

ACADEMIC COUNCIL MINUTES

**14 June 2021
2.00 p.m. – 2.35 p.m.**

Zoom Meeting

Present:

P. Anandarajah	B. Anderson	S. Belton
S. Blott	C. Bohan	L. Boran
M. Brown	J. Brunton	J. Bruton
M. Butler	P. Cahill	B. Corcoran
E. Costello	D. Curran	R. Devery
D. Fitzpatrick	P. Flynn	Y. Freaney
G. French	C. Furlong	L. Gallagher
P. Gallagher	R. Gillanders	S. Giordani
P. Guasoni	D. Hand	S. Hegarty
G. Jones	J. Kearney	R. Keegan (Secretary)
J. Kelly	W. Kelly	E. Kennedy
D. Keogh (Chair)	D. Kinahan	P. Landais
A. Logan	T. Lokot	A. Looney
L. Looney	C. Mac Murchaidh	M. McAdam
C. McArdle	E. McDonald	J. McDonough
J. McManis	I. McMenamin	P. Meleady
P. Mooney	E. Morgenroth	A. Morrissey
J.-P. Mosnier	G.-M. Muntean	F. Murphy
R. Murphy	C. Ní Mhurchú	P. Ó Duibhir
S. O'Brien	C. O'Gorman	K. O'Sullivan
N. O'Sullivan	D. Robbins	P. Rosati
K. Sanders	P. Sharkey Scott	A. Sinnott
J. Stokes	J. Travers	G. Uí Laighléis
J. Usher	L. Van Der Werff	B. White

In attendance:

V. Cooke

Apologies:

PJ Byrne	G. Hughes	E. McGlynn
A. McKenna	P. Robbins	M. R. Sweeney

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted.

A. Minutes and Related Issues**2. Minutes of the meeting of Academic Council of 2 June 2021**

The minutes of the meeting of 2 June 2021 were approved. It was noted that formal minutes would be signed once on-campus activity resumes.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Minutes of the meetings of the Education Committee of 26 May 2021

The minutes were approved.

5. Minutes of the meeting of the University Standards Committee of 20 May 2021

The minutes were approved.

B. Policy and Strategy Issues**6. President's report**

6.1 The President recorded his thanks to DCU staff for their Trojan work over the past academic year. He noted the dedication of staff to the mission of the University, the ongoing commitment to our students and the care shown to each other as we navigated the Covid fog.

6.2 The President informed Council that plans are underway for the return of students to campus in autumn. He noted Minister Harris's plans to publish guidance on the safe return to on-site further and higher education and research later this week. It is anticipated that this schedule will designate further and higher education and research as 'essential activities'. It is expected that the publication will also foreground the Government's commitment to a significant increase in on-campus activity for students from September. The President reiterated DCU's commitment to providing the very best student experience, within the parameters of prevailing public health guidance.

6.3 The President noted that DCU had slipped in the recently published QS World Rankings, but highlighted that this is largely attributable to the Covid related reduction in international student numbers. He informed Council that on a more positive note, DCU has improved its performance on the Academic Reputation and Employer Reputation rankings for a second year. It is anticipated that these achievements will be reflected in the QS subject rankings, due to be published later in the year.

7. COVID-19

Professor L. Looney drew attention to plans for the return to on-site teaching and research, informing Council that it is expected that Government will commit to a full or near full return to on-site activity from September. Estates and the Health and Safety Office are working towards finalising room capacities, and a scoping exercise is underway looking at pinch points in timetable design. Professor Looney informed Council that she intends to contact students once the forthcoming Government guidance has been published, advising them to plan for on-campus classes in September.

Professor L. Looney informed Council that the publication of detailed timetables will not be possible until September. The deferred start date for 1st year students, resulting from the later than normal Leaving Certificate publication date, will mean that timetables will remain as draft for longer than usual thereafter due to the inter-relatedness of all timetables. She informed Council that, given the fluidity of the current situation, indicative timetables should only be communicated to students following approval from the relevant Executive Dean or nominee.

Professor L. Looney informed Council that guidance will be issued to students prior to Semester 1, detailing protective measures in place including the use of face coverings, sanitisation etc. This guidance will also include information on non-academic elements of university life including Clubs and Societies, catering and accommodation.

Professor L. Looney advised Council that it is expected that the forthcoming guidance on the safe return to further and higher education will give a clear commitment to getting all researchers back to campus, and there will be a particular focus on this in DCU over the coming weeks. It was noted that some research students are currently located in red list countries and will face visa issues and compulsory quarantine costs, should they be required to return now. Professor Looney indicated that DCU's focus will be on a phased and incremental return for research students, and plans for returning should only be done when it is safe and practical to do so. It was noted that the International Office is working closely with IUA partners in drafting a protocol for the arrival and return of international students in September.

It was noted that possible restrictions on larger class sizes would create issues, particularly for 1st year classes. Professor L. Looney informed Council that the scoping exercise currently underway is looking at those particular programmes that may be impacted by any restrictions on very large class groups.

8. Strategic academic initiatives

Dr B. White drew attention to the three new HCI programmes recommended for accreditation under item 10. She noted the valuable feedback from the Accreditation Boards which will help further strengthen and shape these innovative programmes.

8.1 Revised Academic Calendar

Mr W. Kelly briefed Council on the circulated criteria and elements document which will inform the development, consultation and approval of both the outline and detailed academic calendars in the future. The revised approval process will see the outline calendar being approved by Academic Council on a three-year rolling basis, typically each December. The *DCU Outline and Detailed Academic Calendars, Criteria and Elements* document was approved.

Mr W. Kelly informed Council that in mapping out the detailed calendar, Registry and the Academic Calendar Implementation Group (ACIG) gave consideration to the overlap between the Semester 2 examination period and the Easter weekend in 2022. Following an assessment of curriculum information submitted, it is proposed that the exam period be extended by two days. Whilst it is not certain that these days will be required, it is important that provision is made for these now. It was noted that this change will shorten the exam correction period but that Registry has committed to scheduling larger modules towards the start of the examination period. The revised examination period for Semester 2 in 2022 was approved.

Mr W. Kelly informed Council of a timetabling challenge in 2022 due to the limited number of days between CAO offers and the start of Semester 1. He advised members that this issue will reoccur every few years. It was noted that the recent announcement regarding the later than normal publication of Leaving Certificate results in 2021 will create a similar problem this year. A working group has met on two occasions to explore how to limit timetabling disruptions. Work in this regard will continue over the coming weeks.

Mr W. Kelly noted the recent decision to defer the start date for 1st year students, to accommodate the later Leaving Certificate publication date. It was noted that programme-led orientation will now coincide with the first week of teaching for continuing students, and this will necessitate revisions to planned activities. It has also been agreed that the 10-week semester will be preserved, meaning Semester 1 for 1st year students will end a week later. Semester 1 exams for 1st year students will be scheduled in the second week of the exam period, to facilitate a one-week study period.

C. Items for Formal Approval/Noting

9. Examination and Progression and Awards Boards Reports, Summer 2021

Approved

10. Accreditation Reports

10.1 BA in Climate and Environmental Sustainability

Approved

10.2 BSc in Psychology and Disruptive Technologies

Approved

10.3 BEng in Sustainable Systems and Energy

Approved

11. Validation Report: European Masters in Law, Data and Artificial Intelligence (Erasmus Mundus)

Approved

12. Validation Report: BEd in Technology, Engineering and Graphics

Approved

13. Any other business

There was no other business.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Date of next meeting:

6 October 2021

2:00 pm