

**UANEEN MODULE**

**STUDENTS’ HANDBOOK**

**UM404 – CONTRIBUTORY MODULE**

**UM405 – NON-CONTRIBUTORY MODULE**

**Table of Contents** **Page No.**

What is the Uaneen module? 3

How to register for the Uaneen module 3

Aims of the Uaneen module 3

What is included in extra-curricular activities? 4

Why take the module? 4

Learning derived from involvement in extra-curricular activities 5

Learning outcomes of the Uaneen module 5

What is involved with taking the Uaneen module? 6

What supports are in place while taking the Uaneen module? 6 - 7

What should be in my final portfolio? 7

What is reflective writing? 8 – 13

Examples of reflective writing 14 – 17

Reflective writing is not .. 17

**What is the Uaneen module?**

Thank you for registering to take part in the Uaneen module this academic year. The Uaneen module was created in 2004 and named after the late Uaneen Fitzimons, an Alumni of DCU who went on to carve out a successful career in the Entertainment industry.

The Uaneen module can be taken as a contributory module (UM404) with a credit value of 5 credits that contribute to the final year award of your programme of study.

It can also be taken as a non-contributory module (UM405) with a credit value of 5 credits that does **NOT** contribute to the final year award of your programme of study.

In both cases the credits and marks are recorded on transcript of results. Uaneen certificates are presented at Graduation with Degree parchments.

**How to register for the Uaneen module**

The Uaneen is a year-long module – there is no option to join it in the Second Semester. Many students who take the Uaneen module will have participated in previous years in the Student Engagement Award and this module will be a natural progression.

Students entering their final year have the option to select the Uaneen module, either contributory or non-contributory on their portal page, module selection in Semester 1 of final year. Not all courses offer the module as contributory – for more information on this please go to [www.dcu.ie/uaneen](http://www.dcu.ie/uaneen)

**Aims of the Uaneen module**

* To recognise the commitment which students put into extra- curricular activity, as well as the personal development derived from this activity.
* To encourage participation and active involvement in extra -curricular activity so as to achieve that personal development.
* To capture the benefits you have gained from your University life in terms of skills and experiences that you will find invaluable in your future life and work.

3

**What is included in extra-curricular activities?**

* Sports
* Clubs
* Societies
* Community Involvement
* Volunteering
* DCU involvement
* Travel

Internal and external to DCU

 **\*No work, for any commercial entity, whether paid or unpaid, will be accepted as part of the Uaneen module.**

You cannot draw on any activity where you gain academic credits i.e. academic work, POD’s etc. You may however, to set the context, draw on your placement experiences, Erasmus and part-time employment.

**Why take the module?**

* Employers are placing more emphasis on recruiting graduates who not only have a degree but who are also equipped with key transferable skills and who have demonstrated a desire to learn more and improve their capabilities during their time at University.
* The Reflective Process enables you to learn more about yourself and your ambitions. The Uaneen Module asks you to draw your experiences together, offers you formal recognition for this process and will make your job application stand out.
* The employer's organisation IBEC works in co-operation with DCU in facilitating these awards.

For previous testimonies from students who successfully completed the Uaneen module as both contributory and non-contributory participants, and to get an idea of the value they gained from taking part, please take a look at testimonials at [www.dcu.ie/uaneen](http://www.dcu.ie/uaneen)

4

**Learning derived from involvement in extra-curricular awards**

According to research, involvement and leadership within a student organization (and similar) can contribute to several broader learning categories, the most relevant of which include:

* civic engagement,
* humanitarianism,
* knowledge acquisition,
* integration and application,
* practical competence and
* interpersonal and intrapersonal competence

**Learning outcomes of the Uaneen module**

On successful completion of this module the learner will be able to;

1. Collect and synthesis information required to develop a unique learning portfolio, which is self crafted and self directed.

2. Critically select activities which contribute to learning and exercise judgement in selecting extra curricular activities which provide learning opportunities.

3. Apply learning to complex societal problems and identify, investigate, formulate and advocate solutions.

4. Determine their role in the wider society and recall information, concepts and theories which are essential to build a democratic society.

5. Demonstrate leadership and self reliance while using an objective approach to problem solving.

6. Justify their own values, motivations and passions to display a personal value system to create a just and democratic society.

5

**What is involved with taking the Uaneen module?**

The Uaneen module is a year long module and final year students are offered a place on the module through their portal page as either contributory (UM404) or non-contributory (UM405) depending on their course (for more information go to [www.dcu.ie/uaneen](http://www.dcu.ie/uaneen)).

Students are required to interact regularly through the Uaneen VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) via their Loop page, to access material in relation to gaining reflective writing skills.

Students are required to attend up to three compulsory workshops organised at regular intervals throughout the academic year that will assist students in learning skills to write reflectively and to aid with the preparation of their final portfolio. Small group tutorials will be organised throughout the academic year and students are required to attend at least two of these over two semesters.

Students must submit a ‘Uaneen Log of Activities’ form by week 2 of Semester 1 to ensure they are eligible to continue on with the module. Students will also be required to submit a ‘Uaneen Module – Assessment Form’ by mid-semester 1 to ensure they understand the concepts involved with reflective writing.

Students must submit a pass / fail short reflective essay at end of Semester 1 of up to 800 words around the Christmas break.

The final part of the module requires students to submit a full reflective portfolio of up to 4,000 +/- 10% words as a file submission via Loop at end of Semester 2.

**What supports are in place while taking the Uaneen module?**

There are a number of supports in place for students who take this module.

Every student will be assigned a mentor during Semester 1 and will be advised who they have been assigned to via email. Mentors are drawn from all areas of DCU academic and administrative staff and have participated in the module over a number of years. The mentor will read through the student’s short reflective essay submitted in Semester 1 and provide guidance to the student in relation to their reflective writing. All students are encouraged to engage with their mentor as results have shown that students who make use of advice from their mentors tend to gain higher grades.

Regular workshops are run throughout the academic year to support students in gaining the correct skills to write reflectively. Regular tutorials are run throughout the academic year that will focus on timely subjects as students prepare their portfolios.

6

There is a weekly drop-in clinic run every Wednesday from 12-2pm in the Uaneen office in the U building for all Uaneen students to avail of.

In the final four weeks of semester 2, there is a Portfolio drop-in clinic where students can show small examples of their portfolio if they require advice in relation to their reflective writing.

There are previous portfolios available for viewing in the Uaneen office or the Library Helpdesk.

The Uaneen Facebook is regularly updated with information students need in relation to the module throughout the year.

**What should be in my final portfolio?**

The portfolio (4,000 +/- 10%) usually consists of the following sections.

* Log of Activities
* Introduction
* The Reflection Section
* Conclusion
* Appendices
* Academic References regarding reflective writing
* Other supplementary material

The Uaneen rubric and marking scheme documentation (both available to Uaneen students on their Loop page) provides full details of how students can gain maximum grades for their portfolio. As with any other academic module, the Uaneen module is subject to strict grading criteria and follows DCU guidelines on grading of academic projects. All portfolios are initially graded internally by both academic and administrative staff from within DCU and grades are rigorously monitored and reviewed by an external examiner.

7

**What is reflective writing?**

Reflection is a process whereby you try to make sense and learn from your experiences and should be perceived as an opportunity to engage, learn, grow and self-actualise (Hamilton, 2016).

From a constructivist perspective, the process of reflective writing facilitates deep learning because it makes connections between facets of experience—between cognition and emotion, between past and present experience and between old and new knowledge. It often takes the form of a narrative, through which an individual can attempt to make sense of thoughts and experiences that might otherwise seem unfathomable. (Carlile, Jordan, 2007, p. 25).

A good understanding of reflection is required to write the reflective blogs and portfolio students must create for the Uaneen module. For many, students write their reflective blog as a descriptive piece. Your reflective pieces should critically analyse the skills gained through experiences.

So what is the difference between descriptive and reflective writing? Descriptive writing asks the ‘who, ‘what’ and ‘when’ questions. Although a small amount of description is required in your reflective blog, the bulk of your writing should be reflective. If you have a piece of paper beside you, draw a triangle on it. Now, one third of the way up, draw a line. In the small portion of the triangle write the word ‘describe’. Draw a line in the middle of the remaining portion and write the words ‘analyse’ and ‘reflect’ in each remaining section. This is the percentage to each type of writing you should attribute in all of your reflective writing.

8



Image taken from <https://libguides.reading.ac.uk/writing/stylesofwriting>

What then is reflective writing? The purpose of reflection is to help you to make improvements for the future and is written in the first person. It’s about thinking about our processes and our feelings and emotions during any experience that we thought was significant in our lives. When we reflect, we analyse how we felt as the event was happening and how we feel our behaviour caused the experience to unfold the way it did. Once we reflect on that process, we then think how we would use our learning from that experience if we were faced with a similar experience in the future.

9

(Corby, 2018)

The Uaneen reflective pieces should be considered by using Gibbs Reflective Cycle. This cycle has six stages: describe, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action.



Image taken from <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/301/study-skills/university-study/reflective-practice>

10

There are many short videos available on YouTube that give detailed description of Gibbs Reflective Cycle and reflective writing.

###### Reflective writing [adapted from University of Portsmouth DCQE]:

Reflective *writing* is evidence of reflective *thinking*. In an academic context, reflective thinking usually involves:

1. Looking back at an event or incident that you were directly involved in.
2. Analysing the event (thinking in depth and from different perspectives, and trying to explain, often with reference to theory from college).
3. Thinking carefully about what the event means for you and your ongoing progress as a learner and/or practising professional.

To help structure reflective thinking into a Reflective writing piece for your blog and portfolio, it might be useful to consider **What? So what? Now what?**

1. **What?** Means a description: a **short** summary of what happened, only focussing on the relevant aspects of the event.
2. **So what?** Is an interpretation of what is interesting, relevant and important about the event; and how this relates to the theory from college. Is the event similar or different to other previous experiences (even outside of a workplace, e.g. in a club, hobby etc.)?

**3. Now what?** Is a consideration of the outcome of the event for yourself, for now and in your future profession?

Reflective writing is characterised by ‘**revealing**’ personal strengths & weaknesses; and successes & mistakes.

Now that we are beginning to understand the differences between descriptive and reflective writing, let’s consider each stage of Gibbs model in more detail. To help you start thinking about your experience reflectively, each stage has some ‘prompt’ questions to help you write about your experience. Remember, description should only be a very small part of your reflective blogs and portfolio.

11

### Step 1: Description

First, ask the person you're coaching to describe the situation in detail. At this stage, you simply want to know what happened – you'll draw conclusions later.

Consider asking questions like these to help him describe the situation:

* When and where did this happen?
* Why were you there?
* Who else was there?
* What happened?
* What did you do?
* What did other people do?
* What was the result of this situation?

### Step 2: Feelings

Next, encourage him to talk about what he thought and felt during the experience. At this stage, avoid commenting on his emotions.

Use questions like these to guide the discussion:

* What did you feel before this situation took place?
* What did you feel while this situation took place?
* What do you think other people felt during this situation?
* What did you feel after the situation?
* What do you think about the situation now?
* What do you think other people feel about the situation now?

12

### Step 3: Evaluation

Now you need to encourage the person you're coaching to look objectively at what approaches worked, and which ones didn't.

Ask him:

* What was positive about this situation?
* What was negative?
* What went well?
* What didn't go so well?
* What did you and other people do to contribute to the situation (either positively or negatively)?

### Step 4: Conclusions

Once you've evaluated the situation, you can help your team member draw conclusions about what happened.

Encourage him to think about the situation again, using the information that you've collected so far. Then ask questions like these:

* How could this have been a more positive experience for everyone involved?
* If you were faced with the same situation again, what would you do differently?
* What skills do you need to develop, so that you can handle this type of situation better?

### Step 5: Action

You should now have some possible actions that your team member can take to deal with similar situations more effectively in the future.

In this last stage, you need to come up with a plan so that he can make these changes.

Once you've identified the areas he will work on, get him to commit to taking action, and agree a date on which you will both review progress.

13

**Examples of reflective writing**

**Level 1 – this would not be considered a good piece of reflective writing as it is very descriptive with very little reflective insight given.**

I was always interested in sport. In school I played basketball, hockey and camogie. It was hard to fit it all in sometimes, especially in my leaving cert year but I enjoyed it so much. When I went to university I joined the basketball and hockey teams. I also joined a book club and the St Vincent De Paul society because I am from a fairly deprived area. In my first two years I found it very busy, but like in school, I felt it did me good. I failed two exams in the summer of second year but I got through in the repeats. I did think about dropping some activities at that stage but I came up with ways of managing my time better and kept them up. In third year I was elected the secretary of the DCU basketball society which made life very busy. I had been playing hockey less and while it was a hard decision I decided to drop hockey and concentrate on basketball. Now in my fourth year I am managing to keep things going. My term as basketball society secretary came to an end and while I was nominated for the role of Chair I didn’t accept the nomination. I felt bad as the society members obviously thought I was good enough to be their Chair, but I had to prioritise my studies. I felt a bit guilty, even a little selfish, but I remembered what it was like to fail those exams in second year. Overall I think that I gained lots of skills. There are many things I would never have thought I would be capable of doing. I have a lot of things on my CV now over and above what I learned in my formal studies. I think I am a more rounded person and I have really grown and matured.

**Level 2 – this would be considered a mediocre piece of reflective writing. There is a 50/50 split between description and reflection.**

I was always interested in sport. I enjoyed being part of a team, bonding with others, playing my part. In school I played basketball, hockey and camogie. It was hard to fit it all in sometimes, especially in my leaving cert year but I enjoyed it so much and I think I felt healthier and more able for my studies. Looking back, I was probably very lucky that I did manage to get a good leaving cert because I was probably stretched too thin. I was also lucky that I didn’t have to work part-time so I had the time for all my activities.

When I went to university I joined the basketball and hockey teams. I also joined a book club and the St Vincent De Paul society because I am from a fairly deprived area. I felt very strongly about giving something back. In my first two years I found it very busy, but like in school, I felt it did me good. I failed two exams in the summer of second year but I got through in the repeats. I was really upset at failing exams. It was the first time that I hadn’t managed to ‘keep it all going’. I felt at the time that it was my lecturer’s fault. I had poor continuous assessment marks but I didn’t realise that I could fail overall – I didn’t take enough notice of their comments and feedback.

14

I did think about dropping some activities at that stage but I came up with ways of managing my time better and kept them up. I made careful weekly plans, making sure I included all my activities, took account of deadlines and balanced things better. That year I was elected the secretary of the DCU basketball society which made life very busy. I had been playing hockey less and while it was a hard decision I decided to drop hockey and concentrate on basketball. I did feel guilty, dropping it midway throughout the year but I felt it was the right decision, especially after discussing it with some friends and my tutor.

Now in my fourth year I am managing to keep things going. My term as basketball society secretary came to an end and while I was nominated for the role of Chair I didn’t accept the nomination. I felt bad as the society members obviously thought I was good enough to be their Chair, but I had to prioritise my studies. I felt a bit guilty, even a little selfish, but I remembered what it was like to fail those exams in second year. Overall I think that I gained lots of skills. There are many things I would never have thought I would be capable of doing. I have a lot of things on my CV now over and above what I learned in my formal studies. I think I am a more rounded person and I have really grown and matured. I have gained organisation skills and am better at communicating with others. I have widened my interests beyond just sports and the book club in particular has given me new insights. My work with the SVP has broadened my perspectives and made me more tolerant and understanding.

**Level 3 – this would be considered an excellent piece of reflective writing. The student has described a scenario, analysed it, reflected on the learning they have gained and how they could project the skills they learned through this experience into future events.**

I was always interested in sport. I enjoyed being part of a team, bonding with others, playing my part. In school I played basketball, hockey and camogie. It was hard to fit it all in sometimes, especially in my leaving cert year but I enjoyed it so much and I think I felt healthier and more able for my studies. Looking back I was probably very lucky that I did manage to get a good leaving cert because I was probably stretched too thin. I realise that the support of my teachers and my parents, in particular, was very important. I also had very close friends. I think too, if I’m honest, that maybe things came too easily to me in school. I was lucky that I didn’t really have to work too hard at anything but I succeeded in most things. Maybe I wasn’t every really challenged. I was also lucky that I didn’t have to work part-time so I had the time for all my activities.

When I went to university I joined the basketball and hockey teams. I also joined a book club and the St Vincent de Paul society because I am from a fairly deprived area. I felt very strongly about giving something back. I often felt that my family had been really lucky never to have had to ask for charity but many of my neighbours and friends were really badly off. The book club was very enjoyable but I found it difficult sometimes when people picked books that I just didn’t like or would normally read. Sometimes this worked out really well as it broadened my reading interest but sometimes if I didn’t like the book I just didn’t keep reading it.

15

My fellow members were quite critical of me about this – they sometimes thought that I just couldn’t be bothered. Often they felt I was criticising them through their book choice. I was upset about this but then it happened with one of my own book choices and I realised how the others might see my own approach. After that I always tried to read the books and then explain what I didn’t like, rather than just dismissing them if I didn’t like them. In my first two years I found it very busy, but like in school, I felt it did me good. I failed two exams in the summer of second year but I got through in the repeats. I was really upset at failing exams. It was the first time that I hadn’t managed to ‘keep it all going’. I felt at the time that it was my lecturer’s fault. I had poor continuous assessment marks but I didn’t realise that I could fail overall – I didn’t take enough notice of their comments and feedback. Thinking back, the signs were there. There had been very useful, if critical, comments when I got my assignments back, but I didn’t really take them on board. It was easier to blame the lecturer but even if they didn’t make things clear enough or I didn’t understand them, I never discussed it with them.

I did think about dropping some activities at that stage but I came up with ways of managing my time better and kept them up. I made careful weekly plans, making sure I included all my activities, took account of deadlines and balanced things better. That year I was elected the secretary of the DCU basketball society which made me even more busy. I had been playing hockey less and while it was a hard decision I decided to drop hockey and concentrate on basketball. I did feel guilty, dropping it midway throughout the year but I felt it was the right decision, especially after discussing it with some friends and my tutor. I discovered that my friends thought I was mad to be juggling so many things and were worried about me getting burned out. They could have been more open about this – it would have been great if they had told me at the time. Maybe I wasn’t seen as open to this or maybe they only saw it in hindsight?

Now in my fourth year I am managing to keep things going. My term as basketball society secretary came to an end and while I was nominated for the role of Chair I didn’t accept the nomination. I felt bad as the society members obviously thought I was good enough to be their Chair but I had to prioritise my studies. I felt a bit guilty, even a little selfish, but I remembered what it was like to fail those exams in second year. I can also see how stretched I was and despite the guilt, I know that I was right to put my studies first.

Overall I think that I have gained lots of skills from my extra curricular activities and also from my set backs. There are many things I would never have thought I would be capable of doing. I have a lot of things on my CV now over and above what I learned in my formal studies. I have held roles of responsibility such as the secretary of the basketball society. From this I learned how to be more organised, how to oragnise a whole gropu of people, take minutes, formulate action plans, keep track of actions being completed, etc. I also made lots of contacts with people on other society committees in other colleges.

16

I think I am a more rounded person and I have really grown and matured. I have gained organisation skills and am better at communicating with others. I am not afraid to discuss my concerns with friends or tutors and to listen to their advice. I have gained team working and participation skills through sports and in particular have learned to be more tolerant of others’ views through my involvement in the Book Club. My work with the SVP has broadened my perspectives and made me more tolerant and understanding. I have seen both poverty and despair but also people turn their lives around and find their feet after some help from the society. My experience has made me realise how good I have it and how I need to build on my own skills and potential.

**Reflective writing is not:**

* just conveying information, instruction or argument
* pure description, though there may be descriptive elements
* straightforward decision or judgment (e.g. about whether something is right or wrong, good or bad)
* simple problem-solving
* a summary of course notes
* a standard university essay

(Corby, 2018)

17