Christine O’Kelly
Age Friendly Project Coordinator

christine.okelly@dcu.ie
00 353 1 700 8933
www.dcu.ie/agefriendly/
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Dublin City University’s Age-Friendly Initiative is an important element of our vision as a university to transform lives and societies through education, research and innovation.

We are delighted to be leading a global initiative to highlight the roles that higher education institutions can play in responding to the challenges and opportunities associated with an ageing demographic across many societies around the world.

Higher education impacts on wider policy objectives including those related to health, 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. Whilst higher education is often regarded as a panacea providing solutions to inequalities in society, unemployment and in raising the expectations of different groups within society, 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.

In seeking to address this challenge we are utilising emerging insights from DCU’s leadership position while highlighting the breadth of activities contained in this report. Contemporary research in intergenerational learning, lifelong learning and unique insights suggest the positive impact of ageing as an enhanced ability to critique with the associated innovative reviews and assessment skills.

We are proud to be a foundational member leading a global initiative to create a network of Age Friendly Universities. DCU’s commitment to this initiative not only encourages academic discourse on ageing but demonstrates and supports active participation by older people, policy makers and non-governmental organisations to come together to contribute to the wider dialogue on how we prepare to meet the opportunities of an ageing society.

Trevor Holmes
Vice-President, Strategic and External Affairs
Vision and Principles

Over the next thirty years, the total number of people in Ireland aged 65 years and older is projected to more than double and the number of those aged over 85 years to quadruple. These demographic changes present major implications, and DCU has taken a leadership role in preparing society to meet the challenges and opportunities of this ageing demographic.

In 2012 DCU established the concept and principles of an Age-Friendly University and became the world’s first officially designated Age-Friendly University and is leading a global network which has been joined by Arizona State University and Strathclyde University.

Working together to promote an inclusive approach to healthy and active ageing, through our research agendas and focus on innovation to address specific issues affecting older adults, our curriculum development and the enhancement of learning opportunities for people across the generations, our ambition is to be internationally recognised as leaders of age-friendly initiatives in education, research and innovation to will promote a greater, more connected and productive quality of life for older adults.

In partnership with an Expert Advisory Board (EAB) comprising organizations working with older people DCU’s Age Friendly Working Group developed a set of ten principles which inform our work:

**Ten Principles:**

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.
In 2014, an Age Friendly Project Coordinator was appointed to coordinate and support a multidisciplinary implementation team under the Chairmanship of the Vice President, Strategic and External Affairs. The team’s work is informed by DCU’s Ten Principles of an Age Friendly University, DCU’s Strategic Plan – Transforming Lives and Societies, National Positive Ageing Strategy, National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, Existing work already underway at DCU including that of the Age Friendly University Working Group, Age Friendly Ireland Initiative and the World Health Organizations (WHO) Age Friendly Cities Initiative.

The Implementation Team comprise leaders representing seven pillars reflecting the breadth of existing work relevant to the ageing sector already underway at DCU.

1. Research and Innovation (including health and wellness)
2. Teaching and learning (to include online learning)
3. Life-long Learning
4. Inter-generational Learning
5. Encore Careers and Enterprise
6. Community engagement (arts & culture, DCU’s retired community)
7. Knowledge Exchange

The objectives of the team are:

- to adopt a mission and vision to integrate the outlined pillars
- to develop an Age Friendly University strategy and implementation plan for the next 12 months
- to engage and inform the ten principles based on particular pillar expertise
- to facilitate the flow of information and exchange of knowledge between the pillars
- to facilitate the flow of information and perspectives between members and between DCU and its EAB
- to contribute to informing national and EU policy
- to plan and deliver a series of events culminating in an inaugural AFU conference in 2015
- to deliver a foundational Age Friendly University Annual Report

Expert Advisory Board:

- Age Action Ireland
- Age and Opportunity
- Aontas
- Senior Citizens Parliament
- Fingal County Council
- Retirement Planning Council of Ireland
- Third Age Ireland
- Ms. Anne Connolly
- Prof. Des O’Neill
- Mens Sheds
- U3A Baldoyle
- Whitehall Active Retirement Association
- Active Retirement Ireland
In almost every country, the population of people aged over 60 years is growing faster than any other age group, as a result of both longer expectancy and declining fertility rates.

This population again can be seen as a success story for public health policies and for socio-economic development, but it also challenges society to adapt, in order to maximise the leath and functional capacity of older people as well as their social participation and security.

World Health Organisation
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World Health Organisation
Profile of Age Friendly DCU

National

DCU is now recognized by government departments, statutory organisations, academic and research organisations and NGO’s as leading the Age Friendly University Initiative.

Through consultation with the Expert Advisory Board and local authority alliances, DCU has embraced the challenge of breaking down barriers to higher education by facilitating events on campus and increasing the participation and visibility of older people.

DCU has a representative role in Age Friendly Ireland, Dublin City Council’s Dublin North Alliance, Fingal Age Friendly Alliance and their Sub-Committees on Transport and Housing.

European

DCU is a member of a the AGE-Platform Europe, a European network of around 165 organisations of and for people aged 50+ representing over 30 million older people in Europe.

Its work includes a wide range of policy areas that impact on older and retired people. These include issues of anti-discrimination, employment of older workers and active ageing, social protection, pension reforms, social inclusion, health, elder abuse, intergenerational solidarity, research, accessibility of public transport and build environment, and new technologies (ICT). The Platform also takes an active part in several EU projects.

The purpose of its work is to voice and promote the interests of the 150 million European Union inhabitants aged 50+ and to raise awareness of the issues that concern them most. AGE seeks to give a voice to older and retired people in the EU policy debates, through the active participation of their representative organisations at EU, national, regional and local levels, and provides a European platform for the exchange of experience and best practices. It also aims to inform older people of their rights as citizen or resident and on EU policy making processes and recent EU policy development.

DCU is a member of the AFE-INNOVNET Project which established a Thematic Network (TN) of local and regional authorities, industries, research institutes and civil society that share the same ambition: working together to find smart and innovative evidence based solutions to support active and healthy ageing and developing age-friendly environments (AFE) across Europe. Through this network, members have access to various data to create partnerships with the private sector, local and regional authorities, civil society, institutes of higher education and SMEs. As older people have specific needs and represent a market that should be taken into account to face demographic opportunities and stimulate the economy, DCU’s contribution to the Thematic Network contributed to the work of interested stakeholders and influences the EU agenda on active and healthy ageing.

DCU is a founder member of the European Covenant on Demographic Change signed in Brussels in December 2015.
International

DCU is leading the global Age Friendly University Initiative, Lassell College, Massachusetts joined mid-2015 with further expressions of interest from Canada, Japan, USA and the UK.

DCU joined the International Federation on Ageing in 2015. The IFA is an international non-governmental organization (NGO) with a membership base comprising government, NGOs, industry, academia and individuals in 70 countries and has General Consultative Status at the United Nations and its agencies including the World Health Organization. It is a voice alongside and on behalf of older adults globally.
Activities 2015

Research

The Age Friendly University Initiative sets a strategic direction to respond to the challenges and opportunities of ageing through its research agenda. Ageing-related research with particular emphasis on the impact of intergenerational and life-long learning; the health effects of physical activity; dementia; technology to support “ageing in place”; and preventative medicine are key areas of interest.

Engaging with our Expert Advisory Board and the local community offers opportunities to collaborate and inform an ageing agenda from product design and end user interface to addressing societal and health issues, and informing policy at national and European level.

In partnership with the Intergenerational Learning Programme, the MeDEX programme and local community, focus groups were convened with older people and students on campus to inform potential opportunities for older people in the higher education setting and explore how the contribution of older people to academia informs research.

In response to a grant call by Medtronic, for projects addressing non-communicable disease, a consultation process with the membership of Age Action, Active Retirement Network and Men’s Sheds revealed Diabetes Type II as a common concern. In partnership with The DCU Educational Trust and The Healthy Ageing Society Hub, grant aid was awarded from Medtronic for a community based peer led mentoring programme on Diabetes Type II. The first phase of a potential three year project involves training members from participating organizations to deliver a mentoring programme.

The Age Friendly Initiative links closely with DCU in the Community and Campus Engage. Several research opportunities are being developed with members of the Expert Advisory Board and Community Based Research Programme.

Students who mentored on the Intergenerational Learning Programme undertook the following research projects:

1. Attitudes towards older people in Ireland
2. Investigation into whether DCU is really an age-friendly university and if so how?
3. Attributes of the 21st century student
4. Case study of the Intergenerational Learning Programme and its impact on DCU alumni in terms of their personal and career development
5. Assessment of the knowledge gap between older individuals and the younger generation and the role of initiatives such as the Intergenerational Learning Programme in closing this gap
Events

Mrs. Nora Owens, Chairperson Fingal Age Friendly Alliance, Mr. Richard Bruton Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and DCU’s AFU Co-ordinator Christine O’Kelly

Over the course of 2015, a number of events promoting the Age Friendly University were held on campus and brought an additional 2000 older people onto campus for the first time.

In partnership and with the support of Dublin City Council, Fingal Age Friendly Alliance and representatives of organisations from the External Advisory Board and local community, 80 people took part in Walkability Surveys on the DCU campus and Albert College Park. Recommendations from the Walkability Survey on campus will inform future developments on campus.


The Age Friendly Project Co-coordinator promoted an Intergenerational Learning Programme Open Day which brought 160 older people onto campus and also supported the launch of a collection of short stories by members of the Intergenerational Learning Programme Life Writing Group which was launched by the travel author, Mary Russell.

Using the Age Friendly Cities Thematic approach to ageing two Walkability Surveys were conducted in 2015. Walkability surveys provide an opportunity to raise awareness about the strengths and assets of a built environment, while challenges and concerns can be referred appropriately and improvements can be sought.

The Albert College Park Walkability Survey highlighted a potential opportunity to maximize the facilities of the park to develop a pop up music/drama venue and in partnership with local older peoples groups develop a healthy community project with Dublin City Council Sports Department and Dr. Niall Moyna, DCU.

The DCU Walkability Survey highlighted a number of issues on campus which will be addressed as part of ongoing improvements on campus.
Events 2015

In partnership with the Intergenerational Learning Programme, a project completed with St. Aidan’s Secondary School supported the Transition Year students to develop a booklet aimed at older people using mobile APPS. The booklet will be launched in early 2016.

An Award for Intergenerational Solidarity was presented by Minister Kathleen Lynch, Dr. Daire Keogh Vice President, DCU and Mr. Michael O’Muircheartaigh to Ashbourne Community School for a video presentation on their ICT programme for Seniors. This award encourages and recognizes intergenerational best practice in secondary schools.

With support from the President’s Office, DCU hosted Age Action’s Silver Surfer Awards in the Helix. DCU was represented on the judging panel by Dr. Mark Glynn, Director for Teaching and Learning Enhancement and Ms. Christine O’Kelly AFU Coordinator. Mr. George Hook, compered the event and 5 Awards categories were presented by Dr. Daire Keogh Vice President DCU and Mr. Eamonn Timmons CEO Age Action.
Promotion and Publicity

The Senior Times magazine promoted the AFU initiative in its bi-monthly publication. For the first time, an Irish higher education institution hosted a stand at the three day Over 50 Show in the RDS, an event promoted by Senior Times which attracted a large number of people and the media. 6,000 brochures on Opportunities in DCU were distributed in addition to information from the Elevator and MeDEX Programmes. The stand was managed by volunteers from the Intergenerational Learning Programme and MedEX Programmes with staff members from DCU.

DCU staff and Volunteers promote Over 50’s show.

Articles on the Age Friendly University have been published in the local and national newspapers and the AFU Coordinator has been invited to speak on local and national radio on the initiative.

The AFU Coordinator has made presentations to local and national groups to promote opportunities for older people in DCU.

Presentations/Workshops

Presentations on the AFU were made at orientation events to new staff and students which raised an awareness of DCU’s commitment to leading the global AFU initiative.

In partnership with the Elevator Project and with the support of the President’s office events to support staff who have or live with relatives with Dementia were held on campus.

With the support of COSC (The National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence) and in partnership with Age Action a workshop to address issues of Ageism and Elder Abuse was hosted on campus which attracted over 50 participants from the local area, secondary schools, care workers, DCU retirees/staff and students.
AFU Conference – Engaging Ageing
– Universities as engines for active and healthy Ageing 2015

The Inaugural Age Friendly Conference “Engaging Ageing” promoted globally attracted over 60 presentations, workshops and seminars on four themes relevant to age friendly universities. The event attracted over 160 people from higher education institutions, non-profit organizations, government and civic society. Twenty four higher education institutions took part representing 4 continents.

The key note speaker, Dr. Jane Barratt Secretary General of the International Federation on Ageing said “Age Friendly Universities (AFU) through the application of its ten principles has the potential to positively impact the lives of generations of older people across the world. The World Health Organization’s (WHO) World Report on Ageing and Health is a timely and appropriate vehicle for AFUs to map a pathway that responds to the educational spirit of all ages, through shaping current and future educational opportunities. It is imperative that AFUs are adequately resourced and focused to build bridges across sectors and disciplines to fulfill its mandate. The International Federation on Ageing (IFA), INGO in official status with the United Nations and WHO stands ready to work with Dublin City University (DCU) and other age friendly universities toward growing this important network globally, and developing an understanding as to how to measure its impact.”

Ms. Helen Campbell, Vice President of the Age Platform and Mr. Hugh O’Connor CEO of Age Friendly Ireland also made key presentations at the Conference.

Ms. Campbell said
“DCU is perfectly placed to offer (that) dynamism and interactive exchange between all ages. With its range of courses from the science and engineering areas to the humanities, arts and culture programmes, DCU can offer a truly lifelong learning experience informed by research and experiential learning.”

Members of the who U3A attended the event and said:
“The DCU AFU event re-vitalised us; energerised us: contributing to confirming that we should keep going: confirming we are up there with the best; stepping outside the stereotypical boxes; not to accept the narrative of others.”

As a result of discussions at the conference, several universities from the UK, Australia and Europe have expressed an interest in joining the AFU. A project with Leeds Beckett University is currently in development and a project with Linking Generations UK and Stadt- Frankfurt promoting employment opportunities for young people in the care industry is being finalized.
Lack of computer skills is not a barrier to availing of opportunities in DCU, a free 4 week “Introduction to Computers” course is run throughout the academic year which not only helps break down the barriers to participation but also involves our students on campus who volunteer their time on a one to one basis as tutors on the programme.
Opportunities in DCU

Under the AFU Initiative, a selection of individual credit bearing modules identified from existing undergraduate programmes presents an opportunity for those considering a course of study to experience university without committing to a longer four year programme.

Modules can be undertaken on an audit basis without undertaking assessment or assignments or on a full basis (with assessment and assignments).

**Modules for Spring 2016**

- Business and Professional Ethics
- Ethics of Journalism
- Introduction to Marketing
- Citizenship, Diversity and Inclusion
- Introduction to Law
- Introduction to Microbiology and Genetics
- Introduction to Modern Ireland
- The American Political System
- Sociology of Sport 1
- Sport and Exercise Physiology
- Comparative European Politics
- Critical Thinking and Health
- Introduction to Development
- Growing Older
- Introduction to Intercultural Studies
- Language Culture and International Communication
- Spirituality, Religion and Health
- Cultural Studies
- Sexuality and Society
- Psychology, Media and Creativity
- Culture, Health and Illness

DCU is developing a Transitions Hub for those who wish to embark on a new phase of life. This will provide participants with a structured platform for self-development and planning, mentoring opportunities, customized courses, supporting “silver” and social entrepreneurs and identifying opportunities for brokering expertise to match societal challenges.

These opportunities complement our existing flexible study options offered by DCU Connected, DCU in the Community, and the Intergenerational Learning Programme.

A wider choice of modules will be available in September 2016
Structure

DCU Age-Friendly Initiative reflects the breadth of existing work relevant to the ageing sector underway at DCU. It is structured under six pillars:

- Research and Innovation
- Teaching and Learning
- Lifelong Learning
- Intergenerational Learning
- Encore Careers and Enterprise
- Civic Engagement

An External Advisory Board comprising organisations representing older people’s interests advises and supports the initiative.