

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY

TUESDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2025 AT 11:00 A.M.

BOARDROOM, T.K. WHITAKER BUILDING

Participants:

Prof. Thomas (Tom) Collins	Chair
Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan	President
Ms. Anna Shakespeare	
Ms. Ann Marie Lacey	
Ms. Antoinette Rourke	
Ms. Ciara O'Shea	
Mr. Gerard O'Brien	
Ms. Madeleine Thornton	
Mr. Patrick W. Malone	
Prof. Paul Moynagh joined at 11:15 a.m.	
Mr. Richard Hanlon	
Mr. Tommy Fanning	
Mr. Patrick McCormick	
Ms. Paula McCaul	
Ms. Rosheen Hornby	

Apologies:

Dr. Jennifer Brennan
Dr. Fatima Hamroush
Mr. Martin Long

Not in attendance:

Ms Tobi Bewajii

Attending:

Ms. Caroline Pigott	Secretary to the Governing Body and Vice President for Finance & Corporate Affairs ("Secretary" / "VP FCA")
Ms. Valerie Ward	President's Office
Dr Breda Brennan	Head of School of Engineering
Dr Sheila Flanagan	Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar
Dr Edel Healy	Executive Project Lead
Dr Patricia Moriarty	Head of School Business & Humanities
Professor Fergal McCaffery	Head of School of Informatics & Creative Arts
Ms Irene McCausland	Vice President of Strategic Planning, Communications and Development
Dr Moira Maguire	Head of School Health & Science

Declarations of Interest

None.

Meeting commenced at 11:05 a.m.

The Chair welcomed Governing Body members and the Executive Board to the meeting this morning. The Chair and President outlined that this was a private meeting and that the information being briefed is confidential, at this moment in time, for Governing Body members.

The President outlined he will be proposing a motion for consideration by the Governing Body after his presentation. He stipulated that no communications are sent out during this meeting and specifically until after midnight tonight.

Before commencing his presentation, the President offered his deepest condolences on the recent tragic loss of five young lives and acknowledged the strong connections many of those affected had with DkIT. He also noted that our thoughts are with the three injured individuals and their families at this extremely difficult time. A book of condolences has been opened in the Engineering Department for those who wish to pay their respects. All those in attendance took a moment to reflect on this profound loss.

The President's presentation to Governing Body, "Delivering our Strategic Vision", provided an update on recent developments in respect of DkIT's Strategic vision to become a University Campus with students receiving a university award.

The President outlined the number of strategic developments to date implemented between Maynooth University and DkIT. A recently concluded scoping study of Maynooth University and DkIT examined potential models of strategic engagement between both institutions. The study's findings indicated that establishing an accreditation arrangement—such as granting 'Recognised College' status—could be a viable option. However, DkIT as a "Recognised College" of Maynooth University, while enabling university awards to be provided to graduates, would not create a university campus for DkIT, as the legal name of the institute would remain.

The President outlined that a further strategic objective of DkIT was to enhance and strengthen strategic cross-border relationships with Northern Ireland FEs and HEs.

In early October 2025, DkIT was approached by Queen's University Belfast (QUB) to explore the possibility of a strategic partnership with DkIT, that could lead to DkIT becoming (*working title*) Dundalk University College – A College of Queen's University Belfast, by autumn 2026.

A series of discussions commenced between DkIT executive and QUB executive to scope out the benefits and risks and determine how such a construct could be formed. DkIT has been in discussion with Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) at each step on this process with support of the HEA and the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science James Lawless T.D. and his colleagues at DFHERIS as well as other Government departments.

For DkIT this strategic partnership will entail:

- Re-designation from "Dundalk Institute of Technology" to "Dundalk University College – A College of Queen's University Belfast" (*working title*). The precise future name has not yet been agreed and will be determined by Oireachtas legislation. The University College model

is a new model within the Irish higher education landscape and will necessitate primary legislation to facilitate such a redesignation.

- Graduates in the region being provided with university awards from QUB from Level 7 to Level 10.
- Retention of governance, financial and staffing autonomy under Irish legislation, continuing to receive public funding from the HEA, and remaining a designated institution under the HEA Act 2022.
- Potentially increased undergraduate, postgraduate and international and northern Irish students.
- Enhanced research and innovation activity on Dundalk campus.

The President is seeking Governing Body approval on a motion to advance this initiative. The President outlined that Cabinet was meeting this morning to be briefed on the initiative in advance of Departmental consideration of the policy/ legislative requirements and QUB was also meeting with their Senate this morning to consider this initiative.

The President reiterated that he was asking the Governing Body for agreement to develop a Strategic Partnership Agreement and this will be brought back to Governing Body.

The Strategic Partnership Agreement will have to be drafted and fully consulted on with all key stakeholders at DkIT and QUB, encompassing the needs of DFHERIS and HEA, with a target signing date of 11 December 2025. The Strategic Partnership Agreement will provide the blueprint as to what will be implemented.

Four joint DkIT/QUB working groups are being formed, covering partnership agreement, academic integration, research and innovation and regional impact.

Discussion and Q&A followed the presentation:

The Chair provided a verbal brief on the significant opportunity being presented for the Institute by QUB. He referenced our ambitious Strategic Plan wherein we looked to retain our autonomy which no other Institute has done. He referenced the very positive reaction from departmental officials and that this is an exceptional offer and a mementos occasion. He formally acknowledged the significant contributions of Maynooth University in advancing key strategic initiatives with DkIT. The Chair expressed recognition of the generosity demonstrated by Maynooth University throughout its engagements and collaborations with DkIT. He also outlined that both he and the President had engaged directly with the Maynooth University President.

The Chair acknowledged members' concerns about the short notice of today's motion, noting that coordination among multiple stakeholders and the need to manage its release contributed to this. He also recognised members' comments regarding the need for adequate resources to advance this strategic initiative.

The Governing Body Motion:

- *Authorises and supports the initiation and development of a strategic partnership between Dundalk Institute of Technology and Queen's University Belfast within which DkIT would become a college of Queen's University Belfast, with the working title of Dundalk University College, a College of Queen's University Belfast, by 30 September 2026.*

- *Requests The Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to re-designate Dundalk Institute of Technology as (current working title) Dundalk University College, a College of Queen’s University Belfast by 30 September 2026.*
- *Requests the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to ensure that in any such re-designation that DkIT retains financial, staffing and governance autonomy with funding provided from the Irish State, and is recognised as a publicly-funded higher education institution by the Irish State.*
- *Authorises the President to engage in negotiations with Queen’s University Belfast to develop a Partnership Agreement to include a comprehensive framework for financial, staffing, and governance autonomy, academic integration through formally embedding within Queen’s University academic framework and standards, joint research and innovation co-operation, within a partnership of equals, consult as appropriate with staff representative bodies and other DkIT stakeholders, and present for consideration and approval to Governing Body by 5th December 2025.*

Proposed by: Diarmuid O’Callaghan

Seconded by: Ann Marie Lacey

Vote: Unanimously by all

The Chair took the opportunity to thank Dr. Edel Healy for her work with Maynooth University, the relationships developed and achievements. Dr. Edel Healy wished to note how congenial Maynooth University were, acknowledging the significant effort and energy contributed by the University and conveying appreciation, along with a personal thank you, for the contributions of the President of Maynooth University and Professor Aidan Mulkeen, Deputy President. She also highlighted the ongoing collaborations between the two institutions. The Governing Body concurred.

The Chair informed the Governing Body that he will be attending the all-staff briefing session later today.

The President and Executive Board were congratulated by the Governing Body.

Meeting concluded at 12.45.

Professor Thomas Collins
Chair