

Dublin City University (DCU)

Cycle 3 Outcome

Performance funding in full will be released in respect of the 2017 budget allocation.

In assessing performance, we have relied upon the self-evaluation report submitted by your institution, the reflections on performance document prepared by the HEA, and the discussion at our recent strategic dialogue meeting. Consideration was also given to any points of clarification as provided by your institution at our meeting or in related correspondence.

The self-evaluation report, and subsequent discussion at the bilateral meeting, have shown that progress can be demonstrated across all compact domains. The university continues to develop the compact to incorporate greater use of data, and to focus on particular areas of priority. There has been very good progress on the integration with DCU of St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Mater Dei Institute of Education and Church of Ireland College of Education, and the HEA looks forward to the imminent successful conclusion of this significant national project.

The university is commended for its use of benchmarking. The HEA welcomes the DCU work on benchmarked measures of output quality for research activity. The HEA looks forward to more details as DCU continues to source and develop new metrics and analytics on both quality and output. The implementation of student support and management information systems, and the subsequent use of the data from these systems to improve the quality of programmes and the student experience is also an important and welcome development.

There is good understanding of progress compared with peer institutions, demonstrated through a benchmarking process. The university should seek to continue to use benchmarking to inform priority setting and self-evaluation.

In summary therefore, DCU has demonstrated very good progress against mission-coherent objectives through an analytical and probing self-evaluation report and use of other data sources. DCU should have regard to the specific institutional feedback provided in this document and in the reflections on performance document in advance of, and in preparation for, the next round of compact evaluations.

Dublin City University (DCU)

Minutes of Strategic Dialogue Cycle 3 bilateral meeting, 6 September 2016

In attendance

Members of the Senior Management Team and HEA Executive, along with two external advisors (Mr George P. Pernsteiner and Mr John Randall), met with the institutional representatives as set out below. The meeting was chaired by HEA Interim Chief Executive, Dr Anne Looney. A process auditor was also present at the meeting. DCU representatives were:

DCU representatives

- Professor Brian MacCraith, President
- Mr Ciaran McGivern, Chief Financial Officer
- Mr Billy Kelly, Dean, Teaching & Learning
- Professor Christine Loscher, Director, Health Technologies Research and Enterprise Hub
- Dr. Anne Sinnott, Executive Dean, DCU Business School
- Ms Aisling McKenna, Director, Quality Promotion and Institutional Research

The HEA welcomed Dublin City University (DCU) to the meeting and gave an overview of the strategic dialogue process and the context in which it operates. DCU was commended on its strong progress and for its self-evaluation report that provides evidence of reflection on performance and identification of issues arising. The HEA is aware that all higher education institutions are operating in a challenging financial environment, while continuing to respond to increasing student demand. The system has demonstrated that it continues to provide high-quality higher education and to respond to national priorities. The HEA made the following observations on the university's performance:

- DCU is performing strongly and provided a good self-evaluation report. The university has achieved most of its interim targets and offered context in any areas where performance was below target.
- The HEA welcomes the strong cluster performance. DCU and its partners are particularly responsive to the needs of learners, industry and enterprise in their region.
- There has been very good progress on the integration of St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Mater Dei Institute of Education and Church of Ireland College of Education with DCU and the HEA looks forward to the imminent successful conclusion of this significant national project.
- The HEA welcomes the DCU work on benchmarked measures of output quality for research activity. The HEA looks forward to more details as DCU continues to source and develop new metrics and analytics on both quality and output.
- The institutional wide roll-out of the academic information management tool, GURU, and the use of a relationship management system to co-ordinate information used by Student Support and Development has supported the improvement in the quality of programmes and the student experience and welcome development.

DCU opening remarks

DCU welcomed the opportunity to engage and to further update on progress. Perhaps the most significant development to report on is the culmination of the project to integrate St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Mater Dei Institute of Education and Church of Ireland College of Education with Dublin City University. This has been a most complex, but so far successful project, that has seen the merging of four cultures across three campuses. In response to HEA questions relating to risk, DCU reported that it had embedded a risk management strategy as part of the project from the outset. Steering groups meet every two weeks, and have strategies for managing risks around reputation, funding, change management, and individual reactions.

Clusters

DCU reported strong progress in cluster development with its partners Athlone Institute of Technology, Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) and Maynooth University (collectively known as the Midlands, East and North Dublin (MEND) Cluster). Progress to date on programme mapping and on routes from further education to higher education has been based on trust between the four institutions. The success of the current model has opened a number of opportunities, including an examination of how the tool could inform social and regional aspects of enterprise (such as family businesses), an effort that needs appropriate resourcing. DCU is also working bilaterally with Maynooth on initial teacher education and on traveller education. DCU is also a coordinating partner on regional action plans for jobs and skills fora. This work is resource-intensive and, while there has been significant input from all partners, DCU sees a need for additional resources and expertise to continue the work. The graduate school established in collaboration with DkIT has brought an added richness to graduate research offerings, offering enhanced collaboration opportunities and joint PhD supervision. The matching hasn't always been easy, as DkIT supervisory capacity is in niche areas, but it is working and both institutions are now exploring the feasibility of a taught Masters programmes and articulation routes from level 7.

Access has been a feature of the regional conversation too. As accommodation costs are significant, transport is becoming a major influence on students' programme choices, which can cause some tensions between providers on access and outreach. This highlights the need for HEIs to engage with each other to coordinate their outreach activities for the benefit of the students concerned. Discussions relating to access might therefore be better raised to a super-cluster or national level.

There may also be a need for HEIs in the Dublin region to engage more closely in coordinating the delivery of access/outreach programmes with schools for the benefit of students.

Teaching and learning / transitions agenda

DCU reported that the GURU academic support system are now in place across all the campuses, which has seen improvements in the information available to academic staff within the institution, and increased visibility of the effectiveness of external examiner reports. Quality is at the core of DCU business, and the university is still delivering well. DCU reported that it has the highest university participation in ISSE. The university has also recently explored the potential of learning analytics as a method of identifying students at risk of academic non-progression through the PredictEd research project. Annual programme reviews also incorporate student feedback, and DCU also uses a system to capture external examiner comments. DCU also ensures industry representation in programme development and programme review.

DCU supports the national transitions agenda. The university notes, however, that in some cases industry demand for particular skills necessitates new programmes (for example, for data scientists). However, DCU also reports rising numbers on common-entry programmes in business, humanities and social science.

Research & development / engagement

Engagement is important to DCU, and the university is particularly concerned to accurately capture the impact of this engagement. DCU has developed a pilot index to measure the value of its interactions, and gave some examples of positive return on investment. For example, innovation projects with industry are used to inform research agendas, and for student placement or hackathons. The research and enterprise hubs allow staff to learn more about the challenges facing industry, so that researchers can shape their research agenda to meet these challenges. DCU also described how, as part of its research-intensive university vision, it has a discipline-appropriate definition for research-active staff that is linked to a set of internationally benchmarked measures of output quality.

Further development of the compact process

DCU has had strategic planning processes for a number of years and extracted their compact objectives from that process. DCU is currently developing its next strategic plan. The focus of the previous plan was on expansion and development, but future priorities are more likely to be on student experience, human capital, and personal and skills development. Aligning the strategy with these compact processes will be important. DCU gave an example of the outreach plan, which wasn't referred to in the compact. DCU also has other observations and comments, and looks forward to continued engagement in the process.