Audio Visual Services Unit

Peer Review Group:

> Mr. N. Keeley, Director of Human Resources, UCC (Chair)
> Professor C. Murphy, Department of Accounting, Finance & Information Systems, UCC
> Mr. M. Chapman, Audio Visual Services Unit, University of Limerick
> Mr. A. Craig, Medical Illustration Department, Monklands Hospital, Scotland

Brief Description of conduct of Site Visit:

The site visit was conducted over 2.5 days from 27th – 29th August, 2001 and included meetings with

- i) Head and staff of the unit as a group and individually,
- ii) Representatives of students,
- iii) Representatives of the academic staff,
- iv) VP for Planning, Communications & Development,
- v) Administrative Secretary,
- vi) Secretary & Bursar/VP for Finance & Administration
- vii) Head of User Services, Computer Centre; and a visit to unit

facilities in UCC.

An exit presentation of the principal findings of the Peer Review Group was made to all the staff of the Audio Visual Services Unit during the afternoon of the second day.

Description of Audio Visual Services Unit

Head of Unit: 1

No. of Staff: 5 technicians and 2 administrative staff, all full-time permanent

Location of Unit: Aras na Laoi

Functions of Unit:

- ▶ To provide and maintain audio visual facilities in common (centrally booked) teaching, conferencing and events areas of College
- ▶ To contribute to the design/planning of new areas and the outfitting, upgrading and refurbishment of others as required
- ▶ To provide advice and support for all departments in the buying, installation and maintenance of audio visual equipment.
- ▶ To act as an academic support service
- ▶ To provide a technical service

Mission Statement

To be a service provider of choice to our customers in support of the College Mission.

Aims & Objectives

- ▶ To become a more user-friendly, customer-focussed service
- ▶ To become more pro-active in anticipating user needs and taking a more innovative approach to the provision of audio visual services
- ▶ To promote and advertise our services, ensuring users are kept up-to-date on new an emerging technologies
- ▶ To undertake adequate training and maximise the deployment of your resources or the benefit of College and its students
- ▶ To provide the necessary expertise to help, advise and guide College in achieving the highest standards in teaching support

General Comment on Quality Review

The Peer Review Group complimented the Audio Visual Services Unit on the obvious hard work and effort that went into compiling the Self-Assessment Report and thanked the staff of the Unit for the level of co-operation and candidness they displayed throughout the course of the review. While the Peer Review Group felt that the Self-Assessment Report was of good quality, it did note possible improvements that could be considered for the future in conducting such assessments: the poor response rate from some sectors of the staff in UCC could be counterbalanced by using focus groups to ascertain views; and a full analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats should be included as part of the report. The review group noted that the Audio Visual Services Unit is characterised by highly skilled staff with a strong commitment to high quality. It has the potential to make an even greater contribution to the teaching services of the University and to offer greater production services. The Peer Review Group was impressed by the enthusiasm of all personnel interviewed for the expansion and development of the services that the Audio Visual Services Unit offers.

Many of the recommendations in the report were concerned with development of an appropriate strategy for the Audio Visual Services Unit, following discussion with the relevant bodies/personnel in UCC. The group felt that this was essential before any major recommendations in relation to specific resources could realistically be made.

The Quality Promotion Committee iterated its view that the primary focus of the Audio Visual Services Unit must be the support of teaching and that all strategies developed must have this in the forefront.

Progress on Recommendations for Improvement

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation by QPC	Follow-up Report – Oct. 02
That the Unit rapidly concludes its planning process and implements the action points set out in Section 3.2 of the SA Report ♦ Setting of quality standards for services and practices and have on-going measurement systems ♦ Defining the role of the Unit in a more comprehensive way, agree it formally with College and publicise ♦ Achieve a higher profile for the AVSU ♦ Define staff roles, enhance skills and increase knowledge in a planned way ♦ Develop a strategy whereby some services will be streamlined, limited or killed off so that others can be enhances to become dependable quality services. ♦ Create a 3/5 year plan for the Unit with achievable objectives balanced against available resources.	The QPC welcomed and endorsed recommendations. Recommended immediate action is taken. The QPC recommended that there should be a prioritisation of activities and an integration of activities into the academic community via discussion with Council of Deans, and that this is undertaken immediately as a matter of urgency. The QPC recommended that the AVSU present an Annual Report to Faculties and Academic Council. This report would highlight the activities of the Unit over the previous year, would assist in raising the profile for the Unit within the academic community, and would provide an opportunity for feedback from the academic community.	The Head of the AVSU has made 2 presentations to the Council of Deans: 1. providing background information and discussion of areas of interest; and 2. a report prepared by the Head indicating core activities, priorities, etc. as per the guidelines provided by the Deans. The Council identified priorities and a policy document (attached) has been developed which is close to finalisation. However it appears likely that the outcome will be an increase in volume of work for the AVSU and an increase in expectations of what the unit can deliver. Unless some means are identified of increasing the support for the unit this may result in increased dissatisfaction among users with the service supplied. Once the policy document has been adopted the unit will develop its operational procedures in the light of the approved policy.
That the AVSU be involved in	QPC endorsed recommendation	Implemented. This is now happening

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation by QPC	Follow-up Report – Oct. 02
the specification of all teaching facilities and in the refurbishment of existing areas and the AVSU be informed and consulted in the early planning stages of all new capital developments requiring audio visual services and facilities.		on a regular basis.
That following the conclusion of action on the first recommendation the AVSU prepare a new SA Report (to be concluded by end of March 2002)	The QPC endorsed this recommendation, and have asked for a report in one year (not in March 2002 but in Sept 2002)	Action on this has been deferred pending finalisation of the discussions with the Council of Deans and the agreement on the policy document. (due October 2002).
That the AVSU clearly define the services that it wishes to offer and promote its activities aggressively within the College using appropriate media	The QPC recommended that the services to be offered by the AVSU should be defined and agreed, following discussion with the Council of Deans (see 1. Above) with the College authorities. Following this the AVSU should inform the college community of its priorities and the services it can offer.	Action on this has been deferred pending finalisation of the discussions with the Council of Deans and the agreement on the policy document (due October 2002).
That the AVSU consider changing its name to something which is more descriptive of the full range of activities available.	The QPC felt that this is not the most important issue to be addressed by the AV Unit and consideration should be deferred to a later date.	As above
That any revenue generated by the AVSU be made available to it to develop its services or hire new staff	The QPC felt that consideration of this issue should be deferred pending the outcome of action on the recommendations above and decisions as to the priorities of the AVSU	The unit has retained the revenue generated for its own use. However as the budget allocated from the core UCC budget has been correspondingly decreased, it has not been possible for the unit to develop its services or fund replacement of equipment.
That the demand placed on technical and administrative staff be considered in the context of adding new contract staff, funded by the revenue generated from providing new and expanded services.	This is an issue of College policy which should be considered following action on the recommendations above.	The AVSU has developed a SLA with the Department of BIS, and is discussing SLAs with the Library and the Language Centre. However as a result of generating additional income the budget allocated from UCC was reduced. Thus services could not be expanded or additional contract staff employed.

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That the AVSU work with the Computer Centre to establish a computerised database to manage the work of the Unit. That the AVSU work with the Computer Centre to develop a strategy to improve integrated IT/AV services in the general teaching areas. That the AVSU develop its own internet site with a view to providing on-line services.	The QPC recommended discussions take place between AVSU, the Council of Deans and the Computer Centre as to how best to progress action on these recommendations	AVSU will continue to work towards automation of the work of the unit Communication and relationship with the Computer Centre and the Office of Buildings & Estates has improved greatly over the past year. Strategies are being developed to help improvements in this area. Will do so as soon as the new policy document is agreed with the Council of Deans and the interpretation of the policy is clarified.
That the VSU establish a customer charter which clearly sets out the service expectations for the Unit	The QPC recommended action on recommendation following the outcome of discussion with the Council of Deans.	Will be acted upon following on finalisation of policy document as referred to above.
That the AVSU establish a service level agreement with the General Services area, clearly setting out duties and responsibilities, vis-à-vis, the AV technicians and SSOs' role in maintenance and troubleshooting AV equipment in the general teaching areas.	The QPC endorsed the recommendation	AVSU is working towards implementing this recommendation. Discussions are taking place with relevant unions and are on-going. Integration with the development of the new e-learning units is also on-going.
That the AVSU immediately undertake a needs assessment with the Medical School and CUH. That following on from that assessment the AVSU agree with the Medical School and CUH the level of services which are to be provided, the resource implications for all concerned and the legal liability and responsibilities involved.	The QPC noted that this is a substantive issue and recommended action as proposed by PRG	Completed. A final decision on whether the service to CUH is to continue or not is awaited form the Deans-EMG. A proposal that the unit be closed and services concentrated on one site is currently under consideration by the Deans-EMG.
That the AVSU carry out a review of its pricing structure to ensure it remains competitive relative to outside providers. That the price list, once developed, be distributed widely within College.	The QPC noted that the AVSU is already charging for some services to some college departments and not to others. The QPC recommended a review and decision on policy needed by Deans-EMG prior to any action by the AVSU	This issue is dealt with in the policy document (attached). Information will be widely disseminated as soon as the policy document is adopted by the Deans-EMG.

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation by QPC	Follow-up Report – Oct. 02
That a review of the utilisation of equipment in the AVSU be carried out	The QPC recommended implementation of recommendation	Increased utilisation of the equipment such as the edit suit and the TV studio is a resource issue. Additional staff and financial resources are required to utilise the equipment to a greater degree than at present. There are some projects on-going.
That the AVSU seek to collaborate with the Department of HR and the SEDC of Academic Council to offer training courses to all staff in the use and troubleshooting of audio visual equipment	The QPC endorsed this recommendation and recommended that action be taken following the prioritisation of the activities of the AVSU	This is also an issue of additional resources being required to offer training.
That a separate budget be established to support the purchase of equipment for central teaching areas.	The QPC recommended that this issue be referred to the Council of Deans for consideration and recommendation on action to be taken. NR will write to the Chair of the Council of Deans requesting consideration of the issue.	Some progress has been made. Capital equipment funding is promised for 2003/03. However the unit is concerned that this grant may result in a reduction of the consumables allocation and thus create additional difficulties for the unit.
That technicians be issued with bleepers so they are contactable throughout the day.	This recommendation is at the level of detail best considered when the AVSU has determined its priorities following discussions with the Council of Deans.	Bleepers are not allowed by the unions. Mobile phones do not work in the Boole complex. This is still under active consideration by the AVSU.
That the AVSU establish a helpline, to be manned throughout the working day and to be capable of providing basic troubleshooting and technical advice.	This recommendation is at the level of detail best considered when the AVSU has determined its priorities following discussions with the Council of Deans and has decided how to deliver a service based on the agreed priorities.	This is a staffing resource issue. There is a need for an additional member of staff to implement this. There is a possibility that an existing vacant post could be re-configured to fill this need during the coming academic year.