

GOVERNING AUTHORITY MEETING

Report of meeting of Thursday, February 11th 2021 3.00pm, Video Conference.

PRESENT:

Dr Martin McAleese, Chancellor (Chair)
Mr Michael Burke
Mr James Corcoran
Ms Bernie Gray
Cllr Jimmy Guerin
Ms Brid Horan
Ms Rachel Hussey
Prof Dorothy Kenny
Prof Daire Keogh
Mr Fearghal Lynch
Prof Lisa Looney
Dr Kara McGann

Ms Chloe McMorrow
Prof Caroline McMullan
Dr Jean-Paul Mosnier
Prof Gary Murphy
Dr Noel Murphy
Ms Orla Nic Aodha
Ms Deirdre O'Connor
Mr Terence O'Rourke
Mr John Power
Ms Kathy Quinn
Dr Declan Raftery
Dr Mary Shine Thompson

APOLOGIES:

Ms Isabel Aust
Mr Pat Gilroy

Ms Zainab Boladale
Ms Sharon McCooey

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms Marian Burns
Mr Ciaran McGivern

Prof Anne Sinnott
Ms Marie Mellett (recording secretary)

WELCOME

The Chancellor welcomed members and noted the apologies.

The agenda was adopted with the following additions:

- 5.2 – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee Update
- 11 – Strategic Finance Advisory Committee Update

The Chancellor enquired if there were any interests/conflicts in relation to any item on today's agenda that required a declaration on the part of a member(s) – None were declared.

1. MINUTES OF GOVERNING AUTHORITY MEETING OF 04TH DECEMBER 2020

Approved by the Authority subject to minor corrections.

2. REPORT OF THE GOVERNING AUTHORITY MEETING OF 04TH DECEMBER 2020 FOR WEB PUBLICATION

Approved by the Authority

3. REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

Action 1: Agenda item 7

Action 2: Suggested dates have been circulated

Action 3: Complete

Action 4: Agenda item 5.1

Action 5: Agenda item 7

Actions to be tracked:

Action 1: April meeting

Action 2: Postponed until permitted by public health guidelines.

Action 3: Ongoing

4 MATTERS ARISING

None

FOR DISCUSSION

5 GOVERNANCE

5.1 Self-assessment questionnaire

The Chancellor thanked those who completed the questionnaire. There were 21 responses, 2 more than the previous year. He noted the following in relation to the questionnaire:

- (i) It reminds members of their responsibilities and what they should be focusing on.
- (ii) It may identify recommendations which, if implemented, will improve GA effectiveness.
- (iii) The results of this particular questionnaire will inform the approach to the composition of the next Governing Authority.

The most significant recommendation to emerge from the results of the questionnaire was that at one meeting of the Authority during each year the President and his management team would withdraw and allow members to discuss any issues which they may be reluctant to raise in the presence of management. This recommendation was welcomed by the President and it was suggested that for the current year that it should take place at the end of the April meeting.

Approved by the Authority.

A further recommendation was to designate agenda items as being either strategic or operational in nature.

Approved by the Authority.

The COO presented the skills matrix that would be employed in determining the skills needed and the identification of skills deficits where appropriate when it came to populating the next Governing Authority. It was strongly suggested that a member with experience in IT/cybersecurity should be appointed and that careful consideration be given to widening diversity beyond gender.

At its June meeting the Authority will approve the overall size of the next Authority and the distribution of members over the various membership constituencies.

Reference was made in the questionnaire to a 'robust written oversight agreement' with the Minister / Department which clearly defines the terms of the university's relationship with the Minister / Department. The Chancellor noted that in the last few days a draft Oversight Agreement had been received from the HEA. This agreement will be tabled at the April meeting for discussion and approval before signing by the Chancellor and President.

5.2 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDI) Update

The Chair of the EDI Committee, Rachel Hussey, reported that the committee had met twice since the last meeting of Governing Authority. The draft Terms of Reference that were presented to Governing Authority at its December were approved.

The Chair further reported that:

1. The committee had received a comprehensive briefing from the Director of HR on the current governance structure and reporting lines for EDI within the university.
2. The committee had agreed that its remit will focus on EDI among staff. The student element will continue to be managed and reported on by Student Support and Development, the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Deputy President.
3. The committee has initiated a review of the available data sets, the reporting requirements and the available accreditations, including Athena Swan. The data from February 2021 will be the baseline on which progress will be measured.

The Chair noted that one of the goals in the Terms of Reference is to promote EDI within the university and reminded the Authority that it is International Women's Day on the 8th March and encouraged all to attend the DCU events scheduled.

6 PRESIDENT'S REPORT AND UNIVERSITY OFFICERS' REPORTS

DCU President

The President reported that the start of the new academic year has been dominated by COVID-19. In light of the ongoing uncertainty, a decision was made to continue with predominantly online learning throughout semester two. He noted that the priority has always been the health and safety of staff and students and the delivery of the best DCU experience while also abiding by public health restrictions. High level scenario planning for the next academic year has begun and early decision making will provide clarity to staff and students. To alleviate some pressure on staff, next week has been designated a 'break week' from meetings. HR are also running a number of seminars to which all staff are invited.

In relation to Brexit, the UK and the EU have agreed the UK's continued participation in a range of EU programmes. However, the UK's withdrawal from the Erasmus Programme presents challenges in relation to students from Northern Ireland. An agreement in principle has been reached with the Dept. of Further and Higher Education and Prof John Doyle will be the DCU lead in working through the operational details of this agreement over the coming months.

As the European Consortium of Innovative Universities (ECIU) aligns strategically with DCU's core objectives, the university will continue to be a part of this network. The President has nominated the Vice-President of Academic Affairs to represent DCU on the ECIU University Board. The President has begun a series of bilateral meetings with the rectors of partner

universities seeking to maximise their collaborations with DCU as the sole English speaking university in the group.

The President thanked the Student Union President and the Vice President for Education and Placement for their care of the students and engagement with Senior Management throughout this pandemic. Their leadership throughout this crisis has been exemplary. The Chancellor asked for a short verbal report from the President of the student's union at the April meeting. The report should outline the student experience during the pandemic from a student's perspective and comment on the DCUSU's working relationship with the university's senior management.

The President informed the Authority that the initial data from the CAO has been released and DCU has seen a significant increase from last year, with overall mentions up 30%.

Vice President of Academic Affairs

The Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA) noted that today is 'results day' with 17,000 students receiving their semester one exam results. A huge amount of work is going on in the background to ensure that students' progress as seamlessly as possible through their courses. The VPAA further noted that there are a small number of programmes that have particular professional requirements where a certain amount of face to face hours are needed. When the university is satisfied that it is safe to do so they will be brought on campus.

She reported that the focus has now moved to next semester where decisions need to be taken quickly on international mobility. The implications of these decisions are being worked through and contingency plans are in place. Focus is also on delivery practices that were introduced in response to the pandemic to identify those that can be further developed and adopted post COVID. The DCU Futures and HCI 3 projects are up and running and key positions have been filled.

Finally, the VPAA noted that it is too early to determine the scale of graduation ceremonies but it is being kept under constant review. It was recommended that students and graduates deprived of attending ceremonies during 2020 should be reminded that graduation celebrations will be held in respect of all cancelled graduation ceremonies when public health guidelines allow.

Chief Operations Officer

The Chief Operations Officer reported that the Helix has been reconfigured for use as a mass Covid vaccination centre for the HSE. The multi storey car park has also been made available for this purpose. Vaccinations started yesterday for frontline health care workers. When fully operational the facility will operate 7 days per week 12 hours per day for the next 6 months and will have the capacity to vaccinate up to 5000 people per day.

The purchase of the 9.7-acre greenfield site next to the Glasnevin campus was finalised yesterday and DCU are now the legal owners of this land.

The Chief Operations Officer noted that the University is still waiting on the fire certificate for the Future Tech building from Dublin City Council. Depending on what conditions, if any beyond the norm are contained within the fire cert, a decision will be taken on whether to proceed to tender or not as soon as possible.

Director of Finance

The Finance Director reported that the first quarter results for 2020/21 were favourable to budget for both the university and the commercial group of companies.

In relation to the university there were three key factors in this:

- Increase in student numbers.
- Additional funding for the additional student places.
- HEA funding contribution to Covid related costs.

In terms of the Commercial Group of companies:

- The online panto was hugely successful.
- Campus Residences had a higher occupancy rate than budgeted.
- Additional services undertaken by the DCULS.

The ongoing level five Covid-19 restrictions will have a growing impact on the commercial group as, last summer when the budget was formulated, the expectation was that the commercial group would be in a position to increase trading in 2021 and in particular that the important summer period would be available for a reasonable level of trading. This is now unlikely.

The C&AG has yet to conclude the 2018/19 audit but is expected to do so over the coming weeks. The Chancellor and President will then sign the financial statements in accordance with the approval granted at the December 2020 meeting of the Authority.

The Director of Finance noted that the university has business interruption insurance cover. The insurance company has so far resisted acknowledging the legitimacy of a claim as a result of the pandemic but the judgement in the recent FBD case may force it to reconsider.

Director of Human Resources

The Director of Human Resources reported that:

- HR is conducting a review of the university's performance and development management scheme
- 'Our DCU' is being updated with a focus on building communications. As part of this a virtual book club has been launched with a big uptake from staff registering. Two pieces of art, provided by the university's visual artist in residence, are to be raffled with the proceeds going to Barretstown.
- HR is currently focusing on a realignment of policies, in particular, those relating to reduced hours and working from home. HR will conduct workshops for managers on how to manage staff expectations.
- HR is conducting an ongoing analysis of the uptake of the university's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and has organised a number of health workshops.

The Director of HR informed members of the passing of three students over recent weeks. The students were from the Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences and Science and Health and the Open Education Unit. She also noted the passing of one staff member. It was agreed that the Chancellor would write to all the bereaved families expressing condolence on behalf of Governing Authority.

The Chancellor reported that the Special Standing Sub-Committee of Governing Authority had met virtually just prior to the GA meeting with the President and members of the SMG to discuss in depth the current status of the 'renew' aspect of the Strategic Plan 2017-2022 priorities for year 4. He further reported that progress since the last update was firmly based on the strategic intents outlined in detail to members at the December 2020 GA meeting. He confirmed that members of the Sub-Committee were satisfied that a rigorous and thorough process was being applied to the final Progress Report for year 3 with priorities for year 4. The focus now was preparing the foundation for the university's next Strategy 2022-2027. The Deputy President then proceeded to present on the current 'renew' status of the strategic Plan 2017-2022.

8 HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT

In her comprehensive report to members the Health and Safety Manager, Paula Kierans, focused on the following points:

- Health and Safety plans for the year were updated in early 2020 as a result of the covid-19 pandemic
- Emergency plans were put in place and campuses closed to all staff and students on 29 March 2020
- All incident reports are now online. 219 incident reports were submitted. There were no major injuries or fatalities. 66% of all incidents reported related to students and visitors. 30% of incidents involving students were medical related, followed by sports injuries. The highest incidents involving visitors occurred in the Helix
- DCU have 98 first aid responders and 20 defibrillators across campuses. There are 8 qualified first aid responders trained to administer specific prescription-only medicines
- One claim was notified to the university's insurers
- DCU is fully indemnified by the HSE in the event of an incident in the multi-story car park and the Helix mass vaccination centre

Paula Kierans brought the Authority through timelines and statistics of what was involved in the COVID 19 emergency. The Return to Campus Protocol was established when COVID 19 numbers began to ease last May. This protocol outlined a step by step approach for returning to campus. A sub-committee was put in place to centrally manage all of the return to campus requests and ensure all steps were completed prior to campus access approval. This was a huge undertaking. In October when restrictions returned to Level 5, essential teaching and research were able to continue as these controlled safety measures remained in place. Feedback from staff, who were nervous about coming back on campus, reported that they felt very safe being back on campus.

In response to a question about potential health and safety issues in relation to staff working from home it was noted that there were a lot of requests for ergonomic risk assessments. Health and Safety have developed an online video to address this issue and staff are permitted to come on campus to retrieve chairs, monitors etc.

The Chancellor commended Paula Kierans for her work and that of her staff in the very difficult and challenging working environment created by the pandemic.

9 MICRO-CREDENTIALS PROJECT

The Chancellor welcomed Prof Mark Brown, Chair in Digital Learning and Director of the National Institute for Digital Learning at DCU. In his comprehensive presentation on the 'Microcredential Project' Prof. Brown noted that according to some employers, universities are not producing graduates with the necessary skills for the future.

DCU has been engaging with Deakin University in Australia, which is the pioneer university of micro-credentials and who have introduced a suite of practical micro-credentials. Last year DCU launched its first micro-credential in FinTech on the Future Learn platform. Future Learn is now launching 'co-designed' micro-credentials in partnership with industry.

Micro-credentials facilitate access to lifelong learning and enable the learner to benefit from new pedagogies due to advances in digital learning techniques. DCU has the lead role in the IUA micro-credentials project and is leading the work package for micro-credentials within the ECIU. Last year DCU entered a strategic partnership with Digita, which is one of the world's pioneering platforms for authenticating micro-credentials online

Prof Brown informed members that in early March the Minister will be launching a report 'A Micro-Credential Roadmap' that was authored by DCU and includes surveys from both employees and employers. In April DCU Future Learn will be launching a free online micro-credential 'Certifying Your Future' to help people understand how micro-credentials might be used by HEIs.

Members noted that commercial companies are developing their own micro-credentials and that universities need to embrace micro-credentials or risk being left behind. Prof Brown's presentation reassured members that DCU is fully involved in this at National and European levels.

The Chancellor thanked Prof Brown for his presentation.

10 RISK COMMITTEE

FOR NOTING

- 10.1 Minutes of meeting 25th November 2020**
Noted by the Authority

FOR DISCUSSION

10.2 Report of meeting of 29th January 2021

Bernie Gray, Chair of Governing Authority Risk Committee noted the following:

- The Committee was very reassured after receiving an extensive update on COVID 19.
- The Committee received a list of units preparing an Operational Risk Register. The risk process to date has evolved and it was agreed that the Risk and Compliance Officer should now play a strategic role only and Heads of Units should oversee reviewing the quality assurance of their Operational Risk Registers.
- The proposal to merge the Audit and Risk Committees was discussed and the COO provided a concept paper. The merger will give enhanced functions to the SMG. The members concluded that a transition period of two years be considered. An external presentation at the April meeting will further inform members.
- It was agreed that the Governing Authority blank paper risk exercise should take place before the April meeting. For this purpose and similar to last year, a sub-

committee of Governing Authority should be convened and should also include a student representative.

- The first draft of the 2020 Report was reviewed and will be brought to the April Governing Authority meeting
- It was agreed that the current year's workplan be split in two to reflect the handover to a new GA in July 2021.
- It was agreed to ask the Health and Safety Manager and the SU President to attend the Committee's next two scheduled meetings. The incoming SU President should attend also.

11 STRATEGIC FINANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FOR DISCUSSION

11.1 Report of meeting of 11th February 2021

Terence O'Rourke, Chair of the Strategic Finance Advisory Committee, provided an update to members. The meeting had a single item agenda - the sale of the Griffith Avenue land.

FOR DISCUSSION

12 STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM UPDATE

The Vice President of Academic Affairs noted that the Student Application Portal for post graduates has been launched and consequently during February the SIS project team will be transitioning out of this project. The portal will now be used by faculties on an ongoing basis. The SIS team will now move on to the next stage of the project.

FOR DECISION

13 PERSONNEL MATTERS

The Director of Human Resources presented the following candidates for approval:

- Prof Anya Belz for appointment as Full Professor, School of Computing.
- Dr Donnacha O Beachain for appointment as Professor, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.
- Dr Jane Suiter for appointment as Professor, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.
- Dr Jennifer Bruen for appointment as Professor, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.
- Dr Yvonne Daly for appointment as Professor, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.
- Prof Joy Cummings for appointment as Adjunct Professor, CARPE/School of Policy and Practice.
- Dr Susan Mary Rose Kennedy for appointment as Adjunct Professor, School of Biotechnology.
- Prof Brian K Tanner for appointment as Adjunct Professor, School of Electronic Engineering.
- Prof Andrew McGrady for appointment as Emeritus Professorship, School of Human Development.

Approved by the Authority

The following appointments were approved by the DCU Governing Authority Special Standing Committee in advance of this meeting:

- Dr Blanaid White, Dean of Strategic Learning Innovation.
- Dr Ciaran Dunne, Transversal Skills Programme Director.
- Mr Martin Lynch, Group Financial Controller.

14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The June meeting date has been moved to Friday 25th June.

The Chair

Date

Action Items:

Action		Person responsible	Deadline
1.	Organise a staff greeting and gift for either St Patricks day or Easter.	Director of HR	ASAP
2.	The President and Senior Management will withdraw towards the end of the April meeting to allow for a discussion in their absence.	President / SMG	April meeting
3.	Highlight strategic agenda items.	COO	April meeting and ongoing
4.	Verbal Report from the SU President.	SU President	April meeting
5.	Email students to inform them that graduation celebrations will go ahead once public guidelines permit.	VPAA	ASAP
6.	Include statistics on claims in the Health and Safety Annual Report.	Head of Health and Safety	ASAP
7.	Expressions of interest to participate in the Risk Blank Paper Exercise - to be sent to the COO.	All members	ASAP
8.	Chancellor to write letters of condolences.	Chancellor	ASAP
9.	Update on the Renew aspect of the Strategy.	Deputy President	April meeting

Items to be tracked:

Action		Person responsible	Deadline
1.	Quarterly progress reports on each risk in the Strategic Risk Register.	President	April 2021 meeting

2.	Meetings of GA to be held at different locations.	COO	Every 2 nd meeting will be held off campus subject to public health guidelines
3	New VPEA to present on International Affairs - within 3 months of appointment.	COO	Ongoing