ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES

5 October 2022
2.00 p.m. – 3.00 p.m.

Zoom Meeting

Present:

L. Boran	A. Bourke	A. Brennan
M. Brown	J. Bruton	M. Butler
A. Castilo Villaneuva	P. Clarke	B. Corcoran
M. Coulter	E. Crossen	S. Cullen
B. Egan	P. Flynn	J. Foster
C. Furlong	S. Giordani	C. Gurrin
D. Hand	S. Hegarty	A. Intizar
J. Kearney	D. Kelly	D. Keogh (Chairperson)
D. Kinahan	M. Kirwan	V. Lambert
P. Landais	M. Leahy	A. Logan
L. Looney	A. Maillot	C. McArdle
A. McAuley	U. McCabe	D. Mc Carthy (Secretary)
J. McDonough	E. McGlynn	A. McKenna
J. McManis	R. McManus	P. Mooney
M. Mubashar Saeed	G. M. Muntean	B. Murphy
N. Murphy	C. Ní Mhurcú	M. O'Brien
S. O'Brien	S. O'Brien	C. O'Gorman
K. O'Sullivan	N. O'Sullivan	P. Robbins
M. Rocchi	P. Sharkey Scott	A. Sinnott
J. Stokes	T. Szecsi	G. Uí Laighléis
L. Van der Werff	M. Ward	B. White

Apologies:

J. Appleby	PJ. Byrne	P. Cahill
M. Crane	Y. Crotty	G. French
P. Gallagher	A. Kilroy	A. Looney
P. McGorman	J. McMackin	P. McMorrow
A. Stover		

In Attendance:

V. Cooke	K. Curley (Item 8)	

The President welcomed new members of Academic Council and congratulated Dr Monica Ward on her appointment as Dean of Teaching and Learning; Professor John Doyle on his appointment as Vice-President for Research; and Eoin Crossen on his role as DCU Students' Union Vice-President for Academic Life.

1.   Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted.

A.   Minutes and Related Issues

2.   Minutes of the meeting of Academic Council of 23 May 2022

The minutes were approved.

3.   Matters Arising

There were no matters rising.

4.   Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee of 11 May 2022 and of the Education Committee Standing Committee of 17 May 2022

The minutes were approved.

5.   Minutes of the meeting of the Graduate Research Studies Board of 28 April 2022 and 26 May 2022

The minutes were approved.

B.   Policy and Strategy Issues

6.   President's report (oral report)

6.1   The President recorded his sympathies for the loss of Sue Miller, DCU Library, and Dr Vicky Conway, School of Law and Government. Both Sue and Vicky were highly valued friends and colleagues and loss was felt across the entire University.

6.2   The President informed members that Minister Simon Harris announced Grain-4-Lab as the winner of this year's Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Plastics Challenge. He congratulated the entire Grain-4-Lab team, led by Dr. Jennifer Gaughran and Dr. Brian Freeland, which was awarded €2.4 million in funding for its proposed solution to tackle sustainability challenges in plastic usage in Irish research laboratories by using waste produced from the brewing and distilling industry in Ireland.

6.3   The President noted that first year students started two weeks late due to the delay in the release of the 2022 Leaving Certificate results. He expressed his appreciation to colleagues across the University for their collective, conscientious efforts in ensuring the current academic year commenced without major difficulties.

6.4   The President updated Academic Council on the next stage in the development of the new Strategic Plan. The President, Deputy President and the Vice-President Academic Affairs/Registrar will soon commence meetings with each Executive Faculty to outline the plan. He noted that Teaching and Learning, Research and Engagement, and the Student Experience will continue to feature as major aspects of the Strategic Plan.

6.5   The President noted that DCU had received a record number of CAO first preferences in 2022 and the highest number of first to third choices to date. He acknowledged that this is a reflection of the hard work of Academic Council as the University continues to successfully operate in an increasingly competitive environment.

6.6   The President expressed his thanks to all staff and students who represented the University at Higher Options in September 2022. He recorded a special thanks to Fiona Reynolds, the Head of Student Recruitment, and the entire Student Recruitment and Communications teams.

6.7   The President congratulated the almost 30 award winners in the 2022 Irish Research Council schemes for PhD scholarships and Post-Doctoral fellowships, which included projects in Biotechnology, Chemical Sciences, Communications, Electronic Engineering, Irish language, History, Geography, Law, Maths, Music, Politics & International Relations, Physics, Psychology, Sports and Translation Studies. He reminded members that the submission deadline for the next cycle of funding is 20 October 2022.

6.8   The President noted that DCU Institute of Education had submitted documentation for the re-accreditation of twelve programmes by the Teaching Council. He expressed his gratitude to all staff involved in preparing this documentation over the last nine months and recorded a special thanks to Maeve Fitzpatrick, the Faculty Manager; Dr Anna Logan, the Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning; and Caitríona Ní Mhurchú, the Assistant Faculty Manager.

6.9   The President informed members that the Higher Education Authority Bill 2022 has concluded its passage through the Seanad and is expected to become law by the end of the year. He noted that one of the biggest changes imposed by the Bill will be to the composition of universities' governing authorities. This will impact DCU by requiring a reduction in the numbers, including numbers of staff members on Governing Authority.

7.   Strategic academic initiatives

7.1   Update on ECIU University

Professor Lisa Looney, the Vice President Academic Affairs/Registrar, informed members that the European Consortium of Innovative Universities (ECIU) is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary in December 2022.

L. Looney provided an update on the ECIU University Project, informing members that the project received €14.4 million in funding from the EU Commission under the Erasmus+ programme. This funding will cover the period from November 2022 to October 2026, with the expectation that further funding will be secured for an additional two years. Funding from the EU Commission will be supplemented by substantial investment from each of the member institutions that comprise ECIU University.

L. Looney informed members that the Pilot Phase of the ECIU University Project will conclude at the end of October 2022, and member institutions are currently preparing for the launch of what is being characterised as the Start-up Phase in September 2023. Action Plans have been developed to facilitate progressing to this stage. Each plan focuses on a particular key area of operations, including education, research, innovation and impact, and community.

L. Looney informed members that a number of centralised roles have been created in ECIU University to support the implementation of the Action Plans, which will be filled by staff on secondment from the member institutions and coordinated from the University of Twente. L. Looney noted that DCU has committed to nominating a number of staff members who will support the implementation of particular Action Plans at a local level and will function as the points of contact for the centralised roles.

L. Looney informed members that DCU has committed to creating spaces in a small number of programmes to accommodate an ECIU University Learning Opportunities, to deliver Challenge-Based Learning (CBL) modules as part of ECIU University's portfolio of offerings and to develop academic mobilities within the ECIU network.

It was noted that DCU has committed that sixty DCU student will engage with an ECIU University Learning Opportunity in the academic year 23/24 and discussions with Executive Faculties regarding how this target is met will progress through the Education Committee in the coming months.

L. Looney confirmed that interdisciplinarity is fundamental to challenge based learning. It was noted that partnerships between member institutions of ECIU University will allow DCU students to complete Learning Opportunities at another institution and that interdisciplinarity will be achieved by students from different institutions working together in a CBL activity.

L. Looney confirmed that the emphasis of the new funding is on Teaching & Learning but that colleagues are working to identify alternative funding instruments to support the research and innovation missions of ECIU university. L. Looney informed members that the ECIU Office in Brussels continuously surveys the European funding environment to identify calls suited to existing and potential partnerships between the member institutions of ECIU University.

The President noted that, parallel to ECIU University, there is potential for bilateral arrangements between member institutions and encouraged DCU faculty to consider these institutions when thinking about possible research partnerships.

The President noted that DCU worked hard to ensure the targets and objectives of the ECIU University project are deliverable for and beneficial to DCU.

8.   **National Recognition of Prior Learning Framework**

Karina Curley, Widening Participation Officer, updated members on the National Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Higher Education project. Karina is the DCU Project Lead for this project, which is funded under the Human Capital Initiative (HCI) Pillar 3, the innovation and agility strand, and is coordinated by THEA.

K. Curley informed members of the achievements to date of the project: the development of the Pilot Framework for RPL in higher education and the Pilot Technical Definition for RPL in higher education. Karina thanked DCU staff who provided feedback on the draft versions of the pilot framework and technical definition and expressed particular thanks to Dr Blánaid White, the Dean of Strategic Learning Innovation, for her assistance in progressing this project at DCU.

K. Curley informed members that the framework comprises definitions of RPL and the different types of learning that can be recognised, the core values underpinning RPL and an outline of RPL processes in higher education. The purpose of the framework is to support Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Ireland to develop a shared understanding of RPL and to achieve coherence and consistency in policy and practice across the sector. HEIs will be invited to review their RPL policies, procedures and guidelines in light of the pilot framework during the 2022/23 academic year and will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the implementation of the framework during Semester 1 of the 2023/24 academic year.

K. Curley informed members that the purpose of the technical definition is to indicate what constitutes and, conversely, what does not constitute RPL to allow for the generation of an agreed core RPL dataset across the higher education sector. The pilot definition will be tested during Semester 1 of the 2022/23 academic year and HEIs will be invited to implement the definition in January 2023.

K. Curley informed members that the next steps for DCU are piloting the technical definition, developing an institutional RPL Action Plan, creating a RPL webpage for the University, outlining the five stages of the University's RPL process and developing the Enterprise strand of RPL.

Professor Lisa Looney, the Vice President Academic Affairs/Registrar, noted that developing the Enterprise strand of RPL is being mooted as overlapping with micro-credentials and that DCU should adopt a strategic approach to how it engages with the emerging demand from industry for the recognition of prior learning and professional development opportunities.

The President noted that the National Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Higher Education project is important for maximising access to DCU programmes. L. Looney noted that this project requires engagement from members of Academic Council to ensure that the pockets of expertise across the University are fully utilised, in building broader capability to assess prospective students' RPL portfolios to determine their equivalence to a DCU Award.

C.   Items for Formal Approval/Noting

9.   DCU Statute 6 of 2022 - Academic Council

Approved. It was noted that, under Section 2.8, the term of Students' Union officers runs from 1 June to 31 May each year.

10.   Proposed amendments to Terms of Reference of Academic Council

Approved. It was noted that this approval is conditional on "DCU Statute 6 of 2022 - Academic Council" being approved by Governing Authority at its meeting on 19 October 2022.

It was noted that, under Section 2.8, the term of Students' Union officers runs from 1 June to 31 May each year.

11.   Proposed amendments to Terms of Reference of Subcommittees and Boards

11.1   Education Committee
Approved. It was noted that, under Section 4.6, the term of Students' Union officers runs from 1 June to 31 May each year.

11.2   University Standing Committee
Approved. It was noted that, under Section 3.6, the term of Students' Union officers runs from 1 June to 31 May each year.

11.3   Graduate Research Studies Board
        <u>Approved</u>

12.   <u>Register of Academic Council members 2022/23</u>

<u>Noted</u>. It was <u>noted</u> that the Elected Student Member from the Faculty of Science and Health is Mr Adam Daly.

13.   <u>Register of members of Sub-committees and Boards 2022/23</u>

13.1   Education Committee
        <u>Noted</u>

13.2   University Standards Committee
        <u>Noted</u>

13.3   Graduate Research Studies Board
        <u>Noted</u>

13.4   GRSB Appeals Standing Committee
        <u>Noted</u>

13.5   Examination Appeals Board
        <u>Noted</u>

14.   <u>Amendment to Marks and Standards 2022</u>

        <u>Approved</u>

15.   <u>Report from Autumn 2022 examinations, Progression and Award Boards</u>

15.1   Examination Report: DCU
        <u>Approved</u>

15.2   Examination Report: Ballyfermot College of Further Education
        <u>Approved</u>

16.   <u>Report from DCU Autumn 2022 Faculty Awards Boards for Research Degrees</u>

        <u>Approved</u>

17.   Research Student Awards Reports 2022

17.1   Dundalk Institute of Technology
         Approved

17.2   Royal Irish Academy of Music
         Approved. It was noted that this is the final Higher Degree by Research to be awarded under the legacy agreement between DCU and the Royal Irish Academy, excepting the rare possibility of a future readmission.

18.   Validation Report - Graduate Diploma in SPHE-RSE for Post-Primary Teachers

         Approved. It was noted that the faculty engaged with the Office of the Vice-President of Academic Affairs (OVPAA) early, which facilitated the agility necessary to respond to a request for tender but also adherence to the quality assurance processes for programme development and approval.

19.   Report to Academic Council on the Accreditation of Programmes during the 2021/22 Academic Year

         Noted

20.   Report on Activities of Academic Council for the 2021/22 Academic Year

         Noted

21.   Proposed Aegrotat Award: BSc in Enterprise Computing

         Approved

22.   <u>**Any other business**</u>

Professor Lisa Looney, the Vice President Academic Affairs/Registrar, called particular attention to Item 19 and Item 20 as they reflect the significant amount of work completed by colleagues during the 2021/22 academic year. L. Looney thanked staff in the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs (OVPAA) for supporting this work via the academic committees throughout the year and for preparing the documentation for this meeting of Academic Council.

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Date of next meeting:

30 November 2022
2.00 p.m.
Zoom meeting

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Signature: _____   Date: _____