**ACADEMIC COUNCIL
MINUTES**

29 November 2023

2:00 p.m. – 3:25 p.m.

AG01

Present:

P. Admirand	C. Bohan	A. Bourke
A. Brennan	M. Brown	P. Clarke
E. Clinton	R. Connolly	E. Crossen
S. Cullen	A. Daly	M. Dunne
M. Efthymiou	F. Gallagher	P. Gallagher
T. Gans	D. Hand	C. Holland
R. Keegan	G. Lake	V. Lambert
L. Looney	C. Mac an Bhaird	A. Maillot
U. McCabe	K. McDonagh	E. McGlynn
P. McGorman	P. McMorrow	P. Mooney
JP. Mosnier	T. Ní Mhuirthile	K. Nolan
M. O'Brien	S. O'Brien	M. Rocchi
P. Sharkey Scott	J. Stokes	G. Uí Laighléis
B. White	A. Whelan (Secretary)	P. Young

Apologies:

J. Appelby	L. Boran	C. Brennan
M. Brown	J. Bruton	D. Burke
M. Butler	PJ. Byrne	C. Connolly
E. Conway	M. Coulter	Y. Crotty
J. Doyle	B. Egan	D. Elliott
D. Fahy	O. Feeney	P. Flynn
J. Foster	G. French	C. Furlong
C. Gurrin	D. Harold	B. Hayes
S. Hegarty	A. Intizar	D. Kinahan
A. Kirwan	M. Leahy	A. Logan
A. Looney	C. Loscher	J. Lynch
A. MacNamara	C. McArdle	A. McCarren
J. McDonough	S. McGovern	S. McGroarty

E. McLoughlin	J. McMackin	J. McManis
R. McManus	A. Morrisey	B. Murphy
N. Murphy	P. Murphy	S. O'Brien
R. O'Dwyer	K. O'Sullivan	N. O'Sullivan
M. Pryce	P. Robbins	G. Sinclair
A. Sinnott	T. Szecsi	L. Van der Werff
M. Ward		

In attendance:

M. Howell	D. McCarthy

1.   **Adoption of agenda**

The agenda was adopted, as circulated.

A.   <u>**Minutes and related issues**</u>

2.   **Minutes of the meeting of Academic Council of 4 October 2023**

The minutes were <u>approved</u>.

3.   **Matters arising**

It was <u>noted</u> that there were no matters arising.

4.   **Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee on 13 September 2023**

The minutes were <u>approved.</u>

5.   **Minutes of the meeting of the University Standards Committee on 31 August 2023**

The minutes were <u>approved.</u>

6.   Minutes of the meeting of the Graduate Research Studies Board on 17 August 2023

The minutes were <u>approved.</u>

B.   Policy and strategy issues

7.   President's report (oral report)

7.1   The President referenced the recent riots that occurred in Dublin City Centre and reiterated the University's abhorrence for this violence, and any form of racism.

7.2   The President outlined that the new University strategy, 'Transformation for An Unscripted Future', was launched on 5 October. The plan brings a renewed focus on the areas of excellence where DCU can create real impact and deliver the best outcomes for staff, students and stakeholders. The President had been meeting with Faculty groups to discuss progress across all domains of the strategy. The President conveyed his sincere thanks to the Deputy President and Dr Jean Hughes for their leadership of this process.

7.3   The President <u>noted</u> that outstanding researchers were recently recognised by Science Foundation Ireland at their annual awards ceremony. DCU scholars featured prominently among the awardees. The SFI 'Engaged Research of the Year' award was presented to the SignOn project team, which is led by Professor Andy Way, School of Computing/ADAPT. The project team also includes Dr Elizabeth Mathews and Dr Shaun O'Boyle, School of Inclusive and Special Education/ADAPT. The Irish Research Council bestowed their 'Early Career Researcher of the Year' award to Dr Amanda Drury, School of Nursing, Psychotherapy and Community Health. The Irish Research Council also announced their 'Research Ally' awards which recognises the contributions made by supporting staff in the academic research community. DCU was awarded almost a third of these awards in total which is testament to the research culture and the strong focus it maintains within the University.

7.4   The President briefed members that the first meeting of the Governing Authority in its new format, under the HEA Act 2022, took place on 10 November. Bríd Horan has been unanimously elected as Chancellor and will serve a two-year term. It has been agreed that the Authority will meet at least twice a year without the members of the Executive present. The Terms of Reference for the election of the next Authority will be developed by the current Authority in due course.

7.5 The President outlined that the Academic Promotions Committee had recently confirmed the promotion of eight colleagues to Associate Professor. 51 applications had been received for this competition. The successful candidates were Dr Susan Kelleher, School of Chemical Sciences, Dr Jennifer Foster, School of Computing, Dr Eileen Brennan, School of Human Development, Dr Paula Meleady, School of Biotechnology, Dr Edorado Celeste, School of Law & Government, Dr Peter Tiernan, School of STEM Education, Dr Enda Whyte, School of Health & Human Performance, and Dr Prince Anadaragha, School of Electronic Engineering. He expected that there would be additional targeted promotions emerging from this process.

7.6 The President <u>noted</u> that a significant milestone of the SIS Programme was reached on 23 October when the updated Applications and Admissions system, CRM2, went live. It is planned that postgraduate research applications will be supported by the new system from January. Further updates will be provided in coming months. The President noted his thanks to Professor Lisa Looney, Programme Director Helen Mahon, Project Lead Niall Higgins, Registry and Faculty colleagues and all of the SIS Programme team who have contributed to this significant advance for the University.

8. Strategic academic initiatives

8.1 Teaching and Learning Strategy (approved by Education Committee)

An update was provided by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs/ Registrar regarding the Teaching and Learning Strategy, a component plan of the DCU Strategy 2023-2028. The Teaching and Learning Strategy sits under the strategic pillar of Pioneering a Transformative Student Experience and links strongly to DCU's vision to be a leading and innovative European University. DCU's vision statement, as well as the statement of priorities under this pillar, will help to drive the impact of teaching including in the context of ECIU university. As part of the strategy a focus on excellence in teaching is a priority, as well as provision for a varied learner group and improvement of academic systems.

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs/ Registrar observed that the current focus is on the stated Key Performance Indicators for Year 1, but with those for Year 2 already in mind. The teaching and learning strategy will impact on other dimensions of the institutional strategy including internationalisation, engagement, and sustainable development. Alignment between the overarching Strategy and each Faculty's Teaching and Learning Strategy will be crucial to the success of the Strategy. It was noted that each of the Faculty's Teaching and Learning plans will drive the alignment between their individual strategies and the overarching strategies. It was remarked that the Student Support and Development Plan, which also forms part of Pillar 3, will run alongside, and in conjunction with the Teaching and Learning strategy.

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs/ Registrar focused on a number of aspects of the Strategy. Under the heading of Excellence, she outlined the importance of building on the expertise of the Students Union leaders to enhance partnership. It was noted that academic colleagues are proactively responding to the effect of Artificial Intelligence on assessment, and on the type of graduates that we need to deliver. Transversal skills development will be critical and supportive of our focus on education for sustainable development. It was also outlined that DCU continues to deliver on its commitment to our European University Alliance, the ECIU University.

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs/ Registrar noted that under the emphasis on flexibility, the provision of short form learning and provision for off-campus learners are key themes. Recognition of Prior Learning and Further Education routes will create more opportunities for admission to a wider breadth of students.

Finally, under the theme of our academic services, the Vice-President for Academic Affairs/ Registrar called attention to the delivery of the SIS programme, and that there will also be a roadmap of projects to build on SIS after its implementation. It was also noted that the timetabling process and enabling system and infrastructure to support curriculum design will be reviewed. Student learning in conjunction with industry or international academic partnerships will be repositioned, led by DCU Placement.

It was noted that in parallel with the ongoing undertaking of and commitment to the Teaching and Learning Strategy, DCU is engaging with the HEA regarding a draft Performance Compact, several aspects of which will overlap with the Strategy.

9. **International Education Mark (IEM) (oral report)**

The Academic Secretary outlined that the International Education Mark (IEM) is one of several statutory measures due to be implemented by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The purpose of the IEM is to promote the quality of Irish education internationally, as well as providing adequate protection for Higher Education (HE) and English Language Education (ELE) international students. The Higher Education (HE) IEM or the English Language Education (ELE) IEM will be awarded to the HE and ELE providers who demonstrate compliance with relevant QQI-stipulated criteria. It is intended that the IEM will launch in January 2024.

Within two years of the IEM being launched, it will be a requirement for all HE and ELE providers who wish to recruit international students who require a visa, as it will replace the Interim List of Eligible Programmes currently maintained by the Department of Justice. The

University will be making an application for the IEM HE, and will have 24 weeks to complete the application. It was noted that the criteria relating to HE IEM touch on all areas of the University that have cause to interact with international students and that, consequently, the application will require a whole of institution effort.

The IEM is viewed as a positive development that will provide protection to international students. It was noted that, from a branding perspective, there will be no evident distinction between HE and ELE providers, who are awarded the IEM. On foot of representation from the IUA, QQI will consider the inclusion of specific text within its branding to distinguish between the HE IEM and the ELE IEM. The University's IEM HE application is being coordinated via the Academic Secretariat and will require considerable input and efforts from various departments across the University in the coming months.

10.   **Chair's Summary – Examination Appeals Board 2023 (oral report)**

As his four-year term will conclude at the end of this calendar year, the Chair of the Examination Appeals Board Professor Enda McGlynn was invited to provide some comments about how colleagues can support the work of the Appeals Board. He outlined to colleagues the importance of neutrality if advising students regarding the appeal process and the importance of explaining that grounds must be met for an appeal to be considered, to manage expectations. The Chair reiterated that the Examination Appeals Board is bound by the same parameters as Progression and Awards Boards, in line with University and programme level regulations. The Chair reminded colleagues that the University must abide by its own rules to ensure that there is no gap between practice and published procedures. The Chair recommended that each Faculty review its regulations regarding the carrying of modules, to ensure that the wording within Programme Regulations is clear and transparent.

The Vice-President for Academic Life of the Students Union welcomed this recommendation and agreed that students can find it difficult to have a clear understanding of what is permissible regarding the carrying of modules, and it can present difficulties when trying to assist them with queries. This recommendation was also welcomed by the Academic Secretary and Vice-President for Academic Affairs/ Registrar, who highlighted that clarity and transparency of regulations is of utmost importance.

The Chair conveyed his thanks to members in the Academic Secretariat, Registry and Programme Chairs for their engagement and support during his term which assisted with the handling of appeal cases and queries.

11.   Student Performance and Satisfaction (oral report)

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs/ Registrar provided an update regarding student performance and engagement data which has been analysed and brought to Education Committee for discussion. The trends display some change in pass rates during the period of the Covid pandemic, but this has begun to settle with the data demonstrating overall a return to pre-Covid trends. This pattern is also seen when analysing the precision marks over the same period of time. While no specific action is required at institution level, the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning in each Faculty have access to the reports which will enable them to identify areas of action that may be required more locally. With this focus on actionable trends, Deans will submit reviews back to Education Committee in January 2024. It was noted that this insight is very valuable, and is facilitated by the work of the Quality and Institutional Insights Office.

C.   Items for formal approval/noting

12.   Validation Reports

12.1   MA in Music, Sound, Culture and Media

Approved.

12.2   Graduate Certificate in Active Women's Health

Approved.

12.3   MSc in Physiotherapy

Approved.

13.   Accreditation Reports

13.1   Accreditation Report: BEd in Home Economics and Technology

Approved.

13.2   Accreditation Report: Graduate Diploma/MSc in Financial Technology and Innovation

Approved.

14.   Report from Winter 2023 Examinations/Progression and Awards Boards

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.

15.   Annual Examination Appeals Report 2023

Noted.

16.   DCU Outline Academic Calendar 2026-27

A discussion regarding the timing of Reading week of semester 2 took place. The Director of Registry confirmed that the proposed calendar is within Council approved parameters.

Approved.

17.   Any other business

The Director of Quality and Institutional Insights, on behalf of the Quality Promotions Committee, noted that the Quality Improvement and Development (QuID) Funding Call for 2024 will be announced formally in the coming weeks. QuID is an open funding opportunity inviting submissions for community-led quality enhancement initiatives from both academic and professional support areas across DCU. The theme of this year's call is 'Transitioning AI from a Threat to a Tool: Empowering and Supporting a 21st Century University'.

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Date of next meeting:

7 February 2024
2:00 pm
Via Zoom