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DCU in the Community
– Our Mission

DCU in the Community acts as a bridge between the university and its local community.

Its mission is “To provide educational opportunities to local people in North Dublin in order to increase participation levels and to promote equality in third level education”. Our aim is to broaden access and increase participation in higher education. DCU in the Community has established itself as a leader in the area of civic engagement, promoting social regeneration through education. BRL’s Sustaining Regeneration – A Social Plan for Ballymun highlights the role of education, training and lifelong learning in social regeneration and the positive ripple effects it has across the community.

DCU in the Community recognises the individual talent of each student and offers a flexible curriculum based on their needs and aspirations. We act as a ‘drop in centre’ for all local learners seeking information and advice in relation to accessing higher education options. We aim to promote sustainable community development and serve as a bridge between the resources of Dublin City University, the wider higher education system, and the local community.

In the period of June – December 2013, DCU in the Community underwent an internal DCU review of its services and activities. The process was helpful for us as it enabled us to focus strongly on our mission and to develop a clear strategy and sustainability plan for DCU in the Community for years 2014 – 2017.

2013–2014 in a Snapshot

• 160+ learners
• 200+ hours of student support and guidance
• Assistance with 30+ applications to further and higher education
• 7 courses and programmes delivered on site
• 26 workshops during Summer Schools 2013 and 2014
• 70+ DCU student volunteers and service learners linked with Ballymun organisations
Educational Programmes

Overall, more than 160 learners participated in all courses and programmes at DCU in the Community in 2013/2014, including nearly one hundred students who took up 270 workshop places during Summer Schools in July 2013 and 2014. Many of the programmes were held in partnership with local community organisations and statutory providers. The majority of our learners are mature students (over 23 years of age) from Ballymun and neighbouring North Dublin areas with over 90% in receipt of social welfare benefits - many facing the challenge of being lone parents or long-term unemployed.

Bridge to Education

The Bridge to Education programme is aimed at mature students and adult learners who wish to prepare, personally and academically, for returning to further and higher education. The course aims to equip learners with the knowledge, skills and competencies they can use in their future study and in the workplace, and provide the confidence boost needed to take the next step in education and career.

Areas of study include communications, academic reading and writing, numeracy and computer skills for college, research and study skills, as well as ongoing guidance.

The programme is linked with DCU Campus through guest workshops, speakers and learning events.

As of March 2014, the Bridge to Education programme is delivered jointly with Community and Family Training Agency (CAFTA) and accredited at FETAC Level 5 with strong focus on progression to higher education.

Digital Media iMac

This interactive course is designed for learners who are interested in developing their digital media skills for personal and professional purposes.

Students gain introductory knowledge of using iMac computers and Apple software and applications for creating and editing audio-visual materials, such as slideshows, movies and websites. The course introduces participants to the basics of working with Apple iLife package.

Topics include getting to know the Mac and the iLife package: iTunes, iTunes store, iPhoto, iMovie, GarageBand, iWeb and iDVD.

In May 2014, the programme was delivered to 13 learners over 7 weeks.

Summer School

DCU in the Community Summer School is designed to bring university and community experts together to deliver sessions and workshops for local residents.

For DCU in the Community, it is an opportunity to reach a new student group and introduce them to our activities.

In total, 15 workshops were delivered in July 2013, and 11 workshops were delivered in July 2014 in areas such as personal development, public speaking, psychology, mental health and wellbeing, sports and nutrition, disabilities, mindfulness, coping with stress, green living, sustainability, horticulture, gardening and personal finance.

DCU in the Community would like to acknowledge and thank DCU Schools and Units, as well as our community partners, whose contribution of valuable time and expertise made it possible to facilitate such successful Summer School programmes.

Personal Finance

These hands-on personal finance and budgeting programmes were aimed at increase numeracy, and money management skills among participants, as well as promote decision-making and a pro-active approach to financial matters.

Over 50 individuals availed of these Personal Finance programmes and workshops in 2013/2014.

The programme was funded through Ulster Bank Community Impact Grant and Community Foundation for Ireland.
Partner Programmes

Mental Health Forum Project
Between November 2013 and June 2014, DCU Counselling and Personal Development Services and Ballymun Youth Action Project teamed up with DCU in the Community to deliver a Mental Health Forum Project, funded through Community Foundation for Ireland Caring Communities Grant. The project sought to facilitate open dialogue about student and young adult mental health, reduce stigma around mental health, empower individuals and increase cooperation between university and community mental health professionals. Overall, 71 students availed of open dialogue forums and workshops at the university (facilitated by DCU Counselling and Personal Development Services) and in the community (facilitated by BYAP and DCU in the Community).

Boxing Clever
Boxing Clever is a 20-week programme aimed to promote recovery and rehabilitation of marginalised and socially excluded groups through a framework of adult education, addiction awareness and education, counselling, guidance and physical activity (boxercise and boxing).

The programme is led by HSE RIS, Ballymun Local Drugs Task Force, Ballymun Youth Action Project and Urrús, and supported by DCC and DCU.

DCU in the Community has supported the delivery of the programme since 2012.

In 2013/2014, our involvement in the programme included the provision of study and assignment support, study skills training and the venue, as well as progression options for a number of participants.

The Boxing Clever programme has been shortlisted for AONTAS Star 2014 award.

Project FUTSAL
The goal of Project FUTSAL (Football Used Towards Social Advancement and Learning) is to provide education and work opportunities for people in disadvantaged areas and support community regeneration via employment and volunteerism in the field of sport. In the academic years 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 the course was delivered at Whitehall College of Further Education.

DCU in the Community continued to support the programme through facilitating further links with DCU School of Health and Human Performance whose students (Final Year Sports Science and Health) delivered a series of Masterclasses for Project FUTSAL participants on DCU Campus, showcasing the School’s expertise and facilities.

Project FUTSAL with DCU Sports Science & Health students

The launch of Social Value of the University project
Raising Aspirations - Educational Guidance

DCU in the Community provides a range of pre-entry mentoring and support services for students enrolled on in-house courses as well as external clients, such as study support, educational guidance, application assistance, finance application assistance, interview preparation and more. In 2013/2014, over 200 hours of educational guidance and mentoring were delivered to mature students, Leaving Certificate students, and parents.

In 2013/2014, DCU in the Community also provided one-to-one assistance with completing over 30 further and higher education applications and a similar number of applications for student financial supports. Additionally, in 2013 and 2014, in association with DCU Access, workshops for local secondary school parents on CAO applications, HEAR scheme and Student Finance were held in Axis, Ballymun, with 50 places taken across the sessions. For DCU in the Community it was another opportunity to reach secondary school parents group through provision of information regarding further and higher education options for their children.

Campus events for community students were also organised in 2013/2014, and included campus and library tours, guest workshops and seminars as well as Graduation Ceremonies in June 2013 and July 2014. The Graduation Ceremonies in the Helix were attended by representatives from local community organisations, local councillors, and university partners.

Volunteering and Community Based Learning

Volunteering and community-based learning is an activity that experienced expansion and growth in 2013/2014. At DCU in the Community we realise that volunteering raises the profile of the university in the local and surrounding areas, and assists in the development of rounded graduates. In 2013/2014, over 70 DCU students volunteering and service learning placements were supported by DCU in the Community on a number of community based projects in Ballymun.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Groups</th>
<th>Organisations</th>
<th>Project Areas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.Sc. Psychology</td>
<td>Ballymun Initiative for Third Level</td>
<td>Study Support and Student Mentoring</td>
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<tr>
<td>B.Sc. Health and Society</td>
<td>Education (BITE)</td>
<td>Junior/Leaving Certificate Grinds</td>
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<td>B.Sc. Education and Training</td>
<td>The Plough Youth Club</td>
<td>Working with Young People</td>
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<td>B.Sc. Sport Science and Health</td>
<td>Sports Across Ireland</td>
<td>Afterschool Projects</td>
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<td>M.Sc. E-commerce</td>
<td>Poppintree Youth Project</td>
<td>Sports &amp; Coaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>M.Sc. Management - Digital Marketing</td>
<td>Aisling Project</td>
<td>Digital Media</td>
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<td>M.Sc. Management - Business</td>
<td>Ballymun Youth Action Project</td>
<td>PR and Marketing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ballymun Women’s Resource Centre</td>
<td>Web Design</td>
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<td>St. Margaret’s Local Training Initiative</td>
<td>IT Support</td>
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In 2013, DCU in the Community were also involved in co-organising the DCU Volunteer Expo held in October 2013, with 60 community, charity and voluntary organisations in attendance to promote engagement opportunities for university students. DCU in the Community has also been maintaining the DCU Volunteering Facebook page.

At the national level, DCU in the Community, on behalf of DCU, jointly with University of Limerick and NUJ Galway, is leading a Campus Engage Volunteering and Student-Led Engagement Working Group. The Group hosted a collaborative learning day in December 2013 attended by representatives of universities, institutes of technology and local, national and international voluntary organisations, and is currently developing a National Student Volunteering Management System to be launched in 2015. This national database, will enable higher education students an easier access to volunteering opportunities leading to increased uptake of such, and will support higher education staff involved in management of volunteering activities at their institutions.

Civic Engagement

DCU President’s Awards for Engagement

The President, Professor Brian Mac Craith, announced the winners at the President’s Award for Engagement 2014 ceremony held in the Helix on 27th May:

- **Student Category**: Michelle O’Donnell Keating, DCU School of Law and Government, co-founder of Women for Election
- **Staff Category**: Dr Eithne Kennedy, St Patrick’s College, Write to Read project - a literacy intervention for disadvantaged communities in urban areas
- **Special Merit Award (Staff)**: Dr Raphaela Kane, DCU School of Nursing and Human Sciences and Mr Tom Bisset from Finglas Addiction Support Team, Recovery Coaching and Addiction in the Community Project
- **Special Merit Award (Student)**: DCU Horticulture (Grow Your Own) Society, DCU Community Garden Revival

DCU in the Community Graduations

Ita Tobin, Head of DCU Access Service, presented five groups of community learners with their certificates at the graduation ceremony in June 2013 at the Helix.

Prof Eithne Guilfoyle, DCU Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Registrar, presented three groups of community learners with their certificates at the graduation ceremony in July 2014 at the Helix.

Launch of the DCU & Campus Engage Value of the University Project

On 19th September 2013 DCU President Professor Brian Mac Craith launched this new DCU project aimed at measuring the non-market and wider economic and social benefits associated with higher education institutions.

Community Knowledge Exchange

DCU in the Community works with community organisations and the university to enhance student participation in Community Knowledge Exchange – a community-based research programme whereby students conduct research for local organisations.
Civic Engagement Forum
DCU in the Community staff are active members of the university’s Civic Engagement Forum, chaired by Dr Deiric O’Broin (NorDubCo). Members of the forum include representatives from schools, faculties and administrative units, as well as DCU Student Union, who act as champions of civic engagement in their respective units and university-wide.

DCU Links
Throughout 2013/2014, DCU in the Community continued to work with DCU faculties, schools and administrative units in the field of service learning, volunteering and research placements, as well as increasing the university’s community outreach activities and projects.

Campus Engage

Campus Engage Steering Committee
Campus Engage is the national network of higher education providers championing the civic engagement agenda and co-chaired by Prof Ronnie Munck, DCU Office of Civic Engagement.

June 2014 marked the launch of the Campus Engage Charter for Civic and Community Engagement Minister for Education and Skills, Mr. Ruairi Quinn T.D signed by 20 Presidents of Higher Education Institutions in Dublin Castle.

Campus Engage Volunteering and Student-Led Engagement Working Group
Jointly with colleagues from the University of Limerick and NUI Galway, DCU act as co-conveners of the Campus Engage national Working Group promoting Volunteering and Student-Led Engagement activities.

• June – October 2013: Preparation of work plans and project proposals for the Working Groups and reports to the Steering Committee
• December 2013: Collaborative Learning Event: Volunteering and Student-Led Engagement – held in Morrison Hotel, Dublin, with attendance from community and voluntary organisations as well as representatives from universities and institutes of technology
• June 2014: Campus-Community Partnerships – Conversations for Change Symposium held by Campus Engage in Dublin Castle – presentation of the work of the Volunteering and Student-Led Engagement Working Group

National Student Volunteering Management System
Since August 2013, DCU has co-led the development of the National Student Volunteering Management System jointly with Campus Engage and university partners. This database of volunteering opportunities for higher education students is expected, among others, to lessen the administrative workload involved in management of student volunteering, provide students with an easier access to engage with communities, and stimulate research in this field. The NSVMS is planned to be launched in 2015.
DCU in the Community Review

In the period of June – December 2013, DCU in the Community underwent an internal review of its services and activities at DCU with the following recommendations:

- Clear focus – wider remit in the provision of adult education
- Focus on pathways to higher education particularly with a specific alignment to programmes offered at DCU
- Pre-entry educational guidance and support service for mature students (23+) from areas in North Dublin wishing to progress to higher education with closer cooperation with adult education providers, DCU partners and DCU departments
- Closer alignment with the wider support service providers both within DCU and with the regional cluster organisations and CDETB
- Continued involvement in student volunteering, service learning, and Campus Engage

A Few Words From...

...Our Past Student:

The day I walked into DCU in the Community, the direction of my life changed forever. I went there thinking that I wanted to go to college as a mature student, but had no idea what I wanted to do or even how to go about doing it. The staff sent me out the door that day knowing what I could or should study based on my interests, and also how to successfully navigate the application process. I was also offered a placement on a Bridge to Education course that eventually thought me many of the skills I use today. I am now beginning the final year of my degree in DCU and am almost a straight A student. Literally none of this would have happened had DCU in the Community not went above and beyond the call of duty in helping me achieve my goals and preparing me for the road ahead. I have nothing but good memories of my time there.

Tomas, DCU International Relations

...Our Community Partner:

In the years 2012/2013 St Margaret’s Traveller Women’s Local Training Initiative introduced a Leaving Cert programme onto the course. I contacted DCU in the Community to get an idea of the services they provided to learners attempting to access higher education. They were extremely helpful and discussed the range of options that DCU in the Community could provide to the 3 individuals completing their
Leaving Cert. The approach taken was person centred and specifically tailored to the needs of the learners. The Programme Coordinator met with the learners on a number of occasions and provided information and supports with filling in CAO/CAS applications, PLC’s applications and information on financial supports available at 3rd Level. The learners also attended a course in DCU in the Community to improve their academic skills and better prepare them for 3rd Level education.

When Volunteer Coordinator started at DCU in the Community she was committed to finding volunteers for community organisations in the area and we were fortunate to benefit from her hard work. She also linked us in with the DCU Volunteer Fair and St. Margaret’s LTI were represented at it for the first time.

Furthermore, DCU staff agreed to take a learner on placement for the first time and it was a great experience for her as she had never worked previous in voluntary or paid employment.

Even though I have changed jobs recently I continue to link in with and use the services of DCU in the Community as they are fully committed to supporting local people in Ballymun with progressing to further education and nothing is too much to ask! A big thanks to all the DCU in the Community team for all the support they’ve given to staff and learners alike.

Annette Duffy, Ballymun Regional Youth Resource (formerly St. Margaret’s Traveller Women’s LTI)

...Our National Partner:

The National Strategy for Higher Education 2030 states that ‘Engagement with the wider community must become more firmly embedded in the mission of higher education institutions’ (HEA: 2011:21). Campus Engage, the organisation assigned to formulate action plans to formulate and deliver the HE civic engagement strategy identifies student volunteering and student led engagement as a core civic engagement activity.

The University of Limerick through its Community Liaison Office (CLO) and DCU in the Community have developed a collaborative mutually beneficial ‘working’ partnership through our work with Campus Engage. Our shared values are supporting the positive contribution student volunteers make to internal and external HEI communities, and awarding HEI students for their role is positively profiling HEIs and HEI student body. Our goal is to grow student volunteer and student led engagement across the HEI sector. By sharing our resources, our values and goals are shaping the HE civic engagement and shared services strategy.

In 2013/14 a strategic workplan outlining the development of student volunteering for the next three years was developed and presented to HEIs. Once agreed this plan was presented and signed off by the IUA Campus Engage Steering Group in 2013/14. There is no HE infrastructure to support student/community voluntary activity and/or capture this activity across the sector. Nonetheless the administration of student volunteering involves a significant range of activities from building University/Community relationships, through creation and dissemination of volunteer opportunities; promoting student volunteering; connecting volunteer organisation to HE students and supporting both in the process; capturing the diversity of communities and students engaged; to reporting all this activity - demographics, experiences and impact on students, the communities they serve and HE profiles. The most significant and urgent project is the development of a National Student Volunteer Management System that will be shared by all HEIs.

The collaborative partnership between the UL’s CLO and DCU in the Community has spearheaded the development of the National Student Volunteer Management System (NSVMS) which is now in its second phase of development. It is expected this system will go live in 2015.

Gabriella Hanrahan, Community Liaison Office, University of Limerick
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Samantha Henry (CAFTA) – receptionist/administrator  
Sanjay Shende (Job Bridge) - IT and web design support  
Janet Nolan (DCU BSc Education & Training) – teaching practice and study support  
Gemma McEnery (CAFTA) – receptionist/administrator  
Ann Dwyer (CAFTA) – receptionist/administrator/IT support