

Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner



Sustaining Progress 4th Progress Report

April 2005

Customer Service

Commitment:
ORAC will continue to focus on developing and deepening the concept of **customer service** throughout the organisation

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
The role and membership of the <i>Customer Service Liaison Panel</i> will be reviewed.	30 June 2003	Achieved and reported on in report of April 2004.	
Carry out a further review of membership of <i>Customer Service Liaison Panel</i> to ensure continued broad and effective representation of customer groups.	2nd Qtr. 2005	The membership of the Customer Service Liaison Panel was reviewed in March, 2005, in consultation with the Panel. Following this review the membership of the Panel will be extended to ensure the widest possible representation, having regard to geographic location. In order to further develop our customer service, ORAC will participate in joint Outreach visits to areas with asylum seeker communities with UNHCR, RAT, RIA, RLS, IOM and Garda Ethnic Liaison Officers to provide information and raise public awareness of asylum/refugee issues.	
The development of a new <i>Customer Complaints Procedure</i> will be initiated. Consultation will take place with the <i>Customer Service Liaison Panel</i> and staff of ORAC to agree procedures.	31 Dec. 2003	Achieved and reported on in report of April 2004. The procedure is also now available in Russian, Romanian, French and Arabic. All versions are posted on our website.	

Customer Service *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
The new <i>Customer Complaints Procedure</i> will be implemented	1st Qtr 2004	Achieved and reported on in report of April 2004.	
An assessment of customer service delivery and needs will be carried out, in consultation with the <i>Customer Service Liaison Panel</i> .	31 Dec. 2003	<p>In response to a customer survey carried out in April/May 2004 and reported on in the report of September, 2004, a number of modifications are being made to our waiting area and are expected to be finalised in June, 2005. These include, the provision of two designated hatches to facilitate family applications and more privacy for applicants, television screens with news and cartoon channels, newspapers and a water dispenser.</p> <p>ORAC conducted its third survey at the end of 2004 with members of the Customer Service Liaison Panel and a number of other organisations. It focussed on progress made in 2004 against commitments set out in the Customer Charter. The main findings are generally very positive.</p> <p><i>Continued</i></p>	

Customer Service continued

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issue
		<p>Aspects of our service which received positive comment included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ORAC staff's helpfulness in dealing with personal and telephone callers (100% satisfied or very satisfied) - Quality of the documentation provided to applicants (86% satisfied or very satisfied, 14% dissatisfied) - Waiting times in ORAC's public office (100% minimal or none) - Promptness of responses to written queries (100% satisfied or very satisfied) - Range and quality of the information on ORAC's website (100% satisfied or very satisfied) - Level of consultation in relation to customer service delivery.(86% satisfied or very satisfied, 14% dissatisfied) <p>Areas identified as in need of improvement were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilities for clients in our waiting areas - Awareness levels of Customer Complaints Procedures - Quality and ease of use of ORAC information leaflets - Expansion of the Customer Service Liaison Panel. 	<p>A review of the Information leaflet is taking place, with a view to making it more user friendly for our customers. This will be completed in the 3rd quarter of 2005.</p>

Customer Service *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issue
		<p>These issues are currently being addressed.</p> <p>The fourth customer survey was conducted in March, 2005 by telephone. Recent telephone callers to the Reception and Customer Service Units of the Office were asked about the level of service they received, with regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promptness in answering calls - Transfer of call to the appropriate Unit - Whether ORAC staff member gave their name and Unit in accordance with our customer service policy. <p>Also examined were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Level of courtesy - Information received - Quality of service given <p>The findings, which are currently being examined indicated a high level of satisfaction with the service provided by this Office.</p>	<p>Further details of this survey will be provided in our next report.</p>

Customer Service *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
<p>ORAC will publish a <i>Customer Charter</i> and a new three year <i>Customer Service Action Plan</i> 2004 to 2006 to replace the existing Plan which was published in 2002. This Action Plan and Charter will set out how ORAC proposes to address any customer/service delivery issues which become apparent from the above survey of customer opinion.</p>	<p>End of 1st Qtr 2004</p>	<p>Publication of the <i>Customer Charter</i> was achieved and reported on in report of April 2004.</p>	
<p>Carry out review of Customer Charter and Customer Service Action Plan, in consultation with staff, Customer Liaison Panel and other relevant agencies.</p>	<p>End of 2006</p>		
<p>Fully implement actions set out in <i>Customer Service Action Plan 2005 - 2008</i>.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>A <i>Customer Service Action Plan</i> to cover the period 2005-2008 was published in early April 2005. ORAC's Business Plan will be adjusted, as appropriate and progress will be monitored in the context of monthly reviews of ORAC's Business Plan at Unit and senior management level</p>	

Customer Service *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
Design and roll out new training programme based on commitments set out in <i>Customer Service Action Plan 2005 - 2008</i> and delivered with a high level of ORAC staff involvement as trainers and programme designers.	2nd Qtr 2005	Appropriate briefing/training modules are being developed for delivery to all staff to ensure awareness and understanding of, and compliance with the contents of the <i>Action Plan</i> .	
A mechanism will be developed to enable the <i>Customer Service Liaison Panel</i> to monitor and evaluate the <i>Customer Service Action Plan</i> which will contain performance indicators.	2nd Qtr 2004	Reported on in report of April 2004.	
Progress on performance against these indicators will be outlined in each <i>Annual Report</i> commencing with the <i>Annual Report</i> for 2004 which will be published in 2005.	1st Qtr 2005 (and then annually)	Achieved.	
A review of the <i>Customer Complaints Procedure</i> will take place in consultation with the <i>Customer Service Liaison Panel</i> and staff of ORAC and amended as appropriate	2nd Qtr 2005	Consultations have taken place with staff and members of the Customer Service Liaison Panel and a revised text to ensure that it is more user-friendly will be finalised shortly.	

Customer Service *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
<p>Develop and implement new external communications strategy, based on recommendations of Partnership Committee.</p>	<p>4th Qtr 2005</p>	<p>A Partnership working group was established in late 2004. On completion of its consultation process with staff and the Customer Service Liaison Panel, the working group expects to submit a strategy document to the Partnership Committee in May, 2005.</p>	

Efficient Use of Resources

Commitment:

ORAC is committed to the **efficient use** of all its resources, including staff, to ensure the maximisation of value for money.

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
FINANCIAL RESOURCES			
Specific Action(s)			
Develop procedures to be followed by all ORAC staff members when incurring expenditure on behalf of ORAC with these procedures, covering all areas of ORAC non-pay expenditure, to include: the levels of responsibility to be devolved to local unit management; the expenditure limits to apply to each grade of authorising officer; and the approval process for authorising officers.	Policy & Procedures document circulated to all staff Sept 2003	The ORACLE Financial management System was introduced to ORAC in July, 2004. Our Internal Financial Policy document was reviewed in the context of this roll out and the necessary revisions were made.	
Review in consultation with the Department's Internal Audit Unit, systems in place and, where deemed necessary, strengthen financial controls as recommended in the Mullarkey Report.	1st Qtr 2004	A set of "safeguards" to be applied in ORAC in respect of all areas of non-pay expenditure was developed in 2004. The document was referred to the DJELR's Internal Audit Unit (IAU) for consideration in the context of an audit they were undertaking on ORAC. The audit was completed in January, 2005 and the findings of the IAU are still awaited.	

Efficient Use of Resources *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
FINANCIAL RESOURCES (contd.)			
Implement the recommendations arising from an audit of ORAC's financial control mechanisms by the Department's Internal Audit Unit.	2nd Qtr 2005	The audit was completed by the DLELR's Internal Audit Unit in January, 2005.	Findings of the audit are awaited.
Develop Financial Management Information Systems in accordance with the new ORACLE Financial Management System being introduced for the whole Department.	Being implemented by Finance Division, D/Justice. Likely by June/July of 2004	<p>ORAC carried out all necessary preparatory work to facilitate implementation of the new ORACLE Financial Management System, which was implemented in July 2004. ORAC has agreed to its purchasing requirements being processed through the Department's Central Processing Unit in the interest of the efficient use of resources.</p> <p>ORAC's financial management information systems have been revised to reflect the increased information capacity of the new ORACLE System.</p>	

Efficient Use of Resources *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
<p>Implement all elements of the Financial Management System when advised by the Department's Financial Management.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>ORAC continues to review and adjust its internal financial procedures on an ongoing basis, in consultation with the DJELR's Financial Management Unit to ensure the effective implementation of the ORACLE System.</p>	

Efficient Use of Resources *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
STAFF RESOURCES Specific Action(s)	Ongoing		
<p>Following an examination by ORAC of current procedures, practices and structures, resources will be aligned in order to maximise efficiency and effectiveness.</p> <p>Carry out system-wide review of structures and resource allocation in light of the fact that the number of cases on hands is approaching a ‘current’ status, as well as developments flowing from conclusions of PA Consultants review of resource needs across the asylum and immigration field.</p>	1st & 2nd Qtr 2005	<p>See earlier reports.</p> <p>We have commenced a review of structures and resource allocation and await the PA Consultants report which has been delayed in its finalisation. New Procedures were introduced to speed up the processing of certain categories of applications.</p> <p>In addition, initiatives are underway to ensure the most efficient use of the resources of the organisation. These include reviewing the procedures for interviewing and determining applications, revising the report required under s. 13 of the Act, <i>continued</i></p>	

Efficient Use of Resources *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
		<p><i>continued</i></p> <p>reviewing structures and content of reports with a view to improving consistency and reducing time taken to prepare reports, and re-refining the role of the Case Processing Unit managers. Procedures were reviewed in relation to the processing of minors (unaccompanied and accompanied).</p> <p>ORAC continued to service all hearings scheduled by the Refugee Appeals Tribunal by implementing a strict case assignment management system whereby postponements and withdrawals of appeals are factored in to the scheduling of cases to minimise under capacity.</p>	

Efficient Use of Resources *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
<p>STAFF RESOURCES Specific Action(s)</p>			
<p>Continue to ensure that resources are deployed in the most efficient and effective way possible, including redeployment of posts to other areas of the Dept.</p> <p>In the context of the above factors, the downturn in the number of applicants and the Government’s decentralisation programme, issues of staff morale and knowledge retention will be monitored and addressed.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Posts continue to be diverted to D/JELR when identified as surplus to requirement. Since the September 2004 report, ORAC has returned 26 additional posts to the Dept. of Justice, Equality and Law Reform as follows - 2 Assistant Principal Officer posts, 7 Higher Executive Officer posts, 2 Executive Officer posts, 11 Clerical Officer posts and 4 Service Officer posts. The number of posts returned to the Department since January 2004 is 44.</p> <p><i>continued</i></p>	

Equal Opportunities

<p>Commitment: ORAC is committed to policies on equality and diversity and to developing an equality perspective throughout the organisation.</p>			
Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/ Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
ORAC will appoint an Equality Officer in accordance with <i>A Review of Equality Initiatives in the Justice and Equality Sector</i> .	Sept. 2003	Achieved and reported on in report of April 2004.	
ORAC will continue to ensure that refugee status determination and other induction training incorporate an awareness of equality/cultural diversity issues, having particular regard to the nature of our customer base.	Ongoing	<p>As stated in our last report, ORAC has the capacity to deliver its own refugee status determination (RSD)/asylum issues training to ensure that diversity/ equality issues are addressed appropriately. One RSD course was delivered in September 2004. The course has been further modified to allow for delivery in modular format to smaller numbers and will continue to be delivered as required.</p> <p>The roll out of Interculturalism Awareness Training was completed in February 2005 (the background to this project was reported on in the last report). A total of 25 courses were run by the in-house training team, with 250 staff attending. From March 2005, this training will be delivered as part of induction training.</p> <p><i>continued</i></p>	

Equal Opportunities *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/ Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
Continued		A special initiative for visually impaired computer users is also underway. Developments of case management and knowledge management systems will take account of the need for compatibility with screen-reading software for visually impaired computer users. (See IT Section for details)	Work is currently being undertaken to address difficulties identified with Lotus Notes attachments and PMDS forms. Any forms developed in ORAC as a result of this project will be made available through the network of visually impaired computer users in the public service generally.
ORAC will develop an <i>Equality Policy and Programme</i> with reference to the recommendations of <i>A Review of Equality Initiatives in the Justice and Equality Sector</i> . The Programme will set targets and embody review and reporting mechanisms.	Phase 1: 1st Qtr 2004	As reported previously, the first phase of the Equality Programme was agreed in Jan 2004 and an implementation plan was drawn up and agreed by the Partnership Committee in May 2004. A progress report on this implementation plan was prepared and approved by MAC and the Partnership Committee in January 2005. This report was circulated to all staff and is available on the staff information database	

Equal Opportunities *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/ Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding
<i>continued</i>	Phase 2: 3rd Qtr 2004	A further Equality Group presented its report on the remaining equality grounds in December 2004 and their report was approved by the Partnership Committee in Q1 2005. An implementation plan to reflect that report is being prepared and will be finalised in May.	

Equal Opportunities *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/ Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
<p>Implement the <i>Equality Programme</i>.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Actions taken in the context of the Programme include processing of applications with gender specific issues in accordance with best practice, and agreement with other agencies on procedures and best practice regarding processing of unaccompanied minors.</p> <p>The Equality Officer organised the promotion in ORAC of the Anti Racist Workplace Week in November 2004 and European Week against Racism in March 2005. Initiatives included Lunch & Learn sessions where guest speakers from the African Network, Integrating Ireland, the Chinese Community in Ireland and the Equal Status Unit (D/JELR) gave presentations to staff.</p>	

Performance Management Systems

Commitments:

ORAC has introduced and will continue to implement the Performance Management System (PMDS).

ORAC is committed to the roll-out of the next stage of PMDS and to addressing the issues arising from the evaluation process.

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
The first stage of PMDS is fully operational.	2003	Achieved.	
ORAC will continue to implement PMDS and fully embed it in the organisation.	Started Qtr 1 2003 and ongoing thereafter	<p>General guidelines for completing Annual Review forms were drawn up and circulated to all staff in December 2004. Guidelines for completing the Role Profile and Interim Review forms were also reissued at that time.</p> <p>All 2005 Role Profile Forms have been completed and Interim Reviews are due to be completed by end of June 2005. PMDS forms have been amended for easier use and the language in the form has been simplified.</p>	

Performance Management Systems *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
<p>PMDS will be integrated with all ORAC Business Planning and HR policies and processes, including assessment systems to consolidate PMDS within the organisation.</p>	<p>Qtr 1 2003, 2004, 2005</p>	<p>The 2005 Business Plans for each Unit were developed having regard to the Corporate Plan, the Strategy Statement. In turn, individual Role Profile Forms reflect the objectives and commitments as set out in the annual Business Plan. The integration of assessment and PMDS systems is a matter for the Dept. of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.</p>	
<p>ORAC will also contribute to the formulation of policy in relation to upward feedback and will implement any outcome from the evaluation of PMDS centrally</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>		

Performance Management Systems *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
<p>Upward Feedback will be introduced in accordance with General Council Report no 1398.</p> <p>-A staff attitudinal / climate survey will be conducted.</p> <p>-A code of practice will be developed.</p> <p>-Training will be given in advance of implementation</p> <p>-In preparation for roll out in year two, we will incorporate into the PMDS individualised feedback based on the generic template which has been agreed centrally.</p>	<p>1st Qtr 2005</p> <p>2nd Qtr 2005</p> <p>3rd Qtr 2005</p> <p>4th Qtr 2005</p>	<p>Planning, for the introduction of upward feedback has commenced. In accordance with General Council Report No. 1398, a climate survey was conducted in Q1 2005. The survey questionnaire was finalised following extensive consultation with staff, partnership committee and internal reference group. A consultant was awarded the tender for statistical analysis of data to facilitate the development of appropriate responses. Survey sessions were organised and facilitated by consultant in January, 2005.</p> <p>In total 202 staff completed the questionnaire (80% response rate). Results of the survey were very positive and the consultant reported that he had rarely seen such positive results from a survey. Overall scores:</p> <p>Organisational climate: 71% positive Communication: 66% positive Clarity/Direction: 92% positive Managing Performance: 61% positive Motivation: 71% positive Development and Training: 88% positive Management Style: 69% positive Partnership: 65% positive.</p> <p><i>continued</i></p>	<p>Action plan will be prepared in response to the survey following consultation with all staff.</p>

Performance Management Systems *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
		<p><i>continued</i></p> <p>A project team was established to examine and make recommendations on organisational climate survey findings.</p> <p>The results of the survey and the topic of upward feedback will be subject of the HEO/AP MAC meeting in early May 2005.</p> <p>A Code of Practice on upward feedback and a generic template are being developed and will be submitted in June to the Partnership Committee for consideration.</p>	
<p>Individualised feedback will be introduced in ORAC in 2006 and in this first year of operation the individualised feedback data will remain the property of the recipient without any requirement of onward disclosure.</p>	<p>2006</p>		

Modernisation & Flexibility

<p>Commitment: ORAC is committed to increased flexibility to ensure that public services are delivered in a manner which closely reflects the needs of its customers.</p>			
Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
<p><i>A 5 Year Corporate Plan</i> will be prepared for the functional and organisational development of the office, to enable ORAC to become a best practice asylum determination agency.</p> <p>The Plan will set out a number of key objectives for the period and the actions necessary to achieve them. Particular emphasis will be placed on the identification and provision of appropriate technical, legal, organisational and management skills.</p>	1st Qtr 2004	Achieved.	
<p>A detailed implementation plan will be devised following consultation with staff and Partnership Committee.</p>	1st Qtr 2004	Achieved.	

Modernisation & Flexibility *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties /Outstanding Issues
<p>Following a review by ORAC of current procedures, practices and structures, resources will be aligned to maximise efficiency and effectiveness.</p>		<p>As part of our ongoing review a number of initiatives have been taken to allow us move to a more prescriptive approach when dealing with applications. This will enhance our productivity without adversely affecting the quality of our outputs. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - caseworkers being authorised by the Commissioner to make and sign recommendations on their own behalf. (This will release HEO time to allow more hands-on management of the caseloads and the quality of the work within their Units.) -reviewing structure and content of reports with the intent of improving the consistency of approach as well as reducing the time taken to report on cases. -examining ways to electronically capture and make more accessible crucial and useful information from previous cases that can be shared among caseworkers for use on current cases. This will help reduce the research time needed in many cases. <p>Since the September 2004 report, further re-assignment of responsibilities took place to take account of the return of AP posts to the Department. In all, 26 posts were returned to the Department during the period Oct to March 2005.</p>	

Modernisation & Flexibility *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties /Outstanding Issues
<p>Further streamline prioritised processing arrangements, in order to take advantage of progress made to date in reducing number of cases on hands.</p>	<p>Ist Qtr 2005</p>	<p>New processes introduced to reduce processing times for certain categories of applications</p> <p>In January 2005 ORAC further refined the way in which it deals with applications from prioritised countries. With the exception of those that cannot be completed for medical or other compelling reasons, applicants from these countries are now scheduled for interview within 9 - 12 working days of their initial application with a view to issuing a final recommendation on their claims within 17 working days. Previously our timeframe for these cases was to issue a final recommendation within 5 - 6 weeks of application. Over 35% of all new applications are now processed in this manner with the average case taking 13 days to complete. This has allowed us to further reduce the number of cases on hands which, at the end of February 2005, had fallen by 55% over that which prevailed at January 2004.</p> <p><i>continued</i></p>	

Modernisation & Flexibility *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties /Outstanding Issues
<p>ORAC will respond flexibly to new work demands arising from amendments to legislation or other environmental changes.</p>	<p>An ongoing area of action - see across for recent developments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff in Scheduling and Reception Units are ensuring prioritised applicants are given an interview in 9- 12 days of application • Country briefing and guidance paper developed on Afghanistan in April • New Information Leaflet produced to include designation of new safe countries. • ORAC is carrying out a Pilot Project testing the use of Language Analysis in the refugee status determination process for 40 applications. This will be completed by end of April. • Presenting Unit have continued to adapt to the requirements of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal scheduling of oral hearings. There has been an increase in the proportion of complex cases being scheduled for oral hearing. This is partly attributed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the fact that the 15 new States who joined the EU in 2004 no longer feature in the asylum process, and . - the countries designated as “safe countries” and a number of the “prioritised cases” do not feature in the oral appeals. <p><i>continued</i></p>	

Modernisation & Flexibility

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
		<p><i>continued</i></p> <p>Therefore, the main nationalities at oral hearings are African, Asian and the former Soviet Union. These countries require detailed preparation and research in advance of the oral hearings because of the nature of the complex issues arising in these cases at appeals.</p>	
<p>Implement the commitments contained in the HR Strategy.</p>	<p>2005 - 2008</p>	<p>The HR Strategy was completed in Q1 2005, published and circulated to staff. An implementation plan has been drawn up. Commitments from the Plan are being implemented e.g internal mobility policy developed and agreed by the Partnership Committee in Qtr 1, a progress report on the Equality Programme submitted to Partnership in Qtr1.</p>	
<p>The development of a system of <i>Quality Assurance</i> for the organisation will be initiated.</p>	<p>Dec 2003</p>	<p>Achieved.</p>	

Modernisation & Flexibility *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties /Outstanding Issues
<p>A system of <i>Quality Assurance</i> will be rolled out to ORAC.</p>	<p>Dec 2004</p>	<p>Practices and procedures manuals have been developed in all areas of ORAC. Initiatives in relation to the roll out of QA include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Case Processing Quality Assurance Group met and reported quarterly. The group produced a number of initiatives including a quality assurance checklist for each ORAC recommendation in October 2004 and recommended best practice procedures for receiving and recording documents submitted at interview. • Staff in Reception, Dublin Unit and Scheduling given training and familiarisation in Q/A process in 2004 / early 2005. • Two Q/A sessions on age assessments held in Q1, 2005 with a view to introducing Q/A checklist on age assessment interview in April 2005. • Introduction of QA system to independently verify quality of translation service provided to ORAC. • Regular operational meetings with service providers of translation & interpretation service. • Development of medico legal guidelines in consultation with UNHCR & other asylum agencies. 	

Modernisation & Flexibility *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
Organisation-wide Quality Assurance mechanisms will be bedded down and monitored in a structured fashion		A QA/Risk Assessment Group has been established to monitor procedures throughout the organisation during the year and to recommend revisions where necessary.	

Team Working and Cross Functional Working

Commitment:
 ORAC acknowledges that in order to achieve efficiency and quality of service, **flexibility in assignment of tasks and in reporting procedures** may be required.

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented achieve	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
<i>A Partnership Committee</i> will be established	July 2003	Established.	
Under the <i>5 year Corporate Plan</i> current procedures, practices and structures will be reviewed, and amended, if necessary, to ensure that resources are utilised to maximum effect.	2004 2005 2006	See under ‘Modernisation and Flexibility’.	

New Technology & eGovernment

Commitment:

ORAC recognises that the use of **new technology** may require significant change in work processes in order to maximise its use. ORAC is committed to the development of eGovernment as set out in *Sustaining Progress*.

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
Develop a website for the organisation.	Qtr 1 2004	Achieved.	
Undertake a review of the ORAC website.	2nd Qtr 2005	<p>Policy information on website continued to be updated, as necessary.</p> <p>A review of the website was conducted to ensure full accessibility for persons with disabilities and a privacy statement was added to ensure compliance with Data Protection legislation.</p> <p>An internal working group has also been established with the initial task of reviewing the content of the website and to ensure regular ongoing reviews. The members of the group received a 1 day training course in 'Contribute' which enables them to act as content managers for the website.</p>	

New Technology & eGovernment *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
Introduce desktop Internet browsing for all staff in the organisation to facilitate staff in conducting Internet research and in accessing DJELR integrated web based services, when they become available - Timberlay House & Grand Canal Street - Hanover Street	Qtr 3 2003 Qtr 4 2003	Achieved Since February 2005 all ORAC staff have access to the Refugee Documentation Centre COI database at their desktop.	
Introduce a scanning system to facilitate electronic archival of files and electronic file management.	Qtr 2 2004	Consultants reported in September and their report has been considered. See below.	
Evaluate outcome of pilot scanning project and determine whether to apply more extensively to records management.	3rd Qtr 2005	Pilot scanning project is scheduled to commence in early April, 2005 and will run for a period of 3 months. On conclusion of the pilot project, a detailed report will be prepared and will form the basis of the evaluation to be conducted in Q3.	

New Technology & eGovernment *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
Develop and implement tools to allow staff to securely work from home and any other web location to facilitate flexible working arrangements and secure access to data from other work locations. - initial investigation of available options - implementation of tools	Qtr 1 2004 Qtr 4 2004	An e-working server was installed on ORAC on Qtr. 4, 2004 to facilitate the introduction of e-working. In addition, a mobile e-mail server was installed to enable access to email accounts for staff working out of the Office.	
ORAC will develop a policy on e-working and in that context establish a working group.	1st Qtr 2005	Working Group established in Q2 2005.	
Report from e-working group prepared.	2nd Qtr 2005		Working group now expected to report in Q3.
Policy on e-working developed. A policy and scheme will be implemented and include a pilot e-working programme.	4th Qtr 2005 1st Qtr 2006		

New Technology & eGovernment *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
<p>In co-operation with the EU Commission and other EU Member States, design and implement DubliNET. DubliNET is an electronic communications system used to send and receive Dublin Convention / Dublin II Regulation requests. between States.</p>	<p>Sept 2003</p>	<p>Dublin Unit staff continue to operate DubliNET and to implement changes as necessary, in particular, in the context of EU enlargement.</p> <p>With effect from April 2005, ORAC will be involved in an EU- wide Dublin II Regulation website to facilitate discussion on the operation of the Regulation.</p>	

New Technology & eGovernment *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
<p>Implement the key recommendations of the Accenture Report for the asylum area which are specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - development of an integrated case management system - development of a central knowledge management system - development of a file tracking system <p>These projects are to be implemented in a three stage process, co-ordinated by the Asylum Policy division of the DJELR</p> <p>Stage 1 - completion of a detailed specification of requirements</p> <p>Stage 2 - procurement of solutions</p> <p>Stage 3 - design, development and implementation of solutions</p> <p>*This updates on earlier action and relates to a project led by DJELR.</p>	<p>2nd Qtr 2005</p> <p>3rd Qtr 2005</p> <p>4th Qtr 2006</p>	<p>Towards the end of 2004, consultants CapGemini were engaged by the DJELR to carry out stage 1 (and may be retained to complete stage 2) of this work. An internal project manager , representing the asylum area, was assigned to work with the consultants, who began their work in early 2005. CapGemini have met representatives of ORAC, and all other asylum agencies, over the last few months to determine their detailed requirements for the case management, knowledge management and file tracking systems. They are on target to produce a requirement specification and a high level logical functional and technical specification for the selected systems by the end of Qtr 2 2005.</p>	

New Technology & eGovernment *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
Develop an IT Strategy for the organisation.	1st Qtr 2005	An IT strategy for 2005-2006 was developed for the organisation.	
Implement the recommendations contained in the IT Strategy on a phased basis over 2005 and 2006.	Ongoing 2005 & 2006	An implementation plan for the IT strategy is being developed. It is expected to be completed in Q.2 2005.	
Participate in the implementation of an automated fingerprint identification system integrated with the Eurodac system and an Garda Siochana.	4th Qtr 2006		

Atypical Working Arrangements

<p>Commitment: ORAC is committed to the continuation of flexible working patterns in response to the needs of staff.</p>			
Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
Applications for atypical working arrangements such as work sharing and term time working will continue to be considered on an individual basis.		ORAC is fully committed to the implementation of family friendly work practices and makes every reasonable effort to accommodate staff who wish to avail of them. All applications for atypical working arrangements in ORAC have been approved to date.	
Consultants will be engaged where it is established that consultancy is the most appropriate means of providing a product or service.	2003 2004 2005 2006	Consultants engaged as appropriate, e.g. training, ergonomics survey, evaluation of scanning, design work for corporate publications, organisational climate survey.	
ORAC will cooperate with the employment of temporary staff as the need arises.		There are 39 personnel recruited on a contract basis in ORAC.	

Attendance Patterns

Commitment:

ORAC is committed to having the **attendance patterns** necessary to provide a satisfactory level of customer service.

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
<p>Attendance patterns will be kept under review with a view to ensuring the best attendance patterns to meet customer needs.</p> <p>Any proposed change to attendance patterns will be discussed and agreed in accordance with the terms of <i>Sustaining Progress</i></p>	<p>2003 2004 2005 2006</p>	<p>Throughout the organisation arrangements are in place to respond to our customers' needs, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting Officers schedule their availability and annual leave 5/6 weeks in advance in order to accommodate the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT) in the scheduling of oral hearings, they also frequently restrict their leave to coincide with days where there are no oral hearings. • Presenting Officers facilitate the RAT by presenting adjourned hearings on Fridays, lunchtimes and after normal office working hours, in so far as possible. • Caseworkers programme their availability 5/6 weeks ahead to accommodate the scheduling of interviews of asylum applicants. 	

Attendance Patterns continued

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
Continued		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff in Reception Units have a daily rota which enables the Units to be open to the public from 8.45am through lunchtime until business is completed. 	

Redeployment of Staff

Commitment:

ORAC confirms that the **redeployment** of staff within ORAC and new work initiatives may be necessary to respond to urgent work demands or new legislative provisions.

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
<p>Redeployment of staff may take place in the future in order to implement the recommendations in the CMOD review, to introduce new work initiatives, to respond to legislative provisions or to meet urgent work demands.</p> <p>Unions will be informed in advance of any plans to redeploy staff and discussions will be in accordance with the terms of <i>Sustaining Progress</i>.</p>	<p>2003 2004 2005 2006</p>	<p>There is general flexibility in the deployment of staff in ORAC to ensure that the needs of the organisation continue to be met.</p>	

Training

Commitment:

ORAC is fully committed to **staff development and training** to enhance their knowledge, skills, competencies and career development and to achieve quality service delivery.

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved /Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
Training needs will continue to be identified through the personal development plans on RPFs.	Ongoing	<p>A list of formal business courses for 2005 was drawn up and circulated to staff in December 2004. As part of the PMDS process, the business training needs for staff were selected from this list and were prioritised on Role Profile Forms. The Annual Training Plan for 2005 was compiled taking account of these needs.</p> <p>Training and development needs identified in 2005 Role Profile Forms have been collated on a database.</p>	

Training *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved /Implemented	Implementation Difficulties/ Outstanding Issues
<p>Induction training will be provided as will ongoing and periodic training. The latter will have particular regard to legislative developments and revised procedures and practices.</p>	<p>2003 2004 2005 2006</p>	<p>1094 units of training were provided to staff in 2004 and included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORAC Induction • Customer Service Training • Telephone Techniques • Supervisory Skills • Management Training for Assistant Principal Officers • IT Induction training • Lotus WordPro and Lotus 123 • Desktop publishing • Specific training in Operating systems for IT staff • Train the Trainer course for the in-house training team • Anti Racism and Intercultural Awareness training for the in-house training team • Refugee Status Determination (RSD) training for staff determining applications of minors and separated children <p><i>Continued</i></p>	<p>Further training planned before the end of the year includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying and harassment • Writing skills • Presentations on RSD caselaw • Presentation to Presenting Officers on ‘exclusion clause’ cases (s.2(c) of Act) • Briefing on Dublin II Regulation judicial review cases • Internet training • Case conferencing • • • •

Training *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved /Implemented	Implementation Difficulties/Outstanding Issues
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training sessions for staff in Reception in relation to age assessments which included input from East Coast Area Health Board. • Document authentication • Occupational First Aid • Country of Origin/Internet training • Advanced presenting skills for Presenting Officers • Specialised legal training for Presenting Officers • Psychological support training organised and provided by DRCC. • Internet training • Interculturalism Awareness training for all staff • Peer support sessions • Resource papers training • Case conferencing • Bullying and Harassment • Time Management • Workshops on advanced RSD issues • UNHCR training for new caseworkers <p><i>continued</i></p>	

Training *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved /Implemented	Implementation Difficulties /Outstanding Issues
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training in Q1, 2005 focused on the completion of the roll out of Interculturalism Awareness training. • A tender competition was held for the provision of Bullying and Harassment Awareness training in Q4 2004. Training will commence in Q2 2005. • Provision of training in Advanced Writing Skills for HEOs was examined in Q1, using the drawdown contract which is in place in the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform. Training will commence in Q.2 2005 • An Executive Coaching Programme for Principal Officers was organised and commenced in Q2 2005. • The series of Lunch & Learn talks are continuing in 2005. Since our last report and up to end March, seven lunch and learns have taken place: a talk on the Chinese Community in Ireland to mark Anti Racist Workplace Week, November 2004; Disability and the Workplace; separated children; EU Directives and experience of the Presidency; a talk on Integration to mark European Week Against Racism 2005 , March 2005; Presentation on the National Action Plan against Racism, March 2005; a talk on the experiences of Refugees, March 2005. 	

Training continued

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved /Implemented	Implementation Difficulties/ Outstanding Issues
Guidance and research papers will be developed to assist staff in relation to refugee status determination.	End 2003 2004 2005	<p>Resource papers on eight topics were presented to Case Processing and Presenting Unit staff.</p> <p>Subjects addressed in the Resource papers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agents of Persecution • Credibility • Dual Nationality • Gender Related Persecution • Identity Documentation • The Meaning of Persecution • Safe Third Country • The Internal Protection Alternative 	Review of Resource papers planned for 2nd quarter of 2005.

Training continued

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/ Implemented	Implementation Difficulties/ Outstanding Issues
A training needs analysis will be undertaken to ensure that training and development are better targeted at job related needs and staff development.	Qtr 1, 2 and 3 2003 Qtr 1 2004	Organisational training needs were identified in consultation with management. Individual training needs were collated from data on Role Profile Forms. A report on these data is being finalised.	
Annual Training Plans will be prepared and agreed which will take account of the formal business needs identified by Units.	1st Qtr 2005 1st Qtr 2006	A list of formal business courses for staff in ORAC was prepared at the end of Q4, 2004 and was circulated to staff. Personal Development Plans arising from 2005 Role Profile forms were completed using this list and an annual training plan was then prepared. Both the list of formal business courses and the training plan are subject to ongoing review to reflect any new organisational priorities.	

Training *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved /Implemented	Implementation Difficulties/ Outstanding Issues
The pending <i>Framework for Civil Service Training and Development 2004-2008</i> will inform ORAC in relation to further training and development plans.		See earlier reports.	
Develop a Training and Development Strategy	1st Qtr 2005	A Working Group was established in October 2004 to develop a Training and Development Strategy for the period 2005-2008. Six objectives have been agreed and work on the Strategy is nearing completion.	
Implement the commitments contained in the <i>Training & Development Strategy</i>	2005 - 2008		

Partnership

Commitment:
ORAC is committed to developing the organisation through **partnership** between management, staff and trade unions.

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
<p><i>A Partnership Committee</i> will be established.</p>	<p>2003</p>	<p>The first term of office of ORAC's Partnership Committee ran for one year to the end of August 2004.</p> <p>Since the establishment of the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 working groups have been established (Internal Communications, Equality (Phase 1 and 2), Corporate Social Responsibility (Environmental), Corporate Social Responsibility (Local Community), External Communications. • All groups except the External Communications Group have submitted reports. The work of the Corporate Social Responsibility Group continues. <p>The External Communications Working Group is due to submit proposals to the Partnership Committee by the end of April, 2005 on the development of an external communications strategy.</p>	

Partnership *continued*

Specific Action(s)	Completion Date	What has been Achieved/Implemented	Implementation Difficulties / Outstanding Issues
		<p><i>continued</i></p> <p>The Internal Communications Strategy developed in response to the working group recommendations is implemented and monitored on a monthly basis. A review on the implementation of the Strategy will be undertaken before year end.</p> <p>The first meeting of the Partnership Committee 2004/5 took place in September. Training for the new Partnership Committee was provided in November, 2004.</p>	
<p>Develop and refine the Partnership process.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Partnership sub-group to host Lunch and Learns in April to increase awareness of partnership. From December, 2004 staff have been invited to attend as observers (2 seats available) at each meeting. Guidelines for Partnership working groups agreed.</p>	

Certification by Partnership Committee

*I certify that the above **Progress Report** has been considered by the Partnership Committee for the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner*

Signed by Partnership Chairperson: *Emer Byrden*

Date: 8 April, 2005