

ACADEMIC COUNCIL MINUTES

**6 October 2021
2.00 p.m. – 3.05 p.m.**

Zoom Meeting

Present:

B. Anderson	F. Blin	S. Blott
L. Boran	M. Brown (IoE)	J. Brunton
J. Bruton	M. Butler	PJ Byrne
P. Cahill	A. Castillo Villaneuva	E. Clinton
E. Costello	M. Coulter	S. Cullen
O. Farrell	O. Freeney	J. Foster
Y. Freeney	G. French	C. Furlong
P. Gallagher	R. Gillanders	K. Goodman
P. Guasoni	C. Gurrin	D. Hand
S. Hegarty	C. Holland	G. Hughes
A. Intizar	S. Jones	J. Kearney
R. Keegan (Secretary)	E. Kennedy	D. Keogh (Chair)
D. Kinahan	P. Landais	A. Logan
T. Lokot	A. Looney	L. Looney
C. Loscher	C. Mac an Bhaird	C. McArdle
K. McDonagh	P. McGorman	A. McKenna
J. McMackin	J. McManis	R. McManus
P. McMorrow	M. McSharry	P. Mooney
J.-P. Mosnier	G.-M. Muntean	B. Murphy
F. Murphy	R. Murphy	C. Ní Mhurchú
B. Nolan	M. O'Brien	S. O'Brien (HSS)
S. O'Brien (IoE)	K. O'Sullivan	N. O'Sullivan
P. Sharkey Scott	J. Stokes	M. R. Sweeney
T. Szecsi	J. Travers	G. Uí Laighléis
L. Van der Werff	M. Ward	

In attendance:

V. Cooke	C. Dunne (Item 6)	
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Apologies:

SJ. Belton	C. Bohan	M. Crane
D. Fahy	M. Farrelly	S. Giordani
A. McAuley	E. McGlynn	A. McNamara
C. O’Gorman	P. Robbins	A. Sinnott
J. Usher	B. White	

The President welcomed members to the first meeting of Academic Council for 2021-22. He noted the importance of the decision to bring students back to campus in September and acknowledged the significant work of colleagues in preparing for this return. He recorded his gratitude to staff for their ongoing dedication and hard work in ensuring we continue to offer the very best student experience.

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted.

A. Minutes and Related Issues**2. Minutes of the meeting of Academic Council of 14 June 2021**

The minutes of the meeting of 14 June 2021 were approved.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Minutes of the meetings of the Graduate Research Studies Board of 13 May 2021 and 17 June 2021

The minutes were approved.

B. Policy and strategy issues**5. President’s report (oral report)**

5.1 The President welcomed new members to Academic Council and wished them the very best in their new roles.

5.2 The President expressed his condolences and sympathies to the family of Mr Patrick Stewart, a final year Enterprise Computing Student, who passed away last month.

5.3 The President welcomed the appointment of Ms Brid Horan as the new Chancellor of the University. He noted that Ms Horan has championed the values of DCU throughout her

career and has a distinguished record of leadership and service to Irish society, industry, education, equality and the arts.

- 5.4 The President informed members that the new Higher Education Authority Act will shortly be introduced in the Houses of the Oireachtas and may be enacted by the end of this year. He noted that the Act will reform the composition of Governing Authority, with a majority of external members with requisite skills and appropriate gender mix. He noted that DCU welcomed the revisions which had been made in the government's draft legislation, but expressed concerns about the risks inherent in replacing all of the current Governing Authorities within a limited timeframe. It was his view that Governing Authorities should run their natural life, and successors be appointed according to the revised legislation.
- 5.5 The President reported that DCU received the largest number of applications through CAO this year and that there has been strong demand for the new DCU Futures programmes and pathways. He recorded his thanks to colleagues involved in stewarding these new programmes through to this point and noted the significant work of Communications and Marketing, Student Recruitment, the International Office, Registry and the Faculties. The President also welcomed the significant interest in DCU postgraduate taught programmes and the strong number of international applications. He noted the recent launch of the International Foundation Year by DCU Language Services, which is a critical part of DCU's Internationalisation Strategy.
- 5.6 The President noted that there have been significant successes in research in recent weeks across all five Faculties and he congratulated colleagues on the many achievements.
- 5.7 The President noted the recent call under the Shared Island Fund for research projects which support the Shared Island initiative. He expressed his gratitude to Prof. Greg Hughes and Prof. John Doyle for developing the institutional bid with Ulster University. He noted that the call, in response to lobbying by institutions, was targeted along a dispersed model which allowed for bids across the widest range of disciplinary areas.
- 5.8 The President noted the publication of the revised National Development Plan this week. He informed members that the Plan provided for modest increase in capital funding to the sector, but he noted that the Shared Island Fund has been doubled to €1 billion. It is hoped that the research funding element will be increased proportionally. The President also noted the disappointment that the MetroLink appears to have been put on hold. The MetroLink is strategically important for the University, sustainability and local communities. DCU, with other significant stakeholders, will be campaigning for the speedy delivery of this project.
- 5.9 The President briefed members on recent constructive discussions with Arizona State University (ASU), focused on moving the existing partnership forward in an impactful and meaningful way. The focus of the partnership, in the first instance, will be on Biodesign Europe which presents a significant opportunity for DCU. He also noted plans to strengthen existing strategic relationships between ASU and the Institute of Education, the Centre for Family Business and the School of Communications.

- 5.10 The President informed members that DCU hosted an ECIU leadership development programme in the past week. He encouraged colleagues to consider ECIU members when seeking European research and education partners, noting the significant potential for collaboration.

The Vice President for Research and Innovation noted the significance of the ECIU and ASU partnerships. He informed members that a scheme will shortly be launched in DCU to facilitate researchers in partnering with colleagues in ECIU universities. Work is also underway in the development of a proposal at the ECIU level on new ways for universities to engage with industry partners. He noted the significant potential in Biodesign Europe and informed members that he continues to work with ASU colleagues to strengthen activity in this space.

- 5.11 The President noted the recent media attention being drawn to the lack of affordable student accommodation. He noted the enormous challenge for universities, linked to the housing crisis more generally, and observed that the recent government proposal regarding credit lines to higher education institutions will not be sufficient to address the nature of the challenges. He informed members that Minister Harris has called for a meeting with the higher education institutions to further discuss this significant matter.
- 5.12 The President informed members that the deferred dates for graduations have been confirmed and further details will be communicated in the coming days.

6. Strategic academic initiatives

The Registrar/Vice President for Academic Affairs informed new members that this is a standing agenda item, which covers institutional level, strategic projects. As an example, she provided a brief overview of the ECIU project, which is now in the phase largely based on delivering an Erasmus + funded project to pilot the idea of a European university. The initiative is quickly moving to a phase beyond this, to realise the longer-term objective of establishing an ECIU European University.

The Registrar/Vice President for Academic Affairs informed members that the focus of item 6 today is on the HCI funded DCU Futures project. As part of this project, DCU has committed to developing a transversal skills framework that will ultimately be embedded across DCU programmes. She informed members that Dr Ciaran Dunne, Transversal Skills Director, has been invited to present to Academic Council on work to date in this area.

Dr Dunne presented to members on the progress and future plans for the transversal skills element of DCU Futures. He noted the importance of the transversal skills agenda, highlighting this work is part of how we will fundamentally shift how DCU does what it does, resulting in a reimagining of the DCU undergraduate experience.

He noted that the new DCU Futures programmes are underpinned in a powerful way, not only by the commitment to developing transversal skills but also through evidencing those skills. The rationale for focusing on transversal skills recognises trends in career mobility and rapid technological developments which require graduates to be both adaptable and to differentiate themselves from AI and automation. Other rationales were also noted including calls from national and international bodies who highlight the need for graduates with transversal skills, trends in the digitalisation of higher education,

the diversification of organisations involved in higher education and the personalisation of the student experience.

Dr Dunne briefed members on the skills framework originally developed by Dr Yseult Freeney and Faculty members involved in developing the proposal, which includes four domains; ways of thinking, ways of working, tools for working and tools for thriving. He informed members that work has progressed in identifying the skills and attributes to be developed under these domains based on both internal and external consultation and references. He noted that significant good practice already exists across a range of areas in DCU and the framework presents an opportunity to both consolidate and showcase that practice.

Dr Dunne informed members that consideration has been given to the most appropriate approach to introducing the framework into DCU programmes. It has been determined that an embedded approach is most feasible and this will see skills and competency development being embedded within modules and programme structures in a congruent way. He noted that evidencing skills development must be done in a transparent way and this is vital to the success of DCU Futures.

Ms Kate Goodman noted that the new framework will equip graduates in navigating multiple career pathways.

Dr Yseult Freeney noted the framework will allow DCU to develop in its students the skills and competencies that industry stakeholders are asking for, and will facilitate a more holistic student experience. She noted that the success of the framework is dependent on university-wide buy-in and support.

Prof Anne Looney noted that the introduction of transversal skills is a major focus within the school system at the moment and that the framework is a logical and welcomed development. She noted the coherence of the framework and welcomed the focus on the developmental, relational, connected and collaborative nature of learning.

Prof Sandra Cullen noted that professional accredited programmes will require parallel consideration of professional requirements as the framework is embedded.

The Registrar/Vice President for Academic Affairs noted that while talking about buy-in is relatively easy, members should not underestimate the significant commitment and persistence involved in ensuring these skills and competencies are woven into our teaching and assessment. She noted that this will require sustained leadership and ongoing support as the work progresses.

7. QQI Principles for Professional Engagement with Education Providers, including Programme Validation, Professional Accreditation and Approval

The Academic Secretary briefed members on the proposed *QQI Principles for Professional Engagement with Education Providers, including Programme Validation, Professional Accreditation and Approval*. She noted that the Principles provide a context for future engagement with professional bodies and that QQI have asked that higher education institutions and Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PRSBs) endorse these Principles. She noted that the purpose of the Principles is predominately to ensure a

complementary approach to the various programme validation and professional regulation processes. The Principles are intended to harmonise separate but complementary processes and to avoid unnecessary duplication and overlap, thereby reducing the administrative burden.

The Academic Secretary informed members that the Principles have been the subject of widespread consultation with both higher education institutions and PRSBs, and have been the subject of discussion at DCU Quality Promotion Committee and Education Committee. Education Committee noted that the Principles have already been endorsed by a number of other higher education institutions. Education Committee also noted that the Principles reflect current ongoing dialogue and engagement with PRSBs and are focused on quality assurance and enhancement. On that basis, Education Committee has recommended that the Principles, subject to the additional clarifications provided by QQI in April 2021 (circulated as item AC2021/A5/7c), be endorsed by Academic Council.

The Principles were endorsed by Academic Council.

C. Items for formal approval/noting

8. Register of Academic Council members 2021-2022

Noted

9. Register of members of subcommittees and boards

9.1 Education Committee

Noted

9.2 University Standards Committee

Noted

9.3 Graduate Research Studies Board

Noted

9.4 Graduate Research Studies Board Standing Committee to consider Appeals

Noted

9.5 Examination Appeals Board

Noted

10. Report on activities of Subcommittees of Academic Council 2020-2021

Noted

11. Report from Autumn 2021 examinations, Progression and Award Boards**11.1 Examination Report: DCU**

Approved

11.2 Examination Report: Ballyfermot College of Further Education

Approved

12. Report from DCU Autumn 2021 Faculty Awards Boards for Research Degrees

Approved

13. Research Student Awards Reports: Dundalk Institute of Technology

Approved

14. Report on completion of Accreditation process 2020-2021

Noted

15. Amendment to Examination Regulations

Approved

The President recorded his gratitude to colleagues in Academic Affairs for their work in preparing the papers for Academic Council.

16. Any other business

Mr Peter McGorman highlighted the importance of staff engagement with the cyber awareness training programme, noting the serious impact of cyber-attacks on a number of significant Irish institutions in recent months.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Date of next meeting:

1 December 2021

14:00

Location: Zoom