DCU BUSINESS SCHOOL

Graduate Certificate in Strategic Public Procurement

DCU Business School | NFQ Level 9 | 30 ECTS | Part-time | January 2027

About DCU Business School

DCU Business School is part of Dublin City University, Ireland's University of Enterprise. We are among the top 1% of business schools globally with triple accreditation (EQUIS, AACSB and AMBA), and the only Irish business school to hold the Small Business Charter. Our teaching, research and partnerships focus on real-world impact.

NFQ Level 9	1 year	On campus	25 places	Jan 2027
30 ECTS	Part-time	Block delivery	Capped cohort	First intake

About this Programme

The Graduate Certificate in Strategic Public Procurement is Ireland's first dedicated postgraduate award in strategic public procurement. It develops the advanced strategic, analytical and governance capability required to lead complex procurement in an increasingly regulated, sustainability-driven and geopolitically uncertain environment.

Public procurement in Ireland accounts for approximately €18 billion in annual expenditure — around 8% of GDP — under a regulatory framework of growing complexity, intensifying audit scrutiny, and rising expectations on sustainability, social value and strategic contribution. The programme responds directly to that shift, moving procurement leadership beyond procedural compliance into institutional strategy.

Designed around the working patterns of public sector professionals, it is delivered on campus in concentrated blocks, pairing taught in-class sessions with full-day applied case study workshops. It builds on DCU Business School's eight years of experience delivering the MSc in Strategic Procurement.

Who Should Apply

The programme is designed for procurement and contracting professionals across central government, local authorities, state agencies, the health sector, semi-state bodies and defence organisations — and for suppliers, advisors and legal practitioners engaging seriously with public sector markets. It suits practitioners with two to three years' experience moving from operational delivery into strategic, category or policy roles.

Aligned in full with ProcurCompEU — the European Competency Framework for Public Procurement Professionals and its 30 defined competences.

Programme Structure

The Graduate Certificate comprises four Level 9 modules totalling 30 ECTS, delivered over one calendar year on a part-time basis. Semester 1 establishes systems, governance and applied tendering practice; Semester 2 develops strategic procurement competence, geopolitical risk analysis and economic resilience.

Module	Title	ECTS	Semester
1a	Public Procurement Systems & Governance	5	1
1b	Applied Public Procurement: Tender Design & Evaluation	5	1
2	Strategic Public Procurement & Governance	10	2
3	Geopolitics, Risk & Economic Resilience in Public Procurement	10	2
	Total	**30**	

How You Will Learn

Contact is concentrated into on-campus blocks so that participants remain in full-time employment. Each module pairs taught in-class delivery with an extended applied case study workshop in which learners work a realistic public procurement scenario from end to end. On-campus days are scheduled on a Friday–Saturday pattern to minimise disruption to working commitments.

5 ECTS MODULE

Modules 1a and 1b

- Half-day in-class taught delivery
- One full-day case study workshop
- 1.5 on-campus days per module
- 125 hours total learner effort

10 ECTS MODULE

Modules 2 and 3

- One full day in-class taught delivery
- Two full-day case study workshops
- 3 on-campus days per module
- 250 hours total learner effort

Approximately 10 on-campus days across the calendar year

One induction day, three days in Semester 1, six days in Semester 2 — supported throughout by Loop, DCU's digital learning environment.

Where It Leads

Graduates are positioned for advancement into senior procurement, category management, contract management and procurement policy roles across the public sector, and hold a recognised Level 9 foundation for further postgraduate study. Indicative roles include:

- Procurement Manager / Senior Procurement Manager
- Category Manager
- Contract Manager / Compliance Officer
- Head or Director of Procurement
- Procurement Policy Advisor
- Tender Evaluation Specialist
- Supply Chain Risk & Resilience Manager
- Sustainability & Green Procurement Manager

Semester 1 — Applied Foundation

Semester 1 builds the regulatory literacy and applied tendering capability on which the Level 9 strategic modules depend.

MODULE 1a · 5 ECTS · LEVEL 9

Public Procurement Systems & Governance

Develops advanced analytical understanding of EU and national procurement regulatory design, governance and accountability mechanisms, and the institutional roles that shape procurement practice — the analytical vocabulary and regulatory literacy required to critique procurement strategy at postgraduate level.

Indicative content

- Public procurement as a system: the procurement cycle from need identification to contract close-out, and the policy-to-contract-management continuum
- EU and national regulatory frameworks: Directives 2014/24/EU, 2014/25/EU and 2009/81/EC, Irish transposition, thresholds and procedure selection
- Governance and accountability: the Comptroller and Auditor General, Public Accounts Committee, Freedom of Information, legal challenge and remedies
- Frameworks, Dynamic Purchasing Systems and market architecture: call-off mechanisms, market consultation and structured engagement
- Value for money and public value: life-cycle costing, risk allocation, and procurement as a policy instrument

Assessment: 100% continuous assessment. Critical analysis of a defined procurement scenario, evaluating the applicable regulatory framework, procedure selection, and governance implications.

MODULE 1b · 5 ECTS · LEVEL 9

Applied Public Procurement: Tender Design & Evaluation

Addresses the 'how' of public procurement — applied competence in designing, evaluating and managing procurement exercises within regulatory and institutional constraints, so that learners meet strategic content from a position of practical literacy.

Indicative content

- Designing tender documentation: input versus output specifications, proportionality, and the alignment of selection and award criteria
- Go / no-go decision frameworks: institutional readiness, strategic alignment, risk analysis, and the business case as a governance instrument
- Evaluation methodology: objective scoring, criteria weighting, MEAT models, bias mitigation, and abnormally low tenders
- Debriefing and transparency: statutory feedback obligations, legal defensibility, audit trail standards and challenge preparedness
- Tender failure analysis, SME participation, and market engagement from prior information notice through to standstill and award

Assessment: 100% continuous assessment. Applied tender design and evaluation exercise (80%) — specification drafting, evaluation matrix design and assessment of a supplier submission — plus a structured debrief note (20%).

Semester 2 — Strategic Integration

Semester 2 reframes procurement as a governance instrument, then confronts learners with the volatile environments in which that architecture must operate.

MODULE 2 · 10 ECTS · LEVEL 9

Strategic Public Procurement & Governance

Situates procurement within the architecture of public sector strategy and institutional accountability — not as an administrative compliance function, but as a governance instrument through which institutions create value, allocate risk and shape markets.

Indicative content

- Procurement as strategic governance: public value theory, the political economy of procurement, and market-shaping through strategic sourcing
- Strategic procurement design in complex environments: category and portfolio strategy, major capital programmes, politically exposed contracts
- Procurement law at strategic level: CJEU jurisprudence, the remedies architecture, litigation risk and challenge-proofing
- Governance, accountability and integrity: board-level oversight, conflict of interest, and case analysis of documented governance failure
- Policy integration and leadership: sustainability, social value, digital transformation and comparative international practice

Assessment: Group Strategic Procurement Project (40%) — collaborative development and defence of a strategic approach to a complex institutional scenario — and an Individual Strategic Analysis Paper (60%).

MODULE 3 · 10 ECTS · LEVEL 9

Geopolitics, Risk & Economic Resilience in Public Procurement

Organised around the thesis that public procurement can no longer be designed as if markets are stable, supply chains reliable, and the international order benign. It integrates geopolitical analysis, economic reasoning and procurement strategy.

Indicative content

- Geopolitics, strategic competition and procurement risk: strategic dependency, economic nationalism, and country and conflict risk frameworks
- Economic analysis in strategic procurement: whole-of-life costing, total cost of ownership, real options, investment appraisal under uncertainty
- Supply chain resilience and strategic vulnerability: dependency mapping, redundancy design, continuity and emergency procurement
- Strategic dependency and critical technology: cybersecurity, dual-use, AI governance in contracting, and digital sovereignty
- Sustainability, ESG and the economics of green procurement; strategic foresight and procurement transformation

Assessment: Interactive Oral Assessment (40%) — presenting and defending a strategic risk and resilience framework to a panel simulating senior stakeholders — and a Critical Research Report (60%).

Indicative Schedule

The following indicative schedule illustrates how the programme is organised across the calendar year. On-campus days are typically scheduled on a Friday–Saturday pattern. Loop provides directed reading, preparatory material and assessment submission between contact blocks.

SEMESTER 1 · January – April · Applied Foundation Phase

Week 1	**Induction Day (on campus)**	One full day. Programme orientation, academic writing and referencing, library and digital resources, Loop training, academic integrity briefing, cohort building. Module coordinators introduce modules and assessment briefs.
Weeks 2–5	**Module 1a — Taught Block (on campus)**	Half-day in-class delivery. Procurement systems, EU and national regulatory architecture, governance and accountability, frameworks and DPS, value for money and public value.
Week 6	**Module 1a — Case Study Workshop (on campus)**	One full day. Integrated regulatory and governance case: procedure selection, compliance evaluation, risk assessment and structured justification. Assessment briefing and formative feedback.
Week 7	**Reading / Independent Study Week**	No scheduled contact. Directed reading, assessment preparation and formative activity on Loop.
Weeks 8–11	**Module 1b — Taught Block (on campus)**	Half-day in-class delivery. Specification drafting, go/no-go frameworks, evaluation methodology, debrief obligations, tender failure analysis and market engagement.
Week 12	**Module 1b — Case Study Workshop (on campus)**	One full day. Simulated tender exercise: specification drafting, evaluation matrix design, supplier submission assessment and debrief note production. Peer review and moderation.
Weeks 13+	**Semester 1 submissions**	Module 1a and Module 1b assessments submitted via Loop. Dates confirmed at induction and staggered to avoid clustering.

SEMESTER 2 · September – December · Strategic Integration Phase

Week 1	**Semester 2 Orientation (online)**	Half-day orientation. Introduction to the Level 9 strategic modules, assessment briefs for Modules 2 and 3, directed reading guidance and postgraduate research expectations.
Weeks 2–8	**Module 2 — Taught Block (on campus)**	One full day of in-class delivery. Procurement as strategic governance, category strategy, advanced EU procurement law and remedies, governance failure, sustainability and policy integration.
Week 9	**Module 2 — Case Study Workshops (on campus)**	Two full days. Complex institutional procurement scenario. Groups develop and defend a strategic procurement approach. Peer critique and assessment briefing.
Weeks 3–9	**Module 3 — Taught Block (on campus)**	One full day of in-class delivery, scheduled on weeks alternating with Module 2. Geopolitical risk frameworks, economic analysis methods, supply chain resilience, strategic dependency, green procurement and strategic foresight.
Week 10	**Module 3 — Case Study Workshops (on campus)**	Two full days. Geopolitically exposed procurement scenario. Learners build a risk, resilience and economic analysis framework and defend it under structured questioning.
Weeks 11+	**Semester 2 submissions**	Module 2 and Module 3 assessments. Submission points are deliberately staggered across the semester.

Modules 2 and 3 run concurrently from Week 3 of Semester 2. Contact days are scheduled on alternating weeks and workload is monitored at Programme Board level. The schedule is indicative and subject to annual review.

What Makes This Programme Different

- Ireland's first dedicated NFQ Level 9 award in strategic public procurement, addressing a recognised gap in postgraduate professional development for the sector.
- Designed around working patterns: concentrated on-campus blocks, roughly ten contact days across the year, scheduled Friday–Saturday.
- 100% authentic assessment with no traditional written examinations — every task is anchored in a real or realistic public procurement scenario.
- Mapped in full against ProcurCompEU, giving the award recognised currency and portability across EU public sector contexts.
- A multidisciplinary teaching team spanning procurement and operations, EU public procurement law, and applied economics and public policy.
- Built on eight years of delivery of the DCU MSc in Strategic Procurement, with a team combining over 40 years of industry supply chain experience.
- Capped at 25 participants, enabling genuine peer-to-peer problem solving and direct access to the programme team.
- Delivered by a triple-accredited business school in the top 1% globally.

What You Will Be Able To Do

01 Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of public procurement law, EU regulatory architecture and the governance frameworks applicable to contracting authorities.

02 Design and justify strategic procurement approaches for complex, high-value or politically sensitive public contracts.

03 Apply advanced economic analysis — whole-of-life costing, real options and investment appraisal under uncertainty — to procurement decisions.

04 Evaluate geopolitical risk and supply chain vulnerability, and design resilience frameworks appropriate to Irish and EU public sector contexts.

05 Operate with authority in complex public sector environments, navigating political accountability, institutional constraint and EU legal obligation.

Academic Accreditations

DCU Business School is among the elite 1% of business schools worldwide to be accredited by EQUIS, AACSB and AMBA. In addition to this 'triple crown', it is the only business school in Ireland to have been awarded the Small Business Charter.

EQUIS ACCREDITED · AACSB ACCREDITED · ASSOCIATION OF MBAS · SMALL BUSINESS CHARTER

AACSB accredited 2016, reaccredited 2021. · Applications for the January 2027 intake are welcome now.

Programme Team

Dr Paul Davis Programme Chair. Associate Professor of Operations Management and Supply Chain. Past President of the IIPMM.

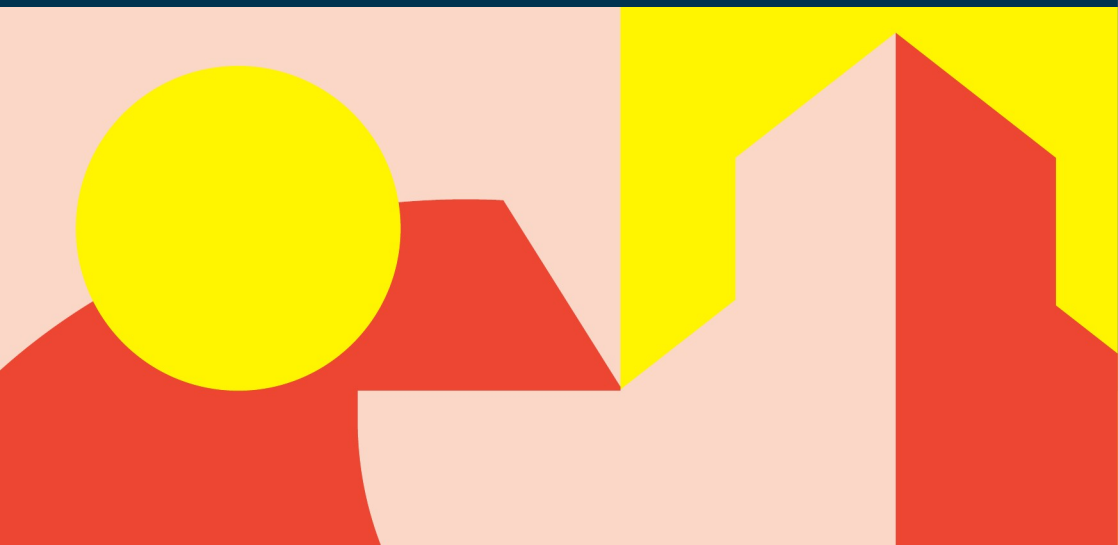
Dr Colum Foley Programme Co-Lead. Assistant Professor in Operations Management, with over 20 years of industry experience.

Dr Emma McEvoy Assistant Professor in Law, DCU School of Law and Government. EU public procurement law and SME participation.

Prof. Edgar Morgenroth Professor of Economics. Applied economics, public policy and infrastructure investment appraisal.

Entry Requirements

- A Level 8 honours degree (NFQ) with a minimum classification of H2.2, or international equivalent.
- A minimum of two to three years' professional experience in a procurement or procurement-related role in the public sector.
- Applicants who do not meet the minimum academic requirement may be considered under Recognition of Prior Learning, subject to a minimum of three years' relevant professional experience.
- A brief personal statement. Interviews may be held where clarification is required, or for applicants seeking entry via RPL.
- IELTS 6.5 or equivalent for non-native speakers of English.

Contact

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