



## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

### **Community Connector, Outreach Officer Student Support & Development Full Time Fixed Term Contract up to three years**

#### **Dublin City University**

Dublin City University ([www.DCU.ie](http://www.DCU.ie)) is a young, ambitious and vibrant University, with a mission 'to transform lives and societies through education, research, innovation and engagement'. Known as Ireland's 'University of Enterprise and Transformation', it is committed to the development of talent, and the discovery and translation of knowledge that advances society and the economy. DCU is the Sunday Times Irish University of the Year 2021.

The University is based on three academic campuses in the Glasnevin-Drumcondra region of north Dublin. It currently has more than 18,000 students enrolled across five faculties – Science and Health, DCU Business School, Computing and Engineering, Humanities and Social Sciences and DCU Institute of Education. DCU is committed to excellence across all its activities. This is demonstrated by its world-class research initiatives, its cutting-edge approach to teaching and learning, its focus on creating a transformative student experience, and its positive social and economic impact. This exceptional commitment on the part of its staff and students has led to DCU's ranking among the top 2% of universities globally. It also consistently features in the world's Top 100 Young Universities (currently in QS Top 70 Under 50, Times Higher Top 150 Under 100).

DCU is placed 84th in the world, in the Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings – measuring higher education institutions' contributions towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Over the past decade, DCU has also been the leading Irish university in the area of technology transfer, as reflected by licensing of intellectual property.

#### **Overview of the department**

Student Support & Development (SS&D) provides professional, academic and personal support and development opportunities to students in DCU and is a busy and diverse Unit which includes the Student Advice Centre, the Careers Office, Counselling & Personal Development, the INTRA work placement Office, Student Learning, the Student Health Centre, the Disability & Learning Support Office, the Access Office and Chaplaincy. Further information on SS&D can be found at: <http://www.dcu.ie/students/index.shtml>.

#### **Role Profile**

College Connect is a Higher Education Authority/Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science [Programme for Access to Higher Education \(PATH 3\)](#) project

established to support the [National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019](#). College Connect is a partnership between Maynooth University (MU), Dublin City University (DCU), Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) and Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) and aims to support access to higher education for communities underrepresented in higher education (including Travellers, people with disabilities, people in the asylum system, refugees, people with previous convictions) in the Midlands, East, North Dublin (MEND) region. College Connect aims to enhance educational aspirations across the region through a participative and sustainable suite of activities and resources to illuminate pathways and provide opportunities into, through and beyond higher education.

College Connect comprises four innovative educational interventions which have been designed to address existing barriers and support the participation of communities underrepresented in higher education in the MEND region:

- **Strand 1: Connecting the Cluster**

Connecting the Cluster brings together stakeholders to inform, guide and oversee the development and implementation of the College Connect Regional Plan 2021-2024 to increase access to higher education from the most marginalised groups. The Plan is rooted in participative, democratic, stakeholder engagement, recognising the wealth of expertise that exists across the region. This innovative organisational structure builds on MEND's foundational work and strong record of accomplishment of regional collaboration.

- **Strand 2: Connecting the Region**

Connecting the Region involves implementing the College Connect Regional Plan 2021-2024 and undertaking community needs analyses to support MEND to strengthen its work with communities experiencing entrenched socio-economic disadvantage and to be more responsive to addressing inequality of access across the region. Four Community Connectors will connect MEND to stakeholders supporting access to education across the region and work alongside partner organisations to develop stronger relationships between the regional cluster and local communities.

- **Strand 3: Connecting the Learner**

Connecting the Learner involves the provision of information aimed at maintaining and raising aspirations for progression to higher education to prospective students, families, and communities. College Connect will communicate the value of higher education and provide targeted support and guidance to learners across multiple platforms.

- **Strand 4: Connecting to College**

Connecting to College involves disseminating information about existing pathways and supporting the development of new pathways to improve access to higher education. It also includes sharing good practice about effective transition and post-entry supports. High-quality transition and post-entry supports lead to greater academic engagement, achievement, retention and progression.

College Connect is led by Maynooth University, where the College Connect Manager, Research Manager and communications/administrative support for the project are based. There are four Community Connectors, each based in one of the four MEND Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Athlone Institute of Technology, Dublin City University, Dundalk Institute of Technology and Maynooth University.

MEND wishes to appoint a Community Connector for the College Connect Project. Community Connectors are responsible for connecting the HEIs in the MEND region to key stakeholders by building sustainable, collaborative relationships and partnerships with communities experiencing deep disadvantage to support access to higher education. The Community Connector will support the

HEI to implement the College Connect Regional Plan 2021-2024 and will also connect the Project to HEI outreach initiatives and strategic access goals.

The successful candidate will be one of four Community Connectors each based in one of the MEND HEIs. This position will be based in DCU and will have a particular focus on the north Dublin catchment area. The post holder will work as a member of the SS&D outreach team and will report to the Widening Participation Officer.

### **Duties and Responsibilities**

The duties and responsibilities of the position include, but are not restricted to, the following:

#### **Build Community Partnerships**

- Working as a Community Connector based in a MEND HEI to identify relevant community stakeholders and outreach activities across the MEND region and link them to relevant information and access personnel.
- Build sustainable, collaborative relationships and partnerships across the region between MEND HEIs and communities experiencing deep disadvantage to support improved access to higher education (HE).
- Support the implementation of the College Connect Regional Plan, sharing resources and expertise to improve access to HE across the MEND region.

#### **Lead Community Outreach**

- Each Community Connector will support the HEI to deliver the College Connect Regional Plan and will also connect the Project to HEI outreach initiatives and strategic access goals.
- Develop and deliver HEI/regional targeted events and workshops to provide information, advice and guidance to prospective students and to community partner organisations on HE pathways, transition and post-entry supports.
- Promote pathways into the HEIs across the region including the Higher Education Access Route ([HEAR](#)), the Disability Access Route to Education ([DARE](#)), Mature Student entry routes and Foundation Certificate/ preparatory programmes.
- Build partnerships with current students and alumni by delivering a regional mentoring programme to support the work of College Connect.
- Promote and support the administration and targeting of scholarships and bursary programmes including the PATH 2 1916 Bursary Fund.
- Ensure that new entrants are connected to transition and post-entry supports in each HEI.

#### **Contribute to Communications, Research and Reporting**

- Integrate outreach activity and community engagement into AIRO platforms and tools.
- Contribute to the Regional Community Needs Analyses and related research projects supporting the Research Manager and coordinating and liaising with key groups and stakeholders to fully participate in the process and leverage emerging opportunities.
- Contribute to the development of an innovative and engaging College Connect communications strategy ensuring relevant information is clearly conveyed and promoted to target audiences.
- Contribute to the evaluation of the College Connect Project supporting the evaluation frameworks, the building of baseline data and the dissemination of findings.

- Prepare progress reports and presentations for the HEI, College Connect and other stakeholders on a regular basis.
- Carry out any other duties related to the College Connect Project.

## **Qualifications and Experience**

### **The candidate must have:**

- Relevant third level primary degree.
- Three or more years' experience working with and supporting students from socio-economic groups that have low participation in HE in educational or community development settings.

### **Desirable**

- Relevant postgraduate qualification in Education, Community Development, Social Policy or a closely related field.
- Full clean driver's license and access to a car.

### **In addition, the successful candidate will ideally have:**

- Thorough knowledge and comprehension of the barriers and issues that impact access, participation, and student success in education and a deep knowledge of educational disadvantage and widening participation in higher education.
- Evidence of building sustainable, collaborative relationships with communities experiencing disadvantage, and active engagement with communities to progress social change.
- Excellent oral, written, presentation, and digital skills with excellent inter-personal skills and an ability to foster strong relationships and networks with diverse student and stakeholder groups.
- Proven ability to work well as part of a team but will also have demonstrated their ability to use their own initiative.
- Excellent organisational, IT, and time management skills, with an ability to plan and prioritise work and meet deadlines with accuracy and attention to detail in a dynamic work environment.
- Excellent project management skills with experience of organising and implementing large-scale projects.
- High levels of creativity, innovation, motivation, proactivity and flexibility.

## **Mandatory Training**

The post holder will be required to undertake the following mandatory compliance training: Orientation, Health & Safety and Data Protection (GDPR). Other training may need to be undertaken when required.

## **Competencies required**

The candidate will be assessed under the following four competencies;

1. **Knowledge of the Organisation/Sector:** shows an interest in learning about DCU; has a basic understanding of its remit;
2. **Team working:** willingly shares tasks and information with others; understands the team's goals and is committed to achieving these

3. **Communication:** Conveys information in a clear manner and actively listens and engages to gain understanding.
4. **Knowledge of Processes & IT Skills:** Demonstrates excellent IT skills. This includes an excellent knowledge and application of MS packages, Google apps, CRM and Drupal.