process methodology. Cost of training to be determined.	Q2 2024	When leaner processes are in place to enhance the user experience. Staff and student feedback on efficiencies created by the new process. Feedback from SU,	

Quality Improvement Plan 2024

Recommendation in order of the PRG Report	SAR Reference PRGR reference	Response / Action Planned	Responsibility for Action	Resources Implications	Deadline / timeframe	Measurement / Benchmarking	Outcome / Status
						Clubs & Societies Officers.	
7 - In the absence of learner processes (Recommendation 6 above), the introduction dedicated financial management resource is recommended to support expenditure approval processes for current SSO operations.	Finance/Financial Management (PRGR, 9.2 pg. 17)	SSO will engage with Finance and HR department re potential solutions for a dedicated financial management resource.\n\nAlternatively staff resource could be incorporated into the additional higher grade role (under recommendation 1C) as opposed to a standalone finance role.	SSO HR	Costs to be determined.	Q1 2025	As recommendation 6 above	
8 - Implement necessary procedural changes to allow cashless payments through RCSI Student Life HQ.	Finance/Financial Management (PRGR, 9.2 pg. 17)	SSO will engage with Finance Department to investigate solutions and progress the necessary procedural changes to allow cashless payments.	SSO Finance	Draw up budget for cost of implementing changes – set up and transactional costs to be determined.	Q2 2024	Cashless payment system available through RCSI Student Life HQ	
Unit Level							
Current Operating Procedures							
9 - Review with Finance the introduction of a layered	Finance/Financial Management - Unit Level	Actions outlined under recommendation 6, 7 & 8	SSO	Outlined under recommendations 6, 7 & 8	Q2 2024	Outlined under recommendations 6, 7 & 8	

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Recommendation in order of the PRG Report	SAR Reference PRGR reference	Response / Action Planned	Responsibility for Action	Resources Implications	Deadline / timeframe	Measurement / Benchmarking	Outcome / Status
approval process at coordinator level.	(PRGR, 9.2 pg. 17)						
Clubs and Societies							
10 - Provide greater transparency to Clubs and Societies on the process for determining annual funding allocations.	Clubs and Societies (PRGR, 9.2 pg. 17)	Review current Standard Operating Procedures and publish clear funding decision to relevant Clubs & Societies.	SSO	None	Q3 2023	Published clear funding decisions to relevant Clubs & Societies	
11 - Review current procedures to create leaner processes to give Clubs and Societies' leaders greater agency and autonomy in the operations of the club/society.	Clubs and Societies (PRGR, 9.2 pg. 17)	Review current procedures to provide Clubs and Societies' "leaders' greater agency". Changes to procedures will require the development of a range of SOPs to cover all clubs and societies. It is anticipated that it will be a challenge to develop SOPs to manage the range of all the activities of clubs and societies. To mitigate against risks and any unintended outcomes as a result of changes to procedures, SSO will engage with SMT and other relevant partners including	SSO		Q2 2024	Approval to provide Clubs and Societies' "leaders' greater agency".	

Quality Improvement Plan 2024

Recommendation in order of the PRG Report		SAR Reference PRGR reference	Response / Action Planned	Responsibility for Action	Resources Implications	Deadline / timeframe	Measurement / Benchmarking	Outcome / Status
			Student Union, Health & Safety Team, Legal Team, Porters, International Reputation, Finance, Communications, EDI and Estates Team, in the development and delivery of any changes to procedures.					
12	-	Review current barriers to the creation of new societies.	Clubs and Societies (PRGR, 9.2 pg. 17)	SSO will review current barriers to the creation of new societies (linked to recommendation 11) and develop an agreed process for the creation of new societies taking into account any additional resources required. Partnering with HR & Finance	SSO	'Right size' needs of society and clubs offering.	Q3 2024	'Right size' number of clubs and societies creating vibrant student life offering	
Other								
13	-	Put in place a feedback process that 'closes the loop' on issues raised by students in relation to SSO operations.	Other (PRGR, 9.2 pg. 18)	Engage with a feedback mechanism to show students how feedback is being acted upon. Partnering with Quality Enhancement Office	SSO	None	Q2 2023	Clear mechanism to show students how feedback is being acted upon	
14	-	A dedicated secretariat in order to support the SU in their activities and to ensure retention and	Other (PRGR, 9.2 pg. 18)	Recruit a dedicated secretariat in order to support the SU in their activities. (This role is currently in situ and funded from an SSO Operations	SSO	Salary costs – Secretary B post x 1 full time	Q1 2024	Staff resourcing appropriate to service delivery requirements. Feedback from union officers on the support	

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Recommendation in order of the PRG Report	SAR Reference PRGR reference	Response / Action Planned	Responsibility for Action	Resources Implications	Deadline / timeframe	Measurement / Benchmarking	Outcome / Status
continuity of corporate memory.		Budget. This resource was highlighted in the units previous quality review)				received from this resource.	