

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES

8 February 2012

2.00-3.25 p.m. in AG01

PRESENT:

M Ali
S Blott
D Brabazon
M Brady
O Bree
P Brereton
P J Byrne
J Carroll
B Casey
Martin Clynes
Mary Clynes
J Costello
P Cummins
T Dalzell
R Devery
J Doyle
I Farragher
O Finlayson
B Flood
A Foley
Y Gao

A Harvey
S Hashmi
G Hughes
J Hughes
P James
B Kelly
D Kenny
P Kinsella
M Kirwan
J Loonam
J Lynch
B McConalogue
B MacCraith (President) *
L McDermott (Secretary)
P McDonagh
C McGroary
P McMorrow
M Molony
G Moore
P Moore
A Morrissey

N Murphy
M Nic Giolla Mhichíl
S O'Brien
P O'Byrne
R O'Connor
G O'Donoghue
P Ó Flatharta
J O'Hara
J O'Higgins-Norman
A Pearson-Evans
C Renehan
M Roantree
A Scott (Deputy President/Registrar)
M Slowey
A Stover
R Tobin
F Waldron
G Warrington
S Wickham
P Willis

APOLOGIES:

L Barry
C Brennan
J Bruen
J Brunton
J Bruton
E Connolly

P Flood
S Fox
M Humphrys
S Ingle
A Kennedy
S Knowlton

C McDonagh
C McGivern
E McGlynn
S McGovern
C Mac Murchaidh
E O'Riordan

J Connolly
E Cunningham
C Fagan
M Farren

J Lalor
C Long
L Looney
C Mac an Bhaird

D Reynolds
R Sadleir
A Sinnott

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms Muireann Ní Dhuigneáin (for Item 7)

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted.

A: Minutes and related issues

2. Minutes of the meeting of Academic Council of 14 December 2011

The minutes were confirmed and signed by the President.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Agreed that Academic Council documentation would be made available on Google Docs to all members, on a default basis, and that any member who wished to get hardcopy documentation also would be required to specify this by a date to be notified. (Item 3.2 from the meeting of 12 October 2011)

3.2 Noted that a view was being sought from the Disciplinary Committee on the proposals on plagiarism discussed by Council on 27 June 2011, and that this view would be conveyed to Council at its meeting of 11 April 2012. (Item 3.1)

3.3 Noted that a presentation on internationalisation issues would be made to the Heads' and Deans' meeting of 22 March 2012. (Item 8.3)

3.4 Noted that the working group on postgraduate student issues would report to the 11 April 2012 meeting of Council. (Item 8.4)

3.5 The Deputy President/Registrar noted that the Admissions Working Group had met once to date, that another meeting was planned, and that the Group included representation from a wide and representative range of areas within the University. In terms of discussions at national level, there is concern that the proposed reduction in

the granularity of the grading system might lead to an increase in the need for random selection; to test this, the Central Applications Office has been requested by the IUA Registrars' Group to run the 2011 offers using the 2011 Leaving Certificate results but adjusting these to take account of the proposed new grading system. Sectorally, consideration is being given to increasing the number of common-entry programmes relative to the number of designated programmes; however, the strategic implications of this for DCU will need detailed discussion. More broadly, the IUA Registrars wish to act on a concerted basis with a view to ensuring that any new admissions system will be a commonly agreed one. The Deputy President/Registrar noted that Academic Council would be kept abreast of developments. (Items 9.2 and 9.3)

4. Minutes of the meetings of the Education Committee of 2 November 2011 and 7 December 2011

Approved.

5. Minutes of the meeting of the University Standards Committee of 24 November 2011

Approved.

5.1 Minutes of the meeting of the Graduate Studies Board of 3 November 2011

Approved. Noted that a review of DCU Graduate Training Elements had been undertaken and that discussions were in progress to agree a system for approving structured PhD programmes. Academic Council will be made aware of ongoing developments; meanwhile, any member who requires additional information is welcome to contact the Dean of Graduate Studies, Dr Lisa Looney.

B: Policy and strategy issues

6. President's report

- 6.1** The HEA Landscape document is awaited, and the University will, when it is published, give consideration to how to respond to it within the timeframe specified. The criteria for the establishment of Technological Universities have been agreed and will be outlined in the Landscape document. Discussions with the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and the National University of Ireland, Maynooth are ongoing, with senior staff from each institution meeting as a group on a fortnightly basis. It is

- intended that the next steps will be agreed and publicised in the second quarter of 2012. The next months will be critical ones for the higher education sector and for DCU's strategic development over the coming years. Academic Council will be kept informed, and members are invited to submit to the President's Office any queries or comments they may have.
- 6.2** The economic environment in which the University has to operate continues to be a very challenging one, with the effective cut in funding per student being approximately 20% over the past three years.
- 6.3** In terms of globalisation issues, progress is being made in terms of establishing linkages with higher education institutions in India, and it is hoped that a significant announcement in this context can be made in due course. All the Irish universities, including DCU, were well represented at the recent Education Ireland fair in India.
- 6.4** The University has acquired most of the former Enterprise Ireland campus in Glasnevin for use as an innovation campus. The remainder will be used by Glasnevin Educate Together.
- 6.5** The President noted the large number of staff who had recently retired, including members of Council, and expressed appreciation, on behalf of Council, to all concerned. Their contributions to the life of the University over the years will be acknowledged in more detail at forthcoming social events.
- 6.6** The President announced that Mr Billy Kelly, currently Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning in DCU Business School, had been appointed Deputy Registrar/Dean of Teaching and Learning. On behalf of Council, he extended congratulations and best wishes to Mr Kelly.
- 6.7** The President welcomed the two new representatives of St Patrick's College on the Council, Dr Caroline Renehan and Dr Fionnuala Waldron.
- 7. Presentation on HEA First Destinations information**
- 7.1** Ms Muireann Ní Dhuigneáin, Head of the Careers Service, made this presentation, noting the following:
- DCU graduates are holding their own in the employment market, notwithstanding the challenging environment
 - it will be important to give consideration to updating the system which the HEA requests higher education institutions to use in collecting the data for First Destinations; the DCU response rate is high relative to that of other institutions, but achieving this requires intensive efforts on the part of DCU Careers Office staff;

some data comes from third parties (e.g. parents) and this is less than ideal; consideration would need to be given to the use of more up-to-date collection methods than is the case at present (e.g. by means of the development of an app)

- as a related issue, it will be very important for the University to integrate all its data collection systems (e.g. by incorporating the collection of First Destinations information into Business Intelligence)
- it would be helpful to revisit the question of the extent to which use can be made of students' mobile telephone numbers as an aid to data-gathering
- the increase in graduates undertaking further study, most noticeable in 2010, has levelled off somewhat
- demand remains strong for programmes in teaching and nursing and for postgraduate research
- the majority of the fifty companies which employ the highest numbers of DCU graduates are large international companies
- more broadly, employers tend to regard DCU graduates very favourably and are very positively disposed towards the four-pillar strategy, the concept of the University of Enterprise, the Graduate Attributes and the focus on translational research
- it will be important to include both international and smaller, local employers in the development of curricula
- there are opportunities for undergraduate research to focus on employer needs, and it will be important to provide undergraduate students with opportunities to publish the results of their research
- an increasing number of DCU graduates now work abroad, partly for reasons of economic necessity but also to broaden their experience and avail of opportunities to travel; the question arises as to how well they have been prepared for life overseas
- only 5% of jobs are now sourced through newspaper advertisements, with increasing use being made of online sources including social media
- the introduction of e-portfolios is likely to assist graduates in their search for employment.

7.2 It was noted that Ms Ní Dhuigneáin had made a version of her presentation to the Education Committee on 1 February 2012. On behalf of Council, the Deputy President/Registrar expressed appreciation to Ms Ní Dhuigneáin both for her presentation and for her very significant contribution to the work of DCU, and wished her well in her forthcoming retirement.

8. Teaching Quality Evaluation and Enhancement: recommendations

8.1 The Deputy President/Registrar outlined the background to this initiative (henceforth to be called QuEST – Quality Enhancement and Survey of Teaching), noting that there

- had been a very high level of engagement from Faculties with the issues involved. She expressed appreciation to the working group for having developed the recommendations. She noted that, notwithstanding the fact that the proposed pilot scheme would not contain all the elements of the very comprehensive scheme originally mooted, it would none the less provide a good basis for decision-making as to future directions, and it was very important for a system to be in place in the University in the near term. Additionally, aspects of the more comprehensive system – e.g. presentation of material to peers in one’s School, or peer observation of one’s teaching to students – could be incorporated into the pilot; where this is done, those responsible are requested to provide feedback on the experience so as to add to institutional knowledge of which practices work best. As far as providing peer observers is concerned, it may be possible to call on the resources of the DRHEA partner institutions.
- 8.2** With respect to external examiners, it was noted that the current proposed pilot system would be less onerous for them than the system previously proposed. None the less, a question is to be included on the external examiner annual report form to elicit the opinions of external examiners about the extent to which programme and module learning outcomes are being achieved.
- 8.3** The links between the aims of the proposed system and ongoing discussions about the provision of feedback to students were noted – for example, the survey on feedback recently carried out by the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning had indicated that part-time lecturers would appreciate training in giving feedback, particularly to large groups.
- 8.4** On the issue of the workload implications for those administering the proposed system, particularly Heads of School, it was noted that, if no problems with teaching emerged, there would in fact be little work, and it was also suggested that Heads could delegate some responsibility for the system to senior colleagues, particularly in larger Schools.
- 8.5** It was suggested that, while there is always a possibility that some students might be marked generously in an attempt to elicit positive feedback, the robustness of the University’s quality assurance mechanisms, especially the external examiner system, would militate against such approaches. It is acknowledged that the proposed system may lead to some loss of granularity in cases in which very detailed surveying of teaching already takes place on the basis of local systems; however, this has to be balanced against the advantages of having a shared understanding, University wide, of the processes. The challenges posed by large class groups are acknowledged, and this issue will be monitored with a view to devising systems to minimise such challenges. With regard to the possibility of over-surveying students, it was suggested that the situation might be alleviated by integrating aspects of the annual programme-level student survey into QuEST.

- 8.6** It was agreed to implement the QuEST pilot system in Semester 2, 2011/12, as recommended by the working group.

9. Teaching Council issues

- 9.1** The Deputy President/Registrar outlined recent events, noting that a DCU working group had drawn up guidelines for interaction with the Council as well as the heads of a response to the most recent consultation documentation made available (the full response is due for submission to the Council by 29 February 2012). The IUA Registrars had requested, and got, an urgent meeting with the Acting CEO and other members of the Council to discuss a number of implications for initial teacher education of decisions taken by the Council. This meeting had taken place on 23 January 2012 and had proved fruitful; as a result, a joint working group had been set up to address the issues in detail. The Deputy President/Registrar will keep Council informed of the progress of this working group. It is hoped that its work will lead to a resolution of the current issues, though noted that a number of challenges will need to be addressed, e.g. the implications for schools, and for the relationships between schools and higher education institutions, of the new requirements – considerably more comprehensive than former requirements – in terms of school placements for student teachers. The Deputy President/Registrar noted that Dr Joe O’Hara, Head of the School of Education Studies, is now a member of the Teaching Council.

C: Items for formal approval/noting

- 10. Matters from the Education Committee and the University Standards Committee**

Approved.

- 11. Memberships for 2011/12: Education Committee, University Standards Committee, Graduate Studies Board**

Noted.

- 12. Marks and Standards: clarifications to wording**

Approved.

13. Progression and Awards Boards recommendations for March 2012 conferring

Approved.¹

14. Faculty Awards Boards recommendations for March 2012 conferring

Approved.

15. Any other business

15.1 The Deputy President/Registrar noted that the mapping of the Graduate Attributes to undergraduate programme outcomes had been completed in the case of all programmes. A website is in development, with advice being made available by the Education Committee. It is intended that this website will be live by the end of the current academic year. Input to it will also be requested of Heads of School. Programme Chairs are requested to take account of the Attributes when the academic structures for 2012/13 are being approved at the Spring Progression and Awards Boards.

15.2 The Deputy President/Registrar noted that the higher education institutions had requested the consultancy company Mazars to conduct a review of the Central Applications Offices (the first such review to be undertaken). It is expected to be completed by the end of June 2012. Academic Council will be made aware of developments in relation to it.

¹ The recommendations were not to hand at the meeting (as the PABs were still in progress). They were made available electronically on 13 February 2012 and approved by Council on 14 February 2012.

Date of next meeting:

**Wednesday 11 April 2012
2.00 p.m. in AG01**

Signed: _____
President

Date: _____