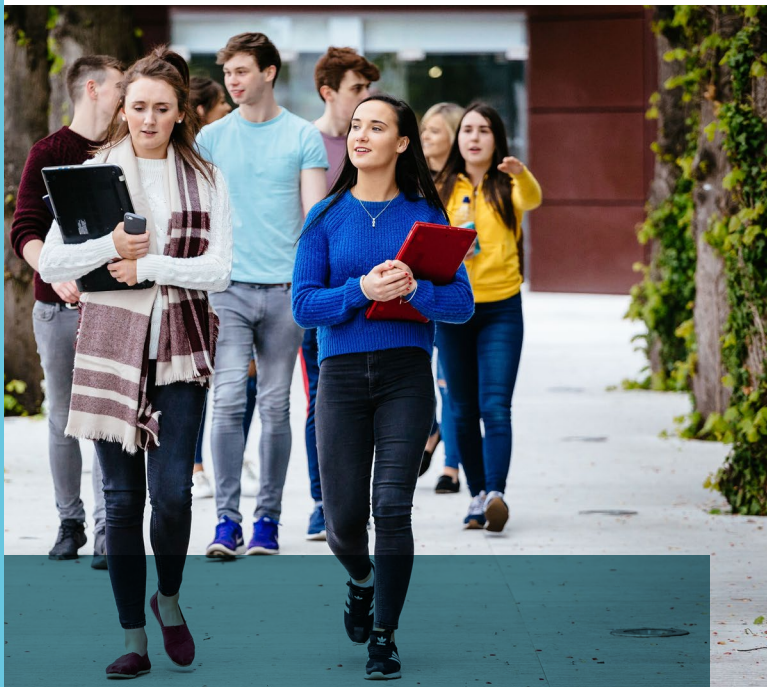




Ollscoil Chathair  
Bhaile Átha Cliath  
Dublin City University



# DCU in the Community Annual Report 2019-2020

DCU SA PHOBAIL  
DCU IN THE COMMUNITY





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## DCU IN THE COMMUNITY: TEN YEARS ON

Dublin City University is a distinctive university. From the beginning, we consciously avoided the ivory tower model and are immensely proud of our North Dublin heritage and identity. We are a placed based university with a global vision. A large proportion of staff are from the locality, or live locally, and we have strong links with local schools through initiatives such as DCU Access. For these reasons, and others, we see ourselves as very much “of the community”.

Despite these intentions, however, before the establishment of DCU in the Community, it was clear that for people in neighbouring areas such as Ballymun (and especially among the older generations) there was a limited sense of having a university on the doorstep. DCU was seen as remote from their daily concerns and “not for the likes of us”. The impact of the recession of the late 00’s underlined a growing belief that DCU could and should make a greater and more tangible social impact by setting up what one resident described to me as our “embassy” in Ballymun. The vision was for a university that was not just “of the community”, but also “in and for the community”.

Over the last ten years, DCU in the Community has made good on that vision. It has delivered a wide range of courses to learners of all ages. It has offered everything from college preparation work to psychology classes, from digital media to sports and fitness, from maths to humanities. Many DCU in the Community learners have progressed to complete their degrees at DCU and other universities. Our centre in Ballymun has also offered a place for DCU students to gain valuable workplace experience and carry out engaged research. Inevitably, though, it has been the “little acts” and DCU’s innately



“human touch” approach that has really made its mark over the past decade and allowed us to become embedded in the local community. These gestures might involve giving guidance to local students wanting to pursue their studies, or opening the centre’s doors to community and resident groups, or working with local schools around the Ballymun 1916 Centenary commemorations.

The exceptional work and impact of DCU in the Community has made a huge contribution to the university’s local democratic mission and its commitment to addressing social disadvantage, both directly and through enhanced educational access. Like other progressive and engaged universities around the world, we see ourselves as an anchor institution for the local community, working with others to pursue social, economic and cultural empowerment. The “transformative student experience” we provide also aims to develop graduates who are active citizens, committed to advancing their own communities and society at large.

The importance of DCU’s strategic goal to “engage with our communities” has never been clearer. We have all seen how COVID-19 has exposed and deepened inequalities in our society. In the next decade, DCU will redouble and renew its efforts to address these issues, working with our local communities in a spirit of trust, collaboration and commitment.



Prof Daire Keogh, President, DCU



## DCU in the Community

DCU in the Community acts as a bridge between the University - its staff, students and resources - and the local and regional community. Our mission is to promote social regeneration through education and enhance local community development and community resilience through the provision of flexible educational and lifelong learning opportunities.

We also aim to promote and embed civic engagement activities in DCU and in the higher education sector in Ireland through our work with Campus Engage. DCU in the Community staff are active members of the Campus Engage Student Volunteering Working Group, and Community-Engaged Learning Working Group, as well as DCU's Civic Engagement Forum.

DCU in the Community is the flagship and most tangible expression of DCU's commitment to civic engagement. Our activities include:

- Adult education and lifelong learning
- Widening access and participation
- Student volunteering
- Community-based learning and research
- Community engagement

Covid-19 posed the most significant challenge in the 2019-2020 academic year; however, in the period of March 2020-August 2020 we ensured continuity of services through remote working. We are happy to report that the majority of DCU in the Community activities in that period, including course delivery, educational guidance and student support, community links and volunteering were continued to be delivered with all staff and students able to work remotely.





## 10th Anniversary Key Highlights and Achievements

In 2020 we celebrated 10 years since the re-opening of DCU in the Community in Ballymun. We welcomed our first students in September 2010 and the decade since the centre's re-launch displays a strong positive balance sheet in all of our activities.

DCU in the Community is firmly established on the local community map, well-networked among local community and voluntary sector organisations, and enjoys an ever increasing buy-in among DCU staff and students.

Between 2010 and 2020 we have:

- Delivered nearly 100 accredited and non-accredited learning programmes for local residents (college preparation, digital media, social studies, psychology, health and wellbeing, personal finance, mathematics, and sports and fitness) with a majority of the programmes delivered in partnership with local community and voluntary organisations
- Catered for over 1,500 community learners and adults returning to education
- Provided 130-180 hours annually of educational guidance and mentoring for adults returning to education – both in-house students and external clients
- Assisted with more than 200 applications to full time further and higher education for mature students and adult learners from socio-economically disadvantaged areas
- Assisted with over 200 student funding applications
- Co-led the development of StudentVolunteer.ie – a national higher education student volunteering management system
- Linked more than 1,000 DCU students from across DCU Schools and Faculties with volunteering and service learning opportunities

We would like to thank all of our university and community partners - without their support, advice, and friendship we would not be able to celebrate this important milestone. Our special thanks goes to all our former staff members.



### 2019-2020 in a Snapshot

- 200+ learners across all programmes
- 130+ hours of educational guidance, student support and mentoring
- Assistance with 15+ applications to higher and further education
- Seven courses delivered on site/online; additionally, hosted five courses for community partners
- Comprehensive Covid-19 response - moving learners and services online
- Six workshops delivered during Summer School 2019
- DCU President's Awards for Engagement ceremony held online in April 2020
- Partners on the Irish Aid-funded Vietnam-Ireland Bilateral Educational Exchange (VIBE) programme jointly with Ho Chi Minh City University of Science
- 4,000 incoming DCU students attended Orientation talks on volunteering
- 4,500 DCU Volunteer Handbook disseminated to DCU students and staff
- DCU Volunteer fundraising and awareness raising events and projects: Shine A Light, Barretstown Roadshow, International Volunteer Day, Become Pen Pals with a Care Home Resident, Shoebox Appeal
- 130+ DCU students registered on StudentVolunteer.ie system between September 2019 and April 2020
- DCU Volunteer Flagship Fundraiser for DCU Charity partner Barretstown in March 2020
- 800 students per week reached through DCU Volunteer Helpdesk
- Launch of DCU Volunteer Strategy - first of its kind in Ireland

## Educational Programmes

Overall, more than 200 learners participated in all courses and programmes delivered by DCU in the Community in the academic year 2019-2020, including the following:

- 56 students who completed QQI Level 5 and Level 6 Bridge to Education, Psychology and Community Organisation Management programmes
- 138 participants who took up training places across 6 workshops during Online Summer School in July 2020
- 12 Boxing Clever programme students



In the 2019-2020 academic year, DCU in the Community also provided venue, equipment and administrative support for courses delivered by other community providers: Ballymun Job Centre Men's Group and An Cosan Virtual Community College.

DCU in the Community also partnered with DCU Access Service, College Connect, Northside Partnership, Dublin Northwest Area Partnership and Blanchardstown Area Partnership/Empower to deliver outreach events for parents of Leaving Certificate students and mature students. Over 50 participants attended the 3 events held in Erin Isle GAA Club in Finglas, Parnells GAA Club in Coolock and Empower Blanchardstown.

- Our courses are designed to build confidence and study skills to return to education; however, we welcome community learners with varied motivations - personal development, career preparation, enhancing CV, lifelong learners, CE participants, those who wish to progress to third level
- We offer educational and career guidance, study support and mentoring to students to encourage them to commit to learning and prepare for further education or future career
- We start with where people are at – in their life stage, educational, professional and personal journey and offer stepping stones to progression.
- We teach in small classes and groups, in a friendly and welcoming environment. Our centre is a community-based centre and we especially welcome people from the local neighbourhoods
- We recognise the individual talents of each learner and offer a flexible curriculum based on our learners' needs, motivations and ambitions
- Jointly with our learners, we map out learning and career paths in simple steps, offering progression routes and timescales to suit their lifestyles and family commitments
- We assess and review learners' goals against their progress and develop tailored learning supports for each student who wants to avail of these





### Bridge to Education (QQI Level 5)

Our Bridge to Education programme is aimed at mature students and adult learners who wish to prepare to return to further and higher education. The programme is accredited at QQI Level 5

Areas of study include communications, academic reading and writing, numeracy and computer skills for college, research and study skills, as well as ongoing guidance

The programme is linked with DCU Campus through tours, guest workshops, speakers and events

The course was delivered on site in September - December 2019, and on site/online in February-June 2020

In 2019-2020 the programme was delivered twice with 28 students enrolling and 17 students completing the course and achieving QQI certification

The course is delivered in partnership with Sillogue Neighbourhood Centre

### Psychology (QQI Level 5)

Our Psychology course aims to equip participants with introductory understanding of psychology as a field of academic study

The focus is on linking the theory of psychology to practical applications, such as therapies and interventions associated with the major psychological perspectives

The programme has been designed with the assistance of experts from DCU BSc Psychology degree, and is linked with DCU Campus through guest speaker workshops and on campus events

The course was delivered on site in September-December 2019, and on site/online in February-June 2020

In 2019-2020 the programme was delivered twice with 28 students enrolling and 22 students completing the course and achieving QQI certification

The course is delivered in partnership with Sillogue Neighbourhood Centre

### Community Organisation Management (QQI Level 6)

The Community Organisation Management course gives participants an insight into the theory and practice of management and leadership in community organisations with a strong focus on developing leadership capacity

It is designed to support those currently employed or volunteering within the community sector and who are looking to progress to managerial roles

A number of guest speakers have delivered talks on the programme from organisations such as Rediscovery Centre, Sillogue Neighbourhood Centre, Ballymun Youth Action Project, Ballymun City Farm, Ballymun Law Centre, BRYR, The Wheel, Carmichael Centre, and Innovate Dublin

The course was delivered on site in September - December 2019, and on site/online in February-June 2020

In 2019-2020 the programme was delivered twice with 23 students enrolling and 17 students completing the course and achieving QQI certification

The course is delivered in partnership with Sillogue Neighbourhood Centre

### Children's Lives and Learning

DCU in the Community partnered with DCU Institute of Education on the delivery of 4 public lecture series with the theme of Children's Lives and Learning held on DCU St. Patrick's Campus

The four sessions were delivered in November - December 2019 attracting nearly 90 participants and covering topics of learning and development in early years, children and bullying, reading and literacy and children and technology

These public sessions were open to parents, early childhood practitioners, teachers, youth and community workers, special needs assistants, and any members of the public with an interest in the complex world of children and childhood

DCU in the Community would like to thank Prof Deirdre Butler, Dr Geraldine French, Dr Helena Murphy and Dr Eithne Kennedy who delivered the lectures, as well as Dr Ann Looney for her support

### Summer School

Held since 2011, DCU in the Community Summer School is designed to bring university and community experts together to deliver sessions and workshops for local residents of all ages

For DCU in the Community, it is an opportunity to reach new student groups and introduce them to our activities

In July 2020 the Summer School was held fully online for the first time. This enabled us to reach more participants

138 participants availed of training places across 6 workshops delivered in areas of professional, career and personal development, law, psychology, and health and wellbeing

DCU in the Community would like to acknowledge and thank colleagues at DCU School of Nursing and Human Sciences, DCU School of Psychology and Ballymun Community Law Centre whose contribution of valuable time and expertise made it possible to facilitate such a successful Summer School programme



### Boxing Clever

Boxing Clever is a 20-week programme aimed to promote recovery and rehabilitation of marginalised and socially excluded groups through a framework of adult education, addiction awareness and education, counselling, guidance and physical activity (boxercise and boxing)

The programme is led by HSE RIS, Ballymun Local Drugs Task Force, Ballymun Youth Action Project and Urrús, and supported by DCC

DCU in the Community has supported the delivery of the programme since 2012W

In 2020, DCU in the Community supported approx. 12 programme participants through the provision of study skills and assignment preparation sessions and provided the venue for the QQI L4 Health-Related Fitness module

Unfortunately in mid March 2020, the programme had to be discontinued due to Covid-19 closures. We hope to welcome the learners back when it is possible to reopen our centre fully for classes

### Other Programmes and Venue Provision

- In 2019-2020 academic year, DCU in the Community provided venue and equipment for 5 programmes held by our community partners
- In September-October 2019 DCU in the Community hosted and provided IT equipment for the QQI L6 Community Leadership programme organised by An Cosán Virtual Community College and Dublin North West Area Partnership
- In September 2019-March 2020, DCU in the Community hosted a weekly Digital Media and Photography programme led and organised by Ballymun Job Centre Men's Group
- In September 2019-March 2020, DCU in the Community hosted three Beginner Computer programmes led and organised by Ballymun Job Centre-Man's Group



## Educational Guidance

DCU in the Community provides a range of pre-entry mentoring and support services for students enrolled on in-house courses as well as external clients through outreach talks, covering topics such as study support, educational guidance, application assistance, finance application assistance, interview preparation and more. In 2019-2020, over 130 hours of educational guidance, mentoring and study support were delivered.

In 2019-2020, DCU in the Community also provided one-to-one, hands-on assistance with completing over 15 further and higher education applications to in-house students and external clients and a similar number of applications for student financial supports, such as SUSI grants, 1916 Bursary and University funding, and Back to Education Allowance.

Campus events and outreach talks for our community students were also organised in 2019-2020 and have included;

- Mature students information sessions with DCU Mature Students Office
- DCU Campus Tours with DCU Student Recruitment Office
- Academic writing skills workshops with DCU Student Learning
- BSc Psychology talks with academic staff and mature students from the programme
- Research ethics seminars
- DCU Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit “Diversity Game” workshop

DCU in the Community would like to thank all staff from the offices and units for their assistance on the delivery of our programmes.

## Covid-19 Response

DCU in the Community centre was forced to close as of 13th March 2020. In the period of March to August 2020, DCU in the Community implemented a Covid-19 Contingency Plan as follows in order to ensure continuity of service:

All our QQI programmes (Bridge to Education, Psychology, Community Organisation Management) were delivered online via the Zoom platform.

Unfortunately around 30% of our students could not continue the courses online due to lack of facilities, equipment or skills. While this was a difficult decision for us, we felt we had an obligation to continue with the online delivery for the majority of students who could complete the programmes and obtain their QQI certification.

Assessment for QQI was modified to suit online delivery - this was done in accordance with QA agreement with QQI and following QQI guidance.

Classes and courses delivered at DCU in the Community by community partners (Ballymun Job Centre, Urrus/BYAP/BLDTF) were suspended or moved online as per community partners' decisions.

Educational guidance and student support services continued to be delivered online (via Zoom, Whatsapp video-call) and on the phone, although with overall hours slightly reduced.

Community links and volunteering services maintained through remote-working with increased need for volunteers experienced.

DCU President's Awards for Engagement 2020 Ceremony was held online as a virtual event in May 2020.

Events postponed: DCU/DCC Connecting Communities Conference originally planned for April 2020; training visit for Vietnamese delegation under Irish Aid-funded Vietnam Ireland Bilateral Education Exchange (VIBE) project, originally scheduled for April 2020.



# DCU Volunteer - Student Volunteering

## DCU Volunteer Strategy

The Inaugural DCU Volunteer Strategy was launched on the 23rd of June 2020 with the support of cross-sectoral stakeholders including Campus Engage, DCU Students Union and the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Strategy is the first of its kind in Ireland with DCU being the only HEI to have its own dedicated volunteering strategy. The strategy forms a part of the wider university strategic plan and is led by DCU Volunteer, who act as a bridge between the university, its staff, students and connected communities locally, nationally and internationally.

### Orientation

- DCU Student Volunteer Coordinator delivered 13 orientation talks on volunteering to all incoming students including undergraduates, postgraduates and international students, reaching almost 4,000 students
- DCU Student Volunteer Coordinator assisted with the running of Active\* Consent classes for all incoming first year students as part of Orientation activities. Coordinated 16 volunteer facilitators with 550+ first-year students participating in 23 workshops over 2 campuses in 4 days
- Additionally, 4,500 DCU Volunteer Handbook disseminated to DCU students and staff

### Shine A Light Sleep-Out for Focus Ireland

- Shine A Light saw DCU Students Union and DCU Volunteer hosting an evening of events in aid of Focus Ireland and their #EndYouthHomelessness campaign. The aim was to bring further awareness to the housing crisis, especially from a student and a young person's perspective. Awareness was a key element of the event, and one of the main aspects of the evening was a panel discussion and live recording of a DCU student led podcast In Conversation With which interviewed an expert panel about homelessness and the housing crisis in Ireland, young people/families and homelessness, student accommodation and what actions can be implemented
- 20 students and staff members slept outside on the grounds of campus for the night, with up to 25 other student volunteers assisting throughout the night including collaboration with DCU Drama society



- In total €2,610 was raised in aid of Focus Ireland which was the most amount of money ever raised by a DCU Volunteer fundraiser

### DCU Volunteer Working Group

- Academic year 2019-2020 saw a growth of Volunteer Working Group to include a member of the Society Life Committee bringing the total number of members to 14. Meetings were held each quarter of full academic year

### StudentVolunteer.ie

- At present there are 627 students from DCU registered on StudentVolunteer.ie, with over 134 of these registrations occurring this past academic year (almost a 200% increase from last year). Over 1000 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) signed up to the system. DCU Student Volunteer Coordinator continued work with the national Campus Engage Volunteering and Student-Led Engagement Working Group

### Charity Partnership with Barretstown

- On Wednesday the 25th of September 2019, DCU announced a three-year partnership with Barretstown Children's

Charity. The inaugural charity partnership will engage DCU's twenty thousand strong staff and student community in a range of initiatives, including fundraising for Barretstown, volunteering opportunities at Barretstown, internships, research, along with leadership and development programmes

- DCU Barretstown Committee has been set up in the university with DCU Volunteer Student Coordinator sitting on this committee as the main student and volunteering contact
- Work was initiated with JustGiving.ie to develop an online fundraising platform and plan for the DCU charity partnership with Barretstown
- Student Volunteer Coordinator has made 3 visits to camp at Ballymore Eustace to liaise with staff and build partnership, including one occasion with 45+ volunteers from the university for the Barretstown Winter Wonderland showcase in November 2019
- DCU Volunteer coordinated a day long roadshow across campus with Barretstown on Tuesday the 11th of February 2020. The day included class addresses, volunteer stories, a 'Brunch with Barretstown' hour of refreshments and talks which led to the sign up of over 60 volunteers for the programme to help seriously ill children and their families

### International Volunteer Day

- In collaboration with DCU SU and the SpeakEasy society, DCU Volunteer hosted a celebration to mark the occasion on 5th of December 2020 titled 'Passion Project - Stories of Change'. The evening saw 15 student volunteers from all across campus, from varying backgrounds, speak about their volunteering experiences and why they are passionate about giving back
- More than 75 people attended the event, with huge resounding impact and positive feedback. The audience was asked to vote for their favourite speaker of the night and a donation was made to that volunteer's chosen cause. HeadstARTS received the €100 donation ahead of their Christmas showcase

### Flagship Fundraiser

- Annual fundraiser run by the DCU Volunteer Working Group took place again this year in the form of 'DCU Game Night' on Tuesday the 3rd of March 2020 in aid of DCU charity partner Barretstown
- Open evening event, arcade style which attracted a number of different students and staff with overall close to 150 people in attendance
- Entry to the event was by donation and total funds raised came to just under €700

### Volunteer Helpdesk

- Continued success of the Volunteer Helpdesk saw the reintroduction of the initiative this year which sees one civil society organisation visiting campus to meet with students, staff and local people in the U of the Student's Union
- In the 2019-2020 academic year, DCU Volunteer hosted 12 organisations in DCU as a whole, offering a range of volunteering opportunities which reached approximately 800 students per week
- Due to campus closure in the spring, the Volunteer Helpdesk had to be cancelled but it is planned to be reinstated once Covid-19 restrictions ease

### Community Liaison

- DCU Volunteer collaborated and partnered with 43 different community organisations during the year including Localise Youth Volunteering, The Hygiene Bank Dublin, Comhlámh, etc
- DCU Volunteer also worked alongside our DCU community, linking in with various offices including Access, Student Support and Development, Careers and more to offer advice, develop partnerships and support

### Social Projects

- DCU Volunteer worked alongside numerous projects throughout the year engaging student volunteers, DCU civic societies and community organisations

- In May 2020, DCU Volunteer partnered with Silver Thread on a Become Pen Pals with a Care Home Resident, and in December 2019 organised 'Shoebox Appeal' with DCU Raising and Giving society in aid of Inner City Helping Homeless - 53 shoeboxes were donated from the DCU student community ahead of Christmas

### Clubs and Societies

- DCU Volunteer presented the inaugural the Outstanding Charitable and Civic Contribution Award at the annual DCU Clubs and Societies Awards on behalf of DCU Volunteer and the Society Life Committee. Awardees were the Enterprise Society for their fundraising efforts and securing over €50,000 in aid of Aware

### Training and Support

- DCU Volunteer provided training for over 120 clubs and societies on volunteering, student engagement and ethical fundraising, jointly with OSL. The two sessions received positive feedback and were voted most useful and engaging according to the Society Life Committee survey
- DCU Student Volunteer Coordinator presented at DCU Civic Engagement Forum about 'volunteerism' and ethical volunteering activities, as well as raising awareness of the issue among the whole staff community
- Additionally, DCU Volunteer held a number of information sessions hosted for specific class groups, societies and the general student body





## Community Based Learning

In 2019 DCU in the Community continued work on the Irish Aid funded Vietnam Ireland Bilateral Education Exchange (VIBE) programme in partnership with Ho Chi Minh City University of Science (HCMUS). The two-year project, started in 2017, entitled Embedding Community-Based Learning (Service Learning) in STEM Education focuses on developing an innovative community based learning methodology for STEM subjects in Vietnam to support social and economic development.

August-September 2019: Over 130 individuals participated in the 1st International Service Learning competition held in Ho Chi Minh City, representing 29 student projects (22 from Vietnam and 7 from Ireland). The competition judging panel comprised Joanna Ozarowska and Natalja Matease (DCU in the Community), Dr Donal Fitzpatrick (DCU School of Computing) and Jordana Corrigan (North-South Social Innovation Network).

October - November 2019: DCU in the Community hosted and organised training for a visit of 7 Vietnamese. DCU in the Community representatives also attended the official reception for Ireland-Vietnam Irish Aid programmes at the Department of Foreign Affairs.

November 2019: Successful application for extension funding from Irish Aid to continue the project in 2020.



# DCU President's Awards for Engagement

The 2020 DCU President's Awards for Engagement were presented on 27th May 2020 during a virtual event by the outgoing DCU President Professor Brian MacCraith. 48 nominations were received in 2020 and four winners were announced.

## The 2020 Award winners were:

### — Winner Student Category:

John Noone, PhD Track student, School of Health and Human Performance, for his extensive engagement with the public through his research and in voluntary capacity. John's volunteering work includes his involvement with DCU Biological Research Society, fundraising for charities including Pieta House and Barretstown, and outreach talks in schools and colleges during Science Week Ireland and Space Week Ireland.



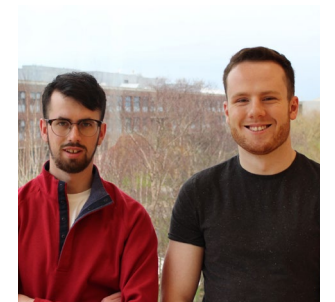
### — Winner Staff Category:

DCU Ability project which promotes the employability of young people with disabilities by offering a university-based programme which includes workplace training and work placements.



### — Special Merit Student Category:

Daniel Kyne (DCU Business School, MINT) and Darragh O'Flaherty (School of Computing, BSc Computer Applications) co-founders of OpinionX, an online platform for public consultation, facilitating citizen-led input to better inform political decision making. The platform promotes digital democracy and brings together democratic activism with social entrepreneurship through a civic technology platform.



### — Special Merit Staff Category:

Dr Yvonne Crotty, School of STEM Education, Innovation and Global Studies, for her ongoing work in the community, beyond that which she does in the classroom, nurtures creativity and culture across the University, and it has deepened DCU's profile in creative and performing arts. Over the years, Yvonne has produced a number of high profile events, created a DCU Access Schools Choir and contributed significantly to DCU's strategic goal of establishing a DCU Cultural Quarter in North Dublin.



For details of the winning projects and a full list of nominees, please visit [here](#).





# Our Team



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Part-Time Tutors

Orla Mooney, Psychology QQI Level 5 tutor  
Angela Farrelly, Community Organisation Management QQI L6 tutor

Our Partners

Lynda Ward, Co-Manager, Sillogue Neighbourhood Centre  
Valerie Keating, Co-Manager, Sillogue Neighbourhood Centre

Special thank you to Gisela Emanuel, DCU in the Community  
former Receptionist/Administrator who completed her  
Community Employment Scheme placement in September 2019.







DCU in the Community graduation



DCU in the Community Vietnam

Purposefully different,  
Consistently excellent





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