



What is the Age-Friendly University Initiative?



Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University



Age-friendly
University
Global Network

In 2012 Dublin City University developed the Ten Principles of an Age-Friendly University which has developed into a global network highlighting the unique role that higher education institutions can play in responding to the opportunities associated with an ageing demographic across societies around the world.

The concept of an age-friendly university has its genesis in the Age-friendly Cities Programme launched by the WHO in 2010, with a focus on how institutions of higher education can contribute to the Programme.

DCU recognises that higher education impacts on wider policy objectives including those related to health, employment, citizenship, community cohesion, national security, social mobility, and wider society. In an ever shrinking world, where businesses and trade are becoming increasingly global, higher education is often a passport to a new life which opens up wonderful new opportunities at any age.

A deeper understanding of the aspirations of potential students and the cultural barriers inhibiting participation in higher education from our ageing population is an ongoing challenge. Contemporary research in intergenerational learning, lifelong learning and unique insights suggest the positive impact on ageing for the growing number of older people.

DCU's commitment to this initiative not only encourages academic discourse on ageing but demonstrates, supports and encourages active participation by older people, policymakers and nongovernmental organisations to come together to contribute to the wider dialogue on how we prepare to meet global ageing needs.





- At a local level DCU's commitment to breaking down barriers to higher education is demonstrated by the wide range of activities on the DCU campus which invite community participation and has resulted in greater visibility of older people.
- At a national level, DCU engages regularly with stakeholder groups in the ageing sector supporting them in their work.
 - The Irish Senior Citizen Parliament – the oldest advocacy organization in Ireland is hosted on the DCU All Hallows campus.
 - DCU is invited at a governmental level to engage and contribute to ageing policy, for example, the National Positive Ageing Forum.
 - Senior DCU management representatives have actively participated on the board of Age-Friendly Ireland and the AFU Coordinator continues to represent DCU on local alliances.
- At a European level DCU is one the founder members of the Covenant on Demographic Change which promotes age-friendly environments and gathers European public authorities at local, regional and national level, committed to developing and implementing an action plan on age-friendly environments based on the WHO Age-Friendly Cities' Guide and in the spirit of the 2013 Dublin Declaration on Age-Friendly Cities and Communities in Europe.
 - DCU is a member of the AGE Platform, a European network of non-profit organisations of and for people aged 50+, which aims to voice and promote the interests of the 200 million citizens aged 50+ in the European Union (Eurostat, 2018) and to raise awareness on the issues that concern them most.
 - DCU is a member of eServices Provision for the Seniors (55+) in the Cross-border eRegion which promotes services for older people in the Baltic States.

Ten Principles for an Age-Friendly University

Developed and launched by DCU in 2012

- 1 To encourage the participation of older adults in all the core activities of the university, including educational and research programmes.
- 2 To promote personal and career development in the second half of life and to support those who wish to pursue “second careers”.
- 3 To recognise the range of educational needs of older adults (from those who were early school-leavers through to those who wish to pursue Master’s or PhD qualifications).
- 4 To promote intergenerational learning to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages.
- 5 To widen access to online educational opportunities for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation.
- 6 To ensure that the university’s research agenda is informed by the needs of an ageing society and to promote public discourse on how higher education can better respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults.
- 7 To increase the understanding of students of the longevity dividend and the increasing complexity and richness that ageing brings to our society.
- 8 To enhance access for older adults to the university’s range of health and wellness programmes and its arts and cultural activities.
- 9 To engage actively with the university’s own retired community.
- 10 To ensure regular dialogue with organisations representing the interests of the ageing population.

Global Impact

Since the launch of the Ten Principles of an Age-Friendly University in 2012 by DCU, the initiative has grown into a global network of universities representing Europe, North America, South America, Australia and South East Asia.

Increased awareness of the societal impact of the global ageing demographic, coalescing national and international approaches place universities in a unique position to rise to the opportunities and challenges of aging and take a leadership role in how we can accommodate our growing ageing communities.

By working together and channeling resources, universities can:

- Foster opportunities and share multidisciplinary best practice in challenging stereotypes through lifelong and intergenerational learning .
- Develop sustainable, affordable, solutions to support independent living through digital technologies, deploy and test new technologies for smart aging.
- Provide innovative learning opportunities to accommodate career transitions.
- Innovate new work practices to accommodate the multigenerational workforce and harness opportunities of the Silver Economy to open up new types of employment in emerging technologies, robotics, wellness, mobility, tourism, personal care, banking, scientific and medical innovation.
- Support the wider communities to embrace the opportunities of ageing in a positive and healthy way.

At a global level, DCU is a member of the International Federation on Ageing, the AGE Platform, and e-REGION Active Ageing Networks.

DCU continues to advance the AFU Global Network and offers opportunities for sharing learning, research, and networking.

On a practical level, the AFU Global Network has facilitated staff and student exchange, networking and collaborations between partner universities.

In December 2019 Ireland became the first country in the world to be recognised by the WHO as Age-Friendly.

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