



Threshold Expectations of Academic Experience

Context:

The following Set of Statements was approved by Education Committee at its meeting on 17 April 2024:

Aim of this set of Statements:

To support consistency in the student learning experience by adopting a set of threshold level standards relating to the student learning experience delivered by DCU Faculties and Schools and to address the recommendations of CINNTE. It is not intended to constitute threshold professional standards for staff teaching, except inasmuch as it indicates specific things students should be provided with.

Minimum Threshold Standards of Academic Experience

1. Students are provided with a **learning environment that is conducive to academic success** - positive, inclusive and engaging, as captured in the DCU [student charter](#), and the DCU [Dignity and Respect at Work and Study](#) and related policies.
2. All students are supported to **achieve programme learning outcomes**

- Module Descriptors are accurate and up-to-date and made available in a timely way online.
 - Students have sufficient timetabled contact hours (lectures, tutorials, practical work, studio work and other academic activities) to successfully complete their programme of study.
 - Students are provided with appropriate, easily accessible resources so that they can take responsibility for their own learning (e.g preparing for participation in academic activities, revision, independent reading, learning across short periods of absence from academic activities due to illness).
 - Online teaching complies with the [Principles for Quality Assurance of DCU E-learning & Blended Provision](#)
 - Students are taught about Academic Integrity issues as they relate to each module.
 - Students benefit from appropriate academic expertise; lectures are delivered by the academic scheduled to do so and are not delegated to others contrary to teaching allocation or outside DCU's guidance in relation to research students involved in teaching support. Academic Module Coordinators ensure preparedness of those supporting other activities (e.g. tutors / demonstrators /lab assistants /guest lectures etc.)
 - University policies related to accommodations for students in specific circumstances are applied (e.g extenuating circumstances, [disability](#), elite sports).
 - Accommodations on assessment deadlines and penalties for late submission are proportionate and applied in a consistent manner within a module.
3. Students have appropriate opportunity for **timely contact with academic staff**
- Staff share contact information with students.
 - Module coordinators publish / display a minimum of two 'office hours' when they are available to meet students outside of the scheduled lecture hours each week to discuss assessments, and other academic matters. This applies for fully online, hybrid or campus based programmes, with availability being in-person for students on campus and hybrid programmes.
 - Students have a point of contact to discuss their academic progress on a programme (e. g. year tutor/personal tutor/subject lead). This contact point is noted on the Programme Loop page.
4. Students are **supported to plan engagement with academic activities** by the provision of key calendar dates, clarity as to mode of engagement, accurate timetabling information and schedules of assessment.
- Outline academic calendars including information on teaching weeks and examination periods are made available 2-3 years in advance.

- Requirements for campus attendance and/or access to suitable online environments are made clear at a high level in the prospectus, and in detail for enrolled students.
 - Any teaching activities in reading week or, in rare cases, outside the teaching weeks are subject to approval and outlined at least a semester in advance to relevant cohorts of students.
 - Academic activities take place as per the timetable across all teaching weeks. They are not canceled, rescheduled or moved online except in cases of staff illness, or by a university-decision (such as closing for extreme weather events). A protocol relating to instances of unplanned lecturer absence is in place, and communicated to students. Rescheduling is done via the Faculty timetabling function in line with the timetable policy.
 - Schedules for mid-semester assessments or coursework are provided for each module and cohort at the beginning of the Semester. Changes to assessment schedules are only made in exceptional circumstances and notified to students as early as possible. Information regarding resit assessments and deadlines is posted on Loop by the date specified in DCU's Academic calendar (usually mid-June).
5. Students are **supported to manage their workload by** the appropriate design of assessment schedules across their programme, provision of information relating to each assessment, and full use of the semester.
- Draft assessment schedules are collated by the Programme Chair, reviewed and adjusted to ensure a manageable level of assessment workload for students throughout the semester and alignment with total ECTS weighting, and made available at the beginning of each semester.
 - Information on the assessment for each module is outlined by the lecturer at the start of semester, is consistent with the cohort schedule and includes:
 - assessment(s) weighting,
 - assessment deadlines/ dates of activities,
 - detail of any penalties for late submission and
 - requirements to attend on campus (eg. for interactive oral, written in-person examination etc.) or have access to a suitable online environment.
 - Formal teaching semesters comprise a minimum of 15 weeks of student activity¹, and this full period is available to students to attain and demonstrate that they have achieved learning outcomes; normally deadlines for, or dates of substantive summative assessments fall in the published examination period of the semester (and not beforehand).

¹ Marks and Standards 2.2.3

6. Students are **provided with suitable assessment(s), guidance and feedback** , i.e their experience reflects with the [DCU Assessment and Feedback in Teaching and Learning policy](#). Key elements include:
- Assessments collectively address module learning outcomes.
 - Assessment workload is commensurate with its weighting and module ECTS.
 - Assessment design is inclusive and supports Academic Integrity.
 - Details of assessment elements, the specific learning outcomes addressed and grading criteria are provided, including rubrics or marking schemes.
 - Students are supported to learn how to receive and apply feedback.
 - Students are given 'timely and appropriate feedback on academic performance' which allows students to improve, noting that this can include cohort level feedback.
 - At the end of each assessment cycle, relevant staff are available, in person, to students during the consultation days published in the academic calendar and in line with DCU's Guidelines on Consultation Days.
 - Students have access to assessment review, recheck and appeals processes as per [DCU appeals procedures](#).
7. Students have **opportunity and appropriate mechanisms to provide formal feedback** on their learning experience and have easily accessible and clear communication channels to academic staff to escalate issues.

This set of statements support consistency in the student learning experience in DCU by articulating a set of Threshold Expectations.

DCU's regulations, codes and policies have primacy, and students and staff should be familiar with and abide by these regulations and procedures.

The Threshold Expectations document does not constitute a Charter pursuant to Section 31 of the Universities, Act 1997 and does not impose legal obligations on the part of the University. Equally, anything arising under, or in connection with, the Threshold Expectations statements does not constitute grounds for appeal of student grades. Students must raise any concerns as soon as they arise.