

# Dublin City University (DCU)

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## Strategic Dialogue Cycle 2 Reflections on Performance

### Overview

- DCU have quite a strong record in relation to Access and are above average compared to the others in the University Sector. It would be of benefit to see the impact of including incorporating partners in such targets.
- Strong progress has been made against outlined objectives in the teaching and learning domain and is demonstrated through a detailed, analytical self-evaluation report. Some clarification is required as outlined below. While the institution objectives relating to research and innovation have been met and evidence provided to support this, it would seem unlikely that DCU will meet its postgraduate research enrolment and research funding targets. DCU has clarified that the data contained within the Institutional Profile in the original Compact proposal is essentially a forecast, rather than a target. Data was provided on the understanding that forecasts were provided primarily for the purpose of planning for higher education, particularly at national level, but they do not consider these projections to form a formal target as part of the Performance Funding Framework with the HEA. Moreover, DCU has recently reviewed the forecasts provided in the Institutional Profile and believe that the previously projected PhD student population in 2016/17 remains accurate. For clarification, all student numbers provided for the academic year 2016/17 in the Institutional Profiles are reflective of a post-Incorporation DCU. DCU notes HEA comments in relation to for the potential for lower levels of research income than previously forecast for 2016/17 Institutional Profile. While they retain ambitious goals in relation to growth of research income, DCU considers that a more likely research income figure in 2016/17 is €55million. They have amended this figure in the revised profile submitted. This represents a 25% growth in research income compared to 2011/12 figures.
- In terms of measuring progress towards being a leading innovative university, DCU has benchmarked itself against other innovative universities nationally and, using the latest u-Multirank profiles, against other comparable “young” universities. DCU has clarified that in terms of research performance, it has identified and regularly benchmarks itself to leading non-medical universities in the UK, including Brunel University, University of Bath, Lancaster University and Strathclyde University. DCU is committed to ongoing, robust benchmarking of our activities, where appropriate institutions and comparable data are identified.

- They also note the significant capital investment in the DCU Innovation Campus showing that they are aligning institutional funds to this as a priority area. The only area where targets are not fully met is in terms of the number of estimated Schools that are engaged in the DCU community knowledge exchange programme, but this does not appear to be a critical failing. DCU note that they are very pleased with progress in relation to the development of the DCU Innovation Campus, now known as DCU Alpha. The quality of the offering and economic growth regionally has contributed to a higher than expected demand than that previously stated targets on Campus occupancy. Sustaining and building on this success continues to be an important strategic priority for the university, particularly with respect to enterprise engagement, knowledge exchange and technology transfer. The consideration of a further 'stretch target' in relation to the development of the DCU Innovation Campus has been considered.
- Where quantitative targets have been met in full, as in the first objective, DCU should discuss whether 2015 and 2016 targets are still valid, as they appear to have already been achieved. Also, some elaboration on how the composite metric of innovation output will be applied would be useful. DCU has clarified how this metric has been developed (see section on Engagement with Enterprise, the Community and Embedded Knowledge Exchange).
- DCU has made considerable improvements in the number of non-EU students enrolled, up from 428 in 2012/13 to some 661 in 2014, which is above their target. The report states that DCU prioritises partnership building in areas like the Middle East, Latin America and Asia yet it was one of a number of Irish universities which did not apply for Erasmus+ funding in 2015 for such activities. An active partnership with Arizona State University has been established. Figures for increased study abroad did not seem to be provided - a 10% increase had been projected. DCU clarified that the 10% growth figure relates to a target at year end 2015, not 2014.
- Progress on consolidation of DCU with SPD, MDI and CICE seems to be on track and 2014 targets have been reached. DCU has clarified that by September 2015, entering students on undergraduate programmes previously offered by two of our incorporating institutions- St Patrick's College and Mater Dei Institute- registered as DCU students, as part of an important milestone in the DCU Incorporation Programme. DCU therefore confirms that the 2015 and 2016 targets on the proportion of undergraduate entrants entering via HEAR of DCU Access routes will be reflective of a post-Incorporation DCU.
- The Leinster Pillar II Cluster consisting of Dundalk Institute of Technology, Dublin City University, Athlone Institute of Technology and Maynooth University have made progress in meeting cluster objectives.

## Self-evaluation report - domain level review

### 1. Regional clusters:

*Institutional objective 1: Agree and implement process to establish and support a sustainable and shared academic planning process to ensure coherent, coordinated and rational higher educational provision across the region.*

This objective has been met. A Working Group of Registrars prepared a protocol for new programme provision within the Midlands East, North Dublin (MEND) cluster. The Working Group will keep working together in examining the requirements for effective, reliable and efficient systems for Student Data Exchange for Joint Academic Programmes.

*Institutional objective 2: Develop a regional approach to access, transfer and progression. (ATP). Objectives have been met in relation to student pathways. SIDF have facilitated the Group in completing inventory of options and mechanisms for Access Transfer and progression. An agreed protocol for new programme provision will be rolled out across the entire HE and FE sectors.*

A Memorandum of Understanding to establish Strategic Alliance was signed between DCU and DKIT and two institutions are working cooperatively. DCU is of the view that their collaboration with Maynooth University and Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) in 3U Partnership has been successful.

The cluster objectives were met. The institutions are working collectively and collaboratively and a Regional Cluster Board which includes Presidents and Registrars has been established. This cluster was the only collaboration to be awarded funding under the SIDF programme.

The Leinster Pillar II Cluster consisting of Dundalk Institute of Technology, Dublin City University, Athlone Institute of Technology and Maynooth University have made impressive progress in meeting its objectives.

### 2. Participation, equal access and lifelong learning:

*DCU set out two objectives in relation to Participation, equal access and lifelong learning: to maintain their commitment to widening access to Student Access Programme and to deepen engagement with students of all ages.*

In relation to commitment to widening access to higher education, DCU set a baseline figure of 6.8% of New Entrants in 2010/11 entering through the HEAR & DARE schemes, to rise to 9% by 2016. DCU has exceeded this target with 10.1% of new entrants entering through the schemes.

DCU has developed a range of initiatives aimed towards older adults in pursuit of its goal as an age friendly university but no baseline targets were set. Interim targets for 2014 set out the completion of an Age-Friendly Strategy and creation of a Strategic Framework which has been achieved.

DCU have quite a strong record in relation to Access and are above average compared to the others in the University Sector. It would be of benefit to see the impact of including incorporating partners in such targets. DCU has clarified that

that the 2015 and 2016 targets relating to the proportion of undergraduate entrants entering via HEAR of DCU Access routes will be reflective of a post-Incorporation DCU.

Targets for enrolling students with disabilities or targets other than socio-economic status could also be usefully considered. More generally, the compact and self-evaluation report do not capture all of the access work that DCU does so well, such as DCU in the Community.

### **3. Excellent teaching and learning and quality of student experience:**

#### *Institution Objective 1: APR and PPR roll-out*

Target is met, annual programme review (APR) for all programmes and 20% of programmes completed PPR.

#### *Institution Objective 2: Academic staff professional development*

Interim target of 20% over baseline has been met. The evaluation shows a 31% annual increase in pedagogy programmes for academic staff. However paragraph 4 of the appendix is inconsistent with this percentage stating 24% annual growth (2011-13 cumulative figure of 202 increasing to 250 for 2011-2014). However, it may be that the baseline or calculation is not clear. DCU should clarify this at the meeting. Otherwise, the 27% target for number of DCU training days has been met.

#### *Institution Objective 3: Development of ePortfolios*

It appears that this target is met, in that all of first year students were 'provided' with eportfolio. It's not clear how many are 'using' this facility by December 2014 and this may in fact be a more useful metric of the impact of eportfolios. In any case, the reason for the self-award of a yellow flag is not apparent.

#### *Institution Objective 4: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Digital Campus*

Target is met regarding increase of academic staff completing training in digital learning pedagogy (=25%, +50). The performance indicator outlines percentages and the baseline staff number is framed in numerical values, so it would be useful to see interim targets for 2014 also expressed as percentages. DCU should clarify at the upcoming meeting.

Clarity on the percentage of programmes with an online or blended element at end of 2014 would also be useful a wider comment on the rebranding of Oscail as eDCU.

DCU clarified that the % of programmes with an online or blended learning element is approx. 15% (although they had not set a target for end 2014). However the Sloan Consortium definition of Blended Learning has changed and DCU is now considering an appropriate model for defining a "blended programme" in the absence of a national definition. The university is keen that any definition is based on a transparent and evidence-based classification, using analytics from digital learning platforms.

The proposed methodology is well advanced, and will be both agreed internally and applied by December 2015.

#### **4. High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation:**

*Institution Objective: Align research agenda priorities with societal and technological challenges*

Research matrix structure with hubs and platforms is fully operational.

*Institution Objective: Deliver on ambitious goals for all academic units.*

Target exceeded in respect of research-active staff. Target not met in respect of % outputs in top quartile outlets (45.4% instead of 50%). DCU propose to realign targets for 2015 and 2016.

*Institution Objective: Enrich the educational offerings for postgraduate students by expanding provision of structured PhD programmes.*

Target met. Increase from 32% of PhD students undertaking taught modules in 2013 (baseline) to 48% in 2014. It is worth noting that the overall number of PhD graduates dropped from 148 in 2013 to 126 in 2014. At the interim dialogue meeting, DCU noted that they had been looking into the issue of decreasing PhD enrolments and would revert to HEA with updates.

While the institution objectives have been met, it would seem unlikely that DCU will meet its postgraduate research enrolment targets (14/15 Masters Research numbers are 52, growing to 75 in 16/17; 14/15 PhD numbers are 636, growing to 739 by 16/17). The targets for research income would also appear to be challenging. Income for 12/13 was €42,833k, they hope to secure €66,778k in 2016/17.

DCU has clarified that the data contained within the Institutional Profile in the original Compact proposal is essentially a forecast, rather than a target. Data was provided on the understanding that forecasts were provided primarily for the purpose of planning for higher education, particularly at national level, but they do not consider these projections to form a formal target as part of the Performance Funding Framework with the HEA.

Moreover, DCU has recently reviewed the forecasts provided in the Institutional Profile and believe that the previously projected PhD student population in 2016/17 remains accurate. For clarification, all student numbers provided for the academic year 2016/17 in the Institutional Profiles are reflective of a post-Incorporation DCU. DCU notes HEA comments in relation to for the potential for lower levels of research income than previously forecast for 2016/17 Institutional Profile. While they retain ambitious goals in relation to growth of research income, DCU considers that a more likely research income figure in 2016/17 is €55million. They have amended this figure in the revised profile submitted. This represents a 25% growth in research income compared to 2011/12 figures.

## 5. Enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange:

*Institution objective: Develop our new Innovation Campus which will drive a step change in innovation, knowledge exchange, engagement with enterprise, and regional economic impact.*

Quantitative targets were set for the number of companies and employees located on the Innovation Campus. Targets have been met and in fact, the 2015 targets have already been surpassed and one part of the 2016 target too.

*Institution objective: Secure our position as Ireland's leading innovative university by doubling our knowledge transfer activities with enterprise and wider society via contract research, collaborative research, consultancy, and licensing activities.*

DCU appear to have met the two targets set in 2014, but could have elaborated on how the composite metric of innovation output would be applied. The 2015 and 2016 targets reference increases on the innovation output metric, but without knowing how it will be applied, or what 2014 baseline has been established, it is hard to judge.

DCU clarified that it has developed an aggregate performance indicator in order to monitor and report on the progress and growth of its knowledge transfer and enterprise engagement activities. In designing a developing the aggregate model, DCU focused on developing a metric that,

- Captures a broad range of knowledge-transfer outputs by a university
- Applies a weighted factor approach within the model, based on their relative importance to the DCU strategic plan and national knowledge transfer priorities
- Where possible, uses data that is publicly available and comparable, to facilitate benchmarking or the measure, or elements of it.

The metric applies a strategic weight to each performance indicator, based on the priorities and goals of the university and DCU Invent strategy. Information on the application of strategic weights, and current performance reporting is summarised on the table below.



Engagement Indicators	Strategic Weighting	2012	2013	2014	Weighted 2012	Weighted 2013	Weighted 2014
Spin-Outs	10	1	7	3	10	70	30
Licence, Option, Assignment	9	18	24	25	162	216	225
Patent Filings	6	7	11	13	42	66	78
Invention Disclosure Forms	2	21	37	33	42	74	66
Non Disclosure Agreement	2						
Contract Research >€50K	8						
Co-Sponsored Research (total value >€50k)	8	22	13	22	176	104	176
Facility Access Agreements >€50K	8						
Contract Research <€50K	6						
Facility Access Agreements <€50K	6						
Industry Sponsored PhDs/P.Docs	5						
Co-Sponsored Research (total value <€50k >€10K)	5	19	19	19	95	95	95
Consultancy Agreement	4						
<b>Total</b>		<b>88</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>625</b>	<b>670</b>
<b>Performance, Indexed to 2012 Baseline</b>					<b>100.0</b>	<b>118.6</b>	<b>127.1</b>

Figure 1: DCU Aggregate Measure of Technology Transfer.

DCU are continuing to test the robustness of the tool and its ability to accurately capture and monitor the strategic priorities and operational focus of the university's knowledge transfer activities.

*Institution objective: Develop DCU community knowledge exchange to be the leading Irish example of direct link between HEI research and community-based, active engagement.*

Only two of the estimated four Schools are participating but it is noted that there is a greater number of projects completed and more community partners than expected. The only area where targets are not met fully is in terms of the number of estimated Schools that are engaged in the DCU community knowledge exchange programme, but this does not appear to be a critical failing.

It is noteworthy that in measuring progress towards being a leading innovative university, DCU has benchmarked itself against other innovative universities nationally and, using the latest u-Multirank profiles, against other comparable "young" universities. This is useful evidence of self-critical analysis by the institution.

The significant capital investment in the DCU Innovation Campus also shows that they are aligning institutional funds to this as a priority area. DCU note that they are very pleased with progress in relation to the development of the DCU Innovation Campus, now known as DCU Alpha. The quality of the offering and economic growth regionally has contributed to a higher than expected demand than that previously stated targets on Campus occupancy. Sustaining and building on this success continues to be an important strategic priority for the university, particularly with respect to enterprise engagement, knowledge exchange and technology transfer. The consideration of a further 'stretch target' in relation to the development of the DCU Innovation Campus has been considered.

Where quantitative targets have been met in full, as in the first objective, DCU should discuss whether 2015 and 2016 targets are still valid, as they appear to have already been achieved.

## **6. Enhanced internationalisation:**

DCU has made considerable improvements in the number of non-EU students enrolled up from 428 in 2012/13 to some 661 in 2014 above their target. The report states that DCU prioritises partnership building in areas like the Middle East, Latin America and Asia yet it was one of four universities which did not apply for Erasmus+ funding in 2015 for such activities. An active partnership with Arizona State University has been established. Figures for increased study abroad not shown - a 10% increase had been projected. DCU clarified that the 10% growth figure relates to a target at year end 2015, not 2014.

## **7. Institutional consolidation:**

Progress with the merging of DCU with SPD, MDI and CICE seems to be on track and 2014 targets have been reached.

## **8. Compact revisions**

DCU clarifications received as follows:

### Regional Clusters

DCU does not propose any revision or reformulation of the goals within this section of the Performance based Compact Agreement

### Participation, Equal Access, Lifelong Learning- Commitment to Access

DCU confirm that in 2015 and 2016 the targets for the proportion of entrants from HEAR and DCU Access programmes are inclusive of undergraduate entrant numbers for a post- Incorporation DCU. In recognising our already strong performance and achievements in relation to this objective, DCU proposes a stretch in the 2016 target from 9% of all undergraduate entrants entering via Access routes, to 12% of all undergraduate entrants.

### Excellent Teaching, Learning and Quality of the Student Experience

In our June 2015 report, DCU reported a number of externally-driven, technical issues that have delayed the development and roll-out of ePortfolios to our students. The delay in implementation, and a reflection on a realistic growth path for the active use of ePortfolio tools among our undergraduate student body, has led us to consider other potential metrics and performance measures which can objectively demonstrate our commitment to the implementation of this strategic goal.

DCU considers that, in parallel to the roll-out of ePortfolios, the successful embedding of graduate attributes should also be evidenced through the direct measurement of the attributes within the curriculum of our undergraduate



programmes. To this end, in 2015, the DCU Business School successfully piloted a model that facilitates the measurement and reporting of the levels of attainment of the DCU Graduate Attributes directly within the assessment framework of the programme modules.

DCU proposes a revision of its target in relation to the mainstreaming of Graduate Attributes with a focus on how DCU can demonstrate the embedding of attributes within the undergraduate curriculum. It proposes that the target for 2016 shall include the roll-out of the piloted model of measurement and reporting in other DCU faculties.

In relation to DCU target for the ongoing growth in activities focused on staff professional development, DCU notes the considerable commitment of our Training and Development Unit to supporting staff in a number of activities in relation to academic and operational models in a post-Incorporation DCU. In light of the strategic importance of this project, and the considerable commitment of resources to this work, DCU proposes lowering the increase in Training and Development activity in 2016 to 50% above that of the reference year, instead of 60% growth.

#### High Quality, Internationally Competitive Research and Innovation

DCU proposes that the target in relation to the *% of research outputs in top quartile* is realigned to reflect a re-scaling of the methodology used in calculating individual institution performance among top-ranked journals by the Scimago database. Percentage growth targets from the realigned baseline remain broadly in line with previously stated targets. Figure 2 summarises the proposed new targets as a result of realignment.

<b>Metric</b>	<b>2012 baseline</b>	<b>Target 2014</b>	<b>Target 2015</b>	<b>Target 2016</b>
Original Target	45%	50%	55%	60%
REVISED Target	41%	45%	50%	55%

Figure 2: Proposed revision of Research Output in the top Quartile, based on a recalibrated baseline.

As noted previously in this document, while DCU remains ambitious in its plans to increase research income, we consider that a more likely research income forecast for 2016/17 is €55million. We have amended this figure in the revised profile submitted with this response.

#### Engagement with Enterprise, the Community and Embedded Knowledge Exchange

DCU notes that it has already significantly exceeded its target in relation to the number of companies and employees located on the DCU Innovation Campus (now rebranded as DCU Alpha). The continued development of the site, and the creation of an eco-system of innovation that allows for collaboration among

campus tenants, shall be coupled with rich opportunities for industry-academic collaboration with DCU academics.

DCU therefore proposes that the HEA performance-based target for companies and staff located at DCU Alpha, shall be increased to 35 companies and 350 staff by the end of 2016 (from 10 companies and 200 staff). In addition, DCU proposes that the 2016 target shall further include an engagement metric that quantifies industry-DCU collaboration between DCU Alpha tenants and DCU staff and students, which may include student internships, mentoring, knowledge exchange and research collaboration.

#### Enhanced Internationalisation

DCU is committed to extending its network of international strategic partners. We consider that if international partnerships with international institutions are to be both sustainable and successful, they must be aligned with the strategic priorities of both institutions, and be multi-faceted, involving collaboration on research, teaching, and opportunities for student and staff exchange.

DCU are currently in advanced discussions with a number of potential international strategic partners. As a result of the complexity of discussions, local political development in one instance (KSA), and considerable leadership commitment to the final stages of the DCU Incorporation Programme, we have not yet completed discussions with these potential future partners. We therefore seek to revise the 2016 goal for this objective to 2, rather than 3 active partnerships by December 2016, with a third partnership to be finalised in 2017.

#### Institutional Consolidation

DCU does not propose any revision or reformulation of the goals within this section of the Performance based Compact Agreement.