Annual Report
2016-2017
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DCU in the Community – Our Mission

DCU in the Community acts as a bridge between the university - its staff, students and resources - and the local and regional community. Our activities include the promotion of equity of access to third level education among groups underrepresented in higher and further education, student volunteering, community-based learning, and community-engaged research. Our mission is to promote social regeneration through education and enhance local community development and community resilience through the provision of flexible educational and lifelong learning opportunities.

DCU in the Community is the flagship and most tangible expression of DCU’s commitment to civic engagement. The spectrum of civic engagement activities offered at DCU in the Community includes:

— Widening access and participation in higher education among underrepresented groups;
— Community-based research to leverage university research to assist disadvantaged communities;
— Student-led engagement, service learning and volunteering – locally, regionally and through national platforms.
2016-2017 in a Snapshot

— 180+ learners across all programmes
— 160+ hours of educational guidance, student support and mentoring
— Assistance with 25+ applications to higher and further education
— 11 courses and programmes delivered on site and jointly with community partners
— 9 workshops delivered during Summer School 2017
— 200+ DCU student volunteers and service learners linked with local and national organisations
Educational Programmes

Overall, more than 180 learners participated in all courses and programmes at DCU in the Community in the academic year 2016/2017, including 50 students who took up almost 100 workshop places during Summer School in July 2017.
— Our courses are designed to build confidence and study skills to return to education; however, we welcome community learners with varied motivations - personal development, career preparation, enhancing CV, lifelong learners, CE participants, those who wish to progress to third level.
— We offer educational and career guidance, study supports and mentoring to students to encourage them to commit to learning and prepare for further education or future career.
— We start with where people are at – in their life stage, educational, professional and personal journey and offer stepping stones to progression.

— We teach in small classes and groups, in a friendly and welcoming environment. Our centre is a community-based centre and we especially welcome people from the local neighbourhoods.
— We recognise the individual talents of each learner and offer a flexible curriculum based on our learners’ needs, motivations and ambitions.
— Jointly with our learners, we map out learning and career paths in simple steps, offering progression routes and timescales to suit their lifestyles and family commitments.
— We assess and review learners’ goals against their progress and develop tailored learning supports for each student who wants to avail of these.

Many of the programmes were held in partnership with local community organisations and statutory providers.
Bridge to Education (QQI Level 5)

Our Bridge to Education programme is aimed at mature students and adult learners who wish to prepare to return to further and higher education. The programme is accredited at QQI Level 5.

Areas of study include communications, academic reading and writing, numeracy and computer skills for college, research and study skills, as well as ongoing guidance. The programme is linked with DCU Campus through tours, guest workshops, speakers and events. In 2016/2017 the programme was delivered twice for nearly 30 learners. Over 60% of students graduating from Bridge to Education programmes in 2016/2017 secured places in higher and further education for September 2017. Bridge to Education course is delivered jointly with Community and Family Training Agency (CAFTA) and Sillogue Neighbourhood Centre.

Psychology (QQI Level 5)

Our Psychology course aims to equip participants with introductory understanding of psychology as a field of academic study. The focus is on linking the theory of psychology to practical applications, such as therapies and interventions associated with the major psychological perspectives. The programme is accredited at QQI Level 5. The programme has been designed with the assistance of experts from DCU BSc Psychology degree, and is linked with DCU Campus through guest speaker workshops and on campus events. In 2016/2017 the programme was delivered twice for nearly 30 learners. The Psychology course is delivered in partnership with Community and Family Training Agency (CAFTA) and Sillogue Neighbourhood Centre.

Creative Digital Media iMac

DCU in the Community has established itself as a state of the art digital media hub. This interactive course is designed for learners who are interested in developing their digital media skills for personal and professional purposes. Students gain knowledge of using iMac computers and Apple software and applications for creating and editing audio-visual materials, such as slideshows, movies and websites. The course introduces participants to the basics of working with software and applications such as Wix, Picasa, iMovie, Audacity and Google Tools. In 2016/2017, the programme was delivered three times for over 30 learners many of whom are employees of local community groups and organisations.
Summer School

Held since 2011, DCU in the Community Summer School is designed to bring university and community experts together to deliver sessions and workshops for local residents of all ages.

For DCU in the Community, it is an opportunity to reach new student groups and introduce them to our activities.

In July 2017, 9 workshops were delivered in areas such as professional, career and personal development, psychology, wellbeing, workplace communications, and digital media.

DCU in the Community would like to acknowledge and thank DCU Schools and Units, as well as our community partners, whose contribution of valuable time and expertise made it possible to facilitate such successful Summer School programmes. 100 workshop places were taken up in July 2017.

Boxing Clever

Boxing Clever is a 20-week programme aimed to promote recovery and rehabilitation of marginalised and socially excluded groups through a framework of adult education, addiction awareness and education, counselling, guidance and physical activity (boxercise and boxing).

The programme is led by HSE RIS, Ballymun Local Drugs Task Force, Ballymun Youth Action Project and Urrús, and supported by DCC.

DCU in the Community has supported the delivery of the programme since 2012.

In 2016/2017, DCU in the Community supported 10 programme participants through the provision of structured study skills and assignment preparation sessions and provided the venue for the QQI L4 Health-Related Fitness module.

Other Programmes & Venue Provision

— Digitise the Nation – beginners computer/iPad programmes held in partnership with Irish Internet Association in May-June 2017, delivered in our Ballymun centre and at St. Michael’s House Omni Training Centre for nearly 20 participants.

— Digital Media and Digital Photography programmes – led and organised by Ballymun Job Centre Men’s Group and held at DCU in the Community weekly between August 2016 and June 2017.

— Fáilte Isteach English Conversational Classes – led and organised by Fáilte Isteach and held at DCU in the Community weekly between January and March 2017.
Raising Aspirations  
– Educational Guidance

DCU in the Community provides a range of pre-entry mentoring and support services for students enrolled on in-house courses as well as external clients through outreach talks, covering topics such as study support, educational guidance, application assistance, finance application assistance, interview preparation and more. In 2016/2017, over 160 hours of educational guidance, mentoring and study support were delivered.

In 2016/2017, DCU in the Community also provided one-to-one, hands-on assistance with completing over 25 further and higher education applications to in-house students and external clients and a similar number of applications for student financial supports, such as SUSI grants and Back to Education Allowance.

Campus events for our community students were also organised in 2016/2017 and have included:
— Mature students information sessions with DCU Mature Students Office
— DCU Campus Tours with DCU Student Recruitment Office
— DCU Library Tours and Workshops with DCU Library
— Academic writing skills workshops with DCU Student Learning
— BSc Psychology talks with academic staff and mature students from the programme
— Research ethics seminars with Nordubco

DCU in the Community would like to thank all staff from the offices and units for their assistance on the delivery of our programmes.

An annual Graduation Ceremony was held on 11th July 2017 in the Mentoring Suite at DCU Library.
Volunteering and Community Based Learning

This academic year of 2016/2017 has been a pivotal one for DCU in the Community and in particular DCU Volunteer. The volunteering element of the Civic Engagement in DCU underwent a major rebranding with the introduction of tailored graphics, slogans and overhaul of social media/online presence. This digital development mirrored the new on campus approach which saw the engagement with SU, student communities and community partners grow.

The introduction of the online volunteering database specialised for students, StudentVolunteer.ie, saw the wealth and variety of volunteering opportunities being made directly available to DCU students surge. The platform was launched on campus in December 2015 by previous DCU SU president Kim Sweeney and has since enabled almost 120 student volunteers from DCU in channelling their time and energy to a worthwhile cause for the benefits of others or their environment.

This kind of altruistic ethos is visible all across DCU’s varying campuses’ which has been demonstrated by the huge number of charitable and civic events and activities that have occurred within DCU over this past academic year. Many of these were derived from the undertaking of charitable and civic societies who work with the student and local community in tackling both on and off campus social issues.

Kickstarting semester one, the annual DCU Volunteer Fair occurred on the 29th of September 2016. The DCU Volunteer Fair was an opportunity for community groups and non-profit organisations to showcase their volunteering roles, promote and encourage volunteering, as well as recruit volunteers. The Fair was visited by students, staff and people from the local community. With spot prizes, atmospheric networking and an interactive spray paint art station on hand to advocate and showcase the benefits of volunteering, the day was a success.

The impact of the Volunteer Fair led to the vested interest in volunteering on campus with events such as International Volunteer Day celebrated on the 5th of December 2016 with festive finger food and mulled wine at the Helix. The event featured talks from representatives of Suas, Habitat for Humanity, Campus Engage and more, giving students an opportunity to hear first-hand the nature of voluntary work abroad and what a worthwhile experience it is.

Throughout both semesters, DCU Volunteer worked closely with the DCU Students’ Union to further the volunteering agenda and planned numerous events for given campaign weeks. For instance, during Helping Hands Week aimed to encourage students to reach out to one another in times of need, the DCU Volunteer Team performed Random Acts of Kindness all across campus to spread a message of goodwill. During Body & Soul Week, voluntary arts and crafts classes along with GAA training sessions for the pupils of St Patrick’s Boys Primary School were held on St Patrick’s Drumcondra campus whilst a fundraising drive for Epilepsy Ireland occurred on Glasnevin campus.

In May 2017, DCU jointly with Campus Engage held the “Campus Engage Participate” workshop for DCU staff focussing on incorporating accredited community based learning and research process into curricula, with 25 staff members from across DCU Schools and Units in attendance.
Civic Engagement

DCU President’s Awards for Engagement

The 2017 DCU President’s Awards for Engagement were presented on 13th April 2017 at the Helix by DCU Deputy President Professor Daire Keogh to recipients from the worlds of engineering, physics, humanities, social sciences and community engagement. The special invited guest speaker at the ceremony was Deirdre Mortell, CEO of Social Innovation Fund Ireland.

The 2017 award winners were:
— Winner Staff Category: Dr Veronica Crosbie, University of Sanctuary & asylum seeker outreach programme
— Special Merit Award Staff Category: Dr Eilish McLoughlin, Leadership in Public Engagement and Education in Science
— Winner Student Category: DCU Media Production Society - 24 hour broadcast in aid of Peter McVerry Trust
— Special Merit Award Student Category: Helen Concannon, Chief Commissioner Girl Guides
— Special Award for Enterprise Engagement: Dr Brian Corcoran, Dr Paul Young, Mr Liam Domican, Mr Dean McLoughlin, Siemens Greenpower Challenge

For details of the winning projects and a full list of nominees please see: www.dcu.ie/community/civicEngagement/presidents.shtml

Civic Engagement Forum

DCU in the Community staff are active members of the university’s Civic Engagement Forum, chaired by Dr Deiric O’Broin (NorDubCo). Members of the forum include representatives from schools, faculties and administrative units, as well as DCU Student Union, who act as champions of civic engagement in their respective units and university-wide.

Campus Engage

DCU Office of Civic Engagement and DCU in the Community continue to work on Campus Engage Steering Committee; Campus Engage Volunteering and Student-Led Engagement Working Group; and Campus Engage Community Based Learning/Community Engaged Research Working Group.
Our Team

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Orla Mooney, Psychology QQI Level 5 tutor
Kate Delaney, Creative Digital Media iMac tutor

Internships, Community Employment and Work Experience
Lara Roche, DCU Multimedia, DCU Volunteer Champion Internship (July 2016 – April 2017)

Our Partners
Lynda Ward, Co-Manager, Sillogue Neighbourhood Centre
Valerie Keating, Co-Manager, Sillogue Neighbourhood Centre