

Continuous Improvement

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1 Introduction

1.1 Improvement in the quality of services and activities within the higher education sector is a key government priority. As part of the response to this, the University is developing a strategy by which the quality of support services may be improved.

1.2 This policy aims to encourage and support a philosophy of continuous improvement in participating units. It is the premise of this approach that all jobs, work processes and systems are capable of endless improvement.

1.3 This policy will support the necessary changes in working practices to better serve the needs of clients of the University and to remove impediments to service improvement.

1.4 Continuous improvement activities will compliment major initiatives resulting from introduction of new technology, the elimination of major problems and other significant changes.

2 Definitions

2.1 Continuous improvement is defined as the progressive step by step improvement of every aspect of work. Steps may often be small, achieving impact by the sheer weight of accumulation. To qualify, improvements must be cost efficient or cost neutral and any improvement should not transfer work to another area.

2.2 The major focus of continuous improvement is to improve quality. Quality does not mean perfection or some unattainable goal, it means conformance with the expected standard where this standard is based on client expectations and requirements.

2.3 Clients are defined as students, academic units, other staff, the community and government.

2.4 The primary focus of continuous improvement is on the prevention of errors before they occur, rather than their correction afterwards. The examination of tasks and work processes with the aim of the elimination of error, waste and inconsistency is critical. Every step in a process is examined, so as to achieve maximum productivity and client satisfaction.

2.5 Pivotal concepts for the implementation of continuous improvement include:

- Prevention of errors rather than correction
- Identification elimination of waste
- Identifying the need to improve inputs
- Focus on improvement at every step in the process
- Productivity improvement as a result of quality improvement
- Understanding of variation and inconsistency
- Importance of small step improvements

- Involvement of all staff
- Empowerment of staff and employee participation
- Importance of measurement

3 Aims and Objectives

3.1 The primary aim is to improve:

- i) Quality of service
- ii) Service delivery times
- iii) Cost efficiency

3.2 Services must also become increasingly consistent, constant and predictable.

3.3 Quality improvement should improve job satisfaction through the removal of tedious checking and error correction. This should also create efficiencies and allow opportunities for job enrichment.

3.4 The process of continuous improvement aims to involve staff at all levels and provide staff with an 'ownership' of the activity, whether this be at an operational, supervisory or managerial level.

4 Scope

4.1 This policy will apply to staff in the units listed in Attachment A.

4.2 The policy applies to staff at all levels.

4.3 It is intended to progressively seek the extension of this policy to other units within the University.

4.4 The continuous improvement plan will be trialed in the units listed in Appendix A. The trial shall be until 31 December, 1994. 4.5 Additional limits may be added to Attachment A on request and by approval of the Vice Principal (Administration) as Chair of the Steering Committee.

5 Responsibilities

5.1 The implementation of this policy is supported by the Executive of the University. Individual projects and strategies will be supported and encouraged. Where necessary, resources will be provided to advance well documented and researched projects which identify methods for improving the quality of service.

5.2 Heads of Units will allocate staff time and resources to support implementation of this policy as a matter of priority.

5.3 Where requested by affected staff member(s), staff representatives of their choice will be consulted on initiatives and strategies where appropriate.

5.4 Staff involvement will occur at all levels. Staff at operational levels will be involved directly through the identification of problems and methods of improvement, as well as the implementation of the improved strategies. Supervisory staff will be required to not only participate, but encourage greater empowerment.

5.5 Service Improvement Groups (SIGS) will be created to address areas of agreed concern. They will operate under rules set down by the University from time to time. All staff will be invited to participate in these Service Improvement Groups.

6 Procedures

6.1 The University will create and maintain a 'Continuous Improvement Management Plan' for implementing continuous improvement. The plan will be updated on an annual basis.

6.2 The plan will include firm targets and be based on process measurement and client feedback systems.

6.3 All staff will be progressively and continually trained in areas relevant to continuous improvement. Such areas will include measurement techniques, group problem solving and client service procedures.

6.4 New staff will be trained in continuous improvement and client service methods and procedures.

6.5 There will be a Steering Committee, which will meet on a monthly basis. The Steering Committee will be chaired by the Vice- Principal (Administration), with the Manager, Personnel Services as the Deputy Chair. The membership of the Committee will be the Heads of the units scheduled in Attachment A.

6.6 The role of the Steering Committee will be to:

- commit resources to the project and guarantee continual support;
- represent the views of their respective sections,
- assist in facilitating the conduct of particular strategies,
- serve as a sounding board for special project proposals,
- suggest tasks and strategies,
- maintain progress and provide feedback to their sections.

6.7 There will also be an Advisory Committee. It will meet at minimum intervals of 2 months. The Committee will be chaired by the Manager, Personnel Services with the Coordinator of the project as the Deputy Chair. The membership of the Committee will be as determined from time to time but will include representatives of those academic units with expertise in relevant activities. The role of the Committee will be to:

- provide technical expertise and comment on particular strategies and tasks;
- give advice on suitable techniques, providers and tools,
- suggest additional strategies and tasks.

6.8 The Vice-Principal (Administration) will allocate appropriate members of staff to implement the management plan. Initially, the plan will be supported by a full-time Coordinator and a part-time Administrative Assistant. The general direction of the plan will be the responsibility of the Manager, Personnel Services. The Coordinator of the project will implement the continuous improvement plan and associated strategies, and ensure staff meet objectives within deadlines.

6.9 The management plan will establish and maintain strategies in, at least, the following areas:

- training
- client feedback
- process measurement
- improvement of systems
- benchmarking

6.10 At the end of each planning period, a progress report will be prepared summarising achievements, problems and issues.

Attachment A

SCHEDULE OF UNITS COVERED

1 February, 1994

Academic and Student Services Branch
Administrative Information Services
Administration including EEO and Internal Audit
Buildings and Grounds Branch (office staff only)
Financial Services Branch
International Office
Personnel Services Branch
Planning and Marketing Branch

Revised: 1/1/94