



Ollscoil Chathair  
Bhaile Átha Cliath  
Dublin City University



# DCU Volunteer Strategy





# Foreword

The self-activation of civil society has historically been important and beneficial to the well-being of our citizens and our democracy. This is of crucial importance in times of significant change and turmoil. Consequently, it needs to be continuously validated and encouraged, never more so, than in these unprecedented times in which we are now living.

Dublin City University (DCU) in its mission statement commits itself to the transformation of lives and societies. We take significant pride in our obligation to empower individuals to act as potent change agents in creating the positive society they envisage. The purpose of this short publication is to outline the strategy and practice of 'DCU Volunteer', a new initiative to embed and promote student volunteering in the pursuit of this key objective.

'DCU Volunteer' is intended to act as a bridgehead, linking the University - its staff, students, facilities and resources - with our connected communities locally, nationally and internationally. It seeks to develop additional novel pathways for DCU students to volunteer and engage civically, not solely within their local communities, but also much further beyond.

Our goal is to ensure that every DCU student can visualise and realise their unique potential as a volunteer, an individual who can make an inimitable difference in the rapidly changing world around them. Similarly, we need our community associates to view DCU as proactive partners and advocates in achieving their respective missions. All members of the DCU family have the capability to, and must be supported in, making meaningful, positive impacts on their community and environment.

Our pledge to fostering a spirit of active citizenship in our student body is unwavering. We remain committed to nurturing the potential of these young people, enabling them to dedicate themselves to making positive social change throughout their lives, not only while they attend university. Volunteering is one way in which we can maintain that pledge to our students, to empower them to realise their value as civic agents for the welfare of society at large, by enabling them to create a sustainable future of active engagement and contribution for the public good.

Trevor N. Holmes  
Vice President – External Engagement



# Introduction

## Our Mission

To engage, inform and inspire our students to be civically driven and active in their communities.

## Our Vision

Volunteering is the practice of giving your time and energy for the benefit of other people without being motivated by financial or material gain. It is about being an active citizen, a change-maker and innovative individual whose aim is to make the world a better place in any way they can. Being a volunteer, for whatever purpose, is commendable, rewarding and worthwhile. It is an act of service towards one's community or the environment.

As a university, we are committed to shaping young people who will dedicate themselves to making positive social change. Volunteering is one way in which we can support our students to realise their value as civic anchors in society - nurturing a sustainable future of active engagement and contribution to the public good.

## Drivers

- Culture
- Collaboration
- Discovery
- Active Citizenship
- Sustainability
- Altruism



# Context

DCU Strategic Plan 2017 - 2022 Talent, Discovery and Transformation states under strategic goal number 9 within Student Engagement (9.2) that DCU will “foster and recognise student engagement. This will entail a multifaceted approach (integration of external engagement into curricula via optional or required modules; assessed service learning; introduction of the DCU Extra-curricular Engagement Award; encouragement of student volunteering via [studentvolunteer.ie](http://studentvolunteer.ie)).”

Throughout all of these strands and initiatives, voluntary and civic action is central. Student volunteering in particular is the lifeblood of any university’s engagement with the members of the community itself and the wider society. DCU has a rich background in student volunteering and civic engagement. Student volunteering activity is deeply rooted in the history of the university and provides links with already strongly established initiatives, such as the Uaneen Module, and newer frameworks such as the Engage Award. During the 2017-18 academic year, Irish university students contributed over three million volunteer hours with an estimated value of €28.4million (based on formally recorded hours on **StudentVolunteer.ie** and estimates from CSO and other data). However, it is likely that the actual level of voluntary activities is higher and numbers are greater but it is not all formally recorded or recognised.

Student volunteering and student-led engagement is also one of the four strands of activities of Campus Engage – a network of Higher Education Institutions in Ireland tasked with promoting community and civic engagement. Over the past three years, DCU has co-led the development of the national student volunteering management system – [www.studentvolunteer.ie](http://www.studentvolunteer.ie) – which was launched in December 2015; “StudentVolunteer.ie enables students to have the opportunity to: enrich your personal development and employability skills, have a fun experience, meet new people, and give back to your community.”



# Main Aims and Strategic Goals

## Main Aims

- To create a united front with those across campus committed to developing a shared set of values and mission for student volunteering with communities both on and off campus
- To build upon the strong culture of civic activity in DCU and enhance student volunteering opportunities
- To be a resource for all voluntary action within the university, providing support, assistance and knowledge in the field of civic engagement
- To amplify DCU Volunteer's role, ensuring there are conclusive, sustainable and positive decisions made regarding student volunteering by those in the university that are realisable and not to over stretch capabilities.
- To consult further with our local communities, seek to collaborate and meet their needs which student volunteers can contribute towards
- To embed responsible, sustainable and mutually beneficial student volunteering into all aspects of DCU student life
- To formally recognise and reward student volunteering at DCU



## Strategic Goals

- Engaging with Civic Society Organisations (CSO) to provide nourishing and rewarding volunteering opportunities in local, national and international communities for all students and CSO's so they are most importantly, mutually beneficial
- Enabling access to civic activity for all students in our university, through a grounded, guided approach in collaboration with our community partners and stakeholders
- Continuing to develop and roll out unique, grassroots events which focus on hands on voluntary action which feeds into our community driven and approachable attitude
- Building on our collaborative partnerships within the University and beyond to continue to deliver innovative voluntary activity models
- Rewarding and recognising all students who participate in volunteering reinforcing the view that it is an integral component of what we do





# Specific Actions



We will ensure all volunteering activities involving students across campus are carried out to a high standard and following the guidelines of Volunteer Ireland's Charter for Effective Volunteering.

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Continue to implement the policies, charters and best practices stemming from The Wheel, Volunteer Ireland, Campus Engage and the IUA.

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Deepen our relationship with Student Support and Development and the Office of Student Life to:

- Promote and enhance the success of the DCU Engage Award and Uaneen Module
- Support students' integration into student and DCU life, and extracurricular endeavours, particularly those that are civically charged
- Nourish the embedded relationship between DCU Volunteer and the Students' Union to be a partner and support, especially for the VP for Engagement and Development

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Encourage collaboration and share best practice by acting as a point of contact for all student volunteering activities.

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Further our relationship with service learning modules, their coordinators and participating students.

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Strengthen our charity partnerships by working hand in hand with the university, Students' Union and chosen organisation:

- To promote, and raise funds for charity partner through a number of initiatives run by DCU staff and students
- To increase awareness and understanding for our partnered organisations amongst DCU staff and students, alumni, retired members of staff and DCU's local community
- To offer DCU students an opportunity to engage, and feel a part of, the partnership, thereby leading to increased involvement in volunteering and fundraising activities
- To promote a cohesive culture across all the campuses of DCU by offering DCU staff an opportunity to engage in volunteering, skill-sharing exercises, team-building and fundraising activities through the partnership





Promote StudentVolunteer.ie as a key means for strengthening volunteer activity across our student population, particularly emphasising its benefits as a database for student volunteering within DCU.

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Further develop the Volunteer Working Group;

- Define roles as stakeholders in OSL Clubs & Societies through workshops, events and resources
- Expand Volunteer Working Group to include new members to broaden base from
- Enhance flagship programme of events for all clubs and societies with Working Group assistance

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Highlight our civic engagement and student volunteers' stories through;

- Our weekly student Volunteer Profiles
- Celebrations such as International Volunteer Day
- Award systems, in particular the President's Award for Engagement

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Enrich our civic engagement opportunities by continuing collaborations with social enterprises, community groups, local schools and civil society organisations by:

- Utilising DCU in the Community as hub of local public engagement
- Preservation of grassroots social projects already running
- Building upon weekly Volunteer Helpdesk

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Source Community and Volunteering Hub on campus to be space for social projects and voluntary activity to take place in with community partners. A hive of community and social inclusion that is dedicated to volunteering outreach programmes.

# Specific Actions

Work alongside Comhlámh who support and promote responsible, responsive overseas volunteering and international development by:

- Informing all students of their Code of Good Practice which ensures positive international volunteering experiences
- Disseminating the StudentVolunteer.ie leaflet 'Making the Decision' which was made with the support of Comhlámh and DCU which highlights the importance of thorough decision making ahead of travelling overseas to volunteer
- Encouraging ethical engagement not beyond the competence of students to deliver at the point of their engagement

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Harness the energy and expertise of the Civic Engagement Forum, it's members and resources to embed the volunteering strategy, enhance the culture of active citizenship already at play and reach all corners of the university:

- Work with members of the forum that offer student engagement and volunteering opportunities
- Implement models to work with marginalised groups supported by the forum that work towards improving employability, graduate skills, emotional resilience and social inclusion through volunteering activities

Purposefully different,  
consistently excellent





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