
ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES**4 October 2023****2.00 p.m. – 3.30 p.m.****Zoom Meeting****Present:**

P. Admirand	A. Bourke	L. Boran
A. Brennan	M. Brown	D. Burke
M. Butler	P. Clark	R. Connolly
M. Coulter	Y. Crotty	S. Cullen
A. Daly	M. Efthymiou	D. Fahy
P. Flynn	C. Furlong	P. Gallagher
T. Gans	D. Hand	A. Intizar
R. Keegan	D. Keogh (Chair)	D. Kinahan
A. Kirwan	G. Lake	V. Lambert
P. Landais	M. Leahy	A. Logan
L. Looney	C. Loscher	A. Maillot
C. Mac an Bhaird	U. McCabe	D. McCarthy
J. McDonough	P. McGorman	S. McGovern
E. McLoughlin	J. McMackin	J. McManis
P. Mooney	A. Morrissey	JP. Mosnier
G. Muntean	T. Ní Mhúirthile	K. Nolan
M. O'Brien	S. O'Brien	S. O'Brien
K. O'Sullivan	N. O'Sullivan	M. Pryce
P. Sharkey Scott	G. Sinclair	A. Sinnott
J. Stokes	T. Szecsi	M. Ward
B. White		

Apologies:

J. Appelby	G. Barry	C. Bohan
J. Bruton	M. Brown	PJ. Byrne
E. Clinton	C. Connolly	E. Conway
E. Crossen	Y. Crotty	J. Doyle
M. Dunne	F. Dwyer	B. Egan
D. Elliott	O. Feeney	J. Foster
G. French	F. Gallagher	S. Giordani
C. Gurrin	D. Harold	B. Hayes
S. Hegarty	C. Holland	M. Kirwan
A. Looney	J. Lynch	A. MacNamara
C. McArdle	A. McCarren	K. McDonagh
E. McGlynn	SR. McGroarty	R. McManus
P. McMorrow	B. Murphy	P. Murphy
E. Ni Bhradaigh	B. Nolan	R. O'Dwyer
P. Robbins	G. Roberts	M. Rocchi
G. Sinclair	G. Uí Laighléis	L. Van Der Werff
P. Young		

In Attendance:

A. Whelan	M. Howell	
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The President welcomed members to the first meeting of Academic Council of the 2023/24 academic year. He noted that this is the last meeting for Dr David Carthy as Secretary to Academic Council.

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted.

A. Minutes and related issues**2. Minutes of the meeting of Academic Council of 6 June 2023**

The minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising

It was noted that there were no matters arising.

4. Minutes of the meetings of the Strategic Learning Innovation Project Steering Group

Prof. Blánaid White, Dean of Strategic Learning Innovation, called particular attention to the comprehensive audit of the DCU Futures project that has been ongoing. She also mentioned the successful DCU Futures Transversal Skills Conference, which further establishes DCU as the sectoral leader in embedding transversal skills across its portfolio of programmes and engaging with industry on this agenda.

4.1 Minutes of the 3 April 2023 meeting

The minutes were approved.

4.2 Minutes of the 29 May 2023 meeting

The minutes were approved.

4.3 Minutes of the 27 June 2023 meeting

The minutes were approved.

5. Minutes of the meetings of the Graduate Research Studies Board

Prof. Joseph Stokes, Dean of Graduate Studies and Chair of the Graduate Research Studies Board (GRSB), called particular attention to 'Procedures for conducting a *viva voce* online or using videoconferencing facilities', which were revised to clearly set out different formats of examination, the circumstances within which each is permitted and the approval process for each format. J. Stokes also informed members that requests to conduct a *viva voce* examination fully online must be considered by GRSB rather than Chairs Action, which was the approval process introduced in the context of Covid restrictions.

5.1 Minutes of the 27 April 2023 meeting

The minutes were approved.

5.2 Minutes of the 1 June 2023 meeting

The minutes were approved.

B. Policy and strategy issues

6. President's report (oral report)

- 6.1 The President expressed his condolences on behalf of the University to the family and friends of Dr Kevin Mc Guinness on their recent loss. Dr Mc Guinness was a highly regarded teacher and researcher and a valued colleague in the School of Electronic Engineering and to many across DCU.
- 6.2 The President informed members that DCU issued a record number of CAO offers for the 2023/24 academic year. He expressed his thanks to the Executive Deans and the Programme Chairs, who worked with Registry to ensure that offers were made to eligible prospective students.
- 6.3 The President thanked colleagues in Student Support and Development for their work in preparing for Student Orientation 2023. He acknowledged the sense of community created on campus and the hard work of the Events team, Registry, DCU Students' Union and staff across the University in achieving this. The President noted that the recruitment cycle for the 2024/25 academic year has already commenced and encouraged members to use their various social media channels to promote their programmes.
- 6.4 The President congratulated colleagues on the DCU Futures Conference: 'Leading for Success in Unscripted Times', which took place on 5 September 2023. He acknowledged the importance of this event in not only showcasing DCU's leadership in re-imagining higher education for the 21st century but also confirming the University's commitment to Futures as the expression of DCU's distinctive teaching philosophy.
- 6.5 The President acknowledged that the University's Internationalisation Strategy is gaining traction, calling particular attention to the International Foundation Year Programme of the DCU International Academy, which continues to develop from strength to strength.

- 6.6 The President informed members that the DCU Strategy 2023-2028 will be launched on 5 October 2023 and thanked Professor Anne Sinnott, Deputy President and Dr Jean Hughes, Director of Strategic Initiatives for their coordination of the process, and all colleagues who contributed to the development of the strategy over the last two years. He noted that delivering on the objectives of the strategy is already underway and that Faculty Management Boards are currently considering how the strategy will be implemented in their respective Executive Faculties.
- 6.7 The President congratulated Professor Anne Parle-McDermott on her appointment as the Director of the Life Science Institute, which will bring the activities of DCU Life Science researchers together under a single centre, and will consolidate and build upon the University's Life Science research portfolio.
- 6.8 The President noted members of the Irish University Association (IUA) have been lobbying the government for adequate resources for the Higher Education sector in advance of Budget 2024. The President and the Chancellor, Brid Horan, joined with the Presidents and Governing Authority Chairs of the other member universities of the IUA, in sending a letter to An Taoiseach, An Tánaiste and four government Ministers to highlight the case of Ireland's universities. This forms part of a coordinated advocacy campaign that the universities have been engaged in for many months to address the €307m shortfall in annual funding identified by the government and which it committed to addressing when it published its 'Funding the Future' policy on 4 May 2022.

7. Teaching and Learning Strategy

Prof. Lisa Looney, the Vice-President for Academic Affairs/Registrar (VPAA), delivered a presentation on the development process for DCU's new Teaching and Learning (T&L) Strategy.

L. Looney informed members that the starting point had been the identification, early on in the development of the overarching institutional strategy of one of the University's strategic pillars: 'Pioneer a transformative student experience'. The draft T&L Strategy should be viewed as setting out the main ways in which the University will do this.

She outlined the stages in which the draft T&L strategy had evolved, starting in the summer of 2022 with an OVPAA review and 'think-in' and a blank-page exercise with Faculty leaders. The review included consideration of a wide range of reports and policy documents and recommendations arising from DCU's Quality Review processes. There was also early

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engagement with student leaders to better understand their recent and current experience of studying at DCU. By early in the 2022/23 academic year, this work had resulted in the agreement on three priorities under this pillar of the university plan: excellence, flexibility and academic services. Across seven meetings of Education Committee, goals related to these priorities were discussed and elaborated upon. The Committee considered our default trajectory in relation to teaching and learning, should no strategic actions be taken, and discussed an alternative vision and the actions which would deliver a transformative student experience. Drafts capturing the actions and goals as they evolved through these discussions were circulated in February, July and again in September '23.

The most recent edits include reference to a review of DCU's portfolio of programmes in response to the impact of generative artificial intelligence, not just in terms of the continued validity of assessments but also the ongoing relevance of programmes in the context of artificial intelligence in the workplace.

L. Looney explained that the Teaching and Learning (T&L) Strategy evolved during the same period as the DCU Strategy 2023-2028 and that the Year 1 KPIs for the overarching Strategy emerged from the interaction between the two sets of discussions. L. Looney informed members that there has already been substantial progress against specific KPIs, in particular, delivering Year 3 of *DCU Futures* and adopting a revised academic integrity policy, while actions regarding the remaining KPIs for year 1 are in train. L. Looney acknowledged that the Teaching and Learning (T&L) Strategy is multidimensional, phased and nuanced, which can make it difficult to attach specific metrics to certain objectives. Nevertheless, the Year 2 KPIs for this pillar of the institutional strategy are in development. It was also acknowledged that the T&L Strategy will extend beyond the current funding period of *DCU Futures*.

The VPAA noted that in the context of the institutional strategy being launched on October 5th, it is intended that a final draft of the T&L strategy be submitted to Education Committee at its November meeting. In the interim, an exercise will be undertaken to support alignment between the strategy of each of the University's five faculties and delivery of the institutional T&L Strategy. It is also intended to do an alignment check with the new Compact Framework.

L. Looney informed members that, while Education Committee has undertaken the bulk of the work in developing the new Teaching & Learning Strategy and was the forum through which Faculties engaged in the development process, Academic Council has an important role to play in ensuring the strategy is implemented as proposed and monitoring the University's progress against stated KPIs.

C. Items for formal approval/noting

8. Register of Academic Council Members 2023/24

Noted

9. Register of members of Subcommittees and Boards 2023/24

9.1 Education Committee

Noted

9.2 University Standards Committee

Noted

9.3 Examination Appeals Board

Noted

9.4 Graduate Research Studies Board

Noted

9.5 GRSB Appeals Standing Committee

Noted

10. Nomination of Chair of Examination Appeals Committee

Prof. Lisa Looney, Vice-President for Academic Affairs/Registrar, thanked Dr Brenda Daly, School of Law and Government, for agreeing to be nominated. Her role as Chair of the Examination Appeals Committee will commence in January 2024. L. Looney noted that it is timely to reflect on the work of the Examination Appeals Committee, and she would ask the outgoing Chair to do this at an upcoming meeting.

Approved

11. Regulations and Guidelines, External Examiners for Taught Programmes/Modules

Dr Monica Ward, Dean of Teaching and Learning, informed members that the proposed changes to the regulations and guidelines are intended to clarify the activities of External Examiners across all programmes post COVID, and to encourage their attendance at one meeting of the Programme Board in the first year of, and at least once more during, their tenure.

Approved

12. Validation Reports

12.1 BEd in Home Economics and Technology

Approved

12.2 Graduate Diploma/MSc in Financial Technology and Innovation

Approved

13. Report from Autumn 2023 examinations, Progression and Award Boards

13.1 Examination Report: DCU

Approved

Academic Council conferred awards on those candidates who demonstrated the required standard and were duly approved for award by the relevant Progression and Awards Boards.

13.2 Examination Report: Ballyfermot College of Further Education

Approved

Academic Council conferred awards on those candidates who demonstrated the required standard and were duly approved for award by the relevant Progression and Awards Boards.

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Prof. Lisa Looney, Vice-President for Academic Affairs/Registrar, informed members that the current arrangement between DCU and Ballyfermot College of Further Education is under review in the Faculty, and an alternative delivery model is being explored which would result in the University having greater involvement in the programme delivery.

14. Report from DCU Autumn 2023 Faculty Awards Boards for Research Degree

Approved

Academic Council conferred awards on those candidates who demonstrated the required standard and were duly approved for award by the relevant Faculty Awards Boards for Research Degrees.

15. Research Student Awards Report: Dundalk Institute of Technology

Approved

Academic Council conferred awards on those candidates who demonstrated the required standard and were duly approved for award by the relevant Faculty Awards Boards for Research Degrees.

16. Report from the Disciplinary Appeals Committee

Noted

17. Report to Academic Council on the Accreditation of Programmes during the 2022/23 Academic Year

Noted

18. Report on Activities of Academic Council for the 2022/23 Academic Year

Noted

19. Items from recent sub-committees of Academic Council

Approved

20. Any other business

Prof. Lisa Looney, Vice-President for Academic Affairs/Registrar, provided a brief update on the most recent data regarding DCU student attainment which suggests a return to pre-Covid trends.. A more detailed analysis of this data will be undertaken by Education Committee. L. Looney also acknowledged that progression rates at DCU compare favourably with others in the sector, as noted in an Irish Times article published on 27 September 2023, which credited the high number of first preferences, the high standards of quality student supports and interventions, and the ongoing monitoring of programme and student attainment data as contributors to this achievement.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Date of next meeting:

<p>29 November 2023</p> <p>2:00 pm</p> <p>AG01, Glasnevin Campus</p>
