DCU Strategic Plan 2017 - 2022
Talent, Discovery and Transformation

Constituent Strategy
Teaching and Learning

Introduction

DCU's strategic plan 'Talent, Discovery and Transformation' sets out DCU's vision to be a globally significant University of Transformation and Enterprise. This Teaching and Learning Strategy is a key component of that strategy, and foregrounds the University's commitment to the "development of talent" and the "discovery and translation of knowledge to advance society".

Vision
The development of talent is a central ambition of DCU's Strategic Plan, and the University's Teaching & Learning Strategy has a key role in that ambition. In furthering this ambition, we will focus on academic excellence, and the development of inspiring and challenging co-curricular experiences. In doing so we will provide a student learning experience that recognises the importance of industry engagement, and the challenges of global citizenship: internationalisation, intercultural competencies, and sustainability.

The contributions of research and innovation to teaching and learning are central to the strategy, as are the opportunities to exploit the affordances of digital and emerging technologies. In seeking to address the challenges of lifelong learning, and the changing nature of the engagement with learning, we will continue to be the leader in digital learning, teaching and innovation and we will provide a learning experience characterised by innovative design in curriculum and delivery. A central goal is flexibility in the delivery of our programmes whether on-campus or off-campus, with digital and blended delivery modes a key driver of our curriculum design.

In recognising learning as a social concept, we particularly value experiential pedagogies that will equip our graduates to engage with an increasingly dynamic world of work. That ever-changing world of work and careers will be supported by the development of further lifelong learning opportunities in postgraduate curricular offerings.

Curriculum
We will embark on a review of our curriculum to ensure that it challenges learners, preparing them for the world of work and lifelong learning. Our curriculum will continue to place an emphasis on the value of interdisciplinarity, drawing expertise from multiple disciplines to resolve authentic problems that reflect the challenges of industry and society. We will ensure that our undergraduate students are exposed to the research work of the University community, and the contribution that it can make in addressing these challenges.

Our students are part of a wider global community of learners and influencers. We will research best practice in providing international and intercultural learning experiences for our students. We will implement innovative projects that address this issue, including collaborative projects with international partners and virtual internships and externships.

We recognise the importance of technology in the future world of the economy and society and will ensure that our students are familiar with new and emergent technologies; accordingly we will incorporate appropriate levels of technological awareness in all our degree programmes.

Employability/graduate attributes

A key goal for the student learning experience is that as graduates, our students will be self-aware, rounded individuals who can chart a lifelong journey of personal and professional development that allows them to reach their potential. The employability of our graduates is a core strength of the University, and we will significantly expand the range of activities that support employability across the entire student life cycle in both curricular and co-curricular areas.

DCU's Generation 21 is a suite of initiatives that supports students' achievement of six Graduate Attributes. These attributes play an important role in supporting the employability of our graduates. The six attributes are: creative and enterprising, solution-oriented, effective communicators, globally engaged, active leaders, and committed to continuous learning. We will continue to review and refine our graduate attributes, and further embed them in the curriculum. We will develop processes that allow students to mark their progress in achieving these attributes, and allow the University to triangulate student and graduate outcomes as seen by the University, the students and graduates, and employers.

In our decision-making with regard to new programme development, programme redesign and programme retirement, we will implement processes of strategic engagement with regional and national employers to identify future needs, trends and employability considerations.

Educational opportunity

We will develop and implement a widening participation strategy that builds on, and extends our existing outreach and access initiatives targeted at underrepresented groups in Higher Education. We will seek to address the barriers that inhibit participation, and to ease the transition to Higher Education through new community based initiatives, and through appropriate partnerships with the Further Education sector. We will research and implement approaches that contribute to the increased retention of learners across the entire student life cycle. In addressing the needs of lifelong learners, and those wishing to upskill or engage with the University for reasons of personal development, we will adopt modes of delivery, and programme structures that best act as facilitators of engagement with Higher Education.

Teaching effectiveness

Further improvement of the quality of the teaching and the learning experience of our students is a core goal of our strategy. We recognise that over the lifetime of this strategy and beyond, our learners will be drawn from increasingly more diverse life stages, cultures, abilities, and circumstances. This more diverse learning community challenges us to reflect on and re-imagine the student learning experience. To address these challenges, we will develop a framework that recognises and values continuous professional development of all staff that support the student learning experience. Within that framework, and drawing on expertise and best practice across DCU Faculties and beyond, we will implement a multi-faceted and multi-level approach that includes:

— a further extension of our portfolio of accredited and non-accredited professional development opportunities;
— CPD resources to assist academic and administrative staff in engaging with more diverse cohorts of learners;
— an accredited award in in Learning Innovation for Higher Education;
— a review of our current scheme of evaluation of teaching effectiveness and implementation of modifications that encompass a holistic approach that includes staff, process, location, delivery mode, and assessment techniques.

Delivery

We recognise that learning is a partnership between learners and teachers, and we will employ student-centred learning design where the student voice is heard, and informs the design and implementation of the learning experience. To enhance the inclusivity of the learning experience, we will promote the principles of Universal Design in the design and delivery of all our programmes. The expected changing demographic of our student body will require that we design our programmes to allow for more flexible delivery. We will seek collaborative contributions from staff and students in the design of all learning spaces, both physical and virtual.

The affordances of digital technologies can fundamentally alter the way that students can learn and how higher education institutions can deliver and facilitate that learning. Those technologies can lead to a more inclusive learning environment that extends its reach to groups marginalised by circumstance or condition. We will continue to undertake research into the effectiveness and impact of digital technologies on student learning, and to implement appropriate evidence-led blended and online delivery initiatives that enhance the learning experience of our students.

Underlying these initiatives is a transformational process, re-imagining how we organise and deliver the entire student experience. In parallel with introducing a new Student Information System, we will undertake a fundamental review of our policies, procedures and structures to ensure that they support our strategic intent of greater flexibility and effectiveness in programme delivery.

Alignment to DCU Strategic Themes

This strategy will act as a framework within which faculties will develop plans and implement strategic goals in the student learning experience, and in programme development and re-design.

In creating this strategy we recognise the expected significant growth in student numbers, the changing nature of industry and technology, the continued importance of developing employability in our students, and preparing graduates for future dynamic careers. We also recognise that student participation in higher education will be drawn from diverse groups nationally and internationally.
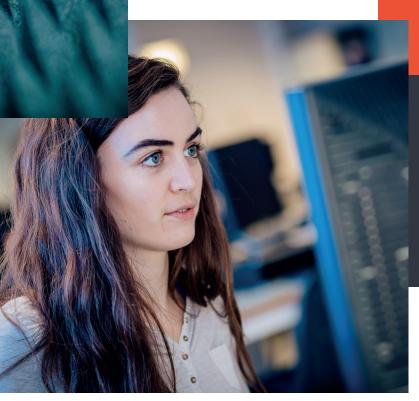
Constituent Strategy Goals

DCU Strategic Goal	Action	Success Measured by:
Curriculum Reform	**Conduct a systematic review of the curriculum to optimise the student learning experience** Review of learning design of programmes, including review/modification of APR/PPR processes to include the student learning experience	Revised APR/PPR process in place Model of delivery developed
	Introduction of online delivery of optional curricular elements to include – 1) design, 2) ethics, 3) sustainability, 4) creativity — Set up a cross-faculty group to steer the development and introduction of these elements	
	Advance a research-integrated learning experience In parallel with the SIS project (1.5), develop a preferred model of flexible student progression with necessary processes to manage that progress (2019-20) Review and streamline/transform programme management processes and governance to reflect changed delivery and technology-enhanced decision-making	Guidelines for research integration agreed 'Green paper' on flexible student progression developed Review of process and implementation of change
	Identify opportunities additional to international placements, e.g., virtual Erasmus Identify opportunities for students to undertake learning outside formal environments	New international learning opportunities developed Expansion of current community service learning opportunities
	Online delivery of postgraduate modules, to include, — Development and approval of business plan for development on agreed platform — Provide template for development of modules by faculties — Develop agreed model for management of student record for online students	Business plan approved Templates developed Student record modifications in place Modifications of curriculum completed
	Incorporate appropriate levels of technological awareness in all our degree programmes — Set up a working group to identify discipline priorities in this regard, and ways to best leverage DCU expertise	

DCU Strategic Goal	Action	Success Measured by:
Teaching Quality	**Establish a Professional Development Framework for Teaching and Learning** — Develop a professional development framework for Teaching and Learning — Develop a DCU award, e.g. Master's in Learning Innovation for HE — Review assessment of teaching quality through a review of QuEST and implementation to identify more effective process/instrument — Designate funding at school level for staff development in disciplinary domains (to include fellowships) — Development of research-supported metrics of impact of Teaching and Learning initiatives on student learning experience	Agreed PD framework Validation and accreditation of DCU programme Improved response rate and impact of QuEST Scheme and funding in place Evaluation framework developed
Skills and Employability	**Ensuring our graduates are equipped with the appropriate skills to flourish as the nature of employment evolves** — Develop employability statements relevant to all of our programmes — Enhance the employability of graduates — Review scope and delivery of INTRA — Review of Graduate Attributes — Increase levels of technology awareness in the curriculum — Incentivisation of achievement of graduate attributes outside the formal curriculum	Employability statements developed Targeted increases in measures of employability Expansion of INTRA opportunities Modifications in curriculum to include a focus on new and emergent technologies Development of a DCU Engagement Award
Educational Opportunities	**Systematically reduce the barriers to participation by mature, second-chance, and lifelong learners through,** — Development of a Widening Participation strategy (2018) — Implement an evidence-based project to identify barriers and means of addressing widening participation. — Identification of clear set of metrics to underpin measurement of widening participation initiatives — Development of new entry routes with FE partners — Further enhance participation by marginalised groups through our Access programme	Strategy developed and approved Widening participation metrics agreed and targets in place Targeted increases in entry from FE
Student Support	**Establishment of an enhanced Student Transitions Programme (STP) to address the full cycle of the student journey** — Enhanced orientation and induction programme — Development of evidence-based retention supports — Introduction of SIS — Greater flexibility in programme delivery — Develop training for academic staff in addressing more diverse cohorts of learners	Increased retention rates for first year undergraduate entrants Implementaton of new SIS Increased participation by non-standard entrants

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