

ACADEMIC COUNCIL MINUTES

**2 June 2021
2.00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

Zoom Meeting

Present:

P. Anandarajah	B. Anderson	F. Blin
S. Blott	C. Bohan	L. Boran
M. Brown	J. Brunton	J. Bruton
M. Butler	PJ Byrne	P. Cahill
B. Corcoran	M. Coulter	S. Cullen
D. Curran	R. Devery	T. Downes
H. Esmond	O. Farrell	D. Fitzpatrick
P. Flynn	Y. Freeney	G. French
C. Furlong	P. Gallagher	R. Gillanders
S. Giordani	C. Gurrin	D. Hand
S. Hegarty	G. Hughes	G. Jones
J. Kearney	R. Keegan (Secretary)	W. Kelly
J. Kelly	E. Kennedy	D. Keogh (Chair)
D. Kinahan	P. Landais	A. Logan
T. Lokot	A. Looney	L. Looney
C. Mac Murchaidh	M. McAdam	C. McArdle
K. McDonagh	E. McDonald	E. McGlynn
P. McGorman	A. McKenna	J. McManis
P. McMorrow	M. McSharry	P. Mooney
E. Morgenroth	A. Morrissey	J.P. Mosnier
F. Murphy	R. Murphy	C. Ní Mhurchú
B. Nolan	P. Ó Duibhir	C. O’Gorman
P. Robbins	P. Rosati	K. Sanders
G. Sinclair	A. Sinnott	J. Stokes
M. R. Sweeney	T. Szecsi	J. Travers
G. Uí Laighléis	L. Waugh-Daly	B. White

In attendance:

V. Cooke

Apologies:

SJ. Belton	D. Collings	J. McDonough
J. Usher		

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted.

A. Minutes and Related Issues**2. Minutes of the meeting of Academic Council of 7 April 2021**

The minutes of the meeting of 7 April 2021 were approved. It was noted that formal minutes would be signed once on-campus activity resumes.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Minutes of the meetings of the Education Committee of 10 March 2021, 31 March 2021 and 28 April 2021

The minutes were approved.

5. Minutes of the meeting of the University Standards Committee of 25 February 2021 and 1 April 2021

The minutes were approved.

6. Minutes of the meeting of the Graduate Research Studies Board of 25 February 2021 and 8 April 2021

The minutes were approved. It was noted that the GRSB recently approved guidance for postgraduate research student annual leave entitlements.

B. Policy and Strategy Issues**7. President's report**

- 7.1 The President acknowledged the extraordinary effort and contributions of DCU colleagues over the past year. He noted the impressive range of nominations for the recent President's Awards, which were a reflection of the extraordinary work that is happening across the University.

- 7.2 The President noted the recent Government call for input into the reform of the HEA Act, and advised Council that the University will be making a submission through the IUA. A new DCU Governing Authority will be appointed this summer under existing legislation, but it is expected that it will have a truncated life span to accommodate the new legislation. Minister Harris recently announced a call for applications for his four nominations to DCU Governing Authority and staff elections will take place in July.
- 7.3 The President recorded his thanks to colleagues in the Finance Office who recently undertook their quality review.
- 7.4 The President drew attention to the DCU Access to the Workplace initiative which will commence next week. There are 90 students commencing paid internships under this programme. The President congratulated colleagues in DCU Access Services and DCU Educational Trust on this important initiative.
- 7.5 The President informed Council that DCU hosted an EUA study group last week with over 70 delegates attending from across a wide range of European higher education institutions. The event was an opportunity for DCU to showcase its success in graduate employability. The President noted the significant work involved in putting the programme together and expressed his gratitude to all those involved.
- 7.6 The President updated Council on DCU's membership in the European Consortium of Innovative Universities (ECIU). The ECIU is currently in the process of developing the agenda for the next stage of the ECIU University, with Prof. Lisa Looney leading out on this on behalf of DCU. The President noted Minister Harris's stated commitment to the European Universities Project but added that, to date, this has not been matched by the necessary funding.
- 7.7 The President informed Council that he recently met with local councillors to discuss the commitments and responsibilities of the University to the local communities. It was a positive meeting with gratitude being expressed for all that DCU is doing. A number of councillors highlighted the importance of FE to HE pathways and welcomed DCU's strategic commitment in this regard.
- 7.8 The President expressed his gratitude to Mr John McDonough and IUA Librarian colleagues who have concluded negotiations on an open-access agreement that will greatly change the availability of online journals to researchers.
- 7.9 The President advised Council that Senior Management effort continues to focus on COVID-19 and planning for the anticipated reopening in Autumn.
- 8. COVID-19**
- 8.1 Prof. Lisa Looney informed Council that clarity is expected imminently on the planned date for the publication of the Leaving Certificate results. This date will potentially impact planning for Semester 1. The University will respond quickly following the announcement, in order to provide as much clarity as possible to incoming first-year students.
- 8.2 Prof. Lisa Looney briefed Council on Minister Harris's intention to bring a paper to Government, detailing support for the intended nature of delivery for 2021-22. Early drafts

describe a predominately onsite student experience with commitments that Government will support further and higher education providers in working towards that goal. This is caveated with the need to follow ongoing public health guidance and the continued rollout of the vaccine programme.

Indications suggest that the majority of staff will be vaccinated by the start of the new year and that many students will have received at least their 1st vaccine. Scenario planning is now focused on scoping out what an optimistic view, with caveats (recognising that there may be significant on-campus activity but possible caps on large numbers) would mean for timetabling and experience of all student cohorts. As soon as the Government announces the framework for a safe return to on-site for Further and Higher Education and Research in 2021-22, DCU will move quickly to refine learning activities and so timetabling.

It was noted that a small number of staff and students, who are deemed high-risk, will always have to be considered, and it is most likely that this would be done on a case-by-case basis given the small numbers identified in the previous academic year.

9. Strategic academic initiatives

9.1 HCI 3 project update

Dr Blánaid White presented a summary update of the five HCI projects in which DCU is involved:

MC2

The IUA led MC2 project will develop the architecture of a national microcredential framework, a structured process for collaboration with enterprise, and an online portal for learners. The project will also see the rapid development and rollout of microcredentials across partner universities. Dr Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichil is the DCU Project Lead.

Recognition of Prior Learning and Lifelong Learning in Higher Education

This THEA led project will see the development of a national recognition of prior learning framework. Mr Billy Kelly is the DCU Lead Contact for the project.

Postgraduate Certificate in Innovative Materials for Industry 4.0

This new collaborative programme is being led by IT Carlow with Prof. Dermot Brabazon as the DCU Project Lead.

Virtual Laboratories in Higher Education

This project, led by Maynooth University, will explore how virtual labs can augment and enhance student learning. Dr Aoife Morrin is the DCU Project Lead.

DCU Futures

As has previously been presented to Council, DCU's ambitious solo project intends to radically reimagine the curriculum. The project is built upon three aspects; transforming what students will learn, transforming how they will learn, and embedding the transversal skills they will need to thrive in unprecedented technological and social change. The project will see a number of new innovative programmes and pathways being delivered in 2021-22.

The new DCU Futures programmes build upon DCU's existing disciplinary strengths, and recognise trends towards zero-carbon economies, a need for sustainable societies and technology- and data-infused worlds. These programmes will embed new and innovative ways of learning including challenge-based and immersive learning experiences, virtual laboratories and deep engagement with industry partners. Students will also follow a transversal skills pathway, that will be interwoven into their entire programme experience. The student journey will feel very different right from the point of orientation, and students will be supported as they navigate a unique learning experience.

Dr White acknowledged the significant cross-university buy-in and support in the development of the DCU Futures project so far, including significant input from the Teaching Enhancement Unit, the Digital Learning Design Unit, Academic Affairs, Student Support & Development, Student Recruitment and Communications and Marketing.

Two colleagues noted that the development of the new programmes is a significant undertaking for the Schools involved, particularly given the rapid pace, the scale of what the project is trying to achieve integrated with disciplinary expectations. It was noted that DCU Futures will allow the University to tap into the DCU DNA and the success of the programme will need to be assessed over the lifetime of the project, not simply in terms of student numbers but in terms of the degree to which the approach is embedded.

C. Items for Formal Approval/Noting

10. Exam timetabling principles

Approved

11. Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis 2021/22

Approved

12. Marks and Standards 2021.1

Approved. Mr Billy Kelly drew attention to the change to the classifications for certificate and diploma awards, which will bring them in line with all other awards in the University.

13. Accreditation Report: BSc in Digital Business and Innovation

Approved

14. Proposed Aegrotat Award from Master of Business Administration

Approved

15. Any other business

Ms Aisling McKenna informed Council that the Studentsurvey.ie data has been received and analysis will commence in the coming weeks. This year there were additional questions,

relating to learning during the pandemic. When compared to the national figures, DCU student responses are comparable or slightly ahead.

Ms Kelly informed Council that the notion of belongingness has emerged as an issue nationally, particularly for first-year undergraduate students. It was noted that this points to the need to consider second-year students in the planning for orientation in 2021-22, many of whom have had limited campus exposure in 2020-21.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Date of next meeting:

6 October 2021

2:00 pm

Location TBC