

## Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

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<b>Approving Authority:</b>	Academic Council				
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<b>Supporting documents, procedures &amp; forms of this policy:</b>					
<b>Reference(s):</b>					
<b>Audience:</b>	Public – accessible to anyone				
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## Version Control and Change History

Version Control	Date Effective	Approved By	Amendment(s)
1	28/05/2021	Academic Council Meeting No. 175 (AC:DOC:175:06:01)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Updated strategy.</li></ul>

### 1. Background and Context

The DkIT Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy sets out DkIT's strategic priorities in relation to learning, teaching and assessment and provides a framework for ensuring that these are used to promote student success in line with the vision and priorities set out in the DkIT Strategic Plan 2020-2022, Strategic Priority 2: Excellent Teaching and Learning and Quality of Learner Experiences.

The concept of student success has been increasingly influential nationally as a means of understanding and enhancing the student experience. This vision of student success has informed the DkIT strategic plan and this strategy will work in tandem with the DkIT Student Success Strategy to achieve the stated objectives. It speaks directly to two of the strategic goals within the DkIT Strategic Plan 2020-2022 set out below:

- Strategic Goal 3: To maintain a high-quality, inclusive learner experience that supports all our learners, holistically, and in their diversity, to achieve their potential.
- Strategic Goal 4: To foster the development of learners as graduates, who can contribute positively to society personally and professionally.

It reflects the Institute's values which underpin the strategic plan:

- Learner Centredness,
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity,
- Transparency and Accountability.

The implementation of this strategy will enable the following strategic objectives to be achieved.

- Strategic Objective 7:** To enhance student success by ensuring excellence and innovation in learning, teaching and assessment.
- Strategic Objective 8:** To enhance the provision of effective learner-centred support for all our learners.
- Strategic Objective 10:** To enhance student engagement.
- Strategic Objective 11:** To ensure that employability is identified as a key aspect of the learning experience.

### 2. Principles/Philosophy

This strategy is founded on the concept of Student Success as a way to understand and improve the student experience. It is informed by the national understanding of Student Success published by the

National Forum for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching<sup>1</sup>. This shared understanding can be summarised as follows:

*'Student success optimises the learning and development opportunities for each student to recognise and fulfil their potential to contribute to, and flourish in, society. To be achieved, this requires a culture in Irish higher education that values inclusivity, equity and meaningful engagement between students, staff, their institutions and the wider community.'*

The DkIT Strategic Plan sets out a commitment to promoting student success by *'ensuring a high quality, supportive learner experiences that foster the development of graduates who are work-ready and can contribute positively to their communities.'* This strategy focuses on 4 themes: Student engagement, Digital learning, Evidence-based decision making, Assessment and Employability. From these, 6 commitments have been identified. These are outlined below, along with actions to be taken to achieve them. The strategy also identifies two strategic enablers: Professional Development and Programme-focused Approaches.

### **3. Strategic Commitments**

#### **1. Promote student engagement and develop our capacity for meaningful partnership with students to enhance learning and teaching.**

DkIT is a community of learners, students and staff. We are committed to developing a culture of engagement that enables meaningful partnership. Student engagement is internationally recognised as an important enabler of student success, but supportive policies and processes are necessary if this benefit is to be realised.

##### **Actions/KPIs:**

We will:

- 1.1 Implement the revised Student Voice Policy.
- 1.2 Develop guiding principles to support student engagement with their learning and programmes of study.
- 1.3 Establish a working group, including staff and student representatives, to review the responses to StudentSurvey.ie and agree actions to enhance learning, teaching and assessment,
- 1.4 Identify the structures and processes needed to promote meaningful partnership between students and staff and use training and professional development to build capacity in this.
- 1.5 Support the implementation of the DkIT Elevate Framework to promote student engagement and support students in evidencing the employability skills developed in the course of this.

#### **2. Increase digital capacity among staff and students to enhance learning.**

As the use of digital technologies to support learning becomes more prevalent, it is essential that staff and students develop capacity and competence in the selection and use of appropriate technologies to enhance learning and build digital skills.

##### **Actions/KPIs:**

We will:

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<sup>1</sup> National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (2019). Understanding and Enabling Student Success in Irish Higher Education. Available , <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/publication/understanding-and-enabling-student-success-in-irish-higher-education/>.

2.1 Develop and implement a Digital Learning Policy to address the key aspects of using digital technologies to support learning and teaching.

2.2 Develop guiding principles in areas such as online etiquette and digital citizenship, accessibility of online activities and resources, digital wellbeing and the use of open educational resources.

2.3 Develop a structured approach for professional development and support personnel, such as educational technologists, digital leaders or champions, working with CELT to liaise with schools and departments to build capacity.

2.4 Provide professional development opportunities which are guided by evidence-based approaches to integrate educational technology tools into practice.

2.5 Provide an induction for new staff and students that introduces them to the virtual learning environment and key digital technologies used for learning and teaching.

2.6 Identify ways to support staff and student wellbeing in a digital environment.

2.7 Provide a suite of learning resources to support staff and students.

### **3. To provide increased opportunities for flexible and lifelong learning using blended and online approaches.**

Modules and programmes which make use of blended or online delivery methods offer students increased flexibility in terms of time and place to facilitate their learning and balance its demands with other commitments.

#### **Actions/KPIs:**

We will:

3.1 Develop good practice principles to guide individuals and programme teams in delivering blended or online modules and programmes.

3.2 Design curricula that are agile and responsive to the need for increasingly flexible modes of delivery with due consideration to standards and quality.

3.3 Provide guidance and training to individuals and programme teams in 'learning design' approaches for blended and online learning.

3.4 Support and advise programme teams in developing programmes for delivery in blended or fully online environments.

3.5 Provide ongoing support and training to those delivering blended or online modules and programmes.

### **4. Use evidence and data to support student success.**

This objective aims to leverage the data available to inform decision-making in order to promote student success. This includes developing a data-literate culture and institutional capacity to access, interpret and use effectively a wide range of data sources.

#### **Actions/KPIs:**

We will:

4.1 Establish benchmarks for success in consultation with the DkIT community, with due consideration to the complexity of the learning, teaching and assessment processes and the importance of selecting suitable proxies combined with qualitative information.

4.2 Build individual and institutional data literacy through development activities for staff and students that promote an awareness of and trust in the processes of analysis and interpretation data.

4.3 Articulate the principles and values that will guide the use of student-related data.

4.4 Consult with students and staff to develop a framework for the analysis, interpretation and use of data to support student success.

4.5 Provide the necessary resources for the collection, analysis, interpretation and communication of evidence-based information which is identified as valuable to promoting student success.

## **5. Use assessment and feedback to promote student success.**

Assessment is a central aspect of the student experience and a key enabler of student success. The contemporary distinction between the functions of assessment (assessment of/for/as learning) highlights the potential of assessment and feedback to promote learning and engagement.

### **Actions/KPIs:**

We will:

5.1 Provide professional development opportunities, resources and support that promote good practice, excellence and innovation in assessment and feedback, with particular focus on assessment literacy.

5.2 Promote and support programme-focused approaches to assessment and feedback.

5.3 Support learners to learn and to develop their understanding and practice of scholarship, including academic writing, research and information skills, academic integrity and assessment literacy.

5.4 Maintain and develop the learning support offered to students.

## **6. Embed employability throughout the curriculum.**

The embedding of employability as a key objective within the DkIT Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy recognises the complementarity between supporting both academic competence and graduate employability. In this strategy, we acknowledge that supporting graduate employability in DkIT is a shared responsibility, which requires us to take a partnership approach to its implementation.

The starting point for this partnership approach to Employability will be in developing an understanding of what Employability is. It is not simply the securing of a graduate job but is grounded in self-awareness and focuses on the ability to manage career development. Employability can be viewed as helping one develop as a “capable person”. These are people who not only know their technical area or specialism but can also apply the knowledge and skills they have in varied and dynamic situations which allow them to develop their skills further (IBEC 2018). There are a number of actions that build on current good practice within DkIT to create a shared vision of employability at DkIT.

### **Actions/KPIs:**

We will:

6.1 Agree an institute-wide Employability Statement and Framework to be used to ‘employability-proof’ programme design, development and review.

6.2 Develop a set of DkIT Graduate Attributes that articulate a shared vision of the DkIT Graduate to be adopted and interpreted in the context of each programme.

6.3 Develop an Employability Guide which identifies and measures employability activity within DkIT and provides a guide on embedding Employability in programme design and delivery.

6.4 Set up a DkIT Industry Employability Forum – in collaboration key industry partners across all academic disciplines to guide and inform employability development in DkIT.

6.5 Commence an Institute-wide discussion about how we can develop a more holistic understanding of student development and learning which will lead to greater employability and contribution to society.

## **4 Strategic Enablers**

### **1. Professional Development to support excellence in learning, teaching and assessment.**

Professional development in learning and teaching plays a central role in enabling the strategic objectives to be met and ensuring the continuation of excellence in teaching and learning. Staff development has dominated much of the discourse in quality assurance of higher education and is the key to moving from a milieu of quality assurance to one of quality enhancement. It also supports diversity and inclusivity and the institutional ability to respond effectively and efficiently to new demands, including the impact of the COVID-19 response and flexible learning models.

#### **Actions/KPIs:**

We will:

- 1.1 Continue to provide a comprehensive programme of accredited and non-accredited professional development in learning and teaching, open to all who teach and support learning.
- 1.2 Foster innovation by providing support, professional development, opportunities to collaborate and share good practice.
- 1.3 Encourage and support staff in the pursuit of qualifications, academic development, scholarly activity and professional recognition in learning and teaching.
- 1.4 Encourage and support disciplines with professional related development and continuing professional development that creates new, or further enhances existing industry links.
- 1.5 Build expertise in curriculum design and delivery to deliver an outstanding higher education experience for all students.
- 1.6 Recognise teaching as a valued activity at both individual and team levels.

### **2. Programme-focused approaches to learning, teaching and assessment.**

The benefits of programme-focused approaches are widely recognised, particularly in assessment and feedback. In particular, these approaches contributed to a more integrated and collaborative learning experience. The development and evaluation of programme and module assessment strategies should be substantial parts of programme design and programme validation. A clear assessment strategy can complement a statement of intended learning outcomes and aid its interpretation.

#### **Actions/KPIs:**

We will:

- 2.1 Foster programme level approaches to learning, teaching and assessment through enabling policies, professional development, guidance and resources.
- 2.2 Identify ways to make space for programme teams to reflect on learning, teaching and assessment at the programme level.
- 2.3 Build capacity by actively encouraging staff to share good practice on programme assessment.
- 2.4 Provide professional development and support for programme teams to take more programme-focused approaches.

## **4. Conclusion**

Within the current context, the impact of COVID-19 has illuminated the need to support and celebrate good practice in learning and teaching. Evidence from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning indicates that engagement with the development of practice in learning and teaching has been central to enabling flexible responses. This strategy aims to build on current strengths and work in partnership with students to enable all of our students to achieve their potential and contribute to society.