



ICDE World Conference on Online Learning: Our Guiding Aspirations

The local organising team at Dublin City University (DCU) is conscious that your decision to participate in this year's ICDE World Conference on Online Learning requires a significant investment in time, money and intellectual enterprise. Delegates from over 50 countries will be converging on Dublin in November 2019 at considerable personal expense and there is also a wider environmental impact associated with the cost of increased international travel. Accordingly we are acutely aware of the direct and indirect costs arising from hosting such a major international conference. Our team is therefore absolutely committed to ensuring this year's event is designed to maximise the benefits of so many people meeting up in Dublin by creating an environment conducive to professional networking and the translation of new knowledge into transformative practices. The real test of the ICDE World Conference is the extent that we ultimately shape and influence the future of online education, and the overarching mission of transforming lives and societies. To this end the decisions the local organising team has made about the design of the ICDE World Conference are anchored in the following guiding aspirations.

1. Value

The ICDE World Conference is the outcome of hundreds if not thousands of hours of voluntary work by many people. Without this work the real costs of staging such a major international event would be significantly higher. We are committed to ensuring that this work results in significant value to everyone participating in the event. To ensure that this work has a distal impact beyond a few days of good craic in Dublin we have purposively woven the conference theme of "transforming lives and societies" carefully throughout the full programme. We hope this theme and the related sub themes will resonate with participants and provide a strong framework to scaffold rich conversations, trigger more critical understandings and generate transformative actions. We are also committed to ensuring our sponsors and exhibitors get genuine value from the event, as the reality is that ICDE World Conference would not be possible without their support.

2. Professionalism

The work involved in planning, preparing and successfully hosting the ICDE World Conference depends on the willingness of many people to undertake tasks often working to tight deadlines. At times this work has been demanding and quite challenging but throughout the planning phase we have been committed to managing the event and our responses to conference participants with the upmost professionalism. Members of the local team have strived to be responsive to enquires and to doing our best to accommodate specific requests wherever possible. Moreover, we have taken considerable pride in efforts to keep people well informed about the event through our active use of social media and regular conference newsletters. We aspire to maintaining a high standard of professionalism throughout the event, as our team wants everyone to feel welcome and have a positive and productive conference experience. On another level our aspiration is that the ICDE World Conference is not just another gathering of professional scholars working in the area, but rather a forum for scholarly professionals from many different countries and discipline backgrounds committed to the transformative potential of education.

3. Inclusion

At the core of ICDE's mission is the goal of bringing accessible, quality education to all through open, online and distance learning. It follows that in planning and designing the ICDE World Conference we have aspired to supporting a culture of inclusion, which is reflected on our choice of a diverse range of formats and speakers, with different experiences from geographically dispersed locations. This is the first year that the ICDE World Conference has supported virtual papers as an attempt to ensure the event is accessible to a wider international community of educators. Inclusion is also evident in our cultural programme where we aim to celebrate indigenous heritage and culture, and more generally the importance of valuing different ways of thinking in today's increasingly digitally connected societies and globalised world. Our commitment to inclusion is also reflected in availability of an inter-faith space throughout the event, and the Principles for Conference Participation, which remind us about some basic rights and responsibilities we all have to ensure that everyone has a courteous, respectful and welcoming experience.

4. Openness

A commitment to Openness is at the heart of the ICDE World Conference. We aspire to foster a culture of openness in the way we go about our own work and in the manner in which the conference has been designed to support open scholarship and open collaboration across professional communities. It is noteworthy that over 30 different professional bodies and associations from around the globe have chosen to support and contribute to the ICDE World Conference. Some of these professional bodies have their own major conferences very close to the date of the ICDE World Conference and we have tried to openly promote these events in the spirit of collaboration. As part of our aspiration to support open scholarship will have encouraged contributors to assign a Creative Commons License to their intellectual outputs and the published conference proceedings, which include over 100 full written papers, will be published in an open access format.

5. Challenge

Our aspiration is that the ICDE World Conference does not merely reiterate what we already know but rather challenges some of our existing beliefs, taken for granted assumptions, and traditional understandings and practices. This aspiration seeks to confront some of the myths, misinformation and half-truths that emerge from often competing and co-existing drivers and change forces associated with efforts to transform education through new digital technologies. Accordingly we hope that some of our invited speakers and the conference programme more generally will provide a catalyst for rich debate, disagreement and the expression of differing viewpoints. If participants depart from Dublin without having some of their pre-existing opinions, perspectives and understandings challenged then the local organising team will have fallen short of our aspirations for the ICDE World Conference. Of course, the design of a challenge-based professional learning experience may well serve to reaffirm existing beliefs and key principles which might be an important outcome of this year's event.

6. Sustainability

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) underpin the conference theme of 'transforming lives and societies'. Dublin City University (DCU) is committed to advancing these goals and last year was ranked in the top 100 universities worldwide for its economic and societal impact measured against the SDGS. We have sought to expand the scope of this year's conference beyond the Goal 4 of Quality Education by including a focus on Goal 3 of promoting Good Health and Well-Being. Moreover, Goal 12 of Responsible Consumption and Production influenced the choice of the Convention Centre Dublin (CCD) as the world's first carbon-neutral constructed convention venue. The CCD has a recycling rate consistently over 90% and all cups and utensils used during the ICDE World Conference are recyclable. We are also pleased to partner with a venue committed to promoting the SDGS of Reduced Inequalities, Sustainable Cities and Communities, and Zero Hunger. This is why we have selected lunch options that under health regulations allow us to share leftover meals with some of Dublin's less fortunate residents. While the Gala Dinner set in an historic venue will be grand event we have deliberately chosen locally sourced products that reflect our commitment to sustainability.

7. Transformation

The conference theme places transformation at the core of our discussions. We believe that participants have a moral and professional responsibility to ensure that this year's ICDE World Conference is not just another talk fest but rather challenges us to address many of the wider societal issues we face with a clear call to action. Therefore we aspire to promoting the translation of new insights and critical understandings so they have real impact beyond Dublin. The real test of our success is the extent that the "Dublin Declaration", which will arise from the conference, lives in our actions to develop new models of open, online and digital education as powerful levers for a more equitable, socially just and sustainable future. We recognise this ambitious aspiration will not be easy but this does not faze the local team from designing a conference that encourages difficult conversations that confront a number of uncomfortable realities.

Finally, we also strive to be excellent hosts during your time in Dublin, where our guiding values, aspirations and commitments combine to help create a vibrant place and space for a great conference experience.