

# DCU's Age-Friendly University Activities 2023



Ollscoil Chathair  
Bhaile Átha Cliath  
Dublin City University



# Ten Principles for an Age-Friendly University

Developed and launched by DCU in 2012

Their work is informed by the Ten Principles of an Age-Friendly University, 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 Masters 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

DCU's Age-Friendly University (AFU) Unit was established in 2014 and has one full-time AFU Coordinator and one part-time Administrative Officer.

“The AFU programme demonstrates the benefit of the longevity dividend to our students. Sitting side by side with students challenges ageist stereotypes provides mentoring opportunities, and contributes to changing the narrative on ageing through intergenerational engagement. We (older people) are the experts in ageing, with opportunities to impact future generations while continuing to remain engaged and age positively. The AFU is an inspirational initiative, and we are proud to continue to support its growth and pioneering approach towards promoting age inclusivity in higher education”.

**(Brid Horan, Chancellor, DCU)**

## Global Growth

The AFU Unit at DCU led the development and growth of the Age-Friendly University Global Network (AFUGN), a growing global network comprising over 100 members representing Europe, North and South America, South East Asia and Australia who all endorse the Ten Principles of an Age-Friendly University. In 2023, the AFU Coordinator supported transitioning to new leads at Arizona State University and the University of Strathclyde. DCU's AFU Coordinator continues to be active on the Executive Board of the AFUGN.

## Learning Programme

The AFU Unit offers over 160 multidisciplinary modules for audit from the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. An additional customised programme accommodates over 400 older people each semester with subjects offered including genealogy, law, politics, religion, art, languages and more.

This programme takes place in spring and autumn, and the AFU Coordinator organises the programme in partnership with Schools and Faculties.



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

## UN Sustainable Development Goals

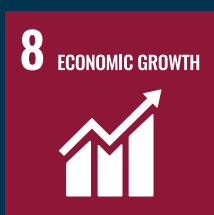
DCU's Ten Principles of an Age-Friendly University are closely aligned with the follow United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:



**Goal Number 3:**  
Good Health and Well-being



**Goal Number 4:**  
Quality Education



**Goal Number 8:**  
Decent Work and Economic Growth



**Goal Number 10:**  
Reduced Inequalities

# Representation

## National

The DCU AFU Coordinator represents DCU on the Age-Friendly Alliance in Dublin City and Fingal. During the past year, she has attended 12 group meetings and contributed to the Strategic Plan for Age-Friendly Fingal.

The DCU AFU Unit continues to support the work and relationships with members of the Executive Advisory Board of the AFU at DCU. This board comprises organisations working with and representing the interests of older people.

The DCU AFU Unit also has three representatives on the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament.

In 2013, the AFU Unit hosted a visit from a judging panel from Age-Friendly Ireland on foot of a nomination for their work on age-friendly activities at DCU.

The AFU Coordinator has presented to various local and national groups, including Men's Sheds, Women's Sheds, and community groups in Donabate, Swords, Blanchardstown, Raheny, and Donnycarney. She also promoted the AFU concept to several trade unions and industry and administrative organisations.

## Global

### Educational Visit to Murcia

In April 2023, participants in the Beginners Spanish module were invited to visit the University of Murcia, an AFU Global Network member in Spain. They spent the week on the Lorca campus in student accommodation, attending Spanish language classes daily, and were welcomed at a special reception by the Mayor of Lorca and the President of Murcia University. The group visited cultural and historical centres and engaged with older and younger University of Murcia students, as well as members of the community.

### AFUGN network transition

The AFU Coordinator facilitated and supported the smooth transition of the AFU Global Network to Arizona State University and the University of Strathclyde, and continues to support and promote the work of the AFUGN as a member of the Executive Steering Group led by ASU.

### Global discussion and support

The AFU Coordinator accepted an invitation to be part of a panel at the Global Coalition on Aging Conference to present the rationale for supporting the growth of AFUs.

The University of Murcia now offers a scholarship opportunity for DCU Students on ageing research.

The AFU Coordinator represented DCU at a meeting in Brussels to discuss "Loneliness in the European Union: Policies at work" and highlighted the benefits of social prescribing.

The AFU Coordinator presented to a group from Pontifical University Campinas, Brazil, speaking about social inclusion and the ageing population. Information about PUC's work since joining the network was also shared. The AFU Coordinator was also invited to present to the Open University in the UK about joining the AFUGN and implementing the Ten Principles of an Age-Friendly University.



### Malta: Delegation visit

The AFU Coordinator was invited to meet with the Maltese Ambassador to discuss the work being done by the AFU Unit,

and explore opportunities for sharing information on the Culture on Prescription Europe Project and discuss collaboration to build links with the University of Valetta.

In October 2023, the Unit hosted a 55-person Maltese delegation composed of several agencies working in health, housing, transport, community services, police and the church. They were part of a practice exchange group working on the Hiliel il-Komunitá project, financed by the EU. The visitors aimed to discuss the DCU AFU Unit's COPE project and other Age-Friendly work at DCU. A day-long visit included presentations from Localise, Professor Deiric O'Broin, HSE Community Services, AFU Participants and the facilitator of the COPE project. Students from DCU St Patrick's Campus provided a traditional Irish music and dance performance.



### Visit from the Open University of China

The Unit hosted a group from the Open University of China - Senior's University and were joined by Caitriona Nic Giolla Mhichil and Dr Monica Ward from the DCU Computing School who discussed digital accreditation and teaching and learning.

## Media

The AFU Coordinator was interviewed several times throughout the year on NEAR FM, Liffey FM and Phoenix FM, and a podcast with the Senior Times promoted DCU events and raised awareness of the opportunities to engage at DCU. Articles featuring and promoting the work of the

AFU Unit were published in the Northside People, North County Leader, Dublin People, Senior Times, Siochana Magazine and Home Instead Magazine.

A series of video recordings on the AFU Unit were made by Spry Finance for their website and it is also featured in the Spry Finance publication and annual report 2023/24.

## Research



### Traditions, Recipes and Cuisine of Europe using Smartphone (TRACEUS) Project

This Erasmus+ funded project was completed over two years, 2021 - 2023. In collaboration with a European consortium led by DCU, the project focused on using mobile phone technology as a learning tool. The project outcome included a curated database of recipes, European traditions and cuisines, and a training manual on how to use a smartphone to record videos. Read more at: [traceus.eu](https://traceus.eu)



### Culture on Prescription Europe Project (COPE)

The DCU AFU Unit has partnered with a consortium of six to promote harnessing cultural opportunities as a method of social prescribing. The Project will be completed in March 2024. The project aims to address issues of isolation and loneliness by "prescribing" cultural activities instead of traditional medical responses to promote wellbeing. Results

have shown that those at risk of loneliness and isolation have reported a 50% reduction in feelings of isolation and isolation, which were reduced through cultural participation. Outputs from the project include a compendium of best practices, a national report from each participating country, resources and digital badges for art facilitators and a platform showing evidence through a cycle of exchange and testimonials for the participants and artists involved. Read more at: [culture-on-prescription.eu](http://culture-on-prescription.eu)

### **Making Our Mark Project**

In partnership with the AFU Unit, Dr Michael Flannery and Dr Una McCabe delivered an eight-week course on the theme 'Making our Mark', celebrating wonder, self-expression and lifelong learning in the arts. This course is a SHAPE (Social Health, Arts and Personal Education) pilot research project and investigates the impact of the arts on wellbeing.

The course also included an art exhibition of the participants work in the School of Arts Education and Movement, which took place in May at the Library on St. Patrick's campus.

### **AFU Cross-Sectional Participant Study**

A cross-sectional study profiling AFU participants was conducted in July/ August 2023. The survey was conducted by a student from the Ageing and Society Programme and was supported by funding from the School of Nursing, Community Health and Psychotherapy. The AFU Coordinator and Prof Catriona Murphy jointly supervised the study. The findings informed plans for 2024 and provided a snapshot of the participants attending DCU's AFU programmes.

In addition to the projects mentioned above, the DCU AFU Unit has contributed to research projects led by the Institute for Education, SALIS, and the School of Nursing and Psychotherapy and several research projects conducted by postgraduate and postdoctoral students.

## **Events**



### **Operation Conversation: Talking About My Career**

Held to mark International Women's Day, this event aimed to inspire, inform and encourage older women to return to the workplace. This event was organised in partnership with the Department of Social Protection and Third Age.

The Lord Mayor of Dublin gave a keynote address. Presentations were made by Lord Mayor Caroline Conroy, Angela Smith (Work Equal), DCU's Careers Service, Dublin Bus, Compass Ireland, The Maldron Hotel Group and Dublin City Council, which promoted and outlined various family-friendly work options.



### **Taste of DCU 2023**

This annual event welcomed over 250 older adults to DCU to participate in lectures, workshops and campus tours, providing them with a taste of what DCU can offer as an Age-Friendly University. The event, hosted annually since 2013, showcases the range of opportunities at DCU. DCU's Chancellor Brid Horan opened the 2023 event, and over 50 DCU staff members engaged in delivering presentations on the day.

### Youth In A Box

DCU welcomed Dr Lucie Vidovičová from the University of Masaryk, Czechia alongside Dr Mel Duffy from SALIS DCU for this intergenerational event, aimed at generating debate on attitudes towards different aspects of ageing in the cosmetic and beauty industry. It also explored how advertisers are targeting young women and creating social media pressures to conform to gender stereotyping.



### Global Intergenerational Week

For a second year, the AFU Unit led this national campaign for Linking Generations (Scotland) and leads representing the UK, USA, Europe, and South America. It aimed to inspire individuals, governments, and organisations to embrace intergenerational practice and connect people of different generations. Several events led nationally by DCU promoted intergenerational engagement by facilitating:

- **Living and Learning Together in Dublin City**  
Participants from the AFU Unit and the group Localise (Youth Volunteering) shared and compared their experiences living and studying in Dublin through different generations and exploring societal changes and their impact on young people today.
- **Ageism Workshop and Pamphlet**  
Visiting student Ursa Kapler delivered a short module on the psychology of ageing and developed an intergenerational survey and pamphlet on ageism, "Reframing an attitude to

Ageing", informed by AFU participants and DCU students, in partnership with the Senior Citizens Parliament. It was launched by Dr Charlotte Haentzel, Demography Unit, EU Commission.



- **Intergenerational Paint Along Week 2023**, artist Mary McCarthy led a "paint along" of the Achill Island's Kildavnet Tower. Participants from three generations participated in the workshop, learning about each other's perspectives and connecting through art.

### Transition Year Awards

The annual TY awards presented to TY students attracted applications from schools all over Ireland. Winners representing Dublin, Galway, Donegal, and Longford showcased their projects with older people, including friendship, singing, and skill exchange. A new category was added to the existing (Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze) awards aimed at those who develop a product for older people using the mini-company model.

### Sunflower Project

The DCU AFU Unit welcomed 80 older Ukrainian visitors who currently reside in Kilkenny for a tour of the DCU campus, followed by lunch, music, and discussions with AFU participants. Marie Carroll (Red Cross) accompanied the group.





### Building Stories Exhibition

This exhibition celebrated the conclusion of the eight-week printmaking module led by DCU artist-in-resident Susan Leen as part of the COPE Project, which aims to combat isolation and loneliness through art. This exhibition showcased the art created by participants during the programme.



### Visit to the Print Museum

AFU members visited the National Print Museum in Dublin to learn more about the history of printmaking in Dublin.

### Does technology deserve the hype? Answers from Irish History

Tyler West, a researcher at the DCU School of Communications, discussed many topical subjects, such as AI and the use of technology in the future, which aimed to educate older people and challenge misconceptions around technology.

### Groove Is In The Heart - The Thread of Rhythm in our Lives

Ronan Guilfoyle, Director, Centre for Jazz Performance Studies, presented to AFU participants on the importance of rhythm in everyday life.

Intergenerational Games Night  
DCU students joined AFU participants at the Hive on Glasnevin Campus to

play board games and connect through intergenerational fun. Hosted with the support of Hasbro Games, a Games Group has been established to meet twice monthly on campus in the Hive with an intergenerational focus.



### UN Day of Older People

In conjunction with Professor Catriona Murphy, DCU School of Nursing and Community Health, the AFU Unit was delighted to promote a virtual presentation by Jonathan Parks, Age Scotland, showcasing their newly installed Virtual Reality Dementia and Ageing Experience educational tools. The event attracted DCU colleagues and those working in the care sector. A presentation for the AFUGN members is scheduled for Spring 2024. Software licences purchased by Prof Murphy will enable students and those working in the care sector to develop empathy and awareness of conditions associated with ageing.

In addition to the events listed above:

- The AFU Unit organised an online presentation on the status of the EU Green Paper on Ageing, which was presented by Dr. Charlotte Haentzel, Demography Unit, EU Commission.
- Local artist Mary McCarthy delivered a module on painting different landscapes using oil paint on canvas.
- The AFU Unit organised several cultural visits to discover the history behind Ireland's castles. Participants visited Rathfarnham Castle, Dublin Castle and Drimnagh Castle.
- Over 80 AFU participants attended a summer lunch at Albert College, regular coffee mornings and the annual Christmas lunch.

# Other Activities

## Facing Into Change Programme

The Unit hosted four workshops regarding career transitions and entrepreneurship in partnership with Innovate Communities. Participants reflected on their life's work and used those thoughts to inform the choices they want to make post-retirement.

The programme offered an opportunity to discuss how choices are made, and the resistance to making them a reality. The programme's ultimate objective was to support the participants to choose some course of action to initiate a change in their lives, enabling them to take on a new and purposeful role in the community.



## Intergenerational Computer Classes

In partnership with the DCU Business School, the AFU Unit continued to offer an intergenerational computer class led by students from the NGM programme.



## Visiting Students

We were delighted to host a visit from Ursa Kappler, who joined us on an Erasmus mobility programme to research AFU activities for her Master's degree at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia.

Additionally, the AFU unit facilitated two US students from the American College for six weeks over the summer. They worked with the AFU Coordinator to plan Semester 1 and worked on the social media platform for the AFU Unit.



## Life Bio in Words and Picture

In partnership with the Red Cross and funded by Fingal County Council, the AFU Unit will deliver a series of outreach workshops for 2024 with three older person groups in Fingal, including a Ukrainian Group in Howth hosted by the Red Cross.





DCU is a founder member  
of the Age-Friendly University  
Global Network

[dcu.ie/agefriendly](https://dcu.ie/agefriendly)