

## GOVERNING AUTHORITY MEETING

Report of meeting of Wednesday, September 06<sup>th</sup> 2023  
2.00pm, B103, DCU St Patricks Campus

### **PRESENT:**

Ms. Brid Horan (Chair)  
Prof Daire Keogh  
Dr Audrey Bryan  
Ms Marian Corcoran  
Prof Yvonne Daly  
Mr Justin Doyle  
Ms Sarah Fitzpatrick  
Ms Rachel Hussey  
Mr Cathal Marley (online)

Dr Kara McGann (online)  
Ms Deirdre O'Connor  
Mr Thomas O'Dowd  
Dr Aisling de Paor  
Ms Michele Pringle  
Dr Declan Rafferty  
Ms Marie Sinnott  
Mr Seamus Walsh

### **APOLOGIES:**

Mr David Harney  
Mr Brian J. Smyth  
Ms Fiona Naughton  
Prof Lisa Looney  
Mr John Darby  
Prof Anne Sinnott

Cllr Jimmy Guerin  
Ms Carol Hanney  
Ms Zainab Boladale  
Prof Ray Walshe  
Prof James O'Higgins Norman

### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr John Kilcoyne  
Ms Marie Mellett

Mr Gareth Yore

### **WELCOME**

The Chancellor welcomed members. She thanked everyone for their participation and noted the apologies.

The agenda was adopted.

The Chancellor enquired if there were any conflicts of interest in relation to any item on the agenda that required a declaration on the part of a member(s) – None were declared.

- 1. MINUTES OF GOVERNING AUTHORITY MEETING OF 21<sup>ST</sup> JUNE 2023**  
**Approved** by the Authority subject to two minor amendments.

- 2. REPORT OF MEETING OF 21<sup>ST</sup> JUNE 2023 FOR WEB PUBLICATION**  
**Approved** by the Authority subject to two minor amendments.

The Authority agreed, for transparency, the reports should be accessible to the public.

- 3 REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS**

Action 1: Ongoing

Action 2: Ongoing

Action 3: On agenda

Action 4: Ongoing

Action 5: Can be removed from the action item list.

Action 6: There was much discussion on the topic of resourcing. Financial sustainability is currently a significant risk and refocusing existing resources was noted.

**Actions to be tracked:**

Action 1: Ongoing

Action 2: Ongoing.

Action 3: Complete

Action 4: Ongoing

Action 5: Ongoing

Action 6: Ongoing

**4 MATTERS ARISING**

None

**5 GOVERNANCE**

**5.1 Governing Authority Reconstitution**

The Authority noted the *Governing Authority Competency Survey* results was circulated in advance of the meeting. It shows there is a comprehensive set of the key competencies on the transitioning Governing Authority and that no obvious competency gaps need to be addressed at this time.

DR informed the Authority that they await feedback from the DFHERIS on our transitioning proposal. The last meeting of the current Governing Authority will be October 18<sup>th</sup> however the term will officially end on November 09<sup>th</sup>.

DR also informed the Authority that a Chair will need to be appointed to the transitioning Authority. The temporary chair will only be in place for the start of the December meeting at which a nomination for Chancellor will be tabled. The Chancellor's term, along with the transitioning Authority, will end in July 2025. During this time procedures will be drafted on how to appoint a new Governing Authority in accordance with the HEA Act 2022 and these procedures will require Ministerial approval.

**FOR APPROVAL**

## **6. GOVERNANCE REVIEW INTERIM REPORT**

### **6.1 DCU Education Support Services DAC (generally referred to as DCU Commercial)**

The interim report was taken as read. The interim report highlighted that robust governance structures are in place. A recommendation of increasing the frequency of meetings along with an expansion in the membership of the DCU Educational Support Services Audit Committee was agreed.

MC noted that this group of companies are significant assets to the university. Their level of commitment to the university is exceptional. The Authority noted the important role played by these companies and their staff.

### **6.2 Student Union/Office of Student Life**

The interim report was taken as read and the Authority noted the important roles of this Office and the Student Union. One recommendation was made to enhance the governance of OSL (an independent company limited by guarantee). This was to appoint a Chair of the company from Governing Authority or Senior Management who attends Governing Authority. This would strengthen the governance link to the University. It was agreed that DR would discuss this with the Student Union President and current board of OSL and revert to the Authority.

The Chancellor thanked MS, CM and MC for their work on these reports. It was noted that further work is to be carried out in relation to the DCU Educational Trust Report. This will be presented at a later date.

## **7. UNIVERSITY BUDGET 2023/24**

The Director of Finance noted that this budget is set against a very challenging environment with increasing inflationary pressures and with the core grant from Government not providing sufficient inflationary adjusted increases. The Director of Finance noted that this was the most difficult budgetary process (Covid aside) in over a decade. Any potential supplementary grants from Government in relation to inflation pressures are unlikely to be confirmed before March 2024.

The Finance Team reviewed the annual transfer to capital allocation in detail and due to budgetary pressures maintained this at the same level as the prior year. The Director of Finance further noted that all borrowings are on fixed rates.

The capital budget includes estimated costs for the new student residences build (Phase 1) as full tender costings have not yet been received.

The DCU Educational Support Services (DESS) Group Company budgets are included in the budget pack to give an overview of the group financials, however these are for noting by the Governing Authority. The DESS budgets are approved by the individual company Board of Directors. These companies are also being affected by cost inflation.

After a full discussion the Authority **approved** the 2023/24 University Budget.

## **8. AUDITED ACCOUNTS 2021/22 (DELEGATED APPROVAL AUTHORITY)**

The Director of Finance noted that the Mazars audited accounts were approved by the Authority at its April 2023 meeting. The Office of the Controller and Auditor General have

begun their audit and are at an advanced stage. No material changes or adjustments are anticipated to the financial statements that were approved at the April 2023 meeting.

The Director of Finance requested Authority approval to delegate authority to the Chancellor and President to sign OCAG Letter of Representation and the financial statements once certified by the OCAG, subject to:

- No material adjustments or changes being required by OCAG to the consolidated financial statements as previously approved.
- Formal clearance being provided by OCAG to DCU for the consolidated financial statements to be signed.
- Any edits/narrative changes required by OCAG will be brought to the attention of the DCU Audit Committee at its meeting later in September 2023.

**Approved** by the Authority

#### FOR DISCUSSION / NOTING

#### **9. OVERVIEW OF INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION**

Prof Anne Looney, Executive Dean, DCU Institute of Education (IOE), was welcomed to the meeting to present on the IOE which consists of six schools, two denominational centres and a number of research centres with c. 4000 students and 192 staff. The Centre for Talented Youth, Ireland is an affiliated centre. IOE provides both undergraduate and postgraduate education and shares programmes with the Faculties of Science & Health and of Humanities and Social Sciences.

AL noted that seven years post incorporation into DCU the IOE are focusing on the future. An independent external review of Incorporation concluded that the IOE is now well established and is moving into a new development phase.

The IOE have recently developed some new ground-breaking B.Ed. undergraduate specialisms including a new programme with TU Shannon for construction, graphics and engineering. Thirty students are due to start this semester. Students will be based on both campuses and registered with both universities. A new home economics with technology programme B.Ed. specialism is being developed with a start date of semester 1 2024. This is being submitted for validation with Education Committee next week. This programme will have a strong industry focus.

AL informed the Authority that IOE has just completed a Quality Review which came at a good time as the IOE has bedded in and matured post incorporation. Informative sessions were conducted on challenges and what shapes the IOE future. One recommendation as a result of this quality review was to expand the IOE's international profile, including Education Doctorates. International students do not usually attend the IOE but offering a level 9 would attract these students.

The area of school placement will be a focus for the IOE going forward. It is such an integral part of the IOE and has scope for improvement. Student support while in placement is an important aspect with various inputs including Student, Support and Development offering 24-hour support during placement.

AL noted that there is no fall in the numbers of students applying for the BEd programme, however having to have a certain level in Irish is hindering students from some demographic groups in applying to the programme. AL is working with the Department to develop an FE route into the BEd programme.

Overall the IOE want to:

- Provide a transformative and sustainable student experience.
- Continue to advance research and share impact.
- Develop staff community and wellbeing.
- Focus development and engagement with local, national, and international stakeholders.

The Chancellor thanked Professor Looney and colleagues for the great work in embedding the IOE within DCU and noted their important contribution to a number of progressive developments.

## **10. UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

Laura Mahoney, Executive Director of Engagement, was welcomed to the meeting to present on the units she leads.

The remit for her office is to enhance Local and International Engagement. Approximately 2 years ago there was an organisation redesign and DCU Global was created. The following units fall under DCU Global:

- Student Recruitment
- Registry
- Placement (Incoming/Outgoing students)
- Student Support and Development and
- Global Partnerships.

Global partnerships is broken down into regions and each member of staff manages a region. This will help maintain competitiveness and continue to grow our market share. Extensive in-person travel is needed to develop and establish strong networks with stakeholders. LM noted that applications from international students are increasing however the number of international students converted into registrations can drop significantly. DCU Business School and the Faculty of Engineering and Computing have the largest numbers for registrations. One-third of international students have deferred their place due to accommodation issues.

DCU has had a 222% growth in enrolments from India over the last three years. The US market also has real potential for growth. The current focus of DCU Global is to access the High School counsellor network in the US.

The University has a significant number of international partnership arrangements in place. The level of activity under these is being reviewed. These include membership of the European Consortium of Innovative Universities (ECIU) and partnerships with Arizona State University and Notre Dame and a developing relationship with Rutgers.

The Chancellor thanked the Executive Director of Engagement and colleagues for their work and noted the importance of effective external engagement for the success of the University.

## **11. RISK COMMITTEE**

### **11.1 Report of meeting of 06<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

Marie Sinnott, Chair of Risk Committee, gave an update to the Authority. The following items were noted:

- Financial Sustainability was noted under new and emerging risks.
- How the University is managing climate adaptation was discussed.
- The FOI process is being remodelled and is in line with best practice.
- An update on personal data retention was discussed and actions ensued.
- A Risk 'Blank Paper' Exercise was conducted which will feed into the University Strategic Risk Register Process.

### **11.2 Minutes of meeting of 08<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

**Noted** by the Authority

## **12. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE**

### **12.1 Minutes of meeting 15<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

**Noted** by the Authority

### **12.2 EDI Committee Annual Report 2022**

Rachel Hussey, Chair of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee, noted that 2022 was the first full year of this Committee's existence and confirmed that the Committee has complied with their Terms of Reference. The main areas of focus for 2022 were:

- Athena Swan
- Support and monitor the university's EDI work and
- The implementation of the HEA principles.

The EDI Committee recommendations to management for 2023 are as follows:

- Build diversity considerations into all university decision-making processes.
- Develop a robust data picture so that progress can be captured and reported on.
- Champion and encourage learning and awareness activity across equality, diversity and inclusion with consideration given to how leaders can help embed a learning culture.

## FOR DISCUSSION / NOTING

## **13. PRESIDENT'S REPORT AND UNIVERSITY OFFICERS' REPORTS**

### **DCU President**

The President gave an overview of his report which had been circulated to GA and highlighted the following:

- With great sadness, the President noted the loss of our colleague Dr Kevin McGuinness in the School of Electronic Engineering.
- DCU made c. 4000 offers for undergraduate programmes under the CAO process. This is our highest ever number of CAO offers to applicants. DCU has also offered more nursing places than in any previous year. The progression from FE to HE is very important and the number of places on offer this year by DCU has increased by 30%.
- An MOU has been agreed with Louth and Meath Education and Training Board.

DCU is a registered charity under the Charities Act 2009

DCU Charity Number: 20013653

- DFHERIS has included a proposal to increase stipends/scholarships for PhD Students in their Annual Options Paper on the Cost of Education as part of the pre-Budget process. Following extensive lobbying by the IUA, a proposed figure of €25m has been included for Higher Education Institutions core funding to cover an uplift in institutional scholarships to €25,000 in addition to €18m in competitive funding for SFI/IRC.
- DCU Futures have been showcasing their work over the last two days in the Helix.

The Authority expressed their condolences to the family and colleagues of Dr McGuinness and the Chancellor will convey this on their behalf.

#### **Vice President of Academic Affairs**

The Vice President of Academic Affairs Report was circulated and there was no further update.

#### **Chief Operations Officer**

The Chief Operations Officer Report noted the issue around potential Residential Zoned Land tax on our Griffith Avenue land and the North lands. Application to have these lands excluded from the Residential Zoned Land Tax map was denied by both DCC and An Bord Pleanala. This could result in a tax liability from February 2023 of 3% of the land value per annum. DCU has eight weeks to decide whether to challenge this decision in the High Court through a Judicial Review.

The Authority agreed that DCU should engage with the HEA and DFHERIS before a final decision is made to proceed with the Judicial Reviews. The final decision whether to proceed with the Judicial Reviews was delegated to the Standing Special Committee of the Governing Authority (the Chancellor, President and the Chairs of the Governing Authority Subcommittees).

The Chief Operations Officer further noted that it is expected that DCU will be in a position to issue tender for the construction of Student Residences Phase 1 by September 11<sup>th</sup>. This is subject to DFHERIS/HEA approval. DCU have also submitted an outline business case for the construction of 830 on-campus beds (Phase 2) to DFHERIS and is awaiting feedback.

The Marlet case regarding repayment of their forfeited deposit for land purchase is ongoing and is due to be heard in the High (Commercial) Court on October 10<sup>th</sup>.

A Service Level Agreement (SLA), in principle, has been agreed with the DFHERIS in relation to the administration of Carysfort Pensions and it is expected that this SLA will be executed by both parties in the coming days.

#### **Director of Finance**

The Director of Finance presented accounts presented for ten months to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023, which show a small surplus of €0.3m against a budgeted breakeven position.

The financial outlook for the University is to achieve breakeven for the 2022/23 financial year, in line with the budget.

The DCU Commercial Group of Companies has recorded an operational profit of €4.6m against a budgeted profit of €3.0m, a favourable variance of €1.6m for the first ten months of the financial year.

The overall financial position of the DCU Group remains strong with significant cash reserves on hand.

The COVID-19 Business interruption Insurance claim is ongoing and it is hoped there will be an update by the end of the year.

**Director of Human Resources**

The Director of Human Resources Report was circulated and there was no further update.

**14. PERSONNEL MATTERS**

The Director of Human Resources submitted the following candidates for approval:

- Prof Blanaid White for appointment as Executive Dean in the Faculty of Science and Health.
- Dr Cathal Gurrin for appointment as Professor in the Faculty of Engineering and Computing.
- Dr Robert Gillanders for appointment as Professor of Economics in the DCU Business School.
- Dr Rory O’Sullivan for appointment as Adjunct Professor in the DCU Institute of Education.

**Approved** by the Authority

**15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The President invited members of Governing Authority to attend the Honorary Degree Conferring and the Graduation ceremonies that are taking place the week commencing 23<sup>rd</sup> October.

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Chancellor

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Date

**Action Items:**

<b>Action</b>		<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
1.	Presentation from the Director of Student, Support and Development. The presentation should include Critical Incident Response and Lessons Learned on the sudden passing of a student.	Director of SS&D	December 2023
2	Circulate Organisation Diagram	Deputy President	When complete



3.	Report on DCU Educational Trust.	Marie Sinnott, Marian Corcoran, Cathal Marley	2023
4.	EICU Presentation	VP of Academic Affairs	2023
5.	Discuss the Residential Zoned Land Tax with the HEA and the DFHERIS.	SMG	ASAP

**Items to be tracked:**

<b>Action</b>		<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
1.	Quarterly progress reports on each risk in the Strategic Risk Register.	President	Next update in October 2023
2.	Meetings of GA to be held at different locations.	COO	Ongoing
3.	Update on any changes to the Universities Act.	COO	As they arise
4.	Strategy only meetings.	Deputy President	Annually
5.	Deans to present on rotation	COO	Ongoing