

GOVERNING AUTHORITY MEETING

Report of meeting of Thursday, October 29th 2020 3.00pm, Video Conference.

PRESENT:

Dr Martin McAleese, Chancellor (Chair)
Ms Zainab Boladale
Mr Michael Burke
Mr James Corcoran
Mr Pat Gilroy
Ms Bernie Gray
Cllr Jimmy Guerin
Ms Brid Horan
Ms Rachel Hussey
Prof Dorothy Kenny
Prof Daire Keogh
Mr Fearghal Lynch
Prof Lisa Looney
Ms Sharon McCooley

Dr Kara McGann
Ms Chloe McMorrow
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 Isabel Aust

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms Marian Burns
Mr Ciaran McGivern

Prof Anne Sinnott
Ms Marie Mellett (recording secretary)

WELCOME

The Chancellor welcomed members and noted the apologies. He also noted that this was Professor Lisa Looney's first Governing Authority meeting as Vice President of Academic Affairs/Registrar and wished her well in her new role. He also welcomed Ms Zainab Boladale who was attending her first meeting as a member of Governing Authority and noted that the Chief Operations Officer would arrange an online induction for her and Jimmy Guerin in the near future.

The agenda was adopted. The Chancellor informed members that today's agenda, along with the agenda for the December meeting, would address all the significant agenda items previously deferred due to Covid-19.

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 10TH SEPTEMBER 2020

Approved by the Authority subject to a minor correction.

2 REPORT OF THE GOVERNING AUTHORITY MEETING OF 10TH SEPTEMBER 2020 FOR WEB PUBLICATION

Approved by the Authority

3 REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

Action 1: Will be presented at the December meeting

Action 2: Ongoing

Action 3: For December meeting

Action 4: Terms of Reference to be brought to the December meeting for approval

Action 5: Agenda item 11

Action 6: Agreed that all universities would submit letters in December

Action 7: Agenda item 8

Actions to be tracked:

Action 1: The Governing Authority Risk Committee will review the risk identification and assessment process at its next meeting on 12th November and take into account the high level risks identified by the GA Special Group at its recent meeting. It will then prepare the draft Institutional Risk Register (IRR) for review at a joint meeting of the Audit and Risk Committees prior to presentation to GA at its December meeting.

Action 2: Postponed until permitted by public health guidelines.

Action 3.1: Agenda item 11

Action 3.2: Agenda item 11

Action 4: Agenda item 11

Action 5: Presentation deferred until the appointment of a VPEA. The role will be reviewed as part of the review and renew of the Strategic Plan and it could take up to a year to make the appointment. In the meantime, the responsibilities of the role will be spread across senior management.

Action 6: Agenda item 7

Action 7: Agenda item 8

4 MATTERS ARISING

None

FOR DISCUSSION

5 GOVERNANCE

No matters for discussion.

6 PRESIDENT'S REPORT AND UNIVERSITY OFFICERS' REPORTS

The Chancellor informed members that the Special Standing Sub-Committee along with the Chair of DCU Commercial had met once (via Zoom call) with the senior management team since the last GA meeting to be updated on the measures the university is implementing to mitigate the impact of Covid-19. He also indicated that he continues to be in regular contact with the President and the Chief Operations Officer.

DCU President

The President reported that students returned to campus in early October and outlined the measures taken by the university to ensure that they receive a transformative DCU education and student experience in the face of the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 public health guidelines. He focused on how the university welcomed new students and thanked the Student's Union for the important role it played in this particularly in how it helped in facilitating the university's student communications and its attention to student welfare.

The President noted that Budget 2021 fell short of the calls from the Irish Universities Association for a resolution of the funding crisis within Higher Education particularly in relation to the need for infrastructural investment, research funding, and measures to address the underlying structural deficit. He did acknowledge, however, that the Minister had made significant Covid related contributions to the sector since the budget announcement and was proving to be a strong advocate for the sector.

The President reported that the university continues to play an active role in networks such as the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor Network and DCU-UU had recently made a joint presentation to the Secretariat of the North South Ministerial Council. In recent weeks the university has had a series of engagements with the Executive of Fingal County Council and the CEO of Dublin Airport Authority to explore ways that DCU might respond to heightened levels of unemployment in the region associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, Fingal County Council and DCU SU are collaborating on how best to communicate Covid-19 related issues to young people

The President reported the following research successes:

- i. €20m under the Government's Human Capital Initiative
- ii. Six DCU projects successfully funded under a new €5.5m Covid-19 Rapid Response Research and Innovation Programme established by Science Foundation Ireland, IDA Ireland, the Health Research Board and the Irish Research Council.
- iii. 20 DCU research projects have been awarded funding under the prestigious Irish Research Council Government of Ireland programmes recently announced by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

The Times Higher Education Rankings announced significant advances for various disciplines within DCU:

- Arts and Humanities are now in the top 200 worldwide. This equates to being in the top 2-3% of universities globally
- Social Sciences, and Business and Economics are now in the top 250 worldwide

The President informed members that DCU had been named 'Irish University of the Year 2021' by the Sunday Times. The university's response to Covid-19, its commitment to equality and

access, its transformative student experience, its focus on sport and student wellbeing, and its promotion of gender equality were among the factors considered in arriving at the decision.

The Chancellor asked the President to include the Authority's congratulations in his all staff email on the honour.

Vice- President of Academic Affairs

The Vice President of Academic Affairs reported that despite the significant difficulties presented by the Covid-19 pandemic evidence was now available that the completion of the academic year 19/20 had resulted in positive outcomes for students. There was no evidence of higher rates of non-progression or lower rates of student performance. All were broadly in line with previous years. She also outlined the difficulties faced by staff in delivering online lectures, many doing so for the first time, and highlighted the supports available to staff particularly the support of the Teaching Enhancement Unit.

The VPAA detailed the measures put in place to ensure that the university was prepared for the hybrid method of course delivery for the first semester of the new academic year. She emphasized the importance placed on this in the scenario planning exercise that had been carried out over the summer, the newly established Digital Design Team, the investment in technology and staff development, a revised approach to timetabling and the various sets of new guidance for staff and students. Although on-campus orientation was limited, new tools and innovative approaches allowed for a high quality orientation experience for first year under and post graduate students.

The VPAA reported in detail on the following:

- Dealing with the later than normal conclusion of the CAO cycle and recalculation of Leaving Certificate grades
- How the DCU Futures Project would accelerate the 'reimagining' of the undergraduate curriculum
- The Digital Hub – the new one-stop-shop for students

In response to a question on how does the university identify and respond to students who are struggling in the first semester and what measures are in place to keep the first year dropout rate to a minimum the VPAA made the following points:

- Student engagement in classes easier to track online and on Loop
- Semester one exam results are a good indicator and could prompt programme chairs to reach out to students where appropriate
- Operation of 'Studies Advice' where students are organized in groups/pods of 10-15 from their courses to discuss issues.
- Creating a sense of connectivity by small group teaching. Each group timetabled with the same students
- First year students provided with an app to document their feelings
- Student's Union has launched an initiative entitled 'Don't drop out, Drop in'

Finally, the VPAA reported that after consideration of the response to a survey conducted among students after the spring virtual graduation ceremony it was decided that 'graduation celebration' events would be offered in the Helix when health and safety guidelines permitted.

Members of the Authority paid tribute to the commitment and loyalty to the university by all staff during the very difficult and challenging working environment created by the pandemic.

Chief Operations Officer

The Chief Operations Officer reported that managing safe and effective campus operations in the current pandemic remains very challenging particularly in the context of Level 5 restrictions and extensive community transmission of the virus. He then outlined in detail the measures being taken to ensure the safety of staff and students including the vital role of the DCU Covid-19 helpline in providing up to date information on current public health guidelines and advice on what to do if tested positive and how to self-isolate.

He further reported that the first week of semester brought problems with the online learning platform Loop resulting in the system being taken offline for 24hrs. Temporary workarounds were put in place so that teaching could continue. When the core issue was identified a decision was taken to move to an alternative cloud computing provider and this was completed in time for week two. There have been no issues since.

The COO reported that an application to proceed to public tender had been submitted to the HEA for approval in relation to the construction of the FutureTech Building. Subject to approval being granted the matter will come to GA for the final decision on whether or not to proceed to tender.

The construction of the new 3G pitch on the St Patrick's campus will be completed on 31 October and the handover of the refurbished Woodlock Hall on the All Hallows campus is expected to take place in the first week of November.

The Chief Operations Officer noted that the appointment of Prof Lisa Looney to the Board of the Central Applications Office (CAO) company had been formally approved electronically by the Governing Authority.

Director of Finance

The Director of Finance reported that the expectation is still that the financial result for 2019/20 will be a deficit for the DCU group and that there remains a significant level of uncertainty in relation to 2020/21. The HEA has still to decide on the distribution of funding for 2020/21

The move from level 4 to level 5 has had a very limited impact on the university's operations. However, it has had a significant impact on the commercial group of companies and in particular on the DCU Sport's facilities which have had to close with the temporary layoff of staff once more. A limited number of catering outlets remain open for those staff and students who are attending campus. DCULS is experiencing cancellation of business booked and budgeted for next year. Campus Residences currently has an occupancy factor of 40%.

The Director of Finance noted that the university is in a reasonably strong financial position and he has no immediate concerns for budget 2021. Every effort is being made to generate extra business and minimize loss, for example, Fired Pizza, will now be delivering locally and it is hoped to stage a Christmas Panto at the Helix.

In response to a question about the outstanding debt from the PNU the Director of Finance noted that PNU is slow to pay but they always do. DCU Business School has a very strong and satisfactory relationship with PNU.

It was noted that a significant focus was placed on student recruitment during the summer, which has resulted in an increase in the number of taught post graduate students of 30% leading to additional revenue for the university.

Director of Human Resources

The Director of Human Resources reported that HR is working on filling the two vacant Executive Dean posts. These will be advertised along with the position of Executive Dean of Humanities and Social Science, as the current Executive Dean will be stepping down in January. Academic promotions will conclude in December. There was a slight delay due to Covid-19.

The Covid-19 website is being updated continuously and a FAQ section will be added in response to the volume of questions being asked.

Prof. David Collings from the Business School recently gave a talk to staff on the subject of remote working. This was very well received with many staff members commenting on how much they enjoyed the social aspects of the engagement. HR will plan similar events in due course to ensure staff stay connected.

7 DENOMINATED CENTRES ANNUAL REPORTS

7.1 Mater Dei Centre for Catholic Education

The Director of the Mater Dei Centre for Catholic Education, Prof. Gareth Byrne, joined the meeting and provided an update on the work of the Centre during the past academic year. The Centre continues to play an important role in the activities of the Institute of Education. He noted that the Centre's programmes attract approximately 1300 students annually and that this engagement with students across the wider IOE forms a very important part of the work of the centre.

The Director highlighted the following:

- Dr Bernadette Sweetman is leading the gift agreement from the Presentation Sisters on Adult Religious Education in the community. The Sisters agreed to an extension of the programme, to December 2022, due to COVID 19 and gave an additional gift of €250k. Currently nationwide consultations are taking place via zoom and it is hoped that pilot projects can begin in 2021.
- The Centre was chosen to take part in the 'Coronavirus Church and You' Survey alongside York St John University and the University of Warwick. 1400 participants were surveyed over a six week period. Results showed that people were closer to prayer during the pandemic.
- The Centre hosted a successful international conference 'Catholic Education: Formal, Informal and Lifelong.' The Director and Bernadette Sweetman attended the 2nd International Conference on Religious Catholic Education in Melbourne last February. It is hoped that DCU might host the event in the future.

- The Centre, in conjunction with NIDL, produced a report for the International Union of Superiors on The Religious and Spiritual Development of Sisters in Africa.

7.2 Church of Ireland Centre of Education

The Director of the Church of Ireland Centre, Rev. Prof. Anne Lodge, provided an update on the activities of the Centre during the past academic year.

The last of the Rathmines CICE entry students and the first of the DCU entry students graduated last November. The ceremony took place on the All Hallows campus. Invited guests included members of INTO and officials from the Department of Education and Skills.

The Director gave a detailed account of the work of the Centre including its community engagement, its International Anglican Engagement, completed and proposed research projects and publications.

In 2019/20 the small schools specialism, which is compulsory for Church of Ireland Centre pathway B.Ed students, was extended to other B.Ed students who wish to pursue that specialism. Centre staff also provide a final year research project in teaching multi-grade classes, again open to all of the B.Ed cohort. As a result of these initiatives DCU is unique among all providers of initial teacher education in Ireland in offering such a level of support for working in small schools and teaching in multi-level classes.

Next June, the Centre is hosting an exhibition in Christ Church Cathedral for primary school children from Dublin and the Diocese of Glendalough of ancient churches that remain in use for worship. The largest funder of this is All Churches Trust.

The Director referred to Archbishop's Jackson's offer to the President of a heritage gift of the original Irish oak furniture commissioned in the 1930s for the small chapel of the Church of Ireland Training College in Kildare Street and expressed the wish that a suitable place for it could be found on the All Hallows campus. She also hoped that an appropriate place of worship for the Church of Ireland community in the university could be identified.

8 STRATEGIC PLAN – ANNUAL REVIEW AND RENEW

The Chancellor reported that the Special Standing Sub-Committee of Governing Authority had recently met with the President, members of the SMG and Aisling McKenna, Director of Quality Promotion and Institutional Research to discuss the process for the 'review' aspect carried out by the university in relation to the implementation of year 3 priorities of the Strategic Plan 2017-2022. He further reported that members of the Sub-Committee were satisfied that a robust and thorough process of review had taken place. He noted that the 'renew' aspect of the plan was still work in progress and when completed would be reviewed by the Sub-Committee, combined with the review aspect and presented as the final Progress Report for year 3 with priorities for year 4 to GA for approval at its December meeting.

Aisling McKenna was welcomed to the meeting. She gave a brief overview of the review process and presented a high level summary in respect of one of the nine strategic goals.

9 AUDIT COMMITTEE

FOR NOTING

9.1 Minutes of meeting 18th June 2020

Noted by the Authority

FOR DISCUSSION

9.2 Report of meeting of 14th October 2020

Brid Horan, Chair of Governing Authority Audit Committee noted the following:

- The finance team is currently focused on finalising the University's 2019/2020 financial statements. The C&AG have yet to finalise their 201/2019 Audit.
- The KPMG audit of the 2018/2019 financial statements is at an advanced stage.
- KPMG presented their audit plan for 2019/2020 together with their statement of continuing Independence. Both were reviewed and approved by the audit committee.
- A report on the cybersecurity internal audit was presented and the audit committee was assured that the newly installed cybersecurity infrastructure is fit for purpose. Quarterly reports will be issued to internal audit in future.
- The Head of Internal Audit provided a quarterly update noting the following: the University Scholarships audit recommendations are almost complete, the Health and Safety Audit is underway and planning has commenced for both the Estates and HR Policies and Practices Audits. Audit of the Governance framework around the SIS project has been deferred until January.
- The Dean of Teaching and Learning will present at the next meeting; this is not directly under the remit of the Audit Committee. However it will provide an opportunity to understand the processes in place.
- Continuous auditing has made recommendations in relation to the procurement function. These are being considered.
- Internal Audit issued an invitation to tender for an external auditor to assist with IT Audits, only one tender was received and it did not meet the stated requirements. Internal Audit will issue a new invitation to tender.
- The recruitment of an Internal Audit manager is proving difficult and is ongoing.

In response to a question about increased C&AG reliance on the work of the university's external auditors to speed up their audit process it was noted that although the C&AG does take the external auditor's work into account they prefer to conduct their own deep analysis in certain areas. The real assurance to Governing Authority is derived from the KPMG audit.

10 RISK COMMITTEE

FOR NOTING

10.1 Minutes of meeting 17th July 2020

Noted by the Authority

FOR DISCUSSION

10.2 Report of meeting of 16th October 2020

Bernie Gray, Chair of Governing Authority Risk Committee noted the following:

- An indepth update provided on COVID 19.
- Discussion on new and emerging risks including Brexit.
- The Committee reflected on the excellent presentation from Heriot Watt University. The Committee noted that the language in the Risk Management Policy and Framework needs to be pitched at the right level to facilitate internalisation and embedding. The Committee also noted that the DCU risk process needs to be more adaptable and shorter.

- The Committee needs to review the balance of responsibility between it and senior management.
- The need to have defined tolerances in the Risk Appetite Statement within each risk category.
- Any changes recommended as a result of the above considerations will require Governing Authority approval.
- A review of GDPR took place. It was noted that significant progress has been made by the DPU. One area of concern was the risks associated with the uptake of online training by staff.
- The Committee will review strategic risks at its next meeting and will subsequently discuss these at a joint meeting with the audit committee prior to presentation to GA at its December meeting.
- The Committee plans to have an external review of its effectiveness before June 2021 to assist in the preparation of the transition to the GARC Committee of the next Governing Authority. The review will also inform a concept paper on the possibility of merging Risk and Audit into one Sub-Committee of the next GA.

11 QUALITY PROMOTION OFFICE ANNUAL REPORT

The Chancellor suggested that the QPO annual report be presented to GA in April of each year. As well as an account of the office's activities for the year and its future plans it would include an update on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the one year and three year QulPs previously approved by GA. The Chancellor also suggested that in future each QilP presented to GA for approval would clearly indicate how it is aligned to the strategic goals of the university and the extent to which risk and audit awareness has been reflected.

Aisling McKenna, Director of Quality Promotion and Institutional Research noted that the report circulated for today's meeting relates to the academic year 2018/2019. It provides an overview of quality review activity including quality reviews completed during the year, the 2018 Cinnte Institutional Review and Completion of Implementation Plan, allocation of Quality Improvement Plan Funding, the funding of 'Embracing Sustainability' and the Quality Review Schedule 2018/19 – 2014/25

A discussion followed on the value of QulPs. It was noted that all such plans are required by the Universities Act 1997 to be approved by GA.

Summary Review Report for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Deirdre O'Connor reported that she had engaged with the the Director of the Quality Promotions Office, received the Self-Assessment Report, the Peer Review Group Report and the Quality Improvement Plan to help her prepare an overview of this summary review report. She further reported that in her view the quality review process was fully complied with and she recommended the Summary Quality Review Report to Governing Authority for approval.

Approved by the Authority

12 STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM UPDATE

The Vice President of Academic Affairs reported that the focus of the Project is currently on the installation and opertion of the new CRM recruit modeule. This is the first deployment of a product under the SIS Project. The launch is expected on 23rd November. She also reported

that otherwise the Project is progressing satisfactorily and continues to remain on schedule and on Budget.

FOR DECISION

13 PERSONNEL MATTERS

The Director of Human Resources presented the following candidates for approval:

- Dr Joseph Stokes for appointment as Professor, Graduates Studies Office.
- Dr Derek Molloy for appointment as Professor, Faculty of Engineering and Computing.
- Dr Gabriel-Miro Muntean for appointment as Professor, Faculty of Engineering and Computing.

Approved by the Authority

14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

15 NEXT MEETING

Friday December 04th

The Chair

Date

Action Items:

Action		Person responsible	Deadline
1.	Presentation on Academic Affairs approach to academic quality assurance	Vice-President Academic Affairs	Dec 2020 meeting
2.	Induction for Jimmy Guerin and Zainab Boladale	COO	ASAP
3.	Once established and the Terms of Reference are agreed - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Sub-Committee will be a standing item on the GA agenda	COO	Dec 2020 meeting
4.	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Sub-Committee to draw up draft terms of Reference	COO and Rachel Hussey	Dec 2020 meeting
5.	President to inform HEA in writing that GA had approved a deficit budget for 2020/2021	President	December meeting
6.	Special group of external members to meet SMG to discuss proposed 'renew' of Strategic Plan	Chancellor and President	December meeting

Items to be tracked:

Action		Person responsible	Deadline
1.	Quarterly progress reports on each risk in the Institutional Risk Register	President	Overview of Risk at Dec 2020 meeting
2.	Meetings of GA to be held at different locations	COO	Every 2 nd meeting will be held off campus subject to public health guidelines
3.	New VPEA to present on International Affairs - within 3 months of appointment	COO	Ongoing