

## GOVERNING AUTHORITY MEETING

Report of meeting of Thursday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020  
3.00pm, Video Conference.

### PRESENT:

Dr Martin McAleese, Chancellor (Chair)  
Mr Michael Burke  
Mr James Corcoran  
Ms Aisling Fagan  
Ms Christine Farrell  
Mr Pat Gilroy  
Ms Bernie Gray  
Cllr Jimmy Guerin  
Prof Eithne Guilfoyle  
Ms Brid Horan  
Ms Rachel Hussey  
Prof Dorothy Kenny  
Prof Brian MacCraith

Ms Sharon McCooey  
Ms Kara McGann  
Prof Caroline McMullan  
Dr Jean-Paul Mosnier  
Prof Gary Murphy  
Dr Noel Murphy  
Ms Orla Nic Aodha  
Ms Deirdre O'Connor  
Mr Terence O'Rourke  
Mr John Power  
Ms Kathy Quinn  
Dr Declan Raftery  
Dr Mary Shine Thompson

### APOLOGIES:

Ms Amy Donohue

### IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms Marian Burns  
Mr Ciaran McGivern

Prof Daire Keogh  
Ms Marie Mellett (recording secretary)

### **WELCOME**

The Chancellor welcomed members to the first video conferencing meeting of Governing Authority and noted the apologies. He expressed his hope that all members and their families were well and safe during these very difficult and challenging times of Covid-19.

The agenda was adopted. The agenda is mainly focused on the impact on the university's operations of COVID-19. Some agenda items that were scheduled for this meeting have been deferred but will be considered at future meetings. Today's meeting will also include a presentation on the Student Experience from the Christine Farrell and Aisling Fagan.

The Chancellor enquired if there were any interests/conflicts in relation to any item on today's agenda that required a declaration on the part of a member(s) – None were declared.

#### **1. MINUTES OF GOVERNING AUTHORITY MEETING OF 27<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2020**

Approved by the Authority subject to minor corrections.

#### **2. REPORT OF THE GOVERNING AUTHORITY MEETING OF 27<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2020 FOR WEB PUBLICATION**

**Approved** by the Authority

**3 REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS**

Action 1: Deferred

Action 2: Sharon McCooley to action

Action 3: Full induction not yet effected but Cllr Jimmy Guerin noted that from his initial in-depth discussion with the COO he feels he is sufficiently briefed to contribute to GA meetings.

Action 4: Agenda item 6

Action 5: Ongoing

Action 6: Agenda item 5

Action 7: Deirdre O'Connor informed the Authority that all QuIPs are being implemented insofar as is possible within the current financial and resource constraints.

Action 8: Deferred

Action 9: Deferred to the June meeting of GA. The Institutional Risk Register needs to be revised to reflect the impact of Covid-19.

**Actions to be tracked:**

Action 1: Agenda item 6

Action 2: Ongoing

Action 3.1: Ongoing

Action 3.2: Ongoing

Action 4: Ongoing

Action 5: Ongoing

**4 MATTERS ARISING**

None

**5 GOVERNANCE**

The Chancellor informed the Authority that the establishment of the new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Sub-Committee is being deferred until the Terms of Reference are approved by GA. This will clarify the blend of members drawn from the Governing Authority and University staff.

The Chancellor reported that the chairs of the Governing Bodies of the seven Irish universities will meet via video conferencing the next morning with Jim Miley, DG of the IUA to decide how the chairs can add support to the IUA's case for increased third level funding.

A meeting of the Honorary Degree Committee was to take place today but it will now take place before the June meeting of GA, via Zoom, to discuss and agree the revised Terms of Reference of the committee. These will then be presented to GA for approval.

The Chancellor noted that Lynette Fay has stepped down from Governing Authority. In due course the Governance and Nominations Committee will bring the name of a replacement to Governing Authority for approval.

#### FOR DISCUSSION

### **6 COVID-19: PRESIDENT'S REPORT AND UNIVERSITY OFFICERS' REPORTS**

The Chancellor informed the Authority that he is in regular contact with the President and the Chief Operations Officer. He also informed the Authority that the special standing committee to which John Power has been co-opted had recently met twice with the President and his senior management team to be briefed on the measures the university's was taking to mitigate the impact of Covid-19. It was intended that these meetings will be a regular occurrence during the course of the pandemic.

#### **DCU President**

The President noted that given the current emergency circumstances his report will not follow its standard structure and will instead focus on the impact and consequences of COVID-19 and the mitigation measures being adopted by the university.

The DCU COVID 19 Crisis Management Team comprising all members of the SMG and the Director of Communications, meets daily via Zoom call. The meetings are chaired by the COO. All decisions are governed by the following principles:

- Protecting the health and safety of our students and staff is our highest priority.
- We are committed to supporting our student community, as best we can, in completing their academic programmes by employing technology-enabled solutions to provide a quality educational experience.
- We are aiming to mitigate all risks to the University, with a particular emphasis on the economic impact of the crisis on DCU's current and future financial wellbeing.
- We will do whatever we can to support the national effort in tackling the COVID19 Crisis

As communications are critical, a dedicated COVID-19 webpage for both staff and students has been created. Furthermore, to keep staff informed on the current situation within the university, but not to overload their inbox, a weekly e-zine is circulated. Feedback on this has been positive and is regarded as a very important channel to convey support to our staff as they carry out their duties under challenging circumstances.

In recent weeks the DCU academic community has put a major effort into redesigning our approach to alternative final assessments. Detailed surveys of our students were conducted to determine if their ability to access and engage with learning online was being affected by their internet connectivity. The responses of nearly 4000 students were taken into account and analysed. Minister Bruton has now announced that most telecom operators would

adopt a zero-rating of data usage for education purposes. Students have been kept up to date on a real time basis.

DCU staff have responded to the university's needs by transitioning to working online within a very short period of time. A draft schedule of on campus exams had to be completely replaced by a set of redesigned alternative online assessments in the last three weeks. All members of staff have had to transition to new ways of working and HR has been heavily involved in supporting staff in making the move to working full time from home.

The President informed the Authority that the Presidents of the seven IUA universities continue to meet on a regular basis with the main focus on the financial impact of the crisis on the individual institutions and sector and the impact on research. The sector's Directors of Finance have estimated there will be significant losses over this and the next academic year and their consolidated report has been conveyed to the DES and HEA. There is a consensus among IUA Presidents that there is a need to profile publically the extreme challenges faced by the sector by articulating our case based on the following four elements:

- The positive response from the sector in terms of business continuity and our substantial support to the national response to the crisis
- The scale of the financial impact
- The critical role of the university sector in Ireland's economic recovery
- A package of potential solutions

Regarding research there are issues around the impact on deadlines and deliverables of externally funded research projects and the situation of contract research staff. The IUA are unhappy with the response from Government around contract research staff and will continue to advocate very strongly with funding agencies.

The President noted that refunds are being offered to students living in Campus Residences. This is being co-ordinated by Campus Residences and the Student's Union. The President also noted that he and the COO have a weekly Zoom call with the President of the Students' Union. This regular contact has enabled them to address issues on a real-time basis.

DCU have played a significant part in supporting the national effort, such as:

- Providing over 200 volunteers to the contact tracing centre located on the Glasnevin Campus.
- Providing and making personal protection equipment (PPE)
- The HSE COVID 19 Clinical Hub based on the DCU Glasnevin campus commenced operations on April 18<sup>th</sup>
- Established the DCU COVID 19 Research and Innovation Hub with generous support from DCU Educational Trust. This hub will leverage all relevant disciplines across DCU's five faculties to develop solutions for the following:
  - ✓ Challenges in the Hospital and Nursing Home environment for frontline healthcare workers
  - ✓ Tackling COVID-19 spread in the community
  - ✓ Supporting the return to normality (economy; education etc.)
  - ✓ Societal issues in a post-COVID-19 world

The Crisis Management Team have now transitioned from addressing immediate academic and operational issues to focusing on the major challenges facing the university over the coming months. It is clear that our operating model for the coming academic year will be different from the previous one. The Scenario Planning Team, chaired by the Deputy President, will develop a range of realistic scenarios and work through their implications.

#### **Vice- President of Academic Affairs**

The Vice President of Academic Affairs informed the Authority that 1500 modules were converted to online delivery using various software technologies including Zoom and DCU's own, Loop. This put demands on staff at short notice as modules had to be delivered online within four days.

The five Executive Deans have and continue to meet daily. The online delivery of modules has received positive feedback.

Alternative Assessments for our 455 on campus exams are aligned with the learning outcomes for each programme and are the same standard as an examination. A third of the assessments are online synchronous exams with the remaining a mix of 'take-home' exams, project work and essays. All Irish universities have been discussing alternative assessments and are taking similar approaches. There is no loss in quality of outcomes as a result of using these alternative assessments and they also meet all the requirements of professional bodies. All assessments were made available for review by external examiners.

The VPAA was asked if the on-line assessments had contingency plans in place. She noted that they were conducted at local level and an Exam Support Call Centre will be in place for the duration of the exam period to help any student that might encounter difficulties, technical or otherwise. DCU systems were also tested to ensure it could handle this extra capacity.

The VPAA noted that there are challenges in finalizing the 2020-21 academic calendar including the possibility that a significant part of the curriculum may be delivered online.

#### **Chief Operations Officer**

The Chief Operations Officer noted that the university had been tracking COVID-19 since January and had advised our students in China to come home at the end of January. On February 26<sup>th</sup> our dedicated COVID-19 webpage went live, keeping the DCU community updated.

The Chief Operations Officer chairs the Emergency Operations Team which meets daily via zoom video call at 10.00 am. Teaching and Learning have their team call at 11.00 am and both feed into the Senior Management Crisis Team meeting at noon.

Steps were taken early in the crisis to bring students home from abroad to mitigate personal risks.

Campuses are effectively closed with only 196 students left in Campus Residences on the Glasnevin Campus. The Nursing Building is hosting a Contact Tracing Call Centre with 50 volunteers in place at any one time over two shift patterns. Last week the HSE opened a COVID-19 Clinical Hub on campus.

It was noted that DCU has supplied various hospitals with in-house hand sanitizer and PPE. DCU are also housing nurses and the Gardai are using St Claire's as an alternative to Templemore for certain training programmes.

The Future Tech building project is currently in the design stage, this will continue to completion of design and then a decision will be made as to whether or not to progress to the next stage. The business plan for the new Campus Residences project will need to be revised in the light of the COVID crisis and its impact.

DCU has now begun future planning for the 2020/2021 academic year. If the two metre social distancing requirement is to remain in place it will significantly reduce the capacity of lecture theatres and teaching rooms. One of the largest lecture theatres that has a capacity of 263 seats will only be able to accommodate 24 students and flat classrooms that currently have a capacity of 40 seats will only be able to accommodate 11 students. DCU is reaching out to the European Consortium of Innovative Universities to share ideas/challenges around international students and to develop solutions for future planning.

#### **Director of Finance**

The Director of Finance noted that DCU are entering this crisis with a very strong Balance Sheet and all normal university controls remain in place for all staff, for example finance staff were reminded that all normal procedures have to apply. All staff are also reminded of the need to curtail expenditure as much as possible. The Budget Committee has been made aware that any additional resource requests must be essential.

Regarding the university's financial position, the biggest problem is the uncertainty in terms of how long the crisis will last. Another concern is the university sector being at the end of a long list from a Government funding / support perspective. DCU has engaged with the HEA through the IUA and briefed it on its approach to supporting the national effort in dealing with the impact of Covid-19 and explaining the damaging financial impact the crisis is having on the sector. It is estimated that in the current year to 30 September the crisis will result in a €7m loss for DCU and that it will not be possible to prepare a breakeven budget for the following academic year to 30 September 2021.

Laboratory-based research has been halted and the funding agencies are only considering no cost extension.

A delay in the start date of for the 1<sup>st</sup> year intake of students will also have a negative financial impact. DCU has a strong cash position, but no substantial reserves and has recently opened a zero negative interest rate deposit account with the NTMA.

All non-essential or contractually committed capital projects have been paused or cancelled. Projects that that have been previously approved will have to apply for re-approval to the Capital Projects Committee.

DCU's biggest cost is staff. The FEMPI agreement does not allow for university staff to be made redundant. This does not apply to staff of the DCU Commercial group of companies and of a total staff of 318 employed by these companies in excess of 200 have been made redundant.

A member asked if the €10 million insurance cover is a one off payment or per academic year. The Director of Finance noted that it is €10 million in total and has to be claimed within a 3-year period.

### **Director of Human Resources**

The Director of Human Resources reported that the normal HR function to service and support key stakeholders throughout the university continues as normal with a particular focus on Line Managers as they try to support their staff and students. This is conducted by the HR Business Partners Team.

HR continues to support the university's 1892 full time and 1145-part time staff and the remaining Campus Company Staff in relation to sick leave and working from home. The Employee Assistance Programme continues to be emphasized to staff. Staff are also being encouraged to take annual leave as part of their well-being. Learning and development are now running online courses and the next induction day will be online for the first time. Procedures for recruitment and selection, and contract authorisation have been amended to facilitate remote working arrangements and is working well. Only 13 out of 128 competitions have been postponed.

HR has worked with the Director of Finance and the respective General Managers of the commercial companies to facilitate the temporary layoff of staff and has also provided support to them.

The Director of Human Resources further reported that she has received a request from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to the redeployment of staff members. HR is working closely with all Heads of Departments / Units in determining potential temporary reassignments. A member asked if there was an end date for any staff members who would be redeployed. The Director of HR noted that no end date was provided. 100 staff members from all seven universities have been identified but to date there is no information on the number who have been redeployed.

### **Deputy President**

The Deputy President outlined the Scenario Planning Framework noting that it is in line with DCU's current strategic plan. He noted that he is leading the process and the Dean for Engineering and Computing is coordinating the work.

This is a five step process consisting of the following:

- Agree a set of scenarios
- Expand – how the scenario impacts each area
- Reflect – Identify preparations and overarching decisions
- Explore – prepare timelines
- Compare – identify preparations such as what decisions need to be taken immediately and what can be deferred.

The goal of this framework is to be pro-active rather than re-active.

Working groups have been developed to cover various areas such a Teaching and Learning and Research. The timeline indicates that scenarios and indicative plans will be ready for early May.

It was noted that the framework is very comprehensive and in response to a question about which scenario will be used for base level, IUA or DCU itself the Deputy President indicated

that they will be preparing for the worst case scenario taking account of current Government and Health Service Executive advice. He further indicated that the student experience would also be a central part of the scenario planning.

### **Students Union President**

The Students Union President, Christine Farrell and the Vice President for Welfare and Equality, Aisling Fagan gave a comprehensive presentation on the student experience and the work of the students' union.

- Every student is automatically a member of the Students' Union and elected officers represent over 17,500 students.
- The university has in excess of 140 different clubs and societies
- The Students' Union also offer 'DCU Volunteer' where students can help civic and social societies. The Barretstown Partnership is an example of this. DCU Volunteer helps students to thrive.
- The Student's Union hosts award ceremonies (DCU Engage launched this year) to recognize the extracurricular work of students.
- The fundraising campaign for Pieta House, raising over €13k.

The Students Union President noted that the student voice is listened to within DCU at both local and programme level. She believes the relationship with management is positive, collaborative and both formal and informal. She is satisfied that the views of the students are taken into account and have influenced some of the SMG's decision making. She did note that there is no student voice on Campus Company Boards. The Chair of DCU Commercial agreed to invite a member of the Students' Union to present at a Board meeting later in the year.

Due to COVID-19 DCU closed on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March with five weeks of the final semester to run. The Students' Union continues to engage with students to facilitate an ongoing student experience. The Students' Union recently held its first online Class Rep. Council and class rep. elections.

New sabbatical roles will be adopted for 2021 and an online induction for the incoming Students' Union team will take place in June 2020.

The Chancellor thanked Christine and her team for their work and commitment to the university over the past year and wished them well for the future.

## **7 AUDIT COMMITTEE**

### **7.1 Report of meeting of 22nd April 2020**

Brid Horan, Chair of Audit Committee reported as follows:

- A new Head of Internal Audit has been appointed along with a 2 member team. Due to Covid-19 the Head of Internal Audit has only been on campus for a month. However, she is settling in and working well.
- The Internal Audit Plan 2020 was approved. This year's plan will adopt Agile Auditing. The Committee asked for the scenarios identified by the Senior Management Crisis Team to be integrated into the Internal Audit Plan. The main



areas of focus in light of COVID-19 will be Crisis Management, Cybersecurity and how controls continue to be monitored.

- The 2019 Internal Audit Annual Report will be presented to Governing Authority at its June meeting.
- The effectiveness review of the Audit Committee had a positive outcome. It did highlight that external members of the Committee that do not sit on Governing Authority should have an annual update on the university's strategic environment.
- Both Chairs of GA's Audit and Risk Committees have agreed that any merger of the committees should be deferred as now is not the right time to change structures. This will be kept under review.
- C&AG was due to come on campus in May but this had been delayed. The Deputy Director of Finance intends to liaise with the C&AG on an audit plan.
- The Commercial Group and Subsidiary Companies' 2018/2019 Financial Statements are ready to be signed.
- The Audit Committee is recommending the extension of the audit contract with KPMG for a further period of one year. Given the current climate it is not practical to go to tender. In addition KPMG was only able to conduct a limited amount of on-site work on the University's 2018/2019 Financial Statements.. DCU can rely on Regulation 72 in proposing the 12 month extension.

**Approved** by the Authority

## **7.2 Minutes of meeting of 20th November 2019**

**Noted** by the Authority

### **8 STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM UPDATE**

The Director of Finance noted that the project is currently focusing on CRM Recruit and the project is continuing to operate within Budget.

### **9 PERSONNEL MATTERS**

**Noted** by the Authority

### **10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The President informed the Authority that the Vice-President for Academic Affairs has been appointed as Secretary General of the Irish Red Cross and will be finishing in DCU at the end of the month.

The President also informed the Authority that three staff members had been appointed to the Royal Irish Academy. This is the highest scholarship honour in Ireland.

DCU has been ranked 84th in the world in the 2020 Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings.

**11 NEXT MEETING**  
Friday June 26th

\_\_\_\_\_

The Chair

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

**Action Items:**

<b>Action</b>		<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
1	Presentation on Academic Affairs approach to academic quality assurance.	Vice-President Academic Affairs	June 2020 meeting
2.	Discuss approaching significant graduate employers	Chancellor and Sharon McCooey	Ongoing
3.	Induction for Cllr Jimmy Guerin	COO	Before June 2020 meeting via Zoom
4.	Honorary Degree Committee to meet to discuss their Terms of Reference	President	Before June 2020 meeting via Zoom
5.	Vice President of External Affairs to present on International Affairs	Chief Operations Officer	2020
6.	Establishment of GA Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Sub-Committee	Chancellor and COO	Ongoing
7.	Identify a suitable replacement for Lynette Fay	Governance & Nominations Committee	Before June 2020 meeting
8.	QPO Annual Report 2018/2019	DQI&IR	June 2020 meeting
9.	Presentation of 2019 Internal Audit Report	Head of Internal Audit	June 2020 meeting
9.	GA to carry out a Blank Paper Risk Assessment exercise	COO	June 2020 meeting
10.	A letter of condolence to be sent to the family of our colleague from Law & Government who passed away .	Chancellor	ASAP

**Items to be tracked:**

<b>Action</b>		<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
1.	Quarterly progress reports on each risk in the Institutional Risk Register	President	Every 2 <sup>nd</sup> meeting – next update June Meeting following GARC meeting
2.	Meetings of GA to be held at different locations	COO	From September 2020 every 2 <sup>nd</sup> meeting will be held off campus.
3.1	Review of QulPs in the second year of implementation and each Quality Review Summary Report to highlight recommendations in tabular form	Deirdre O'Connor	After one year of implementation at February Meeting
3.2	Each quality review self-assessment be accompanied by a view on the extent to which it is aligned with the strategic principles of the University	Deirdre O'Connor	On-going
4.	Brief dialogue on how the Quality Reviews are aligned with Risk and Audit	Director of Quality Promotion and Institutional Research	Annually at February meeting
5.	Update of GA Annual Work Plan	COO	On-going