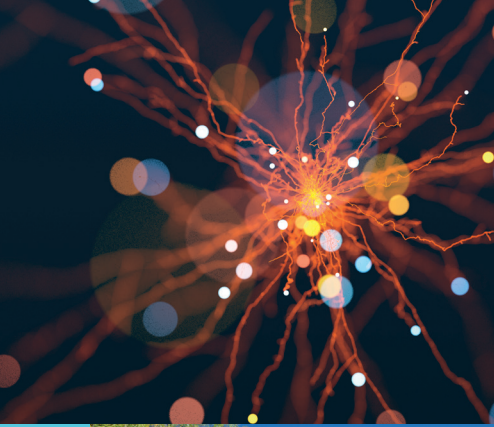




Ollscoil Chathair  
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## DCU Strategic Plan 2017 - 2022 Talent, Discovery and Transformation

### Constituent Strategy **Student Experience**



# Introduction

At DCU, we understand the importance of a university education in the formation and transformation of an individual. These years form the foundations of the future direction of the life of the student, and the experiences during this time play a key role in raising aspirations and setting personal goals.

In this context, DCU strives to provide a 'lived' student experience that is enriching and enlightening, liberating and exciting. We expose students to academic excellence in their chosen discipline and offer a world of opportunity to allow students explore and discover their interests, ensuring that the range of options available affords students from all backgrounds and all walks of life the opportunity to ignite a passion which will determine their future paths.

DCU attracts students from a broad range of backgrounds and experiences. We are committed to inclusion and will continue to develop pathways to entry and frameworks of support, which cater for a wide array of needs. Our diverse student body currently comprises significant numbers of students who would traditionally not have been well represented among those attending university, including students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, students with disabilities, international students, mature students and students who entered through FE routes to higher education. Our active engagement with groups who are under-represented in higher education

has been a core aspect of DCU's values since our foundation. In recent years, we have both deepened and broadened our activity and have introduced specific initiatives, for example to facilitate university attendance by refugees and by students on the autism spectrum, demonstrating our commitment to ensure that DCU is a university which welcomes and supports through to completion, students from all areas of Irish and global society.

Recognising the importance of co-curricular activities in a student's development, DCU will continue to place a strong emphasis on the lived experience, in addition to their pursuit of academic excellence. This Strategy introduces the concept of a DCU Engagement Award, which will encourage and recognise engagement with the University and society from first through to final year. Using the scaffolding of the DCU Digital Portfolio to collect and demonstrate activity, the Award will recognise students' formal and informal engagement with on-campus and off-campus volunteering, community engagement activities, personal development workshops, skills development, leadership programmes and peer-to-peer support frameworks. It will encourage students to focus on the DCU Graduate Attributes - attributes, which have been identified as being desirable characteristics of an all-rounded graduate - and help guide them along a journey of self-fulfilment and self-actualisation.

Beyond DCU, we see a world abounding with opportunities for our graduates and we will prepare students for the world of work and their future careers. We will introduce them to employment and international experiences through our study abroad programme, INTRA work placements, clinical and teaching placements - and help them develop professional skills and overcome challenges while on placement, as part of this crucial learning experience. Students will learn the importance of flexibility and resilience while learning to cope with real world situations and develop the skills to work in an environment which requires the ability to adapt and use knowledge and skills creatively and effectively.

The DCU Student Experience focuses specifically on the individual needs of our diverse student body. We will allow students the ability to carve out their own journey through their years at the University by ensuring flexible and adaptable frameworks of engagement, hence providing

them with the choice to forge their own paths in life. This approach will encourage students to take responsibility for their own development, within a safe, stimulating and supportive environment and help them understand the positive impact they can make on the workforce and on society at large.

Upon graduation, we will provide opportunities for graduates to remain connected to their alma mater, both in terms of their own continued professional and educational development and through engagement with our student body as professionals with a wealth of expertise to share. We fully acknowledge the responsibility we have to develop the future leaders and thinkers of our society and will continue to work towards achieving the ambitions laid out in this Strategic Plan. DCU will form a university-wide Steering Committee to monitor and ensure the effective implementation of this strategy and will inform the DCU community of key milestones reached along the journey.

## Student Experience Vision

DCU students will enjoy opportunities to develop and thrive in an environment which nourishes talent, values diversity and encourages individuality. Students will enter the workforce with a clear understanding of their individual talents and skills, and the confidence that comes with a sound knowledge of a specific academic discipline and exposure to personal and professional development opportunities. Equipped with these attributes, DCU graduates will make a strong contribution to society and the global workplace

## Alignment to DCU Strategic Themes

The DCU Student Experience is firmly rooted in the six Strategic Themes outlined in the DCU Strategy Plan. It reflects the importance which the University places on the uniqueness of each individual student, acknowledging the diversity of needs and aspirations and keeping in mind that each student comes with personal goals and ambitions and a set of unique circumstances.

At the heart of Talent, Discovery and Transformation (DCU Strategic Plan 2017-2022) is the concept of providing students with the relevant opportunities and supports which will allow them thrive along a journey of self-discovery and development. The Student Experience touches on each phase of the student

journey from initial orientation, introduction into the new learning environment, through experiential learning in the workplace and social settings - preparing them, ultimately, for their professional lives beyond graduation.

The transformation of our society, as outlined in the DCU Strategic Plan, can only become a reality if we unlock the potential in our students at each point in their personal and academic journeys and allow them to discover new ways of thinking and doing. The lived Student Experience focuses on maximising the opportunities for these students to enter a world of discovery and shape the future in a progressive and sustainable way.

## Constituent Strategy Goals

DCU Strategic Goal	Action	Success Measured by:
<b>Provide a transformative student experience</b>	<b>Develop a multi-faceted approach to strengthen student employability:</b>	
	In the context of an overarching employability framework for the University, articulate out-of-class learning and skills enhancement opportunities, and support the development of students' Graduate Attributes through a suite of workshops and initiatives.	
	Develop a Leadership & Life Skills Centre in the new Student Centre, offering tailor-made programmes and civic engagement opportunities for all students through collaboration with external organisations.	Employability Framework, to include co-curricular opportunities
	Increase employer and alumni engagement with DCU students to support the development of professional skills amongst the student body.	Engagement with Centre activities and qualitative feedback from students and stakeholders Development of opportunities / monitor engagement
	<b>Deepen the mechanisms which support the recognition and development of student engagement:</b>	
	Introduce a DCU Engagement Award, encouraging and rewarding personal and professional development and civic engagement through active participation in University life and volunteering activities.	Target 60% participation by Year 3
	Develop a coherent framework for student engagement in University planning.	Develop and enhance the National Student Training and Engagement Programme (NStEP)



DCU Strategic Goal	Action	Success Measured by:
<b>Provide a transformative student experience</b>	<b>Enrich student support by widening participation through effective engagement activities:</b>	
	Develop and enhance the Widening Participation agenda of the University, by supporting new entry routes to education and ensuring relevant supports and frameworks are in place to help students from all backgrounds reach their full potential.	Develop Widening Participation Strategy
	Develop a clear framework for supporting the ongoing development of DCU as an 'Autism-Friendly' University.	Develop framework and roll out initiatives for full implementation by Year 3
	Develop enhanced pathways to education for the most disadvantaged in society, in line with the University's 'College Connect' initiative.	10% increase in the numbers of students entering from targeted regions
	<b>Enhance Student well-being to support the physical and psychological well-being of our students:</b>	
	Develop a comprehensive Student Transitions Programme which enhances the student journey from pre-arrival through to graduation, helping students develop key skills at every stage of the process	Engagement with the Student Transition Programme to reach 80% by Year 3
	Develop a Sports Strategy which incorporates both sports and well-being and becomes an integral part of the culture of the University.	Launch the DCU Healthy initiative
<b>Sustain our ambitions through income generation</b>	<b>Nurture the postgraduate research community:</b>	
	Develop a stronger sense of community amongst postgraduate research students by developing an enhanced infrastructure (structures, services and facilities) to support their social and personal development.	Identify the challenges faced by research students and develop the required inputs
<b>Sustain our ambitions through income generation</b>	<b>Develop student-centred initiatives through interdepartmental collaborations:</b>	
	Strengthen our collaboration with the DCU Educational Trust and external funding agencies to deliver on student-facing initiatives, such as Widening Participation, Leadership & Life Skills Centre activities, University of Sanctuary.	Develop engagement plan with the DCU Educational Trust to maximise impact

DCU Strategic Goal	Action	Success Measured by:
<b>Ensure a coherent, connected university</b>	Ensure continued and effective connectivity in a multi-campus environment:	
	<p>Carry out a comprehensive study of the services, facilities and opportunities offered to students across all campuses and across all modes of study, with a view to identifying any challenges students face in availing of the 'Full' student experience.</p> <p>Develop University systems which are connected and seamless, providing a high quality level of service interaction.</p>	<p>Cross-campus survey / Action Plan to address shortcomings</p> <p>Development of a 'relationship management' system within the SIS</p>
<b>Value and develop our staff community</b>	Support academic, administrative and professional staff who are supporting students, to ensure all members of the community are able to provide the appropriate learning environment to work with the diverse student population:	
	<p>Develop a full suite of training for all staff interacting with students with disabilities / ongoing medical conditions / mental health difficulties and specific learning difficulties.</p> <p>Provide training for relevant staff in the application of Universal Design for Teaching.</p> <p>Foster and develop interdepartmental collaboration across the University, with a view to supporting staff supporting students.</p>	<p>Establish staff training programmes and monitor staff engagement</p> <p>Develop implementation plan for Universal Design across DCU</p> <p>Enhanced collaboration and joint initiatives</p>
<b>Develop a global university</b>	Deepen Global Partnerships to enhance multicultural diversity across the University Landscape:	
	<p>Create a Global Village in the new Student Centre in order to encourage internationalisation 'at home'.</p> <p>Develop the Languaculture Space to enhance intercultural communication and understanding in the University.</p> <p>Explore the expansion of work placement opportunities abroad for students.</p> <p>Develop additional opportunities for DCU students to study abroad as part of their degree programmes.</p> <p>Expand and enhance our (incoming) Study Abroad programme to include volunteering and work placement opportunities.</p> <p>Enhance engagement with our global alumni community.</p>	<p>Establish Global Village and monitor activity</p> <p>Identify resources to permit an expansion of the Languaculture Space and explore its most appropriate physical location</p> <p>Establish baseline and increase mobility opportunities</p> <p>Explore new opportunities within the Study Abroad programme and implement</p> <p>Establish a strategy for communicating with and connecting graduates on a global scale</p>

DCU Strategic Goal	Action	Success Measured by:
Nurture creativity and culture across the University	Promote and support a culture of creativity and innovation:	
	Develop a Visual Arts Strategy.	Implementation of Strategy and recruitment of VA Officer
	Explore the expansion of the Arts Bursary and increase visibility of the opportunities within the Bursary.	Increase funding to expand the number of students who benefit from the Arts Bursary.
Pursue active engagement with our communities	Enrich civic engagement activities and partnership opportunities to ensure continued and meaningful collaboration with our local and wider communities:	
	Support DCU societies to further their engagement with local community and voluntary groups.	Establish baseline of current activity and set targets
	Embed Alumni as a source of learning, guidance and inspirations. Develop a mutually beneficial relationship between the student body and DCU alumni.	Increase the presence of Alumni in the Student Centre to maximise the synergies between the alumni and student communities



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