

GOVERNING AUTHORITY MEETING

Report of meeting of Wednesday, February 09th 2022 2.00pm, Zoom Video Call

PRESENT:

Ms. Brid Horan (Chair)
Prof Daire Keogh
Mr Waqar Ahmed
Dr Audrey Bryan
Ms Marian Corcoran
Prof Yvonne Daly
Mr Justin Doyle
Ms Kate Goodman
Ms Carol Hanney
Ms Rachel Hussey
Prof Lisa Looney
Mr Cathal Marley

Ms Fiona Naughton
Ms Deirdre O'Connor
Prof James O'Higgins Norman
Dr Aisling de Paor
Ms Michele Pringle
Ms Kathy Quinn
Dr Declan Raftery (DR)
Mr Terence Rooney
Ms Marie Sinnott
Mr Brian J. Smyth
Mr Seamus Walsh
Prof Ray Walshe

APOLOGIES:

Ms Zainab Boladale
Cllr Jimmy Guerin
Dr Kara McGann

Mr John Darby
Mr David Harney

IN ATTENDANCE:

Prof Anne Sinnott
Ms Marie Mellett (recording secretary)

Mr Ciaran McGivern
Ms Marian Burns

WELCOME

The Chancellor welcomed members to another meeting being held remotely due to current public health issues. She thanked everyone for their participation and noted the apologies.

The agenda was adopted.

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

1. **MINUTES OF GOVERNING AUTHORITY MEETING OF 10TH DECEMBER 2021**
Approved by the Authority subject to minor typos.
2. **REPORT OF MEETING OF 10TH DECEMBER 2021 FOR WEB PUBLICATION**
Approved by the Authority
3. **REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS**
Action 1: Agenda item 5
Action 2: On agenda

Action 3: April 2022

Action 4: April 2022

Action 5: Complete

Action 6: Ongoing

Actions to be tracked:

Action 1: Ongoing. An update will be given under agenda item 11.

Action 2: When possible will begin with meetings on both the SPC and AHC.

Action 3: Ongoing

Action 4: Ongoing

Action 5: Ongoing

FOR DISCUSSION

4 MATTERS ARISING

The Chancellor noted that the full membership of the Strategic Finance Advisory Committee was not complete. The Chancellor along with the Chair of The Strategic Finance Advisory Committee are putting Deirdre O'Connor, Head of Planning NAMA, forward for appointment. They feel her experience and skillset will make a valuable contribution to the Committee.

Approved by the Authority

5 OVERVIEW OF UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Vice President of Academic Affairs gave a presentation to Governing Authority on the structures and measures that are in place to ensure quality teaching and learning within DCU, including the following points:

- The beginning of a student's DCU lifecycle begins with the Registry department. The student will engage with this office predominantly, from initial registration as a DCU student to receiving their degree transcripts when finished. DCU also needs to maintain records of student results. A number of critical systems underpin these processes, therefore there are close working relationships between the owners of these systems and the ISS Team.
- Academic Council and its sub committees oversee the standards of programmes and policies to underpin both quality assurance and innovation.
- There are a number of departments that oversee and support in-class quality assurance, such as:
 - Teaching Enhancement Unit
 - DCU Studio – a new unit which helps to ensure quality in relation to online learning.
 - NIDL – National Institute of Digital Learning – works collaboratively with DCU Studio.

- Human Capital Initiative (HCI) Teams – oversee the key innovation projects and support the development of new innovative degree programmes
- All these areas within Academic Affairs support excellence, flexibility and strategic priorities.
- As the area is diverse, Academic Affairs incorporates a mix of skills including academic leadership and senior professional support.
- The Vice President of Academic Affairs noted that a thematic quality review of digital learning is being undertaken, there is a focus on micro credentials and discussions are ongoing as to DCU's ideal contribution/role in these areas. The Chancellor noted that a discussion of the issues and opportunities by Governing Authority could be helpful.
- Strategic priorities centre on transforming the student experience. The following projects will assist with this:
 - DCU Futures – one element is developing a framework for transversal skills.
 - SIS – Student Information System.
- A Data Governance Management Structure for students records is currently being put in place.
- A number of factors and stakeholders contribute to academic quality. DCU operate under the European Higher Education Area in terms of standards and guidelines for quality assurance.
- DCU have many institutional regulations that they follow such as an internal review process.
- There are also external regulations such as, professional accreditations, CINTE Institutional Review and HEA Compacts.
- Student feedback is also essential and there are a number of mechanisms in place to receive this.

The Authority noted the important roles played by:

- Academic Affairs, under VPAA's leadership, in promoting and ensuring academic quality within DCU
- In-depth external quality reviews
- Reviews of graduate outcomes and
- HEA oversight.

The Authority thanked the Vice President of Academic Affairs for an extremely informative presentation.

6 PROPOSED HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY BILL 2022

DR gave a presentation, noting that the HEA Act 2022 it is currently at Committee Stage in the Houses of the Oireachtas and noted the following:

- One of the key changes is the proposed reduction in size of Governing Authorities, with a maximum of 17 members – Chair, President, 2 students, 5 from within the institution, 3 external members appointed by Minister and 5 external members selected by the GA based on competencies required.
- When the Act is in place, Governing Authorities will have 12 months to comply. There will be an added function of GA'ss. *'In order to satisfy itself that appropriate systems, procedures and practices are in place to enable compliance with policies of the Government or a Minister of the Government to the extent that*

those policies (whether set out in codes, guidelines or other policies) may effect or relate to the functions of the University’.

- IUA have made a number of submissions regarding the Draft including regarding the allocation of certain powers within the HEA.
- There may be further changes at Committee stage and advice is being sought from CSO/Eurostat regarding potential implications of certain provisions regarding reporting of borrowings by universities.

The Authority will be kept up to date as this Act progresses through the Oireachtas.

FOR DISCUSSION/NOTING

7 RISK COMMITTEE

7.1 Report of meeting of 02nd February 2022

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

- An update from the Chief Operations Officer on Covid-19. All existing COVID-19 safety and mitigation measures remain in place and will do so until the end of April. Additional funding from Government has been sourced for Covid-19 related measures. Free antigen tests were distributed to staff and students as an additional safety measure for the resumption of semester 2. The concern around the impact of social isolation on students was discussed. The Committee were reassured that this is being closely monitored. Students are being encouraged to participate in social events. DCU are flexible in relation to social gatherings and are encouraging students to maximise the use of the new outdoor spaces for these events. The SU reported that there was an increase in the uptake of counselling services. Overall the Committee were satisfied that the Covid 19 situation is being handled very well.
- An update on cybersecurity was given. The Committee were satisfied with the steps taken to protect the university systems. It was further noted that there is a good uptake among staff for cyber security awareness training.
- The Committee were informed that NDAs were not used by DCU in the context of sexual harassment.
- DCU’s plan to update the Business Continuity Management Plan 2022. A Business impact assessment review and learnings in relation to cybersecurity will feed into the updated plan. The plan will be brought back to the Risk Committee later in the year.
- The Committee signed off on the Strategic Risk Register (SRR) process.
- The threat landscape around cybersecurity is evolving and keeping on top of this is a constant challenge. Work is ongoing on a separate detailed cyber risk register and will go to the Risk Committee for review. Sourcing and maintaining key staff for this area and adequate funding remain challenging. Overall the Committee noted that there is very good support from Senior Management for on-going investment in cybersecurity.
- A presentation was given by the Sustainability Manager, Samantha Fahy, on Climate Risk and DCU’s Climate Action Plan. Carbon emissions need to be significantly reduced if the University is to reach the target of 50% reduction by 2030. This reduction will drive transformative change. This is seen as a risk but also an opportunity and needs to be front and centre of the new Strategic Plan.

The Committee believe sustainability will feature as a key theme on their work plan going forward.

- The Committee reviewed their work plan priorities for 2022.
- It was noted that the new Data Protection training on-line module went live on the Loop platform.

The Committee commended the work of the ISS Team on cybersecurity and asked Justin Doyle to convey this thanks to the entire ISS team.

7.2 Minutes of meeting of 07th December 2021

Noted by the Authority and echoed commendation of work of ISS Team.

FOR APPROVAL

7.3 Updated Terms of Reference recommended by Committee for approval of Authority

Approved by the Authority

8 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

8.1 Report of meeting 03rd February 2022

Rachel Hussey, Chair of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, gave an update to the Authority. The following items were discussed:

- The Staff Engagement and EDI survey results are being analysed and will be reported back to staff. The results will also inform activity around Athena Swan. A further update on this will be presented at the next EDI meeting.
- DCU has received funding for another cohort of The Vista Development programme. This will prepare women for academic advancement.
- The Business School is applying for Athena Swan Bronze award and EDI team are working with three other schools on preparing submissions for the award in April.
- Training continues across a variety of EDI areas.
- A draft Sexual Misconduct Policy has been shared with the trade unions for consultation and is due to be circulated to staff later this month.
- The President will interview the Chancellor at the re-launch of the Women in Leadership programme on International Women's day, March 8th.
- The EDI Committee track progress in the composition of Committees across DCU and the record for December 2020 – December 2021 will be reviewed at the next EDI meeting.
- Minister Simon Harris launched the results of the National Survey on Sexual Harassment and Violence. Nationally the response rate for this survey was very low.

The Authority noted that students were concerned with completing the survey as it requested a lot of sensitive information. The President highlighted an increased incidence of loneliness among students and it was noted that students commuting long distances can exacerbate this. It was further noted that the Students Union have introduced the role of VP for Diversity and Inclusion and that women's safety is a priority issue.

8.2 Minutes of meeting of 25th November 2021

Noted by the Authority

FOR APPROVAL

8.3 Updated Terms of Reference recommended by Committee for approval by Authority

Approved by the Authority

9 AUDIT COMMITTEE

9.1 Updated Terms of Reference recommended by Committee for approval by Authority

Approved by the Authority

10 HONORARY DEGREE COMMITTEE

10.1 Updated Terms of Reference recommended by Committee for approval by Authority

Approved by the Authority

11 PRESIDENT'S REPORT AND UNIVERSITY OFFICERS' REPORTS

DCU President

The Strategic Planning Process is underway, with an away day for Senior Management scheduled for February 15th. The European Union recently published a European Strategy for Higher Education which highlights the importance of universities in European civil society. DCU's mission and strategic plan are closely aligned with the European Strategy. Our membership in ECIU also links us very closely to the European mission. DCU was a member of another European Consortium, YERUN, however a decision was made at Senior Management level to withdraw from this, to allow us to focus on one European consortium membership.

Working with ASU, we have identified key areas of focus in research and collaboration. A number of joint meetings are taking place in Washington DC in March to progress joint initiatives and identify areas for further collaboration.

A conferring ceremony will also be held in Washington we will confer Honorary Doctorates on the President of ASU, Michael Crowe, Ambassador Barbara Barrett and Congressman Richard E. Neal.

A number of years ago DCU established a graduate school at Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT), which has been very successful, providing opportunities for post graduate study and helping DkIT grow its numbers. A quality review of this initiative has commenced with early indications that the review will be positive.

The Chancellor commended all those involved in the FutureTech Project as formal permission was received from the HEA to proceed to signing of the construction contract.

The Chancellor commented on the RTE Change Maker series which highlighted DCU's research activities.

The Chancellor also commended DCU's Sustainability Manager, Samantha Fahy, and all involved in securing DCU's ranking in the Top Ten Most Sustainable Universities in Europe.

Vice President of Academic Affairs

No further update.

Chief Operations Officer

The Chief Operations Officer noted that construction has commenced on the Future Tech project.

The transfer of Morton Stadium under a long-term lease to DCU should take place by the end of the month.

The Chief Operations Officer gave an update on the Strategic Risk Register (SRR) and the following key points were noted:

- The full SRR was circulated to the Authority in advance of the meeting.
- Some risks by their nature are long term risks and it will take time to resolve these, for example financial sustainability.
- Through sub committees there is ongoing reporting to Governing Authority on the cybersecurity and sustainability risks.
- In the last 12 months there has been extensive capital investment in the University facilities and infrastructure to ensure these remain fit-for-purpose.
- Future Tech is a huge step in the right direction to help with risk number 5 - *Insufficient teaching space and ancillary services capacity to accommodate growing student numbers over the next decade.*
- Risk 8 is primarily driven by Covid 19 and the general wellbeing and mental health of staff and students.
- The Authority were informed that there is a statement of Academic Excellence within the SRR to show the University have not omitted this as a risk but it is considered to be a low risk in light of the extensive oversight and mitigation measures in place.
- The new strategy will seek to address all risks outlined in the SRR.
- It was noted that the 'top down' and externally focused risk consideration undertaken by members of Governing Authority was hugely beneficial both for Authority members and in compiling the SRR. It is hoped that this process will be maintained in future.

Director of Finance

The Director of Finance noted that there has been a reasonable first quarter, with the University operating slightly ahead of budget. Ultimately, the outlook for the University will only become clearer when the annual HEA Core Grant allocation is determined, which will be at the end of February or early March. The outlook for the commercial group of companies will be determined by their summer business.

The Director of Finance noted that significant progress has been made under the Deputy Director of Finance in relation to financial planning. The Director of Finance thanked John Kilcoyne and his team.

DCU continues to pursue its claim under its Business Interruption Insurance Policy arising from the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. To date a partial payment has been made to DCU. Discussions are ongoing regarding the balance of the claim.

Director of Human Resources

The Director of Human Resources noted that further detail on the outcome of the staff engagement survey will be brought to the next meeting. A summary of findings will be sent to all staff. The participation rate was 40%, double that for the previous survey.

There will be a half day Fuse session (online engagement and consultation process which proved really effective in previous strategy development process) in September to get further feedback on 'Our DCU'. This will help shape the 'people' priorities in the Strategic Plan.

FOR DECISION

12 PERSONNEL MATTERS

The Chancellor noted that Kara McGann met with the Director of Human Resources to discuss the process of selecting the below candidates. Kara confirmed to the Chancellor that she is satisfied that the process was appropriate.

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

- Prof Anne Matthews for appointment as Full Professor, School of Nursing, Psychotherapy and Community Health.
- Mr Eoghan Stack for appointment as Director of Commercial Business Development, DCU Business School.
- Ms Paula Murray for appointment as Director of Placement, Office of the Vice-President for Academic Affairs.
- Prof Dermot Diamond for appointment as Emeritus Professorship, Faculty of Science and Health.
- Prof Maria Slowey for appointment as Emeritus Professorship, DCU Institute of Education.

Approved by the Authority

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chancellor noted that she received an invitation from the Oireachtas Joint Committee to make a written submission on future funding for the higher level sector and lifelong learning, on a personal basis having regard to her earlier work in this area. She appreciated the helpful input from DCU colleagues and has made her submission. The core message was the urgent need to address the growing funding gap in relation to core ongoing costs and to capital investment across the third level sector as identified in previous reports. Layering additional initiatives on an under-funded base is undermining the ability of the sector to provide teaching and learning excellence in line with international standards and to continue to provide the highly educated graduates needed to ensure Ireland's continued social and economic success.

Chancellor

Date

Action Items:

Action		Person responsible	Deadline
1.	Presentation on Student Life and how the SU assist this.	SU President / VP Academic Life	April 2022
2	Circulate a breakdown of the non EU price increases by course.	Director of Finance	April 2022
3.	Governing Authority members invited to give input into the next Strategic Plan.	All members	April 2022
4.	A comprehensive presentation on the SIS Project.	LL	2022

Items to be tracked:

Action		Person responsible	Deadline
1.	Quarterly progress reports on each risk in the Strategic Risk Register.	President	On-going
2.	Meetings of GA to be held at different locations.	COO	Future meetings to be held on other DCU campuses and occasionally meetings will be held off campus subject to public health guidelines
3	New Executive Director of Engagement to present on International Affairs - within 3 months of appointment.	COO	Ongoing

4.	The President and Senior Management will withdraw from the April meeting each year to allow for a discussion in their absence.	President and SMG	Ongoing
5.	Comprehensive presentation on progress of the SIS Project.	LL	April and November meetings in 2022/2023